

THE HMONG: A HUMAN RESOURCE IN TRANSITION

By

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ABSTRACT

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The Hmong are an ancient people, but their Diaspora has proven them to be an adaptable people. Change does take time and for the Hmong high school graduates change has placed them between two worlds. One is of the ancient third world country of their ancestors and traditions. The other is a world based on a fluctuating economy, where access to success is gained through literacy and education. Their generation is a pivotal one that can aid this ancient people with acculturation into the United States community. The purpose of this research is to study the 1992, 1994 and 1996 Hmong graduates of Wausau East and West high schools. The study will look for relationships among the graduates to find any

post-secondary trends, employment plans, encouragement of family and clans in their educational plans, and the citizenship status of the students and parents.

Assimilation can cause a loss ancestral traditions so the study will also look at the graduate's knowledge and retention of their native language.

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **Introduction**

The United States (US) has a long history of anti-Asian immigration legislation and feelings. In the 1800's, Chinese immigrants were drawn to the West Coast with the promise of work and hope for a better future. Before the turn of the century, fear of these immigrants working for lower wages pushed Congress to pass the Chinese Exclusion Act forbidding immigration from China for ten years. The Exclusion Act also prevented Chinese from becoming naturalized US citizens. These included children born in the US, even though the 14th Amendment granted citizenship to all people born on US soil. Ten years later, the Geary Act extended this ban. In 1923, the Japanese were also barred from naturalized citizenship.

The Cable Act of 1922 stated that any female United States citizen who married an alien ineligible for US citizenship would cease to be a citizen. The National Origins Act of 1924 limited all immigration to two percent of each country's 1890 population. It was meant to curtail the influx of Eastern Europeans, but also reduced Asian immigration to a fraction of the previous years. This act also forbade wives of US citizens, if they were of Chinese, Japanese, Korean, or East Indian decent, from entering the country. This was to limit the number of native-born Asian American citizens. This law did not change until after the 1945 passage of the War Bride's Act that permitted the immigration of the US servicemen's spouses and children.

The McCarran-Walter Act of 1952 allowed Asians to become naturalized citizens after China became a World War II (WWII) ally and the sons of East Indian, Filipino and Japanese immigrants had fought and died in US military service. In the 1965

Immigration Act, the National Origins quotas were abolished allowing immigrants to enter as immediate family members of US citizens. By 1985, family reunification allowed the numbers of Asian immigrants to soar to four of the five largest immigrant groups arriving in the US. Many of these immigrants were given priority because of their occupations or skills. The profile of many of the Asian immigrants was that of students or well-educated professionals. Many came from upper-income families who could afford to study English before attending a US university (Walker-Moffat, 1995).

In the 1980's and 1990's Wausau, Wisconsin (WI) became home to a number of members of a Laotian ethnic group called the Hmong. Their eventual exodus dates back to WWII. During WWII the Hmong had fought with the French in Indochina in opposition to the Japanese invasion and occupation. After the war, the French tried to maintain their colonial rule of French Indochina. The nationalists of Vietnam sought independence and found support from Communist China and the Soviet Union. In the late 50's France withdrew, but the US government feared a domino effect for other countries in the region. It was thought that if Vietnam became communist then other countries of the Indochina region would also fall to communism. When the French left Indochina, the CIA was informed of the abilities and loyalty of the Hmong people. The US dispatched troops to Vietnam and became ensnared in an ideological struggle. By the 60's, the war spilled over into Laos.

The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), under the auspices of the US government, became involved in the secret war in Laos. The US supported the Royal Lao military and utilized the Hmong. By 1962, American, Soviet, Chinese and North Vietnamese military and para-military forces were all present in Laos (Hamilton-Merritt, 1993). The US

government was concerned with the possibility of confrontation among superpowers because three out of the four countries had nuclear capabilities. With the Geneva Accords in 1962, foreign personnel were to be removed, but the North Vietnamese dishonored the Accords, removing only a small number of their forces. The US did not want to risk reintroducing their troops, but they knew that a resistance to the North Vietnam takeover of Laos had to be initiated (Sayaovong, 1997).

In 1962, a CIA operation under President Kennedy was developed to assist the Hmong in opposing a communist takeover. This was in violation of the Geneva Accords. The US utilized the Hmong because of their knowledge of the mountains and valleys in rescue operations of downed US pilots. The Hmong were also to function as a clandestine force to harass the North Vietnamese without being connected to the US. They collaborated with CIA forces and were provided with weapons and supplies. The Hmong duties included gathering information on enemy locations, maneuvers and military plans. The CIA had stated agreements to protect the Hmong for their loyalty if Laos would be lost, but no concrete plans were developed. The Hmong, in a defensive position, were not able to drive out the North Vietnamese. The estimated casualties of the Hmong forces by 1969 were 18,000, but these losses were in a war they could not win. By the end of the war the Hmong death count was higher than that of the US soldiers during the Vietnam War (Pieper, 1996).

