

The State of Hmong-American Studies

Presentation by

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The State of Hmong-American Studies Presentation Outline

- A. Hmong 2000 Census Study – A comprehensive compilation and analysis of Hmong-American demographics, socioeconomic status and educational status across states
- B. Key Publications in Sub-Realms of Hmong-American Studies
- C. Areas in Need of Increased Scholarly Attention in Hmong-American Studies

Hmong 2000 Census Publication: Data and Analysis

- Year-long census data compilation and analysis project was a partnership between the Hmong Cultural and Resource Center and Hmong National Development and 11 scholars
- The project represented the first time detailed tables had been compiled from raw census data to compare the population, demographics, socioeconomic and educational status of Hmong in different states.
- Census enumerated Hmong distributions on all of the variables were compared in the 16 U.S. states with the largest Hmong populations and the U.S. as a whole
- Hmong-American Studies Scholars contributed 6 analysis articles related to educational issues, poverty, homeownership and family composition (marriage rates, household size etc.)
- The Hmong 2000 census publication may be ordered at:
<http://www.hmongstudies.org/orhmoncenrep.html>

Issues with Hmong-American Census Data

U.S. Hmong census enumerations are almost certainly significant undercounts

- The Language Barrier may have prevented some families from filling out the census form
- A person only counted as “Hmong” if they took the initiative to write in “Hmong” as their ethnicity on the census form.
- Many families may be distrustful of providing information to the government about income etc. due to past experiences as a minority in Laos and Thailand

Hmong Population in the U.S. (2000 U.S. Census)

- 186,310 Hmong counted in the 2000 U.S. Census
- Hmong National Development in Washington D.C. estimates the actual Hmong population is about 275,000 in the U.S.
- **Top 10 Hmong Populations by State**
 1. California – 65,095
 2. Minnesota – 41,800
 3. Wisconsin – 33,791
 4. North Carolina – 7,093
 5. Michigan – 5,383
 6. Colorado – 3,000
 7. Oregon – 2,101
 8. Georgia – 1,468
 9. Washington – 1,294
 10. Massachusetts – 1,127

Hmong Population in the U.S.

2000 U.S. Census

- **Top 10 Hmong Metropolitan Areas in the U.S.**
 1. Minneapolis-St. Paul, MN – 40,707
 2. Fresno, CA – 22,456
 3. Sacramento-Yolo, CA – 16,261
 4. Milwaukee-Racine, WI – 8,078
 5. Merced, CA – 6,148
 6. Stockton-Lodi, CA – 5,653
 7. Appleton-Oshkosh-Neenah, WI – 4,741
 8. Wausau, WI – 4,453
 9. Hickory-Morganton-Lenoir, NC – 4,207
 10. Detroit-Ann Arbor-Flint, MI – 3,926

The photo shows a Hmong business on the East Side of Saint Paul, MN. With more than 25,000 Hmong residents, Saint Paul has the largest Hmong population of any city in the U.S.



Hmong Demographics in the U.S.

2000 U.S. Census

- Median Age of the Hmong Population in the U.S.: 16.1 Years compared to 35.3 years among the entire population of the United States
- % of the Hmong Population in the U.S. under 18 Years Old: 56% compared to 25.7% of the entire U.S. Population
- Average Hmong Household Size per occupied Housing Unit: 6.27 persons compared to 2.59 persons among the entire U.S. Population

The photo is from the 2002 Hmong New Year in Green Bay, WI. It was published by the Hmong Times Newspaper, September 15, 2002.

Hmong-American Demographics (Age, Household Size) do not differ greatly between states i.e. MN, CA, WI etc.



