

The Bhutanese (Lhotsampa) refugees of Winnipeg:  
A journey of empowerment, self-efficacy, and resiliency

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## **Abstract**

In 2007, approximately 108,000 Lhotsampa refugees had been displaced from their native Bhutan and were living in refugee camps in the neighbouring nation of Nepal. With the assistance of the Nepalese government, the Core Group on Bhutanese Refugees, and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, a resettlement initiative resulted in the redistribution of Lhotsampa refugees to several developed nations throughout the world including Canada. This study explored the stories of a group of resilient Bhutanese (Lhotsampa) refugees – from their expulsion from Bhutan, to their lives in refugee camps in Nepal, and to their final journey to Winnipeg, Canada, in search of a more harmonious and peaceful life. The theory section of this study examines several themes including the effects of traumatization, the social process of empowerment, the theoretical perspectives of self-efficacy and resiliency, and the phenomena of culture. To supplement this research query two methodologies were deployed – narration and asset mapping. Narration presents a holistic picture of the events and experiences of the Lhotsampa refugees and their migration to Winnipeg. Asset mapping, on the other hand, outlines the tangible and intangible assets the Lhotsampa refugees identify and utilize to support their transition from life in a refugee camp to life in Canada.

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## **List of Abbreviations**

AI – Amnesty International

AMDA – Association of Medical Doctors of Asia

A&O – Age and Opportunity

APA – American Psychological Association

BPP – Bhutan People’s Party

BVOR – Blended Visa Office-Referred

CBS – Canadian Bhutanese Society

CBSA – Canada Border Services Agency

CCR – Canadian Council for Refugees

CIA – Central Intelligence Agency

CIC – Citizenship and Immigration Canada

CIDA – Canadian International Development Agency

EU – European Union

EAL – English as an Additional Language

ESL – English as a Second Language

GAR – Government-Assisted Refugees

GDP – Gross Domestic Product



GNH – Gross National Happiness

HDI – Human Development Index

HIV – Human Immunodeficiency Virus

HRW – Human Rights Watch

ILP – Immigrant Loan Program

IOM – International Organization for Migration

IRCC – Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada

MANSO – Manitoba Association of Newcomer Serving Organizations

MIIC – Manitoba Interfaith Immigration Council

MIRSSA – Manitoba Immigrant & Refugee Settlement Sector Association

NCSM – Nepali Cultural Society of Manitoba

PR – Permanent Resident

PSR – Privately Sponsored Refugees

PTSD – Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

RAP – Resettlement Assistance Program

RRC – Red River College

STCA – Safe Third Country Agreement

UN – United Nations

UNDP – United Nations Development Programme

UNHCR – United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

WELARC – Winnipeg English Language Assessment & Referral Centre

WFP – World Food Programme

WSD – Winnipeg School Division

## **Chapter 1 – Introduction**

### ***Introduction***

This chapter provides an introductory exploration of the refugee phenomena. First, it includes a definition of refugees according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and a brief history of the refugee movement and the world's current refugee crisis. Second, an overview of Bhutan's refugee crisis and its significance is discussed. Third, an examination of refugee initiatives and resettlement issues in Canada, the province of Manitoba, and the city of Winnipeg is offered. The final section of this chapter informs the reader of the organizational structure of this thesis, its purpose, supplementary research questions, and significance of the study. In brief, the goal of this research is to share the Bhutanese (Lhotsampa) refugees' journey of empowerment, self-efficacy, and resiliency with fellow and future refugees and with those who provide settlement and integration services to newcomer refugees in Manitoba.

### ***Defining refugees***

According to the UNHCR (2000, as cited in Pavlish, 2007), refugees are defined as “people who have left their usual place of residence and crossed an international border because of persecution, armed conflict, or violence” (p. 28). Unlike immigrants who voluntarily and permanently settle in host nations, refugees are forced to involuntarily flee their countries of origin under circumstances beyond their control (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2016d; Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2015b). As a result, the migration experience can differ significantly between immigrants and refugees. Immigrants, for example, typically leave their home countries on their own fruition. They often leave dissatisfied with their economic and social situations and seek improved living conditions and better opportunities in

host countries (Dow, 2011). Immigrants usually take time to methodically plan their migration, and according to Dow (2011), can make the transition “practically, psychologically, and systematically over time” (p. 211) and usually can return to their countries of origin without punishment.

Refugees, on the other hand, tend to be pushed out of their countries because of conflict, human rights violations, natural and human-made disasters, and government depopulation (Martin & Schoenholtz, 2006). Refugees often leave their countries for fear of being persecuted because of nationality, race, religion, political association, or membership in a group and are fearful of returning to their countries for similar reasons (Norton, 2004). Unlike immigrants who may have the opportunity to contemplate their migration experiences, refugees tend to be forced from their homes on short notice and take up refuge in unfamiliar destinations (Dow, 2011). As a result, refugees are often disenfranchised, dismissed, marginalized, and distressed (Abuelaish, 2011). While many countries in the world protect their citizens, several countries do not and fail to report refugee numbers accurately. In fact, it is these types of countries that produce many of the world’s refugees (Norton, 2004).

### ***History of the refugee movement***

The refugee phenomena and the history of the refugee movement can be traced back to the ending of the Second World War in Germany. Following the conclusion of the war in 1945, approximately 15 million German refugees exited the country and were relocated (Norton, 2004). Two years later in 1947, India gained independence from Britain, and the Muslim state of Pakistan was created. The creation of the Pakistani state resulted in eight million Hindu and Sikh refugees fleeing Pakistan for India and eight million Muslim refugees fleeing India for Pakistan

(Norton, 2004). In 1961, the Berlin Wall was also built resulting in 3.5 million German refugees fleeing communist East Germany for the democratic state of West Germany. In 1973, the Vietnam War resulted in two million Vietnamese refugees fleeing the country – many of whom took up refuge in the United States (Norton, 2004). The mass exodus from Vietnam continued into the 1990s and resulted in the world setting a record total of 18.2 million refugees in 1993 (MacFarlane & Khong, 2006). The collapse of communism in Eastern Europe in the late 1980s and the breakup of Yugoslavia and the former USSR in 1991 contributed to the record high number of refugees and shifted the focus of the refugee movement from the less developed world to the European continent (MacFarlane & Khong, 2006; Norton, 2004). The world's refugee total decreased to approximately 12.1 million in 2000 (Norton, 2004) but has been increasing in recent years as new waves of conflict ignited worldwide including the civil unrest in Syria and the upsurge of African migrants crossing the Mediterranean into Europe.

### ***The world's current refugee crisis***

As of 2015, there were a reported 21.3 million refugees worldwide – the highest number the world has seen to date. The country of Turkey hosts approximately 2.5 million of these refugees, which is the most of any nation (UNHCR, 2016a). Refugee numbers have been increasing significantly in the past ten years especially in developing world countries. For three decades, Afghanistan was the top source country of refugees, but the recent Syrian conflict has resulted in Syria eclipsing Afghanistan as the world's top refugee source country. In 2014, developing nations housed approximately 86% of the world's refugee population, which is an increase of 14% from ten years prior in 2004 (UNHCR, 2014). The fact that developing countries house 86% of the world's refugee population suggests that a disproportionate congregation of refugees are residing in the so-called “third world”. The imbalance of international support results in some

of the world's poorest economies housing some of the world's most vulnerable people. Pakistan, for example, has 710 refugees for each US dollar of its per capita gross domestic product (GDP) compared to Germany which has 17 refugees for each dollar of per capita GDP (Moszynski, 2011). This discrepancy shows the minimal financial supports developing countries such as Pakistan can offer incoming refugees.

In the past five years, conflicts have ignited and resumed in several developing countries including in the Central African Republic, Nigeria, South Sudan, Syria, Iraq, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (UNHCR, 2015). In 2012, an average of 3,000 people a day became refugees because of the prevalence and severity of these conflicts (UNHCR, 2012). Refugee crises such as the Syrian refugee crisis are taking a significantly longer time to resolve due to greater political instability and regional insecurity in the developing world. In 2004, for example, it took an average of 17 years before refugee crises could resolve themselves compared to the nine years it took to resolve refugee crises in 1993 (Dutton, 2011; UNHCR, 2006). Because of the persistence of conflict and the intensity of war and political persecution, the number of refugees will likely continue to increase worldwide (UNHCR, 2015).

### ***Bhutan's refugee crisis***

In the late 1980s, the country of Bhutan was rife with ethnic conflict. The Lhotsampas, an ethnic minority of Nepali Hindus, were growing in numbers in the southern regions of the country, and in the views of the Ngalop ruling elite, posed a threat to the political and cultural dominance of the nation. As a result, the Ngalop administration implemented a "One Nation, One People" campaign to suppress the influence of the Lhotsampas and displace the group from the country. The campaign resulted in anti-government protests and violent opposition but succeeded in disenfranchising and expelling 100,000 Lhotsampas between 1988 and 1993, which was

approximately one-sixth of the country's population (CIC, 2007b; Pulla, 2015b). While it garnered little international media attention, Bhutan's refugee crisis resulted in one of the largest waves of refugees fleeing persecution in modern history (Rizal, 2004). According to Rizal (2004), Bhutan's refugee crisis is largely an "unknown" crisis. During this time, media outlets focused on the refugee crises taking place in Bosnia, Rwanda, and the Middle East. Consequently, little news was reported on the mass exodus of refugees fleeing ethnic cleansing from the smallish Eastern Himalayan kingdom in southern Asia (Pulla, 2015b; Rizal, 2004).

### ***The policies and practices of refugee settlement in Canada***

Canada has an extensive history of sponsoring refugees from war-torn countries around the world. The country is required to respond to humanitarian conflicts such as Bhutan's refugee crisis and resettle refugees as a signatory of the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees<sup>1</sup> (McLean, 2013). From 1971 to 1980, Canada accepted over 70,000 Cambodian, Laotian, and Vietnamese refugees from conflict plagued Southeast Asia and approximately 7,000 Asian refugees from Idi Amin controlled Uganda. Incoming refugee numbers increased between 1981 and 1990 as Canada accepted over 220,000 refugees from various countries in Latin America and from Eastern European nations including Poland and Hungary. The years 1991 to 1999 saw approximately 240,000 refugees arrive to Canada after conflicts erupted in Afghanistan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Iran, Sri Lanka, and Yugoslavia (Richmond, 2001).

In 2015, approximately 1.15 million of the world's total number of refugees required immediate resettlement. This number is a 22% increase from 2014 and a 67% increase from 2013. The UNHCR reports that 27 countries around the world accept refugees for resettlement

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<sup>1</sup> The 1951 Refugee Convention provides a definition of the term "refugee" and outlines the rights of displaced persons. The document also specifies the legal obligations of nations to protect vulnerable refugees. The convention was signed by 144 states (UNHCR, 2016c).

including the country of Canada (as cited in Amnesty International, 2015). Canada's global resettlement program resettles refugees from a multitude of the world's ethnicities (CIC, 2016b). The top five refugee groups arriving to Canada in 2014 included refugees from Congo, Eritrea, Iran, Iraq, and Somalia (Schwartz, 2015).

Under the global resettlement program, there are three ways in which refugees are resettled in Canada. The first group are Government-Assisted Refugees (GARs). These refugees have been referred for resettlement by the UNHCR or other referral agencies such as Refuge Point.<sup>2</sup> GARs are supported for a maximum period of one year by the Government of Canada or the Province of Quebec depending on residency. The second group are Privately Sponsored Refugees (PSRs). These refugees are eligible for sponsorship if they meet the Canadian government's convention refugee standards.<sup>3</sup> Instead of government sponsored, PSRs are sponsored and supported for a one-year duration by private individuals and organizations. The third group are Blended Visa Office-Referred refugees (BVORs). These refugees are referred for resettlement by the UNHCR and matched to private sponsors. BVORs are equally supported by the Government of Canada for six months and by private sponsors for an additional six months (CIC, 2016a; CIC, 2017).

In 2014 Canada took in 22,000 refugees, which was approximately 1% of the world's total number of refugees. Of the 15 million worldwide refugees in 2015 nearly 150,000 were taking up refuge in Canada. This suggests Canada takes in a disproportionate number of refugees

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<sup>2</sup> Refuge Point is an international refugee referral organization that was founded in 2005. The organization works to meet the unmet needs of some of the world's most vulnerable refugees including women, children, and urban refugees (Refuge Point, 2013).

<sup>3</sup> To be eligible for sponsorship, privately sponsored refugees must be outside of Canada and be designated as a Convention Abroad Class Refugee or a Country of Asylum Class Refugee. A Convention Refugee is a refugee who cannot return to his/her country of origin for fear of persecution because of race, religion, or nationality. A Country of Asylum Refugee is a refugee severely affected by civil war, armed conflict, or has been denied basic human rights (CIC, 2017).



in comparison to the top refugee host countries of Turkey, Pakistan, and Lebanon, which host between 1.2 million and 1.8 million refugees each (Canadian Council for Refugees, 2015).

Canada's Liberal government, however, pledged to increase the number of refugees it resettled in 2016. According to former Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) Minister, John McCallum, the pledge "outlines a significant shift in immigration policy towards reuniting more families, building our economy and upholding Canada's humanitarian traditions to resettle refugees and offer protection to those in need" (as cited in Mas, 2016, para. 3). The Liberals immigration shift in 2016 was to result in the resettlement of 51,000 to 57,000 government sponsored refugees and 18,000 privately sponsored refugees (Mas, 2016).

### ***Refugee resettlement in Winnipeg, Manitoba***

Manitoba is an ethnically diverse province and received approximately 6,500 refugees from 1999 to 2010. These incoming refugees arrived from countries in conflict including from Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Sierra Leone, Sudan, and Yugoslavia (Ghorayshi, 2010). The province's capital and largest city, Winnipeg, is an important destination for incoming refugees (McLean, 2013) and has seen an increase in refugee numbers (Fast, 2013). In 2014, 1,495 refugees arrived in Manitoba, which was the highest number of refugees arriving into the province on record (Manitoba Labour and Immigration, 2015). Many of the incoming refugees to Manitoba settle in Winnipeg's downtown and inner-city. McLean (2013) describes the downtown area of the city as an ethnically diverse neighbourhood. Ghorayshi (2010) adds that the downtown area comprises many racialized persons and Aboriginal people. In fact, these two groups comprise approximately 44% of the inner city's population (Ghorayshi, 2010). Ghorayshi (2010) explains that refugees choose to live in the inner city for various reasons including its central location,

accessibility to services, proximity to community members, affordable housing, and inexpensive rental options.

Despite its numerous benefits for incoming refugees, Fast (2013) classifies the inner city as a marginalized and impoverished neighbourhood. A 2009 study conducted by Carter (as cited in Fast, 2013) reveals that 33% of families residing in the inner city are below the poverty line compared to the city average of 19%. Poverty also affects refugee families living in the inner city. In fact, some 68% of privately sponsored refugees are reported to be living in poverty, which is three times higher than the average Winnipeg family. Migrating to higher-income neighbourhoods is often an impossible aspiration for refugees living in the inner city because many lack the skills and financial resources to make such a move possible (Fast, 2013).

### ***Purpose of the study***

This study explored the personal accounts of a group of determined and resilient Bhutanese (Lhotsampa) refugees – from their expulsion from Bhutan, to their lives in refugee camps in Nepal, and to their final journey to Winnipeg, Canada, in search of a more harmonious and peaceful life. To supplement this research query, two methodologies were utilized – narration and asset mapping. A narrative presents a holistic picture of the events and experiences of the Lhotsampa refugees and their migration to Winnipeg (Schutt, 2011). Asset mapping outlines the tangible and intangible assets the Lhotsampa refugees identify and use to support their transition from life in a refugee camp to life in a developed country (Lightfoot, McCleary & Lum, 2014).

Winnipeg is a multicultural city with several immigrant groups calling the city home. Despite this fact, the Lhotsampas are at a disadvantage because Canadian cities lack established Bhutanese communities to support and ease the cultural adaptation of newly arrived refugees (Armstrong, 2009). In Winnipeg, for example, there were approximately 200 Bhutanese residing

in the city as of 2011<sup>4</sup> (Sanders, 2011). This number is in stark contrast to the large numbers of Winnipeg's more established ethnic communities such as the Filipino, Indian, and Chinese communities.<sup>5</sup> Overall, the Bhutanese are an underrepresented group in the city. The group's stories are largely untold, and the Lhotsampa refugees' empowering journeys of self-efficacy and resiliency are very much deserving of a voice.

### ***Research questions***

Drawing upon the key concepts of trauma, empowerment, self-efficacy, resiliency, and culture this research project chronicled the Bhutanese (Lhotsampa) refugee experience from a variety of theoretical lenses. The following table illustrates my primary research question and other key questions that I explored throughout my research regarding Lhotsampa resettlement in Winnipeg:

<b>Primary Research Question</b>	How do Lhotsampa refugees perceive their resettlement experiences in Winnipeg?
<b>Traumatization</b>	What insights do the Lhotsampa refugees' experiences offer regarding traumatization?
<b>Empowerment</b>	What challenges do Lhotsampa refugees face, and what resources are available in the community to empower these refugees?
<b>Self-efficacy and Resiliency</b>	What personal characteristics and qualities do the Lhotsampas rely on to make a successful transition?
<b>Culture</b>	What role does culture play in the resettlement of Lhotsampa refugees?

<sup>4</sup> An updated population estimate of Bhutanese residing in Winnipeg is not available. However, participants of this study estimate that approximately 500 Bhutanese are now living in the city although this number may be decreasing as Lhotsampas migrate to other Canadian cities in search of employment opportunities.

<sup>5</sup> Official population numbers of Winnipeg's three largest immigrant groups: Filipino – 43,275, Indian – 11,245, Chinese – 5,980 (Statistics Canada, 2013).

By focusing on the key research question and related sub-questions in the table, this research outlined, theorized, and analyzed the journey of Lhotsampa refugees from the expulsion of the group from their native Bhutan, to their time spent in inhospitable refugee camps in Nepal, and finally to their migration to Canada and resettlement in the city of Winnipeg.

### ***Significance of the study***

The objective of this research study was to share the chronicles of a group of determined and resilient Lhotsampa refugees from Bhutan who have ventured thousands of miles in search of a more harmonious and peaceful existence. To construct a peace constituency, Lederach (1997) believes that communities must see people and culture as not simply recipients but important sociocultural resources in peace-building initiatives. For the Lhotsampa refugees in this study, their local community groups and cultural heritage are assets the group can rely on to successfully transition in this new country. While aid and support are vital in the early stages of their journey, the Lhotsampa refugees are empowered and gain strength from their own community and culture. Instead of relying on outside assistance, refugees must use their own resources and mechanisms in the peace-building process (Lederach, 1997).

### ***Positionality***

This study was also meaningful and relevant for myself in several ways. I have worked and volunteered in several multicultural settings in the capacity of conversation facilitator, employment counsellor, and adult educator. While I can never truly comprehend the difficulties refugees such as the Lhotsampas have gone through, my experiences allow me to appreciate their endeavors to build new lives for themselves and their families in an unfamiliar and foreign

country. Despite the challenges of adapting to life in an unfamiliar country, a democratic society such as Canada provides the foundation for refugees to fulfill their aspirations and realize their dreams. Because of their incredible determination and resiliency, refugee groups can begin to reconstruct their lives and ease the transition for the future generation of refugees arriving to the country.

### ***Thesis organization***

This thesis is divided into eight chapters. Chapter one contains the introductory section of the thesis. This first chapter defines “refugees” and provides information regarding the history of the refugee movement, the world’s refugee crisis, and an overview of the refugee crisis in Bhutan. Contextual information regarding refugee resettlement in Canada, Manitoba, and Winnipeg is also provided. This chapter concludes with the purpose of this research project, supplementary research questions, and the project’s overall significance.

Chapter two outlines the social context of the study. Contextual information in this section includes a brief overview of Bhutanese history, geography, politics, economic development, and ethnicity. An overview of the historical expulsion and disenfranchisement of the Lhotsampas is also provided. Chapter two concludes with information regarding the UNHCR’s and the Government of Canada’s efforts to provide Lhotsampa refugees with third-party resettlement.

Chapter three contains the theoretical framework of this research project and core themes relating to the resettlement of refugees such as the Lhotsampas. This section provides an overview of traumatization and the impact trauma has on refugees. In addition, the social process of empowerment is discussed and an explanation of how refugees attempt to gain control of their lives is offered. The concepts of self-efficacy and resiliency are also outlined with a focus of how

refugees develop resilient behaviours to cope to life in Canada. Lastly, the role culture plays in refugee resettlement and the cultural adaptation experiences of refugees are analyzed. Overall, these theoretical perspectives serve an important role in the resettlement of Lhotsampa refugees.

Chapter four provides an overview of the methodological approaches used throughout this research project. The chapter begins by outlining narration as a research product and asset mapping as an approach to build strong newcomer communities. Detailed information pertaining to my research participants, research access, data sources, analysis, and the type of interview questions which were utilized during my interviews is provided. The chapter concludes by describing my role as a researcher and the limitations and challenges of this project.

Chapter five chronicles part one of the experiences of 10 Lhotsampa refugees who are now living in the city of Winnipeg. More specifically, this section focuses on the early lives of the refugees and their eventual expulsion from Bhutan. This chapter also provides an overview of the Lhotsampas' lives and experiences in Nepalese refugee camps.

Chapter six chronicles part two of the Lhotsampa refugee experience. This chapter includes the group's sponsorship and journey to Canada and their lives and resettlement experiences in the city of Winnipeg. The chapter concludes by outlining the Lhotsampa refugees' hopes and goals for the future and their possible aspirations of one day returning to their homeland of Bhutan.

Chapter seven is divided into five sections and examines the themes from the theoretical orientation section of this thesis. Throughout this chapter the themes of traumatization, empowerment, self-efficacy, resiliency, and culture are explored as they relate specifically to the Lhotsampas' journey to Canada from refugee life in Nepal.

Chapter eight is the final chapter of this thesis and is divided into two sections. The first section includes the researcher's final remarks and reflections as they pertain to the Lhotsampa refugees and how people living in the developed world can learn from the resiliency of these refugees. The second section suggests future research that could be undertaken in the areas of refugee resettlement and refugee trauma.

### ***Conclusion***

This chapter offered an overview of the refugee phenomena, a definition of the term "refugee", and an explanation of how the migration experience differs significantly between immigrants and refugees. A brief history of the refugee movement from the Second World War to the world's current refugee crisis was discussed. Canada's history of refugee sponsorship including the government's plan to increase the number of refugees it resettles in 2016 was outlined.

Contextual information pertaining to refugee resettlement in the province of Manitoba and the city of Winnipeg was also included. The final part of this chapter explained the organization of this thesis including its major research questions, purpose, and significance. The next chapter of this thesis will examine the contextual factors to familiarize the reader with important information of Bhutan including the country's history, ethnic composition, refugee crisis, disenfranchisement, expulsion, and resettlement of Lhotsampa refugees.

## **Chapter 2 – Social Context**

### ***Introduction***

This chapter examines the contextual factors which provide a structural foundation and shape the chronological events I hope to share about the Bhutanese (Lhotsampa) Refugees. A brief overview of Bhutanese history, geography, politics, economic development, identity, and ethnicity are provided to familiarize the reader with some pertinent background information of the country. The Bhutanese refugee crisis, disenfranchisement, and expulsion are also examined. The final part of this context section explores the demographics of Nepalese refugee camps and the UNHCR's initiatives and the Government of Canada's efforts as they pertain to Bhutanese refugee resettlement.

### ***History of Bhutan***

Bhutan was relatively closed to the outside world until the early 1960s when the country began to expand, diversify, and modernize its economy. Prior to this time, Bhutan was an agro-pastoral society lacking industrial growth and urban development (Ura, 1998). Beginning in 1961, Bhutan's third king, Jigme Dorje Wangchuck, initiated several five-year plans to modernize the country's economy, expand infrastructure, and ease the Bhutanese people into the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Government housing projects, road arteries, and commercial centres were constructed across the country. Major strides were also made in improving the country's agricultural and forestry production, electricity, mines, education system, public healthcare, and in creating a national army and police force (Dujardin, 1998; Pommaret, 1998b, 2006; Ura, 1998).



In the 1970s, Bhutan's government transitioned itself from self-imposed political isolation and developed relations with the international community (Pommaret, 2006; Schicklgruber, 1998). Bhutan, for example, joined the United Nations (UN) in 1971, opened its doors to international tourists for the first time in 1974, and forged diplomatic ties with countries such as Austria, Denmark, Germany, India, Japan, the Netherlands, and Switzerland (Edmunds, 1988; Ura, 1998). Subsequent five-year plans in the 1980s and 1990s focused on creating hydroelectric power stations, telecommunication networks, air linkages to cities such as Bangkok, Delhi, and Kathmandu, and bettering the country's social and economic infrastructure (Ura, 1998).

### ***Geography of Bhutan***

Situated in the Eastern Himalayas between the nations of India and Nepal and the autonomous region of Tibet (China), Bhutan is a geographically remote and smallish landlocked nation in Southern Asia (Edmunds, 1988). With an approximate land area of 46,500 square kilometers, a sparse population of some 700,000 people, and the lowest population density in Southeast Asia, Bhutan is overshadowed by its heavily populated and industrialized South Asian neighbours (China and India) and for the most part remains isolated from the western world (Pommaret, 2006; Ura, 1998). Unlike the neighbouring nation of India, Bhutan was never colonized and maintains a low profile on the international scene (Mathou, 2000). In fact, Bhutan's lack of a colonial history coupled with the country's geographical remoteness and imposing mountain passes may explain its obscurity from the western world (Schicklgruber, 1998; Van Strydonck, Pommaret-Imaeda & Imaeda, 1989). The following map in Figure 1 shows the country of Bhutan in relation to its geographical position in Southern Asia.



Figure 1 – Map of Bhutan (Karan & Norbu, 2016).

### *Bhutanese politics*

The year 2008 marked a significant and democratic shift in Bhutanese politics (Rizal, 2004). Prior to this year, Bhutan operated as an absolute monarchy with the king retaining power in hereditary succession. While a national assembly was in place, there were no elections in Bhutan as the king served as the head of state (Rizal, 2004). The country also lacked a bill of rights and a formal constitution. In addition, legally recognized political parties did not officially exist except for those that operated and attempted to democratize the state in exile (Rizal, 2004). In 2008, Bhutan transitioned from an absolute monarchy to a constitutional monarchy. The country's first constitution was drafted and national elections were held for the first time thus transitioning Bhutan into a multi-party democracy (World Bank, 2016).

### ***Economic development in Bhutan***

While urban development and industrialization have been at the forefront of governmental policy in Bhutan since the 1960s, the country has never been economically self-reliant and depends on significant amounts of foreign aid (Ura, 1998). For example, Bhutan's closest ally, India, financed the country's first five-year-plans and has provided economic, hydroelectric, and military support to Bhutan since the two nations forged official diplomatic ties in 1978 (Andelman, 2010; Galay, 2004). Economic prosperity in Bhutan is thwarted by the low population growth, and with 80% of the population involved in agriculture and livestock rearing and two-thirds residing in rural areas, Bhutan remains an impoverished, rural nation devoid of industrial growth (Pommaret, 2006; World Bank, 2016).

While development has been ongoing in urban areas, the rural areas of Bhutan are marked by extreme poverty. Weak agricultural production, low food productivity, minimal access to land, unemployment, and lack of transportation infrastructure in the rural parts of the country have created a rural-urban economical divide (World Bank, 2016). As of 2014, the country ranks in the 132<sup>nd</sup> spot of 188 reporting countries in the UN's Human Development Index (HDI). This ranking places Bhutan in the "Medium Human Development" classification paralleling such countries as Honduras, Tajikistan, and East Timor. While Bhutan is not classified by the UN as a nation with "Low Human Development", its index value is far removed from the likes of highly developed countries such as Australia, Canada, and Norway (United Nations Development Programme, 2014).

### ***Bhutanese identity***

While urban development and industrialization have eased the country into the subsequent century, ancestral traditions, national identity, and religion are vital components of Bhutanese

society and instill its people with a strong sense of national pride (Mathou, 2000; Pommaret, 2006; Ura, 1998). Approximately 75% of Bhutanese adhere to the Buddhism religion, so Buddhist customs and rituals are an integral part of daily life (Pew-Templeton, 2010; Pommaret, 2006; Tulku, 1998). Spiritual rituals are performed during such occasions as births, marriages, illnesses, and deaths. Prayers are held daily and holy scriptures are read frequently. Pilgrimages, religious festivals, and visits to temples and monasteries also take place throughout the calendar year (Pommaret, 2006).

