Hmong Women and Violence

Presented by:
Va Yang & Pangkou Vang
Hmong American Women’s Association
(414) 462-5031
vyang_hawa@yahoo.com
pvang_hawa@yahoo.com
Contents

- Who are the Hmong?
- Where did they come from?
- Why are they here in the U.S.?
- Social and Family Structures
- Domestic Violence
Basic History

- Possibly were from the Middle East … continual research

- Sometime before 221 BC, migrated and inhabited the Yellow/Yangtze River valleys & became the fifth largest ethnic group in China.

- Due to Chinese political and military oppression and persecution in the 19th century, some of the Hmong population migrated and scattered to the mountainous regions of North Vietnam, Laos, Burma, and Thailand.

- There are approximately 12 million Hmong/ Miao in the world.
Southeast Asia
Life in Laos

- Independent and peaceful agrarian communities in the mountains
- Farm by slash and burn and paddies
- Only grow what they need
- Poppy (opium) for medicinal use and trading
The U.S. Secret War in Laos

- 1969 U.S. troop withdrawal and Senator Fulbright reveals CIA military operation in Laos with the Hmong people
- 1973 Cease-fire agreement signed in Paris
- 1974 The last Air America plane left Laos while 40,000 North Vietnamese soldiers remain in Laos
- 1975 Communist Lao Government announces plans to “wipe-out” Hmong for being “mercenaries” to Americans. Many fled on foot to Thailand, some were put in “seminar camps”, and some hid in the jungles.
Hmong Role in the Vietnam War

- Gathered critical intelligence
- Rescued downed U.S. aircrews
- Defended U.S. navigational sites in Laos
- Act as a hindrance to the Ho Chi Minh Trail – vital supply/troop reinforcement route
- Block the advancement of Communist Vietnamese into Laos

“To be an enemy of the United States can be unpleasant. But to be a friend of the United States can be fatal.” – U.S. Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan
Where do the Hmong live now?

- Australia (2,000)
- Burma (Myanmar) (100,000)
- Canada (700)
- China (9 million)
- France (7500)
- Laos (400,000)
- Thailand (300,000)
- US (300,000)
- Vietnam (250,000)

- 260,076 Hmong counted in the 2010 Census

Top ten States Hmong lives in the U.S.

- California – 91,224
- Minnesota – 66,181
- Wisconsin – 49,240
- North Carolina – 10,864
- Michigan – 5,924
- Colorado – 3,859
- Georgia – 3,623
- Alaska – 3,534
- Oklahoma – 3,369
- Oregon – 2,920

Clan Names

1. Chang/Cha (Tsaab)
2. Chue (Tswb)
3. Cheng (Tsheej)
4. Fang (Faj)
5. Her (Hawj)
6. Hang (Taag/Haam)
7. Khang (Khaab)
8. Kong (Koo)
9. Lee/Ly (Lis)
10. Kue (Kwm)
11. Lor/Lao/Lo (Lauj)
12. Moua (Muas/Zag)
13. Pha (Phab)
14. Thao/Thor (Thoj)
15. Vang (Vaaj /Vaj)
16. Vue (Vwj)
17. Xiong (Xyooj)
18. Yang (Yaaj)

Male and females from the same clan names are forbidden to date, have an intimate relationship, or marry one another.
Hmong are community/group oriented. Due to thousands of years of war, resistance to oppression, and dislocation, the individual’s survival depends on the group. Thus, the interests of the individual comes after the group.

**Traditional Leadership Structure**

- Immediate Family: Husband/Father
- Extended Family: Grandfather/Eldest Son
- Same Ancestor Group Leader
- Sub clan Same Ritual Practice Leaders: “Legal” Leader and Religious Leader
- Clan Leader
- Inter-Clan Leader (Hmong Community)
Family Structure

**Traditional**
- A family may consist of three generations: parents, children & their spouses, and grandchildren
- The father is usually the Patriarch, mother is Matriarch
- A man leaves his father’s household when younger brothers are married with children of their own

**Modern**
- Nuclear family: husband, wife and children
- A married man usually leaves home when have first child.
- Unmarried adult children stays home with parents
  - Moved out for school/economic reasons
- Elderly parents live with one of the adult children
Hmong Marriage

The importance of marriage:
1. the union of two clans  
2. to provide heirs for the family

Marriage Ceremony:
- Two marriage representatives (Mej Koob) from each side (bride & groom) to negotiate bride price and date of ceremony; act as upholders and witnesses of the marriage covenant
- Bride price is given by the groom to the bride’s parents
- Parents and relatives give a dowry to the bride to start her new life

Different Ways of Getting Married:
Traditional:
- Kidnap
- Arrange/force
- Elope
- Widow to brother-in-law

Modern:
- Elope
- Mutual agreement between man & woman
During childhood, girls are taught to develop skills that are needed to be a “good wife”. A married woman attached her identity to her husband’s and will mainly be called by her husband’s name.

