

The Hmong resettlement study Site Report Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota

Bruce T. Downing Douglas P. Olney Sarah R.
Mason Glenn Hendricks

Southeast Asian Refugee Studies Project Center for Urban and Regional Affairs University of
Minnesota Minneapolis, Minnesota: October 1984

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p.

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PREFACE

p. i

The Hmong Resettlement Study is a national project funded by the U.S. Office of Refugee
Resettlement. The study is the joint undertaking of Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory
(Portland, Oregon), the University of Minnesota and Lao Family Community (Santa Ana,
California). The major purposes of the Study are to examine closely the resettlement of Hmong
refugees in the United States, focusing on the following issues:

What has been the resettlement experience of the Hmong?

- 1 How are the Hmong faring in terms of employment, dependence, and adjustment?
- 2 Are there areas of employment in which the Hmong have been particularly successful?
- 3 What do resettlement workers and the Hmong regard as the major impediments to
effective Hmong resettlement and self-sufficiency?
- 4 What role does secondary migration play in the resettlement of the Hmong? What are the
reasons for secondary migration among this group? What are the implications for
resettlement strategies?

What resettlement efforts and economic strategies have provided effective results for the Hmong?

- 5 How are problems being handled? What kinds of solutions are being tried, by different resettlement communities and by the Hmong themselves?
- 6 How many and what kinds of entrepreneurial economic development projects involving the Hmong are currently in operation, e.g., farming projects, Pa ndau cooperatives? How were they developed and how successful are they?
- 7 What kinds of Hmong employment strategies have been particularly successful?

How might current strategies be changed to result in more effective resettlement and long-term adjustment of the Hmong?

- 8 How might resettlement be conducted differently for the Hmong? What new projects and approaches are being considered by those involved in Hmong resettlement? How would the Hmong want resettlement to be done differently?
- 9 How can the Hmong be resettled in a way that better utilizes their strengths and unique characteristics?
- 10 What do the Hmong want for themselves? What do Hmong view as essential for effective resettlement? What are their goals for the future? For the next generation of Hmong?

p. ii

Research conducted in the project included analysis of existing data about the Hmong, compilation of information gathered through numerous informal face-to-face and telephone conversations with Hmong informants across the country (in nearly every Hmong settlement which could be identified) and on-site observations, group meetings and personal interviews with Hmong Individuals and families (as well as resettlement officials, service providers and members of the host communities). On-site case studies of Hmong resettlement were conducted in seven selected cities:

- 11 Orange County, California
- 12 Fresno, California
- 13 Portland, Oregon
- 14 Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota
- 15 Dallas-Fort Worth, Texas
- 16 Fort Smith, Arkansas
- 17 Providence, Rhode Island

Staff from the participating institutions worked as a team to conduct the overall project and the seven case studies:

Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory

- 18 Stephen Reder, Project Director
- 19 Mary Cohn
- 20 John Finck (also with State of Rhode Island)

- 21 Michael Sweeney (also with Portland Public Schools)
- 22 Bruce Thowpaou Bliatout (also with City of Portland)
- 23 Karen Reed Green
- 24 William Hadley
- 25 Marshall Hurlich (also with University of Washington)
- 26 Dan X. Mua (also with Portland Public Schools)

University of Minnesota

- 1. Bruce Downing, Subproject Director
- 2. Simon Fass
- 3. Doug Olney
- 4. Sarah Mason
- 5. Glenn Hendricks

Lao Family Community

p. iii

- 27 Shur Vang Vangyi, Subproject Director
- 28 Dang Vang
- 29 Thongsay Vang

The Project Officer for the Office of Refugee Resettlement was Ms. Toyo Biddle.

The results of the project are available to the public as a series of reports published by the U.S. Government Printing Office (GPO). Copies may be ordered from:

- 30 Dr. Allan Gall
- 31 Office of Refugee Resettlement
- 32 330 C Street, S.W.
- 33 Switzer Building, Room 1229
- 34 Washington, D.C. 20201
- 35 Mr. Bud Tummy
- 36 Refugee Materials Center
- 37 U.S. Dept. of Education
- 38 324 E 11th Street, 9th floor
- 39 Kansas City, Missouri 64104

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- 42 Vol. 3: Exemplary Projects
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- 47 Orange County, California
- 48 Fresno, California
- 49 Portland, Oregon
- 50 Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota
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- 52 Fort Smith, Arkansas
- 53 Providence, Rhode Island

For further information about the Hmong Resettlement Study, contact either:

- 54 Dr. Stephen Reder
- 55 Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory
- 56 300 S.W. Sixth Avenue
- 57 Portland, Oregon 97204
- 58 (503) 248-6800
- 59 Dr. Bruce Downing
- 60 SARS
- 61 124 Klaeber Court
- 62 University of Minnesota
- 63 Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455
- 64 Ms. Toyo Biddle
- 65 Office of Refugee Resettlement
- 66 330 "C" Street, SW
- 67 Switzer Building, Room 1229
- 68 Washington, DC 20201
- 69 (202) 245-1966

p. iv

B. The Twin Cities Site Study

Field work for the Twin Cities community case study was conducted in the fall of 1982. Additional field work was conducted in June, 1983, for the current final version of this report.

This report has been compiled using information from this field work and several other types of sources.

First, we have drawn upon a number of previously published studies, reports, and articles. These sources are listed in the Bibliography. The principal source of current base-line data was the Hmong Community Survey (HCS). This was a survey of 305 Hmong households in the Twin Cities conducted in August, 1982, by Hmong students at the University of Minnesota who interviewed household heads, in Hmong, and collected information on all members of each household.

To obtain first-hand information relevant to the purposes of the study, discussions of the research issues were held with sets of individuals representing three categories of people. The

interviewers were three American members of the research team. The first set consisted of twenty-four Hmong individuals in fifteen different households, to whom we spoke through bilingual interpreters. These households were selected from among the 300 households included in the HCS three months earlier, and an attempt was made to select a representative sample. The persons we spoke to included fifteen men and nine women, representing each decade of age from 15 to 75, and including individuals who have been in the Twin Cities from less than a year up to six years. Eleven households were in St. Paul, four in Minneapolis. Ten individuals were male heads of household, three were female heads of household, and the others were women, children, and parents in households headed by others. Of these twenty-four individuals, six were students, three considered themselves retired, twelve

were unemployed and seeking work, and three were employed — two part-time and one full-time but temporary. (One member of our original sample reported that he was working 60 hours per week and was not available to meet with us.) Our discussions with these individuals centered around their personal experiences in resettlement.

p. v

The second group of informants consisted of twelve prominent local Hmong. The informants selected included officers of the principal local mutual assistance association (MAA) and of two other MAAs, employees of American voluntary agencies (volags) concerned with resettlement, employees of a government agency, an employment service, and a school district, and both male and female college students. These people were interviewed in English. They were asked to present their personal perspectives on the general research issues and in some cases to provide information about the agencies or organizations they represent.

The final group of people interviewed individually consisted of fourteen Americans representing various types of involvement with the resettlement of Hmong refugees. These included representatives of volags and an MAA, teachers, an attorney, a nurse, a policeman, a sponsor, and two church workers — a French Catholic priest and a Southern Baptist lay minister. All of these people have had extensive experience working with Hmong for the past several years. The same general questions plus specialized questions for persons in different fields guided our discussions with these individuals.

In addition to meeting with individuals from the three groups described above (a total of 42 sessions, in the individual's home or office, averaging one and a half hours in length), a series of three group meetings of household heads were organized. We first approached the leadership of the principal MAA serving the Hmong (Lao Family Community, Inc. - LFC) and obtained their cooperation in calling a meeting of the leaders of the 42 family groups into which the membership is organized. At this meeting, attended by 12 to 14 of these Group

Leaders, we explained the purposes, scope and methods of the project, and asked for assistance in organizing two or three meetings of household heads by groups. The Vice President of LFC assisted us by selecting three Group Leaders, representing three different clans, who were willing to call such meetings of the household heads in their respective groups.

p. vi

These meetings were held at the LFC headquarters in downtown St. Paul. An average of 18 household heads attended each of these meetings, for a total of 55 individuals. The meetings, which unexpectedly lasted from 3 to 4 hours, were conducted by an American researcher with a bilingual Hmong translator and included three activities. First we explained the research project, answered questions about it, and requested their participation. Second, we elicited some basic information about the participants so as to better evaluate their viewpoints and, through comparison with the larger sample of the Hmong Household Survey, to judge their representativeness. Finally, we opened the meeting up for discussion after outlining the topics about which we were interested in hearing the participants' views. The response was very good; these group meetings served particularly to encourage people to bring out problems and complaints which the persons we interviewed individually in their homes seemed reluctant to speak about. These discussions were interpreted on the spot but were also tape-recorded (except in one case where the equipment failed) and translated more thoroughly later by the same interpreter/translator.

p. vii

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report was written jointly by the four authors, but the contributions of many others made it possible.

Because of an extended illness, Dr. Glenn Hendricks was prevented from assuming the role of principal researcher and writer. As a consequence, Dr. Bruce Downing assumed general responsibility for both fieldwork and writing. Dr. Sarah Mason very generously agreed to join the staff on short notice, and Mr. Doug Olney's share of the effort was increased. The field-work was shared equally by Downing, Mason, and Olney; Hendricks wrote a substantial part of the report, as did each of the others.

Four Hmong students at the University of Minnesota played the essential role of interpreter and translator in our discussions with various members of the community; we are grateful to Messieurs Sao Yang, Pao Vang, Vang Vang, and Ms. Yua Vang for their excellent service as well as Ms. Yia Vang, a high school student, who also ably assisted as interpreter for two of those sessions.

Dr. Timothy Dunnigan has served as an unpaid consultant to this study, contributing background material and reviewing a draft of this report. We wish to express our gratitude to him and to Mr. John Finck, Dr. Marshall Hurlich, Dr. Steven Reder, and Ms. Gail Weinstein, who read and commented on the first draft, and to the government project officer, Ms. Toyo Biddle of the Office of Refugee Resettlement, who suggested a number of improvements that helped in preparing this final text. None of these persons bears any responsibility for the form our report has taken.

Our greatest debt is to all those who gave of their time to meet with us and discuss the status and the problems, and ways of solving the problems, of Hmong resettlement in the Twin Cities. Most of all we thank the Hmong families who invited us into their homes and shared personal experiences which have, we hope, helped us portray the experiences, concerns and successes

of the Hmong in the Twin Cities in a way that to some degree reveals the realities of their lives and their fears and hopes.

Bruce T. Downing, Ph.D.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

p. viii

TABLES AND FIGURES

p. x

I. GENERAL CONTEXT

p. 1

A. Setting and Climate

Minnesota is located in mid-continental northern latitudes and its climate is characterized by extremes of temperature. Minimum January temperatures average 3.2 degrees Fahrenheit while July maximum temperatures average 82.4. Mean winter snowfalls are 46.3 inches and mean annual precipitation received is 26.4 inches. Economic activities of the Twin Cities, located near the confluence of the Mississippi and Minnesota rivers in the east central region of the state, reflect its position as a major transportation and distribution center in the upper midwest.

B. General Population

The adjoining cities of Minneapolis and Saint Paul, Minnesota, are the chief cities of an urban zone of seven counties which together are commonly referred to as the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area. Minneapolis, the larger of the two, had a 1982 population of 366,500 while St. Paul had 267,290 residents. The total metropolitan area population of 2,001,700 represents approximately fifty percent of the 4,075,970 residents of the State of Minnesota.

C. Other Minority Groups

Although the residents of both Minneapolis and St. Paul are principally White, the 1980 census indicated that a growing number are members of ethnic minorities. The suburban sections of the metropolitan area have far fewer minority residents. The majority of Hmong, and Indochinese refugees in general, are concentrated in the central cities, and it is here that this study is focused. Percentages of the various minority groups in the general Twin Cities population are shown in Table I.

School enrollments of the two cities reflect the growing number of minority persons in the general population (Table II). While the total school population

p. 2

has declined during the past decade, the number of minority students has steadily risen. This shift in racial balance is in part a product of lower birthrates among Whites, the movement of many Whites to suburban areas, and, to a minor degree, the enrollment of a larger percentage of Whites in private and

p. 3 parochial schools. Certainly the introduction of large numbers of Southeast Asian refugees has also added to the increasing heterogeneity of the school population.

Indochinese refugees in Minnesota are estimated by the State's Refugee Program Office to number about 26,000. Of necessity the numbers are only approximate, but it is estimated that the present ethnic and nationality identification of this group includes 10,000 Hmong, 6,000 Vietnamese, 6,000 Cambodians, and 4,000 lowland Lao.

A study by Hendricks (1981) of the residential patterns of the refugee population in the Twin Cities indicated that while major geographical concentrations did exist, refugees are widely dispersed throughout the two cities. Using addresses of those refugees eligible for medical assistance programs, the study found that only 25 percent of the census tracts of the cities were without some refugees. More recent school census data indicate that this residential pattern continues.