After the US military pullout from Vietnam, Laos fell to the communists. The conquerors enacted a plan for the extermination of the Hmong of Laos. The jungles were sprayed with deadly chemicals called “yellow rain” by the Pathet Lao (pro-Communist Lao forces). If captured, the Hmong were killed or sent to reeducation camps. The

Hmong had no alternative, but to flee for their lives. Many died or were killed during their Diaspora, and the survivors who managed to cross the Mekong River spent years in Thai refugee camps. Processing time for immigration from the camps ranged from three to four years. The Hmong were dispersed to various countries, but 75% chose to immigrate to France, Canada, or the US. Many of those who had fought planned to reorganize and return to fight again for Laos. A number of the Hmong still struggle to understand the war and the Hmong role (Sayaovong, 1997).

The immigration of the Hmong to the US had for the most part ended in 1997. The camps in Thailand were closed and the last Hmong were either repatriated to Laos or immigrated to another country.

### **Statement of the problem**

The purpose of this research was to study the 1992, 1994, and 1996 Hmong graduates of Wausau East and Wausau West High Schools. The data was confidentially collected from the students by contact through mailings of questionnaires in the fall of 1998. The researcher did a study of the students who attended these secondary schools to find out if they acquired employment or planned to be employed in the Wausau area, if they attended a post-secondary institution and retention in their schools, if they sought or were seeking US citizenship, and the retention of their language.

### **Objectives**

The objectives of this study were as follows:

1. To determine if the students attended post-secondary institutions.
2. To determine if the students completed their post secondary education.
3. To determine if the students retained their language.

4. To determine if the students returned to Wausau to seek employment.
5. To determine the effect of sibling post-secondary attendance in their decision to attend a post-secondary school.
6. To determine the number of years the students have been in the US.
7. To determine the number of students who have sought US citizenship.
8. To determine if “targeting” programs affected the student's decision to attend post-secondary institution (pre-college or Early Identification Program.).
9. To determine if the students felt they received encouragement from their high school counselor and/or teachers to attend post-secondary school.

### **Definition of terms**

To have a full understanding of this research, certain terms will be used and definitions are as follows:

**Animism:** This is the cultural religion of the Hmong. It is involved with the spirit worship of ancestors and nature’s spirits surrounding them.

**Clan:** The large extended family belonging to a common ancestor, all clan members have the same last name.

**Disadvantaged student:** A student from a socially, economically, or culturally deprived background.

**Early Identification Program (EIP):** A component of the Wisconsin Educational Opportunity Program. The purpose of the program is to reduce attrition on the secondary and post-secondary levels. It provides direction toward attainment of career goals by working in partnership with parents and schools to provide academic, personal, and career counseling to students. Research and evaluation indicates that students, especially

minority and disadvantaged students, must be identified and guided earlier if they are to have a chance of academic success and vocational achievement (WI State Department of Public Instruction, 1984).

French Indochina: The region of Southeast Asia comprising Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam. At times Malaya, Burma and Thailand are also included.

Immigrant: Any person who makes the choice to move from their native land to another country permanently.

Mekong River: The river that separates Laos and Thailand.

Pathet Lao: The communist forces trying to take over Laos.

Post-secondary institutions: Any public or private vocational college, community or four-year university.

Pre-college Program: Usually summer programs (1-4 weeks) for middle or high school students to give them an opportunity to live on a college campus and take courses that are of interest to them. Many universities in Wisconsin offer programs geared to minorities, and the Department of Public Instruction offers scholarships to assist disadvantaged students with the cost.

Refugee: A person who is forced to flee from their native country to live and remain free.

Refugee camp: The camps in Thailand where the Hmong and other refugees were housed until placement was made in other countries. On average the process took three to four years, but during this time a family or person may have been moved to a number of different camps.

Southeast Asian immigrants: A variety of persons from countries of the Southeast Asian region, including Vietnamese, Cambodian, Thai, Lao, and Hmong.

### **Assumptions**

The researcher assumed that the respondents gave truthful and accurate answers to the questionnaire. The researcher assumed that the study would supply important information on the culture, the high school graduates' post-secondary trends, employment, and the undertaking of US citizenship among the Wausau area Hmong.

