

**Documenting Hmong and Lao Refugee Resettlement:
A Tale of Two Contrasting Communities**

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To my parents, Nouthong and Thonglor, thank you for your sacrifices and hard work in providing us with opportunities. Words cannot express the gratitude.

To my wife, Gao Sheng, whose patience, motivation and loving support made this journey worthwhile. Thank you for being my best friend.

To my children, Maekalah and Zakarin, your energy and unconditional love inspires me to do better. For you I continue to document the stories and experiences of those who came before us, and to help build a better world.

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Introduction: Taking Refuge(es)

This paper explores the migration of refugees from Laos to the United States following a civil war further complicated by U.S. involvement in Southeast Asia during the Vietnam War. In particular, the Interagency Task Force on Indochinese Refugees developed a resettlement policy that focused the dispersal of refugees broadly rather than resettling them in concentrated clusters. Ultimately disrupting extended family structures of the Southeast Asian refugee communities. Consequently, the move to disperse Southeast Asian refugees widely also disrupted the Task Force's intention to facilitate cultural adjustment of refugees through immersion in American society. The Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR), a federal agency created by the Refugee Act of 1980, established refugee resettlement programs and provided additional resources that helped many refugees and their families. The established programs aimed to encourage refugees to become economically self-sufficient, while paying little attention to developing self-reliance and integration into community life.

Drawing from previous studies on Southeast Asian refugees during the initial wave of resettlement (Desbarats 1985, Haines 1989, Stein 1983, Strand and Jones 1985, and Zucker 1983), as well as new data from the past four decades, this study focuses on two ethnic communities in Minnesota, the Hmong and Lao. The comparison of these two communities is unique in that they are from the same country, were involved in the same kind of conflict, share similar socio-economic backgrounds, and fled the country of Laos for the same reason. Although coming to the U.S. for the same reasons and starting with similar circumstances (levels of educational attainment, English fluency, etc.), in the nearly 40 years since their arrival, their experiences have diverged. Hmong have made significant strides in areas such as engaging in U.S. politics and education, in comparison to Lao. What explains the discrepancy in integration

of the Hmong and Lao? Hmong settlements are currently spatially concentrated in the Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan area. Lao are spatially dispersed with pockets of population in suburbia as well as smaller towns in greater Minnesota such as Rochester and Worthington. Given these different settlement patterns, we see contrasting trajectory in areas such as socioeconomic, education, and engagement in U.S. politics.

In chapter 1, I trace the historical arc and evolution of U.S. refugee resettlement policies at both the national and local level as it focuses primarily on assimilating refugees as quickly as possible through economic-focused programs. Chief among these, in Chapter 2, special attention is paid to in-depth historical and contemporary perspectives of the lives and experiences of Hmong and Lao in Minnesota. Personal narratives gathered from archival sources and case files from social service organizations complement a discussion of resettlement policies and data in an attempt to humanize the resettlement processes. Drawing upon the broad framework of assimilation theories, Chapter 3 considers the effectiveness of past and current refugee resettlement policies that have focused on assimilation of immigrants and refugees. Complimentary to historical narratives and perspectives, the study uses quantitative analysis of the 2000 and 2010 U.S. Census data to determine the trend in resettlement and calculates changes in population of the Hmong and Lao over time, primarily in the State of Minnesota. Moreover, supporting information about Hmong and Lao outcomes in educational attainment, economic mobility and civic engagement will provide evidence of contrasting experiences. I will conclude by contextualizing the experiences of Hmong and Lao with broader immigration policies and key learning outcomes and areas of possible future research.

Chapter 1

Historical Overview of Refugee Resettlement Policies in the United States

To fully understand programs and initiatives designed to accelerate the assimilation and integration of Southeast Asian refugees, it is helpful to first understand the history of United States policies on refugee and the relationship between broader immigration and foreign policies promulgated by the U.S. Though a more comprehensive analysis of succeeding legislation on resettlement would add value to this study, this section focuses on specific outcomes of initiatives leading to the development and implementation of the Refugee Act of 1980.¹ The main objectives of this chapter are to examine the federal and local government's responses to refugees, particularly the roles of the public-private partnership in the integration of refugees. This chapter will give particular focus on resettlement programs and the interconnectedness of each corresponding piece of legislation as summarized in Table 1 below.

The development of refugee resettlement policies in the U.S. can be traced to shortly after World War II (WWII) as a direct response to the post-war crisis in Eastern Europe. Following WWII, a large number of "displaced persons" as they were called then, were fleeing their homeland in fear of persecution or they no longer had a home to which to return to. This international crisis motivated the U.S. to enact new legislation to allow entrance of immigrants beyond the allowable quota set by the National Quota Act of 1924.²

¹ For a more comprehensive study of these legislative actions, please see Anker, Deborah E., and

² 1924 Immigration Act, Public Law 68-139, approved May 26, 1924.

Table 1: Summary of major pieces of legislation focused on United States immigration and refugee policies from 1948-1980

1948	The Displaced Persons Act provided assistance and resources to victims of persecution from the Nazi government and those fleeing persecution from their home countries following WWII. Individuals were granted permanent residency and provided with resources to employment and other financial assistance.
1953	Refugee Relief Act as the U.S. response to the United Nation's definition of <i>refugee</i> . In this legislation, the U.S. referred refugee as someone who lacked the "essential of life", of which differ from the UN definition. Under this provision, 209,000 special immigrant visas were made available to refugees, of which majority were from Communist-dominated or controlled European countries.
1960	Cuban Refugee Migration and Assistance Act provided refugees domestic assistance and services to support the acceleration of self-sufficiency among Cuban Refugees.
1965	President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Immigration and Naturalization Act, best known for eliminating the discriminative national origin quota. Among its provisions, the law gave preference to immigrants with skills needed in the U.S. and to immediate relatives of U.S. citizens.
1975	Indochina Refugee Migration and Assistance Act provided humanitarian resources and resettlement of refugees from Cambodia and Vietnam (amended in 1976 to in Laos). The first wave of Southeast Asian Refugees arrived to the United States through the refugee resettlement program
1980	The Refugee Act created for the first time a definition relating to the status of refugee. The defines refugee as a "person who have been persecuted or has a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, members of a particular social group or political option". The Act created the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) in the Department of Health and Human Services to coordinate domestic refugee resettlement programs and funding.

Sources: Vang 2008, Holman 1996 and Zucker 1983

The legislation's main target populations were those from Eastern European countries, occupied by the Soviet Union.³ The Displaced Persons Act of 1948 provided assistance and resources to victims of persecution from the Nazi government and those fleeing persecution from their home countries following WWII.⁴ Individuals were granted permanent residency and provided with

³ These countries are, Germany, Austria, and Italy, the French sector of either Berlin or Vienna or the American or British Zone and those native of Czechoslovakia.

⁴ Displaced Persons Act, Public Law 80-774, approved June 25, 1948

resources to employment and other financial assistance. Provisions were made allowing adjustment to permanent residency status for qualifying persons who entered the U.S. prior to the enactment of the legislation on temporary visas and were unable to return home. By the expiration date of this legislation in 1952, over 400,000 displaced persons had been admitted to the U.S. (Holman 1996).

The ongoing international struggles of resettling post-WWII refugees tested the newly established United Nations (UN).⁵ As a result, the 1951 Refugee Convention in Geneva established legal documents in defining who is considered a refugee. Adapting this policy, the UN define *refugee* as a person having a “well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, members of a particular social group or political option”.⁶ The U.S. responded by enacting the Refugee Relief Act in 1953. In this legislation the U.S. diverged from the UN definition of refugees by referring to a refugee as someone who lacked the “essentials of life”.⁷ Under this provision, 209,000 special immigrant visas were made available to refugees, of which the majority was from communist-dominated or communist-controlled European countries. Subsequently, special provisions within the Refugee Relief Act called for a thorough screening of applicants and required that they provide evidence guaranteeing a home and job in the U.S. Ethnic communities and social service organizations took keen interest in this

⁵ UN General Assembly, Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, 28 July 1951, United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 189, p. 137

⁶ Refugee Relief Act, Public Law 203-336, approved August 7, 1953

⁷ It should be noted that the U.S. did not take part in the Refugee Convention.

https://treaties.un.org/pages/ViewDetailsII.aspx?&src=UNTSOnline&mtdsg_no=V~2&chapter=5&Temp=mtdsg2&lang=en (accessed on March 22, 2015)

provision. Voluntary agencies (VOLAGS) provided sponsorships and resources in finding a home and job for refugees admitted under this legislation. The allocated quota for immigrant visas under the Refugee Relief Act proved to be insufficient. President Dwight D. Eisenhower responded by authorizing the use of the parole authority of the Attorney General's office to admit refugees to the U.S. Subsequent legislation allowed the admission of relatives of persons who have been admitted under the Refugee Relief Act.

In 1959, as a result of the Cuban Revolution and overthrow of the dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista by Fidel Castro, the U.S. became, for the first time, a country of first asylum for mass groups of refugees following the Cuban refugee crisis (Holman 1996). The first groups of arrivals were political elites connected to pro-Batista government, followed by business elites. Those with low socioeconomic status began arriving in the U.S. in late 1961. During the first two years of Castro's leadership in Cuba, more than 50,000 Cubans fled to the U.S. Similar to refugees before them, Cuban refugees were admitted under the parole provision of the Immigration and Nationality Act, authorizing the Attorney General's office to allow special status. The Cuban refugee crisis differed from previous refugee flows to the U.S., because in prior situations refugees were screened in camps and carefully processed for final arrival to the U.S. In contrast, Cuban refugees simply came on commercial flights, boats, and rafts. Among them were an estimated 13,000 unaccompanied children sent by their parents who were unable to leave Cuba (ibid).

