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"Not Just Based On Land": A Study On The Ethnic Tibetan Community in Toronto

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts degree in Anthropology

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Abstract

The Tibetan identity first emerged as “resistance” (Winland 2002; Scott 1990). The united pan-Tibetan identity did not originally resonate with the diverse group of ethnic minorities living on the Tibetan plateau until post-Chinese occupation. Then, all the groups saw the mutual benefit of adopting the united Tibetan identity against what they perceived as a greater threat to their culture and values. As such the initial Tibetan identity that is projected internationally was harnessed as a “weapon”(Bauman and Vecchi 2004:74) against homogenizing Chinese citizenship and was intimately intertwined with activism.

My research focuses on the formation of diasporic Tibetan identities within the Toronto Tibetan community. Following the 1959 Chinese occupation of Tibet that displaced many Tibetans to India and Nepal, the first wave of 228 Tibetans migrated to Canada in 1970-1971. Presently, Canada contains a Tibetan community in exile of around 6000 (Government of Canada 2014), and yet there have been few recent studies that focus on how Tibetan newcomers have experienced life in Canada. The first part of the thesis will be a literature review of the history of Tibetan migration to Canada, the multifaceted sense of Tibetan identity, as resistance, remembering the “homeland” (real and imagined) and creating diasporic “spaces of belonging” (Robins 2001). The second part will touch upon the recent paradigm shift from viewing Tibetan identity as resistance to a decolonizing project. Finally I will be sharing some of my findings from my fieldwork research with the Toronto Tibetan community in the summer of 2016. My research on contemporary Tibetan identit(ies) will contribute to the ongoing dialogue of non-status people and refugees finding spaces for justice and equality in an unequal world.

Keywords

Tibetan, migration, identity, transnationalism, refugee, diaspora, exile, activism, migrant networks

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Preface

In 1988, Scholar Virginia Appell from the University of Western Ontario conducted research on the rising trend of Tibetan monasteries with a western membership. Now nearly three decades later, I have conducted research with the Tibetan community in Toronto, not with the Tibetan monasteries, but rather with the ethnic Tibetan community. It is my contention that Tibetan identity in Canada is reshaped by the Canadian experience and that the notion of return is different among Tibetans. McCarthy (2001: 1) investigated the conception of a Chinese political identity among the Dai, Bai and Muslim Hui of Yunnan, China. Wellens (2010) report a resurgence of Tibetan cultural practices in the rural communities of China as a reactionary desire to preserve a community identity among the modernizing Chinese society (2010:212). Tibet is a contested site that is continuously going through deterritorialization (Rembold 2011:366). The 1951 Chinese occupation of Tibet started the Tibetan global diaspora. Despite Tibetan narratives of colonialism and unjustified occupation, Chinese discourses have never acknowledged its role as a colonizer. Mao Zedong, the founder of the China's communist party, famously quoted, "let the past serve the present (Zhisui, Chatto & Windus 1997: 209)." His quote represents the Chinese approach to the conflicting histories within its national borders; erasure is justified so long as it serves China's national interest and maintains the Chinese Han superiority. "The memory is not necessarily authentic, but useful (Said 2000:179)." This research aims to investigate the formulation of contemporary, diasporic Tibetan identities in Toronto, Canada.

Chapter 1

1 Introduction

In 1951, the People's Liberation Army, under the orders of Mao Zedong, invaded Tibet. They destroyed many Tibetan monasteries and began to populate the Tibetan plateau with Chinese settlers, a trend that continues to this day. By 1959, relations between Tibet and China had disintegrated considerably, causing the Dalai Lama to flee to India in fear for his life and thousands of Tibetans followed. They made the treacherous journey through the Himalayan Mountains in order to reach Nepal. There are only estimates of the number of Tibetans killed during the Chinese invasion and subsequent occupation; However, Tibetan scholar Sperling (2012) wrote about the discovery of mass unnamed burial sites and the widespread gender imbalance of Tibetans (low numbers of certain generations of Tibetan males). He believes these findings reveal a hidden genocide conducted by the Chinese administration on the Tibetan people during the 1960s-1970s.

According to a 2009 Central Tibetan Administration planning commission, there are over 127,935 Tibetans living outside of Tibet, as compared to 111,020 in a 1998 survey. 74% live in India, and 15% or 18,920 live elsewhere (Hindustantimes 2010). As of 2014, around 6,000 Tibetans have settled in Canada, with approximately two thirds living in the Greater Toronto area (Government of Canada 2014). The Tibetan community has a relatively short history in Canada. Yet they have a significant place in the history of Canadian immigration as one of the first groups of non-European refugees in Canada. As Tibetans negotiate their multiple identities as Tibetan/Canadian, they reshape the Canadian experience and contribute to the wider understanding of refugee and nation-state. Gamble & Ringapontsang go further to call for "adopting more generally nuanced attitude to dual and multiple 'citizenships', which in turn could create a more flexible way of looking at Tibetan identity" (2013: 39). It is important to address the ambivalence Tibetans have toward the *Chatreg*, the Central Tibetan Administration and living precariously in permanent statelessness. Hess (2009) revealed in her research with the ethnic Tibetan communities in the U.S., that Tibetans in the west act as ambassadors to

Tibet. Harnessing their political capital as US citizens and voters, they urge their government to become more involved with the Tibet cause. A similar case is occurring with the ethnic Tibetan community in Toronto, Canada. It is my contention that the ethnic Tibetan community in Toronto has carefully created and passed on a political Tibetan identity based on particularism and that this identity construct is fluid and being reshaped by the Canadian experience. According to Jeffery Week, (quoted in Bauman 2001:100):

The strongest sense of community is in fact likely to come from those groups who find the premises of their collective existence threatened and who construct out of this a community of identity which provides a strong sense of resistance and empowerment. Seeming unable to control the social relations in which they find themselves, people shrink the world to the size of their communities and act politically on that basis. The result, too often, is an obsessive particularism as a way of embracing or coping with contingency.

Tibetans living outside of Tibet generally tend to refer to themselves as Tibetans living in exile, or as Tibetan refugees in X country. In-depth investigation reveals that such terms could be legally ambiguous and at times contentious. Tibetans encounter some difficulties being legally recognized as refugees because they often lack proper identification, lost during the journey through the Himalayan Mountains. Perhaps there is also some reluctance to obtain and use Chinese documents. Most importantly, Tibet is not internationally recognized as a sovereign state. With exceptions such as the 2011 Tibet Project in which the Harper government promised to grant asylum up to 1000 Tibetan refugees from Arunachal Pradesh, India, many Tibetans actually come to Canada as immigrants, through family reunification and as international students. While this should not invalidate their claims, it does reveal a gap in the semantics of the legal concept of refugee and being in exile. This research, through an analysis of the ethnic Tibetan community in Toronto, is an attempt to understand why Tibetans living outside of Tibet continue to actively distinguish themselves not as immigrants or newcomers, but as refugees living in exile.

1.1 Methods

“The narrative of nationalism therefore tells us that the imagining of a people within a specific boundary,” (Lailufar 2014:120); Canadians may never meet every other Canadian, but as Anderson (1991) states in “Imagined Communities”, they have a general idea that other Canadians are for the most part, just like them. This is a problem for people who are on the periphery of these specific boundaries and find themselves outcasts. They are people who do not ‘exist’ and as such “do not constitute a naturally self-delimitating domain of anthropological knowledge” (Malkki 1995: 496; Brettell 2008:113). In order to work with contemporary communities, ethnographic research is adapting to the globalized world. My research will build on past Tibetan research and investigate the emergence of a distinct Tibetan identity in Canada to address important concepts of belonging and identity. It is an ethnographic investigation with the Tibetan community in Toronto, Canada, that look into how contemporary constructions of Tibetan identity create diasporic spaces of belonging (Robins 2001) and foster a sense of Tibetan nationalism and patriotism. Tibetan communities living in South Asian Countries, Tibet and China are referred to for important contextual and background information, but they are not the focus of the current research, which is on the formulation of Tibetan diasporic identities and communities in Canada. Over the summer of 2016, I lived at the University College summer residence. I spent much of my time at the Tibetan Canadian Cultural Centre and participated in many Tibetan public social events that might constitute a Tibetan space, events such as the 2016 Momo Crawl and Wednesday Gorshey nights. In the end, I conducted 11 semi-formal interviews with 1st generation Tibetans between the ages of 80 and 18 years. In the following section I will briefly introduce these participants.

