

**Hmong Parental Involvement and Support: A Comparison Between Families of  
High and Low Achieving High School Seniors.**

**By**

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## **Abstract**

The Hmong are some of the newest refugees who have settled in the United States with population estimates around 300,000. Unfortunately research has shown many Hmong children are not as successful in their education as their peers. Parental involvement in education has consistently been shown to impact academic success and attendance in higher education programs. Little is known about Hmong parental involvement in their children's education process. Therefore, this study was done to compare and contrast the general family characteristics, parenting methods, parental involvement philosophies, parental involvement experiences, and parental education expectations in Hmong families of high school seniors classified as either high academic achievers or low achievers. Students were classified into either higher or lower academic achievement groups based on their high school cumulative GPA. Five students were randomly selected for each group and a qualitative research interview method was used to interview the students and both of their parents (n=30). The findings showed the parents of the higher academic achieving students were younger, had higher levels of education, and had better relationships and trust with the students. Parents from both groups did not have any written rules for their children to follow at home, they mainly became involved in their children's education during the elementary and middle school years, and they did not have any specific preference of an educational level, career, or school for their children after high school. Recommendations for ways Hmong families can be encouraged to participate more in education are made.

## **Introduction**

The Hmong are some of the newest refugees who have settled in the United States. The majority came to the United States after the end of the Vietnam War. The U.S. Census of 2000 showed that there were 169,428 Hmong living all over the United States but the three states that had the highest concentrations were California, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. In 2000, there were 65,095 Hmong living in California, 41,800 in Minnesota, and 33,791 in Wisconsin (UW Eau Claire, 2000; Hmong National Development and Hmong Cultural Center, 2004; UW Extension, 2004). However, some Hmong scholars and community leaders have suggested that the U.S Census of 2000 undercounted the Hmong population. The correct population could actually be around 300,000 (Lemoine, 2006).

Most of the adults or first generation Hmong who live in the US today came from Laos which is a developing country in Southeast Asia, located between Vietnam, Thailand, Burma, China, and Cambodia. When in Laos, the Hmong lived largely as self-supporting-farmers and farmed at the top of the mountains. Formal education was not essential. Many of them never went to school or had even thought of schooling (Lee, 2002). However, when they came to the US, they increasingly found that education was very important. A majority of Hmong parents now understand that having a basic education is essential for their children's survival in this country. But because they lack formal education, many Hmong parents do not know how to support their children education wise. They only hope and wish that their children will work hard and become independently successful in regards to education (Ly, 2005; Thao, 2000).

Unfortunately, researchers have found that many Hmong children are not successful in education, especially at secondary levels. In secondary school, Hmong children have a higher high school dropout rate than the general student population (O'Reilly, 1998; University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire Economics Department, 2000; Wisconsin Information Network for Success School (WINSS), 2005). However, parental involvement studies of other cultures have found that if parents are highly involved in their children's education, the children are more likely to graduate, earn a higher GPA, and attend postsecondary education (Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Ho Sui-Chu & Willms, 1996; Simon, 2000; Walberg, 1984). But there are limited studies pertaining to parental involvement and the Hmong population. The few existing studies have included those conducted by Thao (2000), Xiong and Lee (2005), Ly (2005), and Supple and Small (2006).

One graduate thesis study investigated the experiences and perceptions of Hmong parental involvement in elementary and middle schools (Thao, 2000). The author found that a majority of the parents strongly agreed that education in K-12 and higher was very important for their children to become successful in this country. Most of the parents who participated in the study said they attended parent and teacher conferences as much as possible. In addition, it was found that the lower the educational levels of the parents and the least time they had been living in the country, the higher they valued education. Further, the higher the educational levels of the parents, the more frequently they participated in the children's education, and fathers valued education more than the mothers (Thao, 2000).

Another study researched parental perceptions toward their children's early childhood education (Xiong & Lee, 2005). Here it was found that most of the parents strongly believed in early childhood education and felt the children should be able to master such things as the basic concepts of names, numbers, or addresses before they entered school. A majority of Hmong parents helped their children by teaching them the alphabet at home. However, only 27% of the parents read stories or did other academic activities with their children at home. But, the longer the parents lived in this country and the higher the levels of their education, the more likely they were to become involved in their children's education (Xiong & Lee, 2005).