### **Limitations**

This study was conducted using subjects from one geographical location and one school district within that region. It is only a small representation of the Hmong living in the Wausau area and the US Hmong population. The results can not be generalized because it is a small sampling. Despite confidentiality, validity could be questioned because the students may want to please the researcher with their answers. The Hmong are respectful people, not wanting to offend, and the researcher realized that their answers might not be candid because of politeness.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **Review of Literature**

#### **Introduction**

This review of literature will discuss the following: cultural beliefs, higher education, employment, Americanization, post-secondary education, role models, citizenship, and the myth of the model minority. Moving from a pre-industrial, pre-literate third world society to a superpower nation based on machines and education was a rapid adjustment that the Hmong have had to make in just a matter of years. In the transition, the children have often taken on roles of interpreter and become the sources of information supplied to the families. Many of the elders and parents could not speak English and had difficulty learning the language, and/or had no income (Flom, 1994). In this patrilineal society, the head of the household was to supply the income and information necessary for the family; not being able to do so caused loss of respect.

#### **Cultural beliefs**

The Hmong were a mountain, agrarian people who have for hundreds of years used the slash and burn method of farming. They were subsistence farmers who raised animals for food and/or sometimes trading. Money did not play a major role in their economy. Wealth was expressed with silver coins and jewelry (made of silver and silver coins). The coins were also sewn onto the clothing, but were worn only on special occasions, like the New Year celebrations (Vang, 1996). They had developed a patrilineal clan system that was the main source of organization within their political, social, economic, and religious systems. Each clan member shared the same patrilineal ancestors. There are 18 clan names with alliances through marriages to assure counsel

and support within the great family of Hmong. All persons with the same last name were considered brothers and sisters.

A Hmong household contained a very extended family, with the head of the household retaining final authority. The household served to train the children and placed a very high value on the elders. For the Hmong female, marriage took her from her father's home, and she became the property of the husband's family. The female did not take the husband's name, but all children acquired the father's family name.

Polygamy was practiced within the clan system, but was usually a result of a widow's marriage to her late husband's brother. Wealthier men had a number of wives to maintain the kinship system. The group was always considered before the individual.

The Hmong religion was the practice of animism, which is ancestral worship. The main theme of animism was to maintain a balance between oneself and the supernatural world. Many Hmong have converted to Christian religious practices and about half of those who emigrated to the US belonged to the Missionary Alliance Denomination (Goldstein, 1993).

## **Education**

In Laos, the established education opportunities for the Hmong were very limited. Children learned skills and oral history from village elders. The Hmong did not have a written language until the late 1950's. When living in Laos, the expense of education allowed few Hmong boys, and rarely girls, to receive formal education. The value of education increased because of that scarcity. Education was the key that opened doors for the Hmong to start breaking the cycle of poverty and public assistance in which they have become entangled in the US. The children were encouraged to excel academically,

yet were also expected to help maintain the home. Girls especially were limited in their extra curricular activities and often needed to assist in child care and household chores. The Policy Research Institute Report of April 1991, stated that the standard scores of scholastic performance of the Hmong children were almost 40% higher than the average for all schools. When compared to other Asian Americans, the Hmong were not successful, but they came to this country with less preparation than just about any other group in our history (Vang, 1986).

### **Americanization**

Hmong families who have become involved in mainstream America lose and/or accommodate their traditional values, ceremonies, religion and ethnic heritage. In the US, many elders feel useless in this society as the American values change the lifestyle of the younger Hmong. The goal of the American officials was to resettle the Hmong refugees, and to disperse the population into various locations to avoid overloading any one area. The officials did not understand the clan system. They arranged for private sponsorship and job placement, but again underestimated the language problem and the Hmong necessity to live closer to family (Trueba, Jacobs, & Kirton, 1990).

In 1975, the first Hmong arrived in Wausau, and according to the Wausau Hmong Association, there were 4,368 Hmong as of March 1998. About 255 Southeast Asian families in Marathon County rely on public assistance. Among the population of the Wausau area, 10% are Southeast Asian, and 90% of that number are Hmong. The older Hmong continue to have difficulty finding employment because of the inability to understand English (Xiong, 1997).

According to Hunter (1994), US children are taught to be aggressive, independent, and self-reliant. For the Hmong children, responsibility to the family comes before the individual. The effect of the American culture is causing tremendous change in behavior in the Hmong homes and can cause disturbances within the family and clans.

### **Post-secondary education**

According to Vang (1991), parents with little educational background are not able to help their children prepare for college. They cannot assist their children in identifying clear goals to work toward higher achievement in college. Traditionally, the head of the household is the final authority, so newly independent students can flounder when they embark on the road to higher education. Decisions are thrust on them and choices need to be made, but often without direction from home. Parents do not understand how the government or educational systems function, and rely on the students to guide them. The students are faced with the financial needs for attaining a post-secondary institution education. The family is very limited in its ability to aid with these needs because of low household income.