The Participants

Chak is a senior in her 80s, she was one of the early Tibetan arrivals to Canada in the 1970s. At the time, she came as a Traditional Tibetan dancer as part of cultural preservation efforts. Shing is an older Tibetan in his late 70s, and came to Canada just a few years ago. Tenzin is a 45 years old ex-monk from India. He has lived in Toronto, Canada for over seven years. Nobden is an 18 years old student who will be attending

first year in university in the fall. She has lived in Toronto for 15 years. Sue is an 18 years old student. She has lived in Toronto for 10 years since moving to Canada in 2004. Fiona is a 19 years old university student. She emigrated with her family from India to Canada when she was eight. She has lived in the Parkdale area for 10 years though her family is planning to move to Scarborough next year. Lhamo is 20 years old and going into her third year in Biochemistry and Neuroscience at the University of Toronto. She has lived in Toronto for nine years, though not always in Parkdale. Dolma is in her mid-thirties and unlike the other established Tibetan newcomers who migrated from India, she came to Toronto as a British immigrant. Tashi is a 50 years old long time Toronto resident, having lived there since he was a child. Rachel is 32 years old and works full-time. She was studying in the United States at the time when her family moved to Canada. She later joined them and settled in Parkdale. I also had the opportunity to interview Tibetan artist, Tashi Norbu. He is based in Amsterdam but was in Toronto at the time of my fieldwork to host his art gallery and workshops.

My points of investigations are:

- a) How Tibetans in Toronto carefully maintain a political Tibetan identity based on particularism (clothing, food, language, spirituality, culture and activism).
- b) Tibetans' keen awareness of the Western perspective on Tibet and how individual Tibetans are actively taking advantage of 'obligatory interrogation' (Pennesi) that is routinely performed on immigrants and turned into opportunities to further the Tibet cause.
- c) The impacts of years of exile and displacement on perspectives and notions of return, land, and the loose transnational network on ethnic Tibetan communities around the world.
- d) How the history of forced migration is being embedded and experienced through ethnic Tibetan food.

1.1.1 Theoretical Framework

Bauman (Bauman and Vecchi 2004:14) argues that identity is a *necessary* social construction, explaining the constant negotiation of identity as a way of getting by and I believe this is a productive way of looking at the ethnic Tibetan community in Canada. My proposed research theoretical framework is informed by Zygmunt Bauman (2004)'s concept of liquid identity, as well as Benedict Anderson (2006)'s idea of imagined communities and Edward Said (2000)'s theory of imagined geographies. While Bauman's idea of liquid identity was originally created to complement his concept of liquid modernity, which involves a new understanding of the contemporary world of mass consumerism and capitalism, here, identity is liquid because it is in a constant state of impermanence. For example, global consumers can 'put on' and 'take off' fashion items that define their individuality and identity with relative ease. Tibetans are in turns challenging their ascribed national identity as Chinese and actively choosing to remain as Tibetans, even at the cost of being stateless. Because there appears to be the availability of choice as the Chinese administration has long maintained that Tibetans are not persecuted within its borders, Tibetans can encounter difficulties being legally defined as refugees. Though many Tibetans living outside of Tibet would argue that for them, a choice between being able to live as Tibetans and freely practice their traditions or not, is not a choice at all. This leads to another question regarding how Tibetans are able to maintain a sense of patriotism and Tibetan national identity despite the lack of an officially recognized nation-state.

Benedict Anderson's concept of imagined communities addresses this question by pointing out that the very concept of a nation is "an imagined political community" (Anderson 1991). Tibetans around the world may never meet each other but for a majority of Tibetans living abroad, they hold a mental image of their affinity as Tibetans. "Ultimately it is this fraternity that makes it possible, over the past two centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings" (1991:6-7).

Edward Said's concept of imagined geographies, 'the interplay between memory, place, and invention' (Said 2000:191) is not only employed by the Chinese government to

translate Tibet into Xizang, a Chinese province, but it is also practiced by Tibetans outside of Tibet, who reproduce an imagined pristine Tibet based on collective memory of the homeland prior to Chinese occupation. As the physical landscape is territorialized into Chinese land through development projects. China is actively engaging in a spatial project to reshape the Tibetan landscape by restricting the movements of racialized Tibetan bodies in Tibet and China in order to maintain legitimacy of the Chinese State presence in Tibet. Ethnic Tibetans work to preserve a memory of Tibet in the imagined geography of the Tibetan nation, in order to maintain a notion of return. In a similar manner, westerners and Chinese have also created an imagined Tibet as a pristine spiritual haven that can alleviate the stress of city life. And as more Tibetans are born outside of Tibet, transnational notions of home and the homeland will be relevant to examine. According to Hess, for many Tibetans living in diaspora, Tibetan identity transcends the borders of the homeland to India, to the place where they are currently living, to the places they grew up. This framework was created with the hope of gaining a better understanding of some of the major places and spaces that “have a privileged position in the imagined geography of the Tibetan nation” (Yeh 2013:19) and remain symbolically important to the Tibetan cultural identity.

1.2 Tibetan Diaspora

Thousands of Tibetans followed the Dalai Lama to Nepal when he fled from Tibet in 1959.

Rachel: Nepal is not signatory on the UN Convention on refugees so they allow for safe passage from Tibet to India, to the refugee welcome center in Dharmasala, but Nepal itself does not give status to Tibetans, nor recognize them nor give them any rights. It's very precarious for Tibetans there and increasingly they are sending Tibetans to China. On the borders there are a lot of patrols, someone was shot. I'm sure many people have been shot and killed. It's getting harder (Recorded Interview, August 2016).

While Nepal allows for safe passage from Tibet to India, it no longer grants a Refugee Identity Certificate to Tibetans who arrived post-1989 (ICFT 2013). The Tibetan Refugee Reception Centre in Kathmandu, Nepal, along with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, helps Tibetan newcomers from Tibet safely travel to India. From India, Tibetans are able to secure refugee identification certificates and migrate to any country that would grant them asylum, establishing Tibetan communities around the world. Fiona has relatives in the United States, Switzerland, India and Canada. Sue's family members are mainly still in Nepal and India though she has some distant relatives in America. Lhamo is not sure how many relatives she has, especially on her mother's side. She attributes this in part to Tibetans being displaced so many times that they have lost ties with many of their families. The Tibetan naming system also does not help her in tracking any family members down.

Lhamo: I think I have a lot of relatives here, but I'm not in touch with them...

Diyin: And do you know they are your cousins through your same last name?

Lhamo: No, because we don't have the same last name right? ...So it's hard. It's very different [naming system] too. We do have last names that, like family names and you can tell, but it's quite hard. Because most of us on our passport we never have our actual family name. Because the first name is usually Tenzin or something like that. Common names, and then last names is...

Diyin: Like the first names?