Hmong adolescents' experiences of parental involvement and support of academic achievement was examined by Ly (2005). In this study, the adolescents reported that their parents were mainly involved in their education during the elementary and middle school years. When the children entered high school, their parents stopped

going to the schools. However, there was social and educational trust between the parents and the children in high school. The parents trusted their children to behave appropriately but restricted their freedom, all the while believing them to be focused on their own education. In addition the author found that fathers had more specific preferences toward the type of schools and choices of careers for their children as compared to the mothers. Hmong adolescents depended heavily on their siblings for educational support as compared to their parents, and most Hmong adolescents had access to technology such as computers and Internet service at home. The adolescents understood that these technologies were meant to be used primarily for doing school work (Ly, 2005).

A data analysis was used to compare Hmong adolescents with European American adolescents in relationship to their parents' knowledge of their whereabouts (Supple & Small, 2006). They found that Hmong American adolescents reported their parents had less knowledge of their whereabouts as compared to European American adolescents. In addition, they found that there was a positive correlation between parental knowledge of the adolescents' whereabouts and the adolescents' academic achievement (Supple & Small, 2006).

The above studies examined some important issues related to Hmong parental involvement in schools; therefore the goal of the current study was to extrapolate on their findings and increase the general understanding of the complexities of parental involvement in education. This study was done to compare and contrast the general family characteristics, parenting methods, parental involvement philosophies, parental involvement experiences, and parental education expectations in Hmong families of high

school seniors classified as either high academic achievers or low academic achievers. It was hoped that the results would provide more information about how Hmong parents support and became involved in their children's education. This information could be used to help Hmong parents, community organizations, and schools aid Hmong students in becoming more successful in their education.

### **Research Method**

Qualitative interviews were used for this research investigation. The study consisted of a triad group interview of 10 Hmong families, including 10 senior high school students and both biological parents of each of the students. The total sampling size was 30 participants. The interviews were conducted during the summer of 2007 in Wisconsin.

#### *Participants*

The participants were 10 Hmong senior high school students and both of their biological parents for a total of 10 triad groups of 3 family members each (n=30). The students were senior high school students who attended one urban Wisconsin High School in the school year of 2006 and 2007. They were all on track to graduate at the end of the school year of 2007, had no physical disability, lived with both biological parents, and were born or raised in the United States. The parents were the biological parents of the individual student. According to the school database, there were 283 Hmong students enrolled in the school in the years of 2006 and 2007. Fifty-nine of the 283 were senior students, and 41 of the 59 seniors met the criteria of the study. Twenty-one of the 41 students earned a high school cumulative GPA of 3.00 or higher and were classified as

higher academic achievers. The remaining 20 students earned a high school cumulative GPA of 2.99 or lower and were classified as lower academic achievers.

Five students from the higher achiever group and five from the lower achiever group were randomly selected as participants. An introductory letter was sent to the selected student and parents, then a phone call was made to request an appointment to interview the participants at their homes. All original selectees agreed to be participants.

#### *Interview Protocols*

Interview protocols for both the parents and the students were developed in English and translated into Hmong, and a pilot study was conducted with a Hmong high school junior student and her parents to test and revise the interview protocols before they were used in the actual interviews. The interview protocols were developed using a semi-structured format, consisting of five themes related to each of the five research questions. Each theme contained a series of questions that had open-ended answers.

#### *Data Collection*

All of the interviews were conducted from July 1, 2007 to August 12, 2007. Six families were interviewed during the weekends and four during the weekdays. Seven of the ten families were interviewed in one visit, while three required a second visit in order to interview all of the three members. Most of the interviews took approximately one hour and ten minutes. The students took the least amount of time, while the fathers took the most. A \$20 stipend was offered to each participant with a total of \$60 to each family as stated in the letter of consent. However, three families voluntarily refused to accept the entire \$60; instead, they only accepted \$40, and one family only accepted \$20.