The WI State Department of Public Instruction developed a program in the 1980's to assist minority and disadvantaged students developing their potential to attend post-secondary institutions. The Early Identification Program (EIP) develops personal relationships with students through counseling on education and academic endeavors, visiting universities and colleges, and assisting with financial aid and post-secondary applications. Figures from the Wausau EIP office show that of the 1996 graduation year, over 80% of the Hmong clients went on to post-secondary schools (Hutchison, 1997). Over 90% of the Wausau EIP clients were Southeast Asian (Hunter, 1994). Hutchison's

study in The WI Policy Research Institute Report (1997) also stated that the retention rate of Hmong and other Southeast Asian students surpassed that of other groups, including white students. “The rate of increase of Hmong workers is proportional to the rate of their education” (Vang, 1991).

### **Role models**

Role modeling is another factor that can encourage continued education for Hmong students. Siblings who have attended post-secondary school can attest to the necessities for preparation for a successful education. Many Hmong parents have not acquired education in the US, and few received even elementary education in Laos. Many elders cannot read or write the Hmong language. The pressure for good role models is tremendous. Most females only see women caring for children, the home, and maybe working at a minimum wage employment. It is essential for Hmong college women to become role models for younger girls to help prepare them for college life (Hunter, 1994).

### **Citizenship**

Many Hmong left Laos with intentions of reinforcing militarily and then returning to retake the country from the Pathet Lao. This has not happened, and the young people have only fading memories of the war and their flight. They do not intend to return. These young people feel that the US is their home and officially becoming a US citizen is important. Recent welfare reforms have also threatened those who are not citizens. Many elderly and middle aged Hmong became confused with these government actions. They had been forced to flee Laos because they had aided the US military; now they were being cut off from their only source of income. Many depended upon it to survive.

The House of Representatives, in March of 1997, passed bill H.R. 2202 that would require certification that federal student aid recipients were citizens or permanent legal residents. The Senate passed a similar bill, S. 1664, that would make legal immigrants ineligible for more than a year of student aid during the first five years in the US (Vue-Benson, 1998). This type of legislation puts pressure on all immigrants who live and work in the US for over five years to make application for citizenship.

To apply for citizenship, a person has to live in the US for 5 years, be over 18, file the necessary papers, and pay over \$250 per application and fingerprinting. The process can be very time consuming and requirements have changed numerous times over the last three years. The costs also continue to rise. If the parents become citizens, their children can be processed, but each child has to file a separate application and pay the fees. For a low-income family, this becomes cost prohibitive. There are also trips that need to be taken for interviews with the Immigration and Naturalization Service. If the person passes the examination (covering US history and government), another trip will be necessary for a swearing-in ceremony. The examinations are given in English, and cause difficulty for those who do not have a good understanding of the language. Ten years ago the process was done locally, but changes now make extensive trips necessary.

### **The myth of the model minority**

Otto's (1993) paper on Hmong immigrant students uses the US Census figures to show that Asian/Pacific Islanders have the highest average median income of all minority races. This can be misleading though because many times it is based on family income, with numerous members being employed. Asian students earn the highest scores in math on the SAT test. According to Otto, these statistics would make it appear that Asian

Americans are the “model minority.” This stereotype leads to problems. Asian students are raised in a culture that values the group and prizes politeness. These qualities make them pleasant to work with in the classroom.

The preconceived idea that these students are models may cause them to be given more favorable treatment by teachers. There may even be an inflation of grades simply because the Asian is seen as a “model” student. That can lead to difficulty for the student in a learning environment. When they continue on into a post-secondary institution they may not have the necessary skills to succeed or have to work harder to learn skills that should have been acquired in secondary school.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **Methodology**

#### **Introduction**

This chapter will describe the subjects under study and how they were selected for this study. The instrument developed and its content will be discussed. Data collection and analysis procedures will be presented. The chapter will conclude with methodological limitations.

#### **Subjects**

The subjects for this study were the Hmong graduates of 1992, 1994, and 1996 from Wausau East and Wausau West High Schools. Each subject completed the necessary requirements to graduate from a Wisconsin high school.

#### **Sample Selection**

Using a stratified random sample, the researcher subdivided the Hmong high school graduate population of Wausau. The years 1992, 1994, and 1996 were chosen to participate in this study and 115 were issued questionnaires by mail in the fall semester of 1998. They were given an overview of the study and told that their involvement would be confidential.