D. Economic Base

Thirteen of Fortune's 500 top American companies are based in the Twin Cities. It is the headquarters of a number of international food processing companies (General Mills, Cargill, Pillsbury, and International Multi-Foods, for example) although relatively little of their present processing activity takes place within the State. In addition it is the world headquarters of a number of high technology corporations such as 3M, Control Data, and Honeywell. These firms do carry out considerable local manufacturing activities but by their nature provide limited employment opportunities for an unskilled work force.

Outside of the metropolitan area, farming constitutes the largest sector of the economy of the State of Minnesota.

E. Employment

p. 4 In the past the area has been relatively recession-proof because of the diversity of its economic activities. Currently, however, the State agricultural sector suffers from depressed prices, while reduced need for steel for American industry has severely reduced mining activity in the northern regions. The generally depressed state of the American economy has curtailed production in many of the State's industrial plants. The November 1982 unemployment rate for the state as a whole stood at 8.6 percent (unadjusted). The unemployment rate for the Twin Cities was at 7.4 percent, up from 4.5 percent in November 1981. This was lower than the national average, but these rising rates have had a heavy impact on efforts to find employment for the refugees in the region.

F. Welfare Benefits and Regulations

A 1982 Berkeley Planning Associates report, *The Administration of the Refugee Resettlement Program in the State of Minnesota*, outlined refugee welfare benefits in the State; the following is a summary.

Counties are responsible for the delivery of both welfare and social services in county administered departments of social and human services, acting under supervision of the Department of Public Welfare (DPW) and of county boards of commissioners. State supervised programs include AFDC and AFDC-U, WIN, General Assistance (GA), General Assistance Medical Care (GAMC), Minnesota Supplemental Aid (MSA), Food Stamps, Medicaid, Foster Care, and EPSDT programs through the Bureau of Income Maintenance. MSA is a state-funded program providing aid to aged, blind and disabled clients as a supplement to Social Security or SSI. The DPW Bureau of Social Services oversees the counties' administration of child welfare, family services, Title XX, and services to the aged as well as vocational rehabilitation programs.

The payment schedule (since July 1981) for AFDC provides a monthly grant of \$520 for a family of three children and one adult and \$583 for a family of three children and two adults. For each additional child, the grant is increased by \$46.

p. 5

GA has provided a basic monthly allowance of \$158 for a household of four plus a shelter allowance of \$163 for a total of \$321. Eligible GA recipients must meet state income and resource standards, be ineligible for AFDC, and meet other specific requirements, the most important of which for the refugees is "a person unable to secure suitable employment due to inability to communicate in English." In the 1983 session the State Legislature has adjusted GA so that there will be a single grant rather than one for living and one for shelter, thus simplifying the disbursement of funds.

G. Public Housing

The Twin Cities experienced the mass migration to the suburbs common to American cities in the post World War II period. This left the central core of the cities with large pockets of old, deteriorating, sub-standard housing, available at minimal rental. At the same time, as a result of federal housing policies, cities embarked upon a building program of publicly owned housing projects. It was to these two types of housing that refugees were attracted in the Twin Cities, often with the assistance of their individual sponsors or refugee serving agencies. Initially settling in the center of the city, the refugees spilled over into St. Paul public housing units located at the city's periphery. Today 48.3 percent of the 1825 apartments in St. Paul's four city-owned congregate housing units are occupied by persons classified as Asian American, the majority being Hmong. Due to family size Asian American persons account for nearly 60 percent of the total population in these living complexes.

p. 6

H. Refugee Services and Community Receptiveness

The response of both public and private agencies within the State of Minnesota to the influx of Southeast Asian refugees has been remarkable. This response is undoubtedly a function of both public perception of a need to be accommodated as well as of the availability of Federal, State and local government funds to assist in providing services for the refugees. In May 1975, after the collapse of the American effort in Vietnam, an Indochinese Resettlement Task Force working within the governor's office was created. Recognition that refugee activity was to become more than a passing phenomenon in the State was demonstrated when this office was transferred to become part of the Department of Public Welfare in 1977.

Refugee Services

Since the establishment of the Office of Refugee Programs within DPW, assistance to the refugees has been accomplished through a comprehensive and coordinated system of support services delivered through county welfare departments, adult education centers, health institutions, and by voluntary resettlement agencies. Four major groups of agencies or organizations are involved: (1) Department of Public Welfare staff and other State agencies; (2) County Human and Social Services Departments; (3) the 50 agencies with which the Refugee Program Office has direct purchase-of-service contracts or sub-contracts for the provision of refugee education, employment, and health services; and (4) other organizations, including voluntary resettlement agencies (volags), refugee mutual assistance associations (MAAs), private foundations, and health care providers. A complete description of the State refugee program can be found in the Berkeley Planning Associates report (1982).

p. 7

In addition there have been innumerable individual acts of assistance by private citizens, churches and businesses who have responded in ways ranging from acting as sponsors and organizing the collection of clothes, to assisting in the marketing of handicrafts. In some cases what began as privately sponsored activities later came to be enlarged and institutionalized as government and foundation funds became available.

Several private foundations, with The Saint Paul Foundation taking the lead, have been actively involved in the resettlement effort by providing funds for special projects and support of the MAAs.

The volags were the focal point of many of the resettlement services in the early years. As the numbers of refugees increased the State became more involved. It became the fiscal agent through which federal monies for refugees were channeled, as well as the administrator of many of the welfare programs through which refugees received assistance. In 1980 Hennepin and Ramsey County Human Services Departments became much more centrally associated with these programs, particularly as they assumed major referral responsibilities. Within the Twin Cities area the voluntary agencies, while continuing to carry out much of the initial resettlement work, have tended to specialize. The International Institute focuses on language training; Catholic Charities specializes in employment, particularly through its sponsorship of Project RISE; and Lutheran Social Services emphasizes services for social adjustment. Mutual

assistance associations, particularly Lao Family Community, Inc., have been increasingly recognized through sub-contracts as resettlement service providers.¹

Community Relations

p. 8

The concentration of Hmong in areas of low-income housing with other minorities and poor Whites has created some cause for concern over how Hmong are getting along with the people who live around them. The Hmong moved into poor neighborhoods in times of decreasing public resources and high competition for housing. This creates a situation of potential violence and resentment between the Hmong and the older residents who are each trying to get a piece of the shrinking pie.

The Hmong have experienced some problems with discrimination and harassment, but most American observers do not think the problems are very great. The Hmong who have had problems, on the other hand, are angry. Many feel that harassment is directed toward them just because they are Hmong, though others are not sure. In the Hmong Community Survey (HCS) conducted by the Southeast Asian Refugee Studies Project, 75% of the respondents said they get along well or very well with their neighbors, while 19% reported problems.

A major concern of the Hmong is that they sense they are not really wanted here. They feel that for this reason Americans will never accept them. Olney (1982) found in a study of Hmong in Minneapolis that the Hmong do very much want to get to know their American neighbors and become involved in the community. The optimism expressed in that study has been tempered somewhat by the various problems some have reported.

In the McDonough housing area of St. Paul there have been regular reports of vandalism, young people throwing rocks at Hmong, spitting and name calling. These problems also exist in other areas of Minneapolis and St. Paul for the Hmong. Because the Hmong live in areas where vandalism and other crime was high before they arrived, it is difficult to determine the extent to which the Hmong are being singled out as victims.

One indicator of the antagonism that certain groups of Americans feel toward the Hmong are the rumors that continue to circulate. These rumors first surfaced over five years ago when the Hmong arrived in the Twin Cities, and despite repeated attempts at education through school programs, community programs and newspaper articles, the rumors continue to circulate. The rumors include: 1) the Hmong eat dogs, 2) the government gives every Hmong family a free car, 3) the Hmong do not have to pay taxes for seven years, 4) the Hmong get higher welfare benefits than anyone else, 5) the Hmong get free apartments.

p. 9

Some Americans have commented that the Hmong make easy victims. There is a tendency on the part of the Hmong not to fight back or complain when they have a problem. It seems to have been a general policy of Hmong leadership to advise their people to keep to themselves, ignore

¹ A nearly complete list of programs which serve the Hmong (compiled by Mary Jane Lipinsky for Partners of the Americas Fellowship in International Development, University of Minnesota Agricultural Extension Service, May 1983) is included in the Appendix.

taunts, and not cause trouble. The Hmong have made an effort to keep a low profile in the hope that problems with others would be minimized. But this attitude has only made it easier to harass the Hmong, and some Americans continue to do so.

Many Hmong are expressing increasing frustration with the poor treatment they receive. One man commented "In Laos we were a lower class people, but there was no crime, no prejudice, and we were never treated as badly as we are here." Other Hmong, however, do not feel that the Americans treat them badly and generally have had good experiences in their interactions with Americans, or simply do not interact with Americans.

Community Programs

For several years in the Twin Cities there have been attempts by various organizations to develop educational programs which will help Americans learn more about the refugees. There have also been attempts to organize neighborhood

- p. 10 gatherings or events which bring the refugees and the other residents together. In two areas, neighborhood organizations were formed to deal with the influx of refugees and the rising tensions in the neighborhood.

In St. Paul the Summit-University Acculturation Task Force met regularly For about two years. They talked about the problems of the refugees in the neighborhood and planned and carried out various educational programs. The group finally melted away because of failing interest.

In Minneapolis the Pillsbury-Elliot Park Neighborhood Refugee Coordinating Council was organized in late 1980 in response to the rapid influx of Hmong into the area. This group is a consortium of neighborhood service providers and residents. They have met with the goal of providing better services to the refugees and to deal with community tension. Because of political problems within the group it has never been able to organize effectively, but it does still meet irregularly to provide information about the current refugee situation.

Especially during the years 1979-81 a number of community-wide symposia, conferences, and workshops were held by various organizations to educate Americans about the refugees. Some were for special groups - social workers, nurses, educators, and others for the general public. The standard format, at first not very effective, was to have a representative of each refugee group - Vietnamese, Lao, Hmong, Cambodian, and perhaps a Cuban - give a short talk in difficult English about his country's history and culture, educational system, etc. Then the musicians and dancers were brought out.

These and other educational programs have been useful for those who attended, but the attendance has been limited; mostly the same people showed up at all of these events.

- p. 11 The continued development of community educational programs which deal with Hmong background, history, and culture as well as rumors is seen by many Americans and Hmong to be the best solution for problems of community tension and harassment.

Many Hmong feel that community programs will help their image by showing Americans that they are not lazy and want to work as well as by relating the background of the Hmong, their relationship to the United States and their experience in the war.

II. LOCAL HMONG POPULATION

p. 12

A. Size

Population Growth

The rapid growth of the Hmong population in Minnesota is demonstrated in Table III and Figure I. While the numbers must remain only knowledgeable estimates, they show how quickly the region has had to accommodate a large number of Hmong residents. They also indicate that since the end of 1981 the growth has halted, and that in fact the growth rate seems to have reversed with the population declining substantially.

A factor in Hmong population growth is the very high birthrate. As of August 1982 17% of the Hmong in the Twin Cities were born in the United States. But the major growth factors are primary and secondary migration, offset by the recent outmigration to California.

p. 13

p. 14

The population growth for the Twin Cities as a whole does not reflect the very different experiences of the two cities. Most Hmong in the Metro Area lived in St. Paul from the beginning in 1976 until 1979. In the spring of 1979 there were only four or five Hmong families living in Minneapolis. The subsequent growth in the number of refugees in Minneapolis is reflected in these figures for the number of limited English proficient (LEP) students in the Minneapolis Public Schools in successive years (data from Jermaine Arndt):

At the peak of this influx, the schools were receiving an average of five new LEP students per week. A plateau was reached in 1981. The ethnic breakdown at the end of this period was as follows:

Present Population Estimates

As Table III above indicates, it is believed that the Hmong population in the Twin Cities peaked at about 12,000 at the end of 1981 and has since declined to below 10,000

A check of the 1982 telephone directories for Minneapolis and St. Paul (issued December 1981 and June 1982 respectively) revealed listings under 19

different Hmong family (clan) names. Since 5 of these are alternative spellings of other names, this represents 14 different clans.

p. 15

The total number of listings was as follows:

An estimated population figure might be derived from this total by making certain assumptions, as follows. If 85% of Hmong households have telephones, the total number of Hmong households would be 1375. If average household size is assumed to be 6 persons, then the total Twin Cities Hmong population would be 8252.

The most numerous clans in the Twin Cities, judging again by the telephone listings, are as follows:

More Her and Moua listings are found in St. Paul; Minneapolis has more Lo/Lor and Vue listings. The most numerous groups are well-represented in both cities.

B. History of Settlement

The first Hmong families arrived in Minnesota in 1976. While the population grew slowly during the first two years, after that it grew rapidly, and by 1980 the St. Paul-Minneapolis metropolitan area had become the largest urban concentration of Hmong in the United States. The rapid growth of the Twin Cities Hmong population was the result of both direct sponsorship and secondary

p. 16 migration from other parts of the United States. As can be seen from Figure I, the growth rate was exponential. There are many factors which have influenced this growth.