All of the parents were interviewed using the Hmong interview protocol version and communication was primarily in Hmong. In contrast, all the students were interviewed using the English interview protocol version and communication was primarily in English. There were four female students and one male student in Group A (higher academic achiever group), and three male and two female students in Group B (lower academic achiever group). The reason for the disproportionate number of female students participating in the study was that there were a larger number of females in the higher academic achiever group (13 females compared to 8 males). The students in Group A had a mean GPA of 3.49, and Group B had a mean GPA of 2.00. The entire interviews were recorded on audiotapes first, then transcribed into a written document, and where needed translated into English.

### *Research Questions*

The following five research questions served as the guidelines to develop the interview protocols, interview the participants, and analyze the data:

1. What differences, if any were there in the general family characteristics of (1) parents' and other children's or siblings' levels of education, (2) the average families' incomes, (3) parents employment status, (4) the students' birthplaces (5) student's levels of starting school in the U.S, and (5) the availability of having a computer, Internet services, and cable TV at home between the higher (Group A) and the lower (Group B) academic achieving Hmong senior high school students and their parents?
2. What differences, if any, existed in parenting methods and family relationships of (1) any specific of written or expected rules in the family, (2) the parent(s) who



- were in charge of the children, (3) the relationships among the family members, (4) the kinds of rewards that the children received for their accomplishments, and (5) the type of parenting styles (authoritative, authoritarian, or permissive) of the parents between the higher (Group A) and the lower (Group B) academic achieving Hmong high school senior students and their parents?
3. What differences, if any, existed in parental involvement philosophy of (1) defined parental involvement, (2) the importance of parental involvement in relationship to the academic achievement of the students, and (3) the perspective of parental involvement in this country as compared to the parents' previous countries such as Laos and Thailand and (4) the understanding of similarities or differences between Hmong and American parental involvement in the higher (Group A) and the lower (Group B) academic achieving Hmong high school senior students and their parents?
  4. What differences, if any, existed in the experience of parental involvement of (1) which levels of the children's education-- elementary school, middle school, or high school did the parents become more involved, (2) the experiences of the parental involvement, (3) the activities that schools could do to improve Hmong parental involvement, and (4) who was mainly helping with the students' homework at home between the higher (Group A) and the lower (Group B) academic achieving Hmong high school senior students and their parents?
  5. What differences, if any, existed related to (1) specific parental education expectations such as which colleges or universities and career would the students attend after high school (2) the person that helped with the students' college and

financial aid application, (3) what each student decided to do after high school, and (4) how they saw their lives in the next 10 or 15 years between the higher (Group A) and the lower (Group B) academic achieving Hmong high school senior students and their parents?

### **Results of the Study**

#### *Comparison of General Family Characteristics*

In a comparison of the general family characteristics, there were patterns found in the education of the fathers and siblings, the ages of the siblings and parents, the income of the family, the employment status of the parents, the birthplaces of students, and the accessibility to technologies of the families between Group A (the higher academic achiever group) and Group B (the lower academic achiever group). For example, in terms of the fathers' and sibling's levels of education, four of the five fathers in Group A earned a high school or equivalent to high school diploma, two earned associate's degrees, and one was still working on his bachelor's degree; while none of the fathers in Group B earned their high school or equivalent to high school diploma. Furthermore, despite more of the siblings in Group A being younger than the siblings in Group B, 5 of the total 36 siblings in Group A completed or attended a four-year college or university as compared to only two of the total 32 siblings in Group B.

When examining parents' and siblings' ages, the mean age of parents in Group A was 47.6 years as compared to 54 years for the parents in Group B. The mean age of siblings in Group A was only 16.7 years as compared to 20.36 years for siblings in Group B. In terms of family income, the mean income of the parents in Group A was \$54,600 as compared to \$48,600 of the parents in Group B. In terms of working status of the

parents, 9 of the 10 parents in Group A reported to be employed full-time as compared to only 7 of the 10 parents in Group B. Regarding the birthplace of the students, four of the five of the students in Group A were born outside the United States as compared to only one of the five students in Group B. And in terms of accessibility to Internet service and cable television, four of the five families in Group A reported that they had at least one working computer, Internet service, and basic cable at home as compared to only two of the five families in Group B.

On the contrary, there were no differences found between the two groups in relationship to education of the mothers, the housing status of the family, and the grade level when starting schools of the students in the United States. All of the mothers in the two groups had very little or no prior educational experiences before coming to the United States. They learned how to speak English in adult American education programs. All of the families in both groups owned their homes. They had been living in the houses for approximately seven to eight years, and all the students in both groups either started their American education during pre-school or kindergarten.