#### **Instrumentation**

The researcher (see Appendix A for a copy of the survey) developed a descriptive survey for this study. The items came from personal experience working with the Wausau Southeast Asian community and reading a variety of literature. The designed survey was to address the following areas:

1. To determine if the students attended post-secondary institutions.

2. To determine if the students completed their post secondary education.
3. To determine if the students retained their language.
4. To determine if the students returned to Wausau to seek employment.
5. To determine the affect of sibling post-secondary attendance in their decision to attend post-secondary schools.
6. To determine the number of years the students have been in the US.
7. To determine the number of students who have sought US citizenship.
8. To determine if “targeting” programs affected the student's decision to attend post-secondary institution (pre-college or Early Identification Program).
9. To determine if the student felt they received encouragement from their high school counselor and/or teachers to attend post-secondary school.

This descriptive survey was sent to the graduates in the fall of 1998. The format of the survey was in English. A pilot study was conducted using select students to determine the effectiveness and clarity of the instrument. The participants were asked to provide input about deficiencies and suggestions for improvements. Through the pilot study validity was established, but no other standards for validity or reliability were established. The President of the Wausau Hmong Association, Peter Yang, supplied contributions and questions that would be helpful information in the study and to the association. Nell Anderson, Director of Bilingual/Multicultural/Equity for the Wausau School District, also contributed questions on the student’s extent of knowledge of their native tongue.

## **Data Collection**

The list of the Hmong graduates was acquired from the Wausau School District and the Wausau Hmong Association. Addresses were obtained from family members, friends, the EIP Office, the Wausau Hmong Association and various other sources.

The questionnaires were mailed to 115 of the students. They were sent to current and past addresses to reach as many as possible of the past graduates. Follow-up was done through second and third mailing, getting in touch with relatives, friends, contacts at the Hmong Association and other agencies that worked with Hmong students and personal phone calls. This persisted until at least a minimum of 33% participation was received from each year. Each survey was sent with a self-addressed, stamped envelope to be returned to the researcher. The process of acquiring enough surveys for this research was approximately a year.

## **Data Analysis**

The information was given to the Computer User Support Services of UW-Stout to compile and analyze the data. The researcher interpreted the printout. This was a comparative study that needed at least 33% from each year. The researcher was looking for relationships between the graduation years to see whether there was an increase in the number of Hmong that had attended post-secondary school, the male/female ratio of the students, the retention of these students, the interest in seeking citizenship, and influence of their family/clan on their choices. The researcher was looking for any factors that contributed to changes over the years and the possible effect of those factors.

## **Limitations**

Concerning this study, obtaining the addresses and locations of past graduates was somewhat difficult and time consuming. Possible reasons for non-participation could be poor understanding of English to embarrassment for not attending a post-secondary institute. This reasoning was supplied from conversations with a number of Hmong students and acquaintances. Getting a feasible number of surveys returned took about a year. Survey involvement was strictly voluntary and follow-up mailings and phone calls were needed to acquire the necessary numbers. The results cannot be used to make generalized statements about Hmong graduates because it was a small sampling in only one area of the country.

## CHAPTER 4

### Results

#### Introduction

Through surveys of the 1992, 1994 and 1996 Hmong graduates of Wausau East and Wausau West High Schools, this research attempted to determine if the students attended post-secondary institutions, retained their language, acquired employment, planned to be employed in Wausau area, and if they sought US citizenship.

The objectives of this study were as follows:

1. To determine if the students attended post-secondary education.
2. To determine if the students completed their post secondary education.
3. To determine if the students retained their language.
4. To determine if the students returned to Wausau to seek employment.
5. To determine the affect of sibling post-secondary attendance in their decision to attend a post-secondary schools.
6. To determine the number of years the students have been in the US.
7. To determine the number of students who have sought US citizenship.
8. To determine if “targeting” programs affected the student’s decision to attend post-secondary institution (pre-college or Early Identification Program).
9. To determine if the student felt they received encouragement from their high school counselor and/or teachers to attend post-secondary school.

The researcher sent out 34 surveys to 1992 graduates and received 13 completed surveys. For the 1994 class 39 surveys were sent and 14 returned, and of the 1996 class 42 surveys were sent with a return rate of 22. Follow-up was done through second and

third mailing, getting in touch with relatives, friends, contacts at the Hmong Association and other agencies that worked with Hmong students and phone calls. Each survey was sent with a self-addressed, stamped envelope to be returned to the researcher

### **Gender/Marriage/Parenthood**

From the returned surveys of the class of 1992 there were 7 males and 6 females. Of the males, 4 were single and 3 were married. Two of the males had two children each. Of the females, 1 had remained single, 5 were married and they had between one-three children each.

In the class of 1994, there were 8 males and 6 females. Of the males, 5 were single and 3 were married. Two of the males have one-two children. Of the females, 2 had remained single, 4 were married and 2 females had one-two children.