After the initial flight of Hmong officers and officials from Laos in 1975, the Hmong departure rate from Laos dropped. It was not until 1978-79 that the refugee camps in Thailand began taking in very large numbers of Hmong. While the volags in Minnesota had organized an active sponsorship program as early as 1975, after 1978 sponsoring organizations began to sponsor more Hmong. Sponsorships in Minnesota grew rapidly, with the result that large numbers of Hmong were resettled here by chance.

Among the early arrivals were some influential group leaders. They were treated with kindness and felt that Minnesota was a good place to be. They began persuading their relatives to come to Minnesota. As more Hmong arrived in the state, Minnesota developed a reputation for being a good place to live. The Hmong felt that the cash assistance programs were good, and that there were ample ESL and training opportunities. As relatives who were sponsored around the country began talking about reuniting someplace, Minnesota became a favored choice. Secondary migrants then began to swell the local Hmong population, and these now nearly equal the number of Hmong who were directly sponsored in this area. During our discussions with groups of household heads 41% indicated that they had lived in some other locality in the U.S. prior to coming to Minnesota. The Hmong Community Survey indicated that 66% originally lived outside the Twin Cities. Forty percent first lived outside of Minnesota and moved here from 31 different states.

In addition to Minnesotans, many Hmong have become sponsors themselves. Once established here, they have located an agency through which they could

sponsor their relatives. As can be seen from data presented in Table IV, a majority of the Hmong in the Twin Cities have been sponsored by other Hmong. (These data are from the Hmong Community Survey.) This sponsorship of Hmong by Hmong was the final important factor leading to the rapid growth in the area.

p. 17

After early 1981 few Hmong were coming either to the United States or to Minnesota and it was thought the local population would stabilize. But during 1982 there was out-migration with 2,000 or more Hmong leaving for California.

The winter of 1982 was particularly harsh, and the promise of a warmer climate and the possibility of farming drew many to California. This out-migration continued in the spring and summer of 1983. On the other hand an American resettlement worker said that the Hmong he works with are deciding not to leave unless they have a guaranteed job elsewhere. Migration also continues in other directions. A few families have returned from California, or come from elsewhere, and a few are leaving for other states.

Since the Hmong have a long tradition of moving to find the best place to live (Thao 1982), it is not surprising to see the movement in the United States. Finding the best services and education is very important, but family reunification has been the primary goal of movement. Most who originally were sponsored elsewhere have come to Minnesota because of relatives here, as indicated in the table below, generated from the Hmong Community Survey (HCS).

For example, one Hmong man interviewed was originally sponsored in Columbus, Ohio. He had many American friends there, was learning English and thought his life was good. Then his father arrived in St. Paul and insisted that the man move to St. Paul to help him. So he moved to be with his father, even though there was really nothing else to attract him here. He no longer has American friends and he feels his life is slipping. This man hopes to move back to Ohio one day.

p. 18

Joining relatives is likely to continue to be the main reason for Hmong migration; 90% of the Hmong in the HCS reported that they had close relatives in other parts of the United States. Hmong who do not have jobs have also indicated that they would be willing to move to find work. Many leaders expect that this will lead to a more general scattering of the Hmong in the future as people seek jobs. On the other hand there is still a strong desire to live near other Hmong for purposes of mutual assistance, socializing and ritual.

C. Self-help Organizations

There are three Hmong self-help organizations in the Twin Cities. Lao Family Community (LFC) in St. Paul, a non-profit mutual assistance association (MAA), serves the largest number of refugees. This is the Minnesota affiliate of the national Lao Family Community, Inc., founded by the Hmong leader General

p. 19

Vang Pao in 1977, with headquarters in Santa Ana, California. In addition there are two local women's support groups, the Women's Association of Hmong and Lao, in St. Paul, and the Association for the Advancement of Hmong Women, in Minneapolis.

During 1982 Lao Family Community was criticized by some Hmong leaders for providing services primarily to the Hmong living in St. Paul and neglecting those who live in Minneapolis. The lack of services for Hmong refugees and other Asians in Minneapolis led to the emergence of two new organizations, the Centre for Asians and Pacific Islanders, a pan-Asian group focused on serving Indochinese refugees, and The Hmong in Minneapolis, an informally organized group of LFC members protesting LFC's failure to serve Minneapolis Hmong adequately, and seeking funding to provide the needed services as a separate group. In early 1983 LFC and the Centre for Asian and Pacific Islanders were funded by Minnesota's Refugee Incentive Program to provide specific services to Hmong in Minneapolis and St. Paul. The group known as The Hmong in Minneapolis were not funded and their relationship to the St. Paul LFC remained uncertain.

The MAAs in the Twin Cities play an important role in providing the Hmong community a degree of social and economic autonomy. While voluntary agencies have employed bilingual Hmong in their refugee programs, the Hmong employees are rarely given administrative positions, and therefore are not making policy decisions concerning the Hmong community. The volags are concerned primarily with the refugee's adaptation to their new environment as individuals and families, while MAAs concern themselves with the adaptation of the Hmong community as a whole. The MAAs are concerned with the organization of the Hmong community, the social and economic welfare of the people, the development of Hmong-owned enterprises, and the planning of Hmong culture change. Nevertheless, the success of the MAAs is dependent upon adequate external funding.

p. 20 **III. RESETTLEMENT ISSUES**

A. Employment

The Hmong Community Survey indicates that 29.2% of Hmong households in the Twin Cities have someone working, while only 3.0% have two or more employed. 21.6% of the household heads work, and 15% of those over 18 are working. Figure II illustrates the percent employed in each age group.

There appears to be a strong relation between employment and the length of time a person has been in the United States, as can be seen in Figure III (next page), also based on the Hmong Community Survey. None of those who have been in the United States less than 18 months (13% of the sample) is working.

p. 21 Of those who are not working 38% said they are actively seeking a job and 62% said they are not. The reasons given for not looking are shown in Table VI. Of those who do work, only 50%
p. 22 work 30 or more hours a week.

Hmong leaders estimate that currently about 25% of the Hmong are employed. A survey conducted by the State Refugee Office in the summer of 1982 indicated that 46% of the Hmong households had someone who was employed.

While the range of these employment figures is wide, they all indicate that there is very high unemployment in the Hmong community. This lack of employment for adult Hmong who are able to work is a major problem of adjustment faced by the Hmong. But most Hmong leaders and individuals stated that the reasons for the low level of employment (no job or part-time or low-pay jobs providing inadequate family income) are, in addition to the currently poor state of the economy, inadequate training or inadequate command of English. It is recognized that for many, language proficiency has been an obstacle to the needed training, because training by bilingual staff was not available.

Many of those who do have employment should not be considered self-sufficient. Here is the story of one man:

We have one problem, and that is not enough money. From the time we arrived in 1979 we had government help for quite a while, but since April of this year (1982) and up until now I

don't have enough money because I don't earn very much and I have a large family. We are receiving nothing from the government now. I am working five hours a day. Since it adds up to just over 100 hours a month, I don't qualify for any help from the government, just the same as if I was working full-time. But with one hundred hours of work per month, at a pay rate of \$5.19 an hour, I can earn only a little more than \$500 a month. I don't have any medical benefits or insurance.

p. 23

Once the Hmong are on the job they seem to be doing well. Employers interviewed were generally happy with the performance of their Hmong employees on the job. Some even said that they were among the best workers they had, particularly those employed in assembly. They also indicated that they would be willing to hire more Hmong if more jobs became available. Language was considered a problem, but many employers successfully used Hmong work groups including one Hmong bilingual.

The Hmong who are employed work at a variety of different tasks, but most have either unskilled minimum wage jobs or work in programs that serve refugees. Several of the Hmong attending our group meetings had training in skilled jobs, worked at them for awhile and did well, but were laid off with the downturn in the economy. One man was a janitor. He did not like his job, but it was stable and he felt it was necessary to keep it. Another held a job as a roofer. His employer was providing on-the-job training; he was happy with the situation. A third collates pages and staples them together as booklets. His only complaint was that the job was not full time.

A survey of 77 Twin Cities Hmong households in mid-1981 (Hendricks and Richardson 1982) found that of those of employable age, 66% of the males and 29% of the females reported some sort of employment. Job categories reported in this survey indicated 31% involved in food

service and maintenance work; 30% in some type of factory assembly work; 27% employed in jobs serving other refugees;

- p. 24 and 12% holding jobs requiring skilled labor. Relatively few of the families in the sample, however, were recent arrivals. Their longer experience in America as well as the economic picture at that time may account for the reported employment rate as contrasted to the present situation for the Hmong population in general.

In late 1982, in meetings with 55 household heads, a survey was done by a show of hands. This quick survey focused on various aspects of employment. Only 20% of those responding indicated they were presently employed. However, 55% said that they had been employed at some time since coming to the United States. Using the same categories as the 1981 study, 45% of those presently employed held food service and maintenance jobs, 18% were in some type of factory assembly work, and 36% performed skilled tasks. Differences between these reports may be not only a function of changed economic conditions, but also of the nature of the sample. The earlier study looked at entire households, while these meetings included only household heads.

The jobs that were reported in the August 1982 Hmong Community Survey were as follows: teacher 8%, interpreter 11%, day care 3%, maintenance 23%, factory 15%, laborer 8%, dishwasher 5%, other 8%, and summer jobs held by teenagers 19%.

A study entitled "ESL/Employment Survey" was published by Literacy 85 in St. Paul in March 1983. While the focus is on the job success and job-related problems of Indochinese workers in the St. Paul area, it also provides information about specific areas of employment of Hmong workers. Among employers of Indochinese who were surveyed, Hmong held the following positions: machinist (1); welder (8, all currently laid off); computer assembly; wood casket assembly (2); hand-sewing of boots (15); potter (1); trimming meat in a packing plant (2); sorting rags in a textile warehouse (7); food preparation or maintenance

- p. 25 work (25); summer yardwork (2); entry-level clerical (2); multilingual receptionist for power company (1); janitorial (30 plus); busperson or dishwasher (9). Company sizes ranged from as few as 5 to as many as 3,000 employees. Seven of the eighteen companies with Hmong employees had no other Indochinese. A leather goods manufacturer had specifically sought Hmong employees because of their reputation for traditional handcrafts.

Barriers to Employment

The Hmong feel that the greatest barrier to employment is lack of English. A statistical relation between English ability and employment is suggested by the correlation of jobs and self-rated English proficiency shown in Figure IV (data from the Hmong Community Survey).

- p. 26 The Hmong also feel that their lack of skills and experience makes it hard for them to compete for jobs with other Americans.

Another reason the Hmong give for remaining unemployed is the low pay in the jobs they are able to find. Minimum wage is below the standard welfare payments and usually does not include health benefits. The Hmong recognize the high cost of health care, and some men have admitted quitting jobs when their wives were about to have a baby so the hospital costs would be covered.

Women are having a more difficult time than men finding work. They report problems with English and lack of skills to be barriers. Women attending a meeting for the study consistently cited lack of child care and transportation as barriers to attending English language and employment training. All agreed that child care would help most in enabling them to get jobs. Eleven out of fifteen said that they had small children at home and no one to take care of them. But these women also said that ESL classes and job training (such as the class they were attending in industrial sewing) were necessary in order for them to get jobs. All but one of these women reported that they had had no education in Laos. Two-thirds of them had received some previous instruction in ESL; three were currently taking ESL classes.

Hmong Employment Efforts

The search for a means of finding employment for the refugees has been given high priority since the inception of the refugee program. The first Hmong to arrive were most often under the sponsorship of individuals and organizations who were able to assist directly through their own knowledge of where jobs might be found. As the numbers of refugees increased and secondary migration began, this informal but highly successful system was no longer able to cope with the task. Rather, refugee employment became the responsibility of existing agencies such as the State Job Service, CETA and WIN.

Generally they were unable to meet the need because they were built upon the assumption that their client populations understood English and American job-finding strategies and possessed some kind of job-related skills.

p. 27

Currently there is an effort to develop strategies focused more directly on the unique problems of refugees. There are two agencies under contract with the state that were set up specifically to seek employment for refugees. Both, Project RISE and H.I.R.E.D., have programs which provide orientation to the world of work in American society with emphasis on specific job-seeking skills. In the H.I.R.E.D. program, clients are encouraged to seek jobs aggressively for themselves. At Project RISE each client is assigned to a bilingual case worker who actively seeks to assist the individual in his search for a job, including accompanying him to the prospective place of employment. Once the client is employed, the bilingual worker is available to assist both the employee and the employer in clearing up any job-related questions. Cases are actively followed for 90 days with regular visits by the caseworker to the place of employment. Additional information on Project RISE may be found in Volume III of the Hmong Resettlement Study Final Report.

Project RISE has had some success in getting businesses to hire one Hmong with a fair command of English first and then to take on two or three others with less facility in English, for

whom the first employee can act as go-between trainer and interpreter. An example of this strategy on a larger scale is West Publishing Company in downtown St. Paul, which now has about eighteen Hmong employees, one of whom serves as an interpreter who can be brought in when problems arise. Some employers, though, have complained that this kind of program decreases the opportunities for the non-English speakers to improve their speaking skills through practice on the job.

