

HMONG STUDENTS' PERSONAL  
ADJUSTMENT IN AMERICAN CULTURE

By

Li Shi

A Research Paper

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements of the Degree of  
Education Specialist  
With a Major in

Counseling and Psychological Services

Approved: 6 Semester Credits

---

Field Study Chair

Field Study Committee Members:

---

---

The Graduate School  
University of Wisconsin-Stout  
August, 2001

The Graduate College  
University of Wisconsin-Stout  
Menomonie, Wisconsin 54751

ABSTRACT

<u>Shi</u>	<u>Li</u>	<u>NONE</u>
(Writer) (Last Name)	(First Name)	(Initial)
<hr/>		
<u>Hmong Students' Personal Adjustment in American Culture</u>		
(Title)		
<hr/>		
<u>Counseling and Psychological Services</u>	<u>Dr. Helen Swanson,</u>	<u>August/2001</u>
(Graduate Major)	(Research Adviser)	(Month/Year)
		<u>50</u>
		(Pages)
<hr/>		
<u>American Psychological Association</u>		
(Name of Style Manual Used in this Study)		

The purpose of this study was to gather information relative to Hmong culture and Hmong youth's personal adjustment in the American school system. A twenty-five-item interview was conducted with eight Hmong students in grades 7-12 in a public school district in Minnesota. The findings of the study showed that the educators' teaching techniques, positive attitude about the students and knowledge of the students' culture influenced the students' adjustment at school. Social support, students' sociality, and age at time of arrival in the U.S also influenced the students' adjustment. English proficiency and high self-esteem were also associated with the participating Hmong students' performance at school. The participating students' length of residency in the U.S. was not related to their adjustment. No gender differences were found. Further research with a larger sample size is recommended.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to my research adviser and field study committee chair Dr. Helen Swanson for her supervision, guidance and encouragement throughout my field study work. I am also grateful to my other committee members, Dr. Ed Biggerstaff and Ms. Jill Stanton, for their comments. Thanks also go to Bong Vang who helped me to interpret the interviews and translate the parental consent and interview forms.

I am also thankful to my family for their support and understanding without which my field study may not have been completed.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	2
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	3
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	4
LIST OF TABLES.....	6
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	
Historical Overview.....	7
Statement of the Problem.....	11
Research Questions.....	11
Definition of Terms.....	12
CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE	
Overview of Personal Adjustment in a New Culture.....	13
The Relationship between Culture and Behavior.....	15
Strategies Needed for Adjustment.....	17
Asian Immigrant Youth Identity and Adjustment.....	18
American Schools and Young Asian Immigrants.....	21
A Summary of the Literature.....	23
Research Questions.....	25
Hypotheses.....	25
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY	
Participants.....	27
Instrument.....	27
Procedure.....	28
Data Analysis.....	29
CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS	
Hypothesis 1.....	30
Hypothesis 2.....	31
Hypothesis 3.....	31
Hypothesis 4.....	32
Hypothesis 5.....	32
Hypothesis 6.....	32
Hypothesis 7.....	33
Gender Comparison.....	33

Summary.....	33
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION	
Conclusions.....	35
Limitations.....	37
REFERENCES.....	39
APPENDIX: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS.....	43

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: English Proficiency and Adjustment

Table 2: Educators' Teaching Techniques and Attitudes and Students' Adjustment

Table 3: Self Esteem and Adjustment

Table 4: Social Support and Adjustment

Table 5: Sociality and Adjustment

Table 6: Age at Time of Arrival in the U.S. and Adjustment

Table 7: Length of Residency in the U.S. and Adjustment

## CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

Historical Overview

Hmong, who live all over the world, are from their ancient homelands in China. With a fiercely independent culture dating back to 2000 BC, the Hmong immigrated southward out of China into the mountains of Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam. In the 1960s, during the years of U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War, Hmong sided with the Americans against the North Vietnamese. Thousands of Hmong men and boys were recruited by the CIA to fight the North Vietnamese communists in the Secret War in Laos. After the U.S. withdrew in 1973 and there was a subsequent fall of the area to the communist party, this allegiance led the current Lao government to declare the Hmong as enemies, vowing to “wipe them out”. In the 1970s a major change came about for the Hmong in Laos. The Hmong were forced to flee their homeland. More than 30,000 Hmong left Laos for Thailand and from there they resettled in other countries including the U.S. (Hamilton-Merritt, 1993). Today there are more than 120,000 Hmong living in the United States, and it is the fastest growing population in the U.S.

The Hmong who fled to Thailand stayed in the refugee camp for a period of time before they came to the U.S. The first Hmong group has been living in the U.S. for about twenty years. Some of them just arrived in the U.S. two or three years ago. Hmong in the Thailand refugee camps still keep immigrating to the U.S. through their relatives’ sponsorship. Because of the big gap between the Hmong culture and language and American culture and language, the Hmong have encountered numerous problems in their adaptation to the United States.

Culturally, Hmong are similar to other Asian groups. Hmong value interdependence, group-reliance, communal survival, and cultural tradition. They have a tendency to keep their feelings and opinions to themselves, compared to the U.S. culture in which they have mainstreamed (Podeschi & Xiong, 1990; Timm, 1997). They believe hard work is the way to success. Hmong also have their own unique values, traditions, religion and life style. For example, they often get married at an early age, between 12 and 17 years, and have children soon after getting married (Timm, 1997). A study by Symonds (1984) showed that three out of forty Hmong mothers had their first children at age fourteen or younger and most were fifteen to seventeen years old when they first gave birth. They “practice ancestor worship and spirit rituals” and “believe in the existence of souls” (Lee, 1996, p.6). When someone is sick, a shaman is sometimes invited to pray for “curing” the sickness instead of seeing doctors. The fact that most Hmong were rural, preliterate, preindustrial, self-sufficient farmers with few links to urban markets (Hein, 1994; Podeschi & Xiong, 1990) makes it more difficult for them to adjust to American life.

Linguistically, “Hmong did not have written language until the French missionaries invented one in the 1950s” (Hein, 1994). Hmong language is a language that is completely different from English. It is a tonal language. It consists of eight tones. The final consonant of a word is the tone of that word and it is not pronounced. Words with the same pronunciation but different tones have different meanings. There is no gender system or plural nouns in Hmong language. Consequently, learning English grammar and pronunciations is difficult to Hmong people. Learning English is one of the things with which they continue to struggle.