In terms of identity, Bhutan's national identity is unique in terms of architecture, dress, language, manners, etiquette, personal conduct, and values. To maintain an equilibrium between development and tradition, to appease its citizens, and to ensure a so-called "Gross National Happiness"<sup>6</sup>, the Bhutanese government has strived to balance the need for development with preserving the country's traditions, national identity, and spiritual well-being (Mathou, 2000; Ura, 1998). Pulla (2015b), however, refutes the government's GNH policy as insulting to the Lhotsampas whom the government refused to acknowledge and forcibly displaced from the southern regions of the country.

### ***The ethnic composition in Bhutan***

Despite its small population and geographical size, Bhutan is an ethnically diverse state made up of varied populations (Van Strydonck et al., 1989). The country is comprised of several ethnicities and indigenous groups but has been categorized by numerous scholars (see Dutton, 2011; Pulla & Woods, 2016; Rizal, 2004) into three main ethnic groups – the Ngalops, the

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<sup>6</sup> Gross National Happiness (GNH) is a philosophy that was implemented in 1970 by Bhutan's fourth king, Jigme Singye Wangchuck, to measure developmental progress. GNH consists of the following nine elements: psychological well-being, time use, community vitality, culture, health, education, environmental diversity, living standards, and governance (Tobgay, Dorji, Pelzom, & Gibbons, 2011).

Sharchops, and the Lhotsampas. The Ngalops are believed to have arrived into Bhutan in large numbers from neighbouring Tibet in the ninth century seeking economic wealth and are responsible for introducing Buddhism and Tibetan culture into the country (Pulla, 2015b; Rizal, 2004; Savada, 1993). The group speaks Dzongkha, which has become the official language of the country. In Dzongkha, the country's name is Druk Yul, so the Ngalops are commonly referred to as Drukpas. The term "Druk" means thunder dragon; therefore, Bhutan is symbolically known as the "Land of the Thunder Dragon" (Pommaret, 1998a). In terms of geography, the Ngalops reside in the western, central, and northern areas of the country and comprise the dominant political and cultural group of the nation (Rizal, 2004; Savada, 1993).

The Sharchop group, people of Indo-Mongoloid ancestry, reside in the eastern region and are the first inhabitants of the country having arrived from northern Burma and northeast India during the seventh century (Frontline World, 2002; Savada, 1993). The group speaks a language called Tshangla, and its members are devout followers of Buddhism (Pommaret, 1998a). Despite language differences, the Sharchops have largely assimilated into the Ngalop culture (Savada, 1993).

The third group, the Lhotsampas, are of Nepalese origin, and prior to the 1980s, comprised most of the country's southern and southwestern population. In fact, the term "Lhotsampa" translates to "people from the south" (Pulla, 2015b). The group largely arrived from Nepal and other Nepali speaking areas of northeast India during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century thus giving the southern region of Bhutan a distinct "Nepali" ethnic composition (Frontline, 2002; Rizal, 2004). The Lhotsampas migrated to the southern areas of Bhutan to clear forests and are known for their hard-working mentality (Pulla, 2015b). The group, consisting of mainly farming peasantry, cultivated land, raised cattle, hunted, and fished in the region. The Lhotsampas lived

in isolated and close-knit communities, maintained minimal contact with the Ngalops and the rest of Bhutan, and were largely unaffected by the economic changes that swept across the country in the 1960s (Maxym, 2010; Pommaret, 1998a). Unlike the Sharchops, the Lhotsampas retained their Nepalese language, Hindu religion, and cultural traditions and did not assimilate with the dominant cultural group, which proved problematic for the nation's Drukpa political administration (Rizal, 2004).

It is important to note that other ethnic groups exist within each of these three classifications in Bhutan. According to Pommaret (1998a), the country is a “fascinating kaleidoscope of populations” (p. 43). The following chart in Figure 2 shows the ethnic composition of Bhutan in 2005 in relation to its three main ethnic groups – the Ngalops, the Sharchops, and the Lhotsampas.

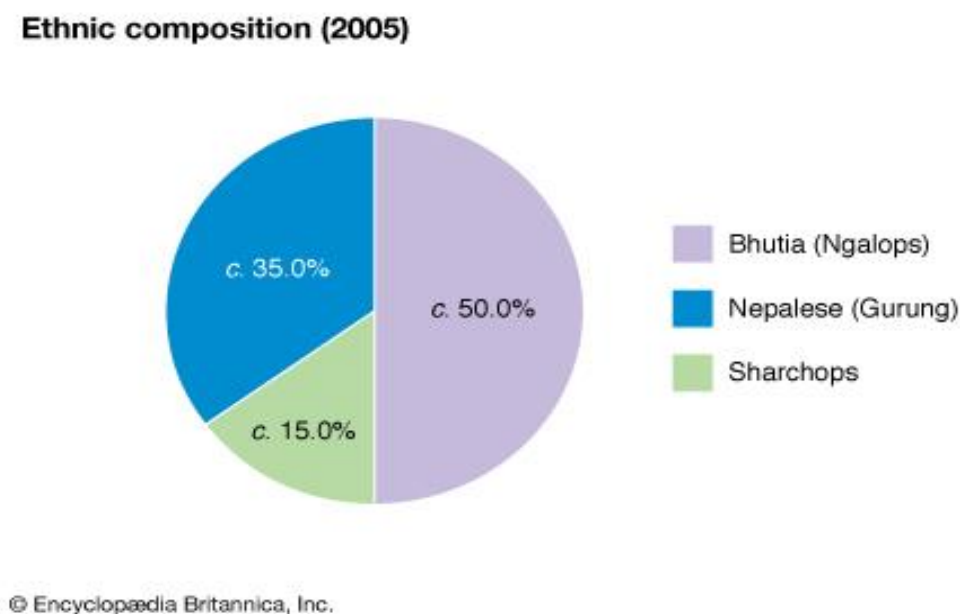


Figure 2 – Ethnic Composition of Bhutan (Karan & Norbu, 2016).

### *Disenfranchisement and expulsion*

While Bhutan is a culturally vibrant country, its Ngalop political administration has not been accepting of cultures except those of the dominant group (Rizal, 2004). In the mid-1980s, tensions began to rise between the Ngalop (Drukpa) majority and the ethnic Nepalese Lhotsampas in the south who numbered approximately 156,000. The fourth king at the time, Jigme Singye Wangchuck, and his Drukpa administration were proponents of economic development and modernization but were also determined to maintain the rich, ancestral traditions and cultural heritage of the Ngalop majority (Maxym, 2010; Pulla & Dahal, 2015; Rizal, 2004).

Before the rule of Jigme Singye Wangchuck, Bhutan was a multilingual, multi-religious, and multicultural society (Pulla & Dhital, 2015). By the late 1980s, however, the Lhotsampa population in southern Bhutan had grown to 30-40% as education and employment opportunities increased and immigration restrictions were eased by the former administration (Savada, 1993). The new king and his administration were concerned about the increasing number of Lhotsampas in the southern region and that the group would outnumber the ruling Drukpas – a concern referred to as the “southern problem” in historical contexts (Pommaret, 2006; Pulla & Dahal, 2015a). The neighbouring nation of Nepal had also restored multi-party democracy in 1990 thus adding to the growing fears that the Lhotsampas would advocate for the democratization of Bhutan (Pulla & Dahal, 2015a). In the opinion of the administration, the growing number of Lhotsampas posed a threat to the political rule and the traditional culture of the Ngalop majority (Maxym, 2010).

Acting upon these concerns, Wangchuck and his administration enacted a so-called “Bhutanization” campaign called “One Nation, One People” to stimulate and cement Drukpa

national identity, consciousness, and integration (Maxym, 2010; Pommaret, 2006; Rizal, 2004). During the campaign, which focused on enforcing Drukpa culture and traditions, conformity became the norm as a Drukpa national dress code was enforced (Maxym, 2010), and the Lhotsampas were expected to take part in traditional etiquette training (Pulla, 2015b). Fines were handed out and Lhotsampas were imprisoned for failing to abide by the country's dress code (Pulla, 2015b). In addition, religious practices came into effect and the Nepalese language was forbidden in Lhotsampa schools (Maxym, 2010). Teachers of Lhotsampa ethnicity were also dismissed from their jobs, some Lhotsampa schools and seminaries were closed, and Nepalese textbooks were destroyed (Maxym, 2010; Pulla, 2015b). Throughout the campaign, Lhotsampas were denied their human rights under the U.N. declaration including the right to nationality, the right to practice one's culture, the right to wear ethnic dress, and the right to speak one's native language (Pulla & Dahal, 2015a). The discriminatory policies associated with the "One Nation, One People" campaign were stringent and were conceived to safeguard the Ngalop's political and cultural dominance thereby severely inhibiting the Lhotsampas' cultural influence (Rizal, 2004).

During this time, strict citizenship laws were also imposed upon the Lhotsampa population. The Citizenship Act of 1985, for example, stated that Bhutanese citizenship could only be acquired or maintained through three categories – birth, registration, or naturalization (Dutton, 2011; Rizal, 2004). To be admitted through the birth category, both parents of the applicant had to be born in Bhutan. To be admitted through the registration category, an applicant had to prove he or she had been residing in Bhutan prior to 1958; otherwise, citizenship was denied (Dutton, 2011; Rizal, 2004). To be admitted through the naturalization category, applicants had to be fluent and literate in the country's official language (Dzongkha) and have a



proficient understanding of Bhutanese culture and history, which was often an unrealistic expectation for the Nepalese-speaking Lhotsampas (Dutton, 2011; Rizal, 2004). Voluntary migration forms were also forced upon Lhotsampas during this time sometimes at gunpoint resulting in many relinquishing their citizenship (Pulla, 2015b; Pulla & Dahal, 2015a). Reports also indicate that Lhotsampas who were forced into signing these migration forms were photographed and videotaped doing so to prove that members were departing the country on their own free will (Ridderbos, 2007).

In 1988, a national census was also administered throughout southern Bhutan. Residents who provided documentation of residency and land ownership prior to 1958 were classified as “genuine Bhutanese”. Those who were unable to provide documentation had their citizenship cards seized (Dutton, 2011; Frelick, 2007). These criteria resulted in the termination of many of the group’s citizenship rights despite some Lhotsampa families having resided in the southern region of the country for up to five generations. Essentially, these criteria turned previous citizens into illegal immigrants (Maxym, 2010; Pulla & Dahal, 2015a).

By the early 1990s, a full-scale conflict had developed between the Ngalops and Lhotsampas. Some Lhotsampas became activists and joined the Bhutan People’s Party (BPP), which advocated for the democratization of Bhutan (Ranard, 2007). Anti-government demonstrations against national integration policies were peaceful in nature but turned increasingly violent (Bird, 2012; Rizal, 2004). Ngalop police officers were attacked, and Drukpa traditional clothing was burned, which resulted in several Lhotsampa protestors being detained (Bird, 2012; Frelick, 2007; Pulla & Dahal, 2015a). Allegations of arbitrary arrests, imprisonment without fair trials, torture, human rights violations, disappearances, and deaths were reported throughout the ordeal (Bird, 2012; Frelick, 2007; Maxym, 2010; Pulla & Dahal, 2015a). There

were also accounts of Lhotsampa bank accounts being frozen and homes and property being confiscated, destroyed, and set on fire (Frelick, 2007; Pulla & Dahal, 2015a; Ranard, 2007). During the conflict, human rights and political activists were arrested and tortured (Ranard, 2007). Lhotsampa women and girls were also harassed, physically abused, molested, raped, and ordered to perform manual labour by Ngalop security forces. These women were also ordered to cut their hair short and remove the traditional tika<sup>7</sup> which adorned their foreheads (Pulla & Dahal, 2015a). Ngalop security forces were also reported to have raided villages and beat, violently interrogated, and tortured residents (Bird, 2012; Frelick, 2007). Several Lhotsampas were also evicted from their homes and others, refusing to give into Drukpa cultural absorption, fled to the neighbouring nations of India and Nepal seeking refuge (Ranard, 2007).

Initiated by the ruling Drukpa administration, the “One Nation, One People” campaign was a nationalist movement to ensure the perseverance of Ngalop culture heritage (Rizal, 2004). The Lhotsampas’ culture and political influence posed a threat to the dominance and national power in the views of the Ngalop majority; and as a result, the Lhotsampas were classified as illegal immigrants, stripped of their citizenship and civil rights, labelled as anti-nationals, and forcibly expelled from the country (Frelick, 2007; Pulla, 2015b; Ranard, 2007). Overall, the policies of the “One Nation, One People” campaign brought much humiliation and hardship upon the Lhotsampas as it classified them as second-class citizens and resulted in an ethnic cleansing of epic proportions (Pulla, 2015b).

Upon forcible expulsion from Bhutan, many Lhotsampa refugees, an estimation of 80,000, crossed into India and were transported by the Indian military to refugee camps located

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<sup>7</sup> The tika is a red dot that Hindus place on their foreheads before a major celebration. For Hindus, red symbolizes life, passion, and purity. As a result, the colour red is often worn during a traditional wedding ceremony. A Hindu bride will often wear red jewelry, colour her hair with red powder, and wear a traditional red dress (Echolls, 2016).

along the Indian border in southeastern Nepal (Bird, 2012). The Government of Nepal refused to provide work permits for the refugees (Bird, 2012) and restricted their movements to within the camps themselves (Laenkholtm, 2007; Ridderbos, 2007). The Nepalese government also rejected UNHCR notions of local integration (Dutton, 2011; Ridderbos, 2007) and believing Bhutan was responsible for the massive influx of refugees crossing its borders, sought repatriation on behalf of the refugees back to Bhutan (Laenkholtm, 2007). Even though the Lhotsampa refugees were of Nepalese origin and have much in common with their Nepali counterparts in terms of culture, language, and religion, Nepal was not a signatory of the 1951 Refugee Convention and had not adopted national refugee legislation. As a result, Nepal was not legally obligated to integrate the refugees and viewed the Lhotsampas as a Bhutanese responsibility (Ridderbos, 2007). In addition, Nepal claimed a lack of resources and insisted that the country could not support the large influx of refugees into its mainstream society (Shrestha, 2001).

Meanwhile, relations between the refugees and local Nepalese communities became strained as the influx of refugees put a strain on the water and forestry resources in local areas. An increase in vehicular traffic on roads leading to the refugee camps and an increase in crime and gender and sexual-based violence also concerned the local Nepalese (Laenkholtm, 2007). In the 1990s, the international community was unable to mitigate relations between the two sparring nations, which resulted in Lhotsampa refugees being confined to these Nepalese refugee camps for the next two decades (Bird, 2012).

### *Nepalese refugee camp demographics*

In 2007, approximately 108,000 Lhotsampa refugees (after population growth) had been expelled from their native Bhutan and were living in seven UNHCR administered refugee camps in the nation of Nepal (CIC, 2007b; Dutton, 2011). These camps included Beldangi-I, Beldangi-

II, Beldangi-II Extension, Sanischare, Goldhap, Timai, and Khudunabari (Ranard, 2007). In addition, approximately 15,000 unregistered Lhotsampa refugees were living outside the refugee camps in Nepal, and 30,000 Lhotsampas were estimated to be taking up refuge in India (Ridderbos, 2007).

In terms of demographics, the refugee camp population during this time consisted of an equal number of males and females (Ranard, 2007). Children under 18 years of age represented 35% of the total population, and 8% of refugees were under the age of five years old. Refugees over the age of 60 equated to approximately 7% of the camps' population (Ranard, 2007). In terms of ethnicity, most refugees in the seven administered camps were of Nepalese origin and spoke the Nepalese language. It was estimated that approximately 35% of camp residents had a functioning knowledge of English. Many refugees in the camps, some 60%, identified as Hindu (Ranard, 2007). Other religious affiliations of the refugees included Buddhists (27%), Kirat (10%), and Christians (less than 7%). Most of the camp residents were previously farmers and students. Other previous occupations of the refugees included teachers, social workers, tailors, weavers, and housekeepers (Ranard, 2007).

Pulla and Dahal (2015b) offer a picture of the educational opportunities available in the refugee camps. Formal schooling, for example, was offered for the refugees in each of the camps. Children from 6 to 17 years old had the opportunity to attend school until grade 10. Play centers were available for children ages 3 to 5 years old, and a youth center was accessible for refugees ages 18 to 21 (Pulla & Dahal, 2015b). The camps also held English classes for adults, Nepali language classes for women, and vocational programs outside the camps. Programming available for female refugees included chalk making, mat making, weaving, and knitting (Pulla & Dahal, 2015b).

### *Conditions in the refugee camps*

Many refugees spent nearly 20 years in these Nepali refugee camps, a time in which they depended on donor groups and aid organizations for the necessities of life and survival. Many Lhotsampas were also restricted from earning income<sup>8</sup> to support their families, and because of this, suffered from limited food diversity, poor feeding practices, shortage of medication, and lack of medical referrals (Abdalla et al., 2008; Dutton, 2011; Laenkhholm, 2007). The Human Rights Watch, the Association of Medical Doctors of Asia (AMDA), and the UNHCR report that Lhotsampa refugees were susceptible to acute and chronic malnutrition, micronutrient deficiencies, respiratory problems, and above average suicide rates throughout their stay in these refugee camps (as cited in Abdalla et al., 2008; Laenkhholm, 2007; Osborn et al., 2003).

Like the experiences of refugee women worldwide, Lhotsampa refugee women also had little control over their lives in Nepalese refugee camps. Many were forced to live in close confinements and deteriorating conditions (Laenkhholm, 2007). These conditions led to a perilous and unsafe environment whereby kidnappings, acts of sexual exploitation, and sex trafficking were commonplace. The Human Rights Watch (2003) reports that rapes, domestic violence, and sexual and physical assaults against female refugees persisted in Nepalese refugee camps. A lack of control can also be seen in the fact that Lhotsampa women were prevented from leaving abusive relationships and were not entrusted with the rations handed out by governmental aid organizations (Osborn et al., 2003). In addition, children constituted a large portion of the Lhotsampa refugee population. Frelick (2007) estimates that 40% or some 42,000 children made

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<sup>8</sup> According to sources (see Bird, 2012; Laenkhholm, 2007) income generating was restricted in the Nepalese refugee camps. Some sources (see Basnyat, 2006; Pulla, 2015a) reveal that these restrictions however were lenient and that several male Lhotsampas found low-paying work as farmers, labourers, and construction workers in neighbouring villages in Nepal and India and in Nepal's capital city of Kathmandu (European Commission, 2014; IOM, 2008).

up the total number of Lhotsampa refugees. Many of these children were born in the camps and possess little familiarity of Bhutan (Frelick, 2007).

### ***Bhutanese refugee resettlement***

From 1993 to 2003 bilateral talks of resolving the refugee crisis failed between Bhutan's king, Jigme Singye Wangchuck, and the Nepalese Prime-Minister at the time, Girija Prasad Koirala (Pulla & Rai, 2015). Bilateral negotiations between Bhutan and Nepal to repatriate or resettle the Lhotsampa refugees never materialized and proved ineffective despite the European Union passing resolutions in parliament requesting that the Government of Bhutan repatriate the Lhotsampa refugees it had evicted from the country. Wangchuck's demand that the Lhotsampas' request for asylum be renounced was also rejected by Nepal's government (Pulla & Dahal, 2015a; Pulla & Rai, 2015).

After continued refugee resettlement and repatriation negotiations between Nepal and Bhutan proved fruitless, an organization called the "Core Group on Bhutanese Refugees in Nepal" was established in November 2005 in Geneva, Switzerland (CIC, 2007c). The group consisted of seven nations – Australia, Canada, Denmark, New Zealand, Norway, the Netherlands, and the United States. The group's mandate was to provide political support to the UNHCR and propose a solution to the refugee problem in order that the Lhotsampa refugees in Nepal could restart their lives (CIC, 2007c).

The possibility of third-party resettlement was welcomed by many Lhotsampa refugees. A survey administered between 2002 and 2003 found that approximately 80% of expelled refugees favoured resettlement as opposed to repatriation (Laenkholm, 2007). The younger generation of refugees faced uncertain futures in camps that lacked safety, security, and

meaningful opportunities, so the majority viewed resettlement as an opportunity to restart their lives (Pulla & Rai, 2015).

Refugee parents also believed that resettlement was in their children's best interests (Ridderbos, 2007). In fact, children who were born in the camps were neither Bhutanese nor Nepalese citizens, and the possibility of becoming so-called “generational refugees”<sup>9</sup> was a reality many refugees were not willing to risk (Pulla & Rai, 2015). Older refugees favoured resettlement for their families but were hesitant of adapting to a new culture and learning a new language. As a result, some older refugees opted against resettlement (Pulla & Rai, 2015; Ridderbos, 2007). Some refugees, however, were adamantly against third-party resettlement and threatened and attacked those who were in favour. Their argument was that resettlement was undermining the group's repatriation efforts and was tantamount to accepting the unlawful expulsion of refugees by the Bhutanese government (Dutton, 2011). These refugees felt that the acceptance of third-party resettlement would further encourage the Bhutanese government to expel ethnic Nepalese from the southern region of the country. The UNHCR also felt that third-party resettlement would set a precedent for ethnic cleansing to continue in southern Bhutan (Dutton, 2011).

With the assistance of the Nepalese government, the Core Group on Bhutanese Refugees, and the UNHCR, a resettlement initiative resulted in the redistribution of Lhotsampa refugees to several developed nations throughout the world including Australia, Canada, Denmark, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, the United States, and the United Kingdom (CIC, 2007c). In total, 69,000 Lhotsampa refugees have been resettled as of 2015. Many of these refugees – some 50,000 – have been taken in by the United States. Resettlement efforts are still ongoing

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<sup>9</sup> A generation is roughly a 30-year time frame between the birth of parents and the birth of their children (generation, n.d.).

today. In fact, these efforts have resulted in a reduction in the number of Lhotsampa refugee camps from seven to two in southeastern Nepal (Bird, 2012; CIC, 2016b).

In 2008, Canadian government officials traveled to Nepal to begin the selection process of Lhotsampa refugees who would resettle in Canada (CIC, 2016b). Officials learned that the refugees were a diverse group of males, females, and children of all ages. The group spoke a variety of languages and possessed an array of employable skills (CIC, 2016b). All refugees were administered for criminality, medical, and security clearances before admittance. Some of the first Lhotsampa refugees who were provided admission to Canada were women at risk, those who had experienced torture and violence, and refugees with special medical needs (CIC, 2016b).

Overall, the Government of Canada's resettlement efforts of Bhutanese (Lhotsampa) refugees have concluded. The Government of Canada resettled 5,000 Bhutanese refugees over a five-year period beginning in 2007. Increased resettlement efforts resulted in 500 Bhutanese refugees arriving in 2012 and an additional 1,000 refugees arriving into the country in 2013 (CIC, 2015c). The Citizenship and Immigration Minister at the time, Jason Kenney<sup>10</sup>, commented on his government's commitment to the Bhutanese refugee problem by saying, "Canada is committed to working with the international community to find long-term solutions for refugees, and we are pleased to be able to resettle these Bhutanese refugees, many of whom have been living in camps for decades" (as cited in CIC, 2013, para. 7). In addition to its resettlement initiatives, Canada has also provided monetary support through its International

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<sup>10</sup> Jason Kenney was the federal government's Minister of Immigration and Citizenship from 2008-2013. Chris Alexander took over the position from 2013-2015. The position has since been renamed and is now the Minister of Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship. John McCallum held this new position from 2015-2017. In 2017 Ahmed Hussen was appointed the new Minister of Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship.



Development Agency (CIDA) in the amount of \$350,000. These funds were allocated towards the UNHCR's work on resettling Lhotsampa refugees in 2007 (CIC, 2007a).

As of December 2015, approximately 6,600 Bhutanese refugees have arrived in Canada from Nepalese refugee camps. These refugees have settled in more than 21 major cities across the country including in cities such as Charlottetown, Fredericton, Hamilton, Ottawa, Quebec City, Saskatoon, Toronto, Vancouver, and Winnipeg (CIC, 2016b). Furio De Angelis, the UNHCR's Canadian Representative, welcomed the government's decision to resettle additional Bhutanese refugees by saying, "By working in partnership with other countries, Canada has helped refugees who have been living in camps for more than two decades find a new home and start their lives anew" (as cited in CIC, 2013, para. 5). As of 2015, the Government of Canada has fulfilled and surpassed its goal of resettling 6,500 Lhotsampa refugees in total (CIC, 2016b).

As of 2011, there were approximately 200 UNHCR sponsored Lhotsampa refugees residing in the city of Winnipeg. According to Chitra Pradhan (as cited in Sanders, 2011), the past president of the Nepali Cultural Society of Manitoba<sup>11</sup>, Bhutanese refugees arriving in Winnipeg face numerous challenges such as adjusting to a new climate, learning how to speak English, and searching for adequate employment. Pradhan points out that the group's experiences, training, skills, and education levels make adapting to life in Winnipeg a formidable challenge. The fact that many Bhutanese have spent nearly two decades living as refugees in crowded and hopeless refugee camps means that adjusting to life in a highly-developed city such as Winnipeg is a stark contrast.

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<sup>11</sup> The Nepali Cultural Society of Manitoba (NCSM) is a community organization that promotes the ancestry, culture, and language of Nepal. The organization advocates for members to connect with their culture and involve the younger Nepali generation so the group can practice and carry on its cultural heritage (Nepali Cultural Society of Manitoba, n.d.).

## *Conclusion*

This chapter examined the contextual factors underpinning the Bhutanese (Lhotsampa) refugee experience. History indicates that Bhutan has been an impoverished and rural nation devoid of industrial growth and very much isolated from the western world. Despite its low economic profile and standing within the international community according to neoliberal measures of development, Bhutan's traditional way of life, national identity, and spirituality are highly valued. While numerous ethnic and indigenous groups populate the country, the Ngalops remain in firm control of the country's administration and disenfranchised and expelled the ethnic Nepalese Lhotsampas who were viewed as a threat to the country's cultural majority. The expulsion of the Lhotsampas resulted in human rights violations and an ethnic cleansing that turned previous citizens into illegal immigrants. This chapter showcased the Lhotsampas' expulsion from Bhutan, the demographics of Nepalese refugee camps, and the initiatives and efforts as they pertain to Bhutanese refugee settlement. The next chapter will outline the theoretical framework of this thesis and the core themes in relation to the resettlement of Lhotsampa refugees.

### **Chapter 3 – Theoretical Orientation**

#### ***Introduction***

This chapter presents the theoretical framework of this research project and the core themes relating to the resettlement of Bhutanese (Lhotsampa) refugees. The theory section of this thesis is divided into five sections. The first section explores the concept of trauma and highlights the inhospitable conditions of developing world refugee camps, the traumatization of refugees and its varying impacts, and what can be done to foster the well-being of traumatized refugees. In order to understand trauma and its impacts, Carlson and Dalenberg (2000) explain that it is imperative to differentiate traumatic experiences from non-traumatic experiences, include what psychological responses can accompany traumatic events, and offer an explanation of what symptoms recur following these events. The second section focuses on the social process of empowerment. One way of fostering growth and well-being is by building a sense of community and empowering traumatized refugees, so emphasis is placed on how refugees especially female refugees attempt to gain control of their lives. The third and fourth sections examine the concepts of self-efficacy and resiliency. More specifically, the focus is placed on how refugees adapt to hardships, develop resilient behaviours, and cope to life in a developed country. The final section examines the role culture plays in the resettlement of refugees. Several studies (see Beiser, 2014; Bekalo, 2012; Fast, 2013; Garang, 2012; Keyes & Kane, 2004; McLean, 2013) have shown that resettling in a new country and learning the norms of that new society are highly distressing experiences for newcomer refugees. In summary, the key theoretical perspectives presented here play a significant role in explaining the resettlement process of Lhotsampa refugees in the city of Winnipeg.