When appraising the 1996 class, 14 were males and 8 were females. Of the males, 10 had remained single, 4 were married with 3 of them having one-two children. Of the females, 5 had remained single, 3 were married with 2 females having one-two children.

### **College attendance**

The 1992 class returned 13 surveys stating that 10 of the students had attended a post-secondary institution. Three attended a vocational technical college, 6 attended four-year universities, and 1 attended a vocational technical school and continued with other courses after graduation. Ten of the students, as of 1998, were currently in post-secondary institutions. Five of those who attended a post secondary institutional were females, and 5 were males.

Of the 1994 class 14 surveys were returned. The surveys showed that 13 of the graduates attended post secondary institutions, 1 at the vocational technical level, 11 at four-year institutions, 1 going beyond the vocational technical school. Twelve of the graduates currently were attending a school. Five of those who attended a post secondary school were female and 8 were male.

The 1996 class returned 22 surveys with 18 having attended post secondary institutions. Two attended at the vocational technical level, 1 at a two-year college, 15 at four-year universities. In 1998, 15 were attending a post-secondary institution. Of those who attended a post secondary school 7 were female and 11 were male.

### **Retention of language**

In the 1992 class, all 13 graduates could speak Hmong fluently, 11 could read their language, and 8 could write it. The 1994 class had 12 of the 14 who could fluently speak Hmong, 10 that could read the language and 7 that could write in their native tongue. In the 1996 group, 19 of the 22 could speak Hmong fluently, 15 could read Hmong and 11 could write the language.

### **Employment and geographical location**

From the 1992 group 12 were currently working full time and 1 part-time. Six were planning to or were working in the Wausau area. From the 1994 class, 5 were working full time, 7 part-time, 4 had seasonal employment and 3 were unemployed. Seven were planning to or were working in the Wausau area. The 1996 graduates had 5 working full time, 7 part time, 4 were seasonal employed and 6 were unemployed. Seventeen were planning to or were working in the Wausau area.

### **Siblings attended post-secondary institutions**

Of the 13 who answered the survey from the 1992 class, 5 had one-four siblings who are or had attended a post-secondary institution. Within the 14 who returned the 1994 class survey, 9 had one-five siblings who are or had attended a post-secondary institution. In the 1996 class 11 had one-five siblings who are or had attended a post-secondary institution.

### **Involvement in targeting programs**

From the 1992 class, 5 had attended a pre-college program, while 7 had belonged to the EIP program. Six of the graduates felt that the EIP program influenced their decisions to attend a post-secondary institution.

The 1994 class had 7 who had attended a pre-college program. Twelve from this class belonged to the EIP program. Nine of those students felt the program was influential in the post-secondary decisions.

The 1996 graduates had 10 who had attended a pre-college program. Eighteen of them belonged to the EIP program and 15 felt the program was influential in their decisions on post secondary institutions.

### **Counselor and/or teacher assistance**

From the 1992 class returned surveys, 9 graduates felt a teacher or counselor assisted them while in high school. In the 1994 class, 8 felt that they had received encouragement and in the 1996 class, 17 felt a teacher or counselor assisted and/or encouraged them in high school years.

### **Clan/family support**

In the 1992 class of the students who attended post-secondary institutions, 9 felt they received support from their parents and clan. One felt that he did not have support of the clan, and at the time of the survey he did not feel he had the support of his parents.

Of the 1994 graduates, 9 felt they had the support of their parents and clan. Three felt they had the support of their parents, but not of the clan. One felt she had the support of their clan and not the parents.

From the 1996 group, 14 felt they had the support of both parents and clan. One felt the parents supported their post-secondary decision, but not the clan. Two felt they had support from neither the parents nor the clan, and 1 felt she had no support from parents but did get support from the clan.

### **Number of years in the United States**

No survey returnees from the 1992 class had been born in the US. The graduates arrived in the US between 1975 and 1987. In the 1994 class none of the students were born in the US, they arrived between 1976 and 1990. The 1996 class had 2 US born citizens, 20 were born in Laos or in a refugee camp. They arrived between 1978 and 1996.

### **Application of US citizenship**

From the 1992 class, 3 had become US citizens, 3 were in the process, and 7 had not applied. The application time took from 12-18 months for completion. In 1994 class, 10 had become US citizens, 3 were in the process, and 1 had not applied. The applications took six months to 3 ½ years to complete. The 1996 group had 2 natural US citizens, 11 had been naturalized, 4 were in the process, and 5 had not applied. The time

line was from 6 months to 3 ½ years for completion. Reasons for non-application ranged from juvenile criminal record, lack of interest or feelings of inadequacy to pass the interview and testing. In 1994 the EIP office, in conjunction with the Wausau School District and local businesspersons, had developed a program to assist eligible graduating seniors with their citizenship applications. Assistance was given with the filling out of applications, pictures, fingerprinting, cost and filing. This continues to be an on going program.

