

HOME IN THE GARDEN: A CASE STUDY OF THE LHOTSAMPA REFUGEE
COMMUNITY'S USE OF A COMMUNITY GARDEN IN HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA
by

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Dedication

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Abstract

In 2011, the Lhotsampa refugees from Bhutan who live in Halifax, Nova Scotia, worked with an immigrant services group to institute the Glen Garden community garden. Participation in the garden is especially important to this group of users. The garden has had an impact on acculturation for the Lhotsampa, both in terms of dietary and social integration into Canadian society. In particular, the garden proved to be important as a space for the Lhotsampa to connect with their identities in Canada, through a nostalgic connection with the past and through a concrete assertion of their place in Canada. The garden also serves several benefits to the older population who struggle to integrate due to language, including increased exercise, social activities and maintenance of traditional diets. There are several steps that could be taken to increase the utility of the garden which are outlined in Chapter 6.

List of Abbreviations Used

AI.....	Amnesty International
BSC.....	Bhutan State Congress
BPP.....	Bhutan Peoples' Party
CFS.....	Community Food Security
EAC.....	Ecology Action Centre
FAO.....	Food and Agriculture Organization
ISANS.....	Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia
ISSofBC.....	Immigrant Services Society of British Columbia
INHURED.....	International Institution for Human Rights, Environment and Development
PFHR.....	Peoples' Forum for Human Rights
NGO.....	Non-Government Organization
RGB.....	Royal Government of Bhutan
UNHCR.....	United Nations High Commission on Refugees
UK.....	United Kingdom
USA.....	United States of America
WFP.....	World Food Programme
WTO.....	World Trade Organization

Chapter 1: Introduction

Context

Between 1990 and 1992, Bhutan, a country affectionately known as “the Last Shangri-La”, was subsumed within a political crisis that resulted in a large proportion of the small country’s population fleeing to refugee camps in Eastern Nepal (Hutt, 2003). The refugees are known as Lhotsampa in Bhutan, which in Drukpa means the people who come from the fertile southern borderlands. They are largely of Nepali ethnicity and come from rural, predominantly agrarian backgrounds (Dhurba, 2004). After two decades of protracted and ultimately unsuccessful dialogue between Nepal, Bhutan and the United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR), countries such as the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Australia volunteered to resettle the refugees in a process known as third country resettlement. Approximately 100,000 refugees have now been resettled in these countries, with the bulk of refugees choosing to emigrate to the United States and Canada.

While it is one of the largest refugee resettlement programs undertaken in global history, the Bhutanese refugee crisis remains largely unknown to the general public. In 2009, the Lhotsampas’ resettlement began in Halifax. Since then, approximately 575 Lhotsampa have settled in the city, the majority of whom live in an apartment complex in the Clayton Park/Fairview neighbourhood (@isans, 2015). Across from the complex, the Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia (ISANS) worked together with the Ecology Action Centre (EAC) to implement a community garden in 2012. The Glen Garden was established largely with the Bhutanese refugees in mind, after the community showed a sustained interest in having dedicated space in which to grow food.

Since the Glen Garden was founded in 2012, it has doubled in size and includes many different cultural communities, including Lhotsampa, Congolese and Korean families. Still, the Lhotsampa use the garden more frequently than other communities, and make up the majority of participants. Previous research has emphasized the crucial role community gardens can play in helping immigrant communities feel integrated and acculturated in their new countries (Alaimo et al., 2008; Corrigan, 2011 Baker, 2004;

Gerodetti and Foster, 2012; Airriess and Clawson, 1994). This thesis will use the Glen Garden as a case study and explore the role of this community garden among the newly arrived Lhotsampa in Halifax.

Practical Problem: Refugee Diets in Resettlement

Refugee issues have featured prominently in the Canadian media in the wake of the recent influx of over 25 000 Syrian refugees in late 2015 and early 2016. But refugees have been arriving in Canada for many years, often in large waves, often in response to major global conflicts. Refugee communities face many challenges in adapting to life in Canada, such as language barriers and integration. However, there is also an interesting health paradox in migrant populations that proves migrants are actually healthier than the host country population when they arrive. Studies have found that migrants often have better health indicators at the time of resettlement than they do after some time has passed (Biddle, Kennedy and McDonald, 2007; Seyovan and Hugo, 2013). Often referred to as the “healthy migrant paradox”, this advantageous health tends to diminish over time due largely to dietary acculturation as migrants begin to adapt to Western eating styles (Kwik, 2008; Harris, Minniss and Somerset, 2014). Heart disease, diabetes, and other diseases are often attributed to Western diets, and at the same time there is substantial evidence that in countries with traditional (non-Western) lifestyles there are lower numbers of overweight people (Lindeberg, 2010). As was referenced in section 1.2.2, low consumption of fruits and vegetables can lead to a host of health concerns. Most scholars of nutrition agree that a healthy diet, often found in traditional populations, is made up of lean meats, vegetables, fruits, root vegetables and nuts (Lindeberg, 2010). It is therefore problematic that as migrants settle into their host countries, they tend to also take on aspects of the host country diets (Bellows et al., 2010).

There are a number of possible reasons that migrants’ diets deteriorate the longer they live in resettlement countries. It has been shown that migrants, especially refugees, who have experienced episodes of food insecurity, are likely to engage in unhealthy food behaviours (Dharod, 2014; Peterman et al., 2010). Migrants who have lived with decreased food security, who then find themselves surrounded by food that would have typically been “festival foods” (often rich foods and red meats) overcompensate when

faced with this relative abundance (Dharod, 2014). Refugees who have faced severe episodes of food insecurity are likely to engage in similar unhealthy food behaviours such as hoarding and overeating, in a general overcompensation for previous periods of having gone without (Peterman et al., 2010). These behaviours are detrimental to health in general, but when paired with a shift towards Western-style diets that are higher in both calories and fat content, the results shift populations into very unhealthy situations (Popkin, 2011). Remembering that migrant populations are also often low-income and face structural barriers in accessing healthy food, their resultant health status is obviously challenged.

There are two resulting facets to the practical problem. Firstly, that refugees, especially older refugees, struggle to adapt and integrate effectively into Canadian society. Secondly, that the health of migrants deteriorates rapidly after adopting Western lifestyles and diets when resettled in a new host country. These two problems combine to form an overall concern regarding how migrants, and particularly older refugees, are acculturating, both socially and through diets.

Research Questions

Based on the practical and research problems, one primary research question has been established and is followed by two secondary research questions.

What does the Glen Garden mean to the Lhotsampa refugees?

How does it affect their social acculturation?

How does it affect their dietary acculturation?

These research questions were formed in order to understand the nuances of the Lhotsampa participation in the Glen Garden. The garden is visited frequently by this particular refugee community and is clearly very meaningful to their lives in Canada. In breaking the question down further in terms of social and dietary acculturation, the questions aim to better understand whether such gardens should be priorities for other refugee populations in Canada.

Community Garden Background

In their simplest form, community gardens are places where plants and food are grown in a communal setting (Brown, 2008; Kingsley, Townsend and Wilson, 2009; Teig, et al., 2009). Community gardens have gained increasing popularity in recent years, especially through community food programming, and are seen as potential solutions to such issues as community cohesion (Firth, Maye and Pearson, 2011), food security (Alaimo et al., 2008) and migrant acculturation (Bellows et al., 2010)¹. In the following sections, I explore aspects of the existing scholarship on community gardens, including benefits to nutrition and health of participants, implications for food security, implications for community development, and the sense of identity that is created when migrants use community gardens.

Nutrition and Health Benefits

While there are many desired outcomes from community gardens, the most obvious are those related to nutrition and health. Indeed, these benefits are often the main drivers behind community gardens that are implemented, particularly when organizations are focusing on improving the health of low-income earners (Crow, 2010). The nutrition and health advantages are “one of the most widely-cited and presumably obvious benefits of community gardens” (Crow, 2010, 221). Currently, one in four Canadian adults are considered obese (Statistics Canada, 2012). Wyatt, Winters and Dubbert (2006), have surveyed the well-known medical consequences of obesity, including cardiovascular disease, diabetes, osteoarthritis and some cancers, in addition to the psychological consequences of anxiety, depression and low self-esteem. Since increased consumption of fruits and vegetables is associated with reduced risk for cardiovascular disease (Lock, Pomerleau, Causer, Altmann and McKee, 2005), and only 39.5% of Canadians over the

¹ Community gardens are the descendants of the land provided by cities for the impoverished and unemployed during the Great Depression; in New York City more than 5,000 gardens thrived (Armstrong, 2000). The prejudice that was associated with the gardens from this era largely disappeared with the advent of Victory Gardens during the Second World War, when many vacant lots and privately held lands gave way to food production (Crow, 2010). Firth, Maye and Pearson (2011) write that an exact definition of a community garden is hard to come by, especially because most develop to meet the specific needs of the local area.

age of twelve consume the daily recommended five or more servings of fruits and vegetables (Statistics Canada, 2015), the assumption follows that by increasing access to growing space through community gardens, fruit and vegetable consumption will also increase, thereby diminishing the risk of disease across the population. Community food programming often emphasizes increasing fruit and vegetable consumption for low-income earners, and since migrants often fall into this category, community gardening can play a particularly salient role in sustaining healthy immigrant populations.

Urbanization is one of the major factors undermining access to fresh produce. As populations become more urbanized, individuals struggle with the availability of fruits and vegetables. Community gardens have been advanced as solutions that increase both availability and intake (Alaimo, Packnett, Miles and Kruger, 2008)². In a 2008 community-wide health survey in Flint, Michigan, households that included a participant in a community garden were more likely to have consumed more fruits and vegetables than those in households who did not participate in a community garden (Alaimo et al., 2008). Of these community gardeners, 61.5% were African American, which underlines how community gardens can offer nutrition interventions to minority populations (Alaimo et al., 2008). These studies have emphasized that visible minorities and lower income communities do not lack knowledge regarding healthy eating, but rather confront systemic challenges that prevent them from doing so. Community gardens offer potential increased access to fruits and vegetables for little to no financial investment by gardeners.

Implications for Food Security

Food security is a concept that tries to ensure that all individuals have access at all times to healthy and nutritious food. The Ecology Action Centre (EAC), based in Halifax,

² It is important to note that structural barriers, rather than lack of knowledge or motivation, tend to be the reason some populations are prevented from higher consumption of fruits and vegetables (Eikenberry and Smith, 2004). Some of these structural barriers include transportation and costs (Twiss et al., 2003; Glover, 2003), while food deserts (areas that are underserved by grocery stores) are found more commonly in low-income neighbourhoods (Corrigan, 2011). Most refugees tend to live in low-income neighbourhoods where they live with other members of their communities, compounding the impact of structural barriers that reduce migrant access to healthy and culturally appropriate food.

uses Hamm and Bellows' (2003) definition of community food security to underline their commitment to increasing food security in the city: "Community Food Security exists when all community residents have access to enough healthy, safe food through a sustainable food system that maximizes community self-reliance, and social justice."

Income is the single greatest predictor of food insecurity, although the elderly, single-parent and large families are also more vulnerable (Rose, 1999). Migrants are often lower-income earners, and therefore migrants and refugees face elevated levels of food insecurity, as much as twice the rate in some areas of the United States (Weigel et al., 2007; in Bellows et al., 2010), in comparison to the general population (Dharod, 2009). Many scholars and non-government organizations (NGOs) see the expansion of cheap produce in a community garden as one solution to urban food insecurity, especially among low income communities (Agustina and Beilin, 2012). Food insecurity is also linked in the Global North to growing rates of obesity, underlining the connections between food insecurity, poverty, consumption of fruits and vegetables and ultimately health (Corrigan, 2011). Improved access to nutritious food and an increase in exercise, both advantages that come from participation in community gardens, can improve obesogenic environments (Drewnowski and Specter, 2004).

A study in Toronto showed community gardeners tended to replace store-bought food with garden-grown produce, both improving nutrition and saving on household budgets (Wakefield et al., 2007). In Armstrong's (2000) study, 60% of low-income gardeners cited the increased healthy food supply as their primary reason for gardening. In a Baltimore community garden, participation enhanced access to fresh food in both growing and non-growing seasons due to participants' ability to freeze and preserve garden produce (Corrigan, 2011). By growing fresh produce in a community garden, participants were able to increase their intake of healthy and nutritious food, as well as reduce the household expenses on food, thereby increasing food security.

Implications for Community Building

Given that the nutritional and dietary benefits of community gardens are usually considered as the primary advantage, it is somewhat surprising that the majority of scholarly studies investigating the impacts of community gardens focus on outcomes associated with community development (Alaimo et al., 2008). Carole Nemore (1998, 1)

famously quipped that “community gardens cultivate more than plants, they cultivate communities”. Winne (2008) echoed this sentiment by emphasizing that *community* is the most important word in community gardens. Firth, Maye and Pearson (2011) followed in the footsteps of Kingsley and Townsend’s (2006) and Glover’s (2004) studies of gardening by examining the “community” aspect of community gardens. Scholars assert that gardening is also an effective tool for improving community through crime reduction, maintenance of cultural diversity, community empowerment, and promotion of civic participation (Warner and Hansi, 1987; Hynes, 1996; Murphy, 1999).

There is some debate in the literature regarding the implied positive benefits of community. Pudup (2008) questioned whether community gardens are run for the community, by the community, or just happen to reside in the community, underlining the uncertainty of whom the gardens are intended to serve. Not all community food projects actually benefit or involve the community they are anticipated to assist (McGlone, 1999); the position of the actor within a social network can create inequitable benefits (Glover, 2004). In fact, Glover (2004) found that there is frequently a core group of (mainly white) people who benefit from community gardens, and those outside the elite group often perceive being left out of these benefits. This echoes Guthman’s (2008a, 2008b, 2009, 2011) frequent commentary on the racialized lens of alternative food networks. Guthman stresses the “whiteness” of the alternative food movement, and calls for a release of the locus of power. There is some controversy in understanding who the true beneficiaries of a community gardening project are, especially one which is implemented from the top-down in a denigrating, though charitable fashion by those who hold positions of power and privilege in society. However, if community gardens are built from the bottom-up, rather than imposed by an outside organization, they seem more likely to be both successful and create stronger communities (Firth, Maye and Pearson, 2011; Corrigan, 2011).

Identity Creation in Community Gardening and Migrant Studies

In recent years, the potential benefits of community gardening for migrant communities have gained credence in the scholarly literature (Gerodetti and Foster, 2015; Baker, 2004; Airriess and Clawson, 1994; Corlett, Dean and Grivetti, 2003; Graham and Connell, 2006; Li, Hodgetts and Ho, 2010). These studies build on older themes that

emphasize the connections between food, culture and identity (Lévi-Strauss, 1966; Warde, 1997). Scholars examine the ways that migrants construct landscapes, both physically and socially, to reflect their identities.

Two major themes have emerged in the juncture of community gardening and migration studies that relate to identities and belonging. Migrants use community gardens: (1) By reconstructing past landscapes that remind them of their homeland, and (2) by using the garden to create a new identity, solidifying their integration into their adopted homeland. In further exploring the second theme, it becomes clear that community gardens are capable of providing migrants with a sense of self-worth and responsibility that is difficult to maintain in a culture that is foreign (Airriess and Clawson, 1994). This underlines the community garden's ability to provide space for gardeners to create a new identity where they can often feel like outsiders. Participants in community gardens are also able to take on a new, common identity of "gardener", cementing their identity and belonging as part of the gardening community. These ideas are explored in more detail below.

Often, migrants recreate past landscapes through planting culturally appropriate crops, using traditional growing techniques, or seeking to recreate sensory experiences from their homelands (Airriess and Clawson, 1994; Baker, 2004; Gerodetti and Foster, 2015). In this way, the gardens act as a space for migrants' traditional cultural identity to be preserved, both through gardening and food production, as well as the ensuing food preparation (Baker, 2004; Bartolomei, Corkery, Judd and Thompson, 2003; Teig, et al., 2009; Thompson, Corkery and Judd, 2007). Baker's important (2004) study on three community gardens in Toronto looked at the way migrants use gardening spaces to construct their own "sense of place" by planting crops that are characteristic of their homelands. In 1994, Vietnamese market gardeners recreated past landscapes by using traditional layered planting techniques and choosing to grow Vietnamese crops; authors believed that this was an act of hortitherapy (Airriess and Clawson, 1994). The authors further believed hortitherapy could be instructive in understanding the impact of gardening on the psychosocial wellbeing of the gardeners (Airriess and Clawson, 1994; Kaplan, 1973). This may be particularly true in refugee populations who have suffered previous traumas.

Migrants' cultural identities change as they are influenced by both the original and the host culture, which blend together to form a completely new identity (Cleveland, Laroche, Pons and Kastouns, 2009), and this is no different in a community space. Agustina and Beilin (2012) emphasize that in the current era of cultural pluralism, the multicultural interactions that take place in a community garden involve participants from many different backgrounds. The impacts are subsequently both varied and interconnected. The host culture itself is influenced by new migrant identities, taking on new forms of dietary and social culture. Werkerle (2000, in Baker, 2004) showed that immigrants in Toronto community gardens were shaping the landscape through their choices of plants and growing techniques, thereby allowing the landscape to form a truer reflection of the multicultural makeup of the city. Gardeners brought not only their traditional crops, but also traditional growing techniques, and adapted them to the Toronto landscape (Werkerle, 2000), the same way Vietnamese market gardeners did in New Orleans in the 1990s (Airriess and Clawson, 1994). This activity brought migrants' identities into the Toronto landscape, cementing their identities in the host country by creating ownership through planting and changing the landscape in the new country. The "sense of place" constructed by migrants represents the ability to *create* a place (Baker, 2004). Adler (2002) argues that the sense of belonging is innately tied to the day-to-day living process. Since most gardeners visit their plots on a daily (if not more frequently) basis throughout the growing season, these day-to-day rituals compound their sense of belonging in their new home through the structure and responsibility provided by the garden. The garden allows participants to create a revised identity and therefore cement belonging in the new host country (Harris, Minniss and Somerset, 2014).

Responsibility and self-worth are the results of the day-to-day activities in the gardens that Adler (2002) claims are tied to belonging in a new culture. By giving structure to the day and a physical reward for hard work in the form of food (often culturally appropriate food that is difficult to find otherwise), gardeners earn a sense of self-worth that is similar to that gained from employment. The utility of the self-worth created in the garden becomes apparent with the publication of studies on Bhutanese refugee suicide. Bhutanese men in particular, who have been found to experience high levels of stress, sometimes resulting in suicide, due to feelings of burdensomeness and

not being able to provide for their families (Ellis, Lankau, Ao, Benson, Miller, Shetty, Lopes, Geltman and Cochran, 2015). Migrant gardeners, and particularly senior or elderly migrant gardeners, are frequent participants of community gardens (Agustina and Beilin, 2012; Baker, 2004; Airriess and Clawson, 1994). These migrants are often those that struggle the most in adapting to a new host culture, facing challenges such as learning English, reduced mobility and integrating into a foreign culture. Airriess and Clawson's seminal (1994) study on Vietnamese market gardeners in New Orleans noted that the sense of responsibility, in addition to the ability to produce something useful to their families, gave the elderly gardeners a newfound identity in the garden that stemmed from their ability to provide. These results have been reproduced in other studies and are especially relevant to older migrants who come from rural backgrounds (Baker, 2004; Head et al., 2004; Corlett, Dean and Grivetti, 2003).

“Gardeners concern to be recognized as good gardeners in the host country garden also indicates their interest in building identity and even status in their new community around their gardening prowess and not necessarily just as representational of somewhere else or to reinforce their individual attachment to their home country” (Augustina and Beilin, 2012, 445).

A further nuanced understanding of creating new identities in the garden was introduced by Agustina and Beilin (2012) who write that a collective, common identity is formed by working as a part of a community in the garden. This common identity of gardeners further induces a sense of belonging by creating a community where different cultures can interact and learn from one another. Gerodetti and Foster (2015) find that because gardeners are constantly adapting their growing techniques to the climate of the host country, gardens tend to take on many of the same plants and herbs. These similarities serve as an iteration of the gardeners' collective identities *as gardeners*. By fostering an identity that ties migrants to a separate community than the one they are (culturally) innately tied to, the garden allows for an extended sense of belonging in the new host country. Gardening strengthens what is known as bridging capital, an aspect of social capital theory that emphasizes the ties between neighbours and acquaintances (Firth, Maye and Pearson, 2011). By inducing identity as a gardener in Canada, the garden provides a distinctive sense of self that is recognized by Canadian society.

In sum, then, community gardens have been found to increase food security by increasing access to fruit and vegetable consumption (Alaimo et al., 2008), and growing community engagement (Firth, Maye and Pearson, 2011). They seem to have added value for migrants, by giving gardeners a space to express their dynamic identities and interact with other cultures (Baker, 2004; Airriess and Clawson, 1994; Corlett et al., 2003). Community gardens are meaningful spaces of identity and interaction, as well as places where the physical production of food can offer additional health benefits to communities.

The multiple meanings imbued in community gardens are significant, and warrant further research to understand their role in the acculturation process of migrants. This study seeks to understand what the community garden means to the Lhotsampa people of Halifax by undertaking an ethnographic investigation of the community and those who participate in the garden. It uses a case study approach to understand the trials of the Haligonian Lhotsampa history, their lives in Canada, and what draws them to the community garden. In this way, this study hopes to fill the gap of deep and nuanced understanding of how refugee communities from agrarian backgrounds can use community gardens to aid in their acculturation process.

Theoretical Framework

Food Security and Food Sovereignty

In the 1960s and 1970s, international development organizations began talking about food security (von Braun et al., 1992). The definition has shifted considerably from an emphasis on simply producing enough food for the world's population, to a more subjective focus on the quality of food available to individuals (Anderson and Cook, 1998). Patel (2009, 664) emphasizes the original definition of food security in 1974:

“the availability at all times of adequate world food supplies of basic foodstuffs to sustain a steady expansion of food consumption and to offset fluctuations in production and prices. (United Nations 1975 cited in FAO 2003)”

Patel (2009, 664) notes the political context of this definition, and in particular the “technocratic faith in the ability of states to redistribute resources if the resources could only be made available...”. This definition reflected the statist slant on food security and

the international interventions that ensued reflected that. Patel (2009) noted that food security changed as the context changed – when the neoliberal capitalist agenda no longer seemed to have any state-level opposition, so too the definition of food security changed, focusing on access and the governing hand of the market. This directly contributed to what McMichael calls the “corporate food regime”, where corporations influence and direct the global food system at the highest levels (McMichael, 2009). Food security was redefined by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) after negotiations between NGOs, nation states and the FAO in 1996 and re-articulated as:

“a situation in which all households have both physical and economic access to adequate food for all members and where households are not at risk of losing such access. There are three dimensions implicit in this definition: availability, stability and access. Adequate food availability means that, on average, sufficient food supplies should be available to meet consumption needs. Stability refers to minimizing the probability that, in difficult years or seasons, food consumption might fall below consumption requirements. Access draws attention to the fact that, even with bountiful supplies, many people still go hungry because they are too poor to produce or purchase the food they need. In addition, if food needs are met through exploiting non-renewable resources or degrading the environment there is no guarantee of food security in the longer-term” (in Hamm and Bellows, 2003, 39).

Food security as a term has evolved over the past decades, but only in a way that has benefitted those who have traditionally held onto power: states and corporations. Food sovereignty therefore developed as a movement to counteract the hegemonic food security movement, and the continually evolving and widening definition of food security has been widely attributed to the prominence of the food sovereignty movement (Patel, 2009). Patel understands food sovereignty as a counterattack on the inevitability of the neoliberal development agenda, at a time when there was no longer an alternative to American neoliberalism at the state level. The ensuing emphasis on market forces to influence food security propelled a loosely organized peasant farmers’ movement, known as La Via Campesina, to put forward the notion of food sovereignty in 1996.

While food sovereignty is notoriously difficult to define, its central tenet is the direct democratic participation in the food system (Patel, 2009). Phillip McMichael, the lead theorist behind food regime theory, understands food sovereignty as the movement behind the agro-ecological “food from somewhere”, opposing “food from nowhere” that

results from the corporate food regime (McMichael, 2009, 147). Food sovereignty in this case joins the Slow Food movement and Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) in the march towards a more democratic, ecological and quality-focused food system. The movement was intended to dismantle the prevailing pillars of food security to reorient the conversation surrounding the global food system (Patel, 2009). Food Secure Canada (FSC) uses La Via Campesina's current definition of food sovereignty to influence their work: "the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems" (FSC, 2016). Food sovereignty developed as a counter movement to food security; but more importantly as an "antithesis of the corporate food regime and its (unrealized) claims for 'food security' via the free trade rules of the World Trade Organization (WTO)" (McMichael, 2014, 934). The movement centers on the concept of peoples' rights to food over corporate control, (Patel, 2009). McMichael emphasizes that food sovereignty was a movement intended to rebuild domestic agriculture in a democratic fashion, removing the privilege of corporate agribusiness (McMichael, 2014), and has exemplified the "genuine opposition to the existing structures of the global agrifood system" (Fairbairn, 2012, 222).