The young generation of Hmong who immigrated to the U.S. with their parents not only has their parents' problems, but also encounter more difficulties than their parents. Besides a new environment, society, new culture and language, they encounter school transition and adjustment. The different educational system, values, and schooling background between Laotian or Thai refugee camps and the U.S. became a barrier for the youngsters' academic achievement. Many changes confront them, including a move to a different social structure, loss of social status, a larger school, different teachers and different sets of peers in each class daily, prevalence of administrative structures, and also differences in educational demands, teacher attitudes, and classroom organization between the two countries (Reyes, 1994). Due to living in the refugee camp, these students did not have a chance to get education or had little education before they came to the U.S. After they came to the U.S., they were assigned to elementary schools, middle schools and high schools according to age, not their schooling. As a consequence, these students have difficulties not only from the cultural barrier, but also the schooling gap. They are often confused, anxious, frustrated, hopeless and struggling at school. Cultural and historical backgrounds affect student adjustment, and those who immigrated with their parents and were not prepared for their immigration have especially found the adjustment process frustrating and frightening (Cheng, 1998). Therefore, there is a great need for helping the Hmong students adjust to American society, including the educational setting. In order to accomplish this, researchers need to study Hmong culture, language, and the Hmong adaptation procedure, the difficulties in the school transition, and successful means of adjustment. In turn, social workers, professionals, teachers and all people who are in contact with Hmong can help the Hmong solve their problems and live in a positive way. The Hmong themselves also will

benefit by becoming aware of what kind of problems they face, what they can do to solve the problems, and how to adjust successfully. The purpose of this study is to help teachers, social workers, and all other related professionals teach, motivate, serve and work with Hmong students in the most effective way. This study focuses on the students who recently immigrated to the U.S. and their personal adjustment in the U.S. educational setting.

According to Shaw & Ort (1953, p.73):

"Personal adjustment is the process of gaining, keeping, or regaining a sense of well-being. When an adjustment technique preserves one's sense of well being and at the same time fosters effective maintenance in the environment, it is adaptive. A series or sequence of adaptive adjustment techniques constitutes the adaptive process of interactive integration. While all adjustment processes are directed toward the preservation of a sense of well-being, adaptive techniques may preserve the sense of well-being but jeopardize effective maintenance in the environment. Such a technique is nonadaptive. A series of such nonadaptive adjustive techniques constitute the process of interactive conflict, which renders the continued preservation of well-being combined with effective maintenance in the environment more and more difficult. The necessity of using adjustive techniques arises because of the existence of demands that the environment makes upon the individual, demands that he makes upon himself, and demands that he makes upon the environment."

Shaw & Ort (1953, p.73) also states that "Adjustment is strongly influenced by past experience and anxiety, and the exercise of curiosity is one of its most significant manifestations. A person's ways of thinking and acting will be strongly influenced by and

will at the same time influence the ways of thinking and acting that prevail in the society in which he lives and in his relationships with others."

### Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to investigate Hmong junior and senior high school students' personal adjustment in an educational setting. Eight students were involved in this study (4 males and 4 females), aged fourteen to eighteen years. The study provides information on these Hmong students' cultural adjustment in American schools, which should help educators in schools. The data was collected by interviewing eight Hmong students individually at their homes in Hmong or English. The interviews were recorded in writing.

### Research Questions

This descriptive study supplies information on Hmong culture and the process of transition. Specifically, the investigation focuses on answers to the following questions:

- (1) Does the students' English proficiency influence their adjustment?
- (2) Do the educators' teaching techniques, attitudes and knowledge of the student foster student adjustment?
- (3) Does the students' self-esteem affect their adjustment?
- (4) Does social support help precipitate newcomers' school transition?
- (5) Does students' sociality foster their adjustment?
- (6) Does students' age at time of arrival in the U.S. affect their adjustment?
- (7) Does students' length of residency in the U.S. affect their adjustment?

## Definition of Terms

The following terms were defined as follows for use in the study:

**Hmong:** a nationality of Laos. They lived in the mountains of Northern Laos. During the years of U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War, thousands of Hmong men and boys were recruited by the CIA to fight the North Vietnamese Communists in the secret war in Laos. After the U.S. withdrawal in 1973 and the subsequent fall of the area to communism, many Hmong fled to refugee camps in Thailand. From there they were resettled to other countries including the U.S.

**Thailand:** the Southeast Asian country, which is close to Laos.

**Laos:** the Southeast Asian country, which Hmong originally comes from.

**Refugee camp:** after the Vietnam War, the Hmong in Laos fled to Thailand and stayed in the refugee camps for years. Many are still there.

**Culture:** A person's values, language, food, customs and beliefs.

**Adjustment:** adaptation in culture and educational setting.

**Junior and senior high school Hmong students:** Students in grades 7-12 who immigrated to the U.S. in recent years.

**Hmong interpreting lecture:** a mainstreaming class with a Hmong language interpreter.

**Special class:** a class designed for the junior and senior high school students with limited English proficiency.

## CHAPTER TWO

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter includes an examination of information in the following areas relevant to the nature of this study: (1) overview of personal adjustment in a new culture; (2) review of the relationship between culture and behavior; (3) review of Asian immigrant youth identity and adjustment; (4) review of strategies needed for adjustment; (5) American schools and Asian young immigrants; and (6) a summary of findings through literature searches.

#### Overview of Personal Adjustment in a New Culture

Personal adjustment in a new culture is an individual process that immigrants face. When immigrants arrive in the United States, they often encounter culture shock caused by different language, food, social values, life styles and communication styles. Generally, culture shock has four stages: exciting stage—being exposed to a new culture, everything is fresh and interesting; depressing stage—experiencing confusion, conflict and discomfort; adjustment stage—figuring out some differences between home culture and host culture and willingness to learn the host culture; and, recovery stage—beginning to feel comfortable about the new culture and trying to fit in. Even though people with different cultural backgrounds and different personal histories have different experiences with the adjustment process, they are more or less expected to experience the stages of culture shock. The duration of the stages usually lasts about one year (Zapf, 1993; Winkelman, 1994).

