Most obvious within each community were the differences in individual aspirations for school and work depending on gender. These differences were fewer among men and women who had reached the university level in their schooling. Other differences were also apparent within the same culture group, depending on such factors as family background in the native country. Because of this, the reader is cautioned against interpreting our data as support for modifying policy or creating or closing programs.

Overall the Vietnamese youth interviewed were closer to ideal American norms about school and work than youth in the other groups. While we did not sample the entire youth population so as to be able to generalize about it, we can say that many Vietnamese youth are succeeding in their own terms and in the terms of our society as a whole. That many of them have been in the United States for more than ten years reminds us that refugee status covers a very long period of time, from literally weeks to more than a decade. Formalizing this distinction (recent, short-time, or long-time refugee) would be useful since behaviors seem to vary depending on length of stay.

This study hovered between looking at individuals and small groups. We learned about personal aspirations which were, to some degree, group aspirations (or aspirations of the majority of group members), and the aspirations of each ethnic community. For indigenous Americans, personal aspirations are individual statements, but for many Southeast Asian youth aspirations are family, friendship group, or community statements. Thus one may interpret the data as indicators of individual or group acculturation, although one must be very conservative in doing this because the data were not collected for this purpose.

Personal success in America is attributed to individual hard work with familial support. But for many Southeast Asian youth success is seen differently. This is true for the Vietnamese youth as well. With the Hmong, for instance, the ethnic community plays a large role in individual success and personal success is actually seen as family success.

Factors that seem to be associated with the likelihood of economic self-sufficiency for these youth are English language proficiency, length of time in the United States, age upon entry to the United States, ethnic group membership, gender, family stability, sibling order, and effective use of support systems. Our study was not expected to find, measure, or assess the relative contributions of such factors. They emerged in the interviews, but their relative potency as predictors of the future is unknown.

Michael Baizerman, a professor in the Center for Youth Development and Research, holds degrees in social work and public health. Interested in how adolescents live their adolescence, he has worked on a variety of youth issues, including fire-setting and female prostitution. He is continuing the study reported here. Glenn Hendricks, coordinator of the Southeast Asian Refugee Studies Program and administrator in the Office of International Education, holds a degree in anthropology. He was editor (with Downing and Deinard) of *The Hmong In Transition* (1986) and has recently returned to Minnesota from a stint as visiting scholar at Oxford University's Refugee Studies Program.

The study reported here was conducted by Baizerman and Hendricks with research assistants Ruth Hammond, Phuc Nguyen, and Norah Neale. The project report (A Study of Southeast Asian Refugee Youth in the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota) will be in print by mid-March. Single copies are available free-of-charge from: Office of Refugee Resettlement; Family Support Administration; Room 1229 Switzer Building; 330 C Street; Washington, D.C. 20201; attention: Toyo Biddle.

Photos on pages 1, 3, 5, and 6 by Robert Friedman. The Asian youth pictured here were not interviewed in this study.

---

**Student Housing Survey**

by Christopher J. Klyza

To the casual observer driving or strolling through Dinkytown, Stadium Village, or the West Bank areas adjacent to the University of Minnesota's Minneapolis campus, it might appear that housing available to students is in fair to poor shape, and that there is a lack of quality housing. From the perspective of the student, however, this housing is just fine.

CURA, in cooperation with the University of Minnesota Housing Office, conducted a survey on housing issues among students at the Minneapolis and St. Paul campuses of the University of Minnesota during the spring of 1987. The results surprised those involved with the study: over 85 percent of the students surveyed were satisfied or very satisfied with their housing situations.

The mail survey, conducted by the Minnesota Center for Survey Research, drew responses from 1,872 current University of Minnesota students, 80 percent of the sample who received questionnaires. The sample was determined through a stratified random selection process. Students living in dorms were not included in the survey.

**Student Satisfaction**

The most surprising result of the survey was the overall high level of students' satisfaction with their housing situations: 50 percent reported being "satisfied" and 35 percent "very satisfied." No specific explanation for the high level of satisfaction is contained in the survey, but at least three explanations are possible. First, the satisfaction level may be related to the tremendous mobility of the students, a mobility that is confirmed by the survey. Students tend to move often, even when they are satisfied with their housing. The survey found that 75 percent of the students reporting they were "very likely to move," were also satisfied with their housing, and 91 percent of those that were "somewhat likely to move," were also satisfied with their housing. Even among students who reported they were very satisfied with their housing, 40 percent were "likely to move." Questions about location reflected the same element of mobility: 87 percent of those who were "very likely to move" were also satisfied with their present location.

This suggests that housing decisions are based on factors unrelated to the quality of the housing unit or its location. These factors might include the breakup of a housing group due to a roommate graduating or getting married or moving in with other friends, for example. Or for students to take a quarter off or move back home for a while. Such events would necessitate someone moving, even though they were satisfied with their housing. Student mobility may also mean that students are not as concerned
and discerning about the quality of their housing, as others are. Realizing that they
will not be living there for long, students may adopt lower standards for their housing.
Student satisfaction levels may simply reflect a realistic view of the alternatives avail-
able to them.