The food sovereignty movement is a counter hegemonic movement poised as the bottom-up approach to food. In fact, Patel (2009) notes that in reality food sovereignty is required as a precursor to food security. Both terms are often intertwined in literature, however one stems from a statist approach to food production and distribution, and the other is grounded in the peasant movement, with democratic and ecological reforms. While food sovereignty is very much acknowledged in international food circles, it remains on the fringes of mainstream conversation regarding the global food system.

Community Food Security

Hamm and Bellows (2003) offer community food security (CFS) as an alternative theory to mainstream food security, by shifting the focus from households and individuals to *communities* of households and individuals. Community food security (CFS) is a theory and an approach often used to combat food insecurity, and stems from the original notion of food security. Whereas food sovereignty exists primarily in the Global South, Fairbairn (2012) notes that CFS largely exists as the sister concept in the

Global North, and primarily in the United States. CFS mirrors food sovereignty in that it was created outside of the larger governing bodies, but differs in that it was spearheaded by professionals and activists in nutrition, community development and sustainable agriculture (as opposed to food sovereignty, which was originally articulated by peasant farmers) (Anderson and Cook, 2009). CFS empowers communities to be self-reliant in sustainable solutions to hunger and breaks with traditional food security lenses by focusing on low-income access to food (Fairbairn, 2012). Hamm and Bellows (2003) emphasize that this food should be both nutritious and culturally appropriate, citing one of the main tenets of food security. However, Fairbairn notes that CFS often encourages entrepreneurial projects (in addition to policy changes), which runs counter to the anti-market tendencies of the food sovereignty movement. Neoliberalism may be unwittingly reinforced through the use of market mechanisms (Guthman, 2008), which Fairbairn determines may limit the transformational power of CFS (2012). Fairbairn's most significant criticism of CFS lays in its inability to tend to the bigger picture of the global food system.

Community food security is used in the community garden literature as a lens to analyze their effectiveness (Corrigan, 2011). CFS is a strategy to tackle food insecurity, especially in low-income communities (Lyson, 2004). Community gardens are one recognized approach to improving access to nutritious foods through the CFS framework (Lyson, 2004; Corrigan, 2011). Hamm and Bellows, scholars who, in 2003, largely set the standard definition of CFS, define community food security as a situation where "all community residents obtain a safe, culturally acceptable, nutritionally adequate diet through a sustainable food system that maximizes community self-reliance and social justice" (Hamm and Bellows, 2003, 37). This is the definition used by the Ecology Action Centre in Nova Scotia in order to improve food security in the province. Even so, community food security lacks the emphasis on democratic and just approaches to the global food system, likely a symptom of its proponents, who are more often concerned with nutrition side of food security (Hamm and Bellows, 2003). It is for this reason that CFS has been combined with food sovereignty, to take advantage of both stances to analyze access to food as well as control over food. Both CFS and food sovereignty

underline control and justice; therefore, this study uses the language of CFS which takes many fundamental notions from food sovereignty.

Community food security is used as a frame of reference in this study due to its emphasis on access to *culturally acceptable* nutrition and underlining of the importance of the community-wide approach. This research takes its theoretical underpinnings from the emphasis of community food security on the *community* level access to food, here specifying the Lhotsampa community rather than a particular geographic community. In line with other community garden researchers such as Corrigan (2011), CFS will be utilized as a framework to understand how the Lhotsampa community's food security is influenced by their use of the Glen Garden. As a large portion of the Lhotsampa community is also on income assistance, it is further useful to use a lens that emphasizes how low-income access to culturally appropriate food can transpire.

Social Capital Theory

Although maximizing community self-reliance is a key part of CFS, it is solely focused on a perspective of nutritional self-sufficiency. This investigation also intends to understand how the community garden impacts refugees' acculturation to Canadian society, and will integrate social capital theory to accomplish this. Social capital theory allows for an understanding of the garden's ability to increase a sense of community, identity and belonging for the Lhotsampa refugees. Social capital theory has a long history stemming from the ideas of Karl Marx (61) and Alexis de Tocqueville, but was formalized in the 1990s and is most readily understood in the format put forward by Robert Putnam (1995). Putnam's (2000) book, *Bowling Alone*, was founded on his essay in 1995 that related the reduction of American participation in civic groups to a decrease in civic engagement in the country as a whole. Putnam emphasizes the importance of civic groups that increase social capital, such as the bowling leagues that were popular in the earlier 20th century. He argued that social interactions and the occasional civic conversation at these events were important to increasing the strength of the social fabric in a society (1995). Putnam's twenty-year study on governance in Italy found that social capital was not only necessary for democracy, but also a precondition for it. He correlates decrease in membership in organizations with a decrease in Americans' trust for one another, describing a society where individualism is taking over the former place of

community (1995). In doing so, Putnam focuses the health of a society's democratic foundation on peoples' individual interactions and trust for one another. Using social capital theory allows the emphasis of community in this research to rest on building a sense of connection and belonging through interactions in the garden, versus CFS's notion of building the skills capacity of a community to increase nutrition.

Social capital theory has been used as a framework in numerous studies on community gardens (Firth, Maye and Pearson, 2011; Kingsley and Townsend, 2006; Glover, 2004). Social capital theory examines the social structures, institutions and shared values that create communities, emphasizing the values of social networks in creating strong communities (Portes, 1998). There is general agreement in the literature that community gardens enhance social capital by supporting social networking and boosting social cohesion (Firth, Maye and Pearson, 2011). Putnam (2003) writes that social capital is a result of social connections and the subsequent trustworthiness; Curry (2010) echoes the sentiment, saying that social capital is increased by the interactions and trust between citizens. Community gardens provide a space for these interactions, while at the same time providing a common interest and value system, enabling a shared goal. (Armstrong, 2000; Hancock, 2000; Wilson, 2001; Twiss et al., 2003).

The impact of community gardens on the *sense* of community has been analyzed through social capital theory (Curry, 2010). Firth, Maye and Pearson (2011) used a social capital framework in order to analyze the construction of "community" in two gardens in Nottingham, UK. The authors applied the different ways of building social capital to situations as they observed them in the garden, allowing the authors to further differentiate between a sense of community that is "place-based" versus one that is "interest-based". Firth, Maye and Pearson suggest that using social capital theory as a metric for measuring community in a garden can be a useful way of understanding the different interactions and their unique impacts on a sense of "community". In this study social capital was used as a theoretical framework to analyze the ways in which the Glen Garden has enabled the Lhotsampa community to connect with the wider neighbourhood community, solidifying their acculturation process in Canada. Bridging social capital has been implicit in this process, allowing interactions to take place across racial and

language barriers, and in turn creating a sense of “home” for the Lhotsampa community in Halifax.

Combining Three Frameworks

This research combines these three theoretical frameworks in order to analyze why the Glen Garden is important to the Lhotsampa community. By combining elements of food sovereignty, community food security and social capital theory, this research intends to understand how the Glen Garden affects both social acculturation and dietary acculturation. The study of the Glen Garden was intended to understand what utility is provided to the community, and by analyzing it through the frameworks above, the nuances of meaning are allowed to come forward. By understanding the community’s access to the garden through a food sovereignty lens, it is possible for the focus to shift away from a more statist, access and distribution style analysis that may occur through a food security lens, and instead focus at a community, grassroots level on the capacity to produce culturally appropriate and nutritious food. By utilizing the social capital theory framework, interactions between members of different communities can be analyzed to understand the effects on the community’s sense of belonging. In particular, the three types of social capital are utilized to understand which types of social capital are highly prevalent in the community, and which types may benefit the community if increased further.

Chapter Layout

This research will use the following layout. Chapter 1 introduces the context for research, a background on community gardens, practical problem, research questions and theoretical frameworks. Chapter 2 introduces both methodology and methods. It begins by justifying the study, explaining the methods of recruitment and consent and limitations of scope, sampling techniques, and data analysis strategy. Chapter 2 ends by exploring my own underlying axiology, epistemology and ontology and the resulting methodology that was undertaken. After delving into the context and methodology involved in the research, the thesis continues in Chapter 3 by undertaking a historical analysis of the Lhotsampa history in Bhutan. Chapter 3 uses secondary research to understand the

refugee crisis in context and examines the Lhotsampa journey from agrarian Bhutanese to refugee camp residents, using their own sentiments of the camps to outline conditions.

In Chapter 4 the Lhotsampa community's life in Canada is observed, making special note of the challenges faced by this specific cohort of refugees in Halifax. Chapter 4 sets the stage for the analysis of the community garden that takes place in Chapter 5. In this chapter, I analyze the ways that the Glen Garden is serving the Lhotsampa community in Halifax, in terms of ability to aid in both diet and social integration in Canada. In Chapter 6, I briefly explore the ways in which the Glen Garden could benefit from increased attention to details, in order to fully tap into the potential of this community resource. Finally, in Chapter 7 I outline my conclusions after having analyzed the historical context of the Lhotsampa community in Halifax and having observed their life in the Glen Garden.

Terminology

In undertaking this study, I came across a number of different naming conventions. In Halifax, the Lhotsampa are often referred to as Nepali. This is a misrepresentation although they are ethnically Nepali and some younger community members were in fact, born in the refugee camps in Nepal. In a classical sense, since the Lhotsampa were born in Bhutan before being expelled, they are also often referred to as "Bhutanese refugees". Since the vast majority of those expelled from Bhutan were of ethnically Nepali heritage, these terms make sense. In Chapter 3 the origin of the word "Lhotsampa" is explained. In deciding which term to use, I simply asked the community what naming convention they most preferred, and Lhotsampa was the given answer.

In another terminology struggle, I have examined in lengthy detail the most appropriate naming convention for the non-immigrant population in the surrounding communities of Fairview and Clayton Park in Halifax. This community is primarily white (though not completely), and primarily born in Canada and Nova Scotia (though not all), and primarily speak English as a first language (though not everyone). Because of these distinctions, I have settled into referring to this community as the "local" community or the "local residents". I chose this naming convention specifically because I did not want to blanket refer to a population by its majority characteristics. I also struck using

“Canadians” or “Nova Scotians” because of the implication that the Lhotsampa are neither, to which, of course they are both. In doing so, I acknowledge entirely that the Lhotsampa are also indeed local residents, however to distinguish between the two communities for the purpose of the study, the terms Lhotsampa and local residents will be used primarily.

Chapter 2: Methodology and Methods

Justification of Study

The current influx of new refugees into Canada makes this study both timely and relevant. The Lhotsampa refugees living in Halifax originally came from the fertile southern plains of Bhutan, where the majority were poor, rural farmers. Most fled Bhutan between 1990-1992, and spent the next two decades living in refugee camps in Eastern Nepal. Since arriving in Halifax in 2009, the refugees have been slowly adapting to Canadian society. Most of the Lhotsampa refugees had never before been on an airplane, let alone seen snow. The differences between Canadian and Bhutanese/Nepali life were stark, leading to challenges in integration and assimilation.

While younger generations within the Lhotsampa community have been largely successfully integrating into primary and secondary schools, with many attending local universities, a significant portion of the adult community experienced difficulty adjusting to life in Canada. Like many refugee populations, the elderly Lhotsampa faced the most challenges in adapting to their new lives. Traditional gender roles are still fundamental constructs of community structure for the Lhotsampa: women are expected to remain in the home and are expected to earn incomes. Long-term unemployment has thus presented a crisis for many Lhotsampa men (Pulla, 2016). Refugees from all countries face challenges in obtaining employment, but this is particularly true for those who are older and have more trouble adapting to local customs and norms, as well as those with more significant language barriers (Firth, Maye and Pearson, 2011). Similar to other refugee communities, the older Lhotsampa populations have not learned to speak English fluently, and contributing to their continued isolation within their community.

Since the Lhotsampa were primarily farming people while living in Bhutan – and also worked to find space to maintain gardens in the refugee camps – the creation of the community garden across the road from their apartment complex has provided the community with many services, including access to nutritious foods, a community hub and a way to structure their time when not working. The garden seems important to the entire community, though those who work emphasize that they do not have the time to

focus on the garden, unlike their unemployed counterparts. The Glen Garden is clearly a meaningful and significant space that plays a fundamental role in the lives of the Lhotsampa in Halifax. This study seeks to understand why and how the garden serves this community. In understanding the utility of the garden to this formerly rural, agrarian community, we may be able to apply lessons to current and future waves of agrarian refugees, aiding in the integration process and ultimately rendering the refugee experience more successful.

Recruitment and consent

This research used several methods to investigate what the Glen Garden means to the Lhotsampa community. First, a review of historical literature was conducted in order to understand the contemporary history of Bhutan, Nepal and the Lhotsampa people. This was necessary in order to appreciate the contextual factors that characterized the Lhotsampa refugee experience, including the impetus for the shift in national policy towards the Lhotsampa, violence faced by the community from both the government of Bhutan and dissident forces, and episodes of food insecurity experienced when fleeing to Nepal and during their extended stays in refugee camps. In undertaking this review of historical literature, it became obvious that the Lhotsampa have experienced significant trauma both in terms of violent expulsion (Hutt, 2003) and the resulting food insecurity (Quisumbing, 2013). Both types of trauma have been shown to affect food behaviours after resettlement.

In addition to the literature review that informed the historical context of this community, this research used both participant observation and semi-structured interviews to elicit the Lhotsampas' perspectives regarding the use of the garden and its impact on daily life in Halifax. I undertook participant observation at the Lhotsampas' community garden from June to August 2015. In early June, 2015, I conducted a meeting at the Garden that was organized by Heather Asbil, the garden coordinator from the Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia (ISANS). This meeting, in compliance with Dalhousie's Research Ethics Board's recommendations, allowed me to introduce this study, and enabled the Lhotsampa the opportunity to provide community-level consent, as well as to engage with key community leaders to ensure buy in. At the

meeting I explained the purpose of the research, emphasizing the participants' freedom to either participate or refrain from taking part. The community seemed genuinely interested and responded enthusiastically. Two translators were present at the meeting in order to help explain when and how the research would be taking place, as well as taking down the names of those interested in being interviewed. I received the majority of interviewees' information at this time, though some more were pursued after this through snowball sampling within the community.

After the initial meeting, I attended the garden throughout the summer (four or five days a week for twelve weeks) in order to make my presence in the community both normal and acceptable. I was able to aid in some garden activities, weeding and harvesting, though because of my very restricted Nepali language skills, interactions were therefore also limited. I observed both the frequency and quality of visits to the garden, noting both in a field notebook. These were later analyzed alongside the interview data using Nvivo software (Version 11.1.1). Of particular interest to me were the social interactions between both Lhotsampa and other cultures, as well as the time spent in the garden, and emotional responses expressed during visits.

Oral consent was the most culturally appropriate form of gaining permission, as many gardeners are illiterate in both English and Nepali. Interviews were used to understand the impact of community gardens on the communities themselves and provide a depth of understanding that is not obtainable from simple participant observation (Corrigan, 2011; Baker, 2004; Firth, Maye and Pearson, 2011). Interviews all took place at the garden so individual plots could be referenced in the interviews. Participants were asked what crops were growing and why, in addition to many questions about what they had grown in Bhutan and Nepal, what their lives had been like in those countries, and how the garden now helped to shape lives in Canada. Nearly all interviews took place through a translator, and though some refugees had a growing grasp of English, all participants expressed an interest for a translator to aid them through some moments of misunderstanding. The translators were already employed by the Immigrant Association of Nova Scotia (ISANS), and were therefore comfortable in the community and used to interacting in this way with community members. Two translators from the community were employed to conduct the interviews, one male and one female, and the female

translator was paired with female informants in order to make participants feel more comfortable. Since gender roles are still very much ingrained in the community, this step ensured that the women were able to give their own perspectives without being influenced by their husbands, brothers or fathers. One translator, Krissaran, was also interviewed for the research, and is a community leader who has excelled in English since arriving in Canada. As a member of the community, it was inevitable that some of his family members were interviewed. This was noted early on and the other translator was present for these interviews. Krissaran was active in the dissident movement in Bhutan and also involved in the implementation of the Glen Garden, and because of his excellent command of the English language, he also served as an informant in the study. The female translator was in fact Nepali, rather than Bhutanese, and so was not interviewed as part of this study.

Scope

The scope of this research was limited in a number of ways. The research undertaken in this study used a case study approach and deliberately prioritized depth over breadth. Though the Lhotsampa refugees may offer insights into the current, wider refugee issues, it was determined that focusing on a small segment of the refugee population who took particular interest in the community garden would offer the greatest depth of contemplating how the garden aids their particular acculturation process. Indeed, the local nature of this study predetermined a case study approach, since experiences of other refugees in other locales (even within Canada) will be vastly different based on local growing conditions, local housing availability, size of community, community's ethnicity, history, agrarian traditions, etc. While this case study may prove useful to provide insights to other refugee communities - and was particularly useful in contrasting the acculturation experience of other Bhutanese refugees in Coquitlam, British Columbia - it should not be used to generalize regarding all other refugee or immigrant experiences. It should be noted specifically that the past experiences of rural agrarianism of the Lhotsampa is unlikely to be generalizable amongst the current wave of Syrian refugees, most of whom come from more urban lifestyles.

Because the intent of this study was to focus on depth rather than breadth, the study focuses solely on Lhotsampa refugee gardeners. Though there are other gardeners who participate in the Glen Garden, only the Lhotsampa were included in this study. Interviews were only conducted with those Lhotsampa gardeners that participated at the Glen Garden. As there were no gardeners at the Glen Garden under the age of thirty, the sample population was limited in this regard. The research instead focused on older generations of Lhotsampa refugees, since they are who a) used the garden frequently, and b) seemed to be facing the most acculturation challenges. This research is therefore not intended to understand a broad view of refugee issues or suggest that community gardens are an appropriate aid to the acculturation process for all refugees. Though it may produce insights for other refugees from agrarian backgrounds, it is very much a grounded case study of this particular refugee community's experience with its garden.

There are also many different community gardens located in Halifax. Since this research focused on the Lhotsampa community, community workers suggested it was best to focus on the garden they use primarily, that being the Glen Garden. However, the Lhotsampa gardeners utilize other gardens as well. In particular, the Mosaic and Multicultural gardens were implemented *after* the successful implementation of the Glen Garden, both of which are frequented by Lhotsampa gardeners. The gardeners who participate in other gardens tend to be younger and/or more mobile than those who use the Glen Garden, as preference is given to those with limited mobility since the Glen Garden is located across from the apartment complex where most Lhotsampa live. Common Roots Urban Farm - a well-known market garden landmark in Halifax run by the Ecology Action Centre - also fell outside the scope of this research, though it is mentioned since many Lhotsampa gardeners "work" at the farm (discussed further in Chapter 5.6). Finally, the Killam Garden has been included since most involved in the gardening community consider it a subsidiary of the Glen Garden. It is located on the Killam Apartment complex land, where most Lhotsampa reside.

Finally, while much community garden literature focuses on the political processes that are required to both get the garden implemented and continue running it, this study has chosen not to include this in its scope. Undertaking a review of the politics involved in the creation and operation of the garden would likely remove the focus from

the gardeners themselves and instead focus on those in power positions. It is the intention of this research to undertake decolonizing methodologies - an approach that focuses on rejecting Western ideologies as superior and equitably approaching indigenous and other ways of knowing and understanding history (Smith, 2012). The focus becomes then what the Lhotsampa refugees feel is important about the garden, rather than what the researcher deems important from a Western lens. The process of setting up the garden – which occurred before this research project began – also falls outside the scope of the study.

Sampling

Twenty Lhotsampa gardeners were interviewed for this study. Of these, the majority were older men, whose age ranged from their mid-fifties to mid-seventies. This was representative of the wider Lhotsampa gardening community, though not representative of the Lhotsampa community as a whole. The youngest participants were two men, one aged 32 and one aged 46. These men make up a much smaller proportion than older men in the garden, and often bring their young children with them to the garden. This generation of men appears to be straddling a line of more difficult integration into Canadian society – the majority in that age group were working and adapting well to life in Canada. The younger men that partook in the study spoke more English than their elderly counterparts, yet not as fluently as those in their twenties or those still in school. Fifteen of the twenty participants were male and five were females. A discussion on gender dynamics in the garden can be found in Chapter 5.8.

The gardeners were largely contacted through a sign-up sheet at the initial meeting at the garden to explain the research project. Fifteen gardeners signed up on the spot, and the further five gardeners were contacted through snowball sampling. Snowball sampling has been used extensively in community garden research (Corrigan, 2011; Baker, 2004) and is appropriate in order to gain a diversity of views (age, gender, etc.) within the specified community. In addition, after the initial meeting new participants were approached by other community members. In tune with decolonizing research methodologies, this approach attempts to reduce refugees' feelings of obligation to the researcher that may prevail based on power differentials (Redman-McLaren and Mills,

2015). The community is very tight-knit and local residents could easily identify those who participated the most at the garden. Study recruitment ended when a saturation point was reached and new interviewees were no longer providing new information.

The limited sample size had disadvantages – it was difficult to elicit a wide variety of views. Younger generations were largely excluded from the study, as they largely do not participate in the garden. Many stopped by the garden throughout the summer to interact with parents, grandparents or community members. Younger children (under the age of ten) were more likely to play in the garden and assist in gardening activities, though children were not interviewed as part of this study. Adolescents were barely present at all. Finally, the very elderly (80+ years) were largely excluded. A number of very elderly Lhotsampa spent time at the Glen Garden on a daily basis, though did not have plots of their own. These were both men and women who used the garden for social purposes. Because they did not actually participate in gardening activities (mostly due to age and mobility issues), they were not included in the sample.

In addition to the twenty Lhotsampa gardeners I interviewed, I also spoke to Heather Asbil, the Coordinator of the Growing Strong Neighbourhoods & Immigrant Seniors Projects at ISANS, and Aimee Carson, from the Ecology Action Centre who works with the Common Roots Urban Farm. Since these interviews took place in English, no translator was needed for these exchanges. These interviews included in-depth questions regarding their perceptions of the community gardeners and the associated benefits of the garden, as well as their expertise in the original operations and setup required for the garden to exist.

Data analysis strategy

All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed with accompanying field notes soon after. Field notes included annotations of moments of deep emotional response to questions (especially regarding their homes in Bhutan and the use of the garden), interactions between gardeners, frequency of use, etc. Subsequently, the transcribed interviews were analyzed through a grounded theory approach, allowing the themes to emerge inductively from the gardeners' responses. This process emerged in

1967 from academics Glaser and Strauss as an approach to creating theories that emerged from the data itself, rather than assuming data would prove or disprove the theory.

I chose to use a grounded theory approach because it prioritizes the points of view of those being studied; it “privileges emic (insider) views and challenges the “context stripping” approach of variable-focused research” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 106, in Redman-McLaren and Mills, 2015). Grounded theory has been used in numerous studies of community food security situations. (Munger et al., 2014). In addition, the underlying emphasis on participation is integral to my own axiology (further explored in Chapter 2.6). Redman-McLaren and Mills (2015) advocate for a transformational grounded theory that is supported by critical realism but also incorporates participatory action research and decolonizing methodologies. Bob Dick’s (2008) seminal work summarizing how grounded theory and action research could influence one another emphasized the underlying value of participation in action research as fundamentally supportive of grounded theory. Since action research underlines both insider knowledge and the technical knowledge of the researcher, then realist grounded theory, which prioritizes the understanding of a socially constructed reality, can benefit from this deeply nuanced knowledge of the phenomena studied (Redman-McLaren and Mills, 2015).

After transcription was completed, the qualitative data was analyzed by observing patterns that emerged, such as the frequency of daily visits to the garden, or the experiences of food insecurity that refugees underwent in their journeys from Bhutan to the camps in Nepal. Once themes and patterns had emerged from the data they were compared to similar themes in the literature in order to validate and contextualize findings.

In addition to the findings from gardener interviews, participant observation and interviews with key informants (community workers from ISANS and the EAC) allowed for further validation of the themes that emerged. This triangulation of data allowed some themes that arose to be validated. For example, all parties emphasized the central importance of the garden in the lives of the Lhotsampa, and this theory was certainly advanced through observation: most gardeners visited Glen Garden at least twice a day, spending anywhere from ten minutes to a few hours tending to their garden and the

gardens of others, socializing with members of both the Lhotsampa community and the surrounding community, and generally appreciating the environmental conditions.

My Place in the Research

Recently, social scientists have pre-empted their research by explaining their own conceptual frameworks and world-views, in order to further contextualize the analysis of data from their worldview. By engaging in this self-reflective exercise, researchers are able to explain how their individual perspective and beliefs will shape the research process (Kovach, 2009). Keeping with Glaser's (1998) assertion that grounded theory does not assume objectivity from the researcher, but instead that biases should be revealed based on rigorous application of the methodology, I will briefly explain the axiological, epistemological and ontological perspectives that helped to shape my approach to research methodologies. In fact, Glaser goes so far as to say that the researcher should "interview oneself" in order to take biases into account as more data to be analyzed (1998). My own axiology, which refers to the values that are vital to the researcher's choice in processes (Redman-McLaren and Mills, 2015), is predominantly aimed at understanding and reducing the variability in power when undertaking research. The values that are integral to my methodological approach are participation, equity and social justice.