### *Fostering growth and well-being among traumatized refugees*

Refugees living in Global South refugee camps face countless life-threatening obstacles. Some of these obstacles include overcoming illness, injury, starvation, rape, and torture (Barrington & Shakespeare-Finch, 2013). In fact, Barrington and Shakespeare-Finch (2013) liken life in a refugee camp to a concentration camp type experience. In a study of Congolese refugees in Rwanda, Pavlish (2007) confirms that a lack of educational and employment opportunities resigns many refugees to poverty. Pavlish (2007) notes that young females are exploited in refugee camps and that the spread of communicable diseases such as malaria and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) are common. In West Africa, refugees residing in refugee camps depend extensively on humanitarian assistance for survival. Illnesses such as diarrhea and respiratory problems are frequent, and malnourishment is an ongoing concern (Doctors Without Borders, 2013). In the Gaza Strip, Palestinian refugees live in overcrowded refugee camps with no electricity, no running water, and little sanitation and often must flee the shelling and bombardment of Israeli tanks (Abuelaish, 2011). De Bruijn (2009) also conducted research of refugee camps in six developing nations and finds that sexual and gender-based violence occur in many of the camps, and that young women are often victims of domestic violence, sexual harassment, and rape. In addition, De Bruijn (2009) reveals that a shortage of water is an ongoing issue in several refugee camps. Because of this water shortage, poor hygiene, inadequate sanitation, and infectious diseases such as cholera are prevalent (De Bruijn, 2009). Overall, the challenges refugees face in developing world refugee camps are immense.

With an infinite number of life threatening obstacles facing refugees, feelings of traumatization result. The impact of trauma is significant and far-reaching. Barrington and Shakespeare-Finch (2013) note that people possess beliefs that the world is a decent and fair

place to live. In addition, people believe they have a certain amount of control over their lives and that negative things do not often happen to good people (Barrington & Shakespeare-Finch, 2013). Barrington and Shakespeare-Finch (2013) refer to these beliefs as core schemas – a commonly possessed outlook or interpretation of the world. Trauma, which is defined as events that “overwhelm the ordinary systems of care that give people a sense of control” (Dutton, 2011, p. 17) shatters and violates these positive outlooks and core set of beliefs. Heaman-Warne and Smyth (2016b) compare trauma to “a wound resulting from experiences of intense fear which cause psychological, physical, emotional, relational and/or spiritual disturbances” (slide 3). In terms of a psychological interpretation, Gerrig, Zimbardo, Desmarais, and Ivanco (2009) state that traumatic events are negative, stressful and are often uncontrollable, unpredictable, or ambiguous. Common examples include rape, which affects individuals negatively, and natural disasters, which affect a larger number of people and have a broader impact psychologically (Gerrig et al., 2009). Understandably, people who suffer from traumatic events question the fairness and controllability of the world and have major reservations about life’s meaning and purpose (Barrington & Shakespeare-Finch, 2013).

An increasing number of refugees today suffer from extreme trauma because of natural disasters, human rights abuses, and psychological, physical, and sexual oppression (Adkins, Birman, Sample, Brod, & Silver, 1999). Examples of life threatening violence refugees experience include beatings, rape, bombardment, fleeing from burning homes, ethnic cleansing, scalding, torture, and witnessing the deaths of family members. Other events can also be traumatic such as the deprivation of food, lack of health care, unsanitary living conditions, family separation, and the disappearance of family members. These traumatic events are

distressing and can have immeasurable mental, social, and physical effects on refugees (Adkins et al., 1999).

There are varying degrees, impacts, and responses to trauma (Drozdek, 2015; Heaman-Warne & Smyth, 2016b). Some refugees develop mental disorders such as anxiety. Common symptoms of anxiety include heart pounding, numbness, and difficulty breathing. Some refugees also suffer from depression. Typical symptoms of depression include hopelessness, guilt, appetite fluctuation, and suicidal thoughts (Dutton, 2011). Other refugees suffer from severe cases of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), which is defined as a psychiatric diagnosis that presents itself when the stress of a traumatic event exceeds an individual's coping capability (Adkins et al., 1999). Symptoms experienced by PTSD sufferers include headaches, flashbacks, nightmares, substance abuse, and personality disorders (Drozdek, 2015; Finn, 2010). Additional symptoms experienced by PTSD sufferers include diminished self-confidence, interrupted sleep, memory difficulties, and an inability to trust those in power (Finn, 2010; Pain, Kanagaratnam, & Payne, 2014). Research conducted in 2005 (see Beiser, 2014) indicate that approximately 10-12% of refugees suffer from PTSD. Other refugees suffer from cumulative trauma which is a culmination of a series of non-traumatic experiences. These non-traumatic experiences accumulate over time leading to an emergence of mental health problems as noted above (Drozdek, 2015). Not all reactions meet the criteria for a PTSD diagnosis. These reactions, however, can still impair one's functionality in society (Heaman-Warne & Smyth, 2016b).

Once arriving in a developed city such as Winnipeg, refugees must deal with resettlement difficulties such as finding a place to live, accessing health services, and enrolling children in schools. Post migration stressors also present challenges for traumatized refugees including not being able to speak English, lacking the training and essential skills to find employment, and

feeling the need to financially support family members abroad (Drozdek, 2015; Manitoba Interfaith Immigration Council Inc., 2015b). A lack of credential recognition, poverty, minimal access to affordable housing, discrimination, and culture shock are additional challenges newcomer refugees are presented with as they adjust to their new lives in Winnipeg (McLean, 2013).

Drozdek (2015) determines that a sequential phased based treatment may be successful in ensuring the growth and well-being of traumatized refugees. A sequential phased based treatment takes basic needs into consideration such as financial and housing needs and assesses refugees prior to treatment (Andermann, 2014; Drozdek, 2015). The initial stage of phased based treatment focuses on the safety and stabilization of trauma sufferers and reducing their trauma related symptoms. In the secondary stage, treatment methods include the processing of traumatic experiences, the constructing of a life narrative, and various types of therapy (Andermann, 2014). Research has shown (see Peddle, 2007) that the recounting of traumatic events has a healing effect and provides sufferers with insights regarding their experiences and better control of their trauma related symptoms. The final stage of phased based treatment entails psychological rebuilding and encouraging trauma sufferers to reconnect with their former selves and move on with their new lives. This can be achieved in various ways including assisting trauma sufferers to find employment, helping them to access English language programming, and involving them in the community through volunteer work (Andermann, 2014).

The focus of phased based treatment is to provide traumatized refugees with stabilization, strengthen their daily skills, ensure their safety, and increase their emotional awareness and social competencies. The objective of phased based treatment is to assist refugee groups transition into life in their new communities (Drozdek, 2015). Larios (2013) points out that

refugees demonstrate unique needs and require intensive and continuous support if they are to integrate into Canadian life and that refugees suffering from trauma require extensive supports and a personal, committed, and holistic approach to integrate successfully. In other words, refugees require a range of services including access to community resources, support services, education and employment programming, interpretation services, and affordable housing and daycare options (Larios, 2013). In subsequent chapters, focus is placed on the Lhotsampa refugees' experiences during the transition period and how phased based treatment is used to help transition this group from refugee life to life in a developed country. Consideration is given to the support settlement agencies provide to newcomers in terms of creating a sense of belonging and alleviating feelings of anxiety, and the important role family members and fellow refugees have in mentoring newcomers and providing social support throughout the resettlement process.

According to Heaman-Warne and Smyth (2016b), refugees experience trauma differently than other sufferers. Refugees have experienced multiple losses and have dealt with prolonged exposure to trauma during the migration period. As a result, refugees suffering from traumatization have difficulty adjusting in host countries. Many are vulnerable and hesitant to share their traumatic experiences often because of a cultural or religious stigma associated with mental illness in non-western countries. Many often disassociate themselves from their experiences and have greater concern for others than their own personal well-being (Heaman-Warne & Smyth, 2016b).

Heaman-Warne and Smyth (2016a) note that PTSD sufferers may also have difficulty functioning in a classroom type environment, so learning a new language and succeeding in traditional academic settings may prove challenging in host countries. Refugees suffering from



trauma are more likely to exhibit poor attendance in language classes, possess cognitive and learning disabilities, and have difficulty problem solving and focusing. Trauma sufferers also tend to have difficulty trusting fellow students and teachers because of their increased vulnerability (Heaman-Warne & Smyth, 2016a). According to Heaman-Warne and Smyth (2016a), there are various strategies classroom teachers can implement to assist refugee learners dealing with trauma. First, teachers need to create a safe learning environment with predictable routines. Second, teachers should avoid re-traumatizing learners by providing them with alternatives in the classroom instead of dictating what they must do as “dictating” might mimic their traumatic experiences. Third, it is important for teachers to progress through lessons at a slower pace, be patient and compassionate with refugee learners, and praise them accordingly (Heaman-Warne & Smyth, 2016a). In the end, Heaman-Warne and Smyth (2016a) stress that it is vital to “see learners with trauma as strong survivors, not damaged goods” (slide 10).

In subsequent chapters, the Lhotsampa participants discuss their language learning experiences. While many have acquired a functional ability<sup>12</sup> to use the English language, some participants have found that learning an additional language is a challenging endeavor. For many Lhotsampa participants, interrupted education in Bhutan and a lack of educational opportunities in the refugee camps in Nepal mean that many Lhotsampa refugees are not functionally literate in their first language which adds to the challenge of learning an additional language such as English.

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<sup>12</sup> From my experience as an EAL instructor, a functional ability of English roughly equates to an intermediate level of English. A learner possessing an intermediate level of English is usually able to participate in routine conversations – for example – a discussion about the weekend, the weather, and future plans. An intermediate language learner is usually able to converse with a bus driver, make a return in a store, and ask for assistance in a library. Intermediate language learners, however, will be challenged by more advanced tasks such as participating in a job interview, giving a presentation at their workplace, and discussing a medical ailment with their doctor. For various reasons, some language learners do not acquire an intermediate level of English and find it difficult to perform routine tasks such as purchasing a bus pass, making small talk with a neighbour, and understanding instructions from a supervisor at work.

While refugees suffering from trauma require extensive supports to integrate successfully (Larios, 2013), there is some support for the idea that trauma sufferers have the innate ability to heal themselves in combination with medical and psychological intervention (George, 2010). Mollica (2006, as cited in George, 2010) believes humans possess a so-called “healing force” allowing them to naturally strive for survival. Mollica (1999, 2001, as cited in George, 2010) argues that trauma victims are often overmedicated and inadequately treated; instead, he feels trauma sufferers should be involved in their recovery process by sharing and constructively interpreting their stories under the guidance of medical and healthcare professionals. Mollica (2006, as cited in George, 2010) suggests that spirituality, humour, physical activity, relaxation techniques, and a healthy diet all play a crucial role in the self-healing process.

Furthermore, Mollica (2006, as cited in George, 2010) believes that it is possible for trauma victims to overcome their harrowing experiences to lead purposeful lives. Mollica (2009) argues that an innate self-healing force allows an individual to strive for survival and recovery. In his research Mollica (2009) discusses the trauma experienced by victims of the Khmer Rouge regime in Cambodia and by prisoners of war from the Cambodian-Vietnamese War. His case studies include a young Cambodian boy who lost his family, his home, and was left blinded by the conflict but was determined to become educated and lead a productive life despite the terrible losses he suffered. Mollica (2009) also includes the case of an elderly Vietnamese soldier who lost his family and was imprisoned and tortured by Vietnam’s Communist government. Following his release, the soldier contemplated suicide but relied on his spirituality and faith to help him recover. Mollica (2009) concludes that violence and trauma leave victims feeling fearful, stigmatized, and socially isolated, but that through a combination of spirituality, altruistic

acts, employment, physical activity, and social support, trauma sufferers can begin their path towards improved health and psychological recovery.

Complementing Mollica's (2009) research, Chan, Young, and Sharif (2016) determine that some refugees experience positive psychological changes following traumatic experiences known as posttraumatic growth. Following highly traumatic events such as torture, ethnic cleansing, sexual assault, and witnessing the death of family members, refugees often become emotionally distressed as their core set of beliefs (schemas) have been altered and they have difficulty envisioning a meaningful future. Chan et al. (2016) explain that despite terrible losses refugees can experience positive psychological changes after processing their traumatic experiences and developing a strong support network. Posttraumatic growth leads to a reduction of emotional distress and results in trauma sufferers developing new schemas and personal strengths, improving upon interpersonal relationships, and envisioning new goals and possibilities (Chan et al., 2016).

### ***Building community by empowering refugees***

One way of fostering growth and well-being is by building a sense of community and empowering traumatized refugees. In terms of a definition, Jeong (2000) defines empowerment as a multifaceted aspiration and desire to obtain the means of livelihood and make life more meaningful. Bush and Folger (1994, 2005) describe empowerment as a restoration of values and strengths and equate it to a shift from a position of weakness to a position of greater strength thus allowing one to better cope with life's challenges. Page and Czuba (1999) supplement these interpretations by stating that empowerment is a multidimensional social process that occurs at the individual, group, and community levels and depends on the people and context involved. Page and Czuba (1999) stress that empowerment assists people in gaining control of their lives

and fosters power, which can be used in daily life, in the community, and in society. Power is indeed central to the theoretical notion of empowerment as it permits individuals to achieve actions and outcomes to improve their quality of life (Page & Czuba, 1999; World Bank, 2011).

Empowerment is about making choices and feeling independent and respected (Abuelaish, 2010; Hogan, 2000). Empowered individuals, for example, are free to make choices to solve problems, take responsibility, and better manage their lives (Hogan, 2000; World Bank, 2011). They also can overcome sensitive issues and difficulties that affect their health and well-being (Edge, Newbold, & McKeary, 2014). Empowerment can involve changing the environment in which one lives or making a self-determined change in one's life. It can also be taking advantage of one's attributes or enhancing others. Empowerment is also very much a cultural phenomenon – what may be empowering in some cultures may not be empowering in others. In India, for example, a woman of low social status may feel empowered if she is granted a fair hearing. In the United States, immigrant workers may feel empowered through union participation in labour negotiations (World Bank, 2011). Despite cultural variances, Lederach (1995) believes that empowered individuals can overcome obstacles, build on personal strengths and resources, and transition from an “I cannot” to an “I can” mentality.

Achieving empowerment and re-establishing stability among newcomer refugees, however, is a challenging task (Kuyini, 2013). According to Page and Czuba (1999), becoming empowered is like completing a journey. In other words, empowerment is not an immediate process but is a challenging journey from the beginning. Kuyini (2013) explains that empowerment leads to a sense of self-sufficiency, and this can only be achieved when psychological and intellectual obstacles are overcome.

Those who suffer from a lack of empowerment are essentially disempowered (Hogan, 2000). In a study of young people in South Africa, Nduna and Jewkes (2012) find that many distressing experiences cause disempowerment. Some of these include experiences of child abuse, death, poverty, unemployment, gender injustices, and gender-based violence. Hogan (2000) admits that disempowered individuals lack self-esteem which has been eroded from experiences and societal circumstances beyond their control.

Refugee women, in general, have little control over their lives and have experienced circumstances beyond their control. In her research, Snyder (2009) reveals that women comprise four-fifths of the world's refugee population and often suffer from violent acts of aggression namely domestic violence, systematic rape, sex trafficking, and forced prostitution. Snyder (2009) presents the case of female refugees from Burma who have largely been disempowered. These women lack the necessities of survival including health care which has resulted in numerous cases of childbirth morbidity. In addition, female Burmese refugees are often victims of sex trafficking and subjected to rape by Thai security forces and members of the Burmese military (Snyder, 2009).

Besides women, children also constitute a large portion of the world's refugee population. According to the UNHCR (2016b), children account for approximately 51% of the total number of worldwide refugees and face circumstances beyond their control. For example, refugee children are vulnerable to abandonment, abuse, injury, and violence and have witnessed many atrocities including torture and murder. Child refugees are dependent on adults in terms of their physical and social well-being, so instances of family separation and upheaval leave many refugee children vulnerable to disease, malnourishment, and military recruitment. Food shortage and lack of schooling also affect the development of children in refugee camps (UNHCR, 1994).

Empowerment is a more difficult aspiration as refugees do not often understand their rights and sometimes lack the tools to assert themselves (Asylum Access, 2012). In his research, Garang (2012) identifies several areas in which newcomer refugees face challenges including financial difficulties, weak cultural integration, employment challenges, stress, and trauma. Other hindrances include family breakdown, social isolation, and an unfamiliarity with the local language (Garang, 2012). Garang (2012) notes that these challenges are often invisible and lead to social problems such as social welfare dependency, higher crime rates, and a degradation of family values.

Newcomer refugees desire to be productive and capable members of society. They want to work in this country, contribute to its economy, and support family members abroad (Garang, 2012). For these desires to become reality, refugee groups need to be empowered. In other words, newcomer refugees need to gain control of their lives, become contributing members in their communities, and lead meaningful lives. Lai and Hynie (2010) believe that newcomers can achieve these desires through participation and engagement in their local communities. Community engagement includes volunteering, attending language classes, enrolling in a cooking club, developing social relationships, and having greater access to employment opportunities. It also includes informal connections such as visiting a neighbour, receiving guidance from a tutor, joining a support group, and attending a community event (Lai & Hynie, 2010; Pain et al., 2014). Lai and Hynie (2010) report that community engagement instills a sense of belonging and self-acceptance. A lack of community engagement and participation, on the other hand, leads to social unrest, a lessening of social values, and poorer physical and psychological health (Lai & Hynie, 2010).

Community and social engagement pose multiple benefits and play an essential role in the individual and community well-being of newcomers (Lai & Hynie, 2010; Scott, Selbee & Reed, 2006). Volunteering, for example, is one way for newcomers to engage in their local communities. Scott et al. (2006) determine that volunteering among immigrants has been on the rise in Canada since 2000 with immigrants volunteering their time in cultural, sports, recreation, housing, and educational organizations. Newcomers reap many benefits by volunteering their time in community organizations including acquiring new skills, gaining job experience, making social connections, and having a sense of contribution. Newcomers in the Scott et al. (2006) study also report improvement in their interpersonal skills, communication skills, substantive knowledge, and employability through volunteer work.

Social support, which consists of guidance, knowledge and resources, also plays a key role in empowering refugees as it can decrease isolation and feelings of loneliness. Support and understanding through family members, friends, peers, and service providers can increase a sense of belonging, control uncertainty, lower levels of stress brought on by discrimination, and provide socialization and human contact (Mikal & Woodfield, 2015; Stewart, 2014). According to Mikal and Woodfield (2015) social support can be informational, instrumental, embedded, and socio-emotional. Informational support includes providing important information to newcomers such as information about English language classes, job training programs, and upcoming community events and activities. Instrumental support includes providing monetary assistance to newcomers like financial support and loans and non-monetary support such as free babysitting and help moving to a new home. Embedded support is the affirmation of identity through social participation and networking, and socio-emotional support includes companionship and motivational encouragement (McGene, 2013; Mikal & Woodfield, 2015). Adkins et al. (1999)

feel that providing refugees with emotional support is imperative as refugees who have experienced trauma may blame themselves for their troubles and have difficulty trusting others.

In her research of Somali and Sudanese refugees residing in Canada, Stewart (2014) finds that these newcomers face numerous challenges including financial uncertainties, lack of child care availability, and residency in unsafe neighbourhoods. Some refugees also report workplace challenges, for example, low wages, employer maltreatment, and lack of job security. Many also discuss how it is difficult to access essential services like education, legal aid, transportation, and translation. In addition, some refugees report hesitancy in approaching service providers because of language barriers (Stewart, 2014). These circumstances are strenuous and disempowering for newcomer refugees.

To feel empowered, refugees in Stewart's (2014) study want to strengthen their social networks and access services to cope with family separation. These refugees also express interest in accessing individualized support to deal with personal problems and group support among peers to network and share coping strategies. Adkins et al. (1999) state that survivors of trauma also benefit from assisting and mentoring those that have experienced similar circumstances. Overall, social support eases the integration of refugees into mainstream society (Stewart, 2014).

In summary, there are several foundational aspects of empowerment. Battersby and Siracusa (2009) believe that having a greater access to education and employment opportunities and the raising of self-esteem are essential indicators of empowerment. Nduna and Jewkes (2012) point out that the strengthening of families and the increasing of financial security are other components. Snyder (2009) argues that for female refugees to feel empowered they need to be able to make their own decisions and life choices. Abuelaish (2010) adds that when women are educated and empowered then real change can take place within society. Snyder (2009) also



believes that a transition needs to be made from gender inequality to gender equality if empowerment is to be achieved among disempowered female refugees.

### *The self-efficacy of refugees*

The Government of Canada sponsors approximately 7,300 refugees annually (Simich, 2003) and its Resettlement Assistance Program (RAP) is extensive. Upon arrival into Canada, for example, refugees are provided with airport reception services, temporary accommodations, and temporary financial assistance. In addition, refugees arriving into Canada are provided with food and rent assistance, basic household items, interpretation services, free language instruction, and help in finding permanent accommodations (CIC, 2015a; Simich, 2003). Refugees are also eligible for the Canadian Government's Immigration Loan Program (ILP) which covers transportation costs to Canada, travel documents, and out of country medical examinations. RAP funding is discontinued after a one-year duration, and ILP loans<sup>13</sup> must be repaid back to the government including the rate of interest incurred (CIC, 2015a). Within one year of their arrival into Canada, many refugees are then assigned to various provinces across the country (Simich, 2003). In fact, Canada has a policy of dispersing refugees throughout the country. The Federal Government of Canada will disperse a minimum number of refugees to various cities and provinces throughout the country. Each province in Canada such as Manitoba maintains a target number of refugees it can accept based on financial resources and other supports (Pulla & Dhungel, 2015).

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<sup>13</sup> The Canadian government's policy requiring refugees to repay travel loans and overseas medical examinations can be usefully critiqued. According to the Canadian Council for Refugees (CCR) many refugees cannot afford to repay these loans, and as a result, many begin their new lives in Canada in immediate debt which can total upwards of \$10,000 (CCR, 2008). The CCR (2008) notes that many refugees begin working low-paying jobs in Canada and struggle to repay these loans and may delay educational plans in order to pay off their debt. While the government saves money in the short-term, the CCR (2008) argues that requiring refugees to repay travel loans delays their integration in Canada and may result in refugees needing additional supports from the government in the long-term. The CCR (2008) believes the government should instead invest in refugees upon arrival and provide a foundation for their future success.

From 2014 to 2015, the province of Manitoba received 513 Government of Canada Assisted Refugees (MIIC, 2015a). This number increased the following year with the arrival of 1,100 Syrian refugees (Zerbe, 2016). Manitoba has also seen a recent influx of asylum seekers from Djibouti, Somalia, and Ghana crossing the border into the province from the United States<sup>14</sup> (MacIntosh, 2017). In the city of Winnipeg, an organization called Welcome Place<sup>15</sup>, which is operated by the Manitoba Interfaith Immigration Council (MIIC), orientates these newcomer refugees to Canadian life such as how to use public transportation, how to budget and use the banking system, how to shop economically, and how to access neighbourhood settlement services (MIIC, 2015b). Newcomers are also provided with food and fire safety lessons, language instruction, pre-employment training, and are taught their rights and responsibilities. In total, Welcome Place provided services to approximately 1,300 new and returning clients in 2014 (MIIC, 2015a). Incoming refugees are also provided counselling, mental health, and social supports at service providers throughout Winnipeg such as Aurora Family Therapy Centre, Family Dynamics, and Mount Carmel Clinic (Manitoba Immigrant & Refugee Settlement Sector Association, n.d.). Overall, refugees arriving into Canada and settling in provinces such as

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<sup>14</sup> The influx of asylum seekers entering Canada from the United States has been an ongoing development in 2017. Attempts of imposing Muslim travel bans by President Donald Trump's administration in the United States has resulted in 1,860 people (at the time of this research) being intercepted by the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) between January 1<sup>st</sup> and March 31<sup>st</sup>. The provinces of Quebec (644 asylum seekers) and Manitoba (144 asylum seekers) have reported the highest number of crossings in the month of March (MacIntosh, 2017). The United States' high number of immigration raids, deportations, and rejections of asylum cases, and the fact that six provinces in Canada including Manitoba offer free legal aid to refugees likely contributes to the high number of border crossings (Malone, 2017). Under the Safe Third Country Agreement (STCA) Canada does not accept refugees who make asylum claims at official border crossings but as a signatory to the Refugee Convention, Canada permits refugees to make asylum cases within its borders (Malone, 2017).

<sup>15</sup> Welcome Place provides settlement services for immigrants and refugee newcomers living in Manitoba. The organization is the province's largest refugee settlement agency providing services to Government Assisted Refugees and Privately Sponsored Refugees. The agency has been in operation for over 65 years and is located at 521 Bannatyne Avenue in Winnipeg (MIIC, 2015c).

Manitoba are provided with services to allow for transition from life in a refugee camp to life in a developed country.

It is important to note, however, that some of these services are unfamiliar and not culturally appropriate for incoming refugees. In her study of newcomer Laotian refugees, Stobbe (2006) found that many Laotian refugees did not have the time to adequately prepare for adjustment in a new culture. The participants in her study felt that more orientation was needed in the refugee camps to familiarize refugees with Canadian history, culture, lifestyle, and language. Stobbe (2006) indicated that this information can be obtained online by other immigrants but is difficult for refugees residing in camps to access. Participants in Stobbe's (2006) study also suggested that more work opportunities, ESL programming, financial support, and mentorships be made available for incoming refugees, and that government agencies and sponsors require more knowledge of refugees' culture and their situations to make for more effective adjustments.

While refugees arriving into Canada require settlement services for successful transition, there comes a time when refugees desire independence and an eagerness to accomplish their goals. In other words, there is a strong desire for higher levels of self-efficacy. According to Pomeroy and Clark (2015), self-efficacy refers to an individual's ability to overcome challenges and anticipate success in strenuous situations. Bandura (1994) adds that self-efficacy beliefs determine how individuals behave, feel, think, and motivate themselves. An individual with high self-efficacy, for example, feels capable of managing stressful situations, overcoming challenges, and is better able to control thought processes (Pomeroy & Clark, 2015). Individuals with a strong sense of self-efficacy are committed to their goals and use their efforts to overcome failures thus leading to lower levels of stress and depression (Bandura, 1994). Individuals with

high self-efficacy use failure as a springboard to success as they perceive failure as a meaningful learning experience and work towards bettering themselves in future situations (Pomeroy & Clark, 2015). Individuals with high self-efficacy maintain higher levels of confidence (Sulaiman-Hill & Thompson, 2011) and stay more calm and optimistic in stressful situations (Pomeroy & Clark, 2015).

On the other hand, individuals with low self-efficacy feel incapable of overcoming challenges and struggles of inadequacy (Pomeroy & Clark, 2015). According to Sulaiman-Hill and Thompson (2011), individuals with low self-efficacy focus on obstacles and personal deficiencies. While an individual with high self-efficacy learns from mistakes and views failure as a worthwhile learning experience, those with low self-efficacy deem failure as personal inadequacy (Pomeroy & Clark, 2015). These individuals are reluctant to take on challenging tasks, maintain weak commitment to their goals, and experience higher levels of stress and depression (Bandura, 1994). While some refugees experience lower-levels of self-efficacy, Rhema (2014) explains that refugees bring many skills and assets with them upon arrival in host countries. These pre-existing strengths which Rhema (2014) coins as “areas of capacity” need to be reflected upon by refugees and should be considered by settlement agencies throughout the resettlement process leading to an argument that self-efficacy does not surface after a period but remains present throughout the refugee journey and transition period.

Pomeroy and Clark (2015) believe there is a strong correlation between self-efficacy and overall wellness and well-being. They feel that an understanding of one’s self-efficacy contributes to one’s overall wellness which is essential in achieving optimal well-being. After conducting a study of Afghan and Kurdish refugees, Sulaiman-Hill and Thompson (2011) suggest there is a positive connection between self-efficacy and mental health and well-being.

They state that individuals with high self-efficacy are motivated to exercise, study, work, and are more health conscious. To achieve higher levels of self-efficacy, Sulaiman-Hill and Thompson (2011) feel refugees need a supportive learning environment, increased employment options, and supportive role models. In the end, Sulaiman-Hill and Thompson (2011) argue that refugee resettlement should be a challenging experience not a threatening one.

### ***Refugee resiliency***

Geographical displacement is a daunting proposition. According to Simich (2003), being displaced is also a wrenching and precarious experience for refugees. A forced uprooting from one's homeland, the crossing of geopolitical borders, cultural and social displacement, human rights violations, and traumatic experiences in refugee camps all contribute to this negative labelling of the refugee experience (Peddle, 2007; Simich, 2003).