- p. 28 Lutheran Social Services (LSS) currently has a Hmong bilingual devoting most of his time to the development of employment opportunities. In general the project is similar to others like Project RISE, but both LSS and Church World Service are actively using sponsors and volunteers to help find jobs for refugees. Some sponsoring churches are able to mobilize committees of volunteers to go door knocking in search of job openings. It is thought by the organizers that this type of volunteerism has great potential for producing jobs at a low cost. The difficulty with this sort of effort is that it is almost invariably reliant upon the deep commitment of a limited number of individuals.

Currently there are two MAAs with contracts to do job development and placement. Lao Family Community has one contract and focuses on the Hmong. The Center for Asian and Pacific Islanders has another contract and works with all Southeast Asian refugees.

Hmong teenagers have been able to obtain jobs working for both the City of Minneapolis and St. Paul in the Summer Youth Employment programs.

Hmong Businesses

While the majority of employed Hmong hold jobs in existing American-owned businesses, there have been a number of attempts to develop Hmong owned, controlled or operated enterprises that have met with varying degrees of success. These business activities fall into three major categories: those self-generated by Hmong individuals or groups; those carried out as joint cooperative projects with the assistance of Americans; and those which are sub-contracts to Hmong individuals who hire Hmong as workers.

Four grocery stores catering to Hmong have been opened by Hmong in the Twin Cities, as well as a store selling Hmong-made jewelry. The food stores are

- p. 29 highly dependent upon social ties within the Hmong community. It is reported that currently they are caught between demands to operate for the benefit of the Hmong community and the need to earn sufficient profits to reward the individual for his entrepreneurship.

An example of a joint cooperative business effort is Lao Family Community's Hmong Enterprise Project, which attempts to adapt Hmong designs and workmanship for the national market. They have received two major grants totalling \$26,000 from local foundations to start the project. Concerned Americans have been instrumental in advising the project, in setting up the business and in developing sales outlets for their products.

Among the early Hmong-focused enterprises have been a variety of efforts to sell Hmong *pa ndau* (needlework). The Saint Paul Junior League organized a selling cooperative in 1979 which focuses on craft fairs. The American volunteers find the places to sell and also handle the money. The Hmong women set the prices.

In 1981 a Hmong textile outlet store was opened in St. Paul; another was opened in the fall of 1982 in Minneapolis. Both stores are run by American volunteers. The Hmong women bring in their work and set their own prices, then 20% is added to cover operating expenses. The Hmong women are paid when one of their pieces is sold.

A Minneapolis textile art gallery, Textile Arts Alliance, has marketed many larger, top quality, pieces of *pa ndau* as fine art. The owner has been successful in placing pieces in several local corporations and banks and has commissioned other pieces for special locations. The prices are much higher than in the small stores and the Hmong women receive 60% of the proceeds.

Another type of entrepreneurship has been sub-contracts by American firms to Hmong contractors. Currently about 25 Hmong are employed by one Hmong-owned

company in making stuffed animals through a sub-contract from a local toy firm. Although these employees are not under his direct supervision, the toymaker is highly pleased with the Hmong as workers. An earlier attempt at such a sub-contracting mechanism met with failure when the principal business operation declined and they were unable to pay for the work performed by the Hmong.

p. 30

The Idea of Farming

For centuries the Hmong have obtained their livelihood by growing their food in the mountains of China and Southeast Asia. In general their system of agriculture was quite adequate and dependable. The war in Laos changed this for many of the Hmong who are now here. They could no longer maintain stable fields because of the fighting. As they moved from place to place they began to rely on rice dropped from the sky or handouts at refugee camps, occasionally supplemented by a garden plot. Many Hmong began to rely on handouts from the United States and others long before they arrived in this country. But all Hmong knew that wherever they had the opportunity they could make a living off the land.

In early contacts with the Hmong as they arrived in the Twin Cities we found little interest expressed by them in taking up farming as a means of making a living in the United States. This lack of interest in farming was expressed by several leaders and several of the other Hmong interviewed for this study. They observed that the Hmong could never farm like the Americans, because farming is not the same here. There is too much technology and machinery involved, and farm life is too isolated; thus many of the Hmong dismissed the idea of farming early on.

Although there was little general interest in farming, there was a great interest in small urban gardens. Given seed and hoes, Hmong took to whatever

pieces of land were offered. Some even tried to work marginal bits of land such as steep banks along the sides of roads. Although there were problems with the short growing season, most Hmong gardens observed are successful. The produce has supplemented their food supply and is beginning to supplement the income of some families through sales at markets.

It was not until 1981 or 1982 that the idea of developing farms where the Hmong could work full time and earn a living began to be taken seriously by Americans.

This new interest in the idea of farming may have begun with the general Hmong population. As welfare money began to run out, progress in learning English slowed, and Hmong workers faced diminishing prospects for finding jobs, or were laid off, many people began to think more seriously about farming. The garden plots did well, and the Hmong were reminded that there is something they are good at.

One leader commented that the Hmong in Laos were always able to grow something when there was nothing else. There is a great trust in the ability to grow food. This idea is reflected in the growing excitement over farming. It is also reflected in the recent migrations to the Central Valley of California. The Hmong have heard that even if there are no jobs, there is land and they can grow food to stay alive year-round.

While there are no data to indicate the degree of interest in farming in 1979-80, there is evidence of a great deal of interest now. General Vang Pao has often talked of setting up Hmong farms. A survey conducted by Church World Service (CWS) in Minnesota indicated a high interest in farming, and CWS began to plan a farm project in detail.

The Hmong Community Survey also reveals a high interest in farming. Seventy-nine percent of the respondents indicated that there was a need for a Hmong farm project.

While the idea of farming has taken hold for many, there are still many Hmong who have no interest in farming. One man pointed out that his family farmed for generations in Laos and never improved their lives. He thought that there are better ways to improve lives here in the United States.

Another major problem associated with farming in the minds of the Hmong is that the American farming methods would separate the Hmong and require them to live in isolated rural areas. Some worked on farms before moving to the Twin Cities. They remember the isolation they felt. For the time being the Hmong feel a great need to be near other Hmong. Support comes from relatives. People need other people nearby to celebrate life cycle events, to socialize and help solve problems. Some of the leaders commented that it is possible sometime in the future that the Hmong will scatter, but for now people need to be together.

Farming Projects

Increasingly, Americans have become interested in helping the Hmong to get started in farming. The most noticeable local effort is the expansion of the Hmong Agricultural Project, the

planning for which has involved representatives of the University of Minnesota Agricultural Extension Division, the Saint Paul Foundation, the Northwest Area Foundation, the F.R. Bigelow Foundation, the McKnight Foundation, 3M Corporation, and Lao Family Community. This project, now called the Minnesota Agricultural Enterprise for New American, and a second large project, the Hiawatha Valley Cooperative, both began operating in the spring and summer of 1983. Both involve large amounts of money and planning, and they hope to provide income for 25 or more Hmong families each. These projects are described in Volume II of the Hmong Resettlement Study Final Report.

Other farm projects focus on family gardens, and there are many such projects in the Twin Cities. These family gardens do not provide employment

but they do supply supplemental food and sometimes income for the families involved.

p. 33

B. Welfare Dependence

Degree of Dependence

Since unemployment in the Hmong community is very high, the majority of Hmong families in the Twin Cities rely on some sort of public assistance either as a supplement or for their total support. This assistance is available in several forms: Refugee Cash Assistance, AFDC, AFDC-U, AFDC-WIN, General Assistance (GA), food stamps, SSI, and the use of low-rent public housing.

Of the families surveyed in the August 1982 Hmong Community Survey, 68% were receiving some form of AFDC, 16% were on GA, and 4% had some other unspecified source of income.

It is clear that the Hmong in Minnesota are very dependent on public assistance and that it has been fairly easy for them to obtain. When eligibility for refugee cash assistance was cut back to 18 months from 36 months in May 1982, many refugees were sent letters telling them they would no longer receive Refugee Cash Assistance benefits under the refugee program and for various reasons they did not qualify for the state AFDC program. Since that time many Hmong have appealed that decision, some by going to their county social worker and others by going to court, arguing that they still do qualify for AFDC either because they had enough work quarters in Thailand, which made them eligible (some went to American friends who had worked in the refugee camps and asked them to testify that the Hmong had worked for them) or by proving that they still were not proficient in speaking English.

The difference between AFDC benefits and GA is great, and, therefore, many Hmong have worked hard to stay on AFDC. What bothered some Hmong interviewed

was the seemingly arbitrary manner in which decisions about AFDC were made Hmong who had been declared ineligible did not see any difference between themselves and friends who were receiving AFDC. This complaint also arose regarding AFDC-WIN, which provides AFDC for families if the head of household is in a WIN-approved training program. It seemed to some

p. 34

Hmong that people were arbitrarily assigned to AFDC-WIN, which is perceived as a better program.

Subsidized Housing

The availability of public housing has been a great help for many Hmong in the Twin Cities. Most Hmong qualify for subsidized housing and public housing. The St. Paul Public Housing Agency (PHA) has over 1200 housing units under its control. These are concentrated in four areas of St. Paul. They are postwar two-story townhouse buildings in large developments. The unit size ranges from one to six bedrooms. To get into these housing units, a family must put their name on a waiting list. Rent is generally set at 27% of the family's income. The waiting list for these units is long, and a family can expect to wait 6 to 18 months, depending on family size, before they get in.

Now that Hmong have been in the Twin Cities for some time they are obtaining places in public housing at an increasing rate. In October 1982 there were close to 600 Asian families in St. Paul public housing, probably 90% of which are Hmong. That translates to close to 3000 of the approximately 7000 Hmong in Ramsey County living in one of four areas of public housing. Of those, 1500 live in McDonough Homes (60% of the total population of the housing project). In McDonough 13.5% are White, 15.2% Black, and 8% are classified as other. The Hmong clearly dominate McDonough and are almost as numerous in the other areas. Numbers and percentages of Indochinese in St. Paul public housing are shown in Table VII.

- p. 35 There are several advantages for the Hmong who live in public housing. As a landlord the PHA is relatively good and because there is a full-time maintenance staff, problems are taken care of. The quality of the units is generally much better than private low-rent housing, and the rent is very low.

The disadvantage is that the rules are rather strict. The tenants must register each resident. The number of people in each unit is regulated by the number of bedrooms. The PHA enforces these rules when they find violations. There are cases where Hmong family members have been evicted because there were too many in a unit. For some the rules are good because they have a relatively

- p. 36 large space for their families, but others have had to split up their families to get into public housing or wait longer for the scarce five and six bedroom units.

These rules also force some to under-represent the number of people who actually live in the household. Survey data for those in public housing may thus reflect a lower population than actually exists.

Other problems people have in public housing relate to welfare benefits. Although the rent is set low for families on AFDC, the Hmong report that it goes up when they are changed to GA or get a job, even though the family income is often substantially lower.

The high concentration of Hmong in these public housing areas and the resentment of other poor people has led to a relatively high level of antagonism between residents.

Hmong Attitudes toward Welfare

While there is a high rate of dependence on welfare, and a degree of maneuvering to stay on, almost all of the Hmong families we talked to agreed they would rather be working. The problem is finding an adequate job, one which pays a high enough wage to support a family and provides health benefits. Hmong spokespersons agreed that if supplemental income and Medicaid were available to those who worked full time at minimum wage jobs, more Hmong would be willing to take those jobs as they became available. Currently a family cannot receive AFDC if a family member works more than 100 hours a month. This may account for the large number (50%) of those working who work less than 30 hours a week (Hmong Community Survey).

Some Hmong have detected the negative attitudes Americans have about welfare and those on it, but as one man pointed out they have little choice:

Many Americans say that the Hmong are lazy and they do not want to work. Hmong do not like to hear that. If the Hmong get a chance to have a job then turn out to be lazy then Americans can say that. But the Hmong do not have jobs, no chance to work, so how can people say they are lazy? Everybody wants to work. p. 37

Others feel that because they fought for the United States, and were given promises of aid if the war went badly, they are owed something by the government. The government should be expected to find jobs for the Hmong, teach them English, or at least make sure they have enough money to survive. Many Hmong were very angry at the 18-month cutoff. They saw it as another in a growing string of broken promises. There is a fear of more cuts. "Cutbacks are heavier for the Hmong than nuclear weapons," one said.

It is hard for many Hmong to be dependent; "I want to be independent, I don't want to need help from the government all the time," another said. Along with the dependency is a growing sense of worthlessness and depression for the once proud men who can now do nothing but stay home and sit. The depression feeds itself and people find it increasingly hard to come out of it. The lack of enough money in a household has contributed to problems of family stress. Some social workers report that more husbands and wives are fighting over money; marital disputes start with money problems, then move on to other things.

One group of people who see even less hope is the widows. A widow said:

It is very hard for young widows with no grown children. Grown children can take care of you. I always dream my son will be an important person in the future. I look forward to the time when my son will be good to me, and my daughter will help me. I look at myself as the father and mother of my children.