I lived in Nepal between 2012 and 2013, becoming familiar with the culture and learning to speak limited Nepali. I worked with a local forestry and agriculture organization, and while living and working in this community began to understand the connections between those who work and rely on the land where they live. When beginning my MA studies at Dalhousie University I intended to undertake research that would be beneficial to the Ecology Action Centre, especially as it related to sustainable food production. When the EAC mentioned a need for research focusing on a Nepali community and their desire for land to farm, I was fortunate to find myself in the midst of this happenstance. It was my intention to try to understand the Lhotsampa story and use my place of privilege in academia to allow the Lhotsampa story to be told and understood, if possible to aid in the resettlement process for Lhotsampa communities around the world. In this sense, it was integral to my study to minimize the power

differentials that I embody as a white graduate student from the developed world. I tried at all times to take my lead from the informants. At the same time, as a female who lived in the male-dominated Nepali society, I was apt to try to separate men and women when interviewing in an attempt to elicit the “true” story. In doing so, it is possible that I overlooked the nuances of the relationships in this culture, which I will never be able to understand fully as an outsider.

In terms of an epistemological position, this research is grounded in constructivism. Constructivism accepts that individuals construct reality by designating meaning to their lives on earth (Appleton and King, 2002). In a constructivist philosophy, meaning is not latently available in objects to be discovered, but rather it is only created as individuals begin to assign that meaning as they interact and interpret objects (Crotty, 1998). Because of these assertions, constructivism counters popular beliefs in one dominant and objective reality, since reality depends on the perspective of the individual creating it. Glaser (2004) acknowledges that classic grounded theory hypothesizes concepts that will have different meanings to different individuals, but that those concepts will still exist. Though Glaser recognizes the possibility of a constructivist perspective of classic grounded theory, he purports grounded theory as epistemologically and ontologically neutral (Glaser, 2005). Holton (2007) expands on this, by clarifying that rather than being neutral, classic grounded theory instead “should not be confined to any one lens” and that it can “adopt any epistemological perspective appropriate to the data and ontological stance of the researcher” (259). Indeed, Glaser (2005) emphasizes that it is more useful for the philosophical approach to emerge alongside the theoretical codes in the data, and writes that it is important for the researcher to stay open to multiple theoretical perspectives. This research uses a constructivist approach to grounded theory, in attempting to reconcile the realities the Lhotsampa perceive, related to their lives in Canada and the role the Glen Garden plays in those lives. This philosophical position was undertaken after analyzing that data and the literature, when it became apparent that migrants construct new realities in their gardens as a process of acculturation (discussed further in Chapter 4).

Chapter 3: The Lhotsampa of Bhutan

History of Lhotsampa in Bhutan

Bhutan is known as a peaceful Buddhist kingdom. Its “Gross National Happiness” (Dorji, 2009) measurement has won the hearts of many, as the country is praised for its critical understanding of human progress and development. Pundits have lauded the country’s recent and gradual transition to democracy from a constitutional monarchy (Gallenkamp, 2011). However, contemporary Bhutanese history often glosses over some of the more contentious parts of this nation’s history.



Figure 0—1 Bhutan is a small country that is bordered by China (Tibet) to the north and India on the remaining three sides.

Bhutan’s Ethnic Makeup

Bhutan has four main ethnic groups: The Ngalung³ (also known as Bhote), the Sarchop, the Lhotsampa and indigenous peoples (Dhurba, 2004). The Ngalung form the dominant ethnicity in Bhutan, based on their position as political elite rather than sheer population size. The Ngalung practice the Tibetan form of

Buddhism called Mahayana (Hutt, 2003). They speak a Tibeto-Burman language called Dzongkha, which is also the national language of Bhutan. In eastern Bhutan the Sarchop

³ The Ngalung people of Bhutan are often known as Bhote in Western literature (Dhurba, 2004). This terminology stems from their origins in Tibet, or Bhot. Anglicising Bhutanese comes with some trouble and therefore there are discrepancies in spelling. This thesis tries to use the more common spelling for most words. Ngalung is often also spelled Ngalong (Evans, 2010). The word Lhotsampa is also found in the literature spelled Lotsampa, Lhotshampa or Llotshampa. The Shabdrung is also known as Zhabdrung.

(roughly meaning *Easterners*), also follow Mahayana Buddhism, though they commonly practice under the tradition called Nyingmapa and speak a distinct language (Hutt, 2003; Evans, 2010). Nyingmapa differs from Drukpa Kagyü, which is the form of Mahayana Buddhism commonly practiced by the Ngalung people (Evans, 2010). While there are only four groups that make up the majority of the Bhutanese population, Dhurba (2004) notes that upwards of twenty languages are spoken in the small country and that ethnic conflict has been deeply entrenched.

The Lhotsampa people of southern Bhutan differ greatly from both the Ngalung and Sarchop by practicing Sanitan Hinduism, the form that is commonly found in Nepal and northern India (Evans, 2010). While the Sarchop and Ngalung practice Buddhism and intermarriage is common between them, the Lhotsampa have remained distinct in culture largely due to the natural physical division in the country (Ferraro, 2012). The Sarchop and Ngalung people have largely integrated and are often referred to as Drukpas collectively; this term will be used throughout this study to those from northern Bhutan who practice Buddhism. The term is used often to refer to Bhutanese people in general, but more accurately represents the northern Bhutanese people who are characterized by practicing Buddhism (Hutt, 2003). In the past, the Sarchop have aligned with the Ngalung allowing the Drukpa culture to be deemed the legitimate ruling elite by representing the majority (Giri, 2004); they are often portrayed as sharing significant cultural characteristics (Ramble, 1997).

Emergence of a Modern State

The diverse people of Bhutan lived more or less separately until the 17th century when the Shabdrung (spelling varies considerably), the region's first theocratic ruler took control (Schicklgruber, 1997). The Shabdrung, a monk called Ngawang Namgyal, fled Tibet amongst tension over the identity of the true reincarnation of the founder of the Drukpa Buddhist school. The Shabdrung is said to have followed a protective spiritual deity to the Lho Mon, the Southern Land of Darkness, now known as Bhutan (Ferraro, 2012). Since the Shabdrung, the leaders of Bhutan have tried to integrate the many ethnic groups to produce a more homogenous cultural legacy and tradition. However, the legacy of the Shabdrung's political and religious prowess was never equaled, resulting in

infighting between powerful families and general domestic instability (Pommaret, 1997; Ferraro, 2012). In 1907 the ruling elite brought an end to the instability by choosing Gongsar Ogyen Wangchuck to initiate a system of hereditary monarchy, becoming the first Dragon King (Evans, 2010). The Wangchuck dynasty is still in place today (though it is now transitioning to constitutional monarchy) and is largely assumed to be of Ngalung ethnicity (Phuntshoe, 2006). Drukpa families have dominated the country politically since the Wangchuck family took control, however Bhutan has cycled through different phases of ethnic tolerance and acceptance since the early 20th century.

Lhotsampa

The Nepali-speaking people who settled in southern Bhutan, near the Indian border at this time are called Lhotsampa (Hutt, 2003). The modern migration of Nepali-speakers from both India and Nepal began in the late 19th century, encouraged by British colonialists to settle the borderland of northern India and southern Bhutan to secure their hold on the area⁴ (Ellis, 2015). The southern belt of the country was largely uncultivated and malarial, and so Nepali-speaking settlers raised no immediate objections from the ruling northern Bhutanese, who had deemed the area unsuitable for living (Evans, 2010). In 1932, a British colonial officer reported a population of approximately 60,000 Nepali-speaking people in southern Bhutan who were clearing densely forested areas in Samchi, Chirang and Gaylegphug and Samdrupjonkhar for farmland (Dhurba, 2004). The Nepali-speaking population were largely farmers living on small acreages ranging from half an acre to around 10 acres (Krissaran, personal communication, August 4, 2015). In some cases, generations of families had already lived on the land in the southern part of Bhutan when the current nationality issues arose (Lee, 1998).

Policy of Indifference

Initially, when the Nepali-speakers began settling at the turn of the 20th century, the Government of Bhutan's policy orientation was of more or less indifference (Rose,

⁴ There is some controversy regarding the timing of Nepali migration; some believe that it began in the Middle Ages when Newari (Nepali) craftsmen were recruited for their skills to build the Shabdrung's empire (Procter, 1995, Hutt, 2003).

1977), allowing the Lhotsampa people to retain their traditional religion and culture in relative isolation (Dhurba, 2004). Lhotsampa citizenship was deemed somewhat uncertain. Lhotsampa were not admitted to the police force or army unlike other ethnic groups (Evans, 2010). They were not permitted to own land in the northern part of the country and most did not speak Dzongkha, the language of the north (Evans, 2013). The southern part of the country was therefore left to run its own affairs for the first half of the 20th century (Hutt, 2003). The area was innately vulnerable to influence from India based on geography, ethnic makeup⁵ and Hindu religion, resulting in a community that had been neither socially nor politically integrated with its Drukpa brethren to the north (Rose, 1977). In the 1950s, inspired by the Indian National Congress's successful bid for independence from Britain, the Bhutan State Congress (BSC) was formed to demand a reduction in the perceived discriminatory policies aimed at the southern Bhutanese people (Lee, 1998). The Lhotsampa viewed the Bhutan State Congress as a way to demand democracy, citizenship rights and political representation (Dhurba, 2004). King Jigme Dorji Wangchuck was, in general, receptive to democratic demands from his constituents and there was a noticeable shift in national policy when he came to power in 1952 (Hutt, 2003).

Policy of Accommodation and Integration

The first official Royal tour of the Lhotsampa region took place in 1957, signaling that the King of Bhutan took BSC claims seriously (Evans, 2013). Whitecross (2009) argues that King Jigme Dorji Wangchuck (grandfather to the current king) introduced the Bhutan Nationality Act in 1958 as a direct response to the BSC demands. The southern Bhutanese were encouraged (but not forced) by the Act to identify and participate with northern Bhutanese culture through financial incentives for marriage between southern and northern Bhutanese. High-ranking government positions were awarded to southern Bhutanese and recruitment tools for Lhotsampa to join the police and army commenced

⁵ Ethnic Nepalese are found not only in Nepal and Bhutan, but many surrounding areas. The former kingdom of Sikkim, now a state in India, separates Nepal and Bhutan. This region is largely populated by people known as “ethnic Nepalese” though this term is more specific outside of the country of Nepal. In Nepal, it includes a number of different ethnicities, including Gorkhas, Gurungs, etc. For more information please see Hutt, 2003.

(Hinton, 1996). While Dzongkha was being advanced as the country's national language, Nepali and Sanskrit were still taught in southern schools, though this practice was eradicated later in 1989 (Hutt, 2003). The 1958 Bhutan Nationality Act approached southern Bhutan through an encouraged integration with the North.

Most significantly, the 1958 Act granted citizenship to Bhutanese people, including the Lhotsampa (Hutt, 2003; Rose, 1977). It gave citizenship to all those who had lived in Bhutan for over ten years and owned agricultural land, or those who had provided 5 years of government service (Whitecross, 2009). Lee (1998, 129) assumes that because most Nepalese-Bhutanese were farmers, this "provision of ownership was clearly inserted with them in mind". However, due to the requirement of land ownership (or government service), sharecroppers and the landless were not eligible for citizenship (Saul, 2000). Even so, the act immediately provided citizenship to all those who had been domiciled since 1948, and gave the assumption of impending citizenship for those who had resided for less than the required 10 years (Saul, 2000). The 1958 Act recognized Nepali culture and dress and trained Lhotsampa for government roles. Citizenship was passed down through the paternal line, allowing children with non-Bhutanese mothers to become citizens. It also gave citizenship to non-Bhutanese women who married Bhutanese men (Hutt, 2003). The 1958 Act motivated integration through tolerance and acceptance of differing cultural norms.

King Jigme Dorji Wangchuck, whether as a response to BSC demands or through a desire for democratic reform of his own, formed the Tshogdu, a government body of representatives (Evans, 2013). The King created Bhutan's first five-year development plan and the Royal Advisory Council in 1965, of which Lhotsampa were crucial members (Hutt, 2003). He had abolished slavery and serfdom in 1956, and instituted land reforms that allowed (mostly ethnic Nepalese) farmers to acquire up to 25-30 acres of land (Gallenkamp, 2011). Prem, a Lhotsampa refugee in Halifax, spoke about his grandfather being given land by the government, probably around this time (personal communication, July 20, 2015). Since then, each successive generation has supposed themselves citizens of Bhutan. King Jigme Dorji Wangchuck was responsible for ultimately changing Bhutan's political and administrative structures during his reign (Rose, 1977), much of which was likely motivated by the BSC movement and demands of the Lhotsampa.

Ironically, the BSC movement never gained much traction with the Nepali-Bhutanese people (Rose, 1977; Hutt, 2003). The Lhotsampa were not particularly political during this time and are what Hutt (2003, 202) calls a “conservative, agrarian population”.

Further Nepali Migration

In 1949 Bhutan turned to India for protection in the face of China’s advance on Tibet. The Treaty of Friendship was signed between the two countries and a porous border with India resulted, encouraging migration in the area – a large portion of which were ethnic Nepalese (Lee, 1998). India financially supported King Jigme Dorji Wangchuck’s first Five Year Development Plan as part of the partnership, and the national assembly, remaining aware of the significance of their actions, looked towards India and Nepal to fill labour shortages in the ensuing years to complete large scale infrastructure and development projects (Lee, 1998; Saul, 2000). While refugees would later say that Nepalese who had overstayed their work permits on the projects had been deported between 1986 and 1988, the Royal Government of Bhutan (RGB) found 100,000 non-nationals in a 1988 census (discussed further in Chapter 3.2.3) who they largely attributed to illegal immigration demanded by the development project era (Dhakal and Strawn, 1994).

Policy of Absorption

While King Jigme Dorji Wangchuck seemed committed to integrating the Lhotsampa people into wider Bhutanese society in a tolerant fashion (Ferraro, 2012), his son, King Singye Dorji Wangchuck – whose rule began in 1972 upon the death of his father - encouraged a national identity in a different manner. Pattanaik (1998) calls these two distinct phases in Bhutanese history the policy of accommodation (1958-1980) and the policy of absorption (1980 onwards). Whitecross (2009, 15) writes that throughout the 1980s the government of Bhutan pushed for a “united and homogenous Bhutanese populace”. This new national identity was largely influenced by the Drukpa culture, traditionally a sub-sect of the Buddhist Kargupa school, and usually practiced by the Ngalung (Dhurba, 2004). However, Bhutanese people in general are known as Drukpa, largely because of the national influence associated with the sect and the intermarriage between different Buddhist groups. While there are differences between these groups,

only the Lhotsampa are so distinct in nature that their culture posed a perceived threat to dominant Drukpa culture (Ferraro, 2012). King Singye Dorji Wangchuck married four Drukpa sisters who were supposed descendants of the Shabdrung in 1977 privately, and in 1989 publicly⁶ (Hutt, 2003). This marriage was instrumental in consolidating the elite power of the Drukpa and coincided with the introduction of the swing in state identity politics.

Understanding the shift in national policy

While government policy towards the Lhotsampa in Bhutan has traditionally been indifferent and consequently isolating, in the 1970s and 1980s it became more noticeably discriminatory in nature. The Bhutanese government justified its actions at a UN human rights panel in 2009 (Dorji) as a way to prevent “demographic inundation”: “given our tiny population and fragile culture, [migration] is a question of our survival as a nation-state, and, therefore, one of national security as well. Under these circumstances, our nationality and citizenship laws are our only safeguards, as well as our sovereign duty to our people.” In this statement, Dorji notes Bhutan’s relative regional success in providing social services, which attracts “the vast movement of destitute people across porous and open borders fleeing a combination of extreme poverty, environmental degradation and political instability” (2009, 5-6).

This perspective, while echoed in the 2009 statement, seems to have been the dominant assessment since the 1980s. The roots of this narrative, however, stem back to security concerns from mid-century. BSC demands in the 1950s led to a perceived threat to the national security in Bhutan, exacerbated by the People’s Republic of China’s invasion of Tibet, and especially India’s annexation of Sikkim in 1975. “Sikkim had a

⁶ In 1979 King Jigme Singye Wangchuck married four Drukpa sisters in a private ceremony. The sisters are said to be descendants of the Shrabdung, who ruled Bhutan prior to the current monarchy. The marriage was then repeated publicly in 1988 in order to lend legitimacy to the current King’s eventual ascension to the throne. This controversial move coincided with the alienation of several royal family members and the inclination towards more Drukpa national policy, signalling a new era of political elite. Dhurba (2004) writes that the “elites’ narrow pursuit of self-serving policies, especially on crucial issues such as national integration, political stability, ethnic harmony and communal peace” have resulted in the ethnic tensions felt in Bhutan from the late 1980s onwards.

lasting impact on the Bhutanese psyche” (Joseph, 2006, 1312), because its large Nepali population had supported the merger with India. The ethnic Nepalese population in the area was perceived as a threat, and rumours of a “Greater Nepal” abounded (Ives, 2002), though Hutt (2003, 274) mused that there “is no real evidence that the [sic] Lhotsampas entertained any longing to reunite the politically divided Nepali cultural zone”. Bhutan and India’s porous border, resulting from the threat of China’s invasion of Tibet, encouraged the migration of many ethnic Nepalese (Lee, 1998), exacerbating the perceived threat of a Greater Nepal. While in the 1950s, the Bhutanese government’s strategy to reduce the threat centered on integration of the Lhotsampa, the increasing frequency and severity of ethnic Nepali demands in the region may have spiked government fear.

From 1986 to 1988, the Bhutanese government was confronted with the uprising of the ethnic Nepalese Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF) in North Bengal in India. This militant group pushed for a separate Nepali state in India, intensifying fears that the “Greater Nepal” was an imminent danger to Bhutanese sovereignty (Saul, 2000). The timing of the GNLF uprising may have precipitated some of the peak tensions between the Bhutanese government and the Lhotsampa, which included a controversial census in 1988 and resulting exodus of Lhotsampa to Nepal in the ensuing years. There were suspicions that Gorkha loyalty among Lhotsampas had been lying dormant for decades. The National Assembly, in their decision to extend citizenship based on an oath to the king decided that: “the Nepalese of Southern Bhutan should abide by the rules and regulations of the Royal Government and, pledging their allegiance to the King, should conscientiously refrain from serving any other authority (such as Gorkha). They should submit a bond agreement to this effect to the Government” (Government of Bhutan, 1983). This explicit mention of Gorkha authority in the Assembly’s decision underlies the relentless fear of rebellion in the south.

Hutt (1996), believes that the Gorkhaland movement was integral to the apprehension amongst the ruling elite in Bhutan of an ethnic Nepali rebellion, and that those fears were exacerbated by the fall of Sikkim. In fact, the Buddhist kingdom of Sikkim was ruled by monarchs related to the royal family in Bhutan, making fears of the power of a Nepali-ethnic majority personal, as Bhutan watched Sikkim fall (Hutt, 1996).

Following the reduction of the Nepali King to mere constitutional monarchy, it is likely that Bhutanese Drukpa rulers were fearful of the large, ethnically distinct population in the southern part of their country.

1977 Citizenship Act, 1980 Marriage Act, 1985 Citizenship Act

When the third Dragon King came to power at just 16 years old in 1972, the threat of a similar act of rebellion by the ethnic Nepalese seemed imminent. One of the King's first official actions was to implement the 1977 Citizenship Act. This new Act retroactively doubled the time required for citizenship from ten to twenty years for those working the land, and tripled required government service time from five to fifteen years, to be considered citizens (Barral, 1993). It also superseded the 1958 Bhutanese Nationality Act in other ways: non-national wives of Bhutanese men no longer automatically received citizenship and had to apply, it required applicants to pledge not to act against the King, Nation or People and new nationals had to have 'some knowledge' of Bhutanese history and the Dzongkha language (Hutt, 2003; Whitecross, 2009). This final requirement was very controversial in the southern part of the country, where many people do not speak Dzongkha. In addition, there was widespread illiteracy in Bhutan, and many Lhotsampa could not read or write in their first language, Nepali, let alone Dzongkha (Saul, 2000). In 1980 the Marriage Act further restricted Bhutanese national identity. Punitive measures were retroactively applied to Bhutanese who had married non-Bhutanese nationals. Bhutanese who married non-nationals were not eligible for promotion in government, they were not allowed to work for the foreign or defense ministries and they forfeited rights to educational assistance (Hutt, 2003). Due to the Lhotsampa proximity to India and shared cultural heritage, many Lhotsampa had married women from across the border. Scholars have supposed that these restrictive policies were aimed at further marginalizing the borderland people (Hutt, 2003; Joseph, 2000).

In 1985 a new Citizenship Act overrode both the 1958 and 1977 Acts, making citizenship even more restrictive. It was granted only if both parents were Bhutanese citizens, instead of just the father (Ferraro, 2012), rendering many children born and raised in Bhutan stateless. The Act extended citizenship to non-nationals only on the basis of those who could prove residency in Bhutan before December 31st, 1958, which is

almost impossible to prove where widespread illiteracy abounds and administrative procedures are a relatively new phenomenon (Bhutan Citizenship Act, 1985; Hutt, 2003). Naturalization applicants needed to have been residents for twenty years before applying, and then required to fulfil the following eligibility requirements: read and write Dzongkha “proficiently”, “have no record of having spoken or acted against the King, Country, and People of Bhutan in any manner whatsoever”, and take an oath of allegiance. Naturalization applicants can be rejected without “assigning any reason” and can be terminated if the person receives citizenship in another country or shows to be disloyal “in any manner whatsoever to the King, Country or People of Bhutan” (Bhutan Citizenship Act, 1985).

Citizenship cards that had been issued by the government only years earlier were no longer accepted as proof of nationality. In 1988 the government conducted a census, and concluded there were 100,000 illegal immigrants in the country⁷ (Hutt, 2003). The census marked a turning point in tensions, and provided the government with evidence that illegal migrants were a threat to Drukpa heritage. The census was one part of the “cultural protective measures” intended to nurture the King’s vision of a homogenous Bhutanese society and the illegal immigrants were by and large ethnic Nepalese from the southern region (Gallenkamp, 2011). Pulla frames the census on behalf of the Lhotsampa, saying: “The general belief among the Lhotsampa even today is that the 1988 census was merely a means to justify their expulsion and reduce their numbers, to reinstate hegemonic Drukpa culture, and to stop any possible attempt to gain power either by the Lhotsampa or by India” (2016, 6).

One Nation, One People Policy

In 1987 Bhutan was in the midst of a quiet cultural revolution, prompting the government to introduce the “One Nation, One People” policy (Hutt, 2003; Mathou, 2000; Saul, 2000). This policy, widely understood as “Bhutanization”, was intended to

⁷ The census determined a population of over 1.6 million people but was revised the next year to less than 700,000. The number is thought to be inflated depending on what kind of majority the government tries to portray and is subject to much debate (Giri, 2004).

create a more homogenous Bhutanese society (Benson, 2011). In 1988 the *gho* and *kira*⁸ became required dress in government offices, official functions, public congregations and schools, including the informal *pathshala* schools where Nepali and Sanskrit training were provided (Hutt, 2003; Giri 2004). While not only culturally discriminating, many Lhotsampa complained that “the thick cloth was too hot for the climate in the south” (informant, in Evans, 2013). While the dress was a burden, Evans’ (2013) informant also noted that the government made attempts to create a cotton version that would be more appropriate for the Lhotsampa, indicating that some effort was taken to appease the Lhotsampa. Though the government denies it, female refugees have reported that they were forced to cut their hair to the traditional Drukpa style, which is shorter than the length preferred by Nepalese culture (Evans, 2010).

The Drukpa etiquette *Driglam Namzhag* was actively promoted as part of the One Nation, One People policy, and the Dzongkha language was widely advanced. The government reversed previous marriage policies of integration, and instead began offering financial incentives for Bhutanese to marry legal Bhutanese citizens (Saul, 2000). In 1989, Nepali and Sanskrit languages were dropped from the school curriculum, which was a breaking point for many Lhotsampa (Chalmers, 2007). Krissaran, a Lhotsampa refugee in Halifax who also participated in the project as a translator, explained that in 1988 the government stopped enrolling Nepali children in schools, and that villages were at odds with government officials. Villages joined forces to provide their own Nepali education for their children, although Krissaran said that education department officials were unhappy with them taking education into their own hands (Krissaran, personal communication, August 4, 2015).

The *One Nation, One People* Policy had far-reaching effects in southern Bhutan, and many ethnic Nepalese were angered by the retroactive loss of their citizenship and gradual erosion of rights to their traditional language and cultural heritage. Ayush explained to me, “The Bhutanese government didn’t want them to wear their own clothes, their traditional everything, but people from Nepal who live in Bhutan, they

⁸ The *gho* is a “wrap-around, coat-like, knee-length garment, with a narrow belt” worn by men, while the *kira* is an “ankle-length dress made of a rectangular piece of cloth held together at the shoulders with a clip and closed with a woven belt at the waist, over a long-sleeved blouse” worn by women (Saul, 322, 331, 2000).

followed their own culture and religion and the government doesn't want them to do that" (personal communication, August 1, 2015). Dhurba (2004, 153) questions the national policy measures that "aligned citizenship with ethnicity", even going so far as to call the shift in policies an attempt to 'ethnically cleanse' the population in Bhutan to assert a Drukpa supremacy.