By the end of 1960, more than 100,000 Cuban refugees resettled in the Miami area. There were major concerns that the state, local government and social services agencies did not have sufficient resources to address the needs of the refugees. President Eisenhower authorized the establishment of the Cuban Refugee Emergency Center located in Miami to assist in the

resettlement and relief effort. The Center became the operational headquarters for the coordination of government and VOLAGS' programs. These programs included financial assistance; educational loans; re-training of doctors and other professionals to meet American practice standards; and the care for and resettlement of unaccompanied children. The efforts expanded with passage of the Cuban Migration and Refugee Assistance Act of 1962, signed by President John F. Kennedy, becoming the first legislation that specified broad domestic assistance for refugees. Through the Cuban Refugee Program, the federal government established partnerships with national voluntary resettlement agencies, ultimately solidifying the public-private partnership in the resettlement effort of refugees in the U.S.

Shortly after the start of his presidency, on October 3, 1965, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Immigration and Naturalization Act, best known for eliminating the discriminative national origin quota and ultimately helping to usher in different streams of immigrants to the U.S. and help to change the demographic profile of the U.S. Among its provisions, the law gave preference to immigrants with skills needed in the U.S. and to immediate relatives of U.S. citizens. The law provided conditional entry status, including refugees from communist countries and the Middle East. With the Statue of Liberty as a backdrop, President Johnson stated, "those who seek refuge here in America, will find it."⁸ These words were directed towards Cuban refugees escaping Fidel Castro's Cuba.

The U.S. response to refugee crisis from the DP to CRP has been regarded as an obligation created by Cold War strategies, providing refuge for those fleeing oppressive regimes, particularly communist-controlled countries (Loescher and Scanlan, 1998). From 1948 to 1980,

⁸ Johnson, Lyndon B. "Remarks at the Signing of the Immigration Bill", Liberty Island, New York. October 3, 1965. Speech

well over 90 percent of refugees admitted to the U.S. fled communist controlled countries. The withdrawal of American troops from Vietnam in 1973 and the collapse of American-supported governments in former French Indochina countries in 1975 led to the largest refugee crisis since WWII. Following the end to the Vietnam War, the international community soon faced an urgency to provide support and sources to refugees fleeing from Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam.

Shortly after the Fall of Saigon on April 30, 1975 and the evacuation of remaining Americans and those who worked closely with their American allies, the U.S. Congress responded by passing the Indochina Migration and Refugee Assistance (IMRA) Act, signed by President Gerald Ford on May 23, 1975. Since WWII, refugee admission to the U.S. has always been on an *ad hoc* basis, responding to each crisis. The Southeast Asian refugee crisis was no different. Like Cuban refugees and prior displaced people, refugees from Southeast Asia were admitted to the U.S. by virtue of the parole program, under the auspices of the Attorney General's office without visas due to the emergency situation. The IMRA Act mirrored the Cuban Migration and Refugee Assistance Act by providing refugees similar kinds of domestic assistance and services as were provided to Cuban Refugees. Though a small number of refugees from Laos were admitted to the U.S. in 1975, the IMRA Act was later amended in 1976 to include, in the statutory language of the law, refugees from Laos. Refugees from Laos made up over 70 percent of Southeast Asian refugees in 1976 who were admitted to the U.S. (Strand and Jones 1985). The IMRA Act appropriated funds to assist the work of the United Nations High Commission on Refugee (UNHCR) and international resettlement agencies to provide humanitarian aid in the region in addition to resettling the refugees in third countries.

Given the emergency evacuation of Southeast Asian refugees from their respective countries, by the end of May of 1975, four processing centers were quickly established in the

U.S. The U.S. not only became for the second time, the first country of asylum, but the establishment of domestic processing centers was unprecedented. The Centers were dispersed throughout the country: Camp Pendleton, California; Fort Chaffee, Arkansas; Elgin Air Force Base, Florida; and Fort Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania (Marsh 1980). The U.S. Congress was wary of calling the Centers, “refugee camps” and wanted to immediately resettle the refugees and close the Centers as quickly as possible. The President’s Interagency Taskforce on Refugees was tasked to supervise the resettlement during the early days of the 1975 arrivals. By the end of 1975, the remaining refugees left the Centers, resulting in the closure of the processing centers. Table 2 below shows that altogether, 1975 saw the resettlement of 130,000 Southeast Asian refugees in the United States.

Table 2: Arrival of Refugees from Southeast Asia from 1975 to 1981

Country	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981
Cambodia	5,571	339	44	1,105	9,422	11,996	31,945
Laos	108	3,153	213	7,926	24,414	50,031	23,966
Vietnam	124,108	813	3,333	14,053	63,020	83,654	57,673
Total	129,787	4,305	3,590	23,084	96,856	145,681	113,584

Source: Strand and Jones 1985

Due to the *ad hoc* nature of the admission process, there was little coordination in providing resources for this first wave of Southeast Asian refugees. Allocated funds from the IRMA Act were limited, with government officials estimating that two years was enough time for the refugees to become self-sufficient. The Indochinese Refugee Assistance Program (IRAP) was created under provisions of the IRMA Act. Federal funds were distributed to states and VOLAGS directly from the Department of Health and Human Services. Special attention was made to programs providing English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction and vocational training. Refugees who were unable to work received assistance from the Supplement Security

Income (SSI), while individuals and families that were not eligible for AFDC or SSI, could receive Refugee Cash Assistance and Refugee Medical Assistance. States and local governments that received additional funding from the federal government established their own refugee assistance programs. States that had limited staff and capacity to run their own programs contracted resettlement work out to local VOLAGS.

Government officials thought that the refugee crisis was coming to an end. Limited funding and resources forced some states and VOLAGS to freeze programs assisting refugees. Without a cohesive policy on refugee resettlement, the U.S. Congress was forced to enact legislation to handle various crisis management. It was not until April of 1978 that Congress appropriated additional funding to assist with the resettlement of Southeast Asian refugees. Consequently, 1978 saw a drastic increase in Southeast Asian refugees leaving their countries. Nearly 25,000 arrived to the U.S. The most notable new arrivals from Southeast Asia were the “boat people”, Vietnamese refugees fleeing on boats and rafts off the coast of Vietnam. International and local news media reported on the plight of the refugees, capturing the attention and concerns of Americans. Cambodian refugees fleeing Pol Pot’s killing fields and refugees from Laos escaping jungles and reeducation camps reinforced the need to expand refugee programs in the U.S. and provide additional international humanitarian aid.

The refugee resettlement process has grown and became more complex since the days of the DP. From 1975 to 1979, over 250,000 refugees from Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam settled in the U.S. (Strand and Jones 1985). The ongoing crisis in Southeast Asia resulted in President Jimmy Carter’s authorizing the admission of an additional 168,000 refugees from Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam throughout 1979 and 1980, totaling an estimated 242,500. Cuban refugees continue to arrive to the U.S. and *ad hoc* admission basis expanded beyond Cubans and

Southeast Asian refugees to other refugee groups (Haitian, Soviet Jews, etc.). Successive waves of refugees from former Indochina had different needs than the first wave of elite Southeast Asian refugees. New waves of refugees included Cambodian farmers who managed to survive the “killing fields”; Lao and Hmong rural farmers and soldiers who escaped reeducation camps and trekked through jungles and ethnic Chinese and Vietnamese who escaped perilously with boats. Their difficult journey and experiences would prove to be a challenge during resettlement.

Momentum was high for legislative actions to strengthen the U.S. resettlement policy. Congress and the public were concerned about the potential for millions of refugees to suddenly appear on American shores. This fear was amid a severe economic crisis in the 1970s where poor Americans had the impression that refugees were competing for resources. Proponents felt that legislative action would bring the admission of refugees into congressional statutory control. In 1980, the Refugee Act championed by Senator Edward Kennedy and supported by the Carter-Mondale administration passed Congress (Kennedy 1981). The Refugee Act created for the first time a U.S. definition relating to the status of refugee. The Act defines *refugee* as a “person who has been persecuted or has a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, members of a particular social group or political opinions”.⁹ The definition was drawn from the United Nations Convention and Protocol on the Status of Refugees. The legislation created a ceiling of 50,000 refugees for admission per year according to the average of the previous two decades, with annual consultation between the executive and legislative branches of government to set future admission ceilings. The Act created the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) in the Department of Health and Human Services to coordinate domestic refugee resettlement programs and funding. Disagreement on the impetus of the Refugee Act

⁹ The Refugee Act of 1980, Public Law 96-212, approved March 17, 1980.

appears to contrast humanitarian admissions with restriction and limit the number of refugees (LeMay 2006, Loescher and Scanlan 1998).

The Refugee Act requires that states work with local government and voluntary agencies to draw up state plans for resettling refugees. ORR was mandated to create a systemic process for how refugees are resettled domestically. In order to do this, ORR worked directly with state, local governments and voluntary agencies to coordinate grants and other funding sources aimed at accelerating self-sufficiency of refugees. Federal refugee resettlement grants were aimed at providing a wide range of services, in areas such as employment, ESL instruction, health care services, and vocational training. States were eligible for 100 percent reimbursement to provide cash and medical assistance under the Refugee Cash and Medical Assistance Program. The Refugee Act mandates that refugee cash assistance be contingent upon the individual's willingness to register and train for employment, and securing a job within sixty days of arrival.

The public-private partnerships between the U.S. federal government and the VOLAGS that occurred in refugee resettlement in the post-WWII era had never been formalized. It was not until the 1980 Refugee Act that the relationship was mentioned in the legislative language. With prior experience working with VOLAGS to resettle Cuban refugees, the federal government partnered with eleven national VOLAGS to arrange the resettlement of Southeast Asian refugees and subsequent groups.¹⁰ Sponsoring VOLAGS and communities made preparations, securing

¹⁰ The eleven national voluntary agencies are: American Council for Nationalities Services, American Fund for Czechoslovak Refugees, Church World Services, International Rescue Committee, Hebrew Immigration Aid and Sheltering Society of New York, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, Polish American Immigration and Relief Committee, the

place of residence and jobs for prior refugee groups. The public-private partnership paid on a per capita basis for the number of refugees that were sponsored and resettled by VOLAGS. Federal funding was provided to state and local government agencies to offset the cost of running programs with the primary purpose of assisting the refugees to enable them to be self-sufficient. State and local social service agencies also took part in the resettlement process in various ways (access to means-tested benefits, etc.).