"Language differences, cultural knowledge, learning or behavioral disorders, and physical health problems" may be the problems that new immigrants will face when entering a new culture (Huang, 1993, p.6). Immigrants' abilities to acquire new beliefs, rules of behavior, communication patterns, and ability to cope with stress and prejudice are the

important factors that determine if they can overcome the cultural conflicts and adjust themselves successfully (Trueba, Jocab & Kirton, 1990). When people enter a new culture, they have to learn new information and patterns of behavior, different ways of thinking and behaving and appropriate new social skills. They are facing new challenges from language difficulties, loss of similar friends and family. They may experience psychological stress (Huang, 1977; Cross, 1995). Entering into another culture also causes acculturative stress that results in some psychological changes and behaviors, such as cognitive fatigue, withdrawal, sleeping, eating and drinking disorders, greater acculturative stress than later generation immigrants, and depression and anxiety, feeling of marginality and alienation, heightened psychosomatic symptoms, and identity confusion. First generation immigrants experience individuals who are aged 12 years and above generally experience more acculturative stress than those younger than age 12 (Hovey & King, 1996; Winkelman, 1994).

There are many factors that influence immigrants' transition to the U.S.: (1) Native language. Language is a part of culture. Immigrants' native languages play an important role in their adjustment in a new culture. Some languages are closer or similar to English in grammar and pronunciation. It is easier for people who speak those languages to learn English and in turn to accept U.S. culture and be accepted by native English speaking people. Those people whose languages are totally different from English in sentence structure and sounds and those who did not have their own written language until recently, experience more handicapping in adjusting to U.S. culture; (2) English proficiency. Proficiency in English enables immigrants to participate in new lives, work and education in the U.S. Many young immigrants cannot make the transition to the mainstream and leave

school without diplomas due to their lack proficiency in English; (3) Reasons for immigrating. There are reasons that immigrants come to the U.S.; one is to seek a better life. Immigrants with this reason are attracted by the U.S. economic and educational opportunities. They are prepared in many ways for the difficulties or problems that they will face in the U.S. They can overcome the problems and adjust themselves easily to American life. Another is political or other economic reasons. Immigrants (refugees) who come to the U.S. with this reason have to leave their own countries due to some problems beyond their control. They are not prepared to leave their own countries or to come to the U.S. This group of people faces a different process of adjustment; (4) Age of arrival in the United States. Age has an impact on immigrants' adjustment. Younger ones more easily adapt to a new culture and learn a new language because they have not developed deep attachments to their own cultures yet; (5) Educational backgrounds. Parents' previous educational backgrounds and students' previous schooling influence one's adjustment in the U.S. Previous native language literacy skills and educational experience enable immigrants to make assumptions and expectations about education in the U.S. Immigrants who didn't have educational experience are less likely to be familiar with formal education in the U.S. and face a big challenge in their adjustment to the educational system (Lucas, 2001).

### The Relationship Between Culture and Behavior

"All human behavior and knowledge are cultural" (Jennings & Waller, 1995, p.1). Culture influences human behaviors because it affects the norms and rules by which individuals behave in their respective cultures. Individuals follow their cultural values guidelines through the socialization process and produce their own behavioral guidelines for behavior across situations. Individuals learn different patterns of interaction through

socializing with other people based on their cultural rules, values and standards of behavior (Gudykunst, Matsumoto, Ting-Toomey, Nishida, Kim & Hyman, 1996). Culture shapes and forms individuals' values, beliefs, self-view and worldview. It directs individuals' behaviors, organizes experience and provides meaning and coherence to peoples' lives. Particular cultural environments lead to certain cognitive, emotional, and behavioral consequences (Cross, 1995).

Behavioral patterns are also guided by cultures. Cultures can be mainly divided into two groups. They are individualistic and collectivistic. Individualism-collectivism has an impact on individuals' communication styles because it influences rules and norms that guide behaviors in certain cultures (Gudykunst, et al., 1976). Communication styles are part of behavioral patterns. According to Hall (1977), there are two different communication styles: low context communication and high context communication. Low-context communication style requires clear and direct messages; high context communication style, on the other hand, uses implicit and indirect messages.

People from individualistic cultures tend to use low context communication styles and people from collectivistic cultures tend to use high context communication styles (Gudykunst, et al., 1976). Asian cultures are more highly contextual. They favor body language, which is non-verbal language or verbal hesitancy. "They are more concerned with avoiding hurting others and imposing on others" (Gudykunst, et al., 1996, p.517). American mainstream culture is more low-contextual. They pay attention to verbal expression. They are more affect oriented and more inclined to talk (Huang, 1993; Gudykunst, 1996). Cultural conflict between low context and high context is a big challenge for Asian immigrants in terms of communication styles.



### Strategies Needed for Adjustment

Adjustment requires the awareness of changes and difficulties of being in a new culture. The use of skills for resolving crises and acceptance that some personal changes and behavioral adjustment is fundamental to adaptation. In order to adjust successfully in a new culture, one also must acculturate and become more tolerant of the local culture while continuing to value and appreciate one's own culture heritage. One must learn skills and cultural knowledge that reduce misunderstandings and increase the knowledge base for appropriate behavior. A positive attitude about the new culture and willingness to change are very important for adjustment. This means that instead of making comparisons with life back home and complaining, immigrants should try to enjoy the host culture and the learning experience. Since cultures are ethnocentric, members from each culture view their own cultural ways better than others. It is important to be prepared to experience the feeling of an outsider and be ready to deal with personal rejection, prejudice, and discrimination from the host culture when encountered.

Entering a new culture, one must deal with stress. Management of stress is important to cultural adjustment. A balance of maintenance and reparative behaviors is necessary for stress management and for maintaining one's personal well being in conditions of cultural immersion. Maintenance behaviors help individuals maintain their own cultural sense of identity and sense of well being, such as speaking one's own language and eating the foods of one's own culture. Reparative behaviors enable individuals to reestablish those vital aspects of one's self that are being lost in the cultural setting, such as dreaming and fantasizing and focusing on activities that reinforce one's sense of self. These are important ways to maintain or to reestablish a sense of stability and well being.

Personal and social relations are other factors that help individuals adjust to a new culture. Individuals should maintain primary relations--family or friends-- to provide positive interpersonal relations for self-esteem and for meeting personal and emotional needs. In the meantime, establishing good relationships and friendships with people in the host countries offers newcomers opportunities to learn more about the culture, gain practical information, develop social skills, and feel acceptance and self-worth.

It is universally believed that language is the most important factor in being able to understand the host culture. It is also essential to learn social interaction rules such as behavioral communication, emotional communication, interpersonal behavior patterns and rules (Winkelman, 1994; Cross, 1995).

Above all, to make the challenge easier, immigrants need to learn about others, their experiences and their perspectives, their blind spots and their prejudices. They also need to learn about themselves, understanding and appreciating their own multiple cultures (Beckham, 1997).