Refugees arriving into Canada have experienced persecution, internment, family separation, torture, and violent conflicts in their home countries (Beiser, 2014; Stewart, 2014). Many have also been forced to leave family members behind for uncertain futures in so-called "alien" societies (Simich, 2014). In her research, Simich (2014) reveals that the public is often unaware of the plight of refugees. As a result, many are often discriminated against in host countries and sometimes perceived as a security threat and seen as a strain on a host nation's resources (Simich, 2014). In fact, a 2015 EKOS poll found that 46% of Canadians feel that too many immigrants are arriving into Canada, which is a 21% increase from a similar poll conducted in 2005 (as cited in Sanders, 2015). Upon arrival into host countries, refugees are presented with further challenging circumstances including minimal employment opportunities, inadequate housing, societal prejudice, and an unfamiliarity with the cultural norms and local language (Peddle, 2007; Pickren, 2014; Stewart, 2014).

While the refugee experience may be deemed a challenging and precarious ordeal, there are certain individuals who can adapt to hardships more so than others. Werner (1993, as cited in Rickwood, Roberts, Batten, Marshall, & Massie, 2004) describes people who can adapt to hardship and stressors as resilient individuals. The American Psychological Association (APA) defines resilience as “the ability of individuals to adapt to diversity by learning and developing resilient behaviors, thoughts, and actions” (n.d., as cited in Rickwood et al., 2004, p. 99). Pulla and Woods (2015a; 2016) term resiliency as the way in which individuals encounter challenges, confront stresses, generate positivity, and maintain functionality. Pickren (2014) states that resiliency is a trait that humans use as a survival mechanism to cope to adverse life situations.

According to Richardson (2002), resilient individuals can cope with adversity and change resulting in the development of protective factors and resilient qualities. Some of these qualities include having a positive temperament, a sense of hardiness, strong emotional insight, and a strong sense of identity and self-esteem (East, Jackson, O’Brien, & Peters, 2010; Rickwood et al., 2004; Simich, 2014). Richardson (2002) contends that resilient individuals develop and grow after experiencing some form of adversity. This growth leads to the development of internal and external qualities and strengths that foster higher level coping skills (Pulla & Bah, 2015). Resilient individuals enjoy helping others and take pleasure in hobbies. They cope with adversity by assuming responsibility, maintaining unconditional relationships, and making meaning out of problems. Having realistic educational plans, taking advantage of opportunities, and having religious affiliation and inner faith are additional characteristics that embody resilient individuals (Pulla, 2015a; Rickwood et al., 2004). These qualities are vital as they help individuals endure setbacks, and according to Richardson (2002), also assist individuals in “bouncing back” in the aftermath of high-risk circumstances. While resiliency is often termed as an intrinsic quality,

Pulla and Bah (2015) note that resiliency can also derive from an individual's community, culture, and the opportunities that one is available to access.

According to Bonnano (2004, as cited in Woods & Pulla, 2015), many individuals have experienced some form of violence or a life-threatening episode in their lifetime. How an individual emotionally, physically, and psychologically adapts to this traumatic event is key in developing resiliency. Woods and Pulla (2015) argue that resiliency should not be associated with recovery, for recovery means the elimination of the problem whereas resiliency means continuing to cope with the problem. Resilient individuals still experience some form of suffering but can move past this suffering, maintain positivity, and lead functional lives (Woods & Pulla, 2015).

### ***The cultural adaptations of refugees***

This study of refugee resettlement requires an examination of the cultural adaptations refugees make while transitioning to life in a developed country. There are several variables when it comes to defining the concept of culture. One variable is that culture is difficult to define as hundreds of definitions of the term exist ranging from simplistic to complex (Avruch, 2009; Manz, 2003). In fact, culture has multiple meanings and carries a lot of so-called "political baggage" (Avruch, 1998, 2008). Another variable is that culture is dynamic, negotiable, forever changing (Byrne & Senehi, 2009; Norton, 2004), and is a frequently used and complicated term that is multidimensional and only broadly understood (Avruch, 2008; Gopalkrishnan & Pulla, 2015; Manz, 2003).

Schwartz (1992, as cited in Avruch, 2008) states that culture is derived from experience, learned or created by individuals, and is passed down from generations or created by individuals themselves. Manz (2003) points out that culture is learned not inherited and is shaped by society

and the people in one's life. Avruch (1998, 2008) supplements these interpretations stating that culture is socially distributed across a population and psychologically distributed within individuals. Because it is derived from experience, culture is adaptive, flexible, responsive, and situational (Avruch, 1998, 2008). Gopalkrishnan and Pulla (2015) explain that culture refers to one's ethnicity or race but may also refer to an individual's nationality, language, religion, and social class.

Each society encompasses a unique culture – in other words – a body of attitudes, beliefs, behaviours, knowledge, rules, values, religious ideology, and interpretation of the world (Manz, 2003; UNHCR, 1994). From a social science perspective, culture is a shared way of life (Eisner, 2002) and consists of the language, food, fashion, and social behaviour of a certain group (Driedger, 2003). Culture can also be referred to as a system of shared meanings, which includes non-materialistic elements such as beliefs and psychological mindsets and materialistic elements such as artifacts and physical landscapes (Norton, 2004). Modern definitions of culture also emphasize social and cognitive processing and the understanding that individuals exhibit multiple cultures. In fact, culture is no longer a singularly coherent concept passed down through generations by one's ancestors but is a complex, unstable, and evolving phenomenon derived from individual experiences (Avruch, 1998).

Metaphorically, culture has also been referred to as an iceberg. The visible portion of an iceberg – about 10% – is believed to be the more obvious elements of a culture including its food, dress, customs, gestures, greetings, and language. The invisible portion of the iceberg – the remaining 90% – is believed to be the less obvious elements of a culture including its unwritten rules such as the relationship between males and females, the importance a society places on time, and how members showcase respect (Pettis, 2009). According to Pettis (2009), newcomers



more often have difficulty adjusting to the invisible elements of a culture thus resulting in settlement and workplace challenges.

Newcomer groups such as refugees normally progress through a U-curve of stages when adapting to a foreign culture (Briggs, 2011; Pedersen, 1995). Newcomers typically enter a “euphoria” or “honeymoon” stage (Beiser, 2014; Briggs, 2011) upon arrival in which feelings of excitement (Briggs, 2011), fascination (Manz, 2003), optimism (Pedersen, 1995), and relief (Beiser, 2014) are common. During this stage, opportunities seem endless and there is a curiosity about the new culture. This is followed by a “rejection” stage where feelings of alienation, disillusion, disappointment, and inadequacy become evident (Beiser, 2014; Pedersen, 1995). It is at this stage that refugees may start to develop mental health disorders as frustration, homesickness, and uncertainty set-in (Beiser, 2014). In the final “recovery” stage there is a balance of positive and negative emotions (Pedersen, 1995) as morale is restored, anxiety is lessened, and newcomers begin to culturally adjust to their new lives and embrace the new culture as their own (Briggs, 2011). Strong motivation, improved language skills, and the access to social support are vital to transition to the recovery stage. Those who fail to reach this final stage are at risk to develop chronic psychiatric disorders (Beiser, 2011; Manz, 2003). In fact, a review of psychiatric surveys<sup>16</sup> by Fazel, Wheeler, and Danesh (2005) reveal that approximately 9% of adult refugees and 11% of refugee children are diagnosed with PTSD, and that 5% of adult refugees are diagnosed with major depression.

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<sup>16</sup> In their research Fazel et al. (2005) analyzed the prevalence of serious mental disorder in refugees from seven countries. In total, the researchers analyzed 20 surveys and the responses of 6,743 refugee participants. Fazel et al. (2005) determine that evidence of mental disorder in refugees is inadequate, scattered, and conflicting. For example, studies predicting the number of refugees suffering from PTSD range from 3% to 86%. Despite the contradiction among the surveys, Fazel et al. (2005) conclude that refugees settling in western countries are ten times more likely to be diagnosed with PTSD than members of the general population, and that there are likely tens of thousands of refugees resettled in western countries who are suffering from PTSD.

Refugees have little choice when it comes to leaving their homelands and learning to adapt to the culture of a new society. Unlike immigrants who are more likely to voluntarily migrate, refugees flee their homelands because of war, political oppression, and religious persecution. Refugees normally experience higher levels of stress in the adjustment period compared to other groups of newcomers because of cultural differences (Manz, 2003) and the fact that the refugee migration experience is often a lengthy and traumatic one (Mikal & Woodfield, 2015). Many refugees arrive into host countries suffering from trauma because of the terrible losses they have experienced (Keyes & Kane, 2004) and possess minimal language proficiency and understanding of their new environments (Mikal & Woodfield, 2015).

The adjustment to a new country's culture and societal way of life, therefore, is a challenging process for newcomer refugees (Sonderegger & Barrett, 2004). Norton (2004) believes cultural adjustment is difficult because newcomers must "re-engineer" themselves to adapt to an unfamiliar system of values and a new frame of reference. Driedger (2003) views cultural adjustment as a challenging process because humans are creatures of habit and changing one's habits is difficult. Mikal and Woodfield (2015) disclose that it is strenuous for newcomers to be separated from familiar cultures and environments, tasked with re-establishing relationships and identities, and becoming familiar with cultural norms in unfamiliar settings.

In their research, Adkins et al. (1999) touch on the notion that newcomer refugees experience acculturative stress – a type of stress common when adapting to a culture that one was not born or raised in. They state refugees experience acculturative stress because of misunderstandings in social situations and misinterpreting the customs and norms of the host nation. Newcomers often assume the language barrier will be the only difficulty they will face in a foreign country, and per Adkins et al. (1999), this misjudgement results in confusion during the

adjustment period. In fact, cultural adjustment is strenuous to the point that it is linked to psychological problems including anxiety, depression, psychotic reactions, schizophrenia, and social problems specifically alcoholism and substance abuse (Keyes & Kane, 2004; Sonderegger & Barrett, 2004).

Bekalo (2012) found that adjusting to the local culture and economic norms of a developed western nation is a challenging proposition for refugees. In his research of East African refugees arriving into the United Kingdom, Bekalo (2012) learned that the refugees had to adjust to a nation that is more liberal and progressive than their home countries of East Africa, and that the newcomers must deal with differences in family structure and gender status. Bekalo (2012) found that newcomer refugees often struggle with balancing their traditional values with the liberal and modern values of western nations. According to Bekalo (2012), these challenges often result in family breakdown and tragedy and highlight the challenges newcomer refugees have of adapting to a new country.

In a 2004 study of Bosnian refugees, Keyes and Kane (2004) found that adapting and belonging were two major themes that came out of interviews with Bosnian refugees who were transitioning to new lives in the United States. During these interviews, Bosnian refugees reported feeling a multitude of emotions upon arrival into the U.S. Many expressed feelings of relief, safety, and gratefulness for their newfound freedom but also feelings of culture shock, loneliness, grief, humiliation, and inferiority in their new country. In terms of adapting and belonging, many of the Bosnian refugees were coping with memories of their homeland and the losses that occurred because of conflict. Some expressed feelings of social isolation and identity transformation. Stressful adjustments also included the learning of a new language and the acceptance of a new culture (Keyes & Kane, 2004).

As in the case of the Bosnian refugees, it is difficult for refugees to adjust to life in developed western societies such as Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Newcomer refugees originate from countries where the culture is vastly different from the culture of a nation such as Canada. Religious and spiritual differences are one reason to explain why newcomer refugees have difficulty adjusting to a new country's culture. In Somalia, for example, Islam is the dominant religion and practices such as female genital mutilation and polygamy are the norm. These traditional practices, while common in Somali culture, are unacceptable and not legally tolerated in Canada ("Somali Outliers", 2012).

In terms of religion, most Lhotsampas practice Hinduism (Maxym, 2010). The Lhotsampas draw heavily on this faith, and it plays an integral role in the group's rituals, social structure, and health care perspectives (Dutton, 2011). Pulla (2015a) acknowledges that spirituality is an important element of humanity that cannot be taken away or withheld from an individual, and it is through spirituality that meaning is constructed, interaction is made with the environment, and relationships are forged and retained. Hindus value community, interdependence, divinity, and place importance on collaboration and providing for others. In comparison, western societies value autonomy, individualism, materialism, and secularism. These values contrast with the values of Hinduism and make cultural adjustment difficult for Hindu newcomers (Hodge, 2004). In fact, Dow (2011) argues that many immigrants such as Hindus, who place emphasis on family togetherness, have difficulty adjusting to the values of individualism and independence which are highly valued in western nations.

There are differing perspectives of how newcomers can culturally adjust in a new society. One perspective is that cultural changes should be made gradually if one's own culture is to evolve (UNHCR, 1994). Moreover, Lewin (1948, as cited in Driedger, 2003) feels a newcomer

group needs to identify with the heritage of the main group to improve its well-being. According to Lewin, this can be achieved by enhancing one's own cultural institutions within the new community. Norton (2004) believes awareness of a new culture is vital and can be achieved by developing new solutions to problems or improving the effectiveness of old solutions. Norton (2004) also emphasizes the importance of making attitude and behavioural changes to culturally adjust. According to Manz (2003), motivation, flexibility, humour, tolerance, and the ability to compromise are some of the attitude and behavioural changes which ease cultural adjustment in a new society.

Adkins et al. (1999) believe that the strategy of biculturalism may prove beneficial in adjusting to a new culture. Biculturalism refers to adapting to some elements of a new culture such as learning the new language, tasting new foods, and becoming familiar with new customs but also retaining one's own language, traditions, and values. The problem with total assimilation is that one loses the ability to relate and communicate with members of one's own ethnic group, and the problem with not adapting to a new culture is that one has difficulty functioning in the new society (Adkins et al., 1999). According to Adkins et al. (1999) biculturalism is an important strategy to implement to negotiate and function in a new society. While there is no clear answer of how long it will take newcomers to become comfortable in a new culture, Adkins et al. (1999) point out that it is reasonable to expect that after a five-year period some form of integration will have taken place.

### ***Conclusion***

This chapter presented the theoretical framework and the core themes of this research project and was divided into five sections. Section one highlighted the inhospitable conditions of Global South refugee camps and examined the concept of trauma and the impact traumatization has on

refugees. Consideration was also given to what can be done to foster the well-being of traumatized refugees including an analysis of sequential phased based treatment. Section two focused on the social process of empowerment and the importance of fostering the growth and well-being of traumatized refugees and an analysis of how refugees attempt to gain control of their lives in resettlement nations such as Canada. Sections three and four explored the concepts of self-efficacy and resiliency and how refugees cope to life in developed countries including how they develop resilient behaviours and adapt to previous hardships including their time spent in refugee camps. The fifth section examined the role culture plays in refugee resettlement including an analysis of how newcomer refugees adapt to the norms of a new society and typically progress through a U-curve of stages when adapting to a foreign culture. The next chapter of this thesis will provide an overview of the methodological approaches utilized throughout this research project.

## **Chapter 4 – Methodological Approaches**

### ***Introduction***

Chapter four provides an overview of the methodological approaches utilized throughout this research project. The chapter begins by outlining narration as a research product and explains its benefits to the researcher, participants, and groups facing adversity. Asset mapping is also discussed as an approach in which newcomers build stronger communities by unearthing solutions to improve the quality of their members' lives (Lightfoot et al., 2014). The section that follows pertains to my refugee participants, how they were identified, and the interview process. Detailed information pertaining to research access, data sources, analysis, and the type of interview questions I used during my interviews is provided with emphasis placed on the researcher-subject relationship, my connection to the refugee community, and the transcription process. The chapter concludes by describing my role as a researcher and the limitations and challenges of this project including the challenges of working with marginalized communities and different cultural groups and the importance of respecting the power imbalance that may exist between a researcher and his or her participants.

### ***Narration***

Barton (2004) defines narration as the study of customs, routines, and everyday occurrences that are filled with aspirations, dreams, and intricacies. Barton (2004) adds that narration is a way of understanding experiences and is a fundamental approach in qualitative research that allows researchers to “excavate deep understanding and meaning embedded in our lives” (p. 519). McMillan (2016) suggests that narration is the sharing of stories which include important beginnings, experiences, viewpoints, influences, and conclusions. These stories can then be used

to “provide a deep and rich understanding of a specific phenomenon” (McMillan, 2016, p. 320-321). According to Schutt (2011), narration is an effective storytelling method to present a big picture of experiences and events while allowing the researcher and readers to “follow participants down their trails” (p. 339). Employing a narrative approach contextualizes a lived experience in a cultural, historical, or social setting and puts participants’ desires, dreams, hopes, preferences, and viewpoints in the heart of the conversation (Morgan, 2002; Schweitzer & Knudson, 2014). Narration was thus used as a methodological strategy to outline the migration of Lhotsampa refugees to Winnipeg.

Researchers gain insight and understanding of the dynamic and complex human experience when listening to the stories of others (East et al., 2010; Schweitzer and Knudson, 2014). East et al. (2010) explain that researchers gain awareness and new perspectives from listening to personal narratives. Possessed with this knowledge, researchers can campaign for change within their local communities. For example, researchers can advocate for the funding of specially designed employment programs upon learning that newcomer refugees are having difficulty finding employment.

Storytelling also benefits individual research participants. Individuals with similar stories, for example, can form bonds and supportive networks (i.e. refugee support groups, conversation circles). The sharing of narratives can help participants develop a sense of resilience, a connection with their inner selves, and a sense of belonging to their community. Additionally, the sharing of difficult experiences can have therapeutic effects on individual storytellers resulting in personal growth and a better understanding of emotions among participants (East et al., 2010). Groups facing adversity also benefit from sharing personal stories. Senehi (2009) explains that groups sharing common difficulties or experiences can develop a knowledge and



power base in which they may begin to address challenges and deficiencies that afflict them from a stronger foundation.

### *Asset mapping*

McLean (2013) notes that refugee newcomers to Winnipeg face obstacles and challenges which impede their personal development and growth. Some of these barriers include culture shock, discrimination, lack of affordable housing, and poverty. While significant barriers exist, McLean (2013) argues that refugee communities possess the knowledge and strength to build social networks and address the deficiencies within their own communities. McLean (2013) proposes that by identifying the challenges and addressing the needs of newcomer refugees, newcomer groups can recognize the strengths and assets within their individual communities, which can be utilized for the betterment of their members.

According to Lightfoot et al. (2014), asset mapping, which is introduced in the aforementioned paragraph, consists of exploring and mapping the assets within a community and using these assets to identify solutions to problems afflicting the community. Asset mapping differs from deficit mapping in that communities explore solutions to a problem from a position of strength rather than a position of weakness. By relying on its tangible assets (i.e. community organizations) and intangible assets (i.e. support networks), newcomer communities can unearth solutions to improve the quality of their members' lives (Lightfoot et al., 2014).

In her case study of newcomer women, McLean (2013) examines how the Winnipeg Afghan female community helps transition newcomer Afghan women using support groups, conversation circles, and cooking classes. These experienced refugee women in McLean's (2013) study recognize the obstacles new female refugees face and can meet their needs with supportive networks and programming. Harris, Beaubien, Aliaga, Fast, and Hay (2011) also

conducted an asset mapping inventory of the Spence neighbourhood in Winnipeg in hopes of increasing economic participation among residents. The researchers learned that the residents of the area possess numerous skills, experiences, and abilities that organizations and employers in the area demand such as skills in maintenance, childcare, and cooking. After surveying residents of the neighbourhood, Harris et al. (2011) developed a skills inventory database which can be accessed by businesses that need employees. Overall, asset mapping allows researchers to witness the pride newcomers take in their communities and the strengths they utilize to confront challenges and move their communities forward (Mathie & Puntenney, 2009).

### ***Project participants***

For this research project, interviews were conducted with Bhutanese refugees of Lhotsampa ethnicity who are currently residing in the city of Winnipeg. I conducted face-to-face, semi-structured style interviews with 10 Lhotsampa refugees to gain a collection of personal accounts from the expulsion of the refugees from their native Bhutan, to their time spent in refugee camps in Nepal, and finally to their migration to the country of Canada and resettlement in the city of Winnipeg.

While the sample size of a qualitative research study is debatable, there were several factors to consider when choosing a possible sample size. Such factors include the phenomena being examined, the type of research questions being posed, and the time and resources available to the researcher (Baker & Edward, 2014). For this study, I interviewed 10 participants, and after completing the interviews, I felt I had gathered enough data to identify important commonalities, patterns, and repetitions (Baker & Edward, 2014). In fact, Hodges (2011) recommends the use of smaller sample sizes in qualitative research studies. She believes the focus should be placed on saturation rather than on representation and confirms that common experiences, key issues, and

relevant data will emerge through saturation. It is important to note, however, that limitations exist when conducting a study with 10 participants. McMillan (2016) advises that studies with smaller sample sizes must be viewed with caution, for studies with larger sample sizes may produce different results. When conducting a study with a smaller sample size, it is important for the researcher to include perspectives that are abundant and detailed so more insights are revealed and the validity of the study does not come into question (McMillan, 2016).

Purposive (selective) sampling was employed to choose prospective research subjects. As an EAL instructor employed at Winnipeg School Division's (WSD) Adult EAL Program<sup>17</sup>, I am familiar with many of the city's settlement agencies for newcomers. To find a reputable Nepali translator in the community, I was referred to Welcome Place and the services of their Nepalese settlement assistance counsellor who provided Nepalese-English interpretation throughout the interviews.

The 10 participants that I interviewed were adult Lhotsampa refugees ranging between 30 to 55 years of age. I decided that both genders should be equally represented in this research project so five males and five females were interviewed. The 10 interviewees possessed various English language levels, educational backgrounds, and employment experiences. Eight of the participants possessed less than four years of formal schooling from their home country, and two possessed more than four years of formal schooling. Four participants had no work experience in Canada, and six had less than one year of Canadian work experience. One of the participants was highly educated having received college education outside of the refugee camp and had more than two years of Canadian work experience. Six participants possessed minimal English skills

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<sup>17</sup> Winnipeg School Division's Adult EAL Program offers classes for adult immigrants. The program provides opportunity for immigrants to improve their English skills to support settlement, employment, training, and further educational opportunities. The classes are held at 275 Portage Avenue (Winnipeg School Division, 2016).

and relied on the interpreter to translate their responses from Nepalese to English. Four of the participants possessed an intermediate level of English and provided a few responses in English but primarily relied on communicating in Nepalese.

Despite differences in employment history, educational background, and English language skills, each of the participants was a Canadian Government sponsored refugee<sup>18</sup> who had spent time in a Nepalese refugee camp. In addition, each participant held permanent resident (PR) status and had been residing in the city for a minimum of two years. Prior to conducting the interviews, human ethics approval was obtained from the University of Manitoba's Research Ethics Board.

Each interview that I conducted lasted approximately 60 to 90 minutes. It is important to note that an interview of this length has limitations as the time frame provides the interviewer with a limited scope on participants' experiences. Each participant was provided a pseudonym to respect his or her anonymity. The interpreter, who assisted me in conducting the interviews, was female. This was a precaution in the case female interviewees felt uncomfortable being interviewed and sharing personal information in the presence of a male researcher. In my interactions with the participants, I found that the female participants had no hesitation in speaking to a male researcher. To make participants feel comfortable, we made casual introductions and engaged in small talk before the interviews commenced. This was helpful in making the participants feel relaxed and ready to begin the interviews. Each interview that was conducted took place in a quiet meeting room at Welcome Place. Following the transcription process, each participant was provided a summary of the interview in simplified English for his or her records.

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<sup>18</sup> According to the Nepalese settlement counsellor at Welcome Place all the Lhotsampas who have arrived in Winnipeg to date are government sponsored refugees as opposed to privately sponsored refugees.

### ***Research access, data sources, and analysis***

To gain access and conduct a thorough and meaningful research study, I employed an overt approach as recommended by Bogdan and Biklen (2007). To do this effectively, I made my interests known and sought the cooperation of those I interviewed. To begin, I set-up an initial meeting with my Nepalese interpreter who assisted in scheduling the interviews with potential participants. During the meeting, I introduced the research project, answered questions, addressed concerns, and worked towards developing a rapport. Developing a rapport with participants was also essential before the interviews commenced as it helped solidify a meaningful researcher-subject relationship, put subjects at ease, and established a safe and comfortable environment for the sharing of personal experiences (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006).

I have been an EAL instructor in the community for eight years, so I have a pre-existing relationship with some members of the Bhutanese community who have attended EAL classes at Winnipeg School Division's Adult EAL Program, which helped in developing rapport and dialogue. Of the ten participants, I knew four participants who had taken classes or were registered for classes in this program. Gaining the trust and acceptance of participants was also of importance during the access stage. Johl and Renganathan (2010) emphasize that strong interpersonal skills, a genuine sense of integrity, and effective verbal communication are keys to gaining the trust and acceptance of participants; consequently, these are the qualities I aspired to throughout my research study.

Throughout this project, I also made use of a research journal. Stake (2010) recommends keeping a journal to keep track of "ongoing speculations, puzzlements and ponderings" (p. 101). In this research journal, I included self-reflective pieces and observer's comments regarding my

analyses, methodologies, procedures, and goals (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). In addition to using a research journal, I relied on field notes to supplement my interviews with participants. According to Bogdan and Biklen (2007), field notes contain a researcher's ideas, reflections, ponderings, and personal experiences – all of which are necessary in a qualitative research study. To produce a rich set of data, which is beneficial to the researcher, field notes should be accurate, detailed, descriptive, extensive, and relevant – qualities I strived to maintain (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

Once the interviews were completed and the data had been gathered, the analysis portion of this research project commenced. Data analysis took place in three steps. During the first step, interviews were transcribed verbatim as translated by the interpreter, transcripts were reviewed, and patterns, regularities, common themes, and important issues were identified (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Stake, 2010). As an exhaustive list of themes was generated from the participants, the number was narrowed down to assure feasibility and to complement the researcher's primary interests (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). The second step was the documentation stage in which I gathered necessary data including observer's comments, field notes, transcripts, and writings from my research journal. Proper documentation provided a blueprint to better conceptualize and analyze the text (Schutt, 2011). The final step was to implement a coding system to enhance in the interpretation of data. Coding categories of personal relevance were developed to sort the data and complement my research. Narrative codes were used to categorize aspects of participants' stories including the structure of the narrative, participants' beliefs, and possible contradictions (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

### ***Interview questions***

A large portion of this project involved interviewing research participants. I relied on personal accounts to engage in a purposeful conversation and to gain a unique interpretation from my

participants (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Stake, 2010). Thus, my interviews were open-ended in nature, and I asked probing questions in hopes of clarifying and refining the information I received (Stake, 2010). To conduct a successful interview, I followed the suggestions put forth by Kvale and Bryman (1996, 2004, as cited in Bryman, 2004). More specifically, I aimed for a balanced, clear, and open-minded approach during questioning and strived for ethical sensitivity when discussing sensitive topics with refugee participants (Bryman, 2004).

Stake (2010) argues that interview subjects often produce quotable materials so interviews should be tailored to what is unique about the individual participant. He adds that the research question epitomizes a compass point as opposed to a standardized procedure. Keeping Stake's (2010) recommendation in mind, I conducted semi-structured type interviews to find out what was special about individual participants. While I relied upon a general set of questions during the interviews (i.e. my compass point), a semi-structured type of interview provided me with a level of flexibility and latitude to pursue a variety of topics thus allowing for the content of the interview to be dictated by the participants themselves (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). According to Stake (2010), semi-structured interviews enable the researcher to ask open-ended questions resulting in an increase in commentary and stories from participants.

Before the interviews commenced, the research project was introduced and a consent form, which outlined the nature of the study and its obligations, was circulated for participants to sign (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Smith, 2005). Participants were asked to sign the consent form if they fully understood the project and what it entailed (Smith, 2005). The consent form assured participants that their responses were to be kept anonymous and confidential (Bryman, 2004). The interpreter was also used to explain the nature of the study and translate the information contained in the consent form in Nepalese. A Nepalese version of the consent form was offered

to be made available, but participants chose to sign the English version of the consent form. While purposive sampling assisted me in selecting potential subjects, I made it clear to the participants that their participation and involvement in this research project was voluntary (Smith, 2005).

The interviews that I conducted were voice-recorded using an I-phone and an MP3 style recording device, and the recordings were transcribed. Transcriptions allowed for a comprehensive account of what participants said and were beneficial in remedying the limitations of memorization (Bryman, 2004). Throughout the interview process, the recorded data was safeguarded in a locked filing cabinet and will be destroyed upon completion of the research project (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006) per University of Manitoba guidelines by December 31, 2017.