Along with their work in the U.S. VOLAGS operate in countries of first asylum and, in the cases of Southeast Asian refugees, this often meant Thailand. Representatives of VOLAGS work collaboratively with their counterparts in the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) office to affirm and approve applications for resettlement. The cases are then referred to the Intergovernmental Committee for Migration (ICM) to arrange for transportation and sponsorship through U.S. VOLAGS. By mid-1980, the U.S. had developed a system of selecting Southeast Asian refugees based on preferences. Priorities were made for refugees who have close relatives already living in the U.S., who had close connections with former political regimes in the region and the U.S. efforts in their respective countries, and who are unable to return home due to fear of persecution. In the U.S., VOLAGS have operated with guidance from the Interagency Task Force whose primary goal was to place refugees in areas of good employment prospect, which often prove to be a challenge for refugees to obtain skilled work. Based on recommendations from the Taskforce, VOLAGS made geographic dispersal a high priority (Gordon 1987).

Historically, refugees are resettled in established communities with existing communities of resettled refugees with similar ethnic ties. However, established ethnic communities of those

Tolstoy Foundation, United States Catholic Conference, World Relief Refugee Service, and the Young Men's Christian Association (Wright 1981).

from Cambodia, Laos, or Vietnam did not exist at the time. They could not be resettled into co-ethnic communities, as were previous refugee groups. As a result the refugees were dispersed throughout the country in locations where sponsors had little knowledge about them. The method of dispersal was not without controversy. The impetus for dispersal of refugees was to prevent resettlement burden to the receiving community and to facilitate cultural adjustment and assimilation to American society. Though well-intended, little attention was made to the adverse effect on the well-being of refugees. Refugees were often resettled with sponsors who knew little about their cultural experiences and to communities that were unprepared to deal with the needs of refugees. The resettlement agencies come in different shapes and sizes. They have different organizational structures and methods of resettlement, and they each used their own methods of finding sponsors to assist in the resettlement of refugees. The availability of federal funds and how these funds were administered also differed from agency to agency. This often resulted in unevenness of programs and resources to assist the refugees. This section has highlighted the complexity of the U.S. resettlement process and the evolution of the public-private partnership, involving federal, state, local and county governments with local and international voluntary agencies.

Refugee policy in the U.S. evolved from a largely ad hoc, disjointed set of policies and practices in place immediately following World War II to a consistent set of policies and practices enshrined by the Refugee Act of 1980. The Displaced Persons (DP) Act of 1948 became a stepping-stone, setting precedent in establishing the concept of sponsorship in the resettlement process. Subsequent legislation and amendments such as the Refugee Relief Act of 1953 increased the annual admission quotas for refugees fleeing communist countries in Eastern Europe. The Cuban refugee crisis following the establishment of Fidel Castro's government led

to the Cuban Refugee Program (CRP) in 1960 that solidified the public-private partnership between U.S. federal government and voluntary agencies (VOLAGS) (Holman 1996, Wright 1981, Zucker 1983). The 1965 Immigration Act eliminated the national quota system and granted new set of criteria for admissions in areas of family reunification and desirable skills.

Resettlement policies implemented during the Southeast Asian refugee crisis were framed by previous attempts by the U.S. government responding to humanitarian needs of displaced people. Similar to the CRP, the 1975 Indochina Migration and Refugee Assistance (IMRA) Act provided federal funds to states and local governments for financial assistance and resources.¹¹ However, the CRP focused primarily on one locale, the Miami area, while the IMRA was national in scope. Between 1948 and 1980, policies related to refugee admission and resettlement in the U.S. occurred as reactions to specific international crises. It was not until 1980 that the Refugee Act provided a systematic procedure for the admission of refugees and uniformed provisions for effective resettlement (Anker et. al 1981, Kennedy 1981, Martin 1982).

¹¹ The Indochina Migration and Refugee Assistance Act, Public Law 94-23, approved May 23, 1975

Chapter 2

Experiences of Hmong and Lao

While most Americans were aware of the plight of Cambodian refugees from Pol Pot's Killing Fields and Vietnamese refugees from the Vietnam War, few were aware of the Hmong and Lao, or even how they became displaced from their homes. Both the Hmong and Lao can trace their roots to modern-day Southern China. The Lao are able to trace their history in modern-day Laos to the thirteenth century, with the establishment of kingdoms and polities. The first unified Lao kingdom of Lan Xang Hom Khao was established by King Fa Ngum in the fourteenth century. At its height in the seventeenth century, Lan Xang spanned much of mainland Southeast. Throughout its history, the Lao polity has expanded and contracted in territory and has for the most part been subjugated within the *mandala* spheres of neighboring polities.¹² The late seventeenth century saw the waning of the kingdom with the death of King Souriyavongsa without an apparent heir, resulting in the eventual collapse of Lan Xang into smaller kingdoms and polities. As a result, the Lao kingdoms became vassal territories of their larger and stronger neighboring polities of present-day Burma, Thailand and Vietnam.¹³

¹² Mandala is a word of Sanskrit origin that means "disc". It is a geo-political system that is centered by the "man of prowess". It was the main pattern of power relationships between polities of Southeast Asia. A quasi-feudal system in which polities were linked in overlord-tributary relationships, its network of power is centered through marriages, alliances, submissions, and conquests.

¹³ For more on pre-modern history of Laos, read:

Berval, Rene De, ed. Kingdom of Laos: The Land of Million Elephants and the White Parasol.

Saigon: France Asie 1959

The Hmong have had a more recent history in Southeast Asia, migrating from Southern China in the nineteenth century. History of Hmong has largely been based on oral tradition. It was not until the early 1950's that Hmong had a written language that was widely used, the Romanized Popular Alphabet (RPA) (Smalley et. al 1990). Through the centuries of events in their history as a people, Hmong have transmitted their stories orally.¹⁴ It was not until the

Evans, Grant. *A Short History of Laos: the land in between*. Crows Nest NSW: National Library of Australia, 2002

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Stuart-Fox, Martin. *The Lao Kingdom of Lan Xang: Rise and Decline*. Bangkok: White Lotus Co. Ltd., 1998

Stuart-Fox, Martin. *A History of Laos*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997

¹⁴ The origin of Hmong has been highly contested among Hmong Studies scholars (M. Lee 2008, G. Lee 2007, Johnson and Yang 1992, Quincy 1988, Savina 1924). Hmong form one of the many ethnic groups in China that identify as part of the Miao. In Southeast Asia, they are often referred to as Meo, a variation of "Miao", and a term that has negative political and historical connotation (Enwall 1992). Yang Dao, a prominent Hmong scholar and first Hmong to receive a Ph.D. asserted that the word Hmong means "free people". Yang later recanted his translation, citing that in order to "free" one must first be enslaved, and assert that Hmong simply means "human being" (Lee 1998). The primary sources on Hmong were written by missionaries and

Vietnam War that Americans first learned of the Hmong. The movement of Hmong to Southeast Asia happened gradually, with clans and families migrating together. Hmong society is divided into descent categories in the clan (*xeem*). It is the basis in which people recognize one another as kin and non-kin, and is the most important social structure in Hmong society that creates strong nuclear and extended families. Clan plays a very important function in the lives of the Hmong. For example, the clan recognizes and partakes in all aspects of life, such as birth, marriage, and death rituals (Dunnigan, 1982). Though their migration to Southeast Asia was gradual, the push southward of Hmong was a result of the expanding Chinese Empire. Hmong settled in highland areas, living in the periphery of Lao society and politics, and migrated to Southeast Asia during a time of change in the geo-politics of the region. Given their oral tradition, there are few historical records regarding Hmong prior to the migration to Southeast Asia, though there are works written about Hmong. Consequently, little has been written about Hmong lived experienced from the Hmong perspective.¹⁵

anthropologists, often sent by French colonials.¹⁴ Anthropologists took keen interest in the Hmong, Nicholas Tapp profess that the work of William Geddes, “United Nation-related Ethnography of the Blue Hmong or North Thailand” as being a classic (Geddes 1976). The work of Robert Cooper on Hmong economy and social structure and Jacques Lemoine’s ethnography on Hmong shamanic tradition and culture became among the many sources on Hmong social practices (Copper 1984, Lemoine 1972).

¹⁵ For more on Hmong history, read: Hillmer, Paul. “A people’s history of the Hmong”, St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2010

Lee, Gary Yia. “Diaspora and the Predicament of Origins: Interrogating Hmong Postcolonial History and Identity” Hmong Studies Journal, 8: 1-25. (2007)

The expansion of European empires consolidated the region's power to colonies and protectorates. Britain gained control of Burma following the Anglo-Burmese War that abolished the centuries-old monarchy. Siam, in the modern-day Thailand, managed to escape colonization, but without conflicts resulted in relinquishing territories in neighboring vassal states.¹⁶ By late nineteenth century, France had already colonized Vietnam and Cambodia. Their interest in Laos revolved around the strategic importance of the route through the Mekong River to China. However, much of present-day Laos at that time was a vassal state of Siam. It was not until the Franco-Siamese conflict that led to a treaty in 1893, relinquishing territories of the Lao vassal states east of the Mekong River to France, completing French Indochina (Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam). Laos became, for the first time since the death of Souriyavongsa in the seventeenth century, a united kingdom under the royal family of Luang Prabang within the protectorate of French Indochina.

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Hmong Studies Journal, 2:2 (1998)

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Tapp, Nicholas, et al., eds. *Hmong-Miao in Asia*. Silkworm Books, 2004.