#### *Comparison about Parenting Methods and Family Relationships*

In a comparison of the basis of parenting methods and family relationships between Groups A and B, patterns were found in parents' roles in charge of the families, the parents' knowledge of the students' whereabouts, and parents' rewards for student accomplishments. For example, all three triad members in the five families of Group A agreed within each family that three of the families had fathers in complete charge, one all agreed the mother was in charge, and one that both parents were equally in charge. In contrast, there were no agreements within three of the triads in Group B in relation to

which parent was in charge in the family. In these three families, the mothers said that they were the ones who were in charge regarding their children's behavior, while the three fathers of those same families disagreed and said that they shared the responsibilities with their wives. The members seemed confused as to specific roles within each family unit unlike the families in Group A.

With regards to family relationships, four of the five families in Group A had at least one parent in each of the families who said they had they had a "very good" relationship with their children at home, while three of the parents (one per family) of the parents in Group B said that they were "frustrated" with their children and did not know how to improve their relationship. In addition, most of the parents in Group A openly expressed a lot of emotional love and care for the children, while most of the parents in Group B seemed to be unwilling to talk about their relationships with their children. When it came to the parental knowledge of their children's whereabouts, students and parents in Group A agreed that parents had to know exactly of their children's whereabouts every time the children went out or did something other than their daily routines. In contrast, although all the parents in Group B said that they should know everything of their children's whereabouts, three students in the group said that they did not have to let their parents know exactly of their whereabouts. They only let their parents know generally where they were going, not exactly what they would be doing, whom they were with, or when they would be home.

In the children's social styles, such as choosing certain clothes, hair styles or body decorations, all the parents and students in Group A said that the parents did not have any problems with their children's choices. The parents allowed their children the freedom to

adopt various styles with clear expectations of what was appropriate and inappropriate.

The students also stated they did not tend to follow any extreme styles and were comfortable with their parents' guidelines. On the other hand, two of the parents (separate families) in Group B strongly disapproved of their children's social styles, such as wearing baggy clothes or wearing too many earrings.

When looking at parental rewards for students' accomplishments, all the parents and students in Group A said the parents usually gave money as rewards when the children earned good grades in school. In contrast, most of the parents in Group B said they only gave money as a reward when their children were younger. However, three of the students in Group B disagreed with their parents saying they never received anything as a reward even when they were younger.

No patterns were found between Group A and Group B regarding written or expected rules in the family, the disciplinary method the parents used, parents' knowledge of the students' friends, and the parenting styles of parents. For example, there were no written rules found in any of the families in both Group A and Group B. However, there were expected routines that all children were aware of in all of the families of the two groups. The most common general routine was that when the students came home from school, they had a limited time to relax; then they had to have dinner, do their homework, and go to bed early.

In the disciplinary method of the parent, *lecturing* was the only method used by all the parents in both groups to correct their children's behavior. Parents reported that the lecturing method worked well for all the children in Group A, while it only worked well with some of the children in Group B. Most of the parents in the families of Group

B claimed many of their older children did not listen to them as they wished, and they did not know any other method that they could use to discipline their children.

As to the parents' knowledge of their children's friends, most of the parents in both groups said that they knew their child's friends well because the child had a limited number of friends.. However, the majority of the students in both groups disagreed with their parents. They said their parents only knew some of their friends because they only brought the friends home that they felt their parents would like.

After giving the families a brief description of three parenting styles (Baumrind,1966), all the family members in both groups said the parenting style of the parents was more like the *authoritative parenting style* because the parents gave the children a lot of freedom, but they also controlled the children to make sure that they did not get into trouble.

#### *Comparison of Parental Involvement Philosophies*

There were no differences found between Groups A and B regarding the understanding of the importance of parental roles in relationship to the children's education, types of activities or ideas the parents did or shared to motivate the children to work harder in school, and the different perspectives between Hmong and American parental support toward their children's education. All the family members in both groups shared the belief that parents needed to provide basic needs such as food, clothes, shelter, and supplies to help children in order for them to be successful in their education. All family members in both groups believed that parental involvement and support were very important to children's education. Without the parents' help and provision of basic necessities, the students would not be able to go to school every day and be successful in

education. In addition, some of the parents in both groups said they shared their own experiences of harsh working conditions stemming from their limited education, and this seemed to motivate their children to work harder in school. Further, most of these parents from both groups also believed that Hmong families had many more children and were less educated than American parents; therefore they could not help their children as much compared to American parents who did more for their children educationally.