Lhamo: Yeah, or like your middle names, or yeah. And then your family name does not [ineligible]. And it's something people have started doing... The best way to explain it, it's because it would have been ok except that we have been displaced so many times from different parts of the world. So then we have to start from scratch right? So my

grandparents, they were asked to fill in forms, which they couldn't because they couldn't even speak, I mean read and write in Tibetan. Let alone in English, or in Indian language. So when they were asked to name their kid and write the date of birth. They didn't know what to write so then they just write whatever they called their kid. So my mum would have her first name on her passport. My dad's name X, right now his passport says X, X (laughs). Like there's no option but the one name. Like he has an actual name, but it just never got written down because of the way, the way in India it was just like, ok what is your kid's name? And they're like, I don't know I call him something but his actual name is... It didn't matter in that sense because in Tibet, you didn't have these formalities. And then that was the case. And then apply for citizenship, or I mean, applying for visa to come here that's another process. And then often times, your name have to be changed or they like... it's a necessity to have a second name or a last name. So my dad needed a last name, he didn't know what to do so then he just repeated his first name (Recorded Interview, August 2016).

Symbols such as the Tibetan national flag and Tibetan National anthem are ritualized by Tibetan communities around the world in demonstrations, and special events in order to emphasize Tibetan cultural identity as well as Tibetan sovereignty.

Fiona: [explains the symbolism behind the Tibetan flag] Blue is the sky or something, and then the red is like the monks, and the sun is like all the teachings to go into all forms of life. And what's the tiger...it's called Singe. I feel bad I can't remember...it's very symbolic. [Yellow border] there's only three, it doesn't end, so it's supposed to say it's going to keep growing (Recorded Interview, August 2016).

As Fiona remarks, “They remind you and give you a feeling of nationalism. We don't have like a solid land, a country that's ours, but we have our language, we have our flag, our songs, our national anthem.”

Sue: It speaks for itself that I'm in Canada, so I am Canadian. But I like to identify myself to others as Tibetan...because I don't want to lose myself (Recorded Interview, July 2016).

After living in Canada for more than seven years, Tenzin still feels more Tibetan than Canadian, though he is fine with being referred to as Tibetan-Canadian. Sonam Chokey, national director for SFT Canada, explains how even as a Canadian citizen, she still feels that statelessness is part of her identity as a Tibetan. This is the same for Chak and Shing, both of whom continuously reminded me throughout the interview that the migration to the West is ultimately motivated by a lack of choice.

Chak: Tibet is such an amazing place. Why would we want to leave if not for the occupation (Recorded Interview, July 2016)?

Dolma was adopted by her aunt who lived in England at a young age of around seven or eight. Before that she lived in one of the resettlement camps in India. For her, she feels at home in England, India and Canada. There was a time when she was younger when she felt she did not quite belong anywhere. Migrating at a young age and going through the western education system had alienated her from her Tibetan culture and language. Right now, she says, she feels most at home in Toronto, where she hopes to stay. Her Tibetan language has improved a lot since she settled down in Toronto, though she feels that her English is starting to take a back seat.

Dolma: I get that with my adopted mom, so she remembers back. Reminiscing about. She had a more harrowing experience escaping Tibet, some of her siblings died on the road. Clearly it was a lot harder, they were nomadic people as well. And then there was a lot of hardship in India. I would like to take my dad back. Because he talks about Tibet. That would be nice...and also to do a pilgrim (Recorded Interview, August 2016).

The first wave of Tibetan refugee migration started in 1959 to India and the surrounding Himalayan countries. Dissatisfaction with the living standards and lack of access to

education and work opportunities motivated the second wave of young Tibetans to migrate from India to the Americas and Europe between the 1960s-1970s. The third wave is a much smaller group of Tibetan dissidents that are migrating likely because of the Chinese-Tibetan violent clashes during the 2008 Chinese Olympics, in addition to dissatisfied Tibetans looking abroad for more opportunities. This third wave could arguably be an extension of the second wave, however a significant amount of time has passed and there are now visible differences, particularly economic-wise, between the new arrivals and those from the 1970s, who are by now well-established in their communities in Canada. Continuous displacement and migration have separated many Tibetans from their friends and families in Tibet. Meeting someone from the same village, as Tashi said, is very special.

Tashi: Kham region, in a town called Tsedang. Tibetans, they said a word called Phayul Chipa. Phayul means where are you actually from? For a lack of a better word, it's like what tribe are you from. Kham is huge, there is a lot places. A lot of Khampas, but each has their own cities and make it seems like these are the tribes. So back then and anywhere. If you meet somebody that is from your own Phayul, or your own village. It's very meaningful. Right now, because you know so many Tibetans, you don't know who is who. You may not know that he is from your...I've met a few people that that I didn't know are from Tsedang. And then you've made a connection, an automatic connection. With that bond comes a lot of support (Recorded Interview, August 2016).

1.3 The Setting

I chose to do my fieldwork research in Toronto, mainly in the Parkdale neighborhood. Today there are around 6000 Tibetans living in Canada with two thirds of the whole Tibetan community living in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) (Government of Canada 2014). The GTA offers an ideal place for the Tibetan community because it has an established network of support, many notable Tibetan associations such as the Ontario Tibetan Women's Association and Student for Free Tibet Canada. Most importantly,

there is a Tibetan Canadian Cultural Center (TCCC). The majority of Tibetans start out in the Parkdale neighborhood due to factors such as cheaper housing, availability of support and culturally sensitive services, translation services and legal aids, as well as close proximity to established Tibetans who live there. This makes the Parkdale neighborhood one of the ideal locations for field research in a Tibetan community.

Parkdale Neighborhood

Even prior to any preliminary research, various people advised me to check out the Parkdale area. Demographically, the Parkdale area has a high concentration of Tibetans compared to any other area in Toronto. In the 2011 South Parkdale neighborhood area profile, people who speak Tibetan as their mother tongue made up 8.8% or 1,775 people. People who speak Tibetan as their home language made up 7.9 or 1,595 people living in the Parkdale area. The Parkdale area that is most relevant to this research is South Parkdale, an area annexed from the Village of Parkdale in 1889 (Slater 2003: 21).

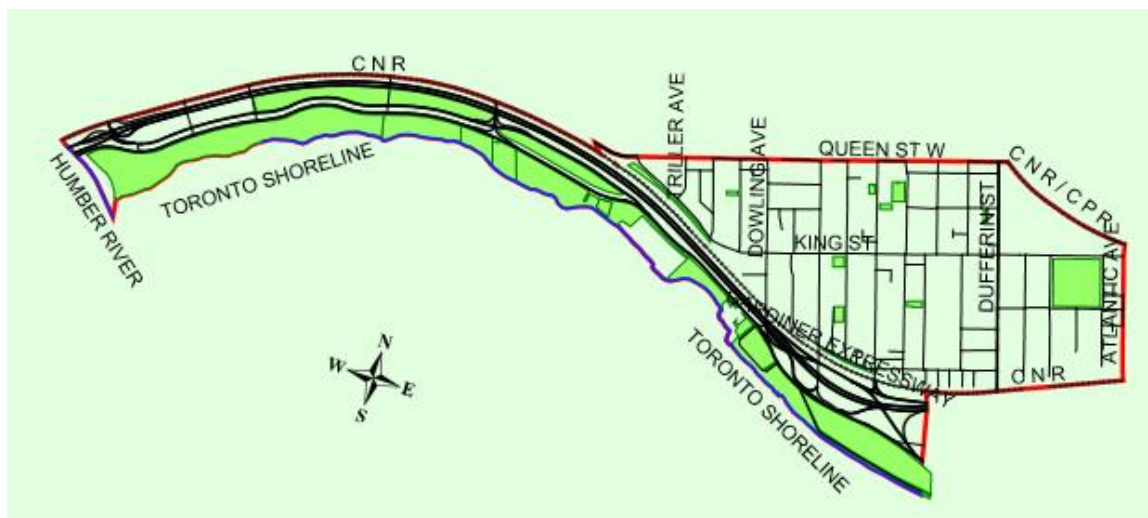


Figure 1: Map of South Parkdale. The concentration of Tibetan activities is around Queen Street W. and Jamieson Avenue, where many Tibetans residents and newcomers live (Taken from City of Toronto Neighborhood planning profile 2011).