Savina, F.M. "Histoire Des Miao" (Paris: Societe des Missions-Etrangers, 1924)

Yang, Dao. "Hmong at the Turning Point", Minneapolis: WorldBridge Associates, Ltd., 1993

¹⁶ For more on Thailand history, read: Keyes, Charles. *The Golden Peninsula: Culture and Adaptation in Mainland Southeast Asia*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1995

The History of American Involvement in Indochina

To understand the experience of Hmong and Lao in the U.S., it is first important to understand how they came to be in the U.S. The U.S. involvement in the Southeast Asian conflict began shortly after World War II with its support of French forces in Indochina.¹⁷ The eventual demise of French Indochina set course for the fully independent countries of Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam in 1945. With the waning presence of French forces, the United State further asserted itself and replaced the French in the region as part of a wider containment strategy for stopping the spread of communism. Internal struggles for political power complicated the fledgling nation-states of former French Indochina. The U.S. involvement was an effort to preserve the non-communist states for fear that if one nation fell to communism, the rest of Southeast Asia would follow suit. This resulted in the U.S. support of the South Vietnamese government against the North Vietnamese communist forces. Concurrently, U.S.-backed governments in Cambodia and Laos experienced their own battles trying to maintain independent countries.

Shortly after the Battle of Dien Bien Phu resulting in the end of the First Indochina War in 1954, internal conflicts and civil wars engulfed Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam. The signing of the Geneva Peace Accord in 1954 divided Vietnam at the 17th parallel and required all French military forces to leave Indochina and prevented any foreign troops from being stationed there.¹⁸

¹⁷ American Presidents from Truman to Nixon justified U.S. involvement as an effort to assist their French allies.

¹⁸ The U.S. refused to sign the agreement and U.S. President Dwight Eisenhower pledged to continue fight against communist expansion. Hannon Jr, John S. "Political Settlement for

The fledgling Royal Lao Government depended heavily on resources from foreign aid to stabilize the economy. The U.S. government provided humanitarian and foreign aid to Laos through the USAID program. U.S. military personnel in civilian clothing provided military advice. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, a civil war raged between the U.S.-backed Royal Lao government and the Pathet Lao, a communist nationalist political movement closely associated with the North Vietnamese Communist movement. As American military forces increased their activities in Vietnam, Laos became a battleground in that region primarily due to the fact that the Ho Chi Minh Trail used by North Vietnamese soldiers passed through much of Laos' eastern border.

Upon leaving the Office of the Presidency, President Dwight D. Eisenhower cautioned his successor, President John F. Kennedy that the fall of Laos to communist forces might have a domino effect in Southeast Asia. During his speech to the United Nation's General Assembly in 1961, President John F. Kennedy declared, "the peaceful people of Laos are in danger of losing the independence they gained not so long ago. We support a truly neutral and independent Laos, its people free from outside interference".¹⁹ During a press conference in 1969, President Richard Nixon adamantly stated, "there are no American combat forces in Laos. We have been providing logistical support and some training for the neutralist government in order to avoid Laos from falling under communist domination. As far as American manpower in Laos is concerned, there are none there at the present time on a combat basis." Nixon further added, "we do have aerial

Vietnam: The 1954 Geneva Conference and Its Current Implications, A." *Va. J. Int'l L.* 8 (1967):4.

¹⁹ Kennedy, John F. "Address to the UN General Assembly." United Nation General Assembly. New York, New York, 25 September 1961. Speech

reconnaissance, we do have perhaps some other activities”.²⁰ He refused to discuss those activities at the time being. The activities that Nixon mentioned were the U.S. covert operation in Laos. Known widely as the U.S. “Secret War”, a war that was kept secret from Congress and the American public. The war resulted in massive bombing campaign in Laos and military intervention by the U.S. government.

The Central Intelligence Agency (C.I.A.), under the pretext of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), recruited and trained irregular paramilitary forces operating within the Royal Lao Armed Forces (Vang 2008). As the conflict in Laos escalated, a U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) operative introduced Colonel Vang Pao (later General) and William “Bill” Lair.²¹ This began a long-standing relationship between Vang Pao and the CIA. The CIA were actively looking for recruitments to fight approaching communist forces, going from village to village offering supplies and means to fight. Vang Pao was fighting the Pathet Lao in northern Laos and was in need of supplies and resources, agreed to work with Lair.²²

²⁰ Nixon, Richard. "The President's News Conference," September 26, 1969. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*.

<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=2246>

²¹ General Vang Pao, a Hmong Commander of Laos’ Military Region II under the command of the Royal Lao Armed Forces.

²² An account by both Vang Pao and Bill Lair as told to Paul Hillmer, insisted that no formal agreement or promises were made between them. “They [the CIA] never came to make this agreement or that agreement”, “They [the Hmong] didn’t want to be promised anything” (Hillmer, 2010:85). This account was mentioned in *Journey from Pha Dong*, a film originally

In the winter of 1963, Laos' King, Sisavang Vatthana visited Vang Pao's newly established base at Long Cheng. During this occasion, Sisavang Vatthana presented medals to Vang Pao's soldiers. This visit by the King was the first time that many Hmong came close to Lao authorities. The following year, Vang Pao was promoted to Major General and was summoned by then Prime Minister, Prince Souvana Phouma to Vientiane. With the pressure from the CIA and fear of losing support from USAID, Vientiane made Vang Pao commander of Military Region II that encompassed Vientiane, Xieng Khouang and Sam Neua. U.S. military advisors continued to recruit from the Lao Armed Forces to fight along the lengthy Ho Chi Minh Trail, stretching from north to south passing through the eastern border of Laos with Vietnam.

Prime Minister Souvanna Phouma was well aware of U.S. military activities. He stated that it was the duty of the U.S. When asked about his knowledge of CIA activities in Laos, the Prime Minister refused to say anything further.²³ The Prime Minister welcomed the assistance and intervention by U.S. aerial bombing to fight North Vietnamese "invaders". Figure 1 below show results from aerial campaigns operated from military base in Eastern Thailand resulted in massive bombing in Laos, forever littering the landscape with evidence of the violence of this period. Between 1964 and 1973, the U.S. dropped more than two million tons of cluster bombs on Laos, making Laos the most bombed country per capita in history (Bransfman 2013).

produced by the CIA that depicted the support and training of Hmong guerilla forces. The narrator insisted that it was the Hmong's war and they [CIA] were simply supplying them with resources (*Journey from Pha Dong*, 1997).

²³ "Laos: The Not So Secret War" <https://archive.org/details/gov.archives.arc.657070> (accessed on March 31, 2015)

Escape and Camps

Early morning on August 23, 1975, the Pathet Lao forces declared a new government under the auspice of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party. The King of Laos, Sisavang Vattana was forced to abdicate, ending centuries of the Lao monarchy. Prince Souphanouvong, the "Red Prince" who joined the Pathet Lao faction, became the President and figurehead of the new government. Individuals who served in the Royal Lao Armed Forces or those considered a threat to the new Lao People's Democratic Republic government were subsequently arrested and sent to "seminars", re-education camps in rural Laos (Vang 2008). Among them were the King and Queen of Laos (Scott 1989). Many remained in the re-education camps for decades, while illness, malnutrition and execution became usual occurrences in the camps. For those who were fortunate enough to leave, either by escaping or bribing low-level soldiers, long-lasting trauma continues to haunt them. Survivors of the re-education camps retell their stories and experiences vividly. One former Lao military official speaks of what he saw and experienced in the "seminar" camp. "I was sent to 'seminar' with a hundred and eighty senior officers...There are three types of jail, the first is under the ground, you cannot see the sun, cannot even breath fresh air," he continued. Executions were conducted openly, as to set examples for other prisoners and

Branfman, Fred, ed. *Voices From the Plain of Jars: Life Under an Air War*, 2nd ed. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2013

Kingshill, Kenneth P. "Present-day effects of United States bombing of Laos during the Vietnam War: can injured Laotians recover under the Federal Tort Claims Act." *Loy. LA Int'l & Comp. LJ* 13 (1990): 133.

dissidents. “Two men were shot before us all, they were major, they were killed in the open and all the people in the seminar camp had to come and see.” (Scott 1989: 249)

With the inevitable fall of Laos to the Pathet Lao forces, refugees fled the country and sought refuge in Thailand. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) established the following refugee camps for those fleeing Lao; Chiang Khong, Chiang Kham, Ban Nam Yao, Sob Tuang, Fak Tha, Ban Vinai, Nongkhai, Ban Na Pho, and Ubon. Escaping from Laos was not an end to the struggle for the refugees. Of the refugees from Laos, many perished along the Mekong River as they escaped to Thailand. Yeng Xiong and her family escaped Laos crossing the Mekong River. Yeng carried an infant on her back with a Hmong baby carrier while holding another child in front. Though unable to swim, Yeng tied one end of the rope to herself and another to her husband. While swimming across the Mekong River from Laos to Thailand, Yeng was briefly swiped under by the strong current. When Yeng reached the shore of the Mekong River on the Thai side, she realized the infant was no longer there on her back. “In my heart, I feel as if I made a mistake and that’s why I lost my baby. If only I had tied my baby to me, I would have seen him if he slipped out.”, Yeng lamented her lost.²⁶

Conditions in Thai refugee camps were not ideal, but instead rather hostile. There were reports of corruption and even rape by Thai soldiers (Hamilton-Merritt, 1993: 447). These camps held the promise of escape from war, but more often delivered a reality of poverty and violence. Some camps were also organizing bases for insurgent groups fighting against the Lao

²⁶ Yeng Xiong (edited and translated by Mai Tong Yang), “Yeng Xiong,” Immigrant Stories Digital Archive, Immigration History Research Center, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LI4ylxTzR2s> (accessed March 26, 2015).

communists. “The heart and lungs are within normal limit”, these words written on medical records, were a sign of final approval that refugees were permitted to resettle in the U.S.²⁷ Official documents created in refugee camps in Thailand by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) placed inside a large white bag marked “IOM” (International Organization for Migration) in big letters accompany refugees along their journey.