### **US citizenship of parents**

From the 1992 class, 5 students had fathers who became US citizens, with 2 more whose fathers were in the process. The application had taken 6 months to 3 ½ years to complete. Four of the graduates had mothers who had become citizens and 2 were still in the process. Their applications also had taken 6 months to 3 ½ years.

The 1994 graduates had 9 fathers who had become citizens with 1 in the process. Their applications also had taken 6 months to 3 ½ years. Five of the grads had mothers who had become US citizens, 2 were in process. It took them 1- 3 ½ years to complete.

The 1996 group had 6 fathers who had become citizens with 4 in the process. Their applications had taken 6 months to unknown for completion. Five of the mothers had become citizens 7 were in process. These also had taken 6 months to an unknown amount of time.

## CHAPTER 5

### Conclusion

#### Introduction

The Hmong graduate makeup changed from 1992 to 1994, similarly the 1994 to 1996 graduates showed change. Without change there can be no progress. The number of females who are acquiring high school diplomas and continuing in their post-secondary education has increased. The number of students involved in “targeting” programs that assist students with positive academic experiences has also increased. By the same token, the number of males and females who have acquired citizenship or are in the process has elevated. Likewise the number of students who returned the surveys showed a continuance of the retention of the native language and ability to write and read their language.

The INS is currently under the scrutiny of Congress because of problems with time frames, bureaucratic overload and general dysfunction. There is consideration of splitting of the agency to assist with the burden of naturalization and enforcement of INS rules, regulations and violations (Adams, Siegel 2000). Many Hmong from the Wausau area are still in process after a 3½-year wait. Currently the Wausau Area Hmong Association believes that approximately 380 out of about 4000 Hmong eligible have become US citizens.

The objectives of this study were as follows:

1. To determine if the students attended post-secondary education.
2. To determine if the students completed their post secondary education.
3. To determine if the students retained their language.

4. To determine if the students returned to Wausau to seek employment.
5. To determine the affect of sibling post-secondary attendance in their decision to attend a post-secondary schools.
6. To determine the number of years the students have been in the US.
7. To determine the number of students who have sought US citizenship.
8. To determine if “targeting” programs affected the student’s decision to attend post-secondary institution (pre-college or Early Identification Program).
9. To determine if the student felt they received encouragement from their high school counselor and/or teachers to attend post-secondary school.

### **Summary of research findings**

The researcher sent out 34 surveys to 1992 graduates and received 13 completed surveys. For the 1994 class 39 surveys were sent and 14 returned, and of the 1996 class 42 surveys were sent with a return rate of 22. The researcher feels that it is necessary to put in this disclaimer. Most of the students who returned the surveys were those who had been active in a targeting program, thus had gone on to attend post-secondary institutions.

### **Implications and recommendations**

Results of this study imply and/or suggest that:

1. Encouragement of Hmong students to be prepared for college through goal and decision making courses in high school needs to continue.
2. Use of targeting programs and pre-college for high schools and middle school students should be encouraged.
3. Encouragement of vocational technical and two-year campus as a stepping stone to 4-year universities needs to continue.

4. Continued encouragement from families and clans of post-secondary decision making appears to be important.
5. College advisors need out-reach programs for new students to help them choose majors and courses necessary for graduation. Possible training of the advisors to understand multicultural needs of students needs to be considered.
6. Development of mentoring programs at the high school and college level needs to be examined.
7. Encouragement of high school students to connect with guidance counselors and teachers is advisable.
8. Encouragement of career counseling in middle and high schools would be advantageous.
9. Development of on campus assistance programs for multicultural students (tutoring and financial aids, etc.) would be advisable.
10. Improvement of accessibility of INS offices in state, for interviews, fingerprinting and swearing in should be considered.
11. It would appear that a revision within the offices of INS at many levels (timelines, language skills, courtesy of interviewers) could be necessary.
12. It would seem that control of cost for citizenship applications could be beneficial.

Suggested use of this research would be for middle, high school and post-secondary school personnel to consider these recommendations when developing programs to assist Hmong students succeed at the post-secondary level. The research could also be used by agencies working with the Hmong population to assist in building a

power base through completion of citizenship applications. With citizenship an empowerment of a voting block would help to effect policies which impact the Hmong population. Officials of the city of Wausau who work with the population in areas of housing and education would find the results helpful in future plans within the city. The research could be used for other cities or villages who share their community with Hmong populations. It would also be useful for the people who are willing to work to influence the federal government in the directives and direction for the Immigrations and Naturalization Services.