The Citizenship Acts of 1977 and 1985 exacerbated discrimination felt by the Lhotsampa, leading to a rise in southern Bhutanese organizations demanding respect for their culture and way of life (Evans, 2010). One prominent organization, the People's Forum for Human Rights (PFHR), was formed to promote the Lhotsampa's rights. Tek Nath Risal, a former member of the Royal Advisory Council, led the PFHR, and in conjunction with some student groups, began organizing peaceful demonstrations to protest the government's infringement on the Lhotsampas' rights in the 1980s (Evans, 2010). Krissaran, a Haligonian Lhotsampa gardener who called himself a political activist, worked with the PFHR in Bhutan. He believed that the group needed to exist to teach Bhutanese people about the differences between rights and duties, what rights the Lhotsampa had and what other Bhutanese had. While the Lhotsampa rights were certainly infringed upon, Krissaran explained that the Lhotsampa were uneducated in terms of rights and responsibilities: "Before no, nobody [sic] know about rights, we don't know about rights, what is wrong, what is right. What is human rights, what is political rights?" (personal communication, August 4, 2015). As Hutt (2003) noted, the Lhotsampa were a largely agrarian, conservative people with little education. They had proved reluctant to take part in BSC demands for democracy and equal treatment in the 1950s and were tolerant of the removal of many of their rights while allowed to continue their agrarian lifestyles. The 1988 census served to shatter the appeasable nature of some Lhotsampa, leading to the creation of a political party and the ensuing culmination of tensions in Bhutan.

Culmination of Tensions

The 1988 census exacerbated tensions in the country and was widely denounced as discriminatory by international human rights' organizations (Amnesty International, 1992). The slow erosion of citizenship stemming from the 1977 and 1985 Citizenship

Acts, coupled with the impending Green Belt Policy, the One Nation, One People policy, and the 1988 census caused tensions between the Royal Government of Bhutan and the Lhotsampa people to boil over. Though human rights organizations had begun to organize, the emergence of the Bhutanese People's Party was the impetus for violent escalations. Community elders who were former BSC members and had previous experience with government acquiescence to peaceful demands began handing out pamphlets that explained human rights (Evans, 2010, 31). However, one of the pamphlets contained information that government officials called 'seditious'⁹ (RGB, 1993, 7). The PFHR, led by Tek Nath Rizal, began organizing peaceful protests that were not particularly well attended, but the government responded quickly (Evans, 2010). Rizal fled to Nepal amid fears for his safety, but was extradited and arrested along with 45 people active in initial demonstrations between October and December of 1989 (Hutt, 2003, 201-202). The swift government response amplified discontent on the part of the Lhotsampa. Following these events, several hundred activists fled Bhutan to take refuge in India. The Bhutan People's Party (BPP) was formed in exile in India, and in June of 1990 'plans were made for a programme of political action across southern Bhutan' (Hutt, 2003, 203).

In the early stages of the BPP, some Lhotsampa activists were in contact with the GNLF extremists in India and adopted similar violent tactics, including setting fires and murder (Hutt, 203, 195). BPP activists pressured ethnic Nepalese to financially support the movement and threatened violence if they did not attend protests. In June 1990, the heads of two southern Bhutanese government officials were found in a bag near the

⁹ The pamphlet, handed out by many students and former BSC members called for action from the Lhotsampa to demand reform from the government. The words, cited in Hutt, 2003, page 200 are as follows:

'It is time for us to shout to the power in Thimphu 'Liberty, Equality and Fraternity' and bring fown the 'Bastille'. It is time to say ourselves, Bhutanese Nepalese, unite, we have nothing to lose but gain. The hour has struck for the historic conflict. We the Bhutanese Nepalese have a culture we cherish, a language we speak, a dress we wear, a religion we follow. They are all ours. They are part of our identity. We shall not allow any power to take them away from us. We shall resist, we shall fight to the last man of our race all repressive laws intended to wipe out our identity. THIS DOCUMENT IS A PROTEST AND A PROPHECY.'

Gomtu River in Samchi District (Zeppa, 1999; Hutt, 2003). According to the Royal Government of Bhutan, these murders coincided with the establishment of the BPP and contained a letter warning: “All those who supported the Royal Government would meet the same fate’ (Hutt, 2003, 203). Refugees reported being threatened by BPP activists that non-supporters would ‘lose six inches’ (a Nepali phrase, referring to the head), and the discovery lent credibility to these claims (Evans, 2010). The government claimed that anti-nationals (*ngolops*) were responsible for violent acts from 1990 onward, including murder and kidnapping (Amnesty International, 1992). Amnesty International also reported that refugees have claimed being intimidated by BPP activists. Refugees reported that the BPP intimidated and threatened them, often forcing one member of the household to join the party, or kidnapping or attacking non-supporters and stealing animals (Evans, 2010). The 1992 Amnesty International report was consistent with reports from refugees that the BPP took part in military activities and bombed government buildings.

Many southern Bhutanese felt stuck between the anti-nationals and the government and felt targeted by both. Hutt (2003, 203) notes that while the “violent aspect of the Lhotsampa’s resistance” was impossible to measure, “the assassinations that did take place can only have strengthened the position of hardliners in the Bhutanese government”. The Lhotsampa were between a rock and a hard place – on one hand suffering government discrimination and punishments for taking part in demonstrations, but on the other hand threatened if they did not participate.

Mass demonstrations in 1990 only strengthened the government’s position on what became known as the ‘southern problem’, something the Lhotsampa refugees told Hutt (2003, 204) in hindsight they thought was planned and provoked. Muni (1991: 145, in Hutt, 2003) writes that between 40,000 and 50,000 Lhotsampa marched in initial protests in Samchi and followed by Sarbhang, Chirang and Dagana (all southern regions). Demonstrations were organized by the People’s Forum for Human Rights, the BPP and the Students’ Union of Bhutan, who were mostly living in India at the time (Hutt, 2003). The motivation to protest differed from person to person, and a list of demands that

responded to discrimination – and used momentum from democracy and rights movements sweeping the globe at the time – was presented at each march¹⁰.

Hutt (2003, 207-208) writes that some refugees claimed to be marching solely as a way to acquiesce BPP demands, explaining the presence of so many women and children. But government sources alleged that the demonstrators burned national dress items and census records were removed from offices, implying a more sinister motivation. The government also claimed that demonstrators were armed with *khukuri*, a symbolic Nepali knife, and were interspersed with militants armed with guns and bombs (Department of Information, cited in Joseph, 1999). According to activists, the protests maintained a peaceful presence, and “suddenly the RBA [Royal Bhutan Army] opened fire upon the crowd and charged them with bayonets resulting in the deaths of several people and injuring scores of them” (INHURED, cited in Joseph, 1999, 146). The Nepali press reported that the Bhutanese government killed over 300 demonstrators in 1990 in Samchi district, although Amnesty International ‘found no evidence to support these reports’ (Amnesty International, 1992). In reaction to the 1990 demonstrations, the government began identifying and arresting participants and supporters. Most of these supporters left Bhutan immediately after being released (Hutt, 2003). Reports from those arrested include instances of torture and ill treatment. Bishal, who came to Canada in 2011, was shot by the Bhutanese army and subsequently arrested and tortured while serving 33 months in prison (personal communication, July 20, 2015). Many Lhotsampa

¹⁰ The list of 13 demands submitted by protesters was as follows, take from Hutt (2003):

1. Unconditional release of political prisoners.
2. Change of absolute monarch to constitutional monarchy.
3. Reform in the judiciary.
4. Amendment to the citizenship act.
5. Right to culture, dress, language and script.
6. Freedom of Religion.
7. Freedom of Press, Speech and Expression.
8. Freedom of Formation of Unions and Political parties.
9. Freedom of Trade and Occupation.
10. Right to Equitable Distribution of Wealth and Funds.
11. Right to Equality of Opportunities in Matters of Public Employment.
12. Right to Education.
13. Right Against exploitation.

that I interacted with spoke of relatives that were arrested by the government, and government officials threatened many of the farmers.

Though the extent to which each side is presented accurately is beyond the scope of this study, it is important to note the level of coercion Hutt believes was present for the Lhotsampa to be involved in such scales of protest (2003, 205-207). Rose (1977, 113) described the Lhotsampa only a decade and a half earlier as “largely unresponsive to suggestions that political organizations and agitation are required to attain community or regional objectives”. Hutt cites experiences of coercion and threats of violence to those who refused to take part in demonstrations, though he maintains an air of caution regarding these motivations (2003, 207). In any case, demonstrations caused reverberating effects throughout the Bhutanese countryside.

The government paused development projects due to “large-scale acts of terrorism unleashed by the anti-national elements” (RGB 1992, 48). Acts of violence perpetrated by activists were used as the impetus to discriminate more severely against the Lhotsampa, which further enraged BPP activists. Children whose parents were suspected of supporting the BPP were prevented from accessing schools, and rumours circulated the Bhutanese Army was sexually abusing women and girls in southern Bhutan. In addition to the violence by both the Bhutanese army and the BPP, northern Bhutanese village militias formed to defend their territory from ‘anti-nationals’ (Hutt, 2003).

Decisions to leave Bhutan

Tensions in Bhutan between the Lhotsampa and the government peaked between 1990 and 1992. Fear of persecution and harassment compelled many Lhotsampa to leave the country at this time, something AHURA (Association of Human Rights Activists Bhutan) calls the government’s “systematic eviction of southern Bhutanese” (AHURA, 2000). Thronson (1993) quotes a government circular issued by the Home Minister in Bhutan from the 17th of August, 1990:

“any Bhutanese citizen leaving the country to assist and help the anti-nationals shall no longer be considered a Bhutanese citizen. It must also be made very clear that such peoples’ family members living under the same household will also be held fully responsible and forfeit their citizenship” (Thronson, 1993, 18).

At the village level, this resulted in government officials instructing Lhotsampa families to leave the country (Evans, 2010). Bhagat, a father with a wife and young daughter at the time, claimed that the army, as directed by the government, “came to our place and said you have to leave this country, it is not your country, you have your own country. Go there” (personal communication, July 31, 2015). These instructions were frequently rationalized based on donations paid to the BPP or having family members who had already fled. Detainees were instructed to flee upon release from custody, as were their families (AHURA, 2000). Voluntary migration forms were presented and people were required, sometimes under duress of physical violence, to sign (AHURA, 2000). The forms, written in Dzongkha, were illegible to most Lhotsampa. Some Lhotsampa in Halifax expressed some confusion regarding the exact reasons for their departure from Bhutan, as rumours abounded and entire communities left together. Some expressed a vague understanding of the governments’ discriminatory actions towards them, while others were arrested and claimed to have been tortured (Bishal, personal communication, July 20). Krissaran (personal communication, August 4, 2015), the activist involved in human rights education, described how the government would target the family of activists after they had fled Bhutan:

“Several times the police and the army came to my village, some [people] were arrested, my father was badly beaten at that time, because of me. Finally, due to me, my whole family left Bhutan, and my uncles, my relatives. Family members were treated badly, and they warned us . . . [that we had] 24 hours . . . to leave [the] country. Not only my family, the whole extended family and the whole Nepalese community was warned in that way. [They told us] If we come next time here and find [you] out around this area you will be killed. So the people, ignorant people from the country [who] do not know about rights, they just left [the] country because some people [were] killed at the time and some peoples’ house were burned. Women were raped at the time, some of them were killed. My uncle, both of them . . . [were] killed in Bhutan, they were just [sic] a simple farmer in the country and they were arrested, every time they [the police and army] put [an] electric saw [to people] and they died inside. And the family was called and [the authorities] said, [your] husband, your father has died [in] jail, sign this paper. In that way, many, almost all people in Southern part, from my village, [and] from another village left Bhutan.”

A massive exodus of ethnic Nepalese from southern Bhutan to eastern Nepal took place between 1990 and 1992. Refugees have largely claimed violence and

discrimination by government officials and forces. However the government has maintained the official position of preventing emigration while demonizing a select few ‘anti-nationals’. In reality, the escalation by both the government and the BPP seems to have resulted in widespread fear and confusion, and it is unclear whether the encouragement at the village-level for Lhotsampa to leave was truly the government’s intention (Hutt, 2003). Many scholars have understood the Voluntary Migration Form in particular, as a way for the government to claim no wrongdoing in future (Hutt, 2003).

While many were forced to sign the voluntary migration forms and are considered ‘voluntary emigrants’ by the Bhutanese government (Hutt, 1996), the majority of Lhotsampa claim to have wanted to continue their lives as farmers in Bhutan. Hutt (410, 1996) contends with the “politically conservative nature of Nepali agriculturalists and their total dependence on the land”; in contrast with those who believe the Lhotsampa were tacitly supportive of the violent measures being taken by those claiming to speak on their behalf. Hutt goes further, explaining the cultural reality of the Lhotsampa:

“It is unlikely that such people would give up their fields, orchards, homes and citizenship simply to express their support 'in principle' for a political movement: this is surely a weak pull factor, and stronger push factors must have been involved. Here it is relevant to point out that in every instance of Nepali-led political activism in recent years, whether it be the various political agitations that occurred in Nepal under the Panchayat regime (1962-90) or the Gorkaland movement in Darjeeling (1986-8), the leaders have come from the educated urban class and have experienced severe difficulties in mobilizing mass support in rural areas.” (Hutt, 410, 1996).

This interpretation was supported by the Lhotsampa gardeners in Halifax, who often outlined their distress at leaving their homelands, even 25 years later. Ayush (personal communication, August 1, 2015) was visibly upset when he explained: “When I was in Bhutan and until I left Bhutan, I was [planning on] living there for my whole life and I wasn’t thinking of going anywhere else, but then the government wanted us to leave so we left [and we had] nothing”.



Figure 0—2 Human Rights Watch Map of Refugee camps in Nepal.

Migration to Nepal

While activists had begun fleeing Bhutan in the late 1980s, most Lhotsampa who fled, left between 1990 and 1992. The Lhotsampa gardeners involved in my study all arrived in Nepal between these years. Though estimates differ due to the varying total population estimates, it is believed that between one-fifth and one-seventh of the Bhutanese population lived in Nepal in refugee camps in the 1990s (Dhurba, 2004). Most Lhotsampa fled the country in fear, taking little, if anything, with them (Evans, 2010). This account was reflected in the stories told by the Lhotsampa in Halifax, who had rarely left with more than the clothes on their back and often at night. Rousselot (no date), a photo journalist for Al Jazeera, quoted a refugee woman, Duku Maya Dhakal saying “We had to leave everything behind. We had cows, oxen land... but all of that we had to abandon in Bhutan. We just carried our children and the clothes on our backs.” Due to the surrounding geography, the vast majority of refugees arrived in Nepal via India. Many stopped in India, but the Indian government “was unwilling to grant asylum to the refugees” (Evans, 2013).

The Lhotsampa in Halifax told similar stories, communicating that those who did not hire trucks in Bhutan to drive directly to Nepal were provided trucks by the Indian government in order to transfer them directly to eastern Nepal. Deepika, now in her fifties but in her mid-twenties at the time, walked while carrying her baby for four days to the Indian border with the rest of her village; from India the community hired a truck to take them to Nepal (personal communication, July 23, 2015). Deepika's story is similar to many of the refugees – she left with only what money she had in hand and a bag of rice. Her family cooked the rice underneath trees as they travelled through the jungle to India. After arriving and hiring the truck, which held approximately 35 adults and 15 children, only two packets of Bujir (a spicy snack) remained, which were shared amongst the children. The journey took two days, and Deepika expressed the concern she had felt for her baby and the other children going hungry on the journey (personal communication, July 23, 2015). Ayush, another Lhotsampa in Halifax, was able to stop at hotels along the route to feed his family (personal communication, August 1, 2015) as were some others. Stories of food insecurity caused by the rapid departure from their homelands are common among the Lhotsampa, as they are common among all refugees. Since refugees often face severe and immediate threats to their safety, the hunger they experience while travelling is often underreported. These experiences of hunger however affect refugees after resettlement, and these experiences are explored in Chapter 5.3.1.

While all refugees experienced some unrest and instability during this time, the entire community aboard Amita's bus was arrested in India. When they were released by the Indian authorities they travelled straight to Nepal without stopping again (personal communication, July 30, 2015). Other refugees echoed these stories, as India's role in the crisis is deemed very controversial (Dhurba, 2004). When fleeing Bhutan all refugees exited to India, and were rapidly moved along by the Indian government, soon arriving in the Eastern borderlands of Nepal, where they were eventually to settle for the next two decades.

Life in Refugee Camps

After the arrival of Bhutanese refugees in Nepal, the Government of Nepal and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) opened and operated

seven refugee camps in eastern Nepal. In the initial waves, several hundred refugees were arriving in Jhapa district each month, totaling around 5,000 by September 1991. This quickly grew to 100,000 and peaked around 108,000 people in 2008 before resettlement began (UNHCR, 2015). In 1991 the Nepalese government formally requested the UNHCR to begin providing support, and the organization began coordinating emergency relief. Before this, camps had been arranged ad hoc, and were disorganized. Early arrivals found little there. Pradip told me that on the “[f]irst day [we arrived in Nepal] our kids were crying from the hunger. Next day, three to four days later we were getting much more food” (personal communication, 20 July, 2015).

Pradip, from the Lhotsampa community in Halifax, explained that the Nepali government “didn’t come in person to welcome us, but they gave us land to live on and so I felt a bit of a welcome. India would not let us stay there but Nepal would. We thought that our government in Bhutan would call us back but they didn’t” (personal communication, July 20, 2015). These sentiments were echoed in the literature as many refugees, over the decades living in the camps, expressed their desire for repatriation to different authors (Evans, 2013; Hutt, 1996; Hutt, 2003; Lee, 1998). The possibility for repatriation however has come and gone, as talks between Nepal and Bhutan have failed many times over (Saul, 2000; Evans, 2013) and the Bhutanese government has resettled northern Bhutanese onto land previously held by the Lhotsampa (Dhurba, 2004). Refugees were originally settled into eight camps in eastern Nepal, and presently the majority of refugees have been resettled, leaving only about ten thousand who were either ineligible for or refused resettlement (UNHCR, 2015).

Most literature describing conditions in the camps in Nepal are from the 1990s, when the refugee crisis was still new and the UNHCR was attempting to bridge negotiations between Bhutan and Nepal (Hutt, 1996; Amnesty International, 1992), though many refugees resided in the camps for 20 years. The camps were approximately the same until 2007 when third country resettlement began and camps were consolidated as the populations diminished (Chase, 2012). An overall assessment of conditions in the camps is controversial: Capdevila (2004) quotes a Bhutanese professor, Gazmere, who lived in the camps, as saying "Many people are dying now because they don't get medical assistance in time, especially old people because (the assistance) seems to focus on young

people". On the other hand, there are reports that the Nepali refugee camps were extremely well run. Rousselot (no date), in a photo essay for Al Jazeera, reiterates this positive outlook on the camps, opening the article with the declaration that Beldangi, one of the seven camps, is "an example of how a refugee camp should be." In 1994, an interview with the King of Bhutan was published in Sunday Times of India. The King argued:

"The main camp in Jhapa is one of the best run refugee camps you can find anywhere . . . Visitors to these camps are amazed at the facilities provided there and say they are far better organized than any villages in Nepal . . . In the West, they cannot comprehend why anyone should want to become a refugee, lose his job, home, land and all facilities that go with it such as food, drinking water. What they don't understand is the situation in our region is totally different. Our levels of education and income are all at a different level . . . You cannot afford to send your children to school or get medical care. Compare this with the facilities available in Jhapa. You get free housing, free electricity, drinking water, proper sanitation, free monthly rations, nutritional sustenance, free clothing, blankets, education up to class 10, and 3 dollars a day. There are eight vocational training programmes and income generating vocational training schemes. And above all, if you work outside the camp, whatever money you earn is extra. Even cooking utensils, gas stoves, soaps are given free."

Former residents though, tell a different story. Refugees were not allowed to leave the confines of the camp and were banned from income-generating activities even inside the camp (Lænkholm, 2007). Though these rules govern all refugee establishments around the world, they are also widely broken (Rousselot, no date; Prem, personal communication, July 20, 2015; Santosh, personal communication, July 31, 2015). Many of the Lhotsampa I spoke to went outside of the camp to work, though they complained their wages were significantly lower than their Nepali counterparts. Except for those who taught in the camps or were employed by the agencies, there was very little for refugees to do in terms of employment. As around 77% of camp residents had been farmers in Bhutan, the restrictions on raising animals and growing crops in the camp was especially hard for residents to cope with (UNHCR, 1995; Hutt, 1996). Amita, then a mother of four children between the ages of six and eleven, explained how difficult these conditions made living,

"In the camp it [was] very difficult for us to find the land [even] to [put up our] tent because they [were] so many people who came from the Bhutan . . . In that

situation. Many people died in camp because of no shelter, no food – nothing . . . in this time it was really hot over there, [and] if you don't have anything to eat, if you don't have anything to live [in], then obviously people can die (Amita, personal communication, July 30).”

Hutt (1996) writes that the difference between their previous productive lives and the monotony of the camps was a frequent topic of conversation. Many refugees had left behind large tracts of valuable land and had photos to reminisce with. As such, the Lhotsampa felt stifled by the inability to provide for themselves in the camps, which was likely the motivation for men to work outside the camps. “When [we] lived in Nepal [we] didn't have any land or anything. The Union group provided the food. The people who [sic] run the camp provided the food for [us]. [We] couldn't grow anything in the camp” (Nabin, personal communication, July 17, 2015). Families were used to being self-sufficient, and food rationing proved difficult: “When [we] went to Nepal [we] were always looking for the fresh vegetables [like at home] but in the camp it was impossible, the people [could only] serve us [enough] to survive” (Ganga, personal communication, August 14, 2015). Krissaran expressed the universal despondency in the camps, explaining that “we were treated so badly by everyone” and “They never think that we are human beings” (personal communication, August 4, 2015).

The ‘Food Basket’ that was provided by the World Food Program (WFP) bimonthly to refugees included a daily allowance of 400 grams of rice, 60 grams of lentils, 25 grams of vegetable oil, 20 grams of sugar, 7.5 grams of salt, 35 grams of wheat/corn/soya blend and 100 grams of seasonal vegetables (IOM, 2008). Red Cross Nepal also supplemented the seasonal vegetable provision in addition to delivering kerosene and cooking stoves (Hutt, 1996). The Lhotsampa gardeners in Halifax mostly agreed that this was more or less enough food, depending on the size of the family. Some larger families had trouble accessing larger rations. If rations were not adequate, residents had to buy food from outside the camps. This added to the motivation to work outside the camp: “. . . they wouldn't let us work outside the camp, so I went outside on my own risk because I needed to afford food for my kids” (Laxmi, personal communication, August 1, 2015); “What the people served [us] in the camp we ate in 2 or 3 days but it needed to

last a week, so then we bought things” (Ayush, personal communication, August 1, 2015).

Of note are the emotions expressed by the gardeners regarding the ability to provide for their families and cook healthy food for their children. Even after reaching the camps many refugees experienced intermittent food insecurity. “At the beginning we didn’t go out to work and I didn’t have the money for the food my kids like to eat” Ayush, an elderly Lhotsampa man told me (personal communication, August 1, 2015). Santosh, a middle-aged refugee man reiterated these sentiments, “It wasn’t enough for all of my kids” (personal communication, July 31, 2015). As Lhotsampa women are traditionally responsible for cooking, they were also very concerned for the healthy development of their children based on the provided rations: “I don’t think I gave them food that they like because we were in a difficult situation when we were in the camp, we always tried to give them enough food when they were hungry . . . I had difficulties [cooking healthy meals with what we were given]” (Leela, personal communication, August 1, 2015).

The quality of the food provided was a greater concern to the Lhotsampa than the quantity. Of the twenty gardeners I spoke to, few complained outright about the quantity of food provided in the camps. Nine gardeners replied that there wasn’t enough when asked specifically, and another three said there was enough for survival but no more. Even given these responses, it was surprising that five gardeners said they were given enough food in the camps. Krissaran later explained that Bhutanese people do not like to seem ungrateful and in particular, do not like to cause conflict, “Yeah, they don’t want to hurt anybody else. This is our culture, you know. They just hide their pain. Nobody in the camp had enough food to eat, if anybody had [an] outside job, [or] something like that [then] they had good food – they [would] have enough food to eat.” Given these sentiments it becomes more clear that the comments regarding food insecurity were severe. Ayush explained how this felt: “We never had enough [food] in [the] camp. We had a big family, we got food every two weeks and we couldn’t even make it last one week” (personal communication, August 1, 2015).

Most gardeners spoke fondly of both the variety and quality of the food they grew themselves in Bhutan, emphasizing the freshness of the food they were used to. The

Lhotsampa commented on rotten, old vegetables in the camps if any were provided at all. While the UNHCR attempted to provide vegetables, rations of rice and dry goods were easier to come across. Ayush explained to me that half the portions of vegetables they were given needed to be thrown out due to spoilage (personal communication, August 1, 2015). Santosh framed the difference between diets in the camps and diets in Bhutan: “Everything in Bhutan was fresh, organic. The camp food was not as nutritious. The food at home in Bhutan was much healthier” (personal communication, July 31, 2015). Refugees frequently referred to the increased health they perceived from eating crops they had grown themselves, and emphasized the significance of freshness in their diets.

These perceptions of superiority in self-grown, organic¹¹ vegetables become significant when refugees lose the ability to grow their own food, as they did in the refugee camps. Most refugees spoke forlornly about their time in the camps not solely as grief for a lost citizenship and homeland, but as grief for the literal land they used to work.