Employment and Welfare Dependence

Employment and welfare dependence are closely related and many Hmong households are able to combine various sources of income to survive. For

- p. 38 example one Hmong man who lives in public housing with his wife, four children, father and 18 year old brother has several sources of income. This man is a student at the University of Minnesota and works part-time as a health interpreter. He earns between \$250 and \$300 a month and is not eligible for AFDC. His father is over 65 and receives \$280 a month from SSI. His brother receives \$60 a month from GA. He had been paying \$210 a month rent for their four-bedroom apartment, but since he is now off GA he pays \$150. Because there are three families living in the apartment, under public housing rules he must pay more rent than if all eight people were his dependents.

The following are other examples of family incomes combining employment and welfare sources:

50 year old man, 9 children. Part time job, 25 hours/week. Income \$400 month, food stamps \$400. Expenses: Rent \$140, Utilities \$90. 45 year old man, 8 children. Part time job, 20 hours/week. Income: \$280, AFDC \$650, Food Stamps \$250. Expenses: Rent 130, Utilities \$118. 39 year old man, 7 children. Part time job. Income: \$270, AFDC \$400, Food Stamps \$200. Expenses: Rent \$84, Utilities \$49.

Americans' Views of Cash Assistance to Refugees

American resettlement workers interviewed for this study felt that it has been too easy for the Hmong to get cash assistance. One person pointed out that welfare dollars have been available without specific demands placed on the recipients. Instead, critics say, the Hmong must be challenged to try to change and develop new ways of living in the United States. The welfare cuts have, in the opinion of some Americans, forced many refugees to realize for the first time that they really have to work at making it here.

p. 39 Case Management

Instead of just granting public assistance to the Hmong, one resettlement worker suggested that welfare be used as a tool to provide gentle pressure on the refugees. To that end the State Refugee Program Office and the volags have been working on a plan to institute better case management. In this system all the resources of the resettlement program would be brought together, and, with the active involvement of the Hmong, individual strategies for adjustment would be developed for each family. Each family would be assigned a case worker and, after counselling, a goal-oriented plan would be developed.

It is hoped that better case management will be particularly helpful for many Hmong who do not know how to go about helping themselves. The system will also be able to track secondary migrants and make sure people do not “fall through the cracks” of the system as some do now.

C. Job Training and Education for Adults

By the time the first Hmong refugees in St. Paul arrived to join the ranks of Vietnamese who had come in 1975, many essential educational programs to meet their needs were already in place. Efforts devoted primarily to teaching English are described in Section E. below. Programs designed to meet other educational and training needs of refugees, at various levels and for various purposes, are described here, as they have played a role in the resettlement of the Hmong.

Instructional Programs for Adults

The refugees, and especially those with little education such as the Hmong, were recognized as needing arithmetic skills and what came to be called “survival skills” as much as they needed English. The International Institute

and the St. Paul schools' adult refugee programs included sessions devoted to these topics along with ESL. “Survival skills” included how to take the bus, how to make change, explanation of checking accounts, asking directions, etc. In 1979, for example, when there were not more than 900 Hmong in St. Paul, the International Institute was holding classes in the neighborhood where most Hmong lived, with Hmong instructors teaching math and introducing terminology associated with medical care, welfare, and, automobiles. Sometimes the cultural orientation was part of the ESL class and sometimes it was separated out, with bilingual Hmong teachers or interpreters to help. p. 40

Today most instructional programs that serve Hmong adults include a component of cultural orientation and survival skills. ESL curricula increasingly focus on what are thought to be the real communication needs of the refugees. The instructional programs at Lao Family Community include separate classes on survival skills, and while funding lasted, a driver's training class. These programs have brought in such resource persons as police officers, fish and game officials, and doctors to discuss their specialty areas.

Job Training

Job training has been available for many of the young Hmong men, primarily through the locally highly regarded vocational technical schools operated by the St. Paul Public Schools (St. Paul Technical Vocational Institute), Ramsey County (916 Vo-Tech in suburban White Bear Lake), and Dakota County on the south side of St. Paul. It is believed that one of the reasons many Hmong families came to St. Paul was that they heard about good ESL and vocational programs available to the Hmong refugees. Some of the first Hmong to settle here were trained as machinists in the St. Paul TVI and obtained highly paid jobs.

Less in the way of vocational training has been available in Minneapolis, and as a consequence students living in Minneapolis have sometimes traveled great distances to attend the classes in St. Paul and White Bear Lake. Some of the programs at the St. Paul TVI and at 916 Vo-Tech have been bilingual, serving Vietnamese and Hmong students. Hmong students have also been p. 41

enrolled in classes for which no bilingual assistance was available. It is reported that in general Hmong students have done well in lab/shop sessions but poorly in the classroom work which relies heavily on technical textbooks.

No detailed information was obtained for this report on other training programs, which reportedly include on-the-job-training for Hmong employed by Control Data Corporation and a volunteer program in Minneapolis to train Hmong women for private house-keeping assignments. There appear to be many households in which the principal wage-earner brought no usable job skills from Laos and has received no job training in the U.S. (In the Hmong Community Survey 52% of the household heads reported that they were soldiers in Laos, 16% farmers, and 16% students; the remaining 16% fell into a variety of other job categories such as trade, mechanics, and teaching.)

The unexpected imposition of an 18-month limit for refugee support caught a number of vocational students in the midst of a program with no means of support and forced them to drop out. Other Hmong students have been affected by a state requirement that they can be supported only in training programs that last no more than 12 months, which effectively eliminates many career options.

The questions asked of household heads in group meetings included some concerning job training and the relation between job training and employment. These questions are listed here with figures representing percentages of the 53 respondents.

p. 42

Outcomes of Adult Education and Vocational Programs

Social Self-Sufficiency. Despite the constant emphasis on “survival skills” and cultural orientation in instructional programs for Hmong adults, and the increasing emphasis on communication skills and functional, particularly job-related English in the ESL classroom, there is a widespread feeling that most Hmong adults are unable to cope by themselves in many common situations. Most Hmong adults remain bewildered by many aspects of American life. The complaint is not that the cultural orientation was not handled properly but that much more is needed. Hmong adults rely heavily on the communicative skills, cultural knowledge, and even the judgment of adolescents when dealing with Americans and American institutions. This often has the effect of undermining the role and authority of the father especially. In many matters adults are unable to make decisions or to solve problems because they don't understand what the options are. To remedy these problems many people have recommended an extensive series of informational programs to be developed cooperatively by Lao Family Community and various public agencies and scheduled through the system of family groups by which Lao Family Community is organized.

Job Placement and Employability. The Twin Cities vocational schools have succeeded in training a number of Hmong for such jobs as machinist and welder. At first some found jobs in the specialties for which they were trained. More recently, many who were employed have been laid off and many more have not been

able to find employment at all. It is not clear whether there has been inadequate counseling of students entering these programs or whether the economic slump is solely responsible for this situation. p. 43

One Hmong man interviewed had been trained in shipping and receiving at an area vocational school, although his English is quite limited. He found no work related to this training, but managed to find a job for himself as a potter. Recently he has been laid off from that job, and has used his own last savings to enroll in a welding course at the St. Paul Technical Vocational Institute.

Employment specialists tell us there are no jobs at present in welding. The kinds of jobs that some Hmong are finding currently are those that require no technical training. But the wages these jobs pay are often inadequate to support a large family. So there remains a dilemma as to whether immediate entry-level jobs or job-training for better-paying positions is the more desirable course; the decision for an individual Hmong seeking employment generally depends on whether an immediate job, or public assistance to support training, or neither, is available at the moment.

D. Education

Hmong children, because of the time spent in flight and in the refugee camps, were nearly as unlikely to have had formal education prior to resettlement in the U.S. as their parents. Of the 400 Southeast Asian students, mostly Hmong, who enrolled for the first time in all levels of the St. Paul school system during the school year 1979-80, the majority had never attended schools of any kind. Almost none of the children under 16 had studied English before coming to the U.S.

The Public School Response

p. 44

Nearly all Hmong children living in the Twin Cities have been enrolled in the public schools of the respective cities. St. Paul received the first group of Hmong school children in 1976, with a rapid increase in their number in 1979-80. The impact of Southeast Asian refugees on the St. Paul public schools is suggested by the following figures. Of 40,990 students enrolled in the district in 1971, 0.2% (96) were of Asian or Pacific origin. In 1981, when the total student enrollment had dropped to 31,665, Asian/Pacific students made up 9.9% of the total, numbering 3,128. Eighty-five to ninety per cent of these (about 2500) were Hmong. In Minneapolis there were almost no Hmong children before the fall of 1979. Thereafter the Hmong population increased so rapidly for a time that the equivalent of one classful of Hmong students was enrolled per month during parts of 1980. In December, 1982, Minneapolis had 667 Hmong students (out of a somewhat larger total school population than in St. Paul), and nearly as many ethnic Lao (538). This was an increase from 240 Hmong and 228 Lao students in May 1980.

Both school districts responded rapidly to the availability of federal and state funding for ESL and bilingual programs. Both St. Paul and Minneapolis have had specific instructional programs for Hmong students under federal and state bilingual education grants. In 1981 the Minneapolis

schools had 35 ESL teachers, 33 bilingual teachers (mostly Southeast Asian), and 24 bilingual aides. Both districts have hired at least a few Hmong bilinguals as teachers and teacher's aides. Minneapolis has experimented with the teaching of Hmong literacy and the use and development of Hmong language materials. St. Paul has experimented with using intensive ESL training in special centers prior to the assignment of Southeast Asian students to regular schools. Both have used the

p. 45 approach of concentrating same-language students in selected schools so that language-specific instruction could be provided. Both have used ESL classes which students attend for part of each day. The amount of time depends on each student's ability to succeed in required subjects taught in mainstream classes.

Self-contained bilingual classrooms, the classic model for bilingual education, have not been established, largely because none of the bilingual staff for the Hmong programs were fully accredited teachers. Hmong staff have been used, especially in Minneapolis schools, to teach special sections of some subjects in Hmong. In general, however, the role of the bilingual staff has been mainly to tutor Hmong students in the subjects studied in mainstream classes. Since the 1979-80 school year, bilingual staff in designated centers in the Minneapolis system have provided instruction in math, science, and social science to Hmong students at the elementary level.

In addition, attention has been paid to Hmong culture, particularly in providing orientation for teachers, other school staff, and American classmates to the background and culture of the refugee students in their school. Auditorium programs and school-wide Hmong New Year programs for example have been used to inform the American students about the Hmong and to heighten the Hmong students' sense of self-worth and acceptance. In St. Paul peer-tutoring has been tried as a means of helping refugee students and increasing contact between refugee and American students. The program has been a success but has had limited impact because of lack of development funds and volunteer tutors.

The public schools have operated summer programs offering Title I instruction to students with adequate command of English and ESL for those with lower English proficiency. Minneapolis LEP students, including Hmong students, have also been offered the opportunity to attend weekend "Friendship Camps" with

p. 46 equal numbers of American-born students. They could also participate in a camping experience at Camp Tamarac during the summer.

The Minneapolis elementary Title VII program is a K-6 program: it starts refugee children off with ESL instruction at the kindergarten level. The district does not have a preschool program as such; there is a day-care center at Windom School and another at Pratt School for the children of adults in English programs. These centers provide the only real opportunity for the schools to provide English language experiences for refugee children prior to kindergarten, but funding is now threatened because Hennepin County, which had supported the program, has decided to put most of its funding into job and food programs. The St. Paul schools previously had a

preschool program, but it was discontinued, along with their interpreter program, when outside funding was lost.

A supervisor in the Minneapolis LEP program told us that they are now beginning to see Hmong children who were born in the U.S. enter the first grade with no English. Some Hmong preschoolers, of course, do learn English from older siblings and English-speaking friends and come to school with little or no deficiency in English.

ESL and Literacy Instruction in the Public Schools

ESL instruction is provided for all students in St. Paul and Minneapolis public schools who are judged to have limited English proficiency and to be in need of such instruction. In St. Paul Southeast Asian students were given intensive ESL instruction in a special center before being placed in mainstream classes, but as of fall 1982 students with limited English have been dispersed to all schools.

Minneapolis ESL instruction is just a part of a curriculum that puts students into some mainstream classes from the beginning and that also utilizes bilingual staff for some teaching and/or tutoring. Nearly all students need ESL and bilingual instruction when they enter the schools. Entering students not only have little knowledge of English, but also have little literacy in their native language. One Hmong teacher told us that only one Hmong junior high school student in five is literate in Hmong, and even fewer elementary school children. Alter (1982) points out that the Minneapolis schools have taken a rather ambiguous stance with regard to Hmong literacy. They have a large bilingual Hmong staff who have developed texts in Hmong for teaching social science subjects, and they teach these subjects to LEP students in Hmong. But after a brief trial they have decided not to teach Hmong literacy to the students. Thus the Hmong language texts can be used by the bilingual teachers but not by most of the students. St. Paul schools have largely ignored Hmong literacy.

p. 47

Progress of Hmong Students

There is evidence that the great majority of Hmong elementary students are learning English and using it. Young children are able to speak fluently on the phone, and they frequently speak English at home in talking about school, doing math problems, etc. The older children speak less fluently than their younger brothers and sisters. They may do well in math classes but find it very difficult to describe their boardwork to the rest of the class.