When working with a cultural group that is different than one's own, it was essential for the researcher to strive for sensitivity. Relaying experiences could trigger strong emotions including anger, sadness, distress, embarrassment, fear, and anxiety, so the researcher must refrain from evoking such powerful emotions (East et al., 2010; Elmir, Schmied, Jackson, and Wilkes, 2011). A semi-structured interview is recommended as a style of interview that bodes well when discussing sensitive topics (Elmir et al., 2011). While the interviewer relies on a predetermined set of questions, he or she can modify or skip a question that may be too sensitive for the interviewee. A semi-structured interview permits the researcher latitude and flexibility (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). To be mindful of sensitivity and avoid discussing topics that may elicit strong emotions, I adhered to Elmir et al. (2011) who suggest designing interview questions that are "open-ended and clear", "sensitive to the needs of participants" and "grasp the entirety"



of a certain experience (p. 14). In addition, I had a list of counselling services on hand and introduced my participants to these services before the interviews began.

### ***Role of the researcher, limitations, and challenges***

According to Smith (2005), the developing and maintaining of relationships with participants is fundamental for researchers working in marginalized communities over time. To be meaningful, relationships with marginalized individuals, collectives, and communities must be nurturing, reciprocal, and respectful. In addition, a researcher should be aware of his or her position within the relationship. In other words, a researcher must be wary of wielding too much power in the researcher-subject relationship; instead, the researcher and participant must be equals in the power-sharing process. To avoid the power imbalance that may exist between participant and researcher, I strived to work collaboratively with my participants (Smith, 2005). Instead of assuming the role of problem solver or therapist (Stake, 2010), I took on the role of shared learner. A shared learner is someone who appreciates and understands that knowledge can be imparted by both parties (Smith, 2005). In addition, I heeded the advice of Neustaeter (2012) who proposes that participants be reminded of the fact that they are the experts and researchers want to listen and learn from them. She adds that when interviewing lower-literacy learners, focus should not be placed on formal and school-based learning but rather on everyday learning and the importance of relationships.

In addition to advocating for an impartial and meaningful relationship with participants, Smith (2005) is a proponent of a researcher-subject relationship built on the moral foundations of trust and integrity. Elmir et al. (2011) add that mutual trust between a participant and researcher enhances the “spontaneous exchange of information” (p. 16). Maintaining integrity and developing a significant level of trust with participants was crucial throughout this project. To

meet these criteria in my individual work, I conducted interviews in a convenient, neutral, and safe site, and assured participants that they were under no obligation to fulfill the interview requirements if they felt uncomfortable. To ensure my participants felt as comfortable as possible during our interview sessions, I heeded Smith's (2005) advice and endeavored to be an active observer and listener and to minimize my own speech.

### ***Conclusion***

This chapter described the methodological approaches used throughout this research study. Two approaches were outlined including narration and asset mapping. Narration was used as a strategy to outline the experiences of Lhotsampa refugees from their early lives in Bhutan, to their time spent in Nepalese refugee camps, and to their final journey to Winnipeg, Canada. Narration presented a "big picture" of the group's experiences allowing the researcher to gain awareness and new perspectives of the refugee experience. Asset mapping was also discussed as an approach in which newcomers build stronger communities by uncovering solutions to improve the quality of their members' lives. By identifying challenges and recognizing strengths, refugee communities can begin addressing the needs of newcomer refugees. The remaining sections of this chapter identified the refugee participants, outlined the interview process, and described the limitations and challenges of working with marginalized communities and participants from a different cultural group. The next chapter of this thesis will summarize part one of the interviews that were conducted with the Lhotsampa refugee participants.

## Chapter 5 – The Journey of the Bhutanese Refugees of Winnipeg – Part I

### *Introduction*

In chapters five and six, I have attempted to provide a comprehensive and thorough analysis of the interviews that I conducted with the Lhotsampa refugee participants. As most of the participants spoke Nepalese during our interviews, I relied on a Nepalese speaking interpreter to provide English translation of participant responses. I am confident that the stories told by the refugee participants have been accurately translated and have not been skewed in any way. I am confident of this because the Nepalese interpreter came highly recommended and demonstrated considerable knowledge of the subject area in her role as a settlement worker at Welcome Place and as a previous refugee herself. To respect the anonymity and privacy of Lhotsampa participants, everyone was provided with a pseudonym. The following pseudonyms were chosen to represent the 10 refugee participants – Amala, Biren, Chophel, Dawa, Dechan, Hari, Pema, Puran, Ramani, and Rinchen. The following overview chart provides a brief profile of each participant.

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Arrival Year to Canada</b>
Amala	Female	2011
Biren	Male	2012
Chophel	Male	2010
Dawa	Female	2009
Dechan	Female	2011
Hari	Male	2011
Pema	Female	2010
Puran	Male	2013
Ramani	Female	2011
Rinchen	Male	2011

This is part one of the journey of the Bhutanese refugees of Winnipeg. This chapter contains the accounts of 10 resilient Lhotsampa refugees residing in the city of Winnipeg. The first section of this chapter focuses on the early lives of these refugees and their expulsion from Bhutan. This section includes the early memories the refugees have of growing up in Bhutan, their reasons for leaving the country, and the emotions they felt becoming disenfranchised refugees. The second section provides an overview of life in Nepalese refugee camps. Throughout this section, participants describe the conditions in the camps and the specific difficulties they faced as refugees in Nepal.

### *Early life in Bhutan*

The Bhutanese refugees interviewed for this project spoke fondly of their early lives in Bhutan. Many were children of farmers and spoke of their peaceful lives in the beautiful mountainous nation before the group's expulsion from the country in 1992. Amala, Dawa, Ramani, and Pema's families reared animals and had an abundance of land. Dawa remembers,

My parents were farmers. We had a big land. My family grew vegetables, and we had animals like cows, goats, horses, and chickens.

Amala reflects on her early childhood saying,

I enjoyed my childhood life. I liked taking care of animals, picking oranges from the garden, and playing with my siblings.

Ramani also has fond memories of her childhood. She recalls,

My parents were farmers. They grew grains, ginger, and reared animals. I was so happy in Bhutan.

Pema remembers her village and her job working on the farm. She says,

I was born in a village called New Village. I lived with my parents-in-law, and my parents had a big farm. They reared animals. I didn't go to school. Instead, I helped my family raising the small children on the farm. I enjoyed living in Bhutan.

### *The escalating conflict*

The peaceful life that Dawa, Amala, Ramani, and Pema spoke of was interrupted by the escalating conflict between the ethnic Nepalese (Lhotsampas) and the Drukpas. Some of the refugee participants shared that the conflict between the two groups arose because of political issues and cultural, linguistic, and religious differences. Dechan explains,

There were two different cultures and because of the different cultures my family decided to leave the country. My parents were sometimes scared.

Dawa acknowledges that the two groups had historically maintained a peaceful co-existence, but that relations deteriorated as the Lhotsampas became more educated. She says,

The groups got along before, but things changed as Nepali people became more educated, understood their rights, and fought for their rights.

In 1989, the ruling Drukpa administration implemented the "One Nation, One People" campaign, and the expulsion of ethnic Nepalese began in the southern region of the country (Rizal, 2004).

Puran reflects on the hostile political situation in Bhutan at the time saying,

The previous kings were very good and weren't bad to Nepalese people. At the time, the new king was very rude and discriminated against Nepalese people. Because of these differences, there was a revolution and we left the country. The king at the time was clever. He had relations with other countries and brought police into the country, but Nepalese people understood their rights.

The new king that Puran refers to was Jigme Singye Wangchuck, the fourth King of Bhutan. Wangchuck's predecessor and father, Jigme Dorji Wangchuck, has been credited by historians for modernizing and reforming the country (see Dujardin, 1998; Pommaret, 1998b, 2006; Schicklgruber, 1998; Ura, 1998), but his successor and son's tenure as king saw a dramatic rise in ethnic conflict. Jigme Singye Wangchuck and his political administration were concerned over the growing number of Lhotsampas in the southern region of the country and the influence the group could have on the political and cultural life of the nation. As a result, Wangchuck and the Drukpa ruling elite sought to expel the Lhotsampas by force (Maxym, 2010; Pommaret, 2006; Rizal, 2004).

### *Memories of expulsion*

Amala, Chophel, Dawa, Pema, and Ramani recall the terror they felt as government police forced their way into their villages and farms. Pema, who was 15 years old at the time, shares,

We were very scared of the government. The government entered the village and punished innocent people. We got scared and left the country.

Ramani was only 11 years old when government officials forced their way into her home. She recalls the terrifying incident saying,

I remember the government of Bhutan. The army came to my place and tortured my mother. They forced my family to leave the country and we left, but I was small and don't remember a lot of things. My family and I went straight to Nepal.

Like Ramani, Amala remembers the terror she felt as the Bhutanese army raided her village. She says,

I remember the Bhutan army used to come to my village and started threatening people and taking innocent people to the jail, beating them, and hitting them. We were so scared

and everyone left the village. My uncle was tortured in the jail. They broke his ribs. One of my uncles is still in jail in Bhutan.

Chophel also remembers the anxiety he felt the night police entered his village saying,

My parents were crying. The government police arrived at night time. My big sister and mom were raped. The police were very bad and said bad words.

Human rights violations, killings, and the raping of women and girls by Drukpa security forces were prevalent throughout the ordeal (Frelick, 2007; Maxym, 2010). According to Siwakoti (2012, as cited in Pulla & Dhital, 2015), rape is a tactic used in conflict to destroy the dignity of women and demoralize men. In most conflict situations, rape is a common occurrence that rarely receives notoriety and postwar justice and is taken for granted (Pulla & Dhital, 2015).

Like Chophel, Dawa also remembers the anxiety she felt as government officials entered her village saying,

Army officials came to my village and took innocent people to jail. People were scared and left the country. The government thought Nepali people were against the government. My father was taken away. He spent 18 months in jail before he was released. He was jailed at the army headquarters. When he was released, my family left the village. My father was a village administrator. The government believed he was doing wrong and against the government, so he was jailed.

During the ethnic expulsion, Dawa's father and numerous Lhotsampas were arbitrarily arrested and imprisoned without fair trials (Frelick, 2007; Maxym, 2010). Dawa shares her father's experience in prison saying,

My father talks about his experiences even now. He shared everything with us. They hit him, punched him, and punished him whenever they wanted. They tortured him for no reason.

### *Fleeing the country*

Dawa was relieved when her father was released from jail. Upon his release, her family fled the country and crossed the border into India. In fact, an estimated 80,000 Lhotsampas fled Bhutan seeking refuge in India (Bird, 2012). Chophel was only seven years old when his family fled Bhutan. He remembers his family bringing along a cow and two buffaloes and selling the animals in India. He also recalls having to live along the river bank in India before being transported to Nepal. Chophel explains,

My family left Bhutan and arrived in India. My family had two buffaloes and one cow. We took the animals to India and sold the animals for 500 rupees. My parents, one sister, and I stayed one week in India. We stayed along the river bank then left on a big truck from India to Nepal. We put all our belongings in the truck.

Moreover, Dawa was 10 years old when her family was forced to leave their home. At such a young age, she did not understand the gravity of the situation saying,

I was happy to leave. I didn't know exactly where we were going. I thought we were just going on a trip. I thought we would return to Bhutan. I was happy because everyone was together. The kids were playing and eating. I didn't think I was leaving my country forever.

Despite the naivety of the children, the adults understood that their situations were dire.

Chophel's parents were upset and were crying. Dawa also remembers the stress her parents were feeling during this time saying,



They left everything including the farm, house, animals, and all assets. They left everything. Everybody was crying.

Despite many Lhotsampa families having resided in the southern region of the country for up to five generations, Drukpa government officials classified the ethnic Nepalese as illegal immigrants through the administration of a national census<sup>19</sup> that took place in 1988 (Maxym, 2010; Pulla & Dahal, 2015a). The census categorized residents into one of seven categories. Category 1 residents were “Genuine Bhutanese”, and category 7 residents were classified as “Non-nationals”. Category 7 people were forced to sign voluntary migration forms and depart the country (Pulla, 2015b).

Biren had grown up in southern Bhutan but was residing and conducting business in the capital city of Thimphu<sup>20</sup> at the time. He recalls being threatened and forced to sign one of these voluntary migration forms. He remarks,

When I was in Thimphu, the village administrator called me and threatened me to leave the country within 10 days. I went back to the village and the village administrator compelled me to fill the form to leave the country, and I did fill the form. At the time, the government categorized people into groups from group 1 to group 7. Group 1 was good people and they can stay in Bhutan. Groups 3, 4, and 5 are middle people and group 7 are the worst people and they had to leave the country. I was put in group 7 and they threatened me to leave the country, and finally I left the country.

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<sup>19</sup> Bhutan’s national census in 1988 had seven categories (Pulla, 2015b). Category 1 were Genuine Bhutanese. Category 2 were Returned Migrants – people who had left Bhutan and returned. Category 3 were Drop-out cases – people who were not present during the census. Category 4 was for a non-national woman married to a Bhutanese man. Category 5 was for a non-national man married to a Bhutanese woman. Category 6 was for Adoption cases – children who were legally adopted. Category 7 was for Non-nationals – illegal immigrants (Pulla, 2015b).

<sup>20</sup> Thimphu is the capital city of Bhutan and is in the western-central region of the country near the Himalayan Mountains. The city is approximately 7,000 feet above sea level. The royal government is housed in the capital city. In 2005 the population of Thimphu was estimated to be between 79,000-80,000 people (Thimphu, 2009).

Being disenfranchised and expelled from their homeland was disheartening for the Lhotsampa refugees. Biren reflects on these experiences saying,

After the revolution, everything changed and there was lots of stress. I left the country with my wife, my mother, and my young son. My family and I felt very bad because we had to leave everything, all property, and all land. It was not good and I felt very bad. We left Bhutan on August 5, 1992. We tried to convince the government that we didn't want to leave the country, but they didn't listen and we were forced to leave the country.

Puran acknowledges that the political situation was difficult for younger Lhotsampas such as himself. He recalls many Lhotsampa youths being pressured to join the Bhutan People's Party. Founded in 1990, the Bhutan People's Party advocated for democracy and human rights and sought international attention to the country's refugee dilemma but also participated in violence throughout southern Bhutan including the destroying of land, the destruction of census documents, and the burning and looting of health centers and schools. The Bhutan People's Party was thus classified by the Bhutanese government as a terrorist organization (Shaw, 1992). Puran says he felt pressure to join the activists from the Bhutan People's Party but that he chose not to and instead fled the country seeking refuge with his family. He recalls,

The Bhutanese revolution party was putting pressure on young people to get involved and fight the government. I didn't get involved in this party.

After being forced to depart the country, some refugees like Dechan, Hari, Puran, and Ramani fled Bhutan with their families and found transport directly to Nepal. Many Bhutanese refugee families including Amala, Chopel, and Dawa's families spent a short time in India before moving to Nepal. The refugees were not allowed to stay in India, and many were transported by the Indian military to forested areas in southeastern Nepal (Bird, 2012). Many Lhotsampa

refugees preferred to move to Nepal rather than stay in India. According to the refugees interviewed, Nepalese people and the Lhotsampas spoke the same language and shared a similar culture. Understandably, Nepal was also the ancestral home of the Lhotsampa refugees and a place of possible refuge.

### *Life in Nepalese refugee camps*

Upon arrival into Nepal, the Lhotsampa refugees settled in forested areas in the southeastern region of the country along the Indian border. The refugees explained that they started to clear trees and construct huts for shelter. The refugees were confronted by Nepalese police and prevented from building the huts. The UNHCR mitigated relations between the Nepalese government and Lhotsampa refugees, and the Nepalese government eventually supplied land for refugee camps to be constructed. In total, seven camps for Lhotsampa refugees were constructed – Sanischare, Timai, Goldhap, Khudunabari, and Beldangi, which had three camps within its confines. In total, approximately 108,000 refugees occupied the seven refugee camps (CIC, 2007b; Ranard, 2007). The following table in Figure 3 shows the population size of each of the refugee camps in Nepal housing Lhotsampa refugees.

<b>Camp Name</b>	<b>Camp Population Size (2008)</b>
Beldangi 1, 2, and Extension	52,756
Sanischare	21,320
Khudunabari	13,180
Timai	10,344
Goldhap	9,632

Figure 3 – Population Size of Nepal’s Refugee Camps (IOM, 2008).

The refugees, who were interviewed for this project, spent several years living in these camps. For example, Dawa stayed in the Sanischare refugee camp from 1992 to 2009. Chopel arrived to the Sanischare refugee camp in 1992 and left in 2010. Puran also arrived to the Sanischare camp in 1992 when he was 26 years old and left in 2013. Rinchen arrived to the Beldangi refugee camp in 1993 when he was 22 years old and stayed for approximately 20 years.

During the interviews, many participants spoke of the poor living conditions in each of the refugee camps. Dechan, who was only 18 years old when she arrived at the Sanischare camp, remembers the terror she felt upon arriving. She says,

It was so stressful when we arrived in Nepal because the situation was not good. The food we got was very smelly, and I didn't like to eat. I had a 15-day old boy with me. I was thinking I was going to die soon. There wasn't any hope of life. I was so scared. So many people died in one day like 15 to 16 people. I was scared for myself and my family. I had a small boy. There was no sanitation and no clean drinking water. Children got sick. People were dying. I was so frustrated, and I was crying.

Biren remembers arriving at night time and the anxiety he felt explaining,

I arrived at night at 9:00 pm. I didn't see anything. My family slept on the bamboo the first night. There were no houses.

Ramani was 11 years old when she arrived to the Sanischare camp for the first time. She remembers,

When we came from Bhutan, we stayed in the jungle. My family and I cut down the forest and made plastic roof huts and stayed there. The food was very bad. It smelled very bad. There was no clean drinking water, no hospitals. Many people died in the refugee camps.

### *Housing in the camps*

Inadequate housing was a major obstacle the refugees had to endure in the refugee camps.

Rinchen recalls the inadequate housing situation in the Beldangi camp saying,

The big problem with the refugee camp was the poor construction of huts. Many were made of bamboo and plastic.

Hari remembers the challenge of constructing these huts in the Sanischare camp saying,

When I came to Nepal, it was very frustrating. We had to destroy the jungle to build huts.

It was very difficult when it was raining and windy.

Chophel, who also hails from the Sanischare camp, remembers that these poorly constructed huts resulted in rain leakage and an infestation of snakes. He recalls,

Snakes killed many people in the camp. Many of the snakes were poisonous. I remember sleeping at night and snakes getting through the roof. These snakes were big. If you got bitten by a snake, you would usually die within 24 hours. These snakes were cobras.

Biren also comments on the housing dilemma in the Beldangi camp saying,

It was very difficult for senior people and children to stay in the huts because in the summer it was 40°C. It was melting in the sun. When there was a storm or rain, everything was blown away and there was no more shelter. Life was not normal.

Amala explains that adjusting to a warmer Nepalese climate was difficult especially for children and the elderly. She says that some refugees died trying to adapt to the climate change between the two countries.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Some of the refugees in this study spoke of a noticeable climate change between Bhutan and Nepal. While the two countries are in close geographical proximity, Nepal experiences more extreme temperatures than Bhutan. For example, Nepal can experience temperatures as high as 40°C between the months of April and June. During these same months, average temperatures in Bhutan will range from 15°C to 30°C and only during extreme heat waves will exceed 30°C (Savada, 1993).

### ***Going to school***

Besides poor housing, the school system in the camps was inadequate for refugee youths. Dawa remembers the schooling situation in the Sanischare camp was dire saying,

The school only had one blackboard in the beginning. Students sat on the floor. The school was poorly organized.

Ramani also attended school in the Sanischare camp. She recalls,

There were no books at first when I started school in the refugee camp. Students had to sit on the floor, on the mud. There was no furniture, no mats, or anything else. There was no school dress. I went to school for only six years.

In terms of schooling, the refugees interviewed for this project had various levels of education. Chophel, for example, went to school from kindergarten to grade eight in the Sanischare camp. Pema, who arrived in the refugee camp when she was 15 years old, did not attend primary school in Bhutan but eventually took some adult Nepali classes in the Timai camp. Dechan completed grade four in Bhutan and entered the refugee camp when she was 18 years old but did not receive any additional schooling. Hari and Puran did not have the opportunity to go to school in Bhutan and received no formal schooling in the refugee camp.

### ***Health problems, sanitation, and death***

According to Pulla and Dahal (2015b) health problems that occurred frequently in the refugee camps included malnutrition, poor oral health, and depression resulting from displacement.

Hopelessness, sleep disturbances, and high levels of anxiety were other common psychological health concerns. In addition, a lack of prenatal and postnatal care and gynecological services added to the insufficient health care available for Lhotsampa refugees (Pulla & Dahal, 2015b).

Many of the interviewed refugees also spoke of the poor sanitation and the lack of clean drinking water in the camps. Biren reflects on the lack of proper sanitation in the Beldangi camp saying,

The big problem was toilets. There were no toilets. We had to go to the jungle. It was so difficult because there were lots of people in the refugee camps and there were no toilets or washrooms. It was a big problem.

Amala addresses the water situation in the Beldangi camp saying,

The refugee camp had no clean drinking water and many people got sick and died. In some families, they lost everyone.

Many refugees said that the lack of a proper health care system was the largest challenge.

Chophel recalls that his neighbours died from illness and lack of proper health care and that their small children were left orphaned. He remembers,

Both neighbours died from sickness and the family had small children now with no caregivers. It was hard for the children as they had no shelter and nothing to eat and no medication, so other moms from the camp began to look after these children.

This act of solidarity by Bhutanese women to care for the orphaned children exemplifies the core values of Hinduism namely the importance of community, collaboration, and providing for others (Hodge, 2004).

Several other refugees interviewed for this research project spoke of the poor health care services in the camps. Rinchen, for example, shared that his mother became very sick because of a lack of health care in the camp and died. Chophel's mother also became very sick; and as a result, he was forced to quit school after grade eight to care for her. Amala revealed that both her father-in-law and mother-in-law passed away upon arriving from India because of a lack of

medicine in the Beldangi camp. In addition, Pema acknowledged that many older refugees and children died in the Timai camp because of a lack of proper medicine. One refugee who had to endure the painful loss of a child was Biren. He shared that he lost his five-year old son in 2008 in the refugee camp because of a lack of medicine. Puran also remembers the family members he lost saying,

I lost my mother, father, and auntie in the refugee camp. They had health issues while living in Bhutan and didn't receive proper medication in the refugee camp. They passed away.

Like Puran, Hari also lost both of his parents in the refugee camp. He recalls,

My mom passed away after two months of arrival. She got sick in the morning and died in the evening. I'm not sure how she died. My father passed away in 1997. He had no health issues but passed away suddenly.

Dawa remembers the poor health care system in the Sanischare refugee camp saying,

Many people died because of diseases. The camp had no hospitals. Many small children and seniors died. Every day about 18 to 19 people died in the camp because of disease, unhygienic food, and lack of clean drinking water. I had one aunt and three uncles die.

Having to cope with the death of family members was a common occurrence in the refugee camps. In fact, many participants spoke of family members passing away unexpectedly upon first arrival. According to the UNHCR (1995), displacement is strenuous and takes a toll on the mental and physical health of refugees. Physical violence, persecution, and grief often traumatize refugees and tend to deplete their physical and mental reserves required to fight off disease, which is a likely cause of these unexpected deaths.



Although the refugees lost numerous family members in the camps, participants still spoke of being able to perform their traditional Hindu period of mourning rituals. Amala explained that elders are highly respected in Hindu culture because they gave birth to children, raised them, and worked hard to provide for them. In return, followers of the Hindu faith spend 13 days in formal mourning and prayers following the death of an elder. According to Amala, the Lhotsampas will not eat salt during these 13 days. Instead, they will only eat rice once a day usually in the morning with pure, unsalted butter and will occasionally eat fruit. She added that during the first seven days, male and female mourners are separated into different rooms. After seven days, a priest will arrive to read from the holy book. On the final 13<sup>th</sup> day, food is prepared by the family, relatives are invited, and the priest is presented with a gift. Amala also added that some Hindus believe in reincarnation<sup>22</sup> after death – that is an individual who has done well in his or her lifetime will be reborn.

### ***Food and nutrition***

In addition to dealing with an inadequate health care system, accessing nutritious food was nearly impossible for refugees in the camps. Hari remembered that the lack of proper nutrition was the worst aspect of refugee life. Rinchen recalls that this depravity also made raising children difficult. He explains,

It was very hard to raise children in the camp because there was a lack of food, lack of basic products like milk, and food was very expensive. I couldn't afford these products. It

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<sup>22</sup> According to Hinduism, those people who have behaved well during their lifetimes will be reincarnated as human beings (Maxym, 2010). Those people who have behaved badly will go to hell or return to earth as animals such as a dog. Some Hindus believe that if the mourning rituals are performed properly, then the soul of the deceased person will transition smoothly to heaven. If the mourning rituals are not performed properly, some Hindus believe the spirit of the deceased person will not transition to the afterlife and instead will remain on earth in the form of a ghost to haunt the living (Maxym, 2010).

was very hard to provide the necessities to my children like food and clothing. It was difficult because I didn't have sufficient income.

The lack of income for Rinchen and other refugees was because the Nepalese government restricted Lhotsampa refugees from employment and confined their movements to within the camps themselves (Bird, 2012; Laenkhholm, 2007). These restrictions, however, were lenient and some refugees found low-paying work and accessed educational opportunities outside the camps in India and Nepal despite their illegal status (Basnyat, 2006; Pulla, 2015a).

Nevertheless, raising children was still challenging for the refugees. Biren brought one son with him from Bhutan and explained that his other children were born in the refugee camp. He explains the difficulty of raising children in the camp saying,

It's not like here. There are no daycares. There is no nutritious food for children.

Especially for mothers, it is difficult. They must care for children and all family members. Fathers must go out for work to earn a living. It is very difficult for mothers to take care of children.

### *Challenges to safety*

Safety was another challenge the refugees spoke about during the interviews. Fires, for example, were a common occurrence. Sometimes the fires were accidental, but sometimes they were intentionally set. Dawa reflects on the problem with fires in the Sanischare camp saying,

There were lots of fires. Sometimes fires were set intentionally, some accidentally. Many people died from fire. Firefighters would arrive after two to three hours. The fires were usually finished by then.

In addition to the lack of timely firefighting services, many of the refugee camps possessed no security or police to provide protection. Because of this, Puran remembers that numerous thefts took place in the Sanischare camp. He states,

It wasn't a safe place to live. The robbers were Nepalese villagers and other refugees.

Once, I was robbed. They attacked my house but didn't take anything.

Amala explained that refugees had to be very careful with any money they had because thefts were so common. She says,

In the evening, we collected the money and put it in the bank. If we put the money at home, some people would steal it. There were many different people. Some people were nice, some people were not nice. Very different people.

Dawa stated that fights among refugees and killings were common in the Sanischare camp. She explains,

Safety was a major challenge in the camp. There was no security, no police in camps to provide support and protection. People were worried every day. The camp had bad and good people. Some people were attacked and killed. There was fighting.

In addition, Chophel explains that the Nepalese people from outside the camps often attacked the refugees. He recalls,

Nepalese people sometimes killed Bhutanese people. They dominated them and attacked them. Once, I was attacked and beaten with sticks.

Amala echoes this sentiment explaining that Nepalese people from outside the refugee camps often discriminated against Bhutanese people. She explains,

Nepalese people had land, houses, and they had everything. Bhutanese refugees had nothing. The Nepalese people told us that we have nothing and that we are not people.

Despite having an ancestral connection to Nepal, Bhutanese people often felt inferior among the Nepalese (Pulla & Dahal, 2015b). Dawa stated that many Nepalese villagers disapproved of the incoming Bhutanese refugees and discriminated against them. She recalls Nepalese people being angry about the deforestation that was taking place to construct the camps and the depletion of local resources such as the water supply. She states,

At first, the Nepalese didn't appreciate the Bhutanese refugees because they destroyed the land, deforested the land, used the water supply, and used and depleted the resources. Amala added that it was sometimes dangerous for refugees to venture outside the camps in search of employment and higher education. She explains,

Some years refugees could not go freely when there was fighting in Nepal. But one year there was a problem. Refugees couldn't go outside, only inside. There was police and army. Refugee people don't go outside. If refugee people went outside, there was Nepali people fighting and refugees maybe get killed. The government sat inside the refugee camp. Many people were shot and killed. 14,000 people were killed at this time by the army and the police.