A once thriving suburb, South Parkdale was considered one of Toronto's most desirable locations. However, after a series of constructions, such as the Gardiner expressway, cut off the area from the lake, a principle amenity offered to the residents, and the loss of real

estate values, the majority of the elites and middle-class home owners decided to move out. High rise buildings and small apartments soon took over the landscape of South Parkdale, offering some of the cheapest permanent accommodations one can find in the highly competitive Toronto housing market. With the timely 1967 election of Pierre Trudeau's liberal government, which brought in the 1971 Canadian Multiculturalism Policy intended to preserve the cultural freedom of all individuals and provide recognition of the cultural contributions of diverse ethnic groups to Canadian society" (Library and Archives Canada), South Parkdale began to have a steady influx of immigrants and low-income residents. The area quickly became one of the most ethnically diverse neighborhoods but also as Slater (2003: 23) called it, "the most economically traumatized community." The fact that South Parkdale houses the highest number of deinstitutionalized patients in Toronto also does not help its reputation. The deinstitutionalization of psychiatric services in the 1960s and 1970s in Canada moved mental health patients out of hospitals and into the community. It was a gradual policy motivated at the time by "legal and financial reasons and the results were felt not just in the community but also on the street" (Sealy and Whitehead 2004: 250). Parkdale became known as one of the rougher areas of Toronto. However, due to important factors such as existing migrant support networks, ideal inner-city location, cheap permanent rentals and availability of employment opportunities for newcomers such as in service, manufacturing, the food terminal and personal care, Parkdale remains a gateway community for many Tibetans and newcomers who want to live in a Canadian metropolis. A consistent pattern revealed by my participants is that they all started out in South Parkdale. And then after they achieved some level of economic and financial stability, many of them moved out of Parkdale to other parts of the Greater Toronto Area such as Etobicoke, Mississauga and Scarborough. Tibetans living in Toronto also often send word back to their friends and families in India, and other South Asian countries about Parkdale. Through word of mouth, Parkdale became the go-to place for Tibetan newcomers who want to settle down in Toronto.

1.4 Historical Background

The root cause of the uprisings which prompted the Dalai Lama to flee Tibet in 1959 is the contentious outcome of the Battle of Chamdo. At the time, the Chinese People's Liberation Army of around 40,000 soldiers crossed over the de facto border into the Cham region of Tibet. Their presence was instrumental in the creation of the 17-points agreement between Tibet and China's delegates. The 17-points agreement legitimized the annexation of Tibet into China, as well as Chinese military presence in the region. While the international community has recognized the legitimacy of the agreement, Professor Eckart Klein of the University of Potsdam, states that the agreement is illegal and void in nature because it was made under duress (1995). This is a term used in court in which the defendant claims they were forced to do something against their will (Collins Dictionary of Law 2006). The Chinese authorities immediately used the news of the 14th Dalai Lama's escape to India to declare the Tibetan government illegal in order to justify Chinese occupation in Tibet, prompting thousands of Tibetans to flee to Nepal, and then to India. Later that same year, the 14th Dalai Lama established the Central Tibetan Administration in Dharmasala, India (Woodcock 1970: 410). Both governments have since then produced their official narrations on Tibet:

One of historical continuity:

“For more than 700 years the central government of China has continuously exercised sovereignty over Tibet and Tibet has never been an independent state.” – People's Republic of China official White Paper, 1992

One of unjustified occupation:

“At the time of its invasion by troops of the People's Liberation Army of China in 1949, Tibet was an independent state in fact and law. The military invasion constituted an aggression on a sovereign state and a violation of international law.” – Tibetan Government in Exile, 1993 (Sperling 2004:1).

There are western scholars supporting both versions; scholars such as Goldstein, Grunfeld and Epstein paint a more sympathetic picture of China going through a painful process of unifying the nation (Powers 2004:137). Scholars such as Richardson, Smith, and Thurman on the other hand, portray the events that occurred in 1959 and the later Chinese policies in the Tibetan region as ‘colonizing’, ‘repressive’ and a ‘foreign invasion’ (ibid). Despite the debate over which narration is the correct one, there is no denying China’s economic interest in Tibet’s land and natural resources. Bill Dunn (2008:12) wrote a fascinating article on accumulation by dispossession using the case of China. What he meant here is that China’s rapid economic growth was made possible through the continued exploitation of cheap labour, but his argument can be further extended to China’s exploitation of the Tibetan land and resources.

China continues to deny international accusations and constructs its own history in order to affirm the claim that Tibet had always been a state of China. Scholar Yeh divides the Chinese narrative into two parts: one of historical continuity. But in the recent decade, Yeh noted that the narrative has shifted to one of gratitude (Yeh 2013: 1). A Chinese presumption of Tibetan gratitude brought about by extensive development and modernization projects China has invested in Tibet.

Chinese historiographers trace China and Tibet’s relations using a series of faux-constructions, which are reimagings of the past, in order to argue that Tibet has always been a Chinese state. The most well-known faux-constructions are the legend of Chinese Princess Wencheng (Woeser 2014) and the Chinese’s own 11th Panchen Lama (Mirsky 2009:395).

The story of Princess Wencheng began in 641 when a 16 year old girl from a branch of a Chinese royal clan was used as an involuntary piece in the political marriage to the Tibetan Emperor as a sign of peace and harmony between China and Tibet (Powers 2004:145; Woeser 2014). According to the Chinese, the Potala Palace, which the 14th Dalai Lama has called the center of Tibetan spirituality, was built in celebration of when Tibetan King Songtsen Gampo took Princess Wencheng as his wife. Not surprisingly, Thangka (traditional Tibetan embroidery painting), Tibetan Buddhism, even the popular

Tibetan greeting “Tashi Delek” were all invented by Princess Wencheng. The sacred mountain Bumpari, the destination of many pilgrims, was named by her and the Highland Barley crop was brought over from China by Princess Wencheng and the list of her ‘accomplishments’ goes on (Woesser 2014). Using the figure of Princess Wencheng, the Chinese put their mark on all things Tibetan and claim them as Chinese.

China narrates the Chinese occupation in Tibet as a liberation mission in which more than 1 million Tibetan serfs were freed. “Chinese propaganda depicts Tibetans as eternally cheerful, singing and dancing with gratitude that peaks every year since 1959 on March 28, “Serfs Emancipation Day” (Sydenstricker 2014). The story is acted out in the 1963 Chinese film “Serf”. The film focusses on the exploitation of one particular Tibetan serf and his liberation by the People's Liberation Army. The Tibetan monastic system is built on the reincarnation of the spiritual leaders. The role of the Panchen Lama is to choose the next Dalai Lama and vice versa. The Chinese administration interfered with the selection process of the 11th Panchen Lama in its efforts to control the Dalai Lama and his following reincarnations.

When the tenth Panchen Lama died, the Dalai Lama agreed with the monks of the Panchen’s monastery in Tibet that the child they had identified as the new incarnation was the real thing, so that little boy was named as the 11th Panchen Lama. That little boy, and his entire family, and the abbot of that monastery were all made to disappear and have never been seen again (Mirsky 2009:359).