### Asian Immigrant Youth Identity and Adjustment

Like adult refugees, young refugees face adjustment in the U.S. culture as well. They even have multiple challenges: relocation pressure, new environment, new school, new culture, peer pressures and new identity. They have to operate out of four identities, Southeast Asian, American, refugee and adolescent, which at times overlap and often create conflict. "Adolescents who migrated after the age of 11 years have suffered particular stress. This is because they simultaneously had to pass through the developmental crisis of 'identity formation' characteristic of adolescence, and the historical crisis of becoming a refugee" (Ascher, 1989, p.1). On one hand, they take on the outward cultural traits of their American

peers such as adopting their peers' clothing, hairstyles and manners, while on the other hand, their ethnic identity of Asian youth remains strong and specific: they see themselves as Hmong, Vietnamese and so forth. Because of this, they hardly make friends with American students and have few cross-ethnic friendships with other Southeast Asians. At school, they have to hide their own cultural heritage to take on the outward cultural traits of those around them to alleviate peer pressure. At home, they have to behave according to their own traditional behavior standards to satisfy their parents (Goldstein, 1985; Ascher, 1989).

Three tasks must be mastered by the new young immigrants in order to overcome the stress and to succeed in school. First, they need to establish a place for themselves in their new circle of peers. Second, they need to gain the acceptance of new teachers. Third, they need to adapt to a new set of school rules and academic standards (Reyes, Gillock & Kobus, 1994). Mcinnis-Dittrich (1991) stated that new Hmong immigrants respect their teachers, and are well-behaved in American schools. For example, they are quiet and obey their teachers, but their language barrier keeps them from knowing that they are expected to participate in class activities, too. When other students who fully participate in the activities receive more teachers' attention, they are confused why "not being quiet" can please the teacher and is accepted in the class.

Relocation has an impact on children. Children experience moving as loss of their friends and habitat. Immigrant children who are from another culture and country are more than the new students at school, they feel they are in an unpredictable environment which they are not able to handle (Gabarino, 1987; Jalongo, 1994). "Relocation can influence children's self-confidence, behavior and physical health, as well as their response to

neighborhoods and peers, teachers and schools. Experts estimate that a child needs at least a year to make an overall adjustment to relocation" (Jalongo, 1994, p.2).

Adler (1975) and Walling (1990) stated children's adjustment goes through five stages: (1) excited about exploring the new setting; (2) depressed and isolated due to the difference between the old and new environment; (3) dislike and rejection of the new environment, and feeling anxious and angry; (4) gaining confidence and feeling less like an outsider; (5) and accepting and appreciating the differences between the environments.

Asian students' "cognitive and cultural referents"(Timm, 1997, p.42) have an impact on students' learning processes and behavior due to the formal instruction and passive learning style in Asian culture. Asian cultures tend to use one way of teaching in the class. This means teachers are expected to teach and to give information. Students are expected to listen and memorize the information. Asking questions and being singled out to speak in class are considered showing off and being disrespectful. Therefore, students may have difficulty openly expressing themselves in front of the whole class. Also, educators are highly respected and attitudes of respect for authority may also inhibit students from expressing themselves (Bempechat & Omori, 1990). The modern teaching methods in America, such as cooperative learning groups, confuse them. Besides the cultural and linguistic differences, Asian students also experience academic and social segregation no matter whether they are placed in a limited English proficiency program or in regular classes. They encounter ignorance and misunderstanding about who they are and why they are in America.

Gender role is one of the cultural issues that is in conflict with the American culture that Hmong youth experience in American schools. The Hmong culture has clear role

expectations for males and females. Females are expected to stay home being housewives (marrying and bearing children early), and not to go to school. They are given more household responsibilities but less personal freedom. Males are valued more than females because they carry the family's name (Liu & Li, 2001; Timm, 1997).

The high contextual communication style that uses lots of nonverbal language in Asian culture affects the way students interact with teachers and the way teachers perceive the nature of the communication (Huang, 2001). In addition, traditional customs and sex-role behaviors make a big difference in learning styles, listening behaviors and response patterns (Harris, 1988 & 1993). " 'Hidden' factors such as illegal immigrant status, limited knowledge about accessing social and health care services, neglect of basic health needs, and physical and psychological problems caused by the political environment in the native country may also impede educational progress" (Harris, 1993, p.1).

#### American Schools and Young Asian Immigrants

Immigrant students in American schools face a multitude of barriers in their attempts to both succeed academically and to adapt to American society, because many of them received little or no formal education. Some of the newly arrived immigrant students are illiterate in their native language and have received an age-inappropriate education in their own countries, and many of them do not understand the grading system or social customs. There are also some other factors that cause emotional and psychological difficulties for young immigrants at school. For example, the cultural difference, the conflict between their identities at school and their traditional role at home, the language barrier that socially isolates young immigrants from making friends, and the process of assimilation. All these factors affect their adjustment. School professionals' awareness and consciousness of all

these factors will assist immigrant students' adjustment at school. These young immigrants need help and assistance to be able to function successfully in school and to graduate from high school (Friedlander, 1991). In order to understand Hmong adjustment, one must try to understand the value differences between Hmong traditional culture and mainstream values of American culture. In order to be fully effective with Hmong students, teachers should be aware of two things. "First, they need to be aware of the intercultural dimensions of teaching and learning, especially the potential effects of the gap between Hmong traditions and mainstream cultural values. Second, educators need to be aware of the institutional and community factors that affect the education of the Hmong in the particular location in which they work"(Podeschi & Xiong, 1997, p.6).

Teachers and other school professionals should understand that young Hmong immigrants' transition from one culture to another creates many adjustment problems, such as a language barrier, relocation pressure, cognitive, emotional and health problems, which in turn, influences their school achievement. It is helpful to focus instruction on assisting Hmong students to learn American culture and also value and appreciate Hmong culture as well. Teachers can help Hmong students reduce or overcome the problems by supporting linguistic instruction. For example, they can incorporate hands-on instruction or ESL teaching methods which use objects, images and pictures to make connections between Hmong students' prior knowledge in their native language and academic content in English. Teachers can work with Hmong students on a one-on-one basis and put them into cooperative learning groups with their buddies who are from both the American and Hmong cultures. Teachers can also invite Hmong speakers to their class to share Hmong culture and traditions.