U.S. Hmong Educational Status (2000 U.S. Census)

Educational Attainment

- 50.7% of all adult Hmong-Americans have less than a 9th Grade education compared to 7.5% of the entire U.S. population
- 40.4% of all adult Hmong-Americans have earned a high school diploma or higher compared to 80.4% of the entire U.S. population
- 7.5% of adult Hmong-Americans have earned a Bachelor's Degree or higher compared to 24.4% of the entire U.S. population
- The percentage of Hmong with a high school diploma and a Bachelor's Degree have more than doubled since 1990 showing considerable educational progress among Hmong people in America
- 2000 Census Figures show Hmong men's educational attainment still exceeds that of Hmong women, though the gap narrowed between 1990 and 2000. Anecdotal evidence suggests women have eliminated the gap and perhaps even pulled ahead in terms of enrollment and completion of higher education.

U.S. Hmong Socioeconomic Status (2000 Census)

- The U.S. Hmong Median Family Income in 1999 was \$32,076 compared to \$41,994 among the entire U.S. population.
- There is a wide variation in median income among Hmong populations across the U.S. according to the census. Hmong Median Income exceeds \$50,000 in Georgia and Colorado but is only \$24,542 in California and \$25,179 in Alaska.
- 30.3% of U.S. Hmong Families had Public Assistance Income in 1999 compared to 3% of all U.S. Families.
- The percentage of U.S. Hmong Families with Public Assistance Income fell from over 60% to 30% between 1989 and 1999.
- 50 percent of Hmong in California and 70 percent of Hmong in Alaska reported receiving public assistance income in 1999 compared to less than 10 percent in Georgia, South Carolina, Rhode Island, Oregon, Washington, North Carolina and Massachusetts.
- 34.8% of U.S. Hmong Families lived below the Poverty Level in 1999 compared to 12% of all U.S. Families.
- The percentage of U.S. Hmong Families living below the Poverty Level fell from nearly 70% to about 35% between 1989 and 1999.
- Hmong Poverty rates exceeded 50% in California and Alaska in 1999 but were below 20% in Georgia, Rhode Island, North Carolina, Massachusetts, South Carolina, Oregon and Colorado.

U.S. Hmong Socioeconomic Status (2000 Census)

- In terms of job distribution, by far the largest percentage of U.S. Hmong adults were concentrated in Manufacturing Jobs – 38.9% - in 2000, this compares to the 14.1% of the entire U.S. adult population who worked in Manufacturing Jobs
- The states with the highest distribution of Hmong men and women in manufacturing jobs were South Carolina, North Carolina, Massachusetts and Wisconsin (more than half of employed Hmong adults in these states worked in manufacturing.
- The states with the lowest distribution of Hmong men and women in manufacturing jobs were Alaska and California.

- In terms of homeownership, about 39% of enumerated U.S. Hmong in 2000 reported they owned their homes (as opposed to renting units) compared to just 13% in 1990. In most states, more than half of Hmong owned their homes. About 2/3 of all Americans own their homes.

- In California, however, the enumerated Hmong homeownership rate was only 16% in 2000, driving down the national Hmong figure given the large size of the California Hmong population.

Other Social Characteristics (2000 U.S. Census)

Disability Status

- Hmong in the U.S. were somewhat *less* likely to report having one disability compared to the U.S. population as a whole but were somewhat *more* likely to report having two or more disabilities.
- Hmong reporting more than one disability were *overrepresented* in the categories of having a mental disability, self-care disability, go-outside-home disability and employment disability.
- Hmong were *less* likely compared to the U.S. population as a whole to report having a sensory disability or a physical disability.

Linguistic Isolation

- The percentage of enumerated U.S. Hmong households reporting linguistic isolation (no adults speaking English well or at all) was 34.8% compared to 4.1% of the entire U.S. population.
- Hmong families are becoming less linguistically isolated. Linguistic Isolation was enumerated as over 60 percent of Hmong households in 1990.

Hmong Statistical Information Resources

- Hmong 2000 Census Publication: Data and Analysis by Hmong Cultural and Resource Center and Hmong National Development, 2004. (Extensive tables and scholarly analysis). May be ordered at <http://www.hmongstudies.org/orhmoncenrep.html>
- Southeast Asian Census Information Center at the Hmong Cultural and Resource Center in Saint Paul (Census printouts for Hmong, Lao, Vietnamese, and Cambodians in the U.S. and Upper Midwest, worksheets on how to access Southeast Asian American census data).
- www.hmongstudies.org and www.hmongcenter.org, population counts of Hmong in every U.S. state and metropolitan area by state, primers on how to access Hmong census data.