The Chinese administration replaced that missing boy with their own Chinese Panchen Lama so that he could choose a Dalai Lama that the Chinese administration could control. However, not only have Tibetans and the world not recognized the Chinese Panchen Lama, the Dalai Lama has also decided to stop his lineage of reincarnation as a way to keep Tibet out of the Chinese’s grasp even after he is gone (Economist 2015). For many Tibetan scholars, such as Woesser (2014) and Powers (2004), stories such as Princess Wencheng, the Serfdom Emancipation Day and the Chinese Panchen Lama, expose the Chinese national arrogance; it took the Chinese superior culture to ‘elevate’

the Tibetan savages onto civilization. “By reconfiguring histories to fit the colonial frames, China has been able to appeal to the settler’s innocence when it comes to the daily occupation of Tibet” (dlo08 2012). The Chinese government uses these faux constructions strategically to crystalize the memories of certain key Tibetan sites as evidence of China’s historical continuity in Tibet (Nora 1989:7). How can the Chinese invade their own country? After all, Tibetans are part of the fifty-six Chinese ethnic groups. Han Chinese may have the majority but in the end, everyone is Chinese and equal through this homogenizing identity. This notion of a homogenizing identity works in favor of the Chinese because it “ignores the issue that one group will always have to submit and relinquish its own ideals, values and culture to fit into this encompassing Chinese citizenship that benefits the dominant Han Chinese, thus exposing the inherent inequality” (1989:7). Identity is at the root of the Tibet-China case. It is a clash of ideologies and a “war of identities”(Bauman & Vecchi 2004:74). The united pan-Tibetan identity did not originally resonate with the diverse groups of ethnic minorities living on the Tibetan plateau, many of whom had their own distinct ethnic identities and traditions until post-Chinese occupation. Afterwards, Tibetans outside of Tibet were at the forefront advocating the adaptation of a united Tibetan identity against what they perceive as the greater threat to their Tibetan culture and values.

The few Han Chinese who express great sympathy for the plight of the Tibetans, feel an encompassing empathy and they “share the pain” because they are all Chinese. Xu Zhiyong, a Han Chinese lawyer wrote an article in the New York Times, in which he stated:

I am sorry we Han Chinese have been silent as Nangdrol and his fellow Tibetans are dying for freedom. We are victims ourselves, living in estrangement, infighting, hatred and destruction. We share this land. It’s our shared home, our shared responsibility, our shared dream — and it will be our shared deliverance (dlo08 2012).

Tibetan blogger, dlo08, points out that the issue here is not a matter of sympathy but rather one of misunderstanding; the Chinese have completely misunderstood the Tibetan

movement. Is the root cause of the irreconcilable ties between China and Tibet because the Chinese administration and the Central Tibetan Administration have very different goals in mind? The problem is simpler than that, as Scholar Yeh revealed, and it deals with the second Chinese narrative of presumed Tibetan gratitude. The Chinese government has spent a lot of money on the development and urbanization of Tibet since 1951. Through the gift of development, the Chinese government effectively asserts its state space and reshapes Tibetans as “subjects in need of development” (Yeh 2013). As such, the general sentiment of Han Chinese regarding the 2008 protests in Lhasa in which Tibetans burned down around 1000 shops that were operated by Han Chinese, is one of resentment and outrage at the ingratitude of Tibetans. The heavy military crackdown in Lhasa post-2008 is in part a response as well to the Han Chinese’s outrage at the ungrateful Tibetans who caused trouble for no apparent reasons. What the protests reveal is an awareness on the part of the Tibetans who partook in the protests; that the gifts of developments came with many strings attached and subjugated Tibet into a “relationship of obligation” (Yeh 2013: 15).

The Dalai Lama is proposing the middle way approach to the Chinese government, Tibet would remain under China as an autonomous region. Technically, Tibet is already an autonomous region in China, but many Tibetans would argue there is no genuine autonomy. Because of the politics of fear and surveillance, Tibetans living in Tibet have even taken to policing their own bodies by self-restricting their mobility and remaining in their homes on certain days such as the Dalai Lama’s birthday in order to stay out of trouble. The experience of Tibetans living in Tibet is one of restricted mobility and surveillance, something Han Chinese and tourists never experience. The racialized Tibetan body is not only restricted, they are also presumed guilty. Yeh recounts an encounter she had with a Tibetan friend who became visibly nervous after realizing they were passing a village where some youths had been arrested the day before because they were suspected of celebrating the Dalai Lama’s birthday.

The entire space had become, for him, a zone of fear. By merely passing through a space associated with a restricted presence on a certain day of the year, he feared that he was already guilty, or had the potential for guilt,

of a potential crime for which he might forfeit employment (Yeh 2013: 37).

Genuine autonomy would involve letting Tibet have full control over the use of its central administration, resources and tourism, and most importantly, the return of Tibet's spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama to the Potala Palace in the capital city, Lhasa. So far, the Chinese administration has refused to recognize the Central Tibetan Administration and refers to the 17 point agreement as the established consensus between Tibet and China.

If there were some way for the Chinese government and the Tibetan government-in-exile to reach a compromise that satisfied both sides, the situation in Tibet would improve dramatically and there would not be any refugees from this region. The Tibetans have been waiting for this solution to materialize for the past 65 years; it is most certainly their preferred resolution to their predicament, but it has not yet happened (Rumble & Ringapontsang 2013: 39).

1.5 *Important Concepts*

The *Chatrel*: The CTA establish its state legitimacy and maintains ties with Tibetans outside of Tibet through documents such as the *Chatrel* or Green Book. The *Chatrel* is the Tibetan refugee identification booklet for Tibetans living in exile. Every Tibetan must maintain the validity of their individual *Chatrel* by paying the annual “voluntary tax” that is differentiated based on regional rates. The money helps keep the CTA running and provides support for Tibetans living in exile in the form of scholarships, jobs and pensions for the elderly. As Falcone & Wangchuk (2008:173) explain, “Taxing towards Tibet”! The regional rate differentiation has created malcontent particularly with new arrivals in the Americas and Europe, where the regional rates are exponentially higher than those in India (2008:175).

Living in Exile: Many Tibetans living outside of Tibet refer to themselves as being in exile. Tibet is not officially recognized as a state but it has a government in exile, Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) in Dharmasala, India. According to the UN definition, “a

refugee is someone who has been forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war, or violence” (UNHCR). But because Tibet is not an official nation-state, and with China denying any persecutions of its ethnic minorities, Tibetans, much like the Roma people in Europe, are treading on ambiguous grounds in being legally recognized as refugees. The conscious adoption and identification of being in exile is political in nature, signifying a notion of return to the homeland and calls for Tibet’s Independence. A form of state governmentality does exist in the loose transnational network despite the lack of a Tibetan nation-state. Tibetan communities paid a voluntary annual tax to the CTA which is used to create programs and scholarships to benefit the Tibetan communities. Tibetan communities around the world also tend to have more political and religious freedom to practice and preserve Tibetan history and culture, making them in some Tibetans’ opinion, the last bastions of pure Tibetan culture. While this research did not go into the range of political options and aspirations among Tibetans living in Toronto, whether they want autonomy or Tibet independence, the majority of Tibetans appear to be in support of the Dalai Lama’s middle way approach, in which he attempted to appease both sides in his demand for greater autonomy for Tibet within China.

Central Tibetan Administration (CTA): “Consisting of 44 members elected directly by the people. Unlike other countries, the representation of Tibetan parliament is very unique as it is equally represented by members from different provinces and religious sects. Each province represents 10 members in Parliament (*U-Tsang, Dotoe and Domey*). Along with this, five religious sects, (*Sakya, Gelug, Bon, Nyingma and Kagyu*) represent two members each in the parliament” (Tsering 2011:6). The CTA placed strong emphasis on education and according to the recent survey by the Planning commission (Dharmasala), the literacy rates of Tibetan refugees have greatly increased from 69 percent in 1998 to 79 percent in 2009. This improvement clearly indicates the educational progress of refugees in India. However, it also signifies a growing number of dissatisfied, highly-educated Tibetan youths living in the resettlements, incoming waves of young, educated Tibetans from India to the Americas and Europe.