One parent, asked how his children are doing in school, said "the children like school and are getting along well. There are no Hmong teachers at school, but that is no problem." Another parent, a widow, said, "I don't know (whether

he is getting a good education), but I think the school teaches him well, because he tells me how to say things in English. Also I know he is smart. He does very well in the first grade."

p. 48

A Hmong high school student reported:

I'm getting along all right, but my problem is that I don't know enough English to do well in school. I didn't know any English before I came here. The first year I took ESL along with a special math class for refugees and an elective - I don't remember what. I had three hours of ESL every day. The second year, I took some regular classes, but also an ESL class including reading and writing, two hours a day. Now (at a new school, his third in three years) I have math, English 10 and other classes. I think I will graduate in two more years.

Relations with Other Students

One secondary school teacher told us that harassment by other students is the biggest problem that Hmong students face at school, and the enmity and suspicion that exists between them and other groups of students must limit their opportunities for developing conversational fluency in English, besides whatever psychological effects it may have.

The Hmong high school students didn't want to say much on this subject, but it is clearly a matter of concern to them. One said that they didn't say anything when others teased them or called them names, because their parents had told them not to. Another, however, said that he and other Hmong students had gotten together after school one day to attack a boy who had repeatedly annoyed them.

Interrupted Education: The Problem of Older Youths

Young Hmong men and women who were of high-school age or just beyond when they arrived in the U.S. have posed a particular challenge for the public schools. Many of these students not only did not speak English but had little

p. 49

or no previous formal education. The policy of the schools has been to admit them to high school up to the age of 19 or 20 years. Placement has been made according to age, and, following the general practice of social promotion, Hmong students have been promoted from grade to grade without regard to academic accomplishment. In past years, those who reached the age of 20 without completing the number of credits required for graduation have been terminated with a certificate of attendance or a meaningless diploma. This problem is lessened now that few new Hmong refugees are arriving from Thailand. Those still in the schools can generally be expected to meet graduation requirements before they reach the cut-off age of 20.

In the Minneapolis Public Schools a new system of graduation requirements has been established under which an increasing number of credits (including ESL and bilingual education credits) are required for graduation by refugee students, so that within four years refugee (LEP) students would be required to meet all the same credit and course distribution requirements as other students in order to graduate.

Nevertheless, the policy of placing students by age, despite the generally accepted social benefits, has the effect of denying educational opportunities to persons who are still young but who did not have access to education during the usual "school years" because of war and displacement to refugee camps.

One well-educated Hmong gave this assessment:

The programs for refugees in the public schools are pretty well organized. The children are making good progress, particularly those who grew up here who are in the elementary grades. One problem is that those who came into high school with no English were placed according to their age, which probably makes them feel good, but which results in their being graduated without have learned much.

A Hmong public school teacher stated this view more strongly:

It is a mistake to place students by age rather than by level. In Laos a teen-aged student who hadn't been to school before would be expected to start at the beginning. p. 50

Another said:

I am very concerned about the youth. One problem is that young people are placed in school by age rather than by level of education. Youth 16 to 20 need a special program like the adult programs to orient them toward technical training.

The problem of providing Hmong refugees the opportunity of completing a high school education is complicated by another matter of government policy. Even though the public schools allow students to remain in high school up to the age of 20, policies governing public assistance make this impossible for many Hmong youth. As soon as they reach the age of 18 young men and women are no longer eligible for AFDC. As a result Hmong young people who may have had only two or three years of public education prior to age 18 may be forced to drop out of school, without having either learned English well or completed a secondary education. They then attempt to find employment, in competition with American young people who, at the same age, have had access to twelve years of full-time free public education.

Education or Marriage: The Drop-out Problem

School officials have recently become greatly concerned about another threat to the secondary education of Hmong youth. This is the fact that a very large number of Hmong girls are getting married and becoming pregnant and consequently dropping out of school, often as young as fifteen. Data from the St. Paul Public Schools indicate that as many as 80% of Hmong high school students in that city are married. Estimates of the number of Hmong girls dropping out of school prior to graduation now run as high as 90%. The schools provide support programs for pregnant teenagers and for school-age mothers

designed to keep these girls in school. But only a few of the Hmong girls have participated in these programs. p. 51

Planning for the Future

One American who works closely with Hmong high school youth has found that many of the teenagers worry about what will happen when they get out of high school. They worry about where their money will come from, and if one asks what they plan to do, they often simply say "look for work." For example, one young man, when asked about his plans after graduation, said, "I might go to Bible College or some other college or work. I don't have any ideas about what kind of work I might do. I want to stay in school if I can, but I would rather work myself than have my mother (a widow) have to go to work."

Thus, a common problem for the Hmong youth graduating from high school is they do not know what possibilities exist for them. They do not have the model of their parents to follow and they do not know the wide range of jobs and careers that can be pursued in American society, let alone the means to develop them. Because of this there is a need, in the view of Hmong college students, for more career counselling for teenagers while they are still in high school, so they will be able to make informed decisions when they graduate.

Despite the existence of strong Hmong MAAs and at least two organizations of Hmong college students, it appears that no one (with the possible exception of the Boy Scouts, who have recently been organizing Hmong and other Southeast Asian youth) has made any broad and sustained effort to help Twin Cities Hmong youth succeed in their studies and make realistic plans for higher education and employment.

p. 52

Opportunities for Higher Education

A small number of exceptional Hmong young people have found their way into institutions of higher education in the Twin Cities. The University of Minnesota has enrolled Hmong students for several years. At present there are approximately forty, including just one woman. (A second Hmong female student left the University in 1982 to get married.) Among these students are some older persons who never attended American public schools, including one former elementary school principal who knew very little English when he enrolled. Others are young people who have gone on to the University after graduating from local high schools. Those with little education or low English proficiency are placed in the General College, where they receive English instruction and tutoring as needed. Other students have been admitted to the University's Institute of Technology and the College of Liberal Arts. One student graduated in the spring of 1982 with a degree in political science and is now attending law school at Hamline University in Saint Paul.

The University's College of Education has organized a credentialing curriculum in bilingual education and has obtained a training grant to support a number of Hmong and Lao as well as Vietnamese and Spanish-speaking students beginning in January 1983. Most students in this program will be people who are currently teachers and teacher's aides in the public schools. Dr. Yang Dao, a Hmong scholar recently arrived from France, has been appointed to fill one of three part-time bilingual positions in the training program, to work with Hmong and Lao teacher trainees.

There has been a Lao Student Association at the University since 1980; its membership is mostly Hmong. Southeast Asian students at the University are served by the Asian/Pacific American Learning Resources Center, which employs

one Hmong student. Other Hmong students, some of whom qualify for the Work-Study program, have been employed part-time to assist in research activities of the University's Southeast Asian Refugee Studies Project.

p. 53

There are a number of small colleges in the Twin Cities that do or may in the future enroll Hmong students. Bethel College, located in a St. Paul suburb, has had one Hmong student each year for the past two years. Dr. William Smalley, a professor at Bethel College, has proposed a Hmong American Higher Education Coordinating Council in the Twin Cities. The Council would be concerned with the development of support services, social support systems, and what Smalley calls "support courses" in the curriculum in which Hmong and American students could instruct each other on a reciprocal basis; this scheme has been tried successfully at Bethel College.

An unknown number of Christian Hmong students are attending area Bible colleges. The sixteen Hmong families visited for this report included one young man who is a full-time student in a Bible college and a fifteen-year-old who is hoping to go to Bible college.

In the spring of 1983 an organization called Honor Hmong Opportunities for New Goals (H.M.O.N.G.) was formed in Minneapolis by a group of Hmong youth. The purposes of the organization are a) to provide financial aid to qualified Hmong students; b) to provide Hmong students with information about financial aid; and c) to inform the Hmong community regarding educational opportunities. The organization plans to apply to foundations and other organizations for scholarship funds to be distributed to Hmong applicants nationwide who demonstrate academic excellence. Recipients will be asked to contribute a share of income for five years after graduation. Sixteen men and four women attended a first general meeting of the organization on May 21, 1983. It remains to be seen whether the

organization will succeed in attracting the funding it needs for scholarships as well as for operating expenses.

p. 54

E. ESL For Adults

English as a second language (ESL) instruction for adults is often combined with the teaching of math and other skills required for self-sufficiency and, increasingly, with job training. Thus no clear distinction can be made between the questions addressed here and those addressed under Job Training.

Background

Both knowledge of English and literacy in any language are very low among the Hmong refugees, relatively lower than in the case of the Vietnamese and lowland Lao refugee

populations. In a meeting of household heads (all male) only 7 of 52 (13%) had had instruction in English before coming to the U.S. In a meeting with fifteen women attending a sewing class in a public housing project, none of them reported having had any formal education. Only one of the fifteen women had studied English prior to coming to the U.S.

The Hmong Community Survey indicates that 74% of Hmong adults over 12 in the Twin Cities had no education in Laos - 55% percent of the men and 89% of the women. Twenty-two percent of the men and 6% of the women had from one to three years of education. Only 23% of the men and 5% of the women had more than three years of schooling. One woman out of 448 spent ten or more years in school. In the same survey, 51% of respondents claimed to be able to read Hmong; 37% said they could read Lao.

A minority of Hmong, almost exclusively male, came to the U.S. with both a fair command of English and literate in at least one other language. One leader estimates the size of this group at 2 to 3 percent of the total local Hmong

p. 55 population. The older educated Hmong had a fair knowledge of French obtained in Laotian secondary schools and seem to have learned English relatively quickly, even if they knew little English on arrival. Others had received months of instruction in English from the U.S. military in Thailand during the war, especially those trained as pilots, air traffic controllers and radio operators. Most of those who knew English before coming to the U.S. came during the early years of resettlement, and thus have had several years to improve their English in the U.S. It is these people in the main who have been hired as bilingual staff in volags, government agencies, and educational programs, and as interpreters in hospitals and other agencies serving refugees.

However, as the above figures also indicate, the great majority of Hmong adults knew little or no English when they arrived. Only about one person per family was able to study English while in refugee camps. Very few of the Hmong have come from the camps recently enough to have benefitted from the current ESL curriculum now offered for America-bound refugees. Furthermore, since most adults had little or no formal education they lacked skills that are known to be important to successful adult second language learning: literacy and the experience of learning languages and other subjects in school.

In the Hmong Community Survey, respondents (usually heads of household) were asked to name the problems facing them or their families. "English" was the problem most often named, by 58% of all respondents - 71% of women respondents. (The second most often named problem was "no job," mentioned by 46% (42% of women).

ESL Programs in the Twin Cities

Four agencies have organized most of the ESL programs that serve adult Hmong refugees in the Twin Cities. The International Institute of Minnesota, in

p. 56

St. Paul, first set up ESL classes for Southeast Asian refugees in 1975. The Institute became the principal provider of ESL, offering numerous classes at a variety of locations in both St. Paul and Minneapolis. Institute staff developed a job-oriented ESL curriculum specifically for Hmong students. Funding cuts have recently reduced their involvement in instruction for refugees by more than 50%.

Also in St. Paul, an ESL program was established offering day classes for adults at the Adult Basic Continuing Education Center.

The Minneapolis Public Schools adult basic education and ESL program for refugees, with two centers, is a day program serving large numbers of Hmong adults. Total enrollment of adult ESL students is now 2,990. This program is currently facing the loss of funding for its child care operation for adult day students which has permitted many women to attend classes who otherwise could not. In addition to their day classes, both St. Paul and Minneapolis continuing education programs have evening ESL classes in various locations.

The fourth major agency is Lao Family Community, which has offered pre-ESL, Hmong literacy, and survival skills classes at their downtown St. Paul office since 1980.

Besides these programs, there are also funded ESL classes for refugees at the St. Paul Technical Vocational Institute in connection with their Adult Homemaking and Bilingual Vocational Programs, and, at advanced levels, at 916 Vo-tech in suburban White Bear Lake.

Teaching and tutoring by untrained volunteers, usually members of the congregation of sponsoring churches, has provided a supplement or an alternative to funded formal instructional programs from the beginning of Hmong resettlement. During the heaviest influx of Hmong refugees, in 1980, these volunteers

began to assume a more important role, when the funded programs were overwhelmed by the numbers of potential students and many arrivals were placed on waiting lists. p. 57

When federal and state funds for adult refugee ESL programs were cut, after 1981, and Hmong adults could no longer be served through funded programs, it became essential once again to look to volunteer efforts. The Minnesota Literacy Council received a grant from the State Refugee Office to establish and coordinate a statewide network of volunteer ESL teachers. Each volunteer is required to complete a weekend training course.