Their journey and experiences were predetermined through the structure and policies established by the public-private partnership with non-governmental voluntary agencies. Shortly after their arrival to the United States, the refugees were provided with a number of resources to facilitate their integration. Saengchanh Thammavong and his family of seven were among the refugees from Laos who made Minnesota their home. The Thammavongs arrived at the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport in 1979.²⁸ This was not the first time that Saengchanh had been to the U.S. Years prior, he had worked for USAID in Laos and was a member of a Special Guerrilla Unit led and trained by the C.I.A. As part of his training, Saengchanh had come to the U.S. in early 1970s to attend military and leadership training at Fort Knox in Kentucky and Lackland Air Force Base in Texas. Saengchanh would later return to Laos, tasked to help rebuild the country amidst the on-going conflict. Xeng Yang and his family of six also arrived in 1979 as refugees, sponsored by another Hmong family in Wisconsin and later relocated to Minnesota.²⁹

²⁷ International Institute of Minnesota Records, General/Multiethnic Collection, Immigration History Research Center Archives, University of Minnesota, Boxes 10-14.

²⁸ International Institute of Minnesota Records, General/Multiethnic Collection, Immigration History Research Center Archives, University of Minnesota, Boxes 12. Note that the names have been changed to ensure confidentiality of IIM clients.

²⁹ Oral History – Project, MHS Collection, project: “Hmong Oral History Project”

Xeng was fifteen in 1960 when he first was recruited to fight under the supervision of the C.I.A. in Laos' Military Region II (MRII). Soon after joining the fight, Xeng left for Thailand to train as a paratrooper. He later returned to Laos and trained other soldiers in Long Cheng.³⁰ Wounded in the battlefield on numerous occasions, Xeng soon was promoted to captain and continued to fight until 1975 when Laos fell to the Pathet Lao.

These refugees from Laos became a product of a complex immigration system. They are legacies of U.S. Cold War responses in the region and of failed U.S. foreign policy, one that spanned multiple presidencies. The Thammavongs and Yangs family and refugees like them were among the first wave of refugees from Laos who escaped to Thailand and joins others in refugee camps established by the UNHCR. The first wave were individuals and their families who have worked closely with the Americans (Vang, 2008). Later, subsequent waves escaped the repressive regimes of Laos, many of whom were farmers in the countryside and prisoners from “re-education camps”.

Early Years of Resettlement

In 1975, soon after the U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam, the former French colonies in Southeast Asia (Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam) fell to communist forces. Collapse of the American-supported governments in Cambodia, Laos and South Vietnam in 1975, led to a mass exodus of refugees from their respective repressive regimes. The U.S. government felt responsible for the massive international humanitarian crises (Mortensen and Mondale 2006). Refugees from Laos begin to arrive in the United States in 1975, albeit a small number as compared to those from Cambodia and Vietnam. The Indochina Migration and Refugee

³⁰ Long Cheng was a CIA base in Laos and an airfield situated in Northern Laos.

Assistance Act of 1975 signed by President Gerald Ford conferred special status on Southeast Asian refugees. The Act’s approach focused primarily on an emergency humanitarian response to an international crisis by providing aid and assistance to accelerate the resettlement and assimilation of refugees. Additional needs to support refugees resulted in the Refugee Act of 1980, sponsored by Senator Edward Kennedy and signed by President Jimmy Carter. This legislation created for the first time in American policy, a statutory definition of “refugee” and provided resources for the “effective resettlement of refugees and to assist them to achieve economic self-sufficiency as quickly as possible”.³¹

As shown in Table 3 below, the number of refugees from Laos ebbed and flowed during the early years of resettlement. From 1975 to 1980, roughly 86,000 refugees from Laos arrived in the U.S. The year 1980 saw the highest arrival of refugees from Laos. (Strand and Jones 1985). Long waits in refugee camps and finding suitable sponsors may have contributed to the ebb and flow of resettlement during the first few years (Vang 2008). The sharp increase in arrival of refugees from Laos in 1980 can be seen as direct results of the 1980 Refugee Act that increased annual admission thresholds for refugees.

Table 3: Arrival of Refugee from Laos from 1975 to 1980

Year	Number of Person Resettled
1975	108
1976	3,153
1977	213
1978	7,926
1979	24,414
1980	50,031
Total	85,845

Source: Strand and Jones 1985

³¹ The Refugee Act of 1980, Public Law 96-212, approved March 17, 1980

Prior to 1975, a Hmong or Lao community in the U.S. did not exist, aside from a small number of students and social elites. The refugees lived in geographically diverse communities dispersed throughout the country in states such as Iowa, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, Texas, and California. The group of refugees from Laos was dispersed to communities with small Asian populations. In 1975, Iowa's Governor Robert D. Ray was one of the three members of the National Governors' Association Task Force on Refugees and took special interest in leading the resettlement of Southeast Asian refugees to his state. The Iowa Refugee Service Center (IRSC) functioned as a VOLAG in areas such as recruiting sponsors, job placement, providing resources for vocational training. Interestingly, the IRSC was attentive to avoiding ethnic tension and rivalries that might have carried on from Southeast Asia to the U.S. To avoid ethnic tension, the IRSC hired well-trained outreach workers from the refugee communities to work with all refugee groups, not just their own (Westermeyer 2011, Zucker 1983).

The VOLAGS that resettled Hmong, Lao, and other Southeast Asian refugees helped with the recruitment of sponsors, many of whom were from church congregations. Prior to the refugees' arrival, the sponsors handled housing and schooling logistics. Sponsors greeted the refugees as they arrived in the U.S. at the airport. Everything they encountered during their journey was new and foreign to them. Refugee children were immediately enrolled in schools in age-appropriate classrooms. Their arrival presented a crisis for the receiving communities and sponsors. How do they find housing for large extended families, find employment and enroll their children into the schools? The first wave of refugees came from the upper and middle classes of their respective countries. They were able to find housing and jobs relatively easily with support from social services agencies.

Since the inception of the refugee resettlement program, the primary roles of VOLAGS were to assist the refugees so they could gain employment and necessary skills. In assisting the refugees in finding employment, the VOLAGS followed recommendations from the Interagency Task Force and the 1980 Refugee Act that made clear that refugees must take “appropriate employment” when it is offered to them (Wright 1981). As a result, people were placed in whatever job was offered to them. This often meant placing refugees in low-paying and unskilled jobs (Downing 1984). A Hmong Community Survey in 1982 reported that 73 percent of Hmong worked in low-skill jobs, such as production, maintenance, and dishwashing (Downing et al. 1984). The misperception of that all Southeast Asians are the same with common culture or language by policymakers and VOLAGS contributed to misguided initiatives (Zucker 1983). For example, in finding employment, VOLAGS and sponsors often misunderstood the role of Lao women in Lao society. When Lao families first arrived in the U.S., the adult males were immediately placed in jobs, while the women stayed home with the children and remained unemployed. In Lao matrilineal society, women work as entrepreneurs, farmer laborers, and often bring in the families financial needs (Devoe 1996).

Figure 2: Shoua Yang, International Institute of Minnesota (IIM) Caseworker



Source: [International Institute of Minnesota Records, Annual Reports, Immigration History Research Center Archives, University of Minnesota, Oversized Box 1](#)

Subsequent waves of Hmong and Lao refugees included rural farmers and low-level soldiers with low-skilled non-mechanized labor experiences. Many in this group of refugees found themselves helping subsequent waves of refugees. Khouthong Vixayvong, a former member of the Agriculture Ministry in the Royal Lao Government who worked with the USAID in Laos resettled in Minnesota in 1980. Perhaps because of prior experiences working with American officials in Laos, Khouthong later became a caseworker at the International Institute of Minnesota (IIM), helping the resettlement of Lao and Hmong to Minnesota.³² Shoua Vang, picture in Figure 2 above, became the first Hmong caseworker at the IIM in 1978. In their 1987 annual report, the IIM credited the work of Hmong caseworkers to the increase of Hmong refugees in Minnesota.³³

Due to decades of conflict in Laos, many Lao refugees that came to the U.S. had little or no education. Many lacked literacy in their own language. Skills that they possessed in their agrarian society were not transferable to the industrialized environment of urban America. A large number of Lao arrived without speaking English, the little English skills that they did have they acquired in refugee camps (Devoe 1996). Though there was awareness that English ability would increase the refugee's capacity to become self-sufficient as quickly as possible, there were concerns that extension of ESL programs in the refugee camps might have an adverse effect on

³² Vixayvong, Phouninh & Khouthong, "LOHA: Vixayvong, Phouninh & Khouthong (5/8): America", Lao Oral History Archive, Center for Lao Studies, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gbrF01zPbyw> (accessed April 1, 2015).

³³ International Institute of Minnesota Records, Annual Reports, Immigration History Research Center Archives, University of Minnesota, Oversized Box 1

rate of resettlement (Gallagher 1985). English language attainment also contributed to barriers felt by Hmong refugees. The State of Minnesota, where many Hmong subsequently resettled imposed a six-month limit on the length of time a refugee can receive free ESL instructions (Downing et. al 1984). The Hmong Resettlement Study reported that the Hmong felt that the greatest barrier to employment is their lack of English skills (ibid). For those who were fortunate to find employment, their language barrier often led to low wages.

Figure 3: The New Oriental Market, sign in Lao reads “New Lao Market”



Source: The Lao Diaspora Project

Despite barriers to employment attainment, both Hmong and Lao refugees started their own businesses. Xay Ratsamy and his family resettled in Iowa in 1980 prior to moving to Minnesota. The photograph in Figure 3 above is the New Oriental Market, the first Lao-owned grocery store in Minnesota by the Ratsamys.³⁴ In Rhode Island, with the help of the Southeast Asian Cooperative Inc, Hmong women were assisted in the sales and marketing of the *paj ntaub*

³⁴ “The Chinese Lao American with a Southern Lao Soul” The Lao Diaspora Project, Little Laos on the Prairie, <http://littlelaosontheprairie.org/2015/01/21/the-chinese-lao-american-with-a-southern-laos-soul/> (accessed on April 10, 2015)

(needlework).³⁵ In Minnesota, Hmong textile stores opened, one in St. Paul and one in Minneapolis. Non-Hmong volunteers operated the store and 80 percent of the proceeds would be paid to the Hmong Women once their pieces are sold (Downing et al. 1984). Figure 4 below show a Hmong woman working on the *paj ntaub*.