**Traditional good wife:**
1. Submissive and obedient of father, husband, and son
2. Have good character:
   * industrious, generous
   * diligent and hardworking
   * amiable and temperate
3. Caretaker of husband, children, and household
4. Discipline children/girls
5. A woman’s word is not valid until the husband acknowledges it

**Modern good wife:**
1. Provider
2. Caretaker of husband, children, and household...
3. Respect and support husband
   * active decision maker with husband
4. Good character:
   * industrious, diligent, and hardworking
   * generous, amiable and temperate
5. Educated yet submissive and obedient of father, husband, and son
Hmong Men

Boys were taught to be a leader who is tough and in control. A man upholds the family name thus is given a new first name after the birth of the first child.

**Traditional good husband:**
- Able to control wife & children
- Provides for his family
- Possess good character:
  - Decision maker, temperate, honest
  - Generous, hardworking, industrious
- Spiritual leader in family

**Modern good husband:**
- Good management of household
- Provides for his family
- Possess good character:
  - Decision maker, temperate, honest, considerate
  - Generous, hardworking, industrious, respectful
- Share with household responsibilities.
- Spiritual leader in family
### Domestic Violence Context

#### Hmong Women: vs. Hmong Men:

**Hmong Women:**
- Responsible for failure of marriage and abuse to occur
- No power and status
- Enduring of partner abuse

**Hmong Men:**
- Sense of right
- Anger and jealousy tendency
- Need for power and control
- Unable to express feelings
- Intellectualization and rationalization for abusive behaviors

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*Suffering and enduring are greatly valued and sought in women.*
Domestic Violence Factors

- Changes in sex roles
- Financial tensions
- New roles and choices clash with traditional expectations
- Male decision making process changes
- Domestic Violence seen as private family affair
- Abuse seen as discipline
- Normalization of abuse while growing up
Conflict Resolution

Traditional:

• Couple

• Husband’s Extended Family: Father or Eldest Son or Leader of descendents of same Grandparents

• Husband’s Group Leader of same Ancestor

• Wife’s Extended Family

• Combined Group Leaders of same Ancestor and Leaders of Extended Family from both sides

Modern:

• First & second generation exhaust traditional resources prior to legal system

• Domestic Violence involved, wife call the police

• Both party separate themselves without contacting relatives

• Wife file for restraining
Service/Outreach Guidelines

**Build Rapport:**

- Learn how to say hello in Hmong.
- Introduce full name, identify agency & services
- Unsure if you might have offend, tell the client
- Use simple English, speak at slower pace than normal and with concerned affect
- Show universal gestures of compassion and concern
- Promote awareness
- Provide culturally sensitive services – respect client’s beliefs and values, yet encourage access to other services

**Respect for Authority:** People traditionally have deep respect for elders and those in positions of authority, with a tendency toward unquestioning acceptance of what is told to them.
Additional Trainings Available

Wisconsin Women’s Training Institute (WWTI)

- Goal: to intentionally provide trainings and resources through a holistic, culturally responsive and culturally appropriate way to create lasting impacts to build strong leaders, families, and communities.
- Trainers are people of color who have been in gender-based violence work for 10-20 years
- For more information about future trainings, please contact: Pa Vang at pa@uwm.edu, 414-227-3168.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hmong</th>
<th>Pronunciation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hello</td>
<td>nyob zoo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Bye</td>
<td>sib ntsib dua</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thank you</td>
<td>ua tsaug</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is your name?</td>
<td>Koj lub npe hu li cas?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My name is_______.</td>
<td>Kuv lub npe yog____.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Morning!</td>
<td>Nyob zoo sawv ntxov.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td>niam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>txiv</td>
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<tr>
<td>Son</td>
<td>tub</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daughter</td>
<td>Ntxhais</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baby</td>
<td>mos liab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I Love You.</td>
<td>Kuv hlub koj.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can I help you?</td>
<td>Kuv pab puas tau koj?</td>
</tr>
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- http://www.hmongcenter.org
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- Split Horn: Life of a Hmong Shaman in America (VHS)
- A Brief History of the Hmong and The Secret War in Laos Narrated by Steve Schofield (DVD)
- The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down by Anne Fadiman
- Tragic Mountains by Jane Hamilton-Merritt
- Hmong Means Free by Sucheng Chan
- Hmong American Women’s Association 9235 West Capitol Drive Suite 414, Milwaukee, WI 53222 (414) 462-5031  http://www.hawamke.com