When working with students, teachers need to speak slowly, use simple English words, and avoid using words that may be confusing to Hmong students due to both Hmong student limited English proficiency and the big difference between the Hmong and English languages, such as synonyms, slang and colloquial expressions. Instructions, directions, class assignment, group projects and homework should be explained and given clearly to Hmong students. Teachers should encourage Hmong students to ask questions and check their understanding by asking them to paraphrase what has been taught in their own words. Teachers also need to be sensitive to Hmong students' gender issues and avoid assigning Hmong students with opposite genders in the same group because it may be considered inappropriate for potential marriage partners to work in such close association (Timm, 1997).

In order to communicate effectively with Hmong students, and to accurately determine the students' communicative styles, school professionals need to understand students' home culture, and the similarities and differences between Asian and American schools (Cheng, 1998).

### A Summary of the Literature

Everyone who enters a new culture more or less encounters culture shock caused by different foods, social values, language and behavior standards. Culture shock has four stages: exciting stage; depressing stage; adjustment stage; and recovery stage. The whole process usually takes one year. Being in a new culture also causes acculturative stress that brings some psychological changes. The psychological changes may result in physical disorders. People who are prepared for the new culture, such as international students, have fewer problems. Immigrants, especially refugees who settled in a new culture and to a new

country due to political reason or other reasons beyond their control, usually face a big challenge of adjustment because they are not prepared for the problems.

There are many factors that influence immigrants' transition into a new culture. These factors mainly involve native language; English proficiency; reasons for immigrating; age of arrival in the new country; and educational background. In order to successfully adjust to a new culture, immigrants need to be aware of the changes and difficulties of being in a new culture, acculturate and become more tolerate of the local culture while valuing and appreciating one's own culture. It is necessary to learn skills and the knowledge base for appropriate behavior and cultural knowledge that reduces misunderstandings. Immigrants also need to have a positive attitude about the new culture and willingness to change, to maintain their own cultural sense of identity and sense of well being, and to establish personal and social relationships with the local people.

Asian immigrant youth, who come with their parents or relatives, can sometimes face more changes than adults do in the U.S. They have to deal with the stress that resulted from relocation pressure, the language barrier, a new school, new teachers and peers, and the conflict between their new identity at school and their traditional identity at home. They need to establish a place for themselves in their new circle of peers, to gain the acceptance of new teachers, and to adapt to a new set of school rules and academic standards, to overcome problems and be successful in school. Due to the difference between Asian culture and American mainstream culture, Asian students' learning styles, listening behaviors and response patterns are different from their mainstream peers. This affects the way they interact with teachers and the way teachers perceive the nature of the communication.



School professionals' knowledge about immigrants' culture and teaching methods can make a big difference in immigrant students' lives. Teachers can help students adjust to American school and reduce the stress of being in a new school and new culture. Teachers can support the linguistic instruction by using hands-on instruction or ESL teaching methods.

### Research Questions

The following research questions were addressed:

- (1) Does the students' English proficiency influence their adjustment?
- (2) Do the educators' teaching techniques, attitudes and knowledge of the student foster student adjustment?
- (3) Does the students' self-esteem affect their adjustment?
- (4) Does social support foster the students' school transition?
- (5) Does students' sociality foster their adjustment?
- (6) Does the students' age at time of arrival in the U.S. affect their adjustment?
- (7) Does the students' length of residency in the U.S. affect their adjustment?

### Hypotheses

The following research hypotheses were advanced:

Hypothesis 1 was that the students' English proficiency would influence adjustment.

Hypothesis 2 was that the educators' teaching techniques and attitudes would foster students' adjustment.

Hypothesis 3 was that there would be a positive relationship between the students' self-esteem and their adjustment.

Hypothesis 4 was that there would be a positive relationship between social support and students' adjustment.

Hypothesis 5 was that there would be a positive relationship between students' sociality and adjustment.

Hypothesis 6 was that there would be a relationship between the students' age and their adjustment.

Hypothesis 7 was that there would be a positive relationship between students' length of residency in the U.S. and adjustment.

No specific hypothesis was advanced regarding gender differences. However, the relationship between gender and reported academic performance was explored.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, the method of the study is presented. A description of participants, a description of the stimulus materials, a review of the research design, the data collection procedure and data analysis are included.

#### Participants

The interviews were individually conducted with eight Hmong students at their homes with or without their parent (sponsor) present in Minnesota by this researcher with the assistance of a Hmong interpreter. The selected area is the area in the U.S. that has the largest Hmong population after the state of California. The selected area also had more recent Hmong immigrants than any other area. All eight students responded to the interview questions completely. Therefore, eight interviews were valid and used in the study. These students' length of residency in the U.S. ranged from six months to two years. All subjects were from a Thailand refugee camp. They were sponsored by their Hmong relatives who came to the U.S. at an earlier time.

Among these eight students, there were four males and four females. The age of the subjects ranged from fourteen to eighteen years old. Two of them were married. All subjects were first generation and immigrated after the age of twelve years old.

#### Instrument

The interview was a 25-item questionnaire developed for the purpose of collecting information on Hmong students' adjustment in the American schools for this study by the author of this paper. The questionnaire was valid because it was based on the review of

previous studies. The questionnaire included items concerning the subjects' personal adjustment in the U.S. mainstream culture; the relationship between the students' culture and behavior; the students identity and adjustment at a U.S. school; and the strategies used for their adjustment. The questionnaire (see Appendix A) was developed to address the research questions of this study.

### Procedure

A student in the Ed.S in the Counseling and Psychological Services Program at the University of Wisconsin-Stout, assisted the author of this paper in contacting parents and interpreting the interview responses because he spoke both Hmong and English. Following the Hmong interpreter's phone call explaining the purpose of the study and the receipt of written parental consent, an interview was conducted with each subject individually at their home with or without the parent (sponsor) present. Each interview required approximately two hours to complete. The interviews were conducted during a two-day time period: March 30, 1997 and April 1, 1997.

In consideration of the participants' limited English proficiency, the interview was designed to elicit yes/no/ don't know answers and also included open-ended questions with examples. The participants had the option of responding in English or Hmong. Due to some parents' concerns about tape recording the interviews, the interviews were recorded in writing by the author of this paper for the purpose of accurate records. English interpretation of Hmong was given at times when it was necessary, by an interpreter, who was present throughout the interviews. Confidentiality was maintained throughout the research procedure.

## Data Analysis

Responses to the individual items were organized into clusters corresponding with each research question, and percentages were calculated.

Question items 2, 4, 5, 6, and 8 addressed the relationship between English proficiency and students' adjustment.

Question items 9, 10, 11, and 12 addressed the relationship between teaching techniques and students' adjustment.

Question items 13, 14, 15, and 16 addressed the relationship between the students' self-esteem adjustment.