“... I missed my farming land and all the properties that I had in Bhutan when I was in [the] refugee camp as well here in Canada, I miss it [here] too ... We missed our land and properties in Bhutan ... People are [always] disappointed because they have no land for farming.”

Refugees felt this loss while living in close quarters in the camps, and spoke about the lack of access to land to grow on as an important and missing part of their lives while in the camp. The Lhotsampa are known as hardworking agriculturalists (Pulla, 2016). Similar to the experiences of Airriess and Clawson in 1994 in the Vietnamese market gardens of New Orleans, the Lhotsampa spoke regularly about their ability to provide food for their families. The sense of responsibility, accomplishment and commitment that Airriess and Clawson see in the Vietnamese is a trait also apparent in the Lhotsampa. When the structure of daily life was altered due to the inability to farm in the camps, refugees ostensibly lost self-worth and fulfillment.

¹¹ In this study, the Lhotsampa continually referred to their vegetables as “organic”. They also referred to the vegetables they used to grow in Bhutan as “organic”. This term will be used throughout this study, as the gardeners themselves used it. In this study “organic” refers to vegetables grown without chemical inputs.

Chapter 4: DISCUSSION – Life in Canada

Arriving in Canada

After living in refugee camps for 18-20 years in eastern Nepal, the UNHCR reached agreements for third-country resettlement in eight countries. The United States agreed to receive 66,134 refugees while Canada agreed to receive 5,376; Australia took 4,190, New Zealand took 747, Denmark took 746, Norway took 546, the Netherlands took 326 and the United Kingdom took 317 (UNHCR, 2013). Since 2009, 575 Bhutanese refugees have arrived in Halifax, Nova Scotia (@isans_ca, 2015). The refugees were welcomed to Canada by the Immigrant Settlement Association of Nova Scotia (ISANS), formerly known as Immigrant Settlement and Integration Services (ISIS) (ISANS, 2014). Immigrant Settlement Associations exist throughout Canada and run similar but specialized programs for influxes of refugees through large-scale resettlement programs, as well as on-going services for refugees coming to Canada on a smaller-scale basis (OCASI, 2015). ISANS runs four major programs that government-assisted refugees can access over the first year that they live in Canada: Resettlement Assistance, Life Skills Link, Immigrant Health and Community Connections.

The Resettlement Assistance program is the first program the Lhotsampa participated in after arriving in Halifax. This program greets refugees at their airport and takes them to temporary housing (usually a hotel) and assists refugees with immediate tasks such as finding an apartment, getting a bank account, obtaining groceries, access to health care and referral to other programs, such as English as a Second Language (ESL) programming (ISANS, 2014). As many Lhotsampa were illiterate even in the Nepali language (Luitel, 2013), learning to speak English, let alone read and write, has been challenging, but especially so for the older Lhotsampa. Most of the Lhotsampa gardeners that I spoke to were in their mid-fifties or older, and were still taking ESL programs in the city or ISANS' own English-language classes, after living in Canada for upwards of three years. Though it was not ever asked directly, many Lhotsampa gardeners that I spoke to mentioned attending English classes as part of their daily life in Canada. Most attended two to three days a week.

Speaking limited English was cited as one of Bhutanese refugees' highest stressors in a study conducted in 2014 among Bhutanese refugees in central Virginia (Hauck et al., 2014). Low language skills are associated with difficulty finding employment and making local friends (Hauck et al., 2014). Refugees also struggle with associated challenges such as finding a place to live, gaining employment, understanding transportation systems and knowing where to find culturally appropriate food (ISANS, 2014). Where ISANS' resettlement program finishes, the Life Skills workers pick up. The Life Skills program trains workers to show refugees the ropes of their new home. This includes the aforementioned challenges, but more importantly, the Life Skills workers speak the language of the refugees and understand their background. With this knowledge, Life Skills workers slowly build confidence and independence so that refugees are able to integrate into Canadian society. They are meant to help reduce stress in newcomers' lives (ISANS, 2014).

Halifax was already home to one or two Nepalese families who had previously immigrated to the city and share the same language, religion and culture as the Bhutanese refugees (H. Asbil, personal communication, May 27, 2015). These families were integral to the settlement of the Lhotsampa, and especially in terms of showing refugees where to find culturally appropriate food in the city. Sherrell, Friesen, and Hyndman (2011) note in their report on settling 100 Bhutanese refugees in Coquitlam, British Columbia, that it is especially difficult to settle refugees where there is no pre-existing ethno-cultural community. The Immigrant Settlement Services of British Columbia (ISSofBC) held pre-settlement consultations with the existing Nepalese community (of around 700-800) to understand their sentiments towards Bhutanese refugees. The authors note that it should not be taken for granted that members of the asylum country culture would necessarily support the resettlement of refugees (Sherrell, Friesen and Hyndman, 2011). The one preexisting Nepali couple living in Halifax were able to take a lead role in helping the Lhotsampa integrate into their new homes, as were the much larger population in Coquitlam.

Feeling in Limbo, Struggling for Work

Though there are numerous programs in place to aid integration, refugees often struggle when arriving in their resettlement country. One concern that was noted in a UNHCR report on engagement with youth in refugee camps was a feeling of limbo (Evans, Lo Forte and McAslan Fraser, 2013). After living in refugee camps for decades, refugees expected to start their lives after arriving in Canada. However, many Lhotsampa implied remaining in limbo, even after resettling. Krissaran explained to me that this feeling of living in limbo has never fully evaporated for the Lhotsampa in Halifax, and compares it to living in the refugee camps: “The federal government will give some money and after a year the provincial government gives some money and that money is not sufficient, and still our people are feeling some, many people are feeling there is no difference being in refugee camp than being [on] income assistance you know?” (personal communication, August 4th, 2015). The limited scope of income assistance is not enough for refugees to pay back their government transportation loans while paying for rent and putting food on the table.

Sherrell, Friesen and Hyndman found that Bhutanese refugee youth in Coquitlam often had a “clearer idea of how things ‘work’” (41, 2011). While their parents and grandparents’ generations struggle with the language, their lack of understanding of Canadian society and communication means many of the challenges are perceived by youth. This perception rides heavily on youth, who worry about their parents’ incomes and ability to pay back government travel loans (Sherrell, Friesen and Hyndman, 2011). When the older Lhotsampa talk about youth adapting to life in Canada and performing transactions and communications they cannot, it is clear from their emotive responses that this is not how they had imagined life in Canada to work. Nabin, Krissaran’s quiet father, described the vision of Canada he and the other refugees had imagined: “But when [we] came to Canada [we] thought that [we were] going to have the land and houses and everything that [we] had had [in Bhutan] . . . when [we] arrived in Canada it’s [sic] a totally different way” (personal communication, July 17, 2015). Nabin’s former understanding of life in Canada was a haunting representation of the way the older Lhotsampa community have been left perplexed by their new life in Canada. As the patriarchs and matriarchs of families, suddenly the paths of their remaining years are somewhat obscured, while at the same time younger generations adapt and find their feet.

In addition to relying on children with better language skills, Bhutanese refugees in Coquitlam also relied heavily on ISS of BC for information regarding services. In Halifax, this has been mirrored by the Lhotsampa reliance on ISANS Life Skills workers.

Initial Experiences of the Lhotsampa in Halifax

When refugees arrive in Canada, they go first to temporary accommodation. In the case of the Lhotsampa in Halifax, most stayed in a hotel for approximately two weeks until they could move into permanent housing (H. Asbil, personal communication, May 27, 2015). The Lhotsampas' first exposure to Canadian food was at their temporary housing accommodation, a hotel in Bedford. Some reports from refugees included not understanding that the food outside their doors was intended for them, or even not realizing it was food. Krissaran (personal communication, August 4, 2015) told me, "they [didn't] have [sic] much rice and vegetables like we eat in our country, and the hotel provide[d] them [with] different kind of food items [than they were used to] and they just threw [them] out. They just smell[ed the food] and taste[ed] it and it [was] totally different." ISANS was integral in encouraging refugees to transition to buying and cooking food themselves after "somebody told them we don't like to eat this, [it is] tasteless and it makes us very sick" (Krissaran, personal communication, August 4, 2015). Other reports from the community reiterated these feelings: "I lived in the hotel for 22 days and it was not enjoyable. After I moved to the apartment here, the ISANS people made me feel better" (Kabir, personal communication, August 1, 2015); "[We] weren't used to that food and [we] didn't like it and [we] cried a lot. After 3 or 4 days when [we] didn't want to eat the Canadian food [we] just found the rice and started to cook for [ourselves] and [we] got better after that" (Ganga, personal communication, August 14, 2015). ISANS workers took note of this after a couple days and asked the local Nepalese couple to help (Krissaran, personal communication, August 4, 2015). The couple brought cooked food to the hotel and acted as the first Life Skills workers, by showing the Lhotsampa where to find culturally appropriate food. This couple was crucial to showing the first Lhotsampa different stores around the city that had food they could eat, a task eventually taken over by the community itself when newcomers arrived.

After the initial wave of refugees, it was easier for ensuing Lhotsampa to find shops where they could buy Nepali food. Each time another family arrived, the community came together to train the newcomers in taking the bus to the varying stores and showing them how to buy produce. Dipesh, one of the younger Lhotsampa gardeners with school-aged children, explained that the existing community was integral to this experience: “People from our own community who came earlier than me helped a lot to [show me where to buy food]” (personal communication, 18 August, 2015). “. . . it would have been very hard to find things without their help” Sandesh, a grandfather who arrived in Canada in 2010, said of his fellow community members when reminiscing over the first time his neighbours took him out in Canadian winter to get groceries (personal communication, 20 July, 2015). Food is a central aspect of the communal Nepali culture, and is also central to successful integration. Any refugee undergoing resettlement is under stress to understand a new culture and environment, and access to culturally appropriate food is a significant aspect of successful integration. In particular, experiences with shifting food culture can affect the health and weight of resettled migrants, something that will be explored further in Chapter 5.3.1.

Food Insecurity in the Community

As migrant groups are known to face food insecurity rates twice as high as those in the general US population (Weigel et al 2007, in Bellows et al., 2010), it is integral to examine the way food insecurity affects the Lhotsampa community in order to understand their utility of the Glen Garden.

Each Bhutanese refugee living in Halifax has experienced an encounter with food insecurity, be it seasonally in Bhutan, journeying to eastern Nepal, living in the refugee camps, or food insecurity in Halifax. For an intrinsically agrarian society, the Lhotsampa have taken all of these experiences in stride, in particular the necessary travel to purchase ethnic food. When asked about the travel time it took them to get groceries for the week, none complained. Though they revealed it was slightly harder in winter, the travels to buy food were not overly taxing. Remembering Krissaran’s words: “This is our culture, you know. They just hide their pain”, I began to understand the lack of complaining not as a

lack of hardship, but rather a refrain from possible ungratefulness¹² (personal communication, August 4, 2015).

The Lhotsampa make regular use of the Fairview Food Bank (Salvation Army), which is the closest food bank to their neighbourhood (Krissaran, personal communication, August 4, 2015) Some also travel to the Parker Street Foodbank that is further away, but does not count towards the once or twice a month allotment that Feed Nova Scotia enforces (Asbil, personal communication, June 14, 2016). Food banks in Canada do their best to reduce hunger in communities, but there are significant challenges associated with their use. Though healthy and nutritious food is not included anywhere in the Ethical Code, Food Banks Canada (2016) shows that 38% of food distributed to Canadian food banks is fresh. This includes milk, eggs, fresh or frozen fruits and vegetables and bread (Food Banks Canada, 2016). Food Banks Canada has even instituted a Community Garden Program to supplement their donated items with fresher items. Food banks in Canada have begun to move toward an era where these types of food are emphasized, and the importance of diversity of diets is considered. This is particularly important when a community like the Lhotsampa are consistently using this service, as their diets are primarily formed from fresh vegetables and occasional lean meats.

Krissaran explained that unfortunately, much of the non-perishable food items that the Lhotsampa receive from the food bank were expired (personal communication, August 4, 2015). Food banking is not a solution to long term food security in society – something Food Banks Canada and FEED Nova Scotia both readily address through the Ethical Code and take steps towards in other programming (Food Banks Canada, 2016). The Lhotsampa make significant use of food banks in Halifax in order to meet their household needs (Krissaran, personal communication, August 4, 2015). The community is clearly facing episodes, if not consistent food insecurity. The Lhotsampa use the food

¹² In fact, there is a Nepali word (*pokhnu*), that translates as emotional expression, but which literally translates as ‘to overflow’. Chase et al. (2013), explain this further as suggesting that one who vents is not particularly capable of containing their emotions, something which is frowned upon in Nepali culture. Both Chase (2011) and Tol et al.’s (2005) research have indicated that there is a general sense of distaste for publicly displayed negative emotions in Nepali culture.

bank as a step in reducing food insecurity, however this is clearly not being adequately managed if the food provided is not meeting their needs by being either culturally appropriate or fresh and nutritious.

The Reality of Living in Canada

Aside from the difficulties associated with learning English, finding jobs and adapting to Canadian culture, the Lhotsampas' assumptions about their lifestyles in Canada were also challenged. Many expected to live in houses and have land to farm, or to be able to work soon after arriving in Halifax, as Nabin (personal communication, July 17, 2015) described above. Nabin went on to describe how different the future was for his children after arriving in Canada, rather than what he had envisaged while in both Bhutan and the refugee camps in Nepal. "I thought [my kids] would farm [sic] big land, because . . . in our country, in our culture also their family has a big land and enough money for the parents. [So] the kids can have whatever they want, however much they want" (personal communication, July 17th, 2015). Living in apartment complexes allows the Lhotsampa to maintain some semblance of the community that is culturally significant in Bhutan and Nepal, however it is not conducive even to small-scale farming.

Another barrier to the agrarian lifestyle many Lhotsampa expressed was the severity of Canadian winters. The Haligonian Lhotsampa expressed their frustration that the growing season was so much shorter than they were used to. "When there is thick snow there is nothing, but in the summer we can grow great vegetables," Sandesh told me (personal communication, July 20, 2015). Of the twenty Lhotsampa gardeners I spoke to, every one mentioned how the change in seasonality had affected their life. Sixteen explained that they either didn't go out if they could avoid it, or that they went out significantly more during the summer. Bishal described his fears of winter, saying, ". . . getting to the store and walking in the snow is awful. I like snow, but I can slip and fall easily" (personal communication, July 20, 2015).

Even after five years in Canada, the cold still shocks Ganga, an elderly grandmother, ". . . in the winter nobody sees anyone because nobody goes out" (personal communication, August 12, 2015). These statements were reiterated multiple times, and

as the weather shifts, so does the space where the Lhotsampa are able to meet up and socialize. The community begins meeting instead at the grocery store in the winter, emphasizing the prominence of food culture for this community (Sandesh, personal communication, July 20, 2015). The impact of winter was also a struggle for Bhutanese refugees in Coquitlam, BC, who, when asked about what should be included in pre-departure training, replied that the weather in Canada should be covered more thoroughly (Sherrell, Friesen and Hyndman, 2011). This is particularly important for agrarian refugees who are accustomed to growing food as a way of life. The shortened growing season has impacted the Lhotsampa understanding of their lives, by shifting the usual, seasonal approaches to not growing at all for six to eight months of the year.

The prominence of food culture is not uncommon in resettled refugee communities; however, it does come with a new set of problems for migrants to manage. Hadley and Sellen (2006) found that 39% of the Liberian refugee mothers in their study believed that grocery shopping in the settlement country was difficult because of unfamiliar food choices. This is reflected in Decker (2010), who found that Somali women refugees preferred small ethnic markets over regular supermarkets. The results of Decker's study showed that many Somali women faced social and language barriers when grocery shopping, making ethnic grocery stores a more comfortable choice (2010). The Lhotsampa in Halifax are no different; many take long bus rides in order to access different shops with culturally appropriate food.

Kiptiness and Dharod (2011) found similar results in grocery patterns of Bhutanese resettled refugees in North Carolina. The Indian Groceries store on Robie St. in the North End of the Halifax peninsula carries many items the Lhotsampa cannot find nearer to where they live, including paneer (cheese), specialty beans and lentils. This trip takes approximately 30 minutes by bus, and Amita, a mother of six, says she takes this trip weekly. The Lhotsampa also visit the Chinese supermarket, only a three-kilometre journey from their apartment complex, but a 25-minute bus ride. The Chinese supermarket, Tian Phat Asian Grocery on the Bedford Highway, is where the ISANS Life Skills workers showed the Lhotsampa where to find mustard greens (Deepika, personal communication, July 23, 2015). After arriving in Canada, the Lhotsampa were feeling rather overwhelmed by their new lives. Central to this feeling was the impact of not being

able to grow food year round, and socialize around the food culture that is integral to the community. The winter affects the ability to perform common cultural activities that revolve around food, though ISANS Life Skills Workers were fortunately present in the initial stages of resettlement to help refugees find their feet – or, in this case, their food.

The Glen Garden

The Lhotsampa began campaigning for a space to garden in 2011 (Krissaran, personal communication, August 4, 2015). Krissaran, the political activist from Bhutan, was instrumental in forming the garden. He explained:

“When I came here, I found most of our seniors [sic] they have no access outside, they simply stayed inside their home and stay[ed] alone, mostly because their children are in the schools and some are going out for groceries. At that time they remained alone at home and they have a lot of stress, anxiety, and I ask some of our seniors here “do you want something to do here?” especially my parents and some other people from other areas here. “We want a garden” [they said] and I start talking with different people and finally we had Glen Garden there” (personal communication, August 4, 2015).

The process to get the garden up and running, in Krissaran’s view, involved going to every available politician’s barbeque and demanding action. Eventually, Halifax city councilors assigned funds to ISANS to grow the garden project (Krissaran, personal communication, August 4, 2015). ISANS was integral to implementing, and the Glen Garden broke ground in 2012 on the corner of Glen Forest Drive and Smart Street in a Clayton Park neighbourhood (ISANS, 2012). The Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) has been largely attempting to make the application process for community gardens easier, and this project was one of the first (Carson, personal communication, April 7, 2016). HRM has since improved the process and encourages community gardens, though the process differs depending on what kind of organization is applying, what kind of resources the organization has, and whether the garden will be on public or private property. The Glen Garden was one of the first of its kind, located in a pocket garden in the neighbourhood. Since the Glen Garden first started, the Halifax Garden Network has begun to coordinate gardens across the HRM.

Heather Asbil, the garden’s coordinator, emphasized how enthusiastic the Lhotsampa refugees were regarding the implementation of the garden. It is notable that

Bhutanese refugees all over North America have been responsible for many community gardens popping up, including gardens in Dallas, Philadelphia, Omaha, Concord and Baltimore (Solis, 2014; Shaw, 2014; Healy, 2013; Wilson, 2014; International Rescue Committee, no date). The Glen Garden itself has grown from just fifteen 4'x12' beds in 2012 to filling the available space with 25 beds that are each shared by two families. This has limited the produce available because of the small growing area, but ISANS has such high demand for the garden that steps have been taken to make it available to more families.

ISANS and the Ecology Action Centre (EAC) partnered to create the space for all refugees, though the Lhotsampa have been particularly active. ISANS received the funding from a number of different organizations, including banks and other NGOs, to establish the garden, but relied on the expertise of the EAC to build the raised beds and associated garden materials. In the summer of 2012, the first growing season, Lhotsampa refugees planted crops that were important to them, such as tomatoes, cucumbers, beans, peas, cabbage, lettuce, spinach, mustard greens, broccoli, and different types of flowers (ISANS, 2012). There was a waiting list for those who hadn't managed to receive one of the fifteen available beds. That same summer, in late July, as harvest season was beginning, the Glen Garden was vandalized. Police estimated that 70% of vegetation in the beds was destroyed (CTV Atlantic, 2012) and it looked as though taller plants had been knocked down with a stick (Fairclough, 2012). The Bhutanese refugees who had plots in the garden surveyed the damage the following day, and were pleased to receive the support of the community over the coming weeks. This is not uncommon in community gardens, and others have noted the paradoxical increase in community support after a case of vandalism (Block et al., 2010). Not only did local business donate transplants and seeds, but the community in the surrounding area also came together to help rebuild (Fairclough, 2012). This was meaningful to the Lhotsampa community, helping them to feel more connected to the broader community. Krissaran's take on the event was especially telling:

“Two years ago, when we had first garden over there, there was big vandalism there. Many Canadians from around this community came with some seeds, some plants, something like that to help our community here. That touch our heart, we are all human beings, whenever there is trouble people help each other, so that

give a good relation between different communities and that will make people understand better each other . . . Due to that incident, since then, people learn a lot, we are all human beings, same thinking and same thoughts” (personal communication, August 4, 2015).

Since the incident, more local residents have stopped by the garden to greet those who use it. They ask questions about what they are growing and how the gardeners use the food. They also honk and wave as they drive by. The garden is located next to a bus stop, and so often there are residents from the area waiting in and around the garden. ISANS changed the approach to the garden in 2013 to include more local residents, in order to “de-stigmatiz[e] and protect the garden” (EAC, 2013). Even so, throughout the summer of 2015 I did not witness any non-Lhotsampa residents gardening. Though the garden is technically open to all cultures and residents, the garden is very clearly dominated by the Lhotsampa, who visit it frequently and stay for long periods of time.

The Glen Garden stretches down the south side of Glen Forest Drive, the street from which it takes its name from. On the eastern side Smart Street borders the garden, and on its southern side backyard fences border it. To the west, the garden spaces morphs into an open park space, which is mostly shaded and therefore not practical for expanding the garden further in that direction. Today, there are 25 plots in the Glen Garden, all of which are split into and supposedly shared by two families, though in reality some plots belong in name to someone who has given it to someone else to make better use of. In this way the Lhotsampa seek to maximize their growing space. The plots are all raised beds, allowing older refugees to sit on the edge and reach an arm’s length across the 4’ x 12’ bed.



Figure 0—2 In this photo, looking east in the garden you can see the old drawers being used to extend the growing space beside a plot.

Refugees grow different vegetables depending on their homeland, but the garden is dominated by Lhotsampa plots and therefore has many tomatoes, potatoes, mustard greens, beans and garlic. Garden residents have used downed tree branches or even an old spring-bed frame to give the vegetables to grow up against. This is similar to the findings of Baker (2004) in the Francis Beavis community garden in Toronto, where Chinese immigrants used scavenged items for creepers to climb. Some plots have spilled over the edges of the beds and tomatoes can be seen growing in containers, old drawers, or even just bordered by makeshift wood planked areas. The space is used with much ingenuity in order to maximize growing. This reflects a broader trend in community gardens. Airriess and Clawson (1994) found that the Vietnamese market gardeners used traditional vertical layering growing techniques to maximize output, and in Baker's (2004) study of the Francis Beavis Community Garden, she found production rates of more than five times the national standard for mixed-vegetable production (OMAFRA, 2004; in Baker, 2004). All of the available space is used in the Glen Garden, and the plots reach from the southern side near the backyard fences to a couple of feet away from the sidewalk on the northern side. This sidewalk is where many local residents walk to the bus stop near the corner of Glen Forest Drive and Smart Street.



Figure 0—1 The sidewalk borders the north side of the garden where the bus shelter is.

Under the shaded area to the west of the plots there is a metal table with attached benches. The table has been painted by the Lhotsampa to include a board for a traditional game, and there are often a variety of older Lhotsampa sitting at the table. Most seem to visit the garden two to three times a day during the summer months; nonetheless each visit takes a significant portion of time. ISANS gives preference to plots in Glen Garden to older and less mobile refugees, most of whom live in the Killam properties on the north side of Glen Forest Drive. The refugees have only to walk between four and ten minutes from anywhere in the complex to arrive at the garden. ISANS operates other gardens where younger refugees can be given plots, however the rationale is to try to minimize the distance required to travel for less mobile refugees.

Because beds in Glen Garden are so sought after, many Lhotsampa who wish to garden do not receive beds in the Glen Garden. This spawned a spin off garden in 2014, often referred to as the Killam Garden, located on the other side of the apartment complex. The Killam Garden was also included in this study, as it is generally considered to be a part of the Glen Garden. There are just 6 beds in the Killam Garden, with the majority belonging to Lhotsampa. There are also two other community gardens that are run by ISANS in the city: The Multicultural Garden and the Mosaic Garden. These gardens were not part of the scope of this study.

The Lhotsampa all discuss the possibility of gaining more land regularly, and have worked out ways to maximize the space they do have. Many Lhotsampa I spoke to also work in



Figure 0—3 Table painted for a traditional Nepali game.

Common Roots, the large Urban Farm run primarily by the EAC attached to the Queen Elizabeth II Hospital located downtown. By volunteering there, they receive access to another bed for planting. In addition, many have also managed to secure beds in Dartmouth at another community site, and take the bus to Dartmouth (often daily) to garden there. The current demand for gardening space for the Lhotsampa is not being met, and so the Lhotsampa travel widely to manage their gardening space, often half an hour in either direction, multiple times a week (Krissaran, personal communication, August 4, 2015).