Most of the parents in Group A said that education for their children was more important in the United States than it had been in Laos or Thailand and the parents should take time to show their children opportunities and monitor their children's education better. In contrast, more of the parents in Group B said that in Laos or Thailand, there were more restrictions and less freedom in the school environment; therefore, the parents and the teachers were able to control the students better, enabling more children to be successful in education as compared to the United States.

#### *Comparison of Parental Involvement Experiences*

There were no differences found among which level of the children's education the parents became most involved in, the experiences of parental involvement of the parents, the expressed importance of parental involvement from the parents, and the academic supporters of children's homework. All of the parents in both groups primarily became physically involved during the child's elementary and middle school years. When the students approached high school, most of the parents from both groups stopped becoming involved in such ways as attending conferences or other activities in the school. The parents stated they did not become involved during high school years because they were busy and did not have time, because parental involvement such as

attending teacher conferences was no longer required, or because the children were older so the parent believed the child did not need their help any longer. In addition, some of the parents from both groups reported they did not know the times, place, or dates of conferences in high school because the children were no longer bringing the conference information home as they used to do when attending elementary and middle school. Also parents and students in both groups reported that the activities that the parents did in elementary and middle school were limited to attending parent and teacher conferences, driving the student to and from school, and checking or monitoring homework at home.

Parents from both groups said that they felt parental involvement was very important to their children's education, and most of their involvement experiences were positive regardless of their limited English proficiency. For academic supports at home, there were agreements among the families in both groups that some of the parents were able to help the children with their homework during the elementary school years. But, when students went to middle or high school, the homework became too difficult for the parents to help with. The children then depended mainly on their older siblings, friends, or teachers for any help.

Patterns existed between the two groups in relationship to the students' perceptions of the importance of parental involvement, especially in high school and the parent's beliefs in the teachers' ability to educate the children. For example, three of the five students in Group A said that their parents' involvement, especially in high school, may not have had any impact on their academic achievement. They did their best and could achieve at their current level regardless of their parents' involvement. In contrast, three of the students in Group B believed that if their parents had been more involved in



their high school education, they may have achieved better than their current level. Most of the parents in Group A believe the schools did a very good job of teaching their children. They trusted the teachers and administrators to provide the best education for their children; therefore, they did not feel or could not think of anything that the schools could do to improve or increase Hmong parental involvement. In contrast, most of the parents in Group B stated there were problems of communication between the teachers and the parents. Many of the parents were not aware of how their children were doing in school until it was too late. In addition, some of the parents believed that their children did not do well in their education perhaps because some of the teachers may not teach them the “right way.”

#### *Comparison of Parents’ and Students’ Education Expectations*

There were no group differences regarding specific parental education preferences for the students after high school or in supporting students in things such as applying for college and financial aid. All of the parents from both groups said that they wanted their children to go to college and study in fields that the children would be able to find jobs in after they graduated. However, two of the students in Group A said they were very concerned about their future career choices because of their parents’ disapproval. At the same time, students in Group B disagreed with their parents’ statement of encouraging them to continue their education after high school. They said that their parents knew that they would not go to college after high school and thus did not encourage them. All of the students and parents from both groups said older siblings, teachers, friends, or relatives were available to help the students with their college and financial aid applications.

However, there were differences between students in the two groups regarding what they were going to do after high school and how they saw their future in the next 10 to 15 years. Four of the five students in Group A said that they would be attending a four-year college or university, and one would be joining the US Marines in the fall. But three of the five students in Group B were not planning to continue any education after high school. In addition, none of these three students had found a job yet. Similarly, for the future of the students in the next 10 to 15 years, all five of the students in Group A firmly believed they would achieve their future educational plans, have a decent job, and a nice family. In contrast, the three students in Group B who did not want to continue their education stated they were unsure as to what their future would be like. Only one of the students in Group B wanted to attend technical college in the fall, and one wanted to attend a university.