A second possible explanation for the high levels of satisfaction is related to the
nearness of most University of Minnesota students to their family home. In the grander
sense, perhaps Thomas Wolfe was right when he declared that you can't go home again,
but University students can and do go home again and again. The survey did not ask about returning home, but those fa-
miliar with the University know that it is common for students to go home for an
occasional meal, an evening at home, or a weekend. Students sometimes change from
living on their own to living at home for financial reasons. It would seem that their
nearness to home may reinforce the temporary nature of students' housing situations,
again leading them to less rigorous standards for satisfaction.

A third explanation for the high levels of satisfaction involves the social nature of
the student housing experience. For many stu-
dents, the experience with student housing
represents their first independent living ex-
perience. Factors relating to this independ-
ence may flavor their satisfaction; factors
such as cooking for oneself, not having to
turn the stereo down, not having parents
around. Other social factors may also influ-
ence their perceptions of satisfaction. A stu-
dent may recall meeting a new boyfriend or
girlfriend next door or throwing a particularly
good party at a housing unit. Conversely,
perhaps a bad academic quarter colors a
student's perception of a housing unit.

The survey data on fraternities and
sororities reflected these factors. Even
though students living in fraternities and
sororities reported major problems with
parking (52 percent), cosmetic repairs (47
percent), and noise (41 percent), the overall
satisfaction level was 97 percent. The ex-
planation seems to be that 95 percent re-
ported satisfaction with their living partners.
Roommates were listed as the best liked
thing about their current housing. Though
they recognized problems with their hous-
ing situation, these shortcomings were far
outweighed by the social benefits and en-
joyment of living in a Greek house.

| Table 1. SATISFACTION WITH HOUSING CHARACTERISTICS BY TYPE OF HOUSING UNIT |
|-------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| Cost                                           | Least                                            |
| Most Satisfied                                 | Satisfied                                       |
| Single family house                            | Large apartment building                         |
| Townhouse (93 percent)                         | (58 percent)                                    |
| Living partners                                | Rooming house                                   |
| Fraternity/sorority (95 percent)                | (82 percent)                                    |
| Type of housing unit                           | Rooming house                                   |
| Single family house (96 percent)               | (64 percent)                                    |
| Amount of space                                | Rooming house                                   |
| Single family house (91 percent)               | (61 percent)                                    |
| Neighborhood                                   | Large apartment building                         |
| Single family house Fraternity/sorority (95 percent) |

Living Situations
Most students surveyed lived in apartment
buildings: 31 percent in small buildings
(three floors or less) and 14 percent in large
buildings. Other major housing types were
single family houses (27 percent) and du-
plexes (13 percent). Smaller numbers of
students reported living in fraternities or
sororities (4 percent), rooming houses (4
percent), townhouses (3 percent), and con-
dominiums (2 percent).

The vast majority of students (76 per-
cent) rented their housing. The remainder
either lived rent-free (14 percent)—prob-
ably with parents or working spouses—or
owned their homes (8 percent). The distri-
bution of students in each of these categ-
ories was predictable. From first year to
senior year, the percentage of students liv-
ing rent-free declined (45 to 14 percent) and
those renting increased (51 to 79 percent).

Eighty-five percent of the students lived in
households of four persons or less. Most
lived with just one other person (34 per-
cent). However, fifty-six persons were re-
ported to live in one residence, a Greek
house.

The majority of housing units (64 per-
cent) were one or two bedrooms. Students
lived in a variety of different arrangements.
Most lived with friends (43 percent). Others
were about equally divided between those
living with spouses, with parents, with non-
parental relatives, or alone.

Comparing housing types with basic de-
ographic variables does not reveal any
startling discoveries. Both older (forty and
over) and younger (eighteen and nineteen)
students were more likely to live in single
family houses than other students. Housing
choice for other age groups generally re-
flected the overall housing unit pattern.
There were no significant differences in the
type of housing unit based on gender or
marital status.

Costs
Money spent for housing ranged from none
to $1,800 per month. The median cost was
$190 to $200 per month. The 16 percent
who reported they contributed nothing to
the monthly share of housing costs were
probably students living with parents or with
working spouses. The bulk of students paid
between $100 and $250 per month: 14 per-
cent paid $100-150, 22 percent paid $151-
200, and 15 percent paid $201-250. There
were no large differences among the me-
dian costs of various types of housing units.
The more persons shared a housing unit, the
less expensive it was for each.

Housing Characteristics
Student satisfaction with more specific as-
pects of housing was consistently high. Stu-
dents were asked about cost, amount of
space, neighborhood, type of housing unit,
and living partners. Their levels of satisfac-
tion ranged from 77 to 89 percent. No clear
relationship existed between level of satisfac-
tion and the cost of housing. Students living
in units with few rooms (one or two) were
less likely to be satisfied than those liv-
ing in larger units. Satisfaction levels rose
from 72 percent for one-room units to 88 per-
cent for four-room units, and remained
at that level and above for all larger units (up
to sixty-one rooms).