Chapter 5: ANALYSIS – Ways the Glen Garden serves the Lhotsampa Community

“After their arrival in Sacramento, the elderly Hmong women in this study often sat alone in their apartments; none spoke English and all reported difficulties in understanding American culture and the changes forced upon them after relocation. Urban gardening, however, provided an opportunity and a place where their skills could be productive and valued. For those who took advantage of the opportunity, tending gardens structured their time, and provided a sense of accomplishment, as they grew their own produce, and supplied their children, grandchildren and families with food. Such activities clearly served as counterweights to combat feelings of over dependence and uselessness.”

Corlett, Dean and Grivetti (2003, 377)



Figure 0—1 Photo taken by Chris Lambie, Local Xpress

The study by Corlett, Dean and Grivetti (2003) of Hmong women gardeners in Sacramento has many parallels to the Lhotsampa gardeners in Halifax. Both populations consisted largely of rural farmers in their home countries who came as refugees to new host countries. Both populations were characterized by elderly refugees who spoke little

English and who had difficulty adjusting to the culture and lifestyles in their new countries. Heather Asbil, the Garden Coordinator at ISANS, believes that the level of education received in the home country has a large impact on the ability of migrants to learn English. Most farmers from Bhutan do not have any formal education, while those who grew up in the camps – the younger generations – did receive some education while there (Asbil, personal communication, June 14, 2016). The struggles of varied elderly migrants were summarized by Matsuoka (1999) as the lack of facility in English, the absence of marketable job skills, overdependence on children, a lack of mobility and the breakdown of their extended family. All of these challenges contributed to low self-



Figure 0—2 A proud gardener

esteem in elderly migrants. These obstacles to healthy adaptation in the host country have been witnessed in many migrant populations including the Hmong women in Sacramento (Corlett et al., 2003), Vietnamese immigrants in New Orleans (Airriess and Clawson, 1994), and immigrant women from Oaxaca, Mexico (Bellows et al., 2010).

There is no question that the Lhotsampa food culture and tradition is important to those gardeners who frequent their plots daily throughout the summer, replace the garden with the grocery store as a community hub through the winter, and

travel substantial distances to buy food. The elderly Lhotsampa gardeners frequent the garden up to four times daily, and the sense of self-worth that is derived from their work in the garden is evident. So follows the research question of *why* the garden is so meaningful to this particular community. Secondary research questions included asking what effects the garden has on the integration and food security of the Lhotsampa community, themes that are woven into the following sections. The following sections will outline the different ways the Glen Garden serves the Lhotsampa community in Halifax in an attempt to answer these questions.

Being able to grow culturally appropriate vegetables

Community gardens exist for many reasons. Their benefits include enhanced community development, food security, or assumed health benefits (Twiss et al., 2003). Recently, the literature exposing the motivation of migrants' participation in community gardens has expanded significantly (Agustina and Beilin, 2011; Baker, 2004; Bellows et al., 2010; Corlett et al., 2003; Gerodetti and Foster; 2015). While Bhutanese refugees in

particular have shown a magnetic draw to community gardens (in Dallas, Philadelphia, Omaha, Concord and Baltimore (Solis, 2014; Shaw, 2014; Healy, 2013; Wilson, 2014; International Rescue Committee, no date), the literature often focuses on minority and low-income use of community gardens. As such, there is a strong concentration on migrant use of community gardens. Within these studies, cultural landscapes are a common theme (Airriess and Clawson, 1994; Gerodetti and Foster, 2015). The landscapes appear to “symbolically recapture the homeland in the new land” by growing “authentically homeland food” (Morgan, Rocha and Poynting, 2005). Gardeners often state that chief among their motivations to participate in community gardens is the ability to grow culturally appropriate food (Baker, 2004). Baker’s (2004) study at multiple community gardens in Toronto showed that Chinese immigrants used the opportunity to grow herbs and vegetables that were relevant to their cultural background, while the Shamba (garden or field in Swahili) was used to encourage African immigrant gardeners. The Shamba garden became an integral part of the ‘Afri-can Basket’ program in Toronto, which provides support to recent immigrants from Africa. The garden experiments in growing taro, sweet potato and okra to offer an understanding of how these crops can be grown in a Canadian climate (Baker, 2004).

Growing culturally significant crops is an important part of the community garden experience, and allows immigrants to grow crops they may not otherwise be able to find in their settlement area. This is an integral facet of Community Food Security (CFS) which aims to ensure community members have access to nutrition. Most Lhotsampa refugees grew crops that would be recognizable to Canadian gardeners, such as beans, pumpkins, potatoes, tomatoes, peas and garlic. In addition to these, the Lhotsampa also commonly grow less common foods such as buckwheat, sesame and daikon. These are plants that the Lhotsampa often cannot find in the condition that they prefer, such as the unprocessed buckwheat that is used in *dhedo*, a dough-like mixture of grains that is eaten alongside vegetables or curry. *Dhedo* is similar to polenta or porridge in that it is considered poor food and is therefore falling out of favour with ethnic Nepali city-dwellers. However, its nutritional makeup is far superior than white rice. Anise seeds are grown to be used whole and fresh in chutneys (*achar* in Nepali, often translated as pickle), unlike the dry anise seeds often sold in Canada. There are a number of crops that

are available in Canada, but not in the preferred condition, or missing integral parts. For example, the Lhotsampa grow ‘pumpkins’ (gourds, rather than typical orange North American pumpkins) frequently, but often don’t actually let them mature. While they occasionally eat the fully mature pumpkin, they prefer to harvest them for the young stalks and leaves. The stalks are peeled and the innards are used for an *achar* (Kavita, personal communication, July 14, 2015). Since the stalks are mostly used before the pumpkins reach maturity, it is next to impossible to buy these in Canada. Even if pumpkins are allowed to reach the mature stage, they are not sold with chutes and leaves attached, making it a delicacy only enjoyed in the summer when the Lhotsampa are able to grow their own.

Bathua, known in English as Lamb’s Quarters, is a leafy green from the same family as spinach. It is cultivated extensively in Northern India and does well in higher altitudes during the winter, providing nutrition during the harder season (Singh et al., 2014). Many Lhotsampa choose to grow it in their plots. *Bathua* is a bitter-tasting green, often used in cooked curries. The Lhotsampa use both the leaves and the stem of this weedy plant and also appreciate its medicinal properties (Pradip, personal



Figure 0—4 *Bathua* plant

communication, July 20, 2015). While *bhatua* is revered by South Asians, the Lhotsampa have actually found an industrial field in Dartmouth, located across the Halifax harbour, where *bhatua* grows wild. The Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) categorizes *bhatua* (Lamb’s Quarters) as a weed, saying it grows “almost anywhere the soil is disturbed” and throughout Canada (OMAFRA, 2003). This

important plant is therefore available in Canada, but only seasonally since it is not commercially available in the winter.

The Lhotsampa have also been able to grow luffa gourd, also known as sponge gourd, since receiving seeds from one of the refugees' relatives now living in Alaska (Dipesh, personal communication, August 18, 2015). The luffa gourd is eaten as a vegetable when young, but if left to dry out becomes a sponge and is used in the Lhotsampa household for cleaning. *Gheeraula ko Tarkarri* is a common Nepali meal, where luffa gourd is pan fried with fenugreek seeds and potatoes. The vegetable is not commercially available in grocery stores in Canada. The ability to grow the plant in their gardens not only adds to the availability of culturally appropriate food items over the summer months, but indeed also creates a sensory reflection of their past by allowing the Lhotsampa to perform household chores such as cleaning and dishwashing in a similar fashion to what they did in Bhutan.

Jaringo (Phytolaccaceae) is grown as a medicinal plant to calm stomachs and help alleviate jaundice by the community (Deepika, personal communication, July 23, 2015). It is often used in *achar* (pickle) and is not readily available in Canada. *Jaringo* is a common part of the Nepali cuisine, and growing it in the gardens allows the Lhotsampa access to a plant they would otherwise have to go without. Other researchers have documented *jaringo* in Darjeeling as recognized for its ability to lower high blood pressure and anti-inflammatory properties (Saha, Sarkar and Chattopadhyay, 2011).

When asked about being able to find “Nepali” food in Canada, the Lhotsampa were generally noncommittal. They replied that they could find most of what they needed, though often this involved travelling to separate grocery stores and possibly taking a bus to Dartmouth to pick the wild *bathua*. Another caveat was that the Lhotsampa were understanding of the need to substitute in their new country. While most agreed that they could find Nepali food in grocery stores, only with some prompting did they elucidate that the food bought in Canadian grocery stores was not exactly what they were used to in Bhutan and Nepal: “[I] couldn’t find [the] same as back in Bhutan or Nepal. There are some Mustard Green[s] here but [they are] different than in Bhutan and Nepal. [We] found one here in Canada [that is a] little bit different” (Dipesh, personal communication, date). Leela conveyed the nuanced differences and frustration in trying to find Nepali

vegetables in Canadian supermarkets: “I found it from the store here, but [it is] not exactly like what I [ate] in Nepal. It looks similar but when we cook we found it different [shakes head]” (personal communication, August 1, 2015).

The Lhotsampa gardeners use Glen Garden to enhance the availability of a variety of crops that are difficult to access in Canada. The ability to grow culturally appropriate vegetables is a significant contributor to CFS. Not only does this activity allow communities access to a product that is culturally significant and therefore important to adapting to life in Canada, but it also ensures the migrant community in question is able to maintain a traditional Nepali diet.

Perceived Health Superiority

The perceived quality of food produced in the garden versus food bought from the grocery store emerged as one of the primary reasons Lhotsampa refugees invested so much in their gardens. Of the twenty Lhotsampa interviewed, nineteen commented that their own plants were of far superior quality as compared to grocery store vegetables. There were two reasons given for the perceived superiority: the Lhotsampa believe that the innate freshness of picking vegetables from your garden to cook with immediately is healthier (17/20) and that conventionally-grown vegetables from the grocery store were innately unhealthy (8/20). “[My vegetables] are way better than the ones I buy from the superstore, these ones are organic and they are fresh – the store has old ones” Ayush explained vehemently (personal communication, August 1, 2015).



Figure 0—5 Three generations in the Glen Garden

The Lhotsampa often use the word *organic*, here assumed to refer to vegetables grown without pesticides or fertilizers, rather than those that are officially certified organic as is common in Canada. This way of producing food plants is clearly deemed better by the Lhotsampa, as Santosh and Deepika explained separately:

“It is much better than store bought food . . . It is organic and doesn’t have any pesticides and [store bought vegetables] come from big farms” (Santosh, personal communication, July 31, 2015).

“Whatever I grow here is healthier than the grocery store. I have doubt[s] [that] whatever [is] in the grocery store, people [have] use[d] all kinds of things, like pesticides. And it is all organic here” (Deepika, personal communication, July 23, 2015).

In the Lhotsampa perspective, organic seems to equal nutritious, and though this may not be the case in reality, the perceived superiority of quality may in fact be a facet of choosing culturally appropriate vegetables. In conversations regarding both community food security and food sovereignty, culturally appropriate food is often referred to as an

important facet and even right. However, the term, used in this way, generally connotes food that is integral to a culture, and even important to food rituals, and may not be available in the host culture. This term may need to be expanded to encompass the cultural significance of the *way* food is grown. In this case, the Lhotsampa place importance on the way food is grown, clearly indicating that organic methods are preferred. In addition to organic methods, eating food *fresh* is also a significant element of cultural dietary practice:

“The vegetables, what I get [them] from my garden . . . I eat [them and they are] very tasty, [more so] than what I bought from the store. The store [vegetables are] not bad but there is [a] differen[ce] . . . [they are] fresh but . . . they keep it in the store for so many days before they [put it out]” (Amita, personal communication, July 30, 2015).

The Lhotsampa have a very clear understanding that the food that is grown in the community garden, by their own hands, is far superior than that which they can find in the grocery store. Sandesh indicated the emotions that are wrapped up in the process of growing in Canada: “We have very little land but we feel much healthier when we can grow our own food (personal communication, July 20, 2015)”.



Figure 0—6 Happy Gardeners

Community gardens are often understood as areas where people can grow healthy food and have been shown to increase rates of fruit and vegetable consumption among participants (Alaimo, 2008; Blair et al., 1991; Crow, 2010). The Lhotsampa gardeners clearly believe that the capacity to produce their own food is important to their health. This is reflected in the literature by analyses of other agrarian immigrant populations such as Corlett and colleagues’ (2003) study on immigrant Hmong women from Cambodia. The women in this study expressed similar sentiments regarding the desire for “fresh, familiar produce for their families”.

Corlett et al. continue to write that: “Although many of the same crops could be

purchased at Asian markets in Sacramento, the women thought it easier, more convenient, and more economical to grow their own” (2003). Blair et al. (1991) found that participants in community gardens have higher fresh vegetable intakes than those of non-participants. The Lhotsampa expressed a perception that fresh vegetables were far superior to any vegetables they could buy at the grocery store, and understood their health as improved by eating their own produce. These two facets may be more important to CFS than has been realized, as the two processes, organic growing and quick eating after harvest, clearly take on cultural significance for the community.

Implications for Diet and Cooking

Understanding the perceived superiority of Lhotsampa vegetables is key to understanding the acculturation of food consumption that takes place when migrants resettle to a new environment. The Lhotsampa maintain traditional gender roles (Pulla, 2016), and this is apparent in their approach to food consumption. Women are primarily responsible for preparing and cooking food in Lhotsampa communities, and the twenty gardeners I spoke to were no different. The Lhotsampa identify their diet as Nepali and similar to that of Northern India, rather than Bhutanese food (Manjeet, personal communication, August 18, 2015). As the majority of Lhotsampa gardeners I interviewed were men (fifteen of the twenty participants), their perspective on the quality of food while cooking was interesting. There was a clear indication that women noticed the difference in quality while cooking with it. Prakash articulated this, “Yes, when I bring [my daughter-in-law] food from my garden she likes cooking with it” (personal communication, July 31, 2015). The difference in quality of food was palpable to those cooking it, but also to those eating it: “My husband likes the garden food as well . . . Yes, he can tell even when I don’t tell him” (Kavita, personal communication, July 24, 2015). There was a clear gendered division when it came to noticing the quality of food provided. This was a continuation of the gendered roles associated with food production and food preparation in the Lhotsampa community. While in the refugee camps, men were responsible for getting food, while women were responsible for creating a meal that would make the most of the dire food situation in the camps.

The quality of vegetables was important though to the entire family. Dipesh (personal communication, August 18, 2015) pronounced the vegetables he brings home from the garden for his family as the “fresh one[s], healthy one[s], [they] taste different . . . much better.” The Lhotsampa gardeners were adamant that the vegetables grown in Glen Garden tasted better than store-bought vegetables, and that their families noticed the difference.

The availability of culturally significant, but more importantly, perceived fresh and nutritious food has allowed the Lhotsampa refugees to maintain their cultural diets. Women are integral to maintaining these diets, as it is their cooking that enables traditional diets’ endurance. Even during the winter when substitutes for home-grown vegetables must be made, the Lhotsampa’s work hard to ensure a continuous supply of culturally-significant food. Kiptiness and Dharod (2011) found that the Bhutanese refugees in their study all preferred to cook traditional Nepali meals. The Lhotsampa refugees in Halifax categorically answered that they ate Nepali diets, with few substitutions from ‘Canadian’ diets. “Sometimes [we] eat pizza but not all the time, but [we] love [our] own food” Manjeet enthused (personal communication, August 18, 2015).

Maintaining cultural diets can be important in migration scenarios. Traditional cultural diets not only preserve home country customs, indicating a strong tie with original cultures, but studies have shown that low-income immigrants’ diet acculturation can lead to weight gain. This shift is due to the substitution of traditional, fruit and vegetable-heavy diets with cheaper, calorie dense and higher fat foods such as pizza, noodles, chips, and sugar-sweetened beverages (Burns, 2004). Creighton et al. (2012) also found that immigrants who stayed longer in the US had higher rates of obesity than recently-arrived immigrants. These changes in diets are often due to the cost of highly processed foods in settlement countries, which tend to be lower than maintaining a diet of the healthy, fresh vegetables and lean meats often found in the original countries. Therefore the shifts in diet are largely associated with a class divide – when immigrants and refugees arrive in a new host country and are surviving on lower incomes, steps are taken to ensure calorie sufficiency rather than nutrition sufficiency, resulting in diets that are more processed than before.

Kiptiness and Dharod's (2011) study of Bhutanese refugee mothers in North Carolina found that traditional food behaviours were a sign of defining and reinforcing cultural identities in a new environment. Hadley and Sellen (2006) found similar sentiments in Liberian refugee women, who often talked about eating traditions as maintaining their links to their traditional culture. The Lhotsampa food culture is important to the community, and while most still eat traditional Nepali diets, some have noticed that their children are transitioning to more Westernized diets. Rajendra, a father of teenagers, explained that his children now refuse to eat Nepali food, and instead like to eat Canadian food, putting them at risk of the increased weight associated with Western diets (personal communication, August 1, 2015). Other Lhotsampa gardeners with young children or grandchildren similarly expressed exasperation the particular types of Nepali food the children refused to eat, or which Canadian foods they enjoyed more. It is notable that most refugees associated "Canadian food" with fast food such as pizza or hamburgers. Guendelman, Cheryan and Monin showed in their (2011) study that diet acculturation is linked with a feeling of belonging in a new culture. This signifies the adaptability of the younger generations of Bhutanese refugees as they conform to more Western diets, exacerbating their parents' sense of alienation in the new environment.

In Airriess and Clawson's (1994, 20) study of Vietnamese market gardeners, they found that traditional dietary practices were more common among older Vietnamese and understood the cultivation of "vegetables and herbs by the elderly as a purposeful strategy to maintain traditional dietary habits...". The significance of traditional diet in the elderly cohort was underlined by Kalcik's (1984) assertion that traditional food is a direct connection to the past, and that it maintains ethnic identity, while it decreases the effects of acculturation. Diet acculturation is understood in the literature as something to be avoided, since migrants' diets frequently provide superior health than do the diets of the new host countries (Burns, 2004). Since these diets are superior to Western-style diets, it may be beneficial to encourage migrants to maintain their traditional diets. This can be difficult in situations where older migrants hang on to customary eating habits and younger generations adapt quickly to the new context.

Kwik (2008), in a study of second-generation immigrants from Indo-Chinese Canadian families, indicated the importance of Traditional Food Knowledge (TFK) in

immigrant populations. While initial settlers are generally aware of food rituals, traditions and practices, the importance placed upon these processes generally falters as generations acculturate to life in Canada. Younger generations are uncomfortable in the kitchen and learn very few of the skills and recipes their parents exemplified, and Kwik writes “the opportunity for this informal sharing and education to increase personal skills for health and community capacity can be lost” (2008, 60). Kwik (2008) emphasizes that TFK is of particular importance in immigrant communities, based on the so-called “healthy immigrant effect”, having maintained healthier food and activity habits before arriving (Hyman et al., 2006, 126). While Lhotsampa children are beginning to adapt to local Western diet, there is significant potential in the Lhotsampa community to maintain TFK and teach children valuable food culture. This was clearly an important point for the older Lhotsampa, as many brought children and grandchildren to the garden to teach them about growing. In fact, Lhotsampa gardeners with much younger children at home (children or grandchildren), hoped that diet acculturation had not yet begun and that these kids enjoyed Nepali home-cooked food grown in the garden. Krissaran believed TFK was important to Lhotsampa culture, but also that all cultures could benefit from teaching children about where their food comes from:

“This is, we need this garden for seniors and children to teach them, we just want to keep this culture going generation to generation, not only our kids, we want to teach our young generations from any communities, this is what or this is where we get vegetables” (Krissaran, personal communication, August 4, 2015).

The garden enables a supply of culturally appropriate food, therefore empowering the Lhotsampa to maintain these diets in their families. Ganga explains that her grandchildren are “so happy” to eat traditional Nepali food, indicating that adoption of Canadian foods has not impeded the desire to eat traditional foods among some youth (personal communication, August 14, 2015). Kavita also expressed proudly that their children enjoy eating Nepali food (personal communication, July 24, 2015). Dipesh’s daughter, around nine years old, helped out in the garden all summer. While Dipesh says she has gotten picky in recent years, she enjoys working in the garden with her father, and loves to eat the potatoes from the garden (personal communication, August 18). Preserving Nepali diets has allowed Lhotsampa children experience traditional food, reinforcing cultural identities (Kiptinness and Dharod, 2011).

The ability to preserve cultural diets enables newcomers to avoid the pitfalls of Western diets, where foods high in fat and sweeteners are responsible for the rise of obesity and diet-related diseases (Hawkes, 2006). The Glen Garden maintains traditional food knowledge, which is important in terms of health maintenance but can be easily lost in migration situations (Kwik, 2008).

Post-Food Insecurity Dietary Behaviours

There are obvious health benefits to maintaining traditional diets, however there are concerns other than those of Westernized diets that relate to migrants. The literature demonstrates that past episodes of food insecurity have significant impacts on future health in immigrant, refugee and migrant populations (Peterman, 2010; Dietz, 1995; Adams, 2003). Peterman (2010) conducted a study of Cambodian adult females' experiences with food insecurity in refugee camps, and concluded that the severity and length of food deprivation had a significant impact on the way refugees approached both food and health when food was abundant. The 2010 study corroborated showing that refugees are more likely to overconsume foods they know are unhealthy if they have experienced deprivation or food insecurity (Olson, 1999; Franzen and Smith, 2009).

The implication of experiences of food insecurity and deprivation for refugees is relevant in the current study as the impacts of these experiences are reflected in food and eating behaviours. The Lhotsampa in Halifax have experienced trauma in having to leave their homes and sometimes family. Many experienced the fear of arrest and physical abuse, and then undertook stressful journeys to arrive in eastern Nepal. Most Lhotsampa experienced severe food insecurity on the journey from Bhutan to Nepal and during their stays at the refugee camps.

The implication of these findings on a community that uses a garden has significant potential. The Lhotsampa community are a prime example of a community that is somewhat isolated by their lack of English language skills and different culture, and have had trouble finding employment. This leaves most elderly refugees to subsist on income assistance (more information in section 5.4). Low-income communities tend to eat less healthy food, due to several structural barriers such as transportation and high prices of more nutritious foods (Eikenberry and Smith, 2004). If these same low-income

communities are also at risk of unhealthy food behaviours based on their past traumas and experiences of food insecurity, then it is perhaps even more advantageous to gain traditional food stuffs from the garden. This enables the Lhotsampa, to increase food security (see section 5.4) and to maintain traditional diets, and may further reduce the risk of unhealthy food behaviours caused by their past experiences.

Food Security

The World Health Organization (2016) emphasizes both physical and economic access to food are key elements of food security. Migrant populations, and especially refugee populations, often double as low-income populations. The Lhotsampa are no different. Without jobs they are struggling to make ends meet while paying back government travel loans that were incurred during the resettlement process, making the act of integration into Canadian society especially stressful.

The majority of Lhotsampa whom I interviewed were elderly refugees who were not currently employed. Nearly all were on income assistance. In Nova Scotia income assistance varies based on age, employment status and number of dependents. According to the Nova Scotia Department of Community Services (2013), shelter allowance for up to three people is \$620 per month. In addition to this, those on income assistance receive a personal allowance of \$255 per month and \$133 for dependent children up to age 18. At the time of interviews, the rent for a two-bedroom apartment in the Lhotsampas' apartment complex was \$730 a month. Krissaran's sentiments exemplify the financial constraints facing elderly refugees: "What about telephone bills, what about internet bills, what about power bills, where is money for food?" (personal communication, August 4, 2015). The experience of food insecurity while on income assistance is not isolated to the Lhotsampa refugee community, though it is exacerbated in populations of new immigrants due to a dearth of familial supports. As in Coquitlam, the refugees moving to Halifax had no foundational ethno-cultural community to lean on (Sherrell, Friesen and Hyndman, 2011).

The Nova Scotia Participatory Food Costing Project (2013) found that in 2012, a family of four (two adults and two children) living on income assistance would have a \$-758.33 deficit at the end of each month, based on the National Nutritious Food Basket

(NNFB). The NNFB is often used in community food security research and includes 67 foods used to calculate the cost of a basic nutritious diet. The food items are minimally processed and widely available (NS Participatory Food Costing Project, 2013). The scenario presented by the Participatory Food Costing Project gives an idea of what living on income assistance turns out as, though of course every situation is different. For example, the Lhotsampa pay nearly \$400 less for their shelter than is estimated in the model, however, Lhotsampa families also tend to be larger than the average Canadian family. Lhotsampa families, especially those who are living on income assistance and/or the elderly, are having trouble affording food for their households (Krissaran, personal communication, August 4, 2015). The Glen Garden serves the Lhotsampa population in terms of both physical and economic access to culturally appropriate food.

In the summer, the Lhotsampa use the garden to supplement vegetables from the grocery store, allowing slightly more leeway in household budgets: “[I] save some money. [I don’t] have to buy [food] all the time” (Manjeet, personal communication, August 18, 2015). Nabin’s family struggled with the cost of food in Canada, “When I have money I only use it for rice and vegetables. I do not have enough money to buy meat” (personal communication, July 17, 2015). While none of the Lhotsampa directly admitted to having trouble making ends meet, Krissaran (personal communication, August 4, 2015) once again tied this to the Bhutanese trait of not wanting to seem ungrateful to Canadians. Krissaran elucidated: “they are suffering. They depend on [the] food bank” (personal communication, August 4, 2015).