### **Discussion**

This study confirmed the findings of Thao (2000) that Hmong parents believed education was very important for their children to be able to survive in the United States, and that parents attended parent and teacher conferences in middle and elementary school as much as possible. However, unlike Thao (2000), this study did not find any relationship between the levels of education of the parents and the frequency that they became involved in their children's education or different preferences between the mothers and the fathers toward their children's future education. In fact, it found that regardless of the level of education of the parents, they primarily became involved in their children's education during the elementary and middle school years, and both mothers and fathers did not have any specific preference of educational level, schools, or

careers for their children after high school. They just wanted the children to go to college and study in a field in which they could find jobs in after graduation. The possible explanation of the different findings between this study and Thao (2000) could be that this study mainly focused on a comparison between higher and lower academic achievers and parents in relationship to parental involvement, while Thao (2000) concentrated more on a comparison between the gender and educational level of the parents in relationship to their involvement.

This study confirmed the findings of Xiong and Lee (2005) that Hmong parents reported participating in their children's education during the elementary and middle school years by attending parent and teacher conferences. Similarly, this study showed that the Hmong parents strongly believed that education was very important for their children to become successful in the United States. The parents believed they played a very important role in their children's education.

Unlike Xiong and Lee (2005), this study did not find any relationship between the years the parents had lived in the United States and levels of parental education in relation to the frequency of parental involvement in their children's education. In fact, this study found that regardless of the parents' level of education and years of living in this country, they mainly became involved in their children's education during the elementary and middle school years. The activities that the parents became involved in were limited to attending parent and teacher conferences, driving their children to and from schools, and monitoring their children's homework. The differences between the findings of this study and those of Xiong and Lee (2005) could be due to varying samples, or perhaps more research is needed to investigate these differences.

Similarly, this study confirmed the findings of Ly (2005) that Hmong parents were primarily involved in their children's education during the elementary and middle school years and that Hmong students depended more on their older siblings, friends, or teachers for educational support than their parents when they approached middle and secondary school. Additionally, this study found that the parents of the higher academic achieving students had a higher trust in regard to their children's abilities to be independently successful in their education, and the abilities of the schools and teachers to help their children be successful as compared to the parents of the lower academic achieving students. Furthermore, this study also found that students who achieved more highly in their educations also had better access to technology such as computers, internet service, or cable television at home as compared to the students who achieved at lower levels in their education. Unlike Ly (2005), in this study, there were no differences found between the mothers and fathers from either group of parents in relationship to their educational preferences for their children after high school. The parents in both groups, regardless of gender, wanted their children to go to college and study in fields where they would be able to find jobs after they graduated. Once again, the possible explanation for the differences between the findings of this study and those of Ly (2005) could be due to sampling issues, different study foci, and/or may warrant further investigation.

Similar to the findings of Supple and Small (2006), this study found that there were more agreements between the family members among the higher academic achievers in relationship to the parents' knowing their children's exact whereabouts as compared to the lower academic achievement group. In addition, this study also found that Hmong male students had more freedom to go out with friends without obtaining

their parents' permission as compared to Hmong female students. Another finding was that more Hmong female students earned a higher high school accumulative GPA as compared to Hmong male students.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Based on the results of this and other studies, we posit six suggestions for Hmong parents, or Hmong students themselves, and for schools and community organizations to help Hmong children become more successful in education. First, this study and that of Ly (2005) found that most Hmong parents mainly became involved in education during the elementary and middle school years. As children entered high school, most of the parents stopped becoming involved in their children's education completely. Therefore, if the parents become more consistently involved in their children's education throughout every level, more Hmong students likely will be able to be successful in their education.

Second, this study found that most Hmong parents believed their responsibilities to their children's education were limited to providing their children the basic needs of food, shelter, clothes, money, or places to study at home. However, the literature related to parental involvement shows parents are responsible in a broader manner for the success of their children's education. At home, parents should control time allowances for their children, make sure that their children complete assigned homework, and build a good rapport with their children. At school, parents should help to choose the right courses for their children to study, join the school decision-making body to help make decisions to improve the school environment, and communicate with teachers to make sure that they are aware of the daily progression of their children. In the community, the parents should attempt to find extra resources to support their children's learning and

expose them to future careers and/or educational opportunities (Walberg, 1984; William, 1998). If Hmong parents are more aware of strategies for enhanced parental involvement and support to help their children's education, their children are more likely to become successful.