Question items 17, 18, 19, and 20 addressed the relationship between social support and students' adjustment.

Question items 21, 22, and 23 addressed the relationship between sociality and students' adjustment.

Question items 8 and 25 addressed the relationship between sociality and students' adjustment.

## CHAPTER FOUR

## RESULTS

In this chapter, the findings of the study in response to the following seven research questions, as stated in Chapters One and Two, are presented:

- (1) Does the students' English proficiency influence their adjustment?
- (2) Do educators' teaching techniques, attitudes and knowledge of the students' culture foster student adjustment?
- (3) Does the students' self-esteem affect their adjustment?
- (4) Does social support foster the students' school transition?
- (5) Does the students' sociality foster their adjustment?
- (6) Does the students' age at time of arrival in the U.S. affect their adjustment?
- (7) Does the students' length of residency in the U.S. affect their adjustment?

#### Hypothesis 1

The hypothesis that the students' English would influence adjustment was supported. Among the eight students who were interviewed, 4 (50%) did not speak or spoke only a little English, and 4 (50%) could speak simple English. The data showed that English proficiency depended on the length of the students' residency in the U.S. and their age of arrival. The longer the students were in the U.S. and the younger the students were at arrival time, the better their English. Two (50%) of the students who spoke English actively asked questions and 3 (75%) of the students who spoke English performed well academically compared to other students in the class. None of those who did not speak English asked questions in English during class. Only 1 (25%) of the participants who did not speak English performed

well academically. Unexpectedly, all 8 (100%) of the students responded that they participated in class activities, if teachers asked them to do so (see Table 1).

(Place Table 1 about here.)

### Hypothesis 2

The hypothesis that the educators' teaching techniques and attitudes would foster students' adjustment was supported. All students responded that teaching techniques and teachers' attitudes, such as assigning buddies to help them study, having an interpreter in the class, being nice to them and knowing something about their culture, helped them to adjust to school. Five (62%) of the students stated that cooperative learning groups improved their learning, and 3 (38%) responded "No". Half of the students were performing well academically and half were performing "fair" in English. Teachers' patience, teaching techniques and a good relationship with newcomers were identified as the most helpful factors by all of the students when asked to give examples (see Table 2).

(Place Table 2 about here.)

### Hypothesis 3

The hypothesis that there would be a positive relationship between the students' self-esteem and their adjustment was also supported. Among eight students, 7 (87%) of the students responded "I can make great achievement if I try." Among the students who spoke English and performed well at school, 4 (50%) had some goals for the future. Only 2 (25%) of the students who did not speak English and did fair at school had goals for the future. All of the students who spoke English and performed well academically at school had confidence about being able to speak good English in the future. Six (75%) of the students who did not

speak English and performed fair academically responded "Don't know" for being able to speak good English in the future (see Table 3).

(Place Table 3 about here.)

#### Hypothesis 4

The hypothesis that there would be a positive relationship between social support and students' adjustment was also supported. Almost all of the participants reported that having social support, including support from family members, relatives, teachers and peers, helped them adjust to school. Four (25%) of the participants did not know if communities supported them (see Table 4).

(Place Table 4 about here.)

#### Hypothesis 5

The hypothesis that there would be a positive relationship between students' sociability and adjustment was also supported. All eight students had a tendency to make friends, but 37% did not have opportunities to make friends with mainstream peers because they were placed in the special English as a Second Language (ESL) class with no mainstream students. All of the participants made friends. Six (75%) had only Hmong friends. Half of the students who spoke English (2) had friends both from Hmong and English cultures. Every participant had friends at least within their own culture (see Table 5).

(Place Table 5 about here.)

#### Hypothesis 6

The hypothesis that there would be a relationship between the students' age at time of arrival in the U.S. and their adjustment was supported. The eight students came to the U.S. at different ages, ranging from 14 to 18 years old. Those who arrived in the U.S. at ages 14 to



16 years old performed well academically at school, which were 4 (50%) of the participating students. Another 4 (50%) of the students, aged 17 and 18 years old at time of arrival, rated themselves "Fair" for school performance (see Table 6).

(Place Table 6 about here.)

### Hypothesis 7

The hypothesis that there would be a positive relationship between students' length of residency in the U.S. and their reported academic performance was not supported. The length of residency for the eight participating students ranged from six months to one year and three months. Of the four (50%) students who had been in the U.S. for one year or longer, two (50%) responded that they academically performed well and the other two (50%) responded that they performed fairly, when asked by the interviewer. Similar results were found for those who had been in the U.S. for less than one year (see Table 7).

(Place Table 7 about here.)

### Gender Comparison

No gender difference in reported academic performance was found. Half of each gender reported performing well, and half of each gender reported performing fair academically.

### Summary

Seven research hypotheses concerning students' adjustment were tested in this study, and six were supported. There was a relationship between students' English proficiency and adjustment. Three fourths of the students who spoke English were performing well academically at school. Similar relationships were found for self-esteem and adjustment, sociability and adjustment, social support and adjustment, teaching techniques and adjustment, and age and adjustment. There was no relationship between length of residency

in the U.S. and reported academic performance. An exploratory analysis of gender also showed no relationship with reported academic performance. A larger sample size is needed to better examine these issues.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSION

After American withdrawal from the Vietnam War, Hmong suffered the consequence of standing on the American side during the war. They had to leave their homeland to avoid the punishment of the communists. They settled in many countries including the U.S. The first Hmong group arrived in the U.S. in 1975. The second and third Hmong groups came afterwards. Some of those who still remained in the Thailand refugee camps also have arrived in the U.S. recently through their relatives' sponsorship.

The Hmong youth who came with their parents faced school transition and adjustment. Educators also faced the challenge of how to teach and help the Hmong youth make a successful transition to mainstream classes. The purpose of this study was to investigate Hmong junior and senior high school students' personal adjustment in an educational setting. Eight students were involved in this study (four males and four females), aged fourteen to eighteen years. The study provides information on these Hmong students' cultural adjustment in American schools, which could help educators in schools.

#### Conclusions

Based on the results of this study, the following conclusions seem appropriate:

- There appears to be a relationship between Hmong students' English proficiency and their adjustment at school. English proficiency affects Hmong youth's communication with others, affects their understanding class lectures, and interaction with mainstream peers and teachers. Even though the finding of this study showed that Hmong English proficiency did not affect their participation in the class activities, this may be related to Hmong culture behavioral standard--obey teachers and authorities. These factors, in turn,

affect students' adjustment. The study by Lucas (2001) (see Review of Literature) also agreed with the finding of this study that English proficiency enabled immigrants to participate in new lives, work and education in the U.S.