The vast majority of students were
happy with the neighborhood in which they
lived: 60 percent were "very satisfied," and
30 percent were "somewhat satisfied." When
answers were broken down by the type of
housing unit in which the student lived (Table 1), all types of housing units
were "satisfactory" to 82 percent or more except for those living in large apartment
buildings and rooming houses. Satisfaction
levels were also consistently high (at least
75 percent) regardless of how many per-
sons lived in a housing unit.

Physical Conditions
When asked to compare their housing to
other housing in the metropolitan Twin Cit-
ies area, 30 percent of the students replied
that their housing was in "excellent condi-
tion" and 42 percent that it was in "good
condition." Nevertheless, two of the five
most often reported problems had to do with
the physical structure of housing. The need
for cosmetic repairs was cited most often
(39 percent), while fourth from the top was
the need for structural repairs (24 percent).
Other major problems included noise (28 percent), parking (24 percent), and other tenants (20 percent). Only 13 percent of the students reported problems with their landlords.

Levels of satisfaction were clearly related to the physical condition of the building lived in. They followed a regular pattern from 95 percent satisfied in buildings that were in "excellent" condition, to 91 percent in buildings in "good" condition, 76 percent in "fair" condition, and 42 percent in "poor" condition. Among the different housing stocks, rooming houses were most likely to be reported as in "poor" condition (16 percent) and condominiums most often reported as in "excellent" condition (81 percent).

**Student Criteria**

Without a doubt, the most important housing concerns for the typical student were location, cost, and size. When asked to name the three things that they most liked about their housing situation, these three were named most often: location (44 percent), cost (16 percent), and size (7 percent). Other concerns were cosmetic factors (5 percent), privacy (4 percent), and quiet (4 percent). When asked to name the three things that they most disliked about their current housing, it was again location (14 percent), cost (14 percent), and size (10 percent), followed by structural problems (9 percent) and noise problems (9 percent).

Satisfaction levels did not appear to be greatly different for students with different demographic characteristics. Neither age, gender, marital status, academic status, nor children under eighteen in the same housing unit, significantly affected a student's level of housing satisfaction.

**Finding Housing**

Students were asked about how they found their housing and how long that process took. One-quarter said that they hadn't looked at all for their housing. These students presumably included those living with parents, spouses, other relatives, or friends who already had a housing unit. Thirty-four percent reported searching for less than ten days, 25 percent for ten to thirty days, and 14 percent took over a month to locate their current housing. Students drew upon a wide variety of information sources in their search (Table 2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2. INFORMATION SOURCES USED IN THE HOUSING SEARCH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>City newspapers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Minnesota Daily</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Housing Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing search firms</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The way in which students actually found their housing varied. Most common was to find housing through friends (26 percent). Others reported they did not look for housing (18 percent), used city newspaper ads (14 percent), or walked the streets (11 percent) in their search. Taking a longer time to find housing did not dramatically affect the degree of satisfaction reported with the housing. Satisfaction levels also varied little with how one actually found one's housing. Over 90 percent of the students thought it important that the University provide a housing service, though only 45 percent had ever used the housing service.

**The Student Sample**

The students sampled in this study came from a broad survey across the student body at the University of Minnesota. In age they ranged from those who were forty-one to eighty-two (3 percent), to those thirty-one to forty (14 percent), to twenty-six to thirty (23 percent), to twenty to twenty-five (56 percent), to those who were eighteen and nineteen (4 percent). Fifty-three percent of the sample were male and 78 percent were single. Approximately 19 percent reported that they were married and less than 3 percent were divorced, separated, or widowed. The great majority of students (88 percent) did not live in situations where children were present. Most (again 88 percent) were full-time students.

The students sampled represented nearly a complete spectrum of the academic units at the University of Minnesota. The largest number were students in the College of Liberal Arts (32 percent), followed by the Graduate School (26 percent), the Institute of Technology (10 percent), General College (8 percent), and the Medical School (4 percent). Actual enrollment figures for Spring Quarter 1987, when the study was conducted, were: the College of Liberal Arts—37 percent, the Graduate School—18 percent, the Institute of Technology—12 percent, General College—6 percent, and the Medical School—4 percent.

The sample was widely spread as to students' academic status: 7 percent were freshmen, 11 percent sophomores, 17 percent juniors, 24 percent seniors, 26 percent graduate students, 10 percent in professional schools, and less than 2 percent registered as adult special students. The somewhat smaller percentages in the sample for the first two years probably reflect the larger number of young students still living at home or in the dorms.

**In Conclusion**

The most important finding of the survey was the overall high level of students' satisfaction with their housing. What these high levels of satisfaction imply about the physical quality of the housing is not entirely clear. Student housing is a different breed of housing. The needs and concerns of students are different from those of the general population. Their perceptions of what quality housing is differ from the perception of non-students. This, in turn, makes it difficult for non-students to evaluate student housing. The student housing survey gave students the opportunity to voice their perceptions. Their answers were clear: in general, there are no major problems with student housing at the University of Minnesota.

Christopher Klyza is a graduate student in political science who is currently writing a dissertation on public lands politics, teaching a course on American political thought, and working on his first novel. In his years as a student, Klyza has experienced student housing in Ithaca, New York and Durham, North Carolina in addition to the Twin Cities.