An instructional program with a special focus is the previously mentioned ESL program offered by Lao Family Community at their headquarters in downtown St. Paul, funded through the State Refugee Office. It is designed to serve the needs of illiterate adult refugees with little or no knowledge of English, offering instruction at two basic levels: Level 1 (Orientation) and Level 2 (Pre-ESL). The instructors are Hmong bilinguals. Students attend classes 20 hours per week for three months, and then are referred to regular ESL classes elsewhere. Repetition of the course is not permitted. The curriculum includes not only introductory ESL, but also Hmong literacy, survival skills and basic mathematics. The purpose of pre-ESL is to help bring students to the level of competence generally assumed in other ESL courses. According to the program's

director, it has succeeded with some students but not with others. The program serves up to 160 people per session.

The adult ESL programs in general recognized very early the necessity of providing instruction that was adapted to the level of the students and that focussed the content of instruction on the immediate communicative needs of the refugees. In many cases teachers have had success with modifying teaching

p. 58 methods and curricula in the direction of more realistic situational learning that integrates language learning with activities such as cooking, shopping, apartment hunting, measuring, etc.

Under mandate from the State refugee office, all programs since 1980 have developed a new focus on language needed for job hunting and employment rather than on general survival skills. Another recent policy change has drastically affected ESL classes that serve the Hmong: the State of Minnesota has imposed a 6-month limit on the length of time that refugees can receive free ESL instruction through programs supported by their funding.

Extent and Results of ESL Instruction Received by Hmong Adults

Some idea of how much ESL instruction has been provided to Hmong adults can be obtained from responses given at the household heads meetings. Three of the questions asked concerned ESL instruction in the United States:

How many of you have studied ESL in the U.S.? 84%

(Note that 13% had studied English prior to coming to the U.S., in Laos or Thailand.)

If you had ESL classes in the U.S., for how many months?

How many hours of instruction (in ESL) did you have per day?

(Not asked in one of the three groups of household heads.)

To obtain some indication of current competence in English the following questions were asked (not asked in one group):

p. 59 One group of male heads of household were asked for self-assessments of English ability on a four-point scale.

Among the fifteen women attending a women's meeting, ten (67%) had received ESL instruction in the U.S. None of these women had a full-time job, and they mentioned their limited English proficiency as a principal barrier to employment.

Figure V, on the next page, breaks down the reported English proficiency of the 305 heads of household in the Hmong Community Survey according to the length of time individual

respondents had been in the U.S. Note that only after five or more years in the U.S. do more than fifty percent of respondents claim to speak English “well” or “very well.” Only among those who have been in the U.S. longer than 18 months do as many as 20% give such a high evaluation of their English proficiency. Employment by time in the U.S. is shown for the same population, for comparison.

The story of one man's experience in trying to learn English may be typical of many.

p. 60

The ESL instruction was good as far as I'm concerned, but learning English is very hard for me because I never studied before, and I had to learn the ABC's and that was hard. The teacher would read first, and then we would follow. Also there was homework; we were supposed to fill in the missing words in the story, but I couldn't do it. The amount of time was not enough - two hours a day is not enough for people like me. Altogether I had ESL classes for one year.

p. 61

On the job now I am not able to speak to the boss. I had to get help to fill out the application form, and some other people who already worked (where he works) helped me get the job. I still have trouble using English on the job. If I have an idea, something I want to say to the boss, I just don't say it because I don't know how. When the boss wants to tell me something, he usually shows me, rather than using words. In the place where I work (one of the few employers willing to hire Hmong who don't already speak English), there are twenty Hmong in two groups, but none of them knows English any better than I do.

Hmong Assessment of Adult ESL Programs

The existence of exceptional ESL and vocational programs in St. Paul is often cited by resettlement workers as one of the factors that influenced the Hmong to settle in large numbers in the Twin Cities. At the July 1981 Hmong National Planning Conference, one of the recommendations put forth by a Hmong man from another state was that every locality be required to have ESL programs as good as those in St. Paul. Professional ESL teachers have shown both dedication and ingenuity in their response to the challenge of adapting traditional ESL methods and materials to the needs of illiterate adult refugees. Hundreds of volunteers have given many thousands of hours of their time to doing what they can to help the Hmong refugees in their communities to learn English.

In the Hmong Community Survey respondents were asked to indicate their degree of satisfaction with English classes on a 4-point scale. The responses “satisfied” or “very satisfied” were selected by 74%. Yet when asked to identify

current problems, 69% said that English was “a big problem” and 27% said it was “some problem.” Thus, the Hmong refugees who recognized their need to learn English as the chief obstacle facing them when they arrived in this country have not in general overcome that obstacle. They still see themselves confronting a language barrier, and they are now far less optimistic than before about overcoming it.

p. 62

A resettlement worker who works very closely with the Hmong summarized the matter this way:

Hmong say that their problems are no English and no jobs. Adult Hmong would go to school full time for English if they had the opportunity. They have a love for learning. There is the attitude that if they can speak English everything else will work out. They will get a job and many of their personal problems will be taken care of. They will be able to make it on their own. As it is now they cannot operate as individuals - they always need outside help to deal with the world.

One of the men interviewed, the head of a large family, seemed quite discouraged about learning English:

Life is very difficult for me. Language is the worst problem. Without English I cannot get a job. I don't like to live off the government. I have looked for a job many times. My teacher (an ESL teacher at a local church) is helping me. I am taking an English class at the church now. But I need training to get a job. I really doubt that the Americans will ever hire me. I would like to go back to Laos.

The frustration the Hmong feel is expressed in part in a wide range of criticisms of ESL programs and of policies regarding language training.

One of the most common complaints heard, from family heads in group meetings and from individuals in their homes, concerned the duration and intensity of ESL courses. Essentially none of the uneducated Hmong who were interviewed felt that they had received sufficient instruction in English to meet their needs. The only exception were some older people who have given up, who do not expect ever to be able to hold a job or venture into American society on their own.

p. 63 A common complaint was that two hours of English per day — the standard for classes at the International Institute — was too little, and that breaks and other interruptions had frequently cut their two hours to an hour and a half. Four to six hours of instruction per day, at least at the beginning, was the preferred amount. A Hmong college student gave this assessment of adult ESL:

The English program is not helping people to learn English. It should be two years of intensive classes. Maybe 5 hours a day. A lot of people get only an hour or two a day for a few months. People cannot possibly get jobs (at the end of their eligibility period) with this much English, when one considers that most people from Laos had no education.

Some felt, however, that the amount of ESL instruction per week did not need to be increased but that ESL instruction should be combined, from the beginning or from an early point, with job training. A Hmong employed in resettlement said, "English is still the key to employment. Job-related materials should be used in ESL classes. And there should be ESL instruction at the worksite."

There is less agreement on just how much ESL instruction is required to give the degree of fluency and literacy needed for social and economic self-sufficiency. But no one who has worked with the Hmong believes that six months of ESL is adequate to reach this goal. There are instructional programs at Lao Family Community and at the International Institute that require

from three to six months just to bring students up to the point where most ESL programs begin. Obviously the quality and intensity of instruction are related factors. The director of one adult ESL program expressed the belief that a pre-ESL course such as Lao Family Community now offers is essential for some Hmong students.

There were other criticisms and suggestions from Hmong regarding curricula. It seems to be the case that some ESL programs were slow to shift to a

survival-oriented focus for English instruction at the beginning and slow again to incorporate a focus on job-related English, although most have made the transition as now required by State policy. One Hmong leader said that people can go shopping without speaking English but they need English for almost any job. A Hmong working in job placement had this to say about adult ESL for the Hmong: p. 64

You must remember that people 40 to 60 years old had no education in Laos. These people don't learn enough in one year to be able to hold a job or even to drive a car. How can ESL be improved? For one thing, teach driving first. Then teach English related to the job, appropriate to the working environment - simulate the job situation. For the new arrivals, there should be six months of basic English, followed by a period of job training accompanied by English.

A suggestion heard from both Americans and Hmong was that it is not enough to have classes that teach English appropriate to the workplace; rather job training and language training should be combined or closely related.

Leaders of Lao Family Community have had the idea, for example, of training Hmong men in furniture-making and carpentry through on-the-job training with a component of ESL. A highly regarded model for such a curriculum is the training in intensive farming combined with relevant ESL instruction which is being offered to recruits to the Hiawatha Valley Project (Church World Service) at the Hennepin County Vocational Training Center.

This kind of training apparently can be effective when done on a volunteer basis as well. One seasonally employed household head described how his teacher at church had in fact given him a job working as a carpenter side-by-side with the teacher; he was very enthusiastic about how he was learning to speak, read and write English and do measurements and calculations as they worked.

One particular complaint had to do with the use of assigned textbooks. Students were asked by their teachers to buy expensive books. Then in class they only used portions of the books or the teachers told the students to study them at home on their own.

The most serious charge directed against ESL programs was brought forth independently by two groups of household heads. They felt that the adult ESL programs deliberately hire poorly qualified American teachers so that the refugee students will learn slowly and thus the programs will be able to continue receiving funds. Even if that charge is discounted, the fact remains that the qualifications of those who teach ESL vary from the professionally trained ESL specialist to persons with very little knowledge of the English language, language pedagogy, or p. 65

the problems and needs of illiterate students. Even the trained ESL teachers have typically had little or no preparation for the task of teaching beginning English and literacy to adults who are as linguistically and culturally different as the typical Hmong student.

One prominent Hmong spokesperson said:

I would like to see some changes in the ESL programs. The way it is now people start teaching at the second step, instead of the first step. Many (Hmong) people really do not understand that the letters for “table” signify the object called *table*. Teachers must begin with very basic A, B, C, as with children. Even when people have been here a long time they are not able to make the connection between writing and speaking. They need to understand this.

The teaching of basic literacy has been a challenge to all ESL programs. ESL teachers typically have had no training for teaching literacy. Teachers trained for Adult Basic Education (ABE) were not trained or accustomed to dealing with students just beginning to speak the language. Many programs are apparently still struggling with this problem. AB\$EA teachers have received training in ESL or are working with trained ESL teachers in continuing education/ABE programs for refugees. At Pratt School in Minneapolis, teachers start their Hmong students with pre-literacy activities designed to teach concepts of linearity and symbolic association before beginning actual teaching of writing.

p. 66 The instructional program at Lao Family Community is the only one that starts students with native language literacy taught by native speakers as a basis for the teaching of written English. (This is an approach used extensively in other countries such as Canada and Sweden.)

In principle the alternative to teaching literacy in Hmong first would be to develop at least moderate proficiency in speaking English before trying to teach students, especially illiterate students, to read and write it. But for practical reasons teachers have found it necessary to teach students to read warning signs, to write their name, address, and phone number, etc., very early in the course of instruction. This means that these things are often taught essentially by rote, without much understanding of the principles of writing.

A particular concern is the adult non-learner. There are a sizeable number of Hmong adults who make some initial progress in learning English and developing literacy and then reach a low plateau from which they seem unable to progress. One Hmong working in education said there are two distinct groups of Hmong learners: those who make steady progress through a course and then go on to succeed in further training or to get a job, and a second group who move through one ESL course after another, never making any progress. The individuals in this second group are not only older people; they include even persons in their twenties and thirties. They include those who were farmers in Laos and others who were primarily soldiers, but certainly not all the members of either of these groups.

Many different reasons are suggested for the existence of these non-learners. Many of the Hmong criticize the American teachers and their methods. They say teachers go too fast, refuse

to answer some questions, and assign homework the students are not prepared to do. One of the adult education

programs has accepted students that were dropped by another program and has seen them make slow progress. But even in the entry-level classes taught at Lao Family Community there are Hmong adults who do not make noticeable progress. One explanation offered is that these people have learning disabilities or emotional problems that interfere. Motivation is also suggested as a factor. These slow students are remarkably regular in attendance; some have finished one ESL course and then sought out and enrolled in a second or a third. But it is of course possible that they are enthusiastic about attending classes, meeting friends, doing what is expected of them, and yet not motivated to learn English because of a pessimistic or uncertain view of the future or a lack of confidence in their ability to comprehend, to learn, and to cope.

p. 67

Whatever the reasons it is clear that there are many Hmong adults who have not learned enough English to be socially self-sufficient and who make poor progress toward communicative competence in English even when enrolled in ESL classes.

IV. UNIQUENESS OF THE COMMUNITY: SUMMARY

p. 68

What stands out about Hmong resettlement in the Twin Cities is that the Hmong are the primary refugee group in the area and have been since 1979. Thus, the Hmong have received the most attention in the media, in volunteer efforts and in the design of refugee programs. Most refugee programs have been developed with the special problems of the Hmong in mind. Project RISE for example, was organized to serve the unskilled refugees; the organizers of the University's Agricultural Enterprise for New Americans were able to put together the resources it did because the Hmong are the dominant and most visible refugee population. In other cities the Hmong might be lumped with the Vietnamese or other Southeast Asians in the awareness of both the public and the service agencies; in Minnesota there is a tendency now among residents to refer to any Asian refugee as a Hmong.

The attention the Hmong receive in the Twin Cities continues to make the area an attractive place for the Hmong to stay even when there is little else to keep them here and much drawing them elsewhere.