Despite reported attacks and discriminatory remarks, positive relationships were formed between some Nepalese villagers and Bhutanese refugees. Dawa elaborates,

The refugee camp was surrounded by Nepalese communities and villages. Some of the Nepalese people were very good. They did trade and supported the refugees. All spoke the same language and had a similar culture. The only difference was the origin of birth – Bhutan and Nepal.

### *UNHCR funding and support*

While poor living conditions were prevalent in the early beginning of the camps, the UNHCR eventually provided additional support to the Lhotsampa refugees. For example, roads were eventually built, clean drinking water was provided, and relations improved between the Nepalese villagers and Bhutanese refugees. Dawa said that some Nepalese villagers trekked to the camps to sell vegetables and milk to the refugees. She recalls,

Nepalese brought vegetables and milk to sell in the camp and did business with refugees.

The relations improved.

Hari recalls that funding from the UNHCR was vital in improving the living conditions in the Sanischare camp. He explains,

It was so difficult for two to three years because there was no medical health system, no clean drinking water, no nutritious food, and no safety. After five years, life improved a little bit. We received better food and could build better houses. This was because of UNHCR funding.

Amala adds that UNHCR funding resulted in better housing in the Beldangi camp saying,

There were no houses when we first came. My family and I made a tent of plastic and stayed there for one year. Later the UNHCR provided materials to build huts, not beautiful huts but shelter.

The school system was also upgraded because of increased UNHCR funding. Dawa explains,

The school system eventually became better. Books were provided. Relief organizations sent aid and the school system began to run more smoothly. Washrooms were put in. The school system developed a routine.

### *Life on the outside*

Dawa was the most educated of the refugees interviewed. She attended school from kindergarten to grade 10 in the refugee camp and completed her high school outside the camp. The camps did not have higher education classes, but Dawa received a scholarship from the UNHCR and completed her grade 12 at a private high school in Nepal. After completing high school, she went to India for college and graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in Botany. Dawa elaborates on her education saying,

The high school costs money, but I received a scholarship for two years. I was a very smart student. After completing high school, I went to India for college. I received a science degree in Botany. I was very interested in science. I scored very good marks. I was planning to do a Ph.D. in Botany.

Dawa indicated that she could attend college in India because the Nepalese government did not pose restrictions on refugees leaving the camps for higher education.

As an adult living outside the refugee camp, Dawa realized how difficult life was for her fellow Lhotsampa refugees. As an educated individual, she began to question the poor housing and health care services in her camp and wondered how life could be improved for refugees. Outside the refugee camp, Dawa also began to experience discrimination saying,

I began to realize that many people thought differently of refugees. I felt bad because of this. Some thought refugees have nothing. I felt disrespected by others. Many refugees were discriminated against and not allowed to rent housing because landlords believed they had no money to pay for rent.

Dawa's experience of discrimination is not uncommon for refugees trying to access affordable housing. In Canada, for example, race and ethnicity serve as barriers to equitable access of the

country's housing market (Teixeira, 2011). Teixeira (2011) explains that newcomer groups are sometimes discriminated against and face language and financial challenges in terms of acquiring knowledge of apartment vacancies and homeownership. Teixeira (2011) argues that "gatekeeping" practices by some of the country's real estate agents, landlords, and mortgage lenders prevent newcomers from accessing affordable housing thus limiting their housing options and culminating in the racial segregation of housing markets.

### ***Survival in the camps***

When questioned of how participants survived life in the refugee camps, refugees like Dechan believe survival was God's will. She reflects,

I lost all hope. I was thinking my baby was going to die and I was going to die. But suddenly, God gave me life and nobody died.

Other refugees like Amala, Biren, and Ramani surmise that life in the refugee camp was "survival of the fittest". Amala elaborates,

People who lost their lives were very simple people. They didn't understand what was good and what was bad. They didn't take care of themselves. Whenever they got sick, they ate anything. They ate contaminated food. When they got sick, they didn't have money for medication so they were drinking and they didn't take care of themselves. People like this lost their lives.

### ***Conclusion***

This chapter summarized part one of the interviews that were conducted with the Lhotsampa refugee participants. The first part of the chapter focused on the early lives of the Lhotsampas including the refugees' memories of growing up in Bhutan and their reasons for departing the

country. Personal accounts revealed that the refugees lived a quiet and peaceful existence before their villages and homes were raided by the Bhutanese military and the group was expelled from the country. The second section of this chapter provided an overview of life in Nepalese refugee camps including participants' descriptions of the conditions and challenges of refugee life including an assessment of the camps' housing, schooling, healthcare, and safety. The next chapter of this thesis will summarize part two of the interviews that were conducted with the Lhotsampa refugee participants.



## **Chapter 6 – The Journey of the Bhutanese Refugees of Winnipeg – Part II**

### ***Introduction***

This is part two of the journey of the Bhutanese refugees of Winnipeg. This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section explores the group's journey to Canada and resettlement. More specifically, this section examines how refugees were sponsored by the Canadian government, their first impressions of Canada, and the culture shock the group experienced upon arrival. The second section details the Lhotsampas' new lives in Winnipeg. This section describes what life is like for the new refugees in a developed country, the challenges the refugees face, and what resources are available in the city for incoming refugees. The final section summarizes the group's future hopes and dreams and aspirations the refugees have of one day returning to the country they were forced from decades ago.

### ***Resettlement***

In 2007, the UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) launched its program to resettle the over 100,000 Bhutanese refugees residing in Nepalese refugee camps. The eight countries that provided third-country resettlement for the Bhutanese refugees were Australia, Canada, Denmark, New Zealand, the Netherlands, Norway, the United Kingdom, and the United States (Shrestha, 2015). According to the UNHCR (as cited in Pulla & Dhungel, 2015), resettlement involves selecting and transferring refugees from host nations to third-country resettlement nations who will provide them with protection and permanent residency. The premise is that these third-party nations such as Canada will also provide incoming refugees with civil, cultural, economic, political, and social rights that may have been denied to them in their countries of origin. There is also an understanding that third-party countries will provide

sponsored refugees with a sufficient standard of living and opportunities for citizenship (Pulla & Dhungel, 2015). The participants interviewed for this project admitted that many Lhotsampa refugees were initially hesitant to resettle in third-party countries. Many wanted to return to Bhutan, but resettling in Bhutan was not a possibility and Nepal insisted it could not support the large influx of refugees into its mainstream society (Shrestha, 2001). Dawa elaborates,

Bhutanese refugees were initially scared to resettle. They all wanted to go back to Bhutan at first, but there was no way to return to Bhutan. Bhutan didn't want to accept the refugees back. Nepal also didn't want to resettle the refugees in their country because Nepal had many of its own poor citizens with no land, so they didn't believe they could support these additional people.

The Nepalese government, in fact, was hesitant in accepting the refugees who began being forcibly displaced from Bhutan in 1990 (Shrestha, 2001). Shrestha (2001) notes that at its height in 1992 approximately 1,000 refugees were arriving daily into Nepalese territory, which continued until 1994 albeit in lower numbers. Shrestha (2001) estimates that 93,500 Bhutanese were initially resettled in refugee camps and that an additional 8,000-10,000 refugees resettled in other parts of Nepal. According to Shrestha (2001), Nepal is an impoverished country<sup>23</sup>, and the country's lack of resources and the influx of refugees from Bhutan put pressure on the country's economy, environment, and security. The UNHCR stepped in to coordinate the construction of

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<sup>23</sup> Shrestha's (2001) claim that Nepal is an impoverished country can be usefully critiqued. According to the Central Intelligence Agency (2014, as cited in Index Mundi, n.d.), Nepal ranks 83<sup>rd</sup> of 162 reporting countries with an estimated 25.2% of its population living below the poverty threshold which speaks to the hesitation the Nepalese government had of integrating the refugees into its mainstream society. This percentage parallels poverty threshold statistics in countries such as Peru, Ecuador, Iraq, and Costa Rica. While Nepal has a quarter of its population living in poverty, this number fails in comparison to the world's most impoverished countries which include Chad, Haiti, and Liberia which each have approximately 80% of their population living below the poverty threshold. It is noteworthy to mention that in Bhutan approximately 12% of people are living below the poverty threshold (CIA, 2014, as cited in Index Mundi, n.d.).

seven refugee camps in Nepal, and in a five-year span spent 20 million dollars on maintaining these facilities (Shrestha, 2001).

### ***The journey and reasons for choosing Canada***

The refugees interviewed for this project shared their experiences with resettlement and their journeys to Canada. Chophel, for example, arrived in Winnipeg in 2010 with 13 family members in total including his twin three-year old daughters. Chophel's resettlement process was complicated because of the poor health of his family members. He explains,

I first applied for sponsorship to the United States because my uncle was living there. The government said I couldn't go to the United States because my parents were sick and taking medication. My wife had epilepsy and wasn't receiving proper medication. She couldn't be left alone. Sometimes she had seizures. The overall sponsorship process took two years. We went to Canada.

Hari arrived in Canada in September 2011 with his wife and four children. Initially, Hari and his family preferred to immigrate to Australia, but the IOM informed him that he was not eligible to migrate to Australia. He was permitted for migration to the United States, but Hari had heard from a friend that the United States was not a safe country so he chose to start his new life in Canada. Hari enjoys cold weather and thought he could adapt more easily to Canada's colder climate. He jokes,

I chose Canada. I heard Canada was a cold place, and I liked colder weather. But, it was too cold!

Biren and Ramani were also admitted for migration to the United States, but both preferred to immigrate to Canada instead. Biren reasons,

When I was first interviewed by the UNHCR, I was told to go to the United States, but I insisted on migrating to Canada. I heard that Canada had a good system of education, and I had little children and was thinking the children would get good education in Canada. Ramani chose Canada over the United States because of the country's reputable health care system. Her 18-year old daughter was experiencing medical issues at the time and required immediate heart surgery. Ramani felt that her daughter's best chance of survival would be in Canada. She reflects on this decision saying,

When I was interviewed by the UNHCR, I was initially told to go to the United States. However, because my child was experiencing heart issues, I preferred to go to Canada because of the health system.

Despite her preference to land in Canada, Ramani was overwhelmed upon first arriving. She remembers,

I came in December 2011. It was winter, and it was snowing. I cried for almost a month. I felt lonely and I cried.

Dawa arrived in Canada in 2009 with her family. Initially, she was not familiar with Canada having only learned a little about the country in geography class in high school. Dawa explains that her family chose to migrate to Canada because of her brother's advice. She shares,

It was a group decision. One of my brothers was already living in Winnipeg. He arrived in 2000 with his wife and daughter. He was sponsored to come here. My family had heard from my brother that Canada was a good place to live, had a good health care system, and very supportive people. It was a good place to start a new life.

Dawa was relieved to have left the refugee camp in Nepal and was concentrating on her future. She elaborates,

I was very excited and had lots of hopes. I had nothing in Nepal. I wasn't a citizen of any country. I had no identity. Everyone called me a refugee, and I didn't want that title. I wanted to remove that title. I wanted to be a citizen of any country. My goal was to do something good for my new country because my country (Bhutan) didn't do anything good for me, and I didn't do anything for my country. I had hopes to be a good citizen. I wanted to have a new identity.

Resettlement is a positive outcome for many refugees arriving into third-country resettlement nations such as Canada. The Lhotsampa refugees were tortured, traumatized, forcibly expelled from their homes, and endured inhospitable conditions in Nepalese refugee camps for nearly 20 years. As a result, refugees such as Dawa are often thrilled to have been provided with a fresh start in a new country (Pulla & Dhungel, 2015).

Like Dawa, Puran was also excited to start his new life in Canada. He remembers,

I was so happy to come to Canada. I came with my family. I met people from the same refugee camp, and I saw the same families from the refugee camp. I didn't feel alone, and I was happy seeing people from the camp.

### ***Cultural adjustment***

Despite leaving the poor living conditions in Nepal, some of the refugees were unhappy upon arrival to Canada. Chophel remembers that his parents were very upset. He recalls,

My parents cried every day. They were very unhappy here. They cried and were upset for one year. They missed their friends and family members in Nepal. They didn't know anybody. They wanted to go back to Nepal to the refugee camp. They felt that they would die here. They felt that we would all die here in the same room.

The hesitation of moving to a new country expressed by Chophel's parents was a common feeling shared by many older refugees who were reluctant of adjusting to a new culture and learning a new language (Ridderbos, 2007). In fact, whether to accept third-country resettlement was a strenuous decision for many Lhotsampa families. These families were tasked with deciding whether to accept resettlement or remain in Nepalese refugee camps despite the poor conditions in hopes of one day returning to their homeland of Bhutan. This decision fractured families as younger refugees favoured the freedom and benefits of life in a developed country versus older refugees who feared the loss of community and the group's cultural identity (Pulla & Rai, 2015).

Many refugees experience strenuous situations in host countries and this includes Chophel whose personal situation was stressful. Upon arrival, his parents became sick and wanted to return to Nepal. He had young daughters at the time who cried constantly and a wife who could not be left alone as she was dealing with epilepsy and suffering from seizures. Chophel also remembers not being able to speak English and this made daily life extremely difficult for him. He recalls,

I couldn't buy things at a store because I didn't know how to talk with the clerk and didn't understand money. I felt dumb.

Like Chophel, Hari also experienced the shock of migrating to an English-speaking country. He recalls,

I went around. I noticed everybody was speaking English, and I felt so nervous. I felt culture shock, and I regretted coming. I asked myself, why did I come to this place?

Amala explained that her husband had a difficult time adjusting to his new life in Canada and contemplated returning home. She remembers,

When he came to Canada, it was very hard for my husband. He was thinking. He didn't want to stay here. He was sick. He was thinking. He didn't have a job. He had lots of problems. Everybody gave him many things. For two years it was very hard.

Dawa also remembers the difficulty of adjusting to new kinds of food. She explains,

I didn't like the food at first. I was provided tickets for food at the hotel. The food smelt so bad. I was used to spicy food from my home country – for example – chicken, chilli, hot, and spicy. I still like this type of food. The food that was served at the hotel was sweet meat with sugar, mashed potatoes, and cold milk. I was used to warm milk. I didn't like the food at first.

Unlike her fellow refugees, Dawa's transition to life in Canada was less strenuous as she was more educated and already spoke some English. She explains that older refugees did not attend school in the camps and because of this possessed zero to minimal amounts of English, which made the transition to Canadian life more challenging. She explains,

I learned English in the Nepalese refugee camp. I went to school there. However, not all refugees completed school in the refugee camp. Older refugees stopped going to school or didn't go to school because of age.

### ***Life in Winnipeg***

Adapting to their new lives in Winnipeg was a challenging proposition for the refugees interviewed for this project. Culture shock was experienced by all the refugee participants in one form or the other. During the interviews, many of the participants discussed their confusion over a westernized traffic system and its rules and regulations. Ramani explained that in Bhutan there were no traffic lights and that crossing the street here in Winnipeg takes time to get used to. Many also mentioned the difficulty of adjusting to Canada's weather and how surprising it was

to see the importance Canadians placed on time and being punctual - a habit that was not as important in the refugee camps.

### ***Shopping and paying for goods***

Chophel and Pema shared the confusion they both experienced when paying for goods in Canada. Pema shared that in the refugee camp she would always pay for goods in cash and could barter with the shopkeepers unlike in Canada where bartering is not practiced and debit cards are more practical. Pema shares her first experience using a debit card saying,

I must use my debit card for everything. For the first few months, I couldn't remember my PIN. I had never used a password before, and I always forgot it. The bank helped me set-up a system where I didn't have to use a password. I just had to swipe my card, but I learned that it was important here to use a PIN. So, I learned how to use it, and now I'm okay using it.

Chophel shares Pema's confusion with using a debit card for the first time. He recalls forgetting his password many times and having to have it changed on many occasions. Ramani also had a difficult time learning how to shop in Canada. She explains,

Shopping is challenging here. Back home, there were no (price) tags when shopping and we didn't use cards. We use cards here and they have tags and there is no bargaining.

### ***Experiences of culture shock***

For Rinchen, using an elevator for the first time was confusing and seeing snow was a shock.

Rinchen, who grew up in the jungle, also recalls the shock he experienced upon seeing skyscrapers and large crowds of people for the first time. Dawa, on the other hand, had difficulty



adjusting to how she celebrated her traditional religious festival – Diwali.<sup>24</sup> Dawa explains that Diwali is celebrated every October and lasts 10 days. She notes that the first five days are not as important as the final five days. During the final five days, a large celebration takes places, families get together, and the parents and elders bless the younger family members. Dawa shares that she does not celebrate Diwali in the same way anymore now that she is living in Winnipeg, and this disappoints her. She continues,

I was used to dressing in my own costumes and having a big celebration. When celebrating festivals here, others don't know I am celebrating my festival. I don't wear my traditional dress in public, just at home. I don't like to wear traditional clothes outside because people look at me.

### ***Newcomers and the police***

For Dechan, trusting police officers was an adjustment she had to make while transitioning to her new life in Winnipeg. She explains,

Back home I feared the police. This fear stayed with me when coming to Canada. I couldn't look police officers in the eyes in Bhutan and Nepal, but I don't have a fear of police now.

According to Fast (2013), relations between law enforcement and newcomer refugees, especially refugee youths, are often strained. In Fast's (2013) study, refugee participants and community workers assert that Winnipeg police lack cultural understanding and often racially profile and

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<sup>24</sup> Diwali is one of the major festivals in Hinduism. The main part of the festival lasts for five days and usually takes place between late October and November. The term Diwali translates into English as "row of lights". During the festival, many Hindu gods are worshiped such as Lakshmi – the goddess of wealth. During the festival, rows of lamps are lit along temples and houses and set adrift in streams and rivers. Common activities performed during Diwali include: visiting friends and family, decorating homes, feasting, exchanging gifts, observing fireworks, and wearing new clothes (Diwali, 2015).

discriminate against newcomer refugee youths. Community workers in Fast's (2013) study also feel that confrontational attitudes prevail between refugee youths and police and that increased dialogue is needed to facilitate improved relations.

### ***Learning English***

Despite experiencing culture shock and challenges during resettlement, most of the refugee participants interviewed are satisfied with their new lives in Winnipeg. Pema, for example, is a homemaker here. She is married and has older children. She learned some English at Winnipeg School Division's Adult EAL Program. She explains the importance learning English has had on her life, saying,

In the beginning, I had to have help with everything. Now, I am more independent. I know some English. I can go shopping and buy stuff for my family. My husband is working full-time. I have friends here, so I'm doing okay.

Hari has also benefited from attending English language classes at Winnipeg School Division's Adult EAL Program. He says,

I started English school. I met new friends. I met people who spoke the same language. I was getting along with my friends. I learned English and got used to the environment.

Biren, who has also attended EAL classes at Winnipeg School Division's Adult EAL Program, explains that attending English class has been enjoyable but was stressful in the beginning. He recalls,

When I first started school, it was a little bit difficult because I was so shy with my teachers. But, I got used to it because I found the teachers very helpful and they make eye contact and they were very supportive. I liked it and I started learning. But, it's very difficult to learn English. I'm 46 years old and I forget everything.

Amala came to an important realization by attending English class. She shares,

Before, because of the language, I had some problems. Then I started going to school and met lots of friends from different countries with the same problems. I felt my problems were normal. I'm okay now.

Despite possessing a more advanced level of English than her fellow refugee participants, Dawa also benefited from additional language training. In September 2009, she attended English language classes at Red River College (RRC)<sup>25</sup>. Dawa recalls her fond memories of the school saying,

I really liked Red River College. Red River College was so nice. I learned many things there like how to make a presentation and write an essay. I improved my reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills.

### ***Successes and challenges***

Upon arriving in Canada, Rinchen was feeling hopeless. He did not understand English, was experiencing culture shock, and had to care for his wife and two children. For several months, he had desires to return to Nepal, but now his feelings of hopelessness have turned to hope. He explains,

I'm very happy here now. My wife and I are both working. My son and daughter are happy. They both graduated from grade 12 this year. They are also working part-time and planning to go to Red River College in the fall.

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<sup>25</sup> Red River College operates a Language Training Centre for Adult EAL newcomers. Some of the centre's programs include Intensive English, English for Specific Purposes, and Academic Language Preparation. Many of the centre's classes provide EAL for settlement, education, training, and employment purposes and better prepare newcomers for life in the community and in the workplace. The classes are held at the college's VIA Rail Station campus (Red River College Language Training Centre, 2016).

It seems that Rinchen has overcome the adversity and the previous hardships of refugee life through his resiliency. He has done this by familiarizing himself with the cultural norms of Canada, finding employment, and taking advantage of the opportunity to learn the English language.

Ramani is also now content living in Canada. Her daughter's heart operation was successful and she is relieved. She explains,

My daughter was taken to Vancouver and had surgery, and it was successful. My daughter is healthy now. I'm happy now. I'm here with my mom, dad, husband, and two kids.

While many of the refugee participants spoke of their positive transitions to Canada, Chophel remained unhappy. At the time of the research, he had only a part-time job here and explained that part-time work is not sufficient to support his family. Chophel, who was a salesperson in the Sanischare refugee camp, spoke of the difficulties he has had finding employment. He says,

I've been to hundreds of job interviews, but I still can't find work. It's so hard to find work here.

Despite the difficulties Chophel has faced finding full-time employment, he continues to attend English language classes and has found part-time work on behalf of a classmate's referral. Like Chophel, Biren has also had a difficult time finding work. He explains that his low level of English makes finding a job very challenging. He says,

Because of my language, there are barriers like looking for a job. My main problem is no job. I have lots of skills like construction and carpentry. But because of English, I can't find work. I'm still looking for work.

### *Searching for employment*

Many newcomers to Canada like Biren and Chophel face barriers when searching for employment. According to Cheinis and Sproule (2008), Canadian employers are sometimes hesitant in recognizing foreign credentials and international work experience. Biren, for example, worked in carpentry in his home country. To certify as a carpenter in Manitoba, Biren would have to complete an apprenticeship program with one level of apprenticeship consisting of 1,800 hours of training and practical experience (Government of Manitoba, 2011). Many Canadian occupations such as carpentry are also regulated meaning potential employees must pass rigorous examinations. In carpentry, these examinations consist of both a practical examination and a written interprovincial examination (Government of Manitoba, 2011). These exams can be costly especially for newcomers on a fixed budget and can be difficult to pass for newcomers with minimal English which sometimes makes credentialization prohibitive to pursue. Canadian employers are also sometimes reluctant of hiring newcomers like Biren and Chophel who possess lower than expected language skills required to fulfill job requirements (Cheinis & Sproule, 2008). Employers also sometimes shy away from hiring newcomers from a different cultural group thinking they may have difficulty adjusting to the culture of the Canadian workplace and fitting in with other team members (Cheinis & Sproule, 2008).

Unlike Biren and Chophel, Dawa has found full-time employment and has successfully transitioned to her new life here in Winnipeg. She completed a volunteer work placement through Red River College at Welcome Place and now works as a Nepali settlement counsellor helping refugee clients with various issues such as filling out child tax benefit forms, permanent resident card applications, passport documents, citizenship applications, and providing

interpretation at medical appointments. Dawa feels that she has integrated herself into Canadian society. She explains,

I know the system better now. I understand Canadian culture and how to involve myself with Canadian people. I understand multiculturalism and how to deal with different people. This understanding came about with time.

### ***Challenges for older refugees***

While younger refugees like Dawa have taken advantage of opportunities to learn English and find employment, older refugee family members have not been as fortunate. Chopel's parents, for example, do not speak English and remain at home during the day. Dawa's parents also stay at home most of the time and cannot speak English. As a result, Dawa and her sister must accompany their parents to medical appointments and provide them with support. According to Guruge, Thomson, and Seifi (2015), the challenges experienced by older newcomers are more severe than the challenges experienced by younger newcomers. Some of the challenges that older migrants experience more often include language differences, discrimination, and the loss of social networks and support. Health and social services are usually more difficult for older newcomers to access which can also present challenges to their mental health (Guruge et al., 2015).

In their research, Pulla and Bah (2015) find that it is sometimes difficult for younger refugees to have to continually provide support to elder family members. However, the researchers note that caring for elders is an important component of Lhotsampa culture, and by assisting and interpreting for their parents, younger refugees like Dawa and her sister also lessen the impact culture shock and the language barrier have on older refugees (Pulla & Bah, 2015).

Despite several obstacles, Dawa says that her parents are happy to be living in Winnipeg. She elaborates,

Everyday life in Nepal was terrifying because of poor living conditions and an unsafe environment. My parents were worried when their daughter left the family hut that she would be attacked and not return. Here my parents are not worried when their daughter leaves home and goes to work. The conditions in Canada are safe. People are respected more. There are no killings and more respect.

While Dawa acknowledges that she feels safe residing in Winnipeg, not all refugees are as fortunate. For many refugees, the inner city becomes home upon arrival. According to Madariaga-Vignudo and Miladinovska-Blazevska (2005) approximately 75% of refugee households are in some of Winnipeg's most impoverished neighbourhoods such as South Portage, St. Matthews, and West Alexander. Many homes in these neighbourhoods are abandoned and in desperate need of repair. Refugees arriving in the city are largely dependent on social assistance and cannot afford rent in other neighbourhoods such as Fort Garry, Transcona, and Tuxedo. Madariaga-Vignudo and Miladinovska-Blazevska (2005) explain that some landlords in the city's wealthier neighbourhoods are also weary of renting to newly arrived refugees and often request personal references and co-signatures. Consequently, many refugees are forced to rent housing in areas where landlords are less restrictive and rent is less expensive. This area happens to be the inner city, which is a neighbourhood commonly plagued with poverty, unemployment, high crime rates, drug dealing, and street gangs (Comack & Silver, 2006; Skelton, 2008).

*Success stories*

Hari recently found a job at a local chicken factory and is now working full-time. Finding employment has provided Hari with confidence. He describes his new job saying,

I hang chickens. I enjoy working and have made many friends at work. I am energized by finding full-time work. I want to work as much as I can. I want to find an additional job and make more money.

Amala has also found full-time work. She enjoys working with her new Canadian colleagues and explains her new job has given her hope. She says,

I'm working now at a hotel. I enjoy my work. Now I can understand all the information my employer asks me to do. I have friends. I'm working in a team and working with my Canadian friends. They are good. Sometimes we enjoy dancing and singing. I really like my job. I'm very happy. Before I was frustrated, and now I have hope I can do something else.

Dawa was initially feeling stressed in her new country. Her English skills were lacking and she needed to improve them. Nevertheless, Dawa's brother mentored her, and she met and was encouraged by fellow newcomers at Red River College. Dawa shares,

My brother advised me to do something. He said don't be stressed because everyone has challenges. I also got advice from others. I went to Red River College. I met friends there. Everyone there shared their own experiences. I began to realize that everyone had similar challenges. I understood it was not good to stay at home but was important to expose myself to these challenges so to overcome them.



### *Challenges of learning a new language*

Puran is now living in Winnipeg with his wife, two sons, daughter-in-law, and two granddaughters. He has battled some health issues and continues to face the difficulties of the cold winter season and learning the English language. He explains,

I still have challenges here like winter and the language. Whenever I learn, it doesn't come easily to my mind. It is very difficult to cope. The weather is challenging here because there was no snow in Bhutan and the weather in Nepal was so hot and all the snow here in Winnipeg is frustrating for me.

For many refugees, such as Puran, learning English is a challenging endeavor. Unlike Dawa who completed grade 10 in the refugee camp and received additional schooling and college outside the camp in Nepal and India, learning an additional language is difficult for many undereducated adult refugees.

Refugees such as Puran are classified as literacy language learners by the Winnipeg English Language Assessment and Referral Centre (WELARC).<sup>26</sup> Learners classified as literacy language learners by WELARC are referred to an EAL literacy program<sup>27</sup> such as Winnipeg School Division's Adult EAL Program, which is the city's largest adult education centre offering an EAL literacy program. A literacy language program is suited for newcomers who are learning EAL and who are not functionally literate in their first language for various reasons. Some

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<sup>26</sup> WELARC assesses and refers clients to EAL programming throughout the city of Winnipeg. The organization uses a placement test to assess clients' skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Assessors will also discuss with clients their personal and professional goals. WELARC will also assess and refer clients to French as a Second Language programs (WELARC, n.d.).