- There appears to be a relationship between educators' teaching techniques and positive attitudes and Hmong students' school adjustment. Teachers' knowledge of Hmong culture, positive attitudes about Hmong students and good teaching techniques for Hmong newcomers affect youth Hmong school adjustment. According to the literature, Hmong young immigrants' transition from one culture to another creates many adjustment problems, such as a language barrier, relocation pressure, cognitive, emotional and health problems, which in turn, influences their school achievement and adjustment. Educator's teaching techniques and positive attitudes about Hmong students assist the students to function successfully in school and help the students overcome the adjustment problems easily.
- Results suggest a relationship between Hmong students' self-esteem and their adjustment at school. Those who have high self-esteem have better adjustment at school. High self-esteem enables the students to have positive attitudes about themselves and their new lives in the U.S. The study from the literature review showed that when immigrants have positive attitudes, they become tolerant of the local culture while continuing to value and appreciate their own culture heritage. This helps them adjust to American school successfully.
- There seems to be a relationship between social support and Hmong students' adjustment. Hmong students who get support from communities, families, peers and educators adjust

to American school better. Social support provides the students with the means to deal with difficulties they may encounter in American schools and in new lives.

- The research suggests a relationship between Hmong students' sociability and their school adjustment. Making friends both within their culture and with people from mainstream culture helps Hmong students adjust to the U.S school. This is probably so because establishing good relationships and friendships with people in the host countries offers newcomers opportunities to learn more about the culture, gain practical information, develop social skills and feel acceptance and self-worth.
- There seems to be a relationship between participating students' age and their school adjustment. Hmong students who came to the U.S. at a younger age appear to adjust to the mainstream culture faster than students who came to the U.S. at older age. Age has an impact on immigrants' adjustment. Younger ones more easily adapt to a new culture and learn a new language because they have not developed deep attachments to their own cultures yet.
- The relationship between Hmong students' length of residency in the U.S. and adjustment was not clear. Length of residency may or may not influence students' adjustment. The effects of length of residency in the U.S. on the school adjustment of Hmong require further investigation.
- Further research with a larger sample size is recommended.

#### Limitations of the Study

Since there were only eight students from one school district participating in this study, they may not reflect the overall personal adjustment of the Hmong newcomers in the Minnesota or American schools. Also, the validity of the data is dependent upon the

honesty of the participants when responding in front of their parent or sponsor, the interviewer and the interpreter.

## References

Adler, P. (1975). Transitional experience: an alternative view of culture shock. Journal of Humanistic Psychology, 15, 13-23.

Ascher, C. (1989). Southeast Asian adolescents: Identity and adjustment. ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education. Available on line: <http://eric-web.tc.columbia.edu/digsts/dig51.html>.

Beckham, E. F. (1997). Diversity opens doors to all. Adapted from an Education Life "Endpapers" that appeared in The New York Times on January 5, 1997. Available on line: [www.fordfound.org/publications/ff\\_report/view\\_ff\\_report\\_detail.cfm?report\\_index=112](http://www.fordfound.org/publications/ff_report/view_ff_report_detail.cfm?report_index=112).

Bempechat, J & Omori, M. C. (1990). Meeting the educational needs of Southeast Asian children. New York: Eric Clearinghouse on Urban Education.

Cheng, L. L. (July, 1998). Enhancing the communication skills of newly-arrived Asian American Students. Digest, 136, 1-5.

Cross S. E. (November 1995). Self-construal, coping, and stress in cross cultural adaptation. Journal of Cross-cultural Psychology, 26, 673-697.

Feiedlander, M. (Fall, 1991). The newcomer program: Helping immigrant students succeed in U.S. Schools. NCBE Program Information Guide Series, 8, 1-22.

Hall, E. T. (1977). Beyond culture. Garden City, NY: Anchor Press.

Harris, C.R. (1993) Identifying and serving recent immigrant children who are gifted. ERIC Digest #E520 1-5. Available on line: <http://ericae.net/ED358676.htm>.

Hein, J. (1994). From migrant to minority: Hmong refugees and the social construction of identity in the United States. Sociological Inquiry, 64, 281-306.

Hovey, J. D. & King, C.A. (September 1996). Acculturative stress, depression, and suicidal ideation among Immigrant and second-generation Latino adolescents. Journal of American Academic of Child Adolescent Psychiatry, 35, 9.

Huang, G. (1993). Beyond culture: communicating with Asian American children and Families. New York: ERIC Clearing houses on Urban Education.

Gabarino, J. (1987). The human ecology of early risk. In S. Meisels & J. Shonkoff (Eds.), Handbook of early intervention. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Goldstein, B. L. (1985). Schooling for cultural transitions: Hmong girls and boys in American high schools. Doctoral dissertation, University of Wisconsin, Madison, WI.

Gudykunst, W., Matsumoto, Y., Ting-Toomy, S., Nishida, T., Kim, K. & Heyman, S. (1996). The influence of cultural individualism-collectivism, self construals, and individual values on communication styles across cultures. Human Communication Research, 22, 510-543.

Jalongo, M. R. (Winter, 1994). Helping children to cope with relocation. Childhood Education, 71, 80.

Jennings, A. & Waller, W. (June, 1995). Culture: core concept reaffirmed. Journal of Economic Issues, 29, 407.

Lee, G. Y. (1994-1995). The religious presentation of social relationships: Hmong world view and social structure. Lao Studies Review, 2, 44-60.

Liang B., & Bogat, G., (February 1994). Culture, control, and coping: new perspectives on social support. American Journal of Community Psychology, 22, 123.



Liu, T. C. & Li, C. Psychoeducational interventions with Southeast Asian students: an ecological approach. ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education. Located at: [Http://eric-web.tc.columbia.edu](http://eric-web.tc.columbia.edu) on March 25, 2001

Lucas, T. Influences on the educational experiences of immigration students in U.S. schools. Located at <http://eric-web.tc.columbia.edu/ncbe/immigration/influences.htm> on March 12, 2001.

Hamilton-Merritt, J. (1993). Tragic Mountains. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

McInnis-Dittrich, K. (August, 1991). Bicultural adjustment of Hmong children: challenges to the educational and social service system. Bringing Together Two Worlds: UW-Green Bay Conference, Green Bay, Wisconsin.

Podeschi R.& Xiong V. (1992). The Hmong and American Education: The 1990s. Milwaukee: University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee.