The Lhotsampa show additional resiliency in using the garden as a year-round supplement to their tight food budget. The majority of refugees attempt to preserve as many of their crops from the summer months as possible during the autumn and winter, by freezing produce or using different fermented processes. Leela (personal communication, August 1, 2015) specified that though fermenting and drying have always been a part of food culture for the Lhotsampa, and freezing is a new part; there is still not enough produce from the garden to support their family in the winter. In particular, a type of *achar*, pickle, is often fermented using wilted greens from the fields. Because there is not enough produce over the summer, greens were usually used fresh rather than preserved for winter months. Other refugees confirmed this, saying that

though the garden helped them to produce crops over the summer, there was only enough to substitute groceries for one or two days a week.

Community Interactions and Learning English

As has been explored above, the garden acts as a space for local community members to interact with newcomers from many countries other than Bhutan (ISANS, 2016). There are interactions between different cultures, though those who struggle with English had no common words. This meant that at most, communication was facilitated mainly through gesturing. Often the younger Lhotsampa generation who could speak English communicated to the younger Korean and Congolese generations, who then all translated responses back to older generations. Participants were able to exchange some information about growing styles and vegetables (Krissaran, personal communication, August 4, 2015), though from my observation this was limited.

The garden is located on quite a busy road and next to a bus stop. This means there are many opportunities for exchanges between local people in the neighbourhood and the Lhotsampa community. Though many struggle with English, they have all been attending some English classes at ISANS and are familiar with some words. Varying levels of English are spoken by the Lhotsampa I interviewed, with the younger refugees speaking (for the most part) more confidently. Kavita, at 45 years old, could communicate effectively in English, as could Samir (32 years old), Mitesh (38 years old) and Krissaran (48 years old). Others could understand some English but not respond, while still others “[had] no idea what [was] going on” (Sandesh, personal communication, July 20, 2015).

Local residents often walk through the garden on their way to or from the bus stop. Since it is also on the corner of two streets and has a path leading out of the other

side, it is a short cut for those walking around.



Figure 0—7: Glen Garden Location

This makes the garden a natural space for community interaction. Deepika (personal communication, July 23, 2015) exemplified Bhutanese humility and her appreciation of the garden as a space to practice English in the following passage:

“When I start talking with Canadian people or other people . . . I feel very happy to learn with them and make us [sic] to know each other . . . I cannot reply in English but I understand it but my problem is that I am absent minded and so I don’t say anything. But if people speak in the garden about all those things I understand all those things . . . My tutor helps me a lot and I ask my tutor lots of questions about vegetables and different kinds of vegetables [so that] if anyone comes to ask about my vegetables in my garden I know their names and I can reply that way. [I] collect[ed] all the seeds from the different areas and [I] put them in front of [my] teacher and [I] ask her what is this called, what is the name of those seeds, and [then I am able to] explain when anyone asks questions about [my] garden . . . This is one of the good places or best places to learn language and to get good vegetables and organic vegetables and to have a lot of fun around here and different people are here and that makes me feel better and good.”

Kavita, who could communicate effectively in English explained that people stopped to talk about her garden and that she enjoyed practicing her English with them (personal communication, July 24, 2015). Bhagat also enjoyed practicing English in both the Glen Garden and Common Roots Urban Farm, explaining: “I learn a lot of things there – different kinds of vegetable [names] and how to grow it [through my] work as a volunteer. And I learn English there as a volunteer, and it helps with different kind[s] of

English, accents, and it's a different part of my education in English" (personal communication, July 31, 2015). Bhagat, Kavita and Deepika have all used the garden to further their understanding of English. Because the garden environment is already a comfortable space for them, English is somewhat more approachable.

Other Lhotsampa were more reluctant to practice English. Often they felt ashamed that they could not understand those who tried to speak to them: "I meet with locals here in the garden [but] I don't speak English and they don't speak Nepali. I feel bad when this happens because we both want to speak about our gardens but we can't" (Prem, personal communication, July 20, 2015). Sandesh reiterated these sentiments: "Sometimes it is difficult to understand – but I do try to understand. I can speak a bit but not enough to have a conversation – I understand 'Hello', 'How are you', 'Good'" (personal communication, July 20, 2015). Amita also reflected this "Yeah, I always like to [speak with local people] but I don't understand what they saying, so how can I talk with them? I understand English a little bit when the Nepalese people talk in English, but I don't understand when the Nova Scotian[s] [speak] English" (personal communication, July 30, 2015). Mitesh, who, at 38 years old could understand English easily and communicate back, explained how these interactions take place in the garden amongst the elderly: "The seniors, whenever they meet other Canadians or Nova Scotians but no English is [a] big problem . . . they use sign language. They use the vegetable names in English [to try to practice]" (personal communication, August 4, 2015).

However, while the language barrier is a challenge, most Lhotsampa still appreciate the practice: "[I speak] very few words but I can still communicate and I feel very happy when we can talk" said Prakash (personal communication, July 31, 2015). Mitesh further explained that: "When people are staying [at the garden], the Nova Scotians ask lots of questions and our people explain what is what and that makes them feel good and able to speak to Canadians" (personal communication, August 4, 2015).

The garden thus serves as a safe space for the Lhotsampa to interact with local Canadian residents. Though many struggle with English, and are not fully able to take advantage of the potential practice, they are still gaining a sense of belonging when local residents stop to ask them questions. Universally, the Lhotsampa answered that the attention paid to them by passersby made them feel good, proud, or happy. Since the

vandalism that took place in 2012, local residents have taken to honking their horns when they drive past and see participants in the garden. While I observed the Lhotsampa looking more or less bemused at this behaviour throughout the summer, Krissaran explained that the practice stems from the connections that have grown in the garden:

“One thing is this is a place [referring to the garden] where we can learn lot of things [like] the way we can integrate in Canada. This will make us learn more about Canadian way[s] or Canadian people and we will never be . . . strangers here . . . Yeah, it’s true in that way, I [have made] a lot of connections in this garden. First we never thought of those things, [that] this garden will be a learning place or something like that. Slowly when people involved in [the] garden and [the] people, the Nova Scotians [were] coming to see what [are] these guys doing here, what these people are doing, what they are growing – in that way, slowly people have [made] connections . . . good connections. So [now] whenever they walk through that garden they just, they just honk their car and say hello. . . If [they see] anybody around there or they know [someone] they just honk there and they just wave. In our country it is not like that . . . most of them, they know people. If they know anybody else at that time they honk . . . Some people [referring to the Lhotsampa], they feel very happy, [because] they start learning Canadian way[s] [so] they feel better . . . The people feel happy, they think “I don’t know him, but he recognizes me” that makes them proud – at least somebody know[s] me” (personal communication, August 4, 2015).

Social Capital is a useful way of framing some of the interactions that take place in the garden, in terms of strengthening a sense of community, and further a sense of belonging for the Lhotsampa in Canada. Firth, Maye and Pearson (2011, 558) use Putnam’s (2000) work to outline three types of social capital that all need to be present to build strong communities:

“**Bonding social capital** is defined as strong ties between individuals in similar sociodemographic situations, such as immediate family, close friends or neighbours. **Bridging social capital** is used to describe more distant ties of like persons, such as loose friendships or workmates. Bridging social capital tends to be outward looking and brings together people from across diverse socio-demographic situations. **Linking social capital** concerns connectivity between unlike people in dissimilar situations. It refers to connections with people in power, such as those in politically or financially influential positions.”

The authors stress the significance of all three types of social capital in enhancing the sense of community in a community garden in Nottingham, UK. All three types of social capital are also relevant to assessing the sense of community built by the Lhotsampas’

participation in the community garden. Specifically, bonding capital is fairly evident as there is a strong sense of community based in the distinct Lhotsampa culture. This type of social capital has been built into the community through shared heritage and experience.

However, Firth, Maye and Pearson (2011) emphasize the necessity of bridging capital in order for a closely bonded community to avoid isolation. Bridging capital takes place, to an extent, with both other participants of the garden and the local community. The processes of residents and Lhotsampa stopping to talk in the garden, or honking their horns as they drive past, are varying levels of bridging capital. The bridging capital is also necessary to build a feeling of social inclusion among the Lhotsampa and their new neighbours. In fact, social inclusion can be a gendered experience in the Lhotsampa community, which is discussed more in section 5.8. Linking capital has also been an important aspect of the garden, and is often overlooked in the literature. Linking capital takes place every time community workers visit the garden, or local MLAs visit. When the ISANS Garden Coordinator visits the garden, the Lhotsampa will actually go back to their apartments and return with other family members. I also experienced being viewed as an authority figure in the community when I came to do the original presentation to gain community consent. When the Lhotsampa were told a researcher was coming from the university to study the garden, about 40 Lhotsampa came to view the presentation, building the sense of linking capital between the community and an institution as weighty as Dalhousie University. Indeed, throughout the summer my own capital shifted within the community as I became a member of the local community (bridging capital) more than I was associated with the University.

Social isolation is faced by elderly populations around the world, but is exacerbated in migrant communities (Saito, Kai and Takizawa, 2012). Understandably, the lack of language skills in the resettlement country can be one barrier to feeling a sense of belonging in a new society. The connections with local people, and to a lesser extent the connections with those from other cultures in the garden, not only aid in learning English, but even without a common language are able to slowly break down the isolation felt by migrants. The honking practice in the Glen Garden is especially telling – to be recognized by those who you do not recognize is to feel a part of a society. To refugees who have struggled finding jobs and making ends meet, being recognized by their fellow citizens is

a comfort to know that their existence is confirmed in the community. This bridging capital may be used not only to build social capital in the garden and therefore a sense of integration into Canadian society, but also helps to build Canadian identity through the act of bridging connections.

Benefits to the Elderly

In their seminal 1994 work, Airriess and Clawson found that the elderly Vietnamese market gardeners benefitted from heightened self-esteem, based on the daily attention required and the ensuing sense of responsibility, commitment and accomplishment. The authors argue that, similar to migrants' strategies of assimilation and integration through planting choices, since they are able to sell the crops they grow, they have been able to "create order in a new socioeconomic environment over which they otherwise have little control" (p.19). While the Lhotsampa gardeners did not sell surplus vegetables, the sense of self-esteem achieved through gardening is also apparent in the Lhotsampa community. The ability to reduce household budgets by supplementing with homegrown vegetables figured into the sense of self-worth and responsibility, which was evident by the Lhotsampa actions throughout the summer. Manjeet demonstrated this: "[I] feel good and these vegetables add [something] [for my] family like healthiness and [taste] and [I] save some money – [I don't] have to buy [it] all the time" (personal communication, August 18, 2015). Moreno-Black (1996) found that the home gardens of women in northeastern Thailand were expressions of their self-worth, underlining the significance in a community that is struggling to connect to a new host culture. By actively participating in a pursuit that once defined their lives, the Lhotsampa use the garden as a means of reconnecting to their former self-esteem.

"I feel good about being able to garden and know how to do something that I used to do (Prem, personal communication, July 20, 2015).

The daily tasks required by a garden create a sense of commitment. To the elderly Vietnamese in Airriess and Clawson's 1994 study, this daily commitment was similar to that of having employment, creating a sense of self-worth. The same is evident in the Lhotsampa community, where the gardeners I spoke to visit the garden from 30 minutes a day, to 2-3 times, to 4-6 times per day. The refugees visiting 4-6 times per day tended to

be those who lived immediately next to the garden, were unemployed and physically fit. Often the Lhotsampa were drawn to the garden with such frequency to socialize with others in the community, rather than performing actual gardening tasks.

“I feel very happy when I come here and I do some exercise here after, in the morning after preparing my breakfast I . . . come here and see [the] garden and then I go home and if I do not have work I come [back] . . .” (Deepika, personal communication, July 23, 2015).

Men in particular sat down at the painted table to trade in conversation, while women flowed in and out of the garden in between household tasks. Often entire groups of grandparents would sit in silence and watch children play in between the garden plots. This is an important example of the bonding capital that takes place in the garden on a regular and daily basis. The bonding capital available in the garden seems especially important to the elderly who struggle with building bridging and linking capital due to their lack of facility with English.

Some Lhotsampa men I spoke to also worked at the Common Roots community garden in downtown Halifax. While this was done on a volunteer basis, all of the Lhotsampa who worked in this garden referred to it as ‘work’. These volunteers tended to be unemployed men who were between their late forties and early sixties. Volunteering at Common Roots took up two to three days a week, from 9 AM – 4 PM each day. On Tuesdays the volunteers worked a half-day in order to attend English classes at ISANS in the afternoons. One volunteer explained: “I work 3 days at Common Roots and 3 days at the school. Yes, very busy” (Bhagat, personal communication, July 31, 2015). The commitment required by the different gardens gives structure to the Lhotsampa lives, something they look for in absence of employment. For those who don’t speak English, gardening is a tool that they understand, and being relied on to perform it gives them a sense of self-worth in the resettlement country. Working at Common Roots also gives the Lhotsampa another chance to work on building both bridging and linking social capital. Nova Scotians from many different backgrounds and cultures work at this garden, allowing bridging social capital to grow between these different groups. At the same time, the garden is run by community workers, often viewed as community leaders and therefore another example of linking capital taking place in the gardens. In fact, Common

Roots is often seen by local politicians and media as good story fodder, which increases the frequency at which these “authorities” are building social capital with the community.

By working at Common Roots, volunteers are also given a second (full) plot to use (4’ x 12’) (Manjeet, personal communication, August 18, 2015). The Lhotsampa covet more gardening space, and many travel to other gardens to achieve this end. The supplemental produce grown by having more than one garden plot means the Lhotsampa have more vegetables to use at home. Fourteen of the twenty Lhotsampa I spoke to expressed pride in being able to bring home their produce to their families. Often, this was expressed as men providing to their families, especially to their wives in order to cook. Samir expressed that his wife prefers to cook with the vegetables from his garden, since they are fresher than those from the grocery store (personal communication, August 4, 2015). “. . . when I bring her food from my garden she likes cooking with it” Prakash explained about providing food to his daughter-in-law, who is in charge of cooking in their house (personal communication, July 31, 2015). This approval of garden produce adds to the refugees’ sense of self-esteem by affirming their ability to contribute to the household. The Lhotsampa not only recreate memories through the sensory experiences associated with eating their garden produce, but benefit from the pride of providing these experiences to their families.

“When I was born in Bhutan, I went to the garden with my parents and learned how to grow everything. I did it in Nepal as well, and I knew how to make my food and eat it. When you eat fresh vegetables it is much healthier. I am very proud of the food that I grow. When I eat the vegetables I am very proud of what I have grown” (Kavita, personal communication, July 24, 2015).

When asked how it felt to provide their family with produce from their garden, some of the responses from Lhotsampa gardeners are outlined below:

“I always feel happy when I eat the veggies from my garden” (Ganga, personal communication, August 14, 2015).

“. . . everything makes a difference [from my garden], even if it was just flowers. It is much better than store food” (Santosh, personal communication, July 31, 2015).

“Yeah I feel very happy, even if I don’t have enough . . . vegetables for us – we have to pick some one day and different ones another [day] . . . I feel healthy and

I also feel proud when I put [the seeds] in the soil and they grow up from this soil and they start to grow [into stalks] and they start to grow vegetables on the [stalks] and I feel proud” (Leela, personal communication, August 1, 2015).

The Lhotsampa community’s use of the community garden is comparable to what Corlett et al. (2003) found in Sacramento, in a study on elderly Hmong women. These refugee women had low English language competencies and difficulty integrating themselves into American culture. Corlett et al. (p.377, 2003) write:

“Urban gardening, however, provided an opportunity and a place where their skills could be productive and valued. For those who took advantage of the opportunity, tending gardens structured their time, and provided a sense of accomplishment, as they grew their own produce, and supplied their children, grandchildren, and families with food.”

The authors emphasized that gardening was a means of combating feelings of overdependence on English-speaking children and reverse feelings of uselessness. The Lhotsampa expressed similar sentiments. The pride and self-worth that is restored by working in the garden is a key part of acculturation in a new society, and clearly gives the elderly Lhotsampa who use the garden a pathway to explore their place in Canada.

The benefits of working in Glen Garden are not limited to the community connections or the feeling of self-worth derived from planting and nurturing culturally significant crops. Senior Lhotsampa refugees also benefit from increased exercise during summer months when they garden. In fact, Baker (2004) found that many gardeners who participated in the cultural community gardens of Toronto gardened explicitly for exercise, a theme reflected by the Lhotsampa:

“I feel very good when I am given this land to work on . . . It is very important to me to work here and to grow veggies and it helps with my health” (Prakash, personal communication, July 31, 2015).

Firth, May and Pearson (2011) found that the key motivations for participation in garden activities were to improve mental and physical health, while Crow (2010) explains that the health benefits associated with gardening are not only limited to increased consumption of fruit and vegetable, but that “working in the garden can encourage a more active lifestyle and provide adults and children with a fun way to engage in physical activity through ‘stretching, bending, walking, digging, and lifting tools and plants’” (Crow, 2010, 222).

In addition to the physical exercise involved in gardening, seniors in the Lhotsampa community benefit just by the daily stroll to the garden. For most, this distance is across the street or around the block, but many make the journey more than once a day. For example, Santosh comes to the garden multiple times a day in the summer: “This garden provides us all with better exercise” (personal communication, July 31, 2015). For others, the journey can take over half an hour. Bishal (personal communication, July 20, 2015) enthusiastically explained how much he enjoys the exercise: “It takes me 35 minutes to walk here every day, so I get lots of exercise in the summer. I don’t mind the walk. If money is lost, nothing is lost. If character is lost, something is lost. If health is lost, everything is lost!” Bhagat reiterated these sentiments: “it is very helpful for health, we get fresh air, outside everything is fresh when we go out. And that helps me a lot and I feel like doing exercise” (personal communication, July 31, 2015). Samir, who is just 32 years old but participates in the garden, explained that the garden did not represent any exercise above and beyond his daily routine, since he went to work downtown every day, though he emphasized that older people did benefit since they had to go ‘work’ (personal communication, August 4, 2015). Ayush’s father and uncle, who are in their eighties, did not leave the house frequently at all until they began participating in the garden. Now, Ayush says they walk down to the garden two or three times a day to work and socialize (personal communication, August 4, 2015).

The sentiments expressed by the Lhotsampa I interviewed were that the garden represented an increase in exercise over regular daily activities, which were made more difficult by the harsh climate. Mitesh explained that his mother-in-law barely leaves the apartment during the winter months but enjoys coming to the garden in the summer (personal communication, August 4, 2015). No one leaves their apartments in the winter, and so nobody sees one another until the summer, Ganga explained (personal communication, August 14, 2015). “We stay inside mostly in the winter” Santosh says of the Lhotsampa elderly population (personal communication, July 31, 2015). The community of Lhotsampa refugees in Coquitlam asked the ISS of BC to help ensure future refugees are more prepared for the change in climate when they come to Canada, indicating that this was one of the most overwhelming aspects of being resettled here (Sherrell, Friesen, and Hyndman; 2011). The climate in Halifax produces more severe

winters than on the west coast of Canada, and based on the responses of the Lhotsampa refugees here, climate is just as, if not more incapacitating than in Coquitlam. The summers in Glen Garden give elderly and senior Lhotsampa refugees a reason to go outside, get fresh air and exercise.

Finally, the Glen Garden acts as a community hub for the Bhutanese refugees. The table on one side of the garden is nearly always home to one or more Lhotsampa people, waiting for their friends to arrive. Pradip explains this easily, in a statement echoed by many others: “Anytime I am bored at home I come outside and garden or sit under the tree and talk with friends” (personal communication, July 20, 2015). The physical health benefits the garden are amplified by the mental health benefits, as the community is able to gather in a space where they are free to recreate past landscapes and share in good times, acting as a counterweight to the social isolation that is a risk to migrant populations. The garden acts as a hub for building both bonding capital, which is integral to the Lhotsampa community’s maintenance of traditional culture and identity, as well as a place to build the bridging capital and identity as New Canadians. The garden is a significant asset to the elderly Lhotsampa population as it encourages self-worth and self-esteem, daily exercise and reduces feelings of social isolation among a vulnerable population.

Feeling at home

As was discussed in section 1.2.4, identity creation is an important intersection of community garden and migration studies. The creation of new identities in a garden setting is particularly relevant to the study of Lhotsampa gardeners in Halifax. Because the majority of gardeners are elderly Lhotsampa who have trouble adapting to life in Canada, the contribution towards self-worth is significant. This is possibly even more significant for a population that suffers from higher rates of suicide than the surrounding populations. Suicide is often tied to a lack of autonomy, particularly given the value placed on autonomy in elderly men’s lives (Bamonti, Price and Fiske, 2014). In this research, the Glen Garden serves the community as a place to grow culturally appropriate vegetables and recreates the past landscapes of home, allowing the refugees to be reminded of their lives in Bhutan. What’s more, the Glen Garden allows for a group of

older refugees to create a new identity that is valued in a country where their place in society is hard to understand. They do this by physically altering the environment to represent their presence, as well as by using the garden as a way to increase their sense of self-worth and responsibility. The garden is a way to solidify their identity in Canada and to confirm their existence. There are different and nuanced ways that the garden allows the Lhotsampa to form identity in Canada, and these are explored below.

As in the section above on cooking with culturally significant vegetables available to them because of the garden, the Lhotsampa are also able to recreate the past landscapes of their formerly agrarian lives in Bhutan. By growing vegetables that are not available in Canada they are able to physically recreate the homeland that they fondly remember.

“ . . . I think of my little garden here as the same as my three acres in Bhutan (Bishal, personal communication, July 20, 2015).

“I feel like now, when I start working in the garden here, I dream like [I am in] Bhutan” (Mitesh, personal communication, August 4, 2015).

“I remember my past here [in the garden]” (Prakash, personal communication, July 31, 2015).

Recreating past landscapes is central to the literature on migrants utilizing community gardens. Gerodetti and Foster encapsulate this literature well: “Gardens are containers of memory (Mazumdar & Mazumdar, 2012) as is food itself (Sutton, 2001) and this theme emerges strongly in studies of migrants and food production . . .” (2015). In their landmark study, Airriess and Clawson (1994) revealed the tendency of formerly poor, agrarian Vietnamese in New Orleans to create a landscape that “reflects their socioeconomic heritage”. They explain that the acculturation process refugees experience may lead to the disappearance of the Vietnamese market gardens. The sensory experience of memory even transcends the garden into the cooking experience (Gerodetti and Foster, 2015). Ingrid, a participant in Gerodetti and Foster’s (2015) study, reminisced about eating something she produced, from her childhood, and explained it as “It’s just sort of, a bit of sentimentality and it’s quite nice really, yeah, it’s just kind of—it’s quite nice having memories and then you somehow recreate them through what you are eating” (Gerodetti and Foster, p. 5, 2015). Baker also presented the varying landscapes of community gardens in Toronto in her 2004 study, showing that local knowledge from all

around the world changed the immigrants' gardens, adapting them to the new climate and environment. She further explains that the community gardens in Toronto act as dynamic, multilayered, multidimensional landscapes (Baker, 2004). Baker argues that these gardeners produce space and culture through their construction of place.

In one sense, the garden seems to act as a stand-in for Bhutan, where the Lhotsampa can dissolve into a refabricated, South Asian agrarian landscape, feeling like they are 'at home'. And yet beyond the physical spaces created by cultural plants, the Lhotsampa are able to feel a sense of belonging in their new homes in Canada.

"Yes, nowadays I always feel like we are Canadian [when we are in the garden]" (Rajendra, personal communication, August 1, 2015).

"I feel very happy and I feel that this is a meeting place for everyone to come here. And Canadian people come here and we share our ideas and views and that way it helps to be [living] here [in Canada]" (Deepika, personal communication, July 23).

The comfort of the garden acts as a way to connect with Canadian culture and people in an environment where there are fewer unknowns – in this way, the garden acts as a safe space to belong to and in a new, foreign culture.

". . . if I work there and [am] involved with different people I feel more Canadian. . . I feel a little bit at home here when I work in the garden. In my country I had very big [sic] land and I had lots of different kinds of vegetables and grains. And here I have a small plot and that also can make me feel a little bit at home" (Bhagat, personal communication, July 31, 2015).

"I feel so much at home here. When I am not able to talk with the people around me in the garden it's not the same . . . I really believe that [the garden helps Bhutanese feel part of Canada]. It makes us feel comfortable here. I can walk from my house to here and I see my friends and we talk to each other about what we are doing and where we are going. I feel good about being able to garden and know[ing] how to do something that I used to do" (Prem, personal communication, July 20, 2015).

". . . this is one of the best ways to engage people [when they] first [arrive], when they have a lot of anxieties, angers, or stress, . . . I think this will help many people to go around to work [in the garden and] to introduce other people here with Canadians. And people will not feel [like] strangers, they [will] introduce each other. This is [the] best way to introduce . . . people and learn [from] each other . . . [then] nobody feels [like a] stranger if [they] come here . . ." (Krissaran, personal communication, August 4, 2015).