The Twin Cities Hmong community is large and diverse. There are some individuals and families there that are doing well in their new lives, have good jobs and important roles in the community. There are many students in college who show ambition and leadership potential and there are students in the school system who are learning English and becoming more and more like American youth. The community is well organized with a strong mutual assistance association, and other organizations of youths and women working for the betterment of the Hmong. And there is a great deal of interest on the part of Americans in helping the Hmong in the Twin Cities; there are development projects large and small to be found throughout the area.

Nevertheless, the majority of the Hmong in the Twin Cities are not doing well. Unemployment and welfare dependence is high, learning of English is progressing slowly, and there are not many available jobs for unskilled people like the Hmong. In general the mood in the Twin Cities Hmong community is one of frustration and depression. Hope for many Hmong is slipping or gone. Many appear to be resigned to being dependent for the rest of their lives while they dream of returning to Laos.

A. Major Problems

English Language and Literacy

While some of the Hmong interviewed said that finding jobs was the major problem facing Hmong refugees in the Twin Cities, many others spoke of inadequate mastery of English as the most serious and pervasive problem. Not all jobs require formal education or special training. But it is widely believed, by the Hmong themselves and others, that most Hmong need to know more English than they do now in order to successfully compete for jobs or to retain a job once they have one, except where bilinguals are available to help with communication. For jobs above the minimum wage level, which many household heads require if they are to support their large families, a fairly good command of English is needed in order for them to receive the necessary training, to compete for a position successfully, or to communicate as needed on the job.

Only those Hmong presently under the age of 25 or so, who have been able to attend public schools in this country, and the few Hmong adults (perhaps 2 to 3 percent) who had substantial education and/or knowledge of English at the time of their arrival in the U.S., seem to have an adequate command of English.

A tremendous effort has been made in the Twin Cities to provide English as a second language instruction for the refugees from Southeast Asia, with special attention to the needs of the Hmong. Although the quality of instruction in ESL and literacy may not always have been the best, and could certainly be improved, the impression was that the Hmong who had complaints about the ESL instruction available to them were most concerned about the duration rather than the quality of instruction. They felt that both the duration and the intensity of ESL classes for Hmong refugees should be increased, whereas in fact the length of time during which a Hmong adult is eligible for subsidized ESL instruction has been reduced over time. Several Hmong felt that English instruction should be combined with job training or employment, either from the beginning or from an early point in the course of instruction, so that both English and job skills could be developed simultaneously and in association with one another.

Minimum Wage Jobs and Medical Benefits

A second major problem is that the low-paid jobs for which Hmong are most likely to qualify - janitorial, house-keeping, assembly, etc. - do not provide sufficient income to meet the needs of the typical large Hmong family. In many cases there is at most one person in a household

who meets even minimum qualifications for employment, and child-care responsibilities may keep the woman of the house out of the labor force.

Quite often a family is already receiving more through cash assistance programs than can be earned if the household head takes a job. Taking a job means not only the loss of this cash assistance but also the loss of medical cost protection (few minimum wage jobs provide health insurance) and often an increase in housing costs (if the family lives in public housing) and transportation costs.

The Need for Guidance and Information

p. 71

There are a number of problems that fall under the general heading of inadequate planning for the successful adjustment of individual families. Family heads often have too little knowledge of American life and the possibilities for education, employment, business ventures, etc., to make realistic plans for themselves. The advice they receive from various individuals or agencies is often short-term and may also be unrealistic. As secondary migrants to the Twin Cities, a large percentage of the Hmong population has no ties to local sponsors or sponsoring agencies. Individuals move from one ESL program or training program or employment service to another without reference to any overall employment or adjustment plan. The Hmong in general are pretty much “at sea,” with too little understanding of what they can and cannot do and how to do what they can to get ahead. This is as true for young people of high school age as it is for the older adults.

Women heads of household, unless they have grown sons, face particular difficulties because they tend not even to have the support of the MAA organizations (including women's support groups). A young widowed head of household, for example, when asked if she ever went to Lao Family Community for information or English classes, responded that only women with husbands were members of LFC.

Distrust of Americans

A tone of general distrust of Americans was expressed by many of the Hmong we interviewed. The feeling was summed up by one man who commented that the Hmong worry that the Americans are only trying to help them because there is federal money around to pay their salaries. This charge was also made against ESL programs specifically.

One Hmong commented that Americans were purposely trying to put the Hmong into low-income jobs so they would never get ahead. Training programs are seldom paid for by the government, he said, and when they are, only for the lower paying jobs such as housekeeping and kitchen work.

p. 72

The other source of distrust is a growing sense of broken promises. Hmong men are quick to point out that they fought for the CIA and the CIA promised they would take care of the Hmong forever. “Otherwise,” one man commented, “why should we fight for them?” They see the

broken promises continuing today with the cuts in the refugee program. Cuts in cash assistance and service programs have worried many Hmong.

B. Impediments to Solving Problems

Obviously the present economic climate of the United States makes it more difficult for the Hmong to achieve self-sufficiency. With unemployment above seven percent in the state of Minnesota at the end of 1982, even American citizens with work experience and job skills were finding themselves dependent on public assistance. Competition for entry-level jobs has increased, at the same time that funds for education and social programs of all kinds have undergone drastic cuts. In these circumstances only extraordinary efforts are likely to succeed in obtaining for the Hmong jobs that pay a living wage.

The progress of Hmong resettlement in the Twin Cities received a serious set-back as a result of the decision to reduce RCA eligibility from 36 to 18 months. Although the change did force some Hmong to seek and find employment sooner than they would have otherwise, available evidence indicates that most Hmong have not received sufficient English instruction or training to be self-sufficient in the U.S. in so short a time.

p. 73 Similarly, the State policy of restricting funded ESL instruction to six months ignores the obvious needs of the many Hmong adults who on arrival in this country lack education, literacy and knowledge of English. The Hmong without previous education or literacy in their own language have more to learn to attain even a basic level of English proficiency.

The present welfare system as it exists in Minnesota provides a disincentive for Hmong adults to seek employment. This is because all government assistance including protection from health care costs is lost as soon as a person accepts a job, even though the job often provides, by itself, less income and no medical coverage. Similarly, Hmong who take a job and subsequently lose it are often penalized for taking it by permanent loss of their eligibility for AFDC benefits.

Not all of the impediments to resettlement are related to economic conditions and the reductions in government assistance, of course.

Factionalism within the Hmong community, to the extent that it exists, is an impediment to successful resettlement. And many of the problems already described — the lack of previous education, the customary early marriage and large families, and the inclination of the Hmong not to be aggressive in seeking jobs, in securing their rights as tenants, or in responding to insults and verbal and physical attacks by Americans — may also be thought of as impediments to successful social and economic adaptation.

p. 74

V. THE FUTURE OF THE HMONG IN THE TWIN CITIES

A Sense of the Future

In our conversations with the Hmong we often asked whether they thought the Hmong way of living and the Hmong language should be kept in succeeding generations.

Answers ranged from yes, forever, to well, it will change, our children will become more like Americans. There was a greater stress placed on keeping Hmong language than on keeping traditional ways of living.

When we asked about plans for the future, very few people had a well-developed sense of how they would like to live in the future. Some simply dream about going back to Laos, others worry about more welfare cuts, but few have an idea of how their life might proceed here.

It might be that for the Hmong, coming from a traditional society where life changes very slowly from one generation to the next and where the primary goal is to maintain society in the way it has always been, it is hard to conceptualize a future full of changes for the Hmong. Aspiring to a new life and planning for new adjustments is a novel problem for many Hmong. It is difficult to conceive of life five years or ten years from now when the possibilities are unknown.

One man commented that, though he would like his children to continue to live in the Hmong way, he will die and he will have no control over the situation.

Hmong Goals

The goal expressed by most Hmong of working age in the Twin Cities was an immediate one: to have a job that will provide an adequate and reliable source

of income to support their families. Because they feel uncertain about the possibility of obtaining a job, or a job that provides sufficient income, with their present level of English and, for some, their present skills, most would welcome additional opportunities to obtain English language instruction and job training. Many feel that additional monetary assistance while obtaining the necessary training is needed if they are to succeed in their goal of becoming "good," productive, and self-reliant citizens. Despite problems of discrimination, poor health, crowded housing, and an unfamiliar and hostile climate, not to mention the great personal losses they have suffered in the course of war and exile from their homeland, the only important concern of these people - and it is of great concern to them - is to have the possibility of working and earning enough to meet their basic needs for food, clothing, shelter, necessary transportation, and medical care.

p. 75

There are some individuals who do not share this majority view of things. Many of the elderly, women who are heads of household, and some others have lost hope concerning their ability to succeed on their own. They are willing to depend on their offspring or other relatives, if they have any, or on the welfare system or both for support. More than the others, they are unable to

see a future for themselves in this place; they long in vain for a return to a different land and a different time.

The younger people were the only ones whose expressed hopes were set higher than immediate self-sufficiency. Those who had made it to college plan to prepare themselves - in law or business management or Bible studies - to fill leadership positions in which they can be of service to their people. High school boys who do not aspire to higher education are nevertheless concerned that the needs of their families might prevent them from obtaining the training

- p. 76 they want. Their concerns are aggravated by the government policy of cutting off cash benefits for them at the age of 18 even if they haven't received a high school diploma. The majority of Hmong high school girls have apparently chosen or been forced by traditional expectations to pin their hopes for the future on marriage and a secure role of child-bearing and child-rearing. The goals of the more educated and acculturated members of the Hmong community, who for the most part already have adequate incomes, seem to be centered around the possibilities of business ventures owned and controlled by Hmong which can provide employment for other Hmong. Their ideas for Hmong businesses include agricultural enterprises at this point but certainly not to the exclusion of other opportunities.

Secondary Migration

Will the Hmong, who have flocked to St. Paul and Minneapolis in such large numbers, remain in the Twin Cities? An answer is suggested by the statement of more than one of the Hmong men that they would be willing to go anywhere for a good job. The Hmong have no ties in Minnesota except to the relatives and friends who are here. What brought them here, apart from the reuniting of families, was the promise of kind treatment and good educational opportunities. What will take them elsewhere now is loss of government support, failure to find employment, and a job offer or the greater possibility of supporting themselves somewhere else. The possibility of farming, the security provided by a family garden, and a liberal welfare program to fall back on in case things don't work out are all part of the attraction that the Central Valley of California has already exerted on some.

p. 77 The Possibility of Repatriation

Several Hmong commented that one reason life was better back in Laos was because there was more freedom there. In Laos, before the war and the communist victory, there was a different kind of freedom: a freedom to live however one liked without government intervention. Hmong complain there are too many rules and regulations here. One is always dependent on someone else to stay alive, and it is hard to continue life in the Hmong way. In Laos people were assured of a source of livelihood, they had control over their destinies, and government was far away. People could live the Hmong way without intervention. They could grow food, build a house or move almost anywhere they liked. In the U.S. there are severe restrictions on their way of life.

Because of the restrictions, and the immersion in a completely alien society, most Hmong adults do not feel comfortable here. This is shown in responses obtained in the Hmong Community Survey (Table VIII). Most Hmong would return to Laos if ever the opportunity presented itself. In the HCS, 86% reported that they would like to go back to Laos.

There is a time factor involved in the growing disillusionment with life in the United States. One man, who arrived in 1976, said that when he first p. 78

arrived he was very excited about being in the United States. He felt this was where he could build a new life and forget about Laos. He had this attitude for about a year, but then he slowly became disillusioned. This man has done well materially, he speaks English and has a good job, but the longer he lives here the more uncomfortable he feels. Now he feels, he said, as if he is in jail. p. 79

Feelings about returning to Laos range from a desire to stay here so as to provide better opportunities for the children to an intense desire to go back and fight. Some men have expressed outright the willingness to follow Hmong military leaders back to Laos and fight to retake the country from the Communists. Others comment they never planned to stay in the United States permanently; rather they came to get away from the war for a while and get some training, then return to Laos when the situation stabilizes. The majority who would like to go back would only return if the Communists left and there was no more war. Most Hmong are tired of war.

Although the Hmong General Vang Pao has continued to talk about a possible return to Laos, he emphasizes the fact that the welfare of the Hmong in the United States takes priority at the present time (interview with Vang Pao in St. Paul, December, 1982). In a speech given in Hmong to the Hmong in the Twin Cities in 1981, General Vang Pao admonished them to take any job that is offered, to be assertive in seeking jobs, to establish businesses to serve their own community, and to work toward becoming American citizens.

It remains an open question whether the strong desire to return to their homeland, expressed as an active hope by some, will negatively affect the adaptation of the Hmong to life in the United States, or whether it will be overcome by a commitment to make a new life for themselves, and especially their children, in this country.

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p. APPENDIX

DIRECTORY OF REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT PROJECTS IN THE TWIN CITIES

Prepared by Mary Jane Lipinsky for Partners of the Americas, Fellowships in International Development, University of Minnesota Agricultural Extension Service, May 1983.

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