<sup>27</sup> An EAL Literacy program such as the one available at Winnipeg School Division's Adult EAL Program will have specialized classes for students who are literacy language learners. Students are placed in a continuum of literacy levels. In a Foundations Phase class, students might learn how to hold a pen for the first time, make pencil strokes, and copy letters or numbers. They might also learn how to read from left to right and from top to bottom. In subsequent Phases I, II, and III, students make progress in their reading, writing, and numeracy skills (Johansson et al., 2000).

literacy learners, for example, speak a language that has no written code. Some literacy learners have received minimal formal schooling in their home countries – one or two years for example. Other literacy learners have attended formal schooling for up to eight years, but this education was sporadic and often interrupted. In addition, some language learners who are literate in their native language are sometimes classified as literacy learners in the beginning of their schooling because they speak a language that uses a non-Roman alphabet such as Chinese, Greek, Punjabi, and Russian. Understandably, it takes time for these type of language learners to familiarize themselves with the Roman alphabet (Johansson et al., 2000).

Most of the refugees interviewed for this project are literacy language learners. Dechan, for example, completed four years of education in Bhutan and is a literacy learner. Rinchen who completed one year of education in Bhutan, is also classified as a literacy learner. Hari, Pema, and Puran did not receive any formal schooling in Bhutan or Nepal and are also literacy learners. While Chophel completed eight years of schooling in the refugee camp, he too is a literacy language learner as this education was sporadic and interrupted when his mother became ill.

### ***Thoughts and reflections***

Despite battling some health issues, the cold winter months, and difficulties learning English, Puran enjoys his new life in Winnipeg. He says,

I've very happy to be here. Canadian society is very cooperative and very helpful. I like it the most. My sister and brother previously living in Bhutan are now living here. English school and settlement agencies have helped me resettle in Winnipeg.

Like Puran, Dechan is also very happy to be living in Canada because of the country's education and health care system. She elaborates,

The health system is very good and the education system is very good. My children are in school, and they are doing very well. I'm not scared of the weather because there was snow back home in Bhutan.<sup>28</sup> I don't have any challenges now. I'm planning to go back to school in September.

Many of the refugee participants discussed the support system that is available to them here and the resources they have accessed during the resettlement process. Chophel discusses how fellow Bhutanese refugees come to his home to advise his parents and provide support. He says,

It was better when friends and other older refugees came to my parents to give them advice and speak in their native language. What was difficult for my parents was that they didn't understand anything, had no language, and a different culture.

Chophel has also relied on the assistance of Canadian people to help him transition successfully.

He and his family have made a few Canadian friends. One of these friends, Lenore, visits his family regularly and takes the family shopping and to outings such as to the beach or park.

Chophel and his wife often invite his teachers, classroom volunteers, and friends to his apartment for coffee and lunch to show his appreciation and to meet his family. Biren has also relied on the kindness of Canadians in his transition period. Biren explains the importance these people have had in his life saying,

I have found lots of people helping me. I have made Canadian friends who were very helpful. Whenever I don't understand something, my Canadian friends explain and provide information whenever I need it.

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<sup>28</sup> In her interview, Dechan states that she is not fearful of the weather in Canada because there was snow back home in Bhutan. In his interview, Puran says he is having a difficult time adjusting to the climate in Winnipeg because there was no snow in his home country. To clarify this contradiction, I asked subsequent participants whether there is snow in Bhutan. Participants confirmed that the mountainous areas of the country receive snowfall and that the capital region of Thimphu also receives snowfall during certain times of the year. Southern Bhutan, where many Lhotsampas resided, does not receive snowfall.

One settlement organization that has assisted the refugees in their resettlement journeys has been Welcome Place. Many of the refugee participants said that Welcome Place provided them with temporary shelter and orientation upon first arrival and counsellors to assist them with referrals to community services, interpretation, form filling assistance, and advocacy. The refugees believe that the services provided by Welcome Place have been instrumental throughout their resettlement journeys in Winnipeg.

### *The future*

Despite differences in formal education and English language levels, all the refugees interviewed for this project possess plans and hopes for the future. To begin with, Chophel wants to find full-time work and hopes his wife can find work and become healthy. He also has plans to pass his driver's licence exam and buy a house for his family outside the downtown area where he resides. Like Chophel, Hari wants to save money to purchase his first house in Winnipeg to live in with his family. Ramani also spoke of buying a home in the future and passing her driver's licence exam.

Dechan and Dawa both spoke about their educational ambitions. Dechan would like to improve her English and speak fluently so she can find work and settle in Winnipeg. Dawa plans to continue her education and enroll in the University of Manitoba's inner-city Bachelor of Social Work program next year. She has experience working with fellow refugees and believes this career will suit her well. Dawa also recently sponsored her husband from the United States and hopes he will find meaningful employment here.

For Amala, Biren, and Ramani, the education of their children is their number one priority. In fact, many of the refugees interviewed placed the welfare of their children above their

personal ambitions. Biren, for example, talks about the hopes he has for his youngest daughter saying,

I have four children who are working and one is 15 and is doing high school. Hopefully, she'll go to higher education.

While many refugees spoke about materialistic goals, Puran spoke of his family's dream of becoming Canadian citizens. He aspires,

I want my family to be good citizens of Canada. I want my family to be involved in Canadian society. I want Bhutanese people to add to Canada's multiculturalism.

### *Contemplating a return*

When asked about plans to visit their country of birth, many of the refugee participants had little interest in returning to Bhutan or Nepal. Rinchen says that he has no plans to return to Bhutan or Nepal and that he does not spend time thinking about his home country. Rinchen's hopes are focused on his and his family's future, not the past. Pema also reported not spending time thinking of her country of origin and has no immediate plans for a trip back home. Hari does not reflect on his time in Bhutan or as a refugee in Nepal. Hari jokingly says that his brain does not operate backwards only forwards. Chophel was the most vocal in his lack of interest in returning to his home country or Nepal. He asserts,

I don't want to go back. My country criticized me and kicked me out. I was beaten by Nepalese people from outside the camp. They attacked me.

Dawa also has little interest in returning to her country of birth. Unlike many of the other refugees, however, Dawa still reflects on her time in Bhutan and has feelings in her heart for her home country, but she does not have any plans of returning. Dawa remains grateful to the

Nepalese government for providing land for refugees and thankful to the Canadian government for providing her with a second chance. She declares,

I want to say a heartfelt thank-you to the Government of Canada. They brought me here and gave me an identity. Now I am a citizen of the great country of Canada.

A few of the refugees interviewed, however, did express interest in one day returning to their country of origin. Dechan has a sister living in Bhutan who she speaks to by phone regularly. Her sister has informed her that the country is very peaceful now, so Dechan hopes to return to Bhutan one day to reunite with her sister. Amala also has relatives in Bhutan and Nepal and would like to go back to visit them one day. Amala also spends some time in reflection. She shares,

I still remember Bhutan because it was my motherland. I liked my village and although I was a refugee in Nepal for almost 19 years, I still have memories and want to go and see the place.

Biren occasionally thinks about his time in Bhutan and Nepal. He has a sister living in Bhutan who he would like to re-establish contact with in the future. Although he spent nearly 20 years of his life living in a refugee camp, Biren still possesses some positive thoughts about Nepal. Like Dawa, he is thankful for the land the Nepalese government provided for himself and other refugees. He is also grateful to the UNHCR for providing the refugees with shelter. On occasion, Biren still thinks about his five-year old son who passed away in the camp. He explains that he does not like talking about this painful moment in his life. He divulges,

Sometimes I still remember my son who passed away, but I don't like to talk about it because he passed away. I don't want to think back. Always, I want to think forward. I

lost my father when I was four-years old. I don't want to remember those things. Those people went, and I don't want to talk about it.

Despite departing from Nepal only a few years ago, Puran expresses no interest in returning to Nepal but would very much like to return to Bhutan. He explains,

I don't remember anything about Nepal. The people in Nepal were very cruel. They kill each other and fight each other. I don't like that. I don't want to go back to Nepal. I don't like Nepal. If the time allows, I want to go back to Bhutan, my homeland. I want to see my birthplace again. I miss my birthplace. I left my garden and my house, but I don't care about their condition. I don't care about the property or material items. I just want to see my birthplace.

### ***Conclusion***

This chapter summarized part two of the interviews that were conducted with the Lhotsampa refugee participants. The first part of the chapter explored the Lhotsampas' journey to Canada and resettlement. Since 2014, approximately 5,700 Lhotsampa refugees have arrived in Canada from refugee camps in Nepal and have settled in major cities across the country including in the city of Winnipeg. The second part of the chapter provided an overview of the Lhotsampas' lives in Winnipeg including the group's experiences with learning English, finding employment, and adjusting to the norms of a developed society. An overview of the resources available to newcomer refugees was also examined including the assistance provided by settlement organizations such as Welcome Place. The final part of the chapter details the participants' hopes and aspirations for the future including goals of improved English, finding employment, and providing opportunities for family members. The next chapter will examine the themes from the theoretical orientation section of this thesis in relation to the Lhotsampa refugee experience.

## **Chapter 7 – A Journey of Empowerment, Self-Efficacy, and Resiliency**

### ***Introduction***

This chapter revisits the primary research question of how the Lhotsampa refugees perceive their resettlement experiences in Winnipeg and explores the themes from the theoretical orientation section of this thesis as they relate to the Lhotsampas' journey of empowerment, self-efficacy, and resiliency. This chapter, which is divided into five sections, will also revisit the key questions that were explored throughout this research regarding Lhotsampa resettlement here in Winnipeg. The first section revisits the concept of trauma, outlines and analyzes the traumatic experiences the Lhotsampa refugees endured being expelled from their country of origin and forced to reside in Nepalese refugee camps, and explains what insights these experiences offer regarding traumatization. The second section examines both the disempowerment and empowerment of Lhotsampa refugees and details the challenges the refugees face, the resources available in the community to empower these refugees, and how the group has built a sense of community and gained control of their lives in Winnipeg. The third and fourth sections revisit the concepts of self-efficacy and resiliency with a focus of how the Lhotsampa refugees have adapted to hardships, developed resilient behaviours, and what personal characteristics and qualities the Lhotsampas rely on to make a successful transition to life in Canada. The fifth section examines the role culture has played in the resettlement of the Lhotsampas and how these refugees have resettled and adjusted to the norms of a developed nation such as Canada despite the challenges.



### *The traumatization of Lhotsampa refugees*

Like numerous refugees throughout the developing world, the Lhotsampa refugees arriving into Canadian cities such as Winnipeg have faced deteriorating and inhospitable conditions in refugee camps. For many, including all 10 refugee participants of this research project, their time spent in refugee camps in Nepal has spanned decades. Throughout their interviews, refugee participants spoke of traumatizing incidents they endured before making their way to these refugee camps. Before being evicted from their homes, however, the Lhotsampas led enjoyable and peaceful lives in the southern region of Bhutan where many farmed the land, reared animals, and grew gardens. Amala, Dawa, and Ramani spoke of the happiness and peacefulness that marked their early childhoods. Amala remembers her favourite pastimes and the beauty of the land saying,

I liked taking care of animals, picking oranges from the garden, and playing with my siblings. My place was very beautiful and very peaceful.

Dawa distinctly remembers the peacefulness of her childhood home and says,

Our life was very peaceful. There were lots of relatives. Life was so nice.

Ramani reflects on the happiness she felt during her early childhood. She explains,

I was so happy in Bhutan. I don't remember a lot of things, but what I remember was joyful.

According to Barrington and Shakespeare-Finch (2013), these participants likely had control over their lives and maintained a positive outlook on life. Understandably, this control and positive outlook was shattered as Ngaloop security forces and government police raided Lhotsampa homes. Forced to flee the country, the sense of control the Lhotsampas had over their lives was gone.

Biren and Rinchen also reflected on their early lives in Bhutan before they were forcibly displaced from the country. Rinchen remembers,

Bhutan was a very beautiful country. It had mountains and lots of animals. It had big forests.

Biren adds,

Before the revolution, I had a very good life. My parents were farmers and they grew lots of vegetables and grains and everything. After the revolution, everything changed and there was lots of stress.

The violent invasion of Lhotsampa homes by Ngalo security forces is likely an event the refugee participants will never forget. Many of the participants spoke of the terror they felt as these security forces entered villages and forced their way into their homes. Participants such as Chopel, Dawa, and Ramani were very young during the expulsion but possess vivid memories of the terror they felt as family members were arrested, tortured, and jailed. Dawa, for example, endured the fear of witnessing her father's arrest and the possibility that she might never see him again. Ramani witnessed her mother being tortured, and Chopel had to endure the pain of seeing his mother and sister raped by government police. Chopel reflects on this tumultuous time in his life saying,

I was seven years old when I left the country. My parents were farmers. There was fighting with the government. I was a small child at the time and don't remember everything. I was happy living in Bhutan. My family had their own land and own farm. My parents were crying when leaving.

Heaman-Warne and Smyth (2016b) explain that these feelings of fear experienced by Chophel, Ramani, and Dawa can be traumatic and can result in psychological, emotional, and/or relational disturbances.

While many of the refugees were children at the time of the group's expulsion from Bhutan, some of the older participants recall the stress of being evicted from their homes and forced to sign voluntary migration forms. Refugees such as Biren and Hari spoke of being forced from their homes and of leaving their land, farms, and animals. Hari remembers,

I left Bhutan in 1992. There was a war and myself and my family went to Nepal.

Depending on the location of the families in the southern region, some refugees went straight to Nepal and some traveled first to India. Life was very hard in Nepal. I was very upset. I got to Nepal by truck. I don't remember what happened to my land and farm.

Many refugees like Hari were not sure if they would return to these possessions, which the families owned and worked hard to maintain for their whole lives. Puran also spoke of the anxiety he felt of being pressured to join the Bhutan People's Party – a political organization which advocated for democracy and human rights but which also had links to terrorist activity (Shaw, 1992). The group's departure from Bhutan, the trek for some to Nepal, and the trek for others to India where they were met by unaccommodating Indian military officials were other events the refugees were forced to endure. Adkins et al. (1999) note that traumatic events such as the ones experienced by the Lhotsampas are overwhelmingly distressing and can have physical, mental, and social effects on refugees.

It was in the UNHCR administered refugee camps in Nepal where Lhotsampa refugees likely experienced the greatest amount of trauma. Many participants spoke of the bamboo and plastic huts that served as their shelters and the poisonous snakes that would terrorize them

during the night. Others spoke of the challenging climate and the extreme heat which caused many fatalities. Equally traumatic events the refugees were forced to endure included a lack of necessities such as sanitation, nutritious food, and clean drinking water – requirements people in the developed world take for granted every day. Rinchen discussed about not being able to provide his children with these necessities – a traumatizing experience for any parent. Perhaps most traumatizing was the loss of family members and the fact that many loved ones died from preventable illnesses. For example, Rinchen lost his mother, Amala lost her parents-in-law, Hari and Puran both lost their parents, Dawa lost her aunts and uncle, and Biren witnessed the death of his five-year old son.

During her interview, Dawa shared the fear her parents felt when she left the family hut to go to school – a trauma her parents had to endure almost every day. Many participants also spoke of the lack of safety and security in the camps; for example, Puran spoke of thieves breaking into his house and Chophel talked about being beaten by Nepalese villagers. Many also shared their memories of discrimination. Dawa, for example, learned the negative perception outsiders have of refugees after she left the camp for higher education. She remembers,

As I grew up, I realized life in the refugee camp wasn't good – for example – poor health system, houses were not good, everything wasn't good. I saw good life and environment on television, and I began to question why are we here. I began to ask how can we improve our life. I went to private school after finishing grade 10 in the camp. I had friends who were Nepalese, and I began to realize that many people thought differently of refugees. I felt bad because of this. Some thought refugees have nothing. I felt disrespected by others.

Amala explained that Nepalese villagers taunted her and fellow refugees by saying that refugees were not people. She reports,

People from Nepal discriminated against Bhutanese people. They did discrimination and the relationship was not good between Nepalese and Bhutanese people. It was because of the level of wealth. The Nepalese people told us that we have nothing and that we are not people.

Everyday life in the camps was both challenging and traumatizing for Lhotsampa refugees.

While refugee life remained trying for all refugees, Lhotsampa women faced numerous challenges such as an unequal distribution of rations, relationship abuse, sex trafficking victimization, and sexual exploitation by aid workers (Osborn, Dalton, Ruby, & Young, 2003). Several Lhotsampa women including Chophel's mother and sister were also raped by Ngalo security forces before being evicted from their homes in Bhutan and must forever deal with the painful memories of these attacks. According to Pulla and Dahal (2015a), Hindu society is patriarchal and may brand a raped woman as defiled and tainted. They add that a Hindu husband might desert his wife if she was raped, and that if the rape victim is unmarried, then she may be viewed as unsuitable for marriage. The raping of Lhotsampa women not only resulted in physical pain and mental anguish for the female victim but also served as psychological punishment for male relatives (Pulla & Dahal, 2015a).

Once arriving into host resettlement countries such as Canada, trauma can be severe in refugee populations like the Lhotsampas. Like all refugees, the Lhotsampas had to deal with pre-migration traumatic events, for example, expulsion from their country of origin, lack of necessities in refugee camps, rampant disease, malnutrition, and sexual exploitation (Abdalla et al., 2008; Laenholm, 2007; Osborn et al., 2003). These events have left Lhotsampa refugees

suffering from headaches, night sweats, dental problems, hearing loss, and musculoskeletal pain (Dutton, 2011). Pulla and Dahal (2015b) point out that adjusting to an unfamiliar environment is stressful for the Lhotsampas, for these refugees have suffered physical and psychological problems, numerous losses, and multiple traumatic experiences.

***The disempowerment and empowerment of Lhotsampa refugees***

The Lhotsampa refugees arriving in Winnipeg, understandably, have had little control over their lives. The group was expelled from its country of origin, some members fled to Nepal, and others fled to the neighbouring nation of India seeking refuge and were transported by the Indian military to refugee camps in Nepal (Bird, 2012). Life in Nepalese refugee camps was strenuous for the refugees as little opportunities existed. Many of the participants such as Hari, Puran, and Rinchen, for example, spoke of receiving little to no formal schooling in the refugee camps. Rinchen explains,

I didn't go to school in the refugee camp. I had small children, and I was a businessman.

Dawa elaborates on the lack of schooling opportunities for youth saying,

Youth had difficulty accessing higher education. There was no money. Children were talented but didn't have money to access higher education.

The lack of educational opportunities in which Dawa speaks of likely disempowered Lhotsampa youth and led to uncertain futures (Ridderbos, 2007).

Earning an income was also not possible in a Nepalese refugee camp as income generating was not permitted. The Nepalese government was against refugee integration and attempted to limit the refugees' access to the economy. Lhotsampa refugees, as a result, were restricted from earning an income, owning land and property, and operating small businesses within the camps (European Commission, 2014). Consequently, Lhotsampa refugees relied on

UNHCR and World Food Programme (WFP) handouts such as food, fuel, and shelter materials, and any cutbacks to these aid programs resulted in a susceptible and vulnerable population (Laenkholm, 2007). Overall, these experiences and circumstances disempowered many Lhotsampa refugees.

For Lhotsampa refugees to feel empowered, they need to take control, take responsibility, and better manage their lives in host resettlement nations (Hogan, 2000; Page & Czuba, 1999). In addition, Lhotsampa newcomers need to overcome the difficulties that affected their health and well-being in the refugee camps (Edge et al., 2014). Many of the refugee participants have taken control, overcome difficulties, and have been empowered here in Canada. Dawa, for example, possesses a great deal of self-determination. She has been adamant in changing her life and has done so through education. She studied diligently in the refugee camp, received a scholarship from the UNHCR, completed high-school in Nepal, and graduated with a post-secondary degree in India. Dawa also has further ambitions to enroll in the University of Manitoba's Bachelor of Social Work program. It is because of education that Dawa has empowered herself and changed her life. Now in her role as a Nepali settlement counsellor, Dawa provides mentorship and eases the transition of fellow refugees into Canadian society.

Other refugee participants have also enhanced their attributes and skills here in Canada. Amala, Hari, Pema, and Rinchen, for example, attended English language classes to improve their listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. Pema shared that with improved English she can now go shopping for her family, which may seem a simple task for those living in the developed world but is empowering for a refugee woman. Because of stronger English skills, Amala and Hari have found employment and can better provide for their families. Amala also stated that with improved English she now understands her employer's instructions and can

accomplish tasks in her workplace more independently. Rinchen, who has also found a full-time job, can now help pay his children's college tuition fees – a rewarding and empowering feat for a refugee father.

As stated by Page and Czuba (1999), achieving empowerment is no simple task and is comparable to completing a journey. According to Hogan (2000), refugees have often been disempowered because of personal and societal circumstances beyond their control. For the Lhotsampas, these circumstances include expulsion from their home country, inadequate sheltering in refugee camps, poor sanitation, and lack of necessities such as medicine, food, and clean drinking water. For many refugees, it takes time to achieve stability in a new country and overcome the difficulties they faced in refugee camps. Chophel, for example, has found part-time work in Winnipeg and has taken some English classes to improve his skills, but his journey of empowerment is ongoing as he searches for full-time employment, gains proficiency using English, supports his parents, and cares for his sick wife.

Some refugees may never achieve personal empowerment in host countries. Biren, for example, has struggled to learn English and find employment in his new country. Boyd (2008) acknowledges that immigrants born outside of Canada like Biren do not fare as well as native born Canadians in terms of employment, salary, and home ownership, for they must adjust to new workplace regulations and a new language and culture. However, by migrating to Canada, Biren's children are allotted opportunities that were inaccessible in the refugee camp such as the ability to graduate from high-school. There are many benefits in Canada for Biren's children and other second-generation immigrants. Boyd (2008) notes that second generation immigrants in Canada are more likely than other generation groups to attain higher education and occupational status. For example, second generations are more likely than third generations to graduate from



high school and acquire a post-secondary degree. Boyd (2008) explains that immigrant parents often have high expectations for their children in terms of acquiring education and employment – a set of expectations commonly coined the “success orientation model”. Biren comments on the expectations he has for his daughter saying,

Hopefully, she’ll go to higher education. I think good for her. I always support her.

In the end, the sacrifices made by many refugee parents such as Biren may not result in empowering futures for themselves but do result in empowering futures for their children.

Many of the Lhotsampa refugee participants are striving for empowerment and aiming to be productive and capable members of society. Several are empowering themselves through participation and engagement in their communities. Amala and Puran, for example, are attending language classes and meeting and befriending fellow newcomers. Biren, who was once an introverted language learner, is now learning English and enjoying his time in school. Amala has made friends at work and enjoys working in a team with her Canadian colleagues. Biren, Chophel, Pema, and Rinchen have also developed relationships with Canadians in their communities and have benefited from the instrumental support these people have provided. Chophel shares,

I have made a few Canadian friends. One is a substitute teacher from my EAL program.

Lenore visits my family regularly and takes my family shopping and to outings such as the beach or park.

Rinchen adds,

It is helpful to have friends here and family members here to show us the way and provide advice and assistance. We have relied on these people for mentorship.

Amala believes that her husband started to feel better when he began to re-engage with his community. She recalls,

I asked my counsellor and my community. Sometimes we would go to a meeting and meet together and talk. My husband came to the community together.

By engaging in their local communities and establishing these relationships, Lhotsampa refugees develop a sense of belonging and self-acceptance, which is crucial in their journeys towards empowerment (Lai & Hynie, 2010).

Many refugee participants have also been empowered because of the social support they received during the resettlement process. Upon arrival, Amala was supported by her sister and parents who had previously arrived in the country. Amala stated that her family provided socio-emotional support during her resettlement and this decreased her feelings of loneliness. Dawa acknowledged that her brother, who arrived in Canada several years before, was a great support to her and her family and provided them with much needed encouragement during the transition period. She elaborates,

My brother, for example, shared his experience with me. He had a child and a wife, but he coped with the challenges. Now he is very settled. He used his own personal strength to cope. Everybody has strength. My brother provided me with advice.

Upon arriving in Canada, Chophel's parents were lonely and depressed, but these feelings subsided once his parents made friends with older Nepalese refugees in the community.<sup>29</sup>

Chophel explained that his parents appreciated visiting with friends, conversing in their native

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<sup>29</sup> Manitoba does not have a Bhutanese society, but the national association – the Canadian Bhutanese Society – is in Lethbridge, Alberta. The Canadian Bhutanese Society (CBS) is a charitable, non-profit organization that strives to enhance the relationship between Bhutanese newcomers and the general community. The organization does this by providing cultural, educational, and recreational programming, and by offering settlement support services to its members (CBS, 2013).

language, and reminiscing about their home country. While Chophel's parents initially struggled to adapt to their new lives, they benefited and were empowered by increased human contact and socialization. Settlement agencies also do their part to empower newcomer refugees, increase their sense of belonging, and lower anxiety levels. Refugee participants such as Chophel, Pema, and Rinchen discussed how Welcome Place, for example, provided informational support to empower them throughout the resettlement process. Pema explains,

In the beginning, I had to have help with everything. Now, I am more independent. The services provided by Welcome Place have been extremely helpful. Our Bhutanese settlement counsellor has provided us with invaluable services and has referred us to other essential services.

### ***The self-efficacy of Lhotsampa refugees***

While incoming Lhotsampa refugees to Canada receive assistance and support from the government to ease in their transition from refugee life to life in a developed country, many of the participants in this study are now moving forward with their lives. In fact, many are striving towards independence and hoping to achieve higher levels of self-efficacy. Dawa, the most educated and adjusted refugee participant, maintains a high degree of self-efficacy. In her interview, Dawa states that upon arrival she was highly committed to her goals of becoming a Canadian citizen, claiming a new identity, and continuing her post-secondary studies. Since that time, Dawa has worked diligently to better her position here in Canada. She has accomplished this by attending English language classes at Red River College, volunteering her time at Welcome Place, working as a settlement counsellor, and mentoring fellow Nepalese refugees. Dawa divulges that she now has a better understanding of Canadian society and a better awareness of how to communicate with people and how to access assistance if needed. Because

of her high degree of self-efficacy, Dawa has gained independence, overcome challenges, and achieved many of her personal goals. She shares,

I brought with myself strength. I had experiences coping with challenges. I was always focusing and thinking about my future. I had many examples to follow.

Many other refugee participants are also developing a strong sense of self-efficacy. Amala, for example, has found full-time employment yet remains committed to attending English classes in the evening to better her skills and employment options. Rinchen felt hopeless upon arriving in Canada but has overcome the challenges of limited English proficiency and is now working full-time and supporting his children's educational aspirations. Although Hari had no experience with formal schooling, he attended English classes where he developed his English language and learned the essential skills<sup>30</sup> to find employment in the Canadian workplace. Like her fellow refugees, Pema also had many challenges adjusting to life in Canada. She had little knowledge of the English language and was unfamiliar with basic tasks such as paying for items in a store. Despite these challenges, Pema remained optimistic and has gained confidence by attending English classes, making friends, and familiarizing herself with common methods of payment. As a result, Pema is now functioning independently in Canadian society. By gaining independence, accomplishing goals, managing stress, and overcoming challenges, several of the Lhotsampa refugees are now more optimistic and confident individuals.

Although self-efficacy cannot be accurately measured, it is safe to say that feelings of self-efficacy operate on a high to low continuum. While Dawa, Rinchen, Amala, Pema, and Hari maintain high levels of self-efficacy, Chopel, Biren, and Puran possess much lower levels.

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<sup>30</sup> According to the Government of Canada there are nine essential skills that prepare and help individuals keep a job, adapt at work, and succeed in the Canadian workplace. These essential skills are: Reading, Writing, Document Use, Numeracy, Computer Use, Thinking Skills, Oral Communication, Working with Others, and Continuous Learning (Government of Canada, 2015).

Chophel, for example, has struggled with feelings of inadequacy since arriving. He has attended numerous job interviews but has struggled to find full-time employment. Despite possessing construction and carpentry skills from his home country, Biren like Chophel is also having difficulty finding employment and remains frustrated. Other refugees possess low self-efficacy because of the challenges associated with learning English. Puran, for example, struggles with a learning difficulty and has been unable to make progress in his language skills. Biren also has a difficult time learning English because of his advanced age and a lack of formal schooling from his home country. Other Lhotsampa refugees such as Chophel's and Dawa's parents are highly dependent on their children and possess lower levels of self-efficacy because of limited English skills and the fact that there are little opportunities available in the community for older refugees. Nevertheless, it is problematic to place the participants at a single point on a continuum for all aspects of their lives. While Chophel, for example, may not feel confident in his ability to find employment, he has easily made friends in Canada and has developed strong relationships with Canadian people. This shows that while Chophel may doubt his abilities to find employment in Canada, he has confidence in his social skills and in his ability to foster meaningful relationships.