Tibetan Canadian Cultural Centre (TCCC): In 2004 the Dalai Lama visited the Toronto Tibetan Canadian community and blessed them to establish a cultural center.

The cultural center resides in Etobicoke and offers a variety of activities including language classes and cultural events, and is a distinct and familiar marker of Tibetan identity and culture in Etobicoke. The center itself is a fascinating space where both Tibetans and non-Tibetan Canadians can potentially engage in dialogue. The community center represents a future which western Tibetan Buddhism practitioners in particular believe in; that Tibetan Buddhism is integrated as a part of the Canadian milieu instead of as a foreign ‘other’ religion. The two giant prayer bells in front of the Tibetan Canadian cultural center in Etobicoke are not only tourist attractions, they are the physical manifestation of spiritual connection between the Tibetans living in Toronto and the Dalai Lama. The community center is central to the Tibetan community in Toronto, as one of my participants puts it, “it is like the mother of all the other organizations!”

Tibetan Canadian Organizations: Friends of Tibet was established by five representatives of the House of Commons in 1990. It is a Parliament branch in Ottawa that offer summer and year-round internships for Tibetan university students as a way to enter politics and contribute to the Tibetan movement. The branch was created as a symbol of Canada’s good will towards Tibet. According to the Canada Tibet Committee, Canada has demonstrated good will in steadily supporting Tibet since 1969, albeit tentatively, with Canada officially separating its human rights campaigns from its economic trade relationship with China in 1996 (CTC 2017).

The Tibetan Women Association (TWA) emerged when the Chinese administration imprisoned and ‘disappeared’ many Tibetan men during 1959. The Tibetan women who were left behind to fend for their families and communities rose up. On March 12, 1959, women from all provinces of Tibet joined together in Lhasa, the Capital of Tibet, to protest against the brutal crackdown on the Tibetans. They were persecuted and many were forced to flee to India and Nepal afterwards. Almost three decades later in 1984, TWA was established in India with more than 54 chapters worldwide. The Ontario TWA is located in Toronto. “TWA provides scholarship to young, destitute Tibetan women to pursue higher studies” (Tsering 2011:12). TWA has also conducted studies and published reports on the socio political status of Tibetan women (ibid).

The Tibetan Youth Congress (TYC) is an organization consisting of Tibetan youth and has chapters around the world. The People's Republic of China called it a terrorist organization with the sole objective of splitting the motherland (Tsering 2011:10) because of the organization's stance for Tibet's complete independence.

Students for Free Tibet (SFT) university clubs can be considered a branch of the TYC since they often share a similar demographic of young Tibetans and non-Tibetans who support the TYC. Last year, SFT Toronto was involved in an intense campaign against the installment of Confucius Institutes in Canadian universities, a Chinese organization that aims to promote Chinese culture and language. SFT saw the Institute as an extension of China's influence into the Western society, and a threat to Tibetans living in the West. The success of this campaign lies in the SFT's strategy to not play this as a Tibetan cause but rather, as a community cause (SFT Canada) that Canadians must rally together and defend Canadian academic integrity. Recently, SFT Canada conducted a protest regarding an offensive Toronto Transit Commission advertisement about travelling to 'New Tibet' (Shum 2016). Members of SFT Canada later explained to me that they were specifically outraged at the label of 'New Tibet', because for them and many Tibetans living in Toronto, it appears to allude to the erasure of Tibetan presence. Unfortunately, because I had already left Toronto at that point, I am not certain about the specifics of the protest. Toronto metro did not take down the offending poster.

1.6 Chapter Outlines

In Chapter 1 will explain the concept of the Tibetan diaspora in India, Nepal and the other South Asian countries, which was motivated by the Dalai Lama's escape to India caused by growing tensions between China and Tibet. The chapter also briefly discusses the contentious history between Tibet and China. In Chapter 2, I will discuss in more detail what life as a Tibetan refugee might be like in resettlement camps in India and Nepal and how the lack of opportunities acted as a push factor that motivated some Tibetans to migrate again, this time to the west. Readers are introduced to my participants' profiles and stories, how they migrated to Toronto, Canada and obtained Canadian citizenship. Through stories and reports, we see a glimpse of a life of precarious work and health in Toronto, Canada that appears to be a common experience

for many Tibetan newcomers as well as other migrants. The chapter ends with an analysis of the Tibetan community's most visible influence in Canada, the growth of Tibetan Buddhism among non-Tibetan Canadians. The focus of chapter 3 is the Tibetan community in Toronto and I share findings from my fieldwork research. My participants elaborate on what determines a Tibetan space in Toronto for them, ponder deeply over how memories of migration are embedded in ethnic Tibetan food as well as contribute to a broadening of what Lhakar, the Tibetan cultural resurgence movement, means to Tibetans and how they practice Lhakar weekly. In Chapter 4 I discuss the generational perspectives as they are understood by my participants. From ideas of how to be a good Tibetan, to notions of return, the homeland and what it means to be a Tibetan in the west, many of the participants in their 20s and 30s revealed a sense of *in-betweenness* in their responses. Not only do they acutely feel a constant struggle to meet the older generations' expectations to be a proper Tibetan, something that appears to be demonstrated through a variety of markers such as Tibetan language fluency, and knowledge of Tibetan Buddhism, these participants also feel they do not quite fit the category of first generation. This is because even though they are not born in Canada, they grew up and lived most of their lives in Canada. They went through the education system and are fluent in English. Most importantly, they can navigate around the Toronto metro system, shopping, applying for work and looking for a place to live, with the ease and familiarity of someone native-born. As such they are the generation 1.5, a group that is permanently liminal. However, despite generational differences between the older participants and younger participants, they all appear to share a common belief that has permeated many of the Tibetan communities in the west. It is a belief that they are under threat of losing the Tibetan culture as caused by assimilation into the Western culture and the lack of freedoms to practice the Tibetan Buddhist culture back in the homeland. My participants demonstrated some of the ways in which they safeguard against the continued erosion of their culture through language and cultural classes, connecting youth to their heritage through naming. In doing so, they also reveal what they view as some of the main differences between Western and Tibetan cultures, in that Tibetan communities generally have a collectivist mindset whereas the Western society champions individuality and personal success. Chapter 5 is the conclusion where I look

over what the research has contributed to the growing academic work on Tibetan communities in the west as well as share some criticism of the research.

Chapter 2

2 Tibetan Migration to Canada

When the iron bird flies and horses run on wheels, the Tibetan people will be scattered like ants across the face of the earth, and the dharma will come to the land of the red men –Padmasambhava, 8th Century (Soucy, Hori, & Harding 2010:322).

This quote is an 8th Century prophecy regarding the future of Tibet by Padmasambhava, a revered Tibetan Buddhist Master who introduced Buddhism to Tibet (Danyluk 2002:9). Many Tibetans believe his prediction foretold the Tibetan diaspora and the promise of justice. The exile of His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama, Tibet's Spiritual leader, in 1959 caused thousands of Tibetans to migrate out of China to India and Nepal. In 1971, Tibetan refugees from India became one of the first non-European refugees to migrate to Canada. The first waves of Tibetan refugees established networks of support and started many diaspora Tibetan communities around the world.

The first 228 Tibetan refugees, age range between 15 years old to 44 years old (Dirks 1977:236), arrived in 1970 and established the first networks of support for the Tibetan community in Canada. “The Tibetan refugees were settled in 11 municipalities across Ontario, Quebec and Alberta. The federal government decided that the future acceptance of Tibetan refugees would depend on the successful settlement of this first group of 228 individuals” (Raska 2015). The new arrivals experienced very different forms of welcome depending on the regions they were assigned. In Quebec, Tibetan refugees were offered language and job training while the other provinces provide little to no resources and support.