Key Publications in Sub-Realms of Hmong-American Studies

An Overview of the Field

- The Hmong Resource Center Library in Saint Paul now possesses more than 150 dissertations/theses and 450 journal articles related to Hmong-Americans (as opposed to Hmong in Asia and other countries)
- The vast majority of works in Hmong-American Studies have been published since 1994
- Increasing numbers of scholarly works are being produced by persons of Hmong-origin, particularly professors and graduate students at American universities. Only about 10% of the publications in 3 earlier bibliographies published by U of Minnesota had Hmong-origin authors, while 132 of 536 (25%) of Hmong Studies publications published since 1996 cited in the Hmong Resource Center's 1996-2004 annotated bibliography had at least one Hmong-origin author.

Studies in Health and Medicine

Two seminal studies related to Hmong-Americans and Health and Medicine published in the last 3 years

- Healing by Heart: Clinical and Ethical Case Stories of Hmong Families and Western Providers (2003), edited by Kathleen A. Culhane-Pera, et al. Nashville: Vanderbilt University.
- Dia Cha's Hmong American Concepts of Health, Healing and Conventional Medicine (2003). New York: Routledge.

Studies of Educational Issues

Not really any seminal works in this field, but a lot of studies of specific issues pertaining to Hmong-American education

Hmong Students Experiences with the American Education System

- Stacey J. Lee. (2001). "Learning 'America': Hmong American High School Students." *Education and Urban Society* 34(2): 233-246.
- Stacey J. Lee. (2001). "More than 'model minorities' or 'delinquents': A look at Hmong American high school students." *Harvard Educational Review* 71(3): 505-528

Hmong Students and Social Issues

- Zha Blong Xiong (2000). Hmong American parent-adolescent problem-solving interactions: An analytic induction analysis, PhD dissertation. University of Minnesota.
- Mai Xiong. (2002). A descriptive study of Hmong youth gang members in the California Central Valley. EdD Dissertation, University of the Pacific.

Studies of Gender Issues

In general, Hmong-American Girls and Women have received a lot more attention than Hmong-American Boys and Men by researchers

- Nancy Donnelly. (1994). Changing Lives of Refugee Hmong Women.
- Stacey J. Lee. (2001). "Transforming and exploring the landscape of gender and sexuality: Hmong American teenaged girls." *Race, Gender, and Class*. 8(2):35-46.
- Kou Yang. (1997). "Hmong Mens' Adaptation to Life in the United States." *Hmong Studies Journal* 1(2): http://hmongstudies.learnabouthmong.org/Hmongstudies%20Journal%20PDFs/HSJ-v1n2_Yang.pdf
- Stacey J. Lee. (2003). "Hmong American Masculinities: Creating New Identities in the U.S." In *Adolescent Boys: Exploring Diverse Cultures in Boyhood*. Eds. Way, N., and J.Y. Chu. New York: New York University Press, 13-31.

Studies of Family Life and Family Relationships

Marriage Issues

- Bic Ngo. (2002). "Contesting 'Culture': The Perspectives of Hmong American Female Students on Early Marriage." *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* 33(2): 163-188.

Hmong Clans and Family Life

- Xong Moua (2001). "Hmong Clan Leaders' Roles and Responsibilities." MSW Thesis, California State University, Fresno.
- Julie Anne Keown-Bomar. (2003). *Relative abilities: Hmong-American kinship in Wisconsin*, PhD Dissertation, University of Minnesota. (This dissertation has also been adapted and published into a book).