The *act* of gardening is clearly significant to the Lhotsampa people, which they elucidate through their body language and eyes while discussing it. “Yes [life is easier] and I feel much happier here with the garden,” Kavita, who works in multiple plots, explained while gesturing around her (personal communication, July 24). The Lhotsampa further illuminate how the act of gardening is significant by expressing their desire for more land to farm, speaking of their expectations that they would one day be farmers again, and their hopes that their children would become farmers. Farming is integral to who the Lhotsampa are as a people (Pulla, 2016). This seems similar in nature to the experience of Oaxacan migrants to the southern USA. Here, “respondents appear[ed] to consider gardening as a basic part of daily life, perhaps because the activity is often a necessity rather than a “recreational” activity” (Bellows et al., 2010). Santosh confirmed, “We like it because we don’t really know anything else” (personal communication, July 31, 2015) and Krissaran explained it simply: “. . . it’s part of our Bhutanese culture, we are all farmers back in our country” (personal communication, August 4, 2015). Sixteen of the 20 Lhotsampa gardeners indicated that they felt “at home” when in the garden. This was a significant proportion, and the strength of emotion that was associated with these sentiments only emphasized it more. Helzer’s 1994 study indicated similar sentiments, finding that the ‘reconstructed landscapes’ of the Hmong immigrants in California were spaces where traditional agricultural skills were still essential, indeed, the Hmong brought seeds with them from their home country, an act that the Lhotsampa also perpetuate.

Because of the garden plots are small, most gardeners cannot use an entire packet of seeds, and instead share them within their community (Ayush, personal communication, August 1, 2015). While Lhotsampa refugees often got their seeds from Wal-Mart or Kent, some bought seeds from farmers’ markets, or even the Halifax Seed Company – experts in seeds adapted to Atlantic Canada. Seeds are difficult for the Lhotsampa to buy, since English language speaking skills are often limited, and most are illiterate in Nepali and English. This makes buying seeds an adventure. Gardeners told me that they look at the pictures and try to tell if the vegetables are the same as what they grew in Bhutan. If they look similar, the Lhotsampa experiment, and adapt each

successive year. Most Lhotsampa save seeds, and actively breed for more specialized varieties each year.

Seeds are a continuation of the cultural identity preservation demonstrated by growing culturally significant vegetables. Seeds are the first step in this cycle, allowing for traditional growing patterns, and finally cooking and eating patterns to develop. Often, seeds are shared in the community much further than could be readily anticipated, with some seeds for culturally significant vegetables being sent from relatives in the USA: “Whatever grows in America will grow here” (Dipesh, personal communication, August 18, 2015); or seeds are smuggled in when refugees arrive: “[I] brought mustard seeds [but I] was not allowed to bring them in [from] Kathmandu, [so I put them into my] sari [in the] petticoat [where there is the] drawstring, [I] [snuck] them in like that” (Deepika, personal communication, July 23, 2015).

The community space that is created by the Glen Garden offers the Lhotsampa refugees a place to recreate landscapes of belonging in more than one way – the hybrid gardening techniques and the act of adapting varieties to Canadian soils and climates, as well as the conscious choice to bring seeds from home, all constitute ways in which the Lhotsampa refugees are turning the garden into a space where they are at home.

Since the vandalism incident in 2012, Glen Garden has been opened up to all newcomer families and Canadian residents in the neighbourhood (ISANS, 2016). The space now boasts vegetables grown from not only a Bhutanese cultural context, but from other cultures as well, including Congolese and Korean families. This scenario provides a novel understanding of the garden landscape; it can be understood as a space for migrants to physically and socially adapt to the resettlement country. It offers social connections in a new, multicultural environment, which can lead to a different kind of belonging in the host country (Baker, 2004). Agustina and Beilin (2011) believe that the plants that are chosen for the gardens are not necessarily cultural markers, and do not necessarily reinforce cultural identities. Indeed, they emphasize that the desire to preserve past practices varies widely. Their findings suggest that gardeners desired to be recognized as ‘good’ in their new countries, and that this is an indication of desire of status and identity in the resettlement country. Thus, the community garden can be understood as creating a *new* space where refugees and immigrants can *create* an identity, rather than preserving

one. In this way, the Lhotsampa are asserting their cultural identity in the garden space by adapting it to a new context. The Lhotsampa pride themselves on their farming prowess, even asserting their gardening skills above the other cultural groups that use the garden. Often, refugees would regard the other cultural groups use of the garden as inferior due to their less frequent visits, overgrown gardens and ignorance of growing conditions. The refugees are able to use their traditional skillset in their 'new' home at Glen Garden.

Gerodetti and Foster (2015) see the hybrid gardening style that migrants use, applying traditional practices to Canadian crops and soil, is considered an acculturation process. The authors argue that the practices involved in choosing known and unknown plants are strategies for assimilation and integration. The Lhotsampa take part in these hybrid activities by buying seeds that look similar to ones they grew in Bhutan from Kent or Wal-Mart, and analyzing how they grow in the conditions in the Glen Garden over the summer. The Lhotsampa further integrate these practices into their daily life by sharing seeds among them and sending seeds that may work between different families in different provinces and even states.

The Lhotsampa spend significant periods of the day in the garden, though plots are only four feet by eight feet. The plots do not take much time to tend to over the summer and yet the Lhotsampa spend a lot of time wandering through and in between the different plots, seemingly just appreciating the surroundings. When asked what they were doing, most just smiled and continued along their way. Occasionally a gardener would bend over to observe a fellow gardener's plot, weeding or pinching some herbs between their fingertips and smelling their fingers. There is a palpable sense of the Lhotsampa losing themselves in this landscape to be drawn back to the landscapes of their homeland, and yet simultaneously using the slightly altered landscape of the garden to assert their belonging in Canada.

Cosgrove (1984) put forth the concept of ideological landscape, where people understand themselves through their imagined relationship with plants and the land on which they grow. Waterton (2007, pg. 69) built on these concepts, acknowledging that a landscape "involves a full range of sensory experiences: it is not only visual, but textured to the touch and resonating with smells, touch, sounds and tastes, often mundane in nature." These sensory experiences transcend the gardening experience through to the act

of bringing garden produce home, cooking with what the Lhotsampa have known throughout their lives, and eating food that is reminiscent of Bhutan, knowing it has been grown with their own nurturing.

Gender Dynamics in the Glen Garden

The Glen Garden attracts Lhotsampa community members throughout the day, but with different motivations and at different times of the day. From my observation, older, unemployed males tended to treat the garden as a job, ensuring they visit at least once a day, if not multiple times a day, and interspersed between visits to plots in other areas of the city. The men that participated in the garden gained value and self-worth from the physical rewards gained from gardening and the structure of their days.

On the other hand, the women that I interviewed tended to see gardening as a fun activity that provided them with something to do during summer days. They cited the ability to see their friends and exercise as an important part of having access to the garden. Notably, the female gardeners did not travel to other plots in the city to garden like their male counterparts. Gardeners who travelled significant distances to produce more food for their families were more likely to be male, and were more likely to treat their time spent in the garden as an occupation. Kavita (personal communication, July 24, 2015) explained that she enjoyed going to the garden to spend time with friends and exercise, as well as to “talk about the vegetables and feel nostalgic about our lives in Bhutan”. For Kavita, the garden meant she had a space to connect with elders in the community about a skill they all still valued.

The interactions between gender in the garden were also telling. Women were more likely to wander in and out of the garden frequently throughout the day, often in groups, to see who was around and to stop and catch up. Towards meal times, women were less likely to be in the garden as they were usually inside cooking. During the pre-evening meal times, men tended to gather in the garden instead, often after a day out in town either at another plot, attending language classes or working at Common Roots farm. In general, men used the garden as a replacement occupation, while, since women in Lhotsampa culture are not expected to have an occupation per se, they were more likely to use the garden as a place for social gathering or as a fun, but less-important activity.

The differences in garden use are significant as they are likely to change as generations of the Lhotsampa community continue to adapt to Canadian society. The gendered use of gardens is an indicator into the Lhotsampas' Canadian integration. Hunting, Grace and Hankivsky (2015, 103) stress the importance of using intersectionality to analyze social inclusion. The authors define intersectionality as “a framework that promotes an understanding of human beings as shaped by interacting social locations and identities (e.g., race, Indigeneity, sexuality, gender expression, migration status, age, ability, religion)”. The authors emphasize the problems associated with referring to discrete populations without being differentiated by these *intersecting* characteristics, and in doing so encourage researchers to value the “complex relationships among mutually constituting factors of social location and structural disadvantage so as to more accurately map and conceptualize determinants of equity and inequity” (Hunting, Grace and Hankivsky, 2015, 103).

It is therefore important to note where intersectionality in the Glen Garden is affecting the social inclusion of female participants, and consequentially their capacity to integrate into Canadian society. While male gardeners were able to tell me stories of getting lost on buses going to and from other plots and being aided by their new neighbours, women do not experience the same interactions because of their relatively limited experiences in travelling outside of the Lhotsampa neighbourhood. In addition, since women tended to visit the garden in groups, they were less likely to interact with local residents walking past the garden. These ingrained gendered behaviours may inhibit the female Lhotsampas' ability to integrate into Canadian society in the same way their male counterparts do.

Chapter 6: Untapped Potential in Glen Garden

The literature on community gardens suggests that these utopian, democratic spaces are the romantic antithesis to the complex, industrial food system (Glover, 2004). The previous section has outlined the numerous benefits to (especially senior) Lhotsampa refugees. And yet the promise and potential of these gardens remains largely unfulfilled. Here, I focus on the ways that the garden deviates from examples in the existing literature, and zero in on how it can better serve the needs of this particular community.

Connecting with the Local Community

Community gardens have been widely studied and celebrated as venues that strengthen social capital (Glover 2004, Kingsley and Townsend 2006, Quayle 2008). Firth, May and Pearson (2011) indicated that in each of their three community garden case studies, social capital was increased, and that bonding social capital was an explicit objective for one garden. Alaimo (2008) claims that community gardens are most often motivated by the concept of community development. Both Head et al (2004) and Baker (2004) found that community gardens acted as places where immigrants could establish relationships with the local community, facilitating integration processes through these basic and daily interactions. Baker (2004) indicates that the gardeners are actively shaping their community. The literature generally confirms that community gardens are intended to act as areas where communities can come together and create social capital. In scenarios where migrants are gardening, newcomers and local community members are able to bond and strengthen communities.

In the Glen Garden, most of the Lhotsampa gardeners that I spoke to explained that though they appreciated local community members attempting to make conversation, they were concerned about their inability to respond. Gardeners felt that their limited English language skills impeded any significant increases in their connections with the local community, a form of bridging social capital. Agustina and Beilin (2011, 447) write that “If social connection is the objective in community gardens, there is a need to resolve two main obstacles; namely, the language barrier experienced by many migrants and the subsequent difficulty in encountering other gardeners.” While the Glen Garden is partly

motivated by the expectation of aiding refugees in English language skills, the limited language skills of the refugees are a major obstacle to deepening social connection and integration.

Interactions between local community members and the Lhotsampa were more limited than I initially expected. While observing in Glen Garden, the majority of interactions I witnessed between the Lhotsampa gardeners and local community members were of a passing nature – honking a car horn while driving past or saying hello while walking to the bus stop. While plots were intended to be assigned to local community residents of Fairview and Clayton Park since the vandalism in 2012, I did not witness any of these non-immigrant or refugees actively involved in the garden.

Since the elderly Lhotsampa gardeners with low English skills make up the majority of the garden participants, the opportunity for interaction with both local residents and other cultural groups who use the garden is limited. Due to their limited English, when the Lhotsampa use the garden as a community hub, it tends to act solely for that community, a space of bonding social capital, rather than as a space for significant interaction between cultural communities, where bridging social capital could really have an impact on a sense of social inclusion and integration for the community. In this way, it is possible that the garden acts as an insular space rather than the cosmopolitan space of interaction it is thought to be by the community garden literature. This is not to say that even small interactions between local residents and the Lhotsampa gardeners are not important – in fact, the sense of self-worth derived from being recognized by local residents described in Chapter 5.6 is significant in itself. While the interactions between local residents and Lhotsampa gardeners may not be as frequent or profound as the community garden literature implies the Lhotsampa gardeners still see significant value in the limited interactions that do take place.

Recommendation: Signage

There is a sign above the garden announcing it as “Glen Garden” and there is also a notice board that was empty throughout the summer that I observed the garden.



Figure 0—1: Glen Garden Entrance

During the summer, when local residents walked to the bus stop, the Lhotsampa gardeners would often stand and watch them walk past.



Figure 0—2: Unused Noticeboard East Side of Garden

As is common in Canadian culture, most local residents avoided eye contact and continued walking. One interpretation of this fascinating cultural two-step is that the two cultures are particularly at-odds in this situation. South Asian culture is community-oriented and lacks the wide personal space that Canadian culture values (Global Affairs Canada, 2016). Canadian culture values privacy and property. It might be helpful, then, to have a sign in the Glen Garden inviting local residents into the garden, and perhaps even a set of rules. This could be the required invitation for local residents to engage in a more valuable form of bridging social capital. The Region of Waterloo includes a needs assessment as part of the planning process for the community gardens in the region, which specifically includes a brainstorming session on what makes a garden a welcoming space for the entire neighbourhood (Waterloo Region Food Systems, no date).

There have been some complaints in the garden about strangers picking the produce, and one passerby I spoke to even indicated that he thought the produce was for communal use. A large sign that indicated this is not part of the garden culture might be

useful, but perhaps one that explains the garden's function and the Lhotsampa's desire to learn English may encourage local residents to drop by and attempt to speak with them. Though language skills in the garden are generally low, I suspect Canadians would like to help when they are asked, and an official invitation may be all the encouragement they need. Toronto-based FoodShare's "Community Gardening 101" report stresses the importance of inviting the local community into the garden to stimulate curiosity and positive reactions, in addition to emphasizing that signs regarding who the gardens are for can be useful (FoodShare, no date) While not related to encouraging inter-cultural communication, FoodShare says: "As the new kid on the block, it's important to inform the neighbours about what you're doing and why and to invite them to participate in the garden. Make sure to include an invitation to join on the garden's sign" (54). Though FoodShare does not offer advice as to how many signs should be used, the Glen Garden may benefit from one on the corner of each street (Smart Street and Glen Forest Drive) in order to capture residents walking in both directions. In addition, a sign in the bus shelter that encourages residents waiting for the bus to make conversation with the gardeners may also encourage the interactions they so desire.

Multicultural Connections

The scholarly literature on community gardens portrays gardens as democratic spaces for *multicultural* integration and learning, meaning that while the Lhotsampa are attempting to learn English and trying to interact with local community members, there are also other cultures at play who are all learning and teaching each other (Agustina and Beilin, 2011; Baker, 2004; Aptekar, 2015). While this space for integration is usually about community building (Baker, 2004), for migrants, the cultural exchange is often about learning how to best grow crops in the resettlement country (Agustina and Beilin, 2011). A report from the Waterloo Region Public Health and the Community Garden Council of Waterloo noted, "Community gardens are focal points for creating and sharing knowledge about food..." (Miedema, Desjardins and Marshall, 2013, 24). Agustina and Beilin (2011) write that migrant gardeners are able to discover new ways of growing plants and vegetables by exchanging ideas with gardeners from other countries.

There are two major obstacles to the Glen Garden serving as a space of multi-cultural learning, and therefore a multi-cultural type of bridging capital. Firstly, there is simply little interaction between different cultural groups, based on low-language skills and the domination of the garden by the Lhotsampa. This may be different in other community gardens across the city. Secondly, in my experience, Lhotsampa refugees expressed a perplexed confusion towards other cultural practices, rather than the open-minded desire to learn that is romantically imbued in the literature. Krissaran, the former political activist from Bhutan, explained an older Congolese woman's actions in the garden: "[There is an] [o]ld lady, she comes here every[day], but I [sic] was just surprised because [she] just took out the leaves of this vegetable [a bean plant] and ate at home like salad. Or they cook [with it], [they] use the leaf of these beans, but we wouldn't do that!" (personal communication, August 4, 2015). When I asked Krissaran and Samir, the young man in his thirties who gardened, whether they would try this, both emphatically shook their heads, exclaimed "No!" and laughed at the suggestion (personal communication, August 4, 2015). They went on to explain that the beans were the useful part of the plant in Nepali and Bhutanese culture, not the leaves. Using the leaves before the beans grew would cost them the bean crop.

The Lhotsampa generally have attitudes of agricultural superiority in the garden, evidenced by their general comments about how other cultures in the Glen Garden leave their plots too long without checking on them, or how overgrown the other plots in the garden may get. The Lhotsampa place such a high degree of significance on their own plots that they deem any less use as inferior or less dedicated, rather than a different cultural approach. The other cultures that use the garden are there less often and take a different approach to gardening based on their own home cultures. The Lhotsampa attitude towards learning from their fellow migrant gardeners may be the first step into increasing multicultural learning and integration.

Recommendation: Facilitation

It is possible that the level of inter-cultural communication at Glen Garden could be improved, through intervention and facilitation from garden staff (ISANS) and potential volunteers. The report on community gardening in Waterloo Region explained

that some gardens have Harvest Dinners, where gardeners get together to prepare, cook and eat some of the produce from their garden (Miedema, Desjardins and Marshall, 2013). These interactions may be an important step to building bridging capital between different cultural groups. This sort of event may provide an opportunity for different cultural participants to try each other's cuisines without sacrificing their own produce, thereby allow them the freedom to try. The garden on its own may be insufficient as a catalyst for multi-cultural integration. A more hands-on strategy that uses the garden as an entry point could be helpful in inducing this integration. Both ISANS and the EAC are ideally situated to lead this programming. The EAC has already experienced significant buy-in from the Lhotsampa gardeners in its city-wide "Garden Tour" and preserving workshops, and would likely experience similar buy-in for other events. It is possible that if different cultural groups in the garden had more ability to communicate they may share their *own* produce more readily, again eliminating the sacrifice for communities' own traditional crops.

Size of the Garden

The greatest benefits of the Glen Garden plots are their proximity and accessibility to the elderly Lhotsampa gardeners' living quarters, however a downside is the limited scale of land size and shared use. When asked if there was anything else the participants would like to share at the end of their interview, nearly every one used the opportunity to appeal for more land to garden.

Nabin, father of Krissaran, was perhaps the most forward with his ask:

"I would like to request that if you can somehow manage to get us some land that you could pass that on to us. If it is not possible to get us the land, at least having more than this garden would be good. I know there will be a long process but we appreciate whatever you can do" (Nabin, personal communication, July 17, 2015).

Most were somewhat reticent to do so, fearing sounding ungrateful for the land they had already been provided with, but many still did. Dipesh skipped around the issue by politely indicating his desires: "I have, [sic] I wish if I had a big land I would grow better vegetables – a lot more vegetables" (personal communication, August 18, 2015) and Santosh articulated similar sentiments: "We have very little land but we feel much healthier when we can grow our own food" (personal communication, July 31, 2015).

This is clearly a significant desire for elderly Lhotsampa for a number of reasons. First, they all come from agrarian backgrounds and grew up on farms of anywhere from three to 25 acres. Secondly, most Lhotsampa believed that after two decades of living in Nepal, when they were resettled their lives would take on a similar format to that which they had left behind. Finally, after arriving in Canada and having difficulty adjusting to the climate, language and customs, the Lhotsampa are happiest in their gardens, where they understand the processes and the plants. The garden allows them to structure their day, interact with their communities, and provide sustenance for their families, giving them a sense of accomplishment in this new and foreign country. However, the garden only provides enough produce over the summer months to feed the families one or two days a week (Kavita, personal communication, July 24, 2015). Given that the Lhotsampa can only garden for a few months of the year, the ideal situation would allow them to maximize produce and even preserve surplus for winter months.

The small garden size and ensuing lack of produce means that the Lhotsampa still buy groceries most of the time, limiting the garden's effects on the economic aspects of food security. It also means the Lhotsampa are forced to spend up to three hours (roundtrip) in order to do their grocery shopping in places where they can buy culturally appropriate vegetables. The Lhotsampa are forced to travel far and wide to other gardens if they want to increase their vegetable production. The small amount of produce also prevents the Lhotsampa from preserving crops in their traditional ways, limiting the ability to preserve cultural traditions. Finally, while the elderly Lhotsampa are able to contribute to their families (and subsequently their own sense of self-worth), a larger garden might increase the sentiments of well-being among this vulnerable population.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

The Glen Garden provides significant utility for the community of Bhutanese refugees in Halifax. The Lhotsampa use the garden for multiple reasons, largely falling under two categories of aiding social and dietary integration. In terms of dietary integration, participation in the Glen Garden allows the Lhotsampa to grow culturally appropriate vegetables that they would otherwise not be able to buy in Canada. This is particularly important for a number of reasons. Having access to these vegetables enables the community to continue to preserve traditional food knowledge (TFK) including diets and cooking. These efforts are important as they relate to the refugees' ability to uphold the healthy immigrant effect and help to reduce health consequences of adopting a Western diet. Having access to traditional crops may also work to counteract the effects of past food insecurity on eating behaviours, such as over-eating Western-style, high-calorie and high-fat foods. The garden is also helpful to the Lhotsampas' physical and mental wellbeing, providing them exercise in the summer months and a meeting place for the community. This community hub acts as a counterweight to the social isolation often felt among new migrants, and the Lhotsampa note it missing from their lives during the winter months.

Growing their own food allows the Lhotsampa to reduce the proportion of the household budget that is spent on food, allowing these resources to be diverted to where they are more useful. The Lhotsampa are already financially resourceful, using extra money (such as GST cheques) to pay for non-perishable items like rice, in addition to preserving what little crops they can save from the summer harvests. These increases in community food security can only be helpful to this community, especially to the older community members who struggle with adapting to their new home.

In terms of social acculturation, the Lhotsampa use the garden as a way to try to interact with non-Bhutanese neighbours, building bridging social capital. This is an encouraging element of the garden, that could easily be ramped up in order to continue to increase language skills for the Lhotsampa. Further, there is potential for other multicultural communication in the garden, aiding both the Lhotsampa and other refugee and immigrant populations to adapt to Canadian society. These interactions help to counteract the possible social isolation that is felt among the community. Even small

gestures, such as honking at community members as they drive by, helps to increase social capital in the community.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the garden serves to increase self-esteem in a segment of the community where there is not much left. The elderly Lhotsampa have lived through the traumas of being forced from their homes, lived in refugee camps for two decades and then been resettled to a country where they face language barriers, unemployment and an overreliance on their children who are adapting. When the Lhotsampa are in the garden they are returned, through sensory memories, to their land in Bhutan. While brushing their hands across the crops they use to grow, or looking at the soil highlighted by sun filtered through mustard leaves, the gardeners feel as if they are at home. The Lhotsampa are able to physically reconstruct past landscapes while at the same time they make their mark on Canadian soil, solidifying their identities as part of this country. Furthermore, the act of gardening allows the Lhotsampa an identity in the community as a *gardener*, attaching a Canadian element to their identity, which is often in flux after being resettled.

The elderly Lhotsampa perhaps gain more than anyone else from the Glen Garden in terms of its ability to add structure and responsibility to their day-to-day lives. The garden replaces jobs for a segment of the population that struggles to gain employment due to language barriers and age. The inability to provide for their families weighs heavily on this community, and the Glen Garden allows them the opportunity to do this. While the garden is small in area and therefore production is limited, the Lhotsampa are proud of the produce they generate. The community garden gives them the chance to bring something home to their families, opening up a sense of pride that is missing during the winter months. The elderly Lhotsampa are reassured by their ability to perform the farming practices they were raised to do, and this allows them to regain some lost dignity after decades of living as refugees.

Heather Asbil (personal communication, June 14, 2016), who works with the Lhotsampa gardeners more than anyone, summed up her thoughts on the Glen Garden and Killam Garden's role on the acculturation process for this particular group of people:

“. . . I think they literally help people feel more grounded during a period when people are adapting to so many aspects of a new life, gardens are good for mental health in terms of being outside and in the dirt; they provide a sense of purpose

(seeing the product of your labour grow). For people who were involved in agriculture in their home countries, I think this is especially the case. I have heard people say that they feel more at home now that they have somewhere to grow foods from back home. I think the fact that they are in a public space means that people come into contact with neighbours more, which helps with the integration process.”

The garden plays a significant role in the Lhotsampas’ lives in Halifax, structuring their days in the summer months and providing them with exercise, social interaction, a sense of identity and reduced food insecurity. While community gardens are often understood as a tool to increase community food security, health and diets, acculturation may indeed be another indispensable element of the community garden. While it may not necessarily provide ongoing facilitation of the English language for the Lhotsampa, it does enact a sense of belonging in Canada. This sense of belonging is by far the most important reason for not only maintaining community gardens, but also increasing them in both size and number. One of the most valuable benefits that the Lhotsampa gardeners conveyed to me was that the ability to garden gave them a sense of self-worth. In a population that is vulnerable to the stresses of resettlement, the values of self-worth and autonomy are integral to protecting their community. The Lhotsampa will thrive if they are able to farm, or garden on more extensive land.

In representing the Lhotsampa one last time, I finish this thesis the way most of my interviews finished, with an appeal to the governments and private landowners that have the power to increase land space for this community to garden in.

“I feel healthy and I also feel proud when I put it in the soil and they [sic] grown up from this soil and they start to grow up on the trees and they start to grow vegetables on the trees and I feel proud.”
(Leela, personal communication, August 1, 2015).

“I feel good about being able to garden and know how to do something that I used to do.”

(Prem, personal communication, July 20, 2015).

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