On December 18 2010, the Harper Conservative Government passed a temporary refugee policy allowing up to 1000 Tibetan refugees from Arunachal Pradesh, Northern India, to settle in Canada within the next five years. The policy specified that each incoming Tibetan refugee must be sponsored by an organization or a ‘group of five’: five

community members will divide up providing the newcomer with emotional, financial, legal support, accommodations and help them find employment. While there are no significant international events in 2010 that suggest the Canadian government's motivations, there are various factors that likely contributed to the passing of the temporary refugee bill (C. and I. C. Government of Canada 2011); Canada's support of Tibet, the significant number of politically-active Tibetan Canadian organizations, and the fact that every Tibetan arrival will be privately sponsored through the 'group of five' model.

Today there are around 6000 Tibetans living in Canada with two thirds of the whole Tibetan community living in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) (S. C. Government of Canada 2014). The GTA offer an ideal place for the Tibetan community because it has an established network of support, many notable Tibetan associations such as the Ontario Tibetan Women's Association and Student for Free Tibet Canada. Most importantly, there is a Tibetan Canadian Cultural Center. The majority of Tibetans who move to Toronto first settle in the Parkdale neighborhood. There are more social services and resources such as legal aid and translation services available in this neighborhood to meet the needs of the high number of Tibetans. As a poorer area of Toronto, housing is also more affordable, though that is changing with increased tensions between landlords and tenants (Slater 2003: 26). The lower cost of housing and accessibility of services as well as proximity to established Tibetans make the Parkdale neighborhood an ideal place to start out. Lau states that "economic activity and work present crucial social processes that enable a migrant group to construct a life-world in and with their new, post-migration surroundings" (Lau 2013:330).

The ethnic Tibetan community in Canada actively supports local Tibetans, resettles Tibetan refugees, and raises funds for Tibetan resettlement camps and campaigns for Tibet's independence. There are five major Tibetan Canadian organizations; Canada Tibet Committee (CTC), Project Tibet, Friends of Tibet, Canadian Tibetan Woman Association (TWA) and Student for Free Tibet. CTC was established in 1987 by a group of Tibetans and non-Tibetans to help with the Free Tibet movement. It presents itself as a representative of the Tibetan movement in Canada (CIC 2007). Project Tibet is a

temporary organization that emerged in order to facilitate the 2011 resettlement project started by the Canadian government (Project Tibet Society). TWA was established in India with more than 54 chapters worldwide with the aim of empowering poor Tibetan women” (Tsering 2011:12). Students for Free Tibet (SFT) consists of university student clubs that focus on activism and the Free Tibet movement.

In the few decades they have lived in Canada, the members of the Tibetan community have successfully integrated and recreated meaningful lives. Some of these members are my participants.

Nobden was born in a small Tibetan settlement village in South India. Since migrating to Canada, she has been back to India twice to visit family as well as to volunteer at the local Tibetan school. Fiona attended the Tibetan Children’s Village boarding school in New Delhi for seven months before migrating to Canada. Because of her poor English at the time, Fiona said that she was not able to attend classes and was instead enrolled in English Second Language class. Fiona also remembered the difficulties she initially had in adapting to life in Canada because of the English language barrier. Sue was born in Dharmasala, India, where her parents owned a successful carpet business. Lhamo was born in Karnataka and grew up in Tamil Nadu, South India. Her parents owned a street vending business. She attended an English School and can speak Hindi, Tamil and English fluently. She did not know how to speak Tibetan and did not know much about Tibet as a child because she grew up in a Tamil majority community. Unlike the other participants who have some basic knowledge of Tibetan before coming to Canada, Lhamo states that she learned Tibetan after coming to Canada. Lhamo said she adapted quickly to the Canadian society thanks to her English education. Rachel was born in Kathmandu, the capital city of Nepal. She grew up living in both Nepal and India, and attending English boarding schools. She was studying in an American university when her family immigrated to Canada.

2.1 Life in India and Nepal

Tibetans fled when they found they could not live freely as Tibetans in their homeland due to the homogenizing influences of the Chinese citizenship. The exile of their spiritual leader, the 14th Dalai Lama, was the catalyst that started the first wave of Tibetan refugee migration. The majority of Tibetans followed the Dalai Lama and settled in India, however some also settled in the neighboring Himalayan countries such as Bhutan and Nepal (Gamble & Ringapontsang 2013:35). Tashi recount the story of his grandparents fleeing Tibet to India, building roads in India and eventually settling down in Dharmasala.

Tashi: This is kind of what happened, so naturally. The reality of the situation is such that the circumstances they were in. When they first came, the Indian government was gracious enough to welcome in the Tibetans. Because we had nowhere to go. Everybody was running away. Tibetans they don't have an army. There was nothing like that. Especially any type of military force that could even give China a challenge. It was just night and day, the technology, tanks. So my parents and a lot of other Tibetans, they escaped through the mountains and the first place they ended up in was India. And because the Indian government have respect for Buddhism, actually Buddhism was born in India and then brought to Tibet. So when the Dalai Lama was escaping and reached out to them saying this is what's happening, we are being attacked and people are dying. Is it ok to come? They welcomed us with opened arms. Once we got there, it wasn't easy though. It wasn't a free roll, a free ride. They don't have a system like Canada. Everyone over there had to really fend for themselves. So they used to make roads. My grandmother and them, they built this long highway. They were a part of building that highway, and the funny thing is that every time they move the highway, they would move the camp. So they would move down the road more. But a lot of people died making this road, from accidents, slips, falling into rivers, things like that. So I think once they paved that, my parents paved the way for them [India], they see how much they've done and how much they've

gave back to India by building this road and dams. And without much complaints, there's nobody complaining. Sad....They were happy actually, because they were able to do this. Eventually that free labour, or cheap labour, set up the area of Dharmasala. And then they made Dharmasala, designated Dharmasala for the Dalai Lama to stay and then from there everybody migrated, Tibetans migrated there and it became this community (Recorded Interview, August 2016).

India's President Jawaharlal Nehru showed personal interest in the Tibetan refugee problem since the first wave of Tibetan refugee to India in 1959. The cultural and religious ties between India and Tibet helped foster an atmosphere of welcome and sympathy (Tsering 2011:2). The Dalai Lama set up the Tibetan government in exile, also known as the Central Tibetan Administration and institutions such Tibetan Performing Arts and Tibetan Children's Village boarding schools to preserve Tibetan culture. There are two Tibetan Children's Village boarding schools in India. Students often have to live apart from their families for years in order to get a Tibetan education. Many of my participants have memories of living in India and Nepal. They revealed how their Tibetan communities and settlement villages differed widely depending on the region of India they live in.

There are more than 35 Tibetan settlements in India (Tsering 2011:3). Tibetans have limited access to jobs in these resettlements in the agricultural, handicraft work sectors. The Central Tibetan Administration 2009 planning commission found that the main economic activities in a survey sample of 28,698 Tibetan refugees in India include cultivator (2,337), sweater seller (4,714), teacher (2,018), CTA related services (2,993), NGO services (757), Household work (872), Health services (1,534), Others (9,603) and Unknown (3,870). These findings show that Tibetans have some access to low-skill job opportunities in the resettlement camps. However, young Tibetans are increasingly frustrated at the lack of better work opportunities and look elsewhere for work. Similarly, new arrivals at these resettlements struggle to find work and businesses that have not already been taken by established Tibetan residents, creating tensions between them. As time went on, the situation in Tibet did not improve and the resettlement camps

were becoming too crowded with new arrivals. Since the 1980s, India has started making individual Tibetans re-register their Registration certificate once or twice a year, a mandatory practice even for those who were born in India; Tibetans and Indians begun to feel Tibetan refugees have overstayed their welcome in India and Tibetans were increasingly experiencing the lack of belonging. As Oha explains: “Exile, as a removal from home, orchestrates an *in-betweenness*: the exiled person is neither here nor there, even in the choice of language to express self. Exile is *somewhere*, but, psychologically, the exiled person is *nowhere*” (2008:87).