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## Appendix

July 26, 1998

Dear

You may remember me from the EIP Office. I worked with Sharon Hunter for 3 years as a program assistant. I also assisted the Wausau 2000 group in the fall of 1996 to aid resident aliens apply for United States citizenship. I am writing because I now need your assistance. I am currently pursuing my Master's degree in Guidance and Counseling at UW-Stout. I am conducting a survey on the Wausau School District Hmong high school graduates from the years 1992, 1994 and 1996. I would appreciate your participation.

The Hmong have been in the Wausau area nearly 25 years. Time and the increase in education and literacy of the population have helped to overcome the cycle of poverty and increase self-sufficiency. I would like your assistance, by completing the following survey, to gather data on students who graduated from Wausau East and Wausau West high schools. The data will help to assess employment trends, higher education trends, and citizenship status of your segment of the Wausau Hmong community. All data will remain confidential and will only be used in group representations.

I would like to have the survey returned to me by October 1, 1998. If you have any questions, please, feel free to call me at (715) 845-8975.

Sincerely,

Suzanne C. Dirks  
306 Prospect Avenue  
Wausau, WI 54403

### Consent for Participation

I understand that by returning this 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 aware that the information is being sought in a specific manner so that only the researcher will have access to my identity. Subjects will be identified by color coding of the year and an envelope numbering system for ease in any necessary follow up by researcher. The compiled data will only be used in group representations so that confidentiality is guaranteed. I realize that I have the right to refuse to participate and that my right to withdraw from participation at any time during the study will be respected with no coercion or prejudice.

NOTE: Questions or concerns about participation in the research or subsequent complaints should be addressed first to the researcher or research advisor and second to Dr. Ted Knous, Chair, UW-Stout Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research, 11 HH, UW-Stout, Menomonie, WI 54751, Phone (715)232-1126.

## Survey

1. Gender:

Male  
 Female

2. Marital Status:

Single                       Divorced  
 Married                       Widowed  
 Separated

3. Do you have children?

No  
 Yes--If yes, how many? \_\_\_\_\_

4. Do you fluently speak Hmong? Can you read Hmong? Can you write Hmong?

Yes                               Yes                               Yes  
 No                                 No                                 No

5. Are you employed?

Full-time                       Seasonal  
 Part-time                       Not employed

6. Did you attend a higher education institution after high school?

Yes  
 No--If "no," why not?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

IF YOU ANSWERED "NO" TO NUMBER 6, PLEASE GO TO QUESTION 16

7. Which type of educational institution did you attend?

Vocational/Technical College                       4-year college/university  
 2 year College     Other

8. Name of school? \_\_\_\_\_

9. What was your major? \_\_\_\_\_

10. Are you currently in school?

Yes--If yes, continue with question # 11  
 No--If no, skip to question # 12

11. What is your current grade level?

Freshman (13th year)

Sophomore (14th year)

Junior (15th year)

Senior (16th year)

Master's program

Doctoral program

Other \_\_\_\_\_

SKIP TO # 13

12. Why are you no longer in school?

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13. Did you or do you plan to return to the Wausau area to work?

Yes

No

14. Did your parents support and/or encourage your decision to continue your education?

Yes

No

15. Did your clan support and/or encourage your decision to continue your education?

Yes

No

16. Do you plan to return to school?

Yes

No

17. Do you have brothers or sisters who attended a higher educational school?

No

Yes--If yes, how many?  1  2  3  4  5

18. In junior high or high school, did you attend any pre-college programs?

No

Yes--If yes, where? \_\_\_\_\_

19. In high school, did you belong to the EIP Program?

No

Yes--If yes, did the program influence your decision to continue your education?  No

Yes

20. Did you feel you received assistance or encouragement from your high school counselor and/or teachers to continue your education?

Yes

No

21. Were there any other reasons that are not included in this survey that you feel helped and/or hindered in your pursuit of a higher education?

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22. Were you born in the United States?

Yes--Skip to question # 24

No--If no, what year did you arrive in the United States? 19\_\_

23. Have you become a United States citizen?

Yes--If yes, about how long did the process take?

6 months                       24 months

12 months                       36 months

18 months

In process

No--If not, why not? \_\_\_\_\_

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24. Did your birth father become a citizen of the United States?

Yes--If yes, about how long did the process take?

6 months                       24 months

12 months                       36 months

18 months

In process

No--If not, why not? \_\_\_\_\_

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25. Did your birth mother become a citizen of the United States?

Yes--If yes, about how long did the process take?

6 months                       24 months

12 months                       36 months

18 months

In process

No--If not, why not? \_\_\_\_\_

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Thank you for taking the time to complete the survey, I appreciate your help.