Oral and Family Histories

- Lillian Faderman. (1998). *I Begin My Life All Over: The Hmong and the American Immigrant Experience* (Boston: Beacon Press).
- Sucheng Chan (Ed). (1994). *Hmong means free: Life in Laos and America*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- D.C. Everett Area Schools. (2001). *The Hmong and Their Stories*, Weston, WI: D.C. Everett Area Schools.
- Sue Murphy Mote. (2004). *Hmong and American: Stories of Transition to a Strange Land*. Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland and Company, Publishers.

Studies of Religious Adaptation

- Most studies of Hmong traditional religion have been done by scholars studying Hmong populations in East and Southeast Asia
- Much more work particularly needs to be done related to Hmong-American maintenance and adaptation of traditional Hmong religion as well how religion impacts perceptions of social issues in Hmong-American communities

Studies of Hmong-American Religious Adaptation

- Gregory A. Plotnikoff, Charles Numerich, Chu Wu, Deu Yang and Phua Xiong. (2003). "Hmong Shamanism: Animist Spiritual Healing in Minnesota." *Minnesota Medicine* 85(6): 29-34.
- Donald Hones. (2001). "The word: Religion and literacy in the life of a Hmong American." *Religious Education* (4): 489-509.
- Rev. Timothy Vang. (1998). *Coming a full circle: Historical analysis of the Hmong church growth, 1950-1998*. D. Min. dissertation, Fuller Theological Seminary.

Studies of Hmong-American Cultural Consumption and Production

An interesting new realm of scholarly inquiry that investigates cultural exchanges and the creative construction of cultural images and perceptions of Hmong history among Hmong-Americans interacting with Hmong in Asia and elsewhere in the world

- Louisa Schein (2004). "Homeland Beauty: Transnational Longing and Hmong American Video." *The Journal of Asian Studies* 63(2): 433-463.

Nicholas Tapp and Roberta Julian have studied these issues as well in research conducted with the Hmong diaspora community in Australia:

- Roberta Julian. (2004). "Living Locally, Dreaming Globally: Transnational Cultural Imaginings and Practices in the Hmong Diaspora." In *The Hmong of Australia: Culture and Diaspora*. Eds. Nicholas Tapp and Gary Yia Lee. Canberra, Australia: Pandanus Books, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, The Australian National University, 25-58.
- Nicholas Tapp. (2004). "Hmong Diaspora in Australia." In *The Hmong of Australia: Culture and Diaspora*. Eds. Nicholas Tapp and Gary Yia Lee. Canberra, Australia: Pandanus Books, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, The Australian National University, 59-96.

Studies of Socioeconomic Incorporation

Most of the existing works related to Hmong socioeconomic status consist of locality studies – studies of Hmong in a particular city or region

- Ines M. Miyares (1998). *The Hmong refugee experience in the United States: Crossing the river*, New York: Garland. (Fresno)
- Jo Ann Kolytk. (1998). *New Pioneers in the Heartland: Hmong Life in Wisconsin*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon. (Wausau)
- Cathleen Jo Faruque. (2002). *Migration of Hmong to the Midwestern United States*. Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America. (Rochester, MN)
- With the exception of the Hmong Cultural and Resource Center and Hmong National Development's Hmong 2000 Census Publication, there is no contemporary work that has looked at the socioeconomic status of Hmong-Americans from a comparative (looking at different states) or national perspective.

Studies of Race Relations

- Jeremy Hein. (1999). "Interpersonal Discrimination Against Hmong Americans: Parallels and Variation in Microlevel Racial Inequality." *Sociological Quarterly* 41(3): 413-429. (Wisconsin)
- Jeremy Hein and Randall Beger (2001). "Immigrants, Culture, and American Courts: A Typology of Legal Strategies and Issues in Cases Involving Vietnamese and Hmong Litigants." *Criminal Justice Review* 26(1): 38-60. (Wisconsin)
- Choua Ly. (2001). "The conflict between law and culture: The case of the Hmong in America." *Wisconsin Law Review*. 2: 471-499. (Wisconsin)

Studies of Hmong-American Achievements and Social Issues Within Hmong-American Communities