### ***Lhotsampa refugee resiliency***

The refugees interviewed for this research project have had a challenging and precarious ordeal. They were evicted from their homes, expelled from their country of origin, and forced to live for nearly two decades in inhospitable refugee camps. Daily life was strenuous as refugees battled an unforgiving Nepali climate, poor sheltering, lack of food and clean drinking water, and inadequate health care services. These factors disempowered the Lhotsampa refugees. There are certain individuals, however, who can adapt to hardship and strenuous situations thereby demonstrating a strong sense of resiliency (Rickwood et al., 2004). The Lhotsampa refugees

interviewed for this research project have demonstrated this type of resiliency. Many of the refugees have experienced adverse life situations but have relied on their resiliency as a survival mechanism to psychologically cope to adversity (Pickren, 2014). Biren, Amala, and Ramani explained that life in the refugee camp was survival of the fittest. In other words, to survive refugees had to confront challenges, deal with stressors, generate positivity, and maintain functionality (Pulla & Woods, 2015a; 2016).

The Lhotsampa refugees demonstrated resiliency in numerous ways including the maintaining of unconditional relationships and the helping of family members. According to Pulla and Dahal (2015b), the Lhotsampas are family oriented people. In fact, all participants spoke of the importance of family togetherness during the interviews. Many spoke of their early lives in Bhutan surrounded by family and relatives and how enjoyable their childhoods were during this time. Despite being evicted from their homes, the group of refugees left together as families and maintained family cohesion throughout their stay in the refugee camps. Dawa recalls,

I was happy in the refugee camp. I had lots of friends and family members. Everyone had similar problems. Homes were close together but were crowded – 20,000 people in one camp. I had relatives and family and friends around. I went to school. I came back home and did homework. This was my routine. I had no worries and was enjoying life.

Once resettled in Canada, the welfare of children remained the group's priority. Dechan and Amala, for example, wish for their children to receive a quality education in Canada, and Biren and Ramani chose migrating to Canada over resettling in the United States because they believed their children could receive better quality education and healthcare in Canada. Maintaining family cohesion and the mentorship of family members were also crucial when the newcomer

refugees began resettling in Winnipeg. Amala, for example, came to Canada in 2011 with her husband and four children. Amala explained that her transition was made easier because she had family members here who supported her. She explains,

I already had family members who came in 2009 and 2010. I didn't feel lonely. I met other family members. My father, mother, and sister were here. It helps that my parents are here.

Many ambitions of the Lhotsampas also revolve around family cohesion and togetherness. Puran and Chopel have plans to purchase homes in the future for their families. Biren and Dechan spoke of reconnecting with family members who are still living in Bhutan, and Dawa spoke of the importance of reuniting with her husband whom she sponsored to join her permanently in Canada. Amala and her husband also recently purchased a home in Winnipeg's south end and said that fellow community members have also moved into the area. She remarks,

Many people bought a house. 20-25 people bought a house in the same area. My younger brother bought a house and he moved near us.

The Lhotsampas also demonstrated resiliency through their hard-working mentality, for once the Nepalese government eased working restrictions, many refugees ventured outside the camps in search of employment. Dawa reported that refugees could leave the refugee camps provided they had an out-pass. Dawa left the refugee camp to study in India and acknowledged that she was also employed at a private school in Kathmandu. Rinchen left the refugee camp daily at 5 or 6 o'clock in the morning to sell fruit and returned at 8 or 9 o'clock in the evening. Amala did not work outside the refugee camp but was employed as a teacher inside the refugee camp. She comments on her work in the refugee camp saying,

I'm not working outside, but I'm working inside the school with adult students teaching the adults. I was teaching Nepali and little bit English like – What is your name? How old are you? Where are you from?

The refugees also gained resiliency through their religion and inner faith. In fact, Pulla and Bah (2015) believe that a deep commitment to the Hindu faith and a strong sense of community helped strengthen the group's resiliency. In her interview, Amala disclosed how important it was for the refugees to adhere to their religious rituals in the camp despite the challenges of everyday life. She explained that performing these rituals for elderly parents, who had passed on, was vital saying,

When someone dies in Hindu culture there are rituals performed. Parents are highly respected in our culture because they give birth, raise, and work hard for their children. In return, the children mourn them, pray for them, and hope their souls will rest in peace.

The fact that the Lhotsampas preserved their spiritual rituals in the refugee camps while simultaneously fighting for survival demonstrates the group's resolve.

Pulla and Dahal (2015b) point out that the Lhotsampas often maintain a positive outlook on life and tend to look ahead instead of dwelling on the past. This fact was evident in the interviews that were conducted. When asked if they reflected on their time in Bhutan or the refugee camps in Nepal, most participants said that they did not spend time in reflection. Hari, for example, responded that his brain operates forward not backwards, and Rinchen said that he does not reflect on the past and stays committed to his family's future. Despite the death of his young son in the refugee camp, Biren also revealed that he tries not to reflect on this painful ordeal and instead focuses on supporting his children here in Winnipeg.



Despite the challenging circumstances Lhotsampa refugees have faced, many are developing stronger self-esteem and possess a positive outlook on life. Some of the refugee participants have developed internal strengths and higher-level coping skills because of the adversity they have endured (Pulla & Bah, 2015). One participant who exhibits strong resiliency is Dawa. Because of her resiliency, Dawa is now mentoring fellow refugees and taking on additional family responsibilities such as accompanying her parents to medical appointments and interpreting for them. Dawa also has realistic plans to further her post-secondary education. Dawa shared that the Lhotsampas have endured much heartache in the refugee camps and that while adapting to a new life in Canada has its challenges, surviving in the refugee camp was the largest hurdle to overcome. She elaborates,

Myself and many refugees have to experience many challenges here especially coming from the refugee camp. The challenges in Canada and the challenges in the refugee camp are not similar. The challenges in the refugee camp are much harder to cope with.

Despite their frustrations in finding employment, Biren and Chophel also have a strong sense of resiliency. Both continue to search for work, attend part-time English classes, and have forged friendships with Canadians. When first arriving in Canada refugees such as Hari, Rinchen, and Amala spoke little English and possessed minimal employable skills, yet because of their resiliency, these refugees have persevered, learned English, and are now employed in meaningful jobs. Overall, the Lhotsampas possess many resilient type qualities that allow the group to endure setbacks and prosper in the new community (Richardson, 2002).

### ***The Lhotsampas' cultural adaptation***

As descendants of Nepal, the Lhotsampas glean their culture from Nepalese customs and norms (Dutton, 2011). Dutton (2011) and Maxym (2010) profile the Lhotsampas as a family oriented

and tightly knit collectivist. The group has large families of eight people per household on average and prioritizes family togetherness. Meals are shared with friends, neighbours, and extended family members. Marriages are usually arranged, divorce is uncommon, and polygamy while unusual does exist in Bhutan and Nepal. In addition, Lhotsampas revere their elders, respect their wisdom, and involve them in important financial, health, and family issues. In Lhotsampa homes, women do most of the cooking and household chores and take on child rearing responsibilities (Hodge, 2004; Maxym, 2010; Pulla & Bah, 2015; Ranard, 2007). These customs and norms, however, undergo cultural adaptation in western societies.

In contrast to Lhotsampa customs and norms, men and women generally share household and child rearing responsibilities in western societies, and women attend post-secondary institutions and work outside the home. Family time in western society is also dependent on one's work schedule. Lhotsampa families also undergo changes as children learn English and adapt to the cultural norms and customs at a quicker rate than their parents who maintain traditional beliefs. This results in children taking on additional family responsibilities and a shift in family dynamics (Dutton, 2011). Dawa comments on these additional responsibilities by saying,

My sister and I visit our parents regularly. We take them to medical appointments and other places. We provide support to our parents.

Tingvold, Middelthon, Allen, and Hauff (2012) explain that the younger generation of newcomers like Dawa usually adapt to a new culture and acquire fluency in the local language by attending language classes and socializing with members of the host country. Newcomer parents often cling to their culture of origin, and as a result, usually have difficulty adapting to the culture of the host country, acquiring language skills, and accessing employment (Tingvold

et al., 2012). With stronger language skills and cultural competency, there is a shift in family dynamics as younger newcomers such as Dawa and her sister are now tasked with supporting their parents and assisting them in the community. This shift in family dynamics is likely a difficult adjustment for older refugees.

Most of the participants of this study experienced the typical stages of culture shock upon arrival into Canada. Several of the participants experienced an initial sense of euphoria upon first arrival. Dawa, for example, was excited upon arriving in Canada and spoke of the hopes she had of a new identity, citizenship, and the opportunity to contribute to Canadian society. Puran and Amala were also very excited upon arriving to Canada. Puran was reassured by meeting with fellow refugees from the refugee camp, and Amala was relieved to reunite with her sister, mother, and father. Pulla and Dhungel (2015) explain that refugees such as Dawa, Puran, and Amala are initially ecstatic upon migrating to a new country and very appreciative of a fresh beginning.

While many migrants experience euphoria upon arrival, some newcomers do not transition through this so-called “honeymoon” phase. Ramani, for example, was overwhelmed upon first arriving in Canada as her daughter was experiencing serious medical issues. Ramani herself felt lonely and it took a month before she stopped crying. Chophel’s parents also did not experience an initial sense of euphoria after arriving from Nepal. His parents were suffering from depression and the shock of adapting to life in a developed country. They missed their traditional way of life and their family and friends from the refugee camp. In fact, it took Chophel’s parents over a year before they began to adjust to their new lives in Canada – a time in which many tears were shed and thoughts of returning to Nepal lingered. Chophel recalls,

My parents cried every day for the first year. They were very sick. They felt that they would die here. They missed their family and friends and wanted to go back. They didn't want to leave Nepal. They wanted to remain in the refugee camp. My parents had no English. They got lost. They stayed inside the house doing nothing.

The generation gap between younger and older newcomers is evident as the younger generation often experience euphoria while the older generation longs for their homeland. Tingvold et al. (2012) reveal that many immigrants such as Chophel and his family experience a type of stress during the adjustment period called acculturative stress. The researchers explain that the similarities and dissimilarities between the country of origin and the new country, a newcomer's personal characteristics, age, gender, race, language, level of education, psychological well-being, and spirituality all factor into the level of acculturative stress a newcomer will typically experience upon arrival. Tingvold et al. (2012) note that immigrant youth often acquire cultural and language competency at different rates than older newcomers. This likely leads to the older generation of immigrants such as Chophel's parents experiencing higher levels of acculturative stress during the adjustment period.

Refugees such as Ramani and many older refugees such as Chophel's parents likely bypass the honeymoon phase immediately into the rejection phase whereby feelings of alienation, disillusion, homesickness, and uncertainty are prevalent. Manz (2003) explains that refugees such as the Lhotsampas experience higher levels of stress during the adjustment period because unlike other migrants, refugees have had to flee their homelands because of war, political oppression, and religious persecution. Many refugees have endured lengthy and traumatic migration experiences and are suffering from the losses that have occurred (Keyes & Kane, 2004; Mikal & Woodfield, 2015), and are now tasked with adjusting to a colder climate,

becoming familiar with modern amenities, and adapting to a complex and unfamiliar healthcare, transportation, and public-school system (Dutton, 2011; Ranard, 2007). These factors contribute to the challenges newcomer refugees face of culturally adapting in a new country.

Many of the participants interviewed for this study are now in the recovery phases of their immigration journey. For some, the anxiety has lessened and their morale has been restored. Dawa, for example, was motivated to fit into her new country, acquire increased language skills, find employment, and strive for citizenship. Rinchen was motivated to support his children's educational aspirations. In addition, Hari and Amala were motivated to improve their language skills and find employment to better support their families, and Pema was motivated to improve her language skills so she could become more independent in the community. Many refugee participants have also been motivated from the social support they have received. Chopel talks about his Canadian friends who provide aid and mentorship. Hari talks about the friends he met at English school, and Amala discusses the colleagues she has befriended in her workplace. Biren also identifies his teachers at school who assist and encourage him throughout his studies. Although it is strenuous to be separated from one's culture, the Lhotsampa refugees in this study are benefiting from establishing new relationships and forging new identities in Canadian society (Mikal & Woodfield, 2015).

### ***Conclusion***

This chapter examined the themes from the theoretical orientation section of this thesis. First, the concept of trauma and the traumatic experiences the Lhotsampas endured were analyzed including witnessing the arrest, rape, and torture of family members and the inhospitable conditions the refugees experienced in Nepalese refugee camps. Second, the empowerment of Lhotsampa refugees was explored as the refugees learned the English language, searched for

employment, adjusted to the culture of a western society, and gained control of their lives. Third, the concepts of self-efficacy and resiliency were analyzed in relation to how the Lhotsampas adapted to the hardships of refugee life, developed resilient behaviours, and are now adjusting to their new lives. The final section explored the role culture played in the resettlement of the Lhotsampas including how the group's values of community and interdependence contrasted the values of individualism and independence which are highly valued in western nations. The next chapter will conclude this thesis project and include the researcher's final remarks and suggestions for future research.

## **Chapter 8 – Conclusion**

### ***Introduction***

This final chapter is divided into two sections. The first section of this chapter includes my final remarks as a researcher including my personal reflections and the thoughts I have of the group of refugees I chose to research – the Lhotsampas – and how people living in the developed world can learn from the tenacity and resiliency demonstrated by this group of refugees. The second section outlines future research that could be undertaken in the areas of refugee resettlement and refugee trauma including in the areas of newcomer employment, programing for older refugees, learning supports for refugee learners, and in methods of treating refugee traumatization.

### ***Final remarks***

I think my role as an Adult EAL instructor helped prepare me for my role as a researcher. Adult EAL instructors, for example, are usually good listeners and learn to be patient and understanding when teaching newcomer refugees. Adult EAL instructors may also be required to work with learners who may be dealing with past trauma and who possess minimal schooling and limited English skills from their home countries. While Adult instructors usually remain empathetic to the situations of refugee learners, they work diligently in helping students improve their language ability and employability skills so these learners can reach their full potential in Canada.

In my role as an Adult EAL instructor and from the research interviews that I conducted for this thesis project, I have come to learn a great deal about the Lhotsampa refugees of Winnipeg. The first thing I learned from teaching and interviewing these refugees is that they possess a hard-working ethos. Many are willing to work long hours and various types of jobs to

support their families. I also learned that several of the older refugees place their children's interests ahead of their personal ambitions and would do anything to see their children lead purposeful and meaningful lives. Many like Hari, for example, are even willing to work two or three jobs to provide better opportunities for their children.

For those who are not working like Biren and Puran, they are attending classes to learn English to better their skills and employment options. For those who are working full-time like Amala and Rinchen, they continue to attend English classes during the evening, which shows their persistence and dedication. The Lhotsampas interviewed for this project are a group that seem to value education. Almost all the refugees interviewed have attended EAL classes or are presently studying English. Many of the parents such as Biren, Dechan, and Rinchen have high hopes that their children will graduate from high-school and enroll in post-secondary education. Education is also important to refugees such as Dawa, who despite already possessing a college degree, has plans to obtain additional university education to better her employment possibilities. By interviewing refugees such as Dawa, I have come to the realization that the Lhotsampas are life-long learners and appreciate the continuous learning opportunities they are afforded here in Canada.

From conducting these research interviews, I also learned that supporting family is crucial in the everyday life of the Lhotsampas. These refugees have a deep respect for elders in the family. Many refugees that I interviewed such as Ramani and Amala discussed how important it is to have their parents here with them in Canada. In interviewing Chophel, it is evident that he places his parents' well-being ahead of his individual interests, and in interviewing Dawa, it is evident how important it is that she and her sister support their parents who have difficulty functioning in the community.



The journey of the Lhotsampas from their expulsion from Bhutan, to their lives in Nepalese refugee camps, and to their final journey to Winnipeg, Canada, has been one of heartache. Many of the refugees interviewed for this project have experienced traumatization that many would deem unthinkable to recover from. Biren, for example, lost his small son in the refugee camp, Chophel witnessed the raping of his mother and sister and was unable to intervene, and refugees such as Hari and Rinchen lost their parents due to illness. All the participants are also dealing with memories of being evicted from their homes, expelled from their country, and forced to endure miserable conditions in refugee camps. Many of the memories the Lhotsampas have are painful ones that will never be forgotten. Nevertheless, time heals many wounds, and the group's desire for self-efficacy and strong sense of resiliency allow them to lead empowering lives here in Canada. As Woods and Pulla (2015) reiterate, the Lhotsampas will never fully recover from some of the trauma they have endured throughout their lifetimes. Because of the group's resiliency, however, the Lhotsampas can move past previous sufferings, maintain positivity, and lead purposeful lives in resettlement nations (Pulla & Woods, 2015).

It is evident that refugees arriving into countries like Canada represent a diverse multitude of the world's people. What differentiates them from people living in developed countries is that refugees have had their lives interrupted by war and conflict. Like people living in host countries, refugees are men, women, teenagers, children, parents, and caregivers. They are professionals, farmers, artists, teachers, and business people. Some possess low levels of education but others are highly educated. Many refugees have experienced terrible losses and are striving for stability (Simich, 2014). The Lhotsampas have experienced religious persecution, expulsion from their homeland, family upheaval, poverty, violence, and are forced to adapt to an

unfamiliar culture (Pulla & Woods, 2016). Despite facing challenges in their new countries, many refugees including the Lhotsampas can alleviate stressors and overcome these high-risk circumstances because of their resiliency. This research study has demonstrated that in due time refugees learn not only to survive but to thrive in their new countries. In the end, valuable lessons can be learned from the perseverance and resiliency demonstrated by refugees (Simich, 2014).

### ***Suggestions for future research***

Refugee resettlement is a vast undertaking. The city of Winnipeg currently has several settlement organizations that operate under an umbrella organization called the Manitoba Association of Newcomer Serving Organizations (MANSO). MANSO's mission is to provide leadership and support for settlement organizations in the province including in areas such as employment, language training, and welcoming (Manitoba Association of Newcomer Serving Organizations, n.d.). Because of this research project and through my work as an Adult EAL instructor, I would like to pinpoint some areas of concern that need to be addressed in the areas of refugee resettlement.

The first issue and perhaps the major obstacle newcomer refugees face upon arriving in Winnipeg is the ability to find employment. As Garang (2012) notes newcomer refugees desire to work in Canada, contribute to the country's economy, and support family members living abroad. Unfortunately, finding meaningful employment is challenging for newcomers as several Canadian professions such as carpentry are regulated and require special licencing and certifications, which make credentialization often prohibitive for refugee newcomers such as Biren to pursue. Many Canadian employers also demand high level language skills and hesitate in hiring newcomers with cultural differences. Newcomers also face competition for jobs from

Canadians who possess strong employment networks and the education and experience employers require (Cheinis & Sproule, 2008). Finding employment can be especially difficult for refugees such as the Lhotsampas, for many lack the education, work experience, and higher-level language skills that more educated immigrant newcomers possess. One recommendation is for businesses to partner with educational institutions to offer English classes and work practicums. In fact, this type of partnership was recently launched by Red River College and the Government of Manitoba to offer English language classes and construction skills training to newcomer refugees<sup>31</sup>. The benefit of these type of training programs are twofold as they provide employment opportunities to refugees and fill a skilled labour shortage within the trades sector in Manitoba (Hoye, 2017).

One recurring theme throughout the interviews that were conducted was how difficult it is for Lhotsampa refugees to find work in Winnipeg. Biren and Puran, for example, arrived in 2012 and 2013 respectively, yet both have yet to find employment here. Hari and Amala both arrived in 2011 yet did not find full-time employment until 2015. Also, Chophel arrived in 2010 but did not find part-time work until six years later. The data suggests that there is a need for more employment focused training programs so these newcomers can develop the necessary language and skills to find employment in a timelier fashion. The challenge newcomer refugees face is that many Canadian employers are unlikely to hire newcomers who possess such low levels of education. Refugees are often at a disadvantage when filling in application forms in Canada because the majority did not complete high-school in their home countries. In addition,

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<sup>31</sup> Launched in March 2017, the Pathway Program to Construction Skills is a joint four-month pilot project between Red River College and the Province of Manitoba. The program currently consists of 19 adult refugees from countries such as Congo, Sudan, and Syria. In this program, students are provided with English language upgrading and hands-on training in dry walling, flattop roofing, and masonry. The language upgrading and skills training is followed by a fully paid one month work experience placement in the trades industry (Hoye, 2017).

many refugees possess less than a grade eight education and several possess no formal schooling, which alarms potential employers. To overcome the barrier to Canadian employment, service organizations in Manitoba should consider developing more workplace training programs so newcomer refugees can gain the skills prospective employers demand. These workplace training programs would benefit from incorporating language upgrading and workplace practicum experiences in service industry occupations such as in cleaning, daycare, homecare, and restaurant work. With many Lhotsampa refugees possessing little formal education and minimal English skills, these language training and workplace practicums such as the recent Pathway Program to Construction Skills launched by the Province of Manitoba and Red River College may increase the employability of newcomer refugees.

The second area of refugee resettlement that requires further research is in programming for older refugees. There are services for older refugees in the community such as the services offered through an organization called Age and Opportunity<sup>32</sup>, but more programming is needed. In the interviews, both Chophel and Dawa mentioned that their parents spend most of their time at home and do not speak English, which limits their participation in the community. EAL programming in Canada is primarily allocated for adult newcomers who the government feels can work and contribute to the country's economy. Programming for older immigrants and refugees thus is often limited. As a result, there is a need for more informal, conversation type classes for older refugees in which they can attend on a part-time basis and learn simple English while at the same time socializing and developing friendships with fellow refugees. As Lai and Hynie (2010) explain, newcomer refugees are empowered through participation and engagement

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<sup>32</sup> Age & Opportunity (A & O) is an organization that offers programming and services for older adults (55+) living in the province of Manitoba. A & O is a non-profit organization, and its mandate is to empower and support older adults in the province by encouraging active participation in the community (Age and Opportunity, n.d.).

in their local communities, and additional programming for older refugees in the province may instill in these newcomers a greater sense of self-acceptance, belonging, and well-being.

The third area of refugee resettlement that requires further research and action is in the availability of learning supports for adult newcomer refugees. While funding is allocated by the province of Manitoba for learners with physical and mental disabilities in the kindergarten to grade 12 public school system, adult learners with similar ailments often go undetected and untreated in adult EAL classrooms. As a result, adult learners with learning challenges and disabilities such as Puran from this study are often provided with little to no supports in language classrooms. Because of this, many adult refugees struggle to make progress learning English and often plateau<sup>33</sup> in their language skills compared to more educated newcomers who gain native like fluency.

The final area of refugee resettlement that requires additional research is in refugee treatment for traumatization. As previously stated, refugees experience trauma differently than other trauma sufferers due to the losses they have occurred and the traumatic migration experiences they have been forced to endure (Heaman-Warne & Smyth, 2016b). Several studies (see Heaman-Warne & Smyth, 2016b; Pulla & Bah, 2015; Woods & Pulla, 2015) indicate that western medical practices are often contradictory to the norms of incoming refugees from non-western nations. To elaborate, western medical professionals often label trauma sufferers as “victims” instead of seeing them as individuals suffering a normal reaction to an abnormal situation (Pulla & Bah, 2015). Western methods of treating trauma also rely on disclosure,

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<sup>33</sup> A plateaued language learner or more formally termed a “fossilized” language learner is one who is having difficulty making sufficient progress in his or her studies. Winnipeg School Division’s Adult EAL Program defines a plateaued learner as one who has not made any progress with his/her language benchmarks in one full year. According to Davies and Pearse (2000), fossilized learners continue to make similar mistakes and errors despite corrections and fail to progress beyond the intermediate and advanced levels.

intervention, counselling, and therapy, which contradict non-western cultures and religions that stigmatize mental illness (Heaman-Warne & Smyth, 2016b; Woods & Pulla, 2015). As Pulla and Bah (2015) reiterate, western professionals often intervene too early in the transition period before newcomers have had time to adjust to culture shock and develop resiliency. For trauma sufferers to move past these sufferings and lead meaningful lives, additional research is needed in whether intervention is appropriate, and if so, what type of intervention is needed and at what stage of the transition period is intervention necessary.

Despite representing a small fraction of the numerous immigrant groups that call Winnipeg home, the Lhotsampas possess the intangible resources needed to successfully transition from refugee life to life in a developed country. McLean (2013) determined that immigrant communities play a crucial role in supporting newcomers, creating a sense of belonging, and levitating feelings of fear and isolation. Like the Afghan participants in McLean's (2013) study, the Lhotsampa community in Winnipeg has supported and assisted in the transition of newcomer Lhotsampa refugees. Several participants of this study described the unconditional support they received from family and community members upon arrival. Amala, for example, described how her feelings of loneliness subsided upon reuniting with her parents and sister. Dawa described how her brother's experiences and advice were necessary in beginning a new life in an unfamiliar country, and Puran remembered how his anxiety lessened upon meeting refugees from the same refugee camp in Nepal. In fact, Chophel stresses how important it is for refugees to support one another during the transition period saying,

It was important for Nepali people to meet others and find friends, speak in the same language, and talk about their home country. It was better when friends and other older refugees came to my parents to give them advice and speak in their native language.

Refugees who have successfully transitioned into their new lives also prove to be invaluable role models for recently arrived refugees. Dawa, for example, has improved her language skills and has gained cultural competency and explains that she can now mentor fellow refugees. She says,

If I have problems now, I know the places to access. I have information about different organizations. I understand Canadian culture and how to involve myself with Canadian people. I can now help other people.

By taking stock of their assets, the Lhotsampas have come to understand that the members within their community are the most important resources they have in helping transition newcomer refugees to build a stronger community group within the city.

### ***Conclusion***

This final chapter offered readers my final remarks as a researcher including my belief that despite facing challenges, refugees learn to thrive in their new countries and that important lessons can be learned from the perseverance and resiliency demonstrated by refugees. In addition, the final section of this chapter outlined future research that should be undertaken in refugee settlement. I propose that additional programming is needed in language instruction and workplace training so refugees can access employment in a timelier manner. I also propose additional programming for older refugees and supports for refugees with learning disabilities in adult EAL classrooms. Finally, I discuss that more research is needed in how western practitioners treat refugee traumatization given that western medical practices differ significantly from non-western societies which stigmatize mental illness.

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## **Appendix A – Interview Schedule**

The following series of questions provides an overview of my research participants' journeys and explored the theoretical notions of trauma, empowerment, self-efficacy, resiliency, and culture.

### ***A) Early life and expulsion from Bhutan***

1. Can you tell me about some of the earliest memories you have of growing up in Bhutan?

Where did you grow up? What was your family life like? Did you go to school?

2. When did you leave Bhutan? What was the reason? Could you share some of the memories you have of that time and experience?

3. After leaving Bhutan, where did you go? Who was with you? What emotions were you feeling?

### ***B) Life in Nepalese refugee camps***

4. Can you describe the refugee camp you lived at in Nepal? What were the conditions like in the camp?

5. What was your experiences in the refugee camp like? What were some of the difficulties you faced as a refugee in Nepal?

### ***C) Journey to Canada and resettlement***

6. Can you explain how you became a Canadian government sponsored refugee? Who in your family was granted sponsorship? What happened to other family members?

7. Please share some of your first experiences and impressions of Canada. What was your first day in Canada like? How were you feeling?



8. Please talk a little about your first few months in Canada. Were you feeling homesick? Culture shock? How did you get through those first few months? What type of support system was available to you here? Was it helpful?

***D) Life in Winnipeg***

9. What is your life like now in Winnipeg? What do you do? Are you happy here?

10. Describe some of the challenges you presently face. How do you cope with these specific challenges? What strategies have you used? Which resources have you accessed?

11. What cultural differences have you noticed here? How do you balance your traditional values with the cultural norms of Canadian society?

***E) The future***

12. What are some of your plans and hopes for the future? What do you hope to accomplish? Do you have any dreams? What do you want for your children?

13. What are your hopes for Bhutan? Would you like to travel back to your home country in the future? Explain.