Figure 4: Hmong woman working on textile



Source: [International Institute of Minnesota Records, Annual Reports, Immigration History Research Center Archives, University of Minnesota, Oversized Box 1](#)

The effort in encouraging entrepreneurship went beyond businesses. The Hmong Agricultural Project, a partnership between the University of Minnesota Agricultural Extension Division and several area Foundations provided training, land, and sources to Hmong families who were interested in farming and gardening (ibid). Despite efforts in encouraging employment and entrepreneurship among Hmong and Lao, unemployment remained high and many families continue to rely on public assistance. In Minnesota, 88 percent of Hmong families identified that they were receiving some form of public assistance (ibid). Nationally, 40 percent of Lao were

³⁵ "Laotian Needlework from Rhode Island." *New York Times (1923-Current file)*: 1. Mar 26 1981. *ProQuest*. Web. 23 Apr. 2015.

unemployed in 1982 making public assistance an important aspect of their survival (Caplan 1985).

Figure 5: Kouthong Vixayvong, co-founder of the Lao Assistance Center of Minnesota



Source: The Refugee Studies Center, University of Minnesota Records, General/Multiethnic Collection, Immigration History Research Center Archives, University of Minnesota

Immediately after their arrival to the U.S., Hmong and Lao relied heavily on their respective communities. As with many immigrant groups prior to them, mutual assistance associations (MAA) played a crucial role in community building. Khoutong Vixayvong, picture in Figure 5 above, was a caseworker at the International Institute of Minnesota and co-founded the Lao Assistance Center of Minnesota (LACM) in 1983 with fellow community leaders. The organization received funding from the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) to assist Lao refugees in areas such as employment, school enrollment for their children, as well as efforts in navigating their new environment.³⁶ LACM remain one of two MAA that provide assistance to Lao in Minnesota. The leadership of Hmong clan leaders helped with the creation of MAAs to assist Hmong refugees. For example, the Association of Hmong Minnesota was founded under

³⁶ Personal interview with Sunny Chanthanouvong in Minneapolis, Minnesota on April 30, 2014

the auspices of General Vang Pao, who worked closely with VOLAGS and other government agencies to assist Hmong refugees in navigating all segments of society (Vang 2008).

As a result of resettlement policy and recommendations from the Task Force, the initial waves of Southeast Asian refugees dispersed throughout the U.S. News of the whereabouts of families and friends began a secondary wave of migration for the refugees. Once refugees have established communities in their new home, news of jobs, support systems, and available resources spread to extended family members and friends. The chain migration of Hmong and Lao occur on many levels. Like immigrants before them, Hmong and Lao refugees preferred to be with members of their own group who speak the same language and share the same customs. The cohesiveness of community relies heavily on community-based support system. In the 1980 U.S. Census, Minnesota ranked first in terms of Hmong population and second for the Lao (Johnson 1983). By the year 2000, 25 years since their first arrival, the population of Hmong and Lao has remained concentrated in California and Minnesota.

Though arriving with similar backgrounds in areas such as education and experiences in modern society, the Hmong and Lao were viewed differently. Robert Wright (1981:164) wrote that, “in terms of our government’s obligation to refugees, the Hmong have a stronger claim than most”. Wright suggested that the Hmong resettlement in a “modern technological society, undoubtedly a wrenching experience for them, poses unprecedented problems for our system of resettlement” (Wright 1981:164). Thus, requiring special attentiveness from the U.S. government. Prior to their arrival, news reports characterized Hmong as “tribal” minorities in conflict with the communists. Descriptions of their plight to the U.S. in news reports further fostered a sense of indebtedness toward the Hmong, a U.S. ally during the war in Vietnam (Dunnigan et. al 1996). News reports such as a 1961 Time Magazine article title, characterized

Hmong as the “Fighting Tribe” (Time 1961). Franklin Ng, a professor in Anthropology stated that their [Hmong] “plight have often characterized Hmong as victims and unfortunate pawns in a Southeast Asian War” (Ng 1993). In contrast a report on “Indo-Chinese Refugees in Minnesota: Movement Toward Economic Self-Sufficiency”, the report recognized that the Laotians [Lao] came from mostly rural/agricultural background, resulting in them facing great difficulties in finding suitable employment in the U.S.³⁷ The report further indicated that given their small population in Minnesota (1980), their needs for services appeared to be ignored. The perception of the Hmong and Lao by the American mainstream has played a role in the differences in trajectory of these two ethnic communities.

The contrasting perception of the Hmong and Lao by media outlets, scholars and social services agencies as indicated above, may have resulted in special attentiveness by national and local governments. Such perception may suggest that the visibility of the Hmong and responsiveness by individuals in social services agencies as well as government bureaucrats, may have led to the development of initiatives and community-based programs. To fully understand these adverse results, further study on the perception of immigrants in the media and its correlation between their needs for social services is needed.

³⁷ The Refugee Studies Center, University of Minnesota Records, General/Multiethnic Collection, Immigration History Research Center Archives, University of Minnesota

Chapter 3

Numbers Matter

The refugee resettlement policies and recommendations by the Interagency Task Force highlight the expressed need to accelerate the integration of refugees to American society as quickly as possible. Early European immigrants settled in clustered patterns in the United States, but subsequent generations tended to disperse throughout the country. Resettlement policies have consistently aimed at the dispersal of refugees. However, local support of states, social services agencies and refugee communities themselves have often thwarted the dispersal goal, resulting in concentration.

Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses

This section provides a broad framework for which an analysis of spatial assimilation and ethnic enclaves, as well as theories of assimilation and adaptation of immigrants in the U.S., examines the effectiveness of current refugee resettlement policies. Classic studies of immigrant assimilation have stressed that dispersal settlement pattern as well as contact with members of the host society are key factors of immigrant's integration. The impetus behind this approach has its roots from the idea of the American melting pot. Immigrant narratives suggest that each new generation of native-born descendants of immigrants becomes more similar to the American "mainstream" over time, in terms of cultural norms, values, and adaptation to the characteristics of the host society. The classical sociological framework of assimilation describes it as a process in which members of an ethnic or racial minority group adopt the norms, behaviors, attitudes and cultural traits of the dominant group. In this 1961 work, Milton Gordon argued that "straight-line" assimilation is realized in two sub-processes that he termed "behavioral assimilation" and

“structural assimilation” (Gordon 1961). According to Gordon, behavioral assimilation, or acculturation, occurs when immigrants absorb norms and values such as language, food, and socializing behaviors of the host society.

Many see this theory of assimilation as problematic because it is intertwined with the notion of “Anglo-conformity,” where assimilation can only occur when immigrants become more like whites (Alba and Nee 1997, Portes and Zhou 1993, Hirschman 1983). Sociologists Alejandro Portes and Min Zhou contest that assimilation theories such as that of Gordon’s neglect to recognize the multifaceted nature of America’s changing demographics. Portes and Zhou suggest a new framework, which they call “segmented assimilation”. According the Portes and Zhou, segmented assimilation recognizes the existence of barriers such as limited education, access to employment and racial discrimination that results in stagnated economic mobility even among second and third generation immigrants (Portes and Zhou 1993). Among the classic framework of assimilation of ethnic groups is spatial assimilation, where the geographic proximity between members of an immigrant group and members of the majority group signals immigrant integration or a condition that will increase the pace of immigrant integration (Massey 1985). In contrast, researchers characterize ethnic enclaves, or the geographic concentration of an immigrant group, as a signal of a lack of immigrant integration or a condition that will decrease the pace of immigrant integration (Portes and Jensen 1989, Portes and Bach 1985, Wilson and Martin 1982).

Methodology and Findings

Hmong achievements in comparison to Lao in areas such as civic engagement and education may be influenced by the relative degree of spatial concentration for each group. The methodology and approaches undertaken to provide a comparative perspective between the Lao

and Hmong communities of Minnesota involved an analysis of U.S. census tract data to determine the trend in residential settlement patterns and to calculate segregation indices for Lao and Hmong. Using the 2000 and 2010 U.S. census tract, the data analysis is organized by geographic categories including the State of Minnesota, the Twin Cities, Metropolitan Area cities, Outer Ring cities, and cities in Greater Minnesota. Changes in population are calculated for each census tract and geographic category. Though a review of Census data from 1990 and 1980 for Hmong and Lao may strengthen this analysis, it should be noted that Hmong have only recently been included as a possible category in the Census questionnaire in the year 2000. Prior to this, Hmong was a write-in or some Hmong reported their identity as Laotian (Pfeifer et al. 2012).

The analysis of U.S. Census data show striking differences in residential settlement patterns and movement between the Hmong and Lao populations. Nationally, there were 232,133 Lao living in the U.S. in 2010. The Lao were concentrated in California, Texas, and Minnesota. Sacramento (12,758), Dallas-Fort Worth (10,074), the San Francisco-Bay Area (9,850), the Seattle-Tacoma Area (9,131), and the Minneapolis-St. Paul Metropolitan Area (7,024) were population centers for the Lao in 2010 (Pfeifer et. al 2012). Table 4 shows how the Lao population was distributed in Minnesota in 2000 and 2010. One strong pattern has been a population decline within the inner cities for the Lao over time, with a substantial proportion moving to outer ring cities. In the 2010 Census, 12,009 persons living in Minnesota identified themselves as Lao. This represents a 4.3 percent increase from the 11,516 Lao recorded in Minnesota in 2000. The data show a sharp decline of over 60 percent of Lao in the inner cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul between 2000 to 2010. In 2010, roughly 13 percent of Lao lived in Minneapolis or St. Paul, a decline of 2,403 Lao in comparison to 2000. Most notably, the City of

St. Paul saw a decline of over 73 percent of Lao population from 2000 to 2010. In contrast, in 2010 45 percent of the Lao population lived in surrounding cities in the metropolitan area suburbs. In 2010, the largest Lao population lived in Brooklyn Park, a suburb to the northwest of Minneapolis. About 13 percent of Lao live in Brooklyn Park, making it the city with the most concentrated Lao population in Minnesota, followed by Minneapolis (9.7 percent) and Rochester (6.1 percent), a city in Greater Minnesota. The other top five cities with Lao population are Worthington (4.4 percent) and Shakopee (3.5 percent).