- Kou Yang. (2001). "The Hmong in America: Twenty Five Years after the U.S. Secret War in Laos." *Journal of Asian American Studies* 4(2): 165-174.
- Kou Yang. (2003). "Hmong Americans: A Review of Felt Needs, Problems, and Community Development" *Hmong Studies Journal* 4:1-23.
<http://hmongstudies.learnabouthmong.org/Hmongstudies%20Journal%20PDFs/Hmong-Americans-Needs-Yang.pdf>
- Scholarly Exploration of Social Diversity *within* Hmong-American communities and comparative research of socio-economic experiences and race relations experiences between different Hmong communities across the United States is sorely needed

Research Resources – Bibliographies and Journal Articles

- Mark E. Pfeifer. (2004). Annotated Bibliography of Hmong-Related Works: 1996-2004. St. Paul, MN: Hmong Cultural and Resource Center.
- 30 online subject bibliographies in Hmong Studies online at www.hmongstudies.org (Hmong Studies Internet Resource Center)
- J. Christina Smith. (1996). The Hmong: 1987-1995: A Selected and Annotated Bibliography, Minneapolis, MN: Refugee Studies Center, University of Minnesota.
- J. Christina Smith. (1988). The Hmong, An Annotated Bibliography, 1983-1987. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota, Center for Urban and Regional Affairs.
- Douglas P. Olney. (1983). A Bibliography of the Hmong (Miao). Minneapolis, MN: Southeast Asian Refugee Studies Project, University of Minnesota.
- Hmong Studies Journal (peer-reviewed internet-based journal with 5 volumes and more than 30 articles on Hmong Studies issues published since 1996).
www.hmongstudies.org/

Research Resources – Library Collections and Archives

- Southeast Asian Archive, University of California at Irvine
<http://www.lib.uci.edu/libraries/collections/sea/sasian.html>
- Hmong Resource Center Library at the Hmong Cultural Center (Saint Paul, MN)
www.hmongcenter.org
- Hmong Nationality Archives (Saint Paul, MN)
www.hmongarchives.org

Areas in Need of Increased Scholarly Attention in Hmong-American Studies

- Indepth studies of Hmong demographics and socioeconomic trends in communities across the United States from 2000 census data
- More Research on educational outcomes and acculturation (in terms of language use, test scores, graduation rates of the first generation of Hmong born and raised in the United States). This 2nd generation will be compared to the other immigrant children and youth born and raised in the United States including Mexican, Vietnamese, and Hispanic groups as well as other racial minorities.
- Investigation of gender differentials in educational attainment between young Hmong-American women and men. No comprehensive contemporary analysis of this issue has yet been published though anecdotes suggest enrollments and retention of Hmong-American women may exceed that of men in many educational institutions.

Areas in Need of Increased Scholarly Attention in Hmong-American Studies

- Works that examine the growing *social, political and cultural complexity* and *diversity* of the Hmong community in the United States and that explore generational, gender, and religious differences in views toward different issues. It is very misleading to make vast generalizations about a monolithic "Hmong community." The new Hmong refugees come to the U.S. from Wat Thamkrabok in Thailand in 2004 and 2005 will add to the complexity of the community considerably.
- An example of an issue(s) of in great need of scholarly analysis: a study of how *religious affiliation* (traditional Hmong religion/evangelical Christian etc.) *influences views* and divides the community's views toward proposed Hmong marriage (Mej Koob) legislation in Minnesota. Religious affiliation greatly influences views of segments of the community toward many social issues but this reality is almost completely missed by policymakers and many community members.

Areas in Need of Increased Scholarly Attention in Hmong-American Studies

- In-depth examinations of local level racial attitudes toward Hmong and racial discrimination (individual and institutional) against Hmong-Americans in the wake of the very negative and stereotyping media reporting of the tragic incident in Northern Wisconsin in November 2004.
- There is still a great need for a comprehensive and authoritative two-way Hmong-English/English Hmong dictionary

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