Third, this study found that most of the families in the higher academic achievement group had a least one parent who expressed a lot of love and feeling toward their children at home, had better relationships with their children, were consistently rewarding of their children's accomplishments, knew their children's whereabouts, had more trust in the children's abilities to be successful in education, believed that teachers could provide the best education for their children, were more open minded towards their children's social styles, and provided more technological services such as access to a computer, internet service, and cable television at home for their children as compared to the parents of the students who achieved at lesser levels in their educations. Therefore, if those Hmong parents with children who are successful academically share more of their ideas or strategies with Hmong parents who do not have any specific strategies to help their children it is likely more children will be able to become successful in their education.

Fourth, this study also found that Hmong students in the higher academic achievement group did well in their educations because they wanted to earn scholarships for college, obtain jobs, and have resources to establish families in the future. In addition, Vang (2001) also found that Hmong students who achieved at high levels in their education often had a clear goal or plan for their immediate future after high school and had higher positive self-esteem. Similarly, this study also found that most of the

students who did not achieve at high levels in their education lacked self-motivation and did not have clear plans for their future. Therefore, if Hmong children and youth can be helped to focus on developing their own self-motivation and solid plans for their futures, more of them will be able to become successful in their educations.

Fifth, this study found that some of the main reasons that Hmong parents did not become involved in their children's education in high school were that parental involvement was no longer required by the schools and they felt that because they lacked academic ability, their involvement was not beneficial to their children's education. In addition, all of the parents believed that their roles in supporting their children's education were limited to providing their children's basic needs. Therefore schools or community organizations should work to develop substantive resources to help Hmong parents understand the importance of increased parental involvement and parental roles in relationship to their children's education. In addition, the schools should also require parents to become more involved in parent and teacher conferences, especially at the high school level. As a result, a larger number of Hmong parents may become more involved in their children's education, and more Hmong students will have the resources and support to become successful in their educations.

Lastly, this study found that there was a big difference between the higher and lower achieving Hmong students in relationship to their future planning. All of the students who achieved high grades in their high school education had clear goals of what to do after high school, while most of the students who achieved low grades did not have any idea of what they would do after high school or in the future. In addition, many of the Hmong parents did not have any specific future plans for their children after high

school. They only encouraged their children to continue their educations and study in fields where they would be able to find jobs after they graduated. Therefore, if schools and community organizations can provide additional career exploration courses this will help Hmong students who do not have any plans better map out their futures and more of them will have a chance to become successful in their educations.

### **Limitations of the Study**

There are some limitations that should be noted in this study. First the measure of the academic achievements of the students was solely based on their high school cumulative grade point averages (GPA). Although many researchers have used such criteria, a high cumulative GPA may not necessarily correlate to the achievement of individual students. A high or low cumulative GPA may be due to the courses that the individual has taken such as advanced or standard classes, or English Language Learning. Second, although the participants were randomly selected from a larger convenience sample, there were only 10 families participating in the study. This limited size may contribute to the validity of the data. Third, this study was focused on an in-depth experience within a specific group, and the situation, as well as the location of Hmong parents and students, and thus it may not be possible to generalize the findings to other groups of Hmong populations or other minority populations. Fourth, this study was done relying on participant recall, which may be limited in scope when reflecting back to the elementary, middle, and high school years. Since experiences change over time, the experiences of the parents and students during this specific time period may not reflect the experiences of other Hmong parents and children in different time periods. And finally, since a second language (Hmong) was also used to communicate with the parents



and some students in the interview process, and although the researcher has been formally trained in both languages and has served as a professional educator for the community for many years, translation was not always easy. It is possible that some of the translation may not be exactly as the participants described or meant.

Future research efforts should take these limitations into consideration. However, because many of the findings were similar to those reported in other Hmong-related investigations (Ly, 2005; Thao, 2000; Xiong & Lee, 2005), the study may be assumed to have validity and a positive generalizability to a larger group of Hmong families.

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