Table 4: Lao Population Trend, Minnesota Distributions, 2000 to 2010

City	2000 U.S. Census	Percentage	2010 U.S. Census	Percentage	2000-2010 Population Change
Minnesota	11,516	100.0%	12,009	100.0%	4.3%
Twin Cities	3,948	34.3%	1,545	12.9%	-60.9%
Minneapolis	2,522	21.9%	1,166	9.7%	-53.8%
St. Paul	1,426	12.4%	379	3.2%	-73.4%
Metropolitan Area Suburb	4,158	36.1%	5,479	45.6%	31.8%
Brooklyn Park	1,299	11.3%	1,597	13.3%	22.9%
Outer Ring	126	1.09%	560	4.7%	344.4%
Greater Minnesota	2059	17.88%	2375	19.8%	15.3%
Other Cities	1,225	10.6%	2,050	17.1%	67.3%

Source: 2010 Census, Summary File 1 ASIAN ALONE OR IN COMBINATION WITH ONE OR MORE OTHER RACES, AND WITH ONE OR MORE ASIAN CATEGORIES FOR SELECTED GROUPS

In 2010, the movement of Lao was not only to suburbs, but also to exurbs in Outer Ring cities. From 2000 to 2010, the Lao population in Outer Ring cities increased at an amazing rate of 344 percent. The movement corresponds with the national trend of immigrants relocating to, or settling in suburbs across the U.S.³⁸ Close to 20 percent of the Lao population in Minnesota

³⁸ Peterson, David. “Immigrant suburbs' emerge in latest census sweep” *Star Tribune* 17

December 2013. <http://www.startribune.com/local/south/236316111.html> (accessed on April 10, 2015)

live in cities in Greater Minnesota.³⁹ The data suggest that in proportion to its population and compared to Hmong (see below) the Lao are dispersed in the state of Minnesota and less centralized.

Table 5: Hmong Population Trend, Minnesota Distributions, 2000 to 2010

City	2000 U.S. Census	Percentage	2010 U.S. Census	Percentage	2000-2010 Population Change
Minnesota	45,443	100.0%	66,181	100.0%	45.6%
Twin Cities	36,998	81.4%	37,174	56.2%	0.5%
St. Paul	26,509	58.3%	29,662	44.8%	11.9%
Minneapolis	10,489	23.1%	7,512	11.4%	-28.4%
Metropolitan Area Suburb	5,891	13.0%	21,108	31.9%	258.3%
Brooklyn Park	1,292	2.84%	5,151	7.8%	298.7%
Outer Ring	188	0.4%	1,536	2.3%	717.0%
Greater Minnesota	886	1.9%	1,386	2.1%	45.6%
Other Cities	1,480	3.3%	4,967	7.5%	235.6%

Source: 2010 Census, Summary File 1 ASIAN ALONE OR IN COMBINATION WITH ONE OR MORE OTHER RACES, AND WITH ONE OR MORE ASIAN CATEGORIES FOR SELECTED GROUPS

Nationally, there were 260,073 Hmong living in the U.S. in 2010. The Hmong are concentrated in California (91,224), Minnesota (66,181) and Wisconsin (49,240). Among the

³⁹ It should be noted that municipal officials have supported the resettlement of Lao in Greater Minnesota. For example, in the 1980s, during a Lao New Year celebration, Worthington’s Mayor Bob Demuth welcomed the celebration and exclaimed “We can no longer live in isolation from other people” and that “we must welcome them into our hearts, our minds and our home”. This sentiment is echoed by members of the Cultural Diversity Coalition in Worthington saying, “This will encourage people to develop new friendships and discover that as human beings we are more alike than different”. The Refugee Studies Center, University of Minnesota Records, General/Multiethnic Collection, Immigration History Research Center Archives, University of Minnesota

states where there are large populations of Hmong, the Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan area remains the primary center where Hmong reside (Pfeifer et. al 2012). Table 5 above shows a large increase of 45.6 percent of Hmong population living in Minnesota from 2000 to 2010. This increase could be attributed to the latest wave of Hmong refugees coming from Thailand in 2004. About 30 years after the first arrival of Hmong to the U.S., the State Department permitted the resettlement of 15,000 Hmong refugees who had remained in Thailand since the last Hmong refugee camp closed in 1993 (Grigoleit 2006).

Hmong remain centrally concentrated in the inner cities, with 56 percent living in Minneapolis and St. Paul. Though the population in Minneapolis and St. Paul has had a slight increase of half a percentage from 2000 to 2010, a closer look indicates a sharp decline of the overall percentage of Hmong living in those cities, from 81 percent in 2000 to 56 percent in 2010. Consequently, the City of Minneapolis also saw a drastic decline of 28 percent. Some of the most impressive growth of the Hmong population is in the metropolitan area suburbs over the 2000-2010 periods. The overall growth rate in the metropolitan area suburbs was 258 percent, where in 2010 33 percent of Minnesota's Hmong population lives. Similar to the Lao, the City of Brooklyn Park had the greatest increase in Hmong population, at 300 percent. In the Outer Ring cities, the Hmong population expanded a rather remarkable 717 percent, over the decade from 188 to 1,536. Greater Minnesota also saw an increase 45 percent, from 886 Hmong in 2000 to 1,386. As mentioned previously, the trend of suburbanization of immigrants could explain this phenomenon. There is further evidence that the latest wave of Hmong refugees may have resettled directly to suburbs. However, additional research on this matter will need to be explored.

Though the data suggests that both Hmong and Lao are dispersed and are no longer concentrated in one area, a closer look shows that in proportion to its population, the Lao are more dispersed than the Hmong. In 2010, more than half of the Hmong population remains concentrated in the inner cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul. In contrast, just over one-fifth of the Lao population in Minnesota resides in the Twin Cities in 2010. Could the differences in settlement trajectory of spatial concentration and population dispersal among the Hmong and Lao, respectively, help to explain some of the integration disparities that exist between the two communities?

Supporting Data

Over 240,000 Asian Americans live in Minnesota, The Hmong represent 27 percent of this population, making them the largest Asian American group. The Lao are the seventh largest at about 5 percent. The disparities between Lao and other Southeast Asian immigrant groups are evident. According to the 2010 U.S. Census, among the Southeast Asians in Minnesota, the Lao have the highest rate of population with less than a bachelor degree at 94.5 percent. In contrast, 83.2 percent of Hmong in Minnesota has less than a bachelor degree. The education gap between Lao and Hmong in Minnesota is strikingly worrisome. For example, the rate of education attainment may have had adverse effects on the dismal employment rate of Lao in Minnesota. In 2010, Minnesota's unemployment rate was at 7 percent. The Lao has a high unemployment rate of 12.7 percent in contrast to the Hmong at 8.4 percent. The disparities between the two communities continue in the area of household income, with a median household income for Lao

of \$40,000 compared to \$42,942 for Hmong.⁴⁰ These disparities are particularly striking given the large number of very recently arrived Hmong in Minnesota, who are likely to have lower levels of educational attainment and household incomes.

An area where the Hmong have excelled compared to Lao is civic engagement, particularly election to public offices. Recently, several Hmong candidates have won elected positions in local and state government positions in Minnesota. Dai Thao, a community organizer, won an election for a St. Paul Council Seat in Ward 1 in 2013. Blong Yang, an attorney, won an election for a Minneapolis Council Seat in Ward 5 in 2013. A year prior, Fong Hawj, a community organizer, won an election for State Senator for Senate Seat District 67, a seat held previously by Senator Mee Moua for over a decade. These successful campaigns are located in areas where Hmong population has historically been concentrated. Interestingly, the increase in Hmong settling in Greater Minnesota has also resulted in political success. Walnut Grove, a city situated in southwest Minnesota is best known for being home of “Little House of the Prairie” Laura Ingalls Wilder, had a population of 871 in 2010. It is now home to a thriving Hmong community. The Hmong population in Walnut Grove is 215, roughly 25 percent of the total population. Xiong Yang has held a seat in the Walnut Grove City Council since 2007.

Initial Southeast Asian refugee resettlement efforts made geographic dispersal a high priority. This policy goal was sometimes thwarted by voluntary secondary migration for family reunification purposes. Like most refugee and immigrant groups before them, Hmong and Lao seek to be with members of their ethnic group. The secondary migration of Hmong and Lao to join existing communities has produced an unevenness of outcomes.

⁴⁰ Council on Asian Pacific Minnesotans. “State of the Asian Pacific Minnesotans, Report”. St. Paul, Minnesota. 2012. Print

Conclusion

This paper has provided an overview of activities as a result of U.S. foreign policies and events in Southeast Asia that lead to the refugee crisis. To contextualize the responses in resettling refugees from Southeast Asia, a summary of the evolution of U.S. refugee resettlement policies from 1948-1980 was provided. The uniqueness of the Hmong and Lao and their experiences prior to coming to the U.S. has provided an opportunity to examine resettlement practices such as the dispersal of refugees, one that still is common in refugee resettlement in the U.S. Personal narratives from the perspectives of Hmong and Lao refugees put faces and stories of real people affected by these policies. An analysis of both historical and recent data shows that there are stark differences in experiences and divergence of settlement patterns among the Hmong and Lao. It is apparent that the Lao population is much more decentralized than the Hmong.