Reyes, O., Gillock, K.& Kobus, K. (1994). A longitudinal study of school adjustment in urban, minority adolescents: effects of a high school transition program. American Journal of Community Psychology, 22, 341.

Shaw, F. J. & Ort, R.T. (1953). Personal adjustment in the American culture. New York: Harper.

Symonds, P. (1984). Educational achievement St. Paul Hmong. Located at <http://www.cyfc.umn.edu/Documents/1/f/1F1008.html-55k> on March 12, 2001.

Timm, J. T. (Spring,1992). Hmong values and Ameican education. Wisconsin Journal for Supervison and Curriculum Development, 16(2),1-11.

Timm, J. T. (September, 1994). Hmong values and American education. Equity & Excellence in Education, 27, 36.

Trueba, H., Jacobs, L. & Kirton, E. (1990). Cultural conflict and adaptation: The case of Hmong children in American Society. New York: The Falmer Press.

Walling, D. R. (1990). Meeting the needs of transient students. Bloomington, IN: Phi Delta Kappa.

Winkelman, M. (November/December, 1994). Cultural shock and adaptation. Journal of Counseling & Development, 73, 121-125.

Zapf, M. K. (November, 1993). Remote practice and culture shock: social workers moving to isolated northern regions. Social Work, 38, 694.

## Appendix:

## Interview Questions

Interview questions:

1. Where were you from? How long have you been in the U.S.
2. Do you speak English now? ( before you came here ?)
3. What is the difference between American school and Thailand school?
4. Do you actively ask your teachers questions in English during class (eg. when you don't understand, when you need help, when you have problems).
5. Do you participate in all class activities?
6. Have you ever have any misunderstanding due to your language barrier? Explain.
7. Compare to what you were when you first came and what you are now, did you make any changes?
8. Do you get good grades? Give me examples of your grades since you came to the U.S. (Your performance level : very good, good, fair, poor compare to your classmates)
9. Does your teacher assign some one(s) to help you during class and after class? Does that help?
10. Do your teachers know something about your culture and be nice to you (give me examples) Do you think teacher's positive attitude affect your school performance (examples)?
11. Do you like the interpreting lecture (or having a Hmong teaching assistant) in your class, why or why not?
12. Do you know cooperative learning groups? How do you like it?
13. Do you believe you can make great achievements if you try your best, Why?
14. Have you thought about going to college and achieve some goals in the future (eg. get a degree, do business, make lots of money, be a lawyer, a doctor, a teacher, a scientist) why or why not?
15. Do you think you can speak good English in the future? Why or why not?
16. Are you happy with what you are, why or why not?
17. How is your relationship with your family members and relatives?
18. Does your relationship with your family members and relatives affect your school study? How?
19. Do you get help from your teachers and peers whenever you need? If yes, give me examples. How does this affect your school performance?
20. Do you know that communities, organizations etc. help you and your family? Is it helpful (give me examples)
21. Have you ever tried to make friends at school? (within Hmong culture or with classmates from mainstream culture). Do you pattern your social life according to Hmong culture?
22. How many friends do you have, are they Hmong, other nationalities or both?
23. Do you think your friendship help you at school? How?
24. Do you have problems or difficulties at school? How do you solve them?
25. Compare to what you were the first year you came to the U.S. school and what you are now at school, what changes did you make? Did you purposely make these changes?

Table 1

English Proficiency and School Adjustment

Interview Questions	Student 1	Student 2	Student 3	Student 4	Student 5	Student 6	Student 7	Student 8
Speak English	yes	yes	yes (some)	no	yes (some)	no	no	no
Use English to ask questions during class	yes	yes	no	no	no	no	no	no
Participate in class activities	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Performance compared to other students in the class	good	good	good	good	fair	fair	fair	fair

Table 2

Educators' Teaching Techniques and Attitudes and Students' Adjustment

Interview Questions	Student 1	Student 2	Student 3	Student 4	Student 5	Student 6	Student 7	Student 8
Assigning buddies helps me	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Teachers' attitude affects my learning (patience, being nice knowing something about my culture etc.)	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
interpreter lecture and using Hmong teaching assistant help me learn	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Cooperative learning groups improve my learning	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	no	no
Performance compared to other students in the class	good	good	good	good	fair	fair	fair	fair

Table 3

Self Esteem and Adjustment

Interview Questions	Student 1	Student 2	Student 3	Student 4	Student 5	Student 6	Student 7	Student 8
I believe I can make great achievements if I try my best	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	don't know	yes	yes
I have thought about going to college & achieve some goals in the future	no	yes	no	yes	yes	no	no	yes But if I have a child...
I am learning English and I will speak good English in the future	yes	yes	yes	don't know	yes	don't know	don't know	yes
Performance compared to other students in the class	good	good	good	good	fair	fair	fair	fair

Table 4

Social Support and Adjustment

Interview Questions	Student 1	Student 2	Student 3	Student 4	Student 5	Student 6	Student 7	Student 8
I have good relationship with my family members and relatives. We help each other	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
My teachers and classmates helped me whenever I needed	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Communities helped us (churches, Hmong organizations or social service agencies, etc.)	I don't know	I don't know	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes

Table 5

Sociality and Adjustment

Interview Questions	Student 1	Student 2	Student 3	Student 4	Student 5	Student 6	Student 7	Student 8
I try to make friends	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes but... *	yes but... *	yes but... *
I have friend(s)	yes Hm. & Am.	yes Hm. & Am.	yes Hmong	yes Hmong	yes Hmong	yes Hmong	yes Hmong	yes Hmong

\*There were some reasons that they could not make friends from the mainstream culture, such as being placed in a special class or English barrier.



Table 6

Age at Time of Arrival in U.S. and Adjustment

Interview Questions	Student 1	Student 2	Student 3	Student 4	Student 5	Student 6	Student 7	Student 8
Age (years old) at time of arrival	14	15	15	16	17	17	18	18
Performance compared to other students in the class*	good	good	good	good	fair	fair	fair	fair

\* Self-reports of performance

Table 7

Length of Residency in the U.S. and Adjustment

Interview Questions	Student 1	Student 2	Student 3	Student 4	Student 5	Student 6	Student 7	Student 8
Length of residency in the U.S.	1 & 1/2 ys	1 & 3 ys	8 ms	9 ms	1 & 1/2 ys	1 yr	10 ms	6 ms
Performance compared to other students in the class	good	good	good	good	fair	fair	fair	fair

\* Self-reports of performance