Key Learning Outcomes and Future Research

Prior to the resettlement of Southeast Asian refugees to the U.S. and the enactment of the Refugee Act in 1980, refugee resettlement policies and programs have historically operated in an *ad hoc* basis. Policies from the Displaced Persons Act in 1948 to the Indochina Refugee Migration and Assistance Act in 1975 have been an avenue in which the U.S. government responded to international humanitarian crises, particularly involving communist-dominated or communist-controlled countries. The considerations of refugee resettlement policies of “calculated kindness” have been a principal force behind the U.S. responses to these crises (Loescher and Scanlan 1998). The events in Southeast Asia mentioned throughout this paper have produced the largest flow of refugees to the U.S. and contributed to the modification of U.S. refugee policies.

The implementation of refugee resettlement policies have historically focused on dispersal, aimed at immersing refugees in the mainstream culture. The process have disrupted extended families and left many without proper social support. Since there were few Hmong and Lao living in the U.S. during that period, most refugees settled in areas with no community support systems. Little attention seems to be made to guard against side effects of the dispersal of refugees. Movements through secondary migration prove to have thwarted initial implementation of the resettlement policy. Although coming to the U.S. for the same reasons and sharing similar journeys and experiences, in the nearly 40 years since their arrival, their lives and settlement patterns has diverged. Despite a parallel narrative, in the context of their experiences in the U.S., the Hmong are able to tell their stories more effectively than the Lao. The analysis of U.S. Census data that was provided suggests that spatial concentration of the Hmong may help to explain their advantage.

One factor that may explain the clustering of Hmong is their social and lineage structure of clans. Previously mentioned in chapter 2, the Hmong clan social structure continues to be a strong component of Hmong society that bonds nuclear and extended families. The need for social support from clan members and extended families become apparent and necessary for the resettlement of the Hmong. Another factor that may have played a role in strengthening the visibility of the Hmong is the media. Bruce Downing, a professor of linguistics at the University of Minnesota and former director of the Refugee Studies Center, attributed the perception of Hmong as requiring special attention to the role of the media. Downing stated, “They [the media] seem to pick up on the fact that these are really different kinds of people. They lived up in the mountains, they didn’t go to school, they did slash and burn farming, and they were tribal people and all of these things kind made their ears perk up and was something unique.” Downing further

explained that, “They [the media] didn’t think of the Lao, who were thought of as people from the settled areas running the government and things like that. So, they didn’t, sort of demand the same attention although some of the needs were obviously the same.”⁴¹ Downing’s own work at the University of Minnesota, Center for Urban and Regional Affairs (CURA)’s Southeast Asian Refugee Studies Project (SARS) also focused primarily on Hmong (Downing 2013 and 1982).

An area of future research may include an analysis of media reports regarding Hmong and Lao in Minnesota. Such analyses are needed to illustrate discrepancy in both media coverage as well as programs and efforts implemented for each of the community. To guard against media bias, more interviews with key individuals in both immigrant and non-immigrant communities who played important roles in facilitating the integration of Lao and Hmong refugees in Minnesota should be conducted. The interviews may provide information regarding the decision-making process as well as the outcome of such programs and policies.

During the last forty years, the Hmong and Lao have struggle to adjust to their new environment. Although some advancement has been made, challenges remain in the two ethnic communities, in areas such as education and economic viability. Given some of their differences in experiences in the U.S., the personal narrative from members of the two communities and their shared journey will continue to bind them in the foreseeable future.

⁴¹ Personal interview with Bruce Downing in Minneapolis, Minnesota on March 12, 2015

Appendix A: Hmong Population Trend, Minnesota Distributions, 2000 to 2010

Hmong					
City	2000 U.S. Census		2010 U.S. Census		2000-2010
	Percentage	Percentage	Population Change		
Minnesota	45,443	100.0%	66,181	100.0%	45.6%
Twin Cities	36,998	81.4%	37,174	56.2%	0.5%
St. Paul	26,509	58.3%	29,662	44.8%	11.9%
Minneapolis	10,489	23.1%	7,512	11.4%	-28.4%
Metropolitan Area Suburb	5,891	13.0%	21,108	31.9%	258.3%
Brooklyn Center	1,448	3.19%	3,170	4.8%	118.9%
Brooklyn Park	1,292	2.84%	5,151	7.8%	298.7%
Maplewood	714	1.57%	2,152	3.3%	201.4%
Woodbury	291	0.64%	1,103	1.7%	279.0%
Vadnais Heights	228	0.50%	578	0.9%	153.5%
Oakdale	219	0.48%	1,524	2.3%	595.9%
Blaine	188	0.41%	950	1.4%	405.3%
Little Canada	128	0.28%	650	1.0%	407.8%
Cottage Grove	122	0.27%	890	1.3%	629.5%
Roseville	122	0.27%	413	0.6%	238.5%
Columbia Heights	119	0.26%	168	0.3%	41.2%
White Bear Lake	118	0.26%	454	0.7%	284.7%
Inver Grove Heights	115	0.25%	303	0.5%	163.5%
Fridley	110	0.24%	419	0.6%	280.9%
Eagan	107	0.24%	255	0.4%	138.3%
Coon Rapids	100	0.22%	765	1.2%	665.0%
North St. Paul city	79	0.17%	546	0.8%	591.1%
Crystal	74	0.16%	180	0.3%	143.2%
Mounds View	73	0.16%	321	0.5%	339.7%
Bloomington	57	0.13%	128	0.2%	124.6%
Robbinsdale	51	0.11%	175	0.3%	243.1%
Shoreview	51	0.11%	150	0.2%	194.1%
Champlin	34	0.07%	201	0.3%	491.2%
New Hope	21	0.05%	135	0.2%	542.9%
Lakeville	14	0.03%	101	0.2%	621.4%
Plymouth	14	0.03%	123	0.2%	778.6%
Arden Hills	2	0.00%	103	0.2%	5050.0%
Outer Ring	188	0.4%	1,536	2.3%	717.0%
Hugo	61	0.13%	264	0.4%	332.8%
Lino Lakes	32	0.07%	358	0.5%	1018.8%
Ramsey	32	0.07%	216	0.3%	575.0%
Lake Elmo	26	0.06%	149	0.2%	473.1%
Ham Lake	23	0.05%	218	0.3%	847.8%
East Bethel	14	0.03%	110	0.2%	685.7%
Forest Lake	0	0.00%	116	0.2%	NA
Columbus	0	0.00%	105	0.2%	NA
Greater Minnesota	886	1.9%	1,396	2.1%	57.6%
Winona	227	0.50%	218	0.3%	-4.0%
Rochester	230	0.51%	256	0.4%	11.3%
Tracy	189	0.42%	204	0.3%	7.9%
Duluth	157	0.35%	159	0.2%	1.3%
St. Cloud	72	0.16%	137	0.2%	90.3%
Walnut Grove	0	0.00%	215	0.3%	NA
Andover	11	0.02%	207	0.3%	1781.8%
Other Cities	1,480	3.3%	4,967	7.5%	235.6%

Appendix B: Lao Population Trend, Minnesota Distributions, 2000 to 2010

Lao					
City	2000 U.S. Census	Percentage	2010 U.S. Census	Percentage	2000-2010 Population Change
Minnesota	11,516	100.00%	12,009	100%	4.3%
Twin Cities	3,948	34.3%	1,545	12.9%	-60.9%
Minneapolis	2,522	21.9%	1,166	9.7%	-53.8%
St. Paul	1,426	12.4%	379	3.2%	-73.4%
Metropolitan Area Suburb	4,158	36.1%	5,479	45.6%	31.8%
Brooklyn Park	1,299	11.3%	1,597	13.3%	22.9%
Brooklyn Center	462	4.0%	355	3.0%	-23.2%
Eagan	366	3.2%	375	3.1%	2.5%
Richfield	320	2.8%	203	1.7%	-36.6%
Bloomington	283	2.5%	336	2.8%	18.7%
Burnsville	205	1.8%	340	2.8%	65.9%
Apple Valley	149	1.3%	170	1.4%	14.1%
Savage	131	1.1%	213	1.8%	62.6%
Crystal	131	1.1%	118	1.0%	-9.9%
Shakopee	120	1.0%	420	3.5%	250.0%
Chanhausen	93	0.8%	80	0.7%	-14.0%
Lakeville	83	0.7%	159	1.3%	91.6%
New Hope	81	0.7%	122	1.0%	50.6%
Hopkins	62	0.5%	46	0.4%	-25.8%
Coon Rapids	54	0.5%	86	0.7%	59.3%
Golden Valley	53	0.5%	68	0.6%	28.3%
Champlin	51	0.4%	100	0.8%	96.1%
Plymouth	45	0.4%	62	0.5%	37.8%
Farmington	37	0.3%	89	0.7%	140.5%
Eden Prairie	37	0.3%	91	0.8%	145.9%
Maple Grove	30	0.3%	169	1.4%	463.3%
Blaine	20	0.2%	122	1.0%	510.0%
St. Louis Park	18	0.2%	53	0.4%	194.4%
Mounds View	17	0.1%	48	0.4%	182.4%
Cottage Grove	11	0.1%	57	0.5%	418.2%
Outer Ring	126	1.09%	560	4.66%	344.4%
Chaska	57	0.49%	124	1.0%	117.5%
Rosemount	42	0.36%	75	0.6%	78.6%
Otsego	19	0.16%	61	0.5%	221.1%
Rogers	5	0.04%	64	0.5%	1180.0%
St. Michael	3	0.03%	114	0.9%	3700.0%
Elk River	0	0.00%	61	0.5%	NA
Carver	0	0.00%	61	0.5%	NA
Greater Minnesota	2,059	17.88%	2,375	19.78%	15.3%
Rochester	522	4.53%	735	6.1%	40.8%
Worthington	510	4.43%	529	4.4%	3.7%
St. Cloud	327	2.84%	405	3.4%	23.9%
Mountain Lake	170	1.48%	206	1.7%	21.2%
Warroad	147	1.28%	169	1.4%	15.0%
Austin	130	1.13%	132	1.1%	1.5%
Jackson	121	1.05%	77	0.6%	-36.4%
St. Charles	97	0.84%	72	0.6%	-25.8%
Waite Park	35	0.30%	50	0.4%	42.9%
Other Cities	1,225	10.6%	2,050	17.1%	67.3%

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