At every check-point and office,

I am an “Indian-Tibetan”.

My Registration Certificate,

I renew every year, with a salaam.

A foreigner born in India... (Falcone & Wangchuk 2008:164).

Tibetans in India and Nepal feel as though they are forever visitors. Some Central Tibetan Administration officials believe this environment is necessary, even good, because it reminds Tibetans that they are “not home” (2008:176), Scholar Gamble and Ringapontsang (2013) criticize the Central Tibetan Administration’s inaction in addressing the long term precariousness Tibetans in South Asia experience because of their statelessness. Falcone & Wangchuk (2008) also note that the majority of Tibetans living in exile reject any creolization of Tibetan identity with influences from the host countries. In general, my participants feel that Tibetans living in the west should have a collective responsibility to preserve Tibetan Buddhism, language, culture, history and tradition. Any creolization would spur paranoia of tainting and deterring preservation efforts, a notion reinforced by what some may see as the loss of their culture due to Chinese occupation in Tibet as well as the pervading influences of Western cultures.

Some Tibetans living in India are ambivalent about their statelessness. This is because CTA discourages Tibetans living in South Asia from actively seeking citizenship,

advocating 'statelessness' as 'Tibetan patriotism' (Falcone & Wangchuk 2008:176). This has created resentment among some Tibetans, who need citizenship in order to own land and businesses in India and Nepal. In India and other South Asian countries, many of my participants explained that Tibetans are treated unequally. They could never become citizens and vote, even if they have lived there all their lives. The precariousness that comes with living as a Tibetan in South Asia makes it difficult for them to get an education, start a business long-term, or travel, and they live with a looming threat of being displaced. India and the Himalayan countries have all adopted the assumption that Tibetans themselves do not wish for citizenship, forcing those who want citizenship to obtain it through informal channels. "For example, so-called "Gyagar Khampas," or Kinnauris, Spitis or Ladakhis, and so on, are Indian citizens, but by virtue of their Tibetan "ethnicity," or religio-cultural affiliations with Tibetans, have been well placed to help Tibetan refugees as go-betweens and as brokers, sometimes legally and sometimes illegally, assisting Tibetans in exile to purchase land or to acquire Indian citizenship." For example, Tibetans would pay to be 'adopted' by Gyar Khampas' family and seek citizenship as a Gyar Khampa. The average rate of illegally procuring such documents in 2006 was around 30,000 Indian rupees or 600 Canadian dollars, "but they were considered an investment by many who procured them. These passports are not legally on the books, and therefore are non-renewable, so Tibetans in exile who need these documents may have to purchase them again and again" (Falcone & Wangchuk 2008: 171). While many Tibetans who manage to procure such passports say it makes going to school and travelling easier due to the illicit nature of these documents, Tibetans often have to purchase them annually or whenever they need them. The accumulated high costs and nature of the illegal documents put the recipients in a precarious position for future blackmail, making these practices unreasonable and impractical in the long term. Scholars such as Frechette (2004) and Falcone & Wangchuk (2008) examine how Tibetan businessmen have navigated through economic and political structures by (illegally) passing as Indian and Nepalese. In the precarious lives of stateless Tibetans, citizenship and temporary visas are becoming nothing more than documentation to travel legally. However, immigration officers are wary of granting visas to Tibetans due to the

rise of illegal documents in Nepal and India. This makes it harder for Tibetans to travel abroad.

2.2 Motivations to Head West

The participants I interviewed all had family members and friends all around the world, in South Korea, India, Nepal, the Americas and Europe. They have a transnational social network that stretches around the globe. They listed four motivations for Tibetans to head west; better education, more opportunities, being treated equally and family reunification.

2.2.1 Better Education

Lhamo's mother did not have an opportunity to get an education because she had to start working at a young age to support her family. As such, she wanted her children to come to Canada and get the education she was deprived of. Lhamo said that the school system is much better in Canada because students are encouraged to think critically, it was "all memorization" at her former school in Tamil Nadu, South India.

Lhamo: Definitely, I guess what I can talk about is the school system. It's so much more different because here you are encouraged to learn and understand the meaning behind what you are learning. Whereas in India you are taught memorizing everything. Just want to see what you can copy and paste to an exam right? And it's not the best way to learn. I went to school there until grade 6 and never had an opportunity to play any sports. I didn't know a single sport, I got to touch a volleyball once but I think it was actually a soccer ball used as a volleyball. And then when I came here, sports became a major factor in my life. So lots of things are different compare to India (Recorded Interview, August 2016).

A mutual understanding shared among all my participants, older and younger, was that the move ultimately was for the next generation, so that the next generation will have more opportunities, better education and good jobs. The older generations migrated to

the west for the future generations both to ensure the individual success of their children and the collective survival of their Tibetan Buddhist culture.

2.2.2 More Opportunities

Dolma: Unless they are very dedicated. They don't go back. I mean it's the same, my auntie she stayed on in England but she volunteered in India for many years. And now she is doing something that is close to her heart, to give back to the community. And she is only able to do that because she lived in England. Otherwise, there won't be...some people they do a bit of naming and shaming. They are seen as more of a waste. A wasted resource that could be allocated to somebody else who is more dedicated. My cousin is one of them (laugh)...A few years ago and there was literally a poster of people who didn't come back. I think the smaller communities sometimes they do things that are unethical. Like oh my god did they really do that?! (Recorded Interview, August 2016).

In terms of opportunities, my participants defined them broadly as employment, financial stability, and to make something of oneself. On whether there are any tensions between one's personal aspirations and the tenets of Buddhism, my participants in general appear to believe that such duality can exist. Tenzin believes that more Tibetans will migrate to the west as the remaining businesses in the resettlement camps become less in demand. Tibetans living in South Asian countries work mostly in the sweater and winter clothes trade. However, he feels that with global warming, even this industry will dry up. With fewer jobs, Tibetans would have no choice but to migrate. Sue said that everyone in India wanted to migrate to the west these days.

Sue: I'm sure a lot of my cousins would like to come here and in that sense I feel super lucky. I could have been back there wanting to come here. Though sometimes I found myself feeling my cousins are so lucky, they get to be there, living peaceful and happy lives. But I'm sure if there's a switch between me and my cousin I would probably be like, "Oh my cousin is lucky, to live in Canada." (Recorded Interview, August 2016).

2.2.3 To Be Treated Equally

“The whole thing about being a refugee in India, no matter where you go in India you are always a refugee (Lhamo” (Recorded Interview, August 2016). Rachel discussed how some Tibetan businessmen have been getting around the barriers to start businesses by illegally obtaining a Nepalese passport. But it is a risky affair. Rachel points out if, for example, the businessman had obtained the illegal document through a corrupt official, that official can now regularly blackmail the businessman for campaign money. He “can't go to the police because you are afraid that the police will question your papers” (Recorded Interview, August 2016) Tibetan artist Tashi Norbu experienced a different kind of precariousness as a child in Bhutan when the Bhutanese government gave the Tibetans living in the country an ultimatum.

Tashi: Yeah, in my family [first generation]. First in my family, they all came after me. We all moved to Holland. I was born in Bhutan. We had to move from Bhutan for some political reasons. You know China makes trouble for Tibetans in India, same thing happen in Bhutan. That was in the 80s. Then we had to move in 1981. I was like 8 years and a half. [Moved to a Tibetan settlement camp in India]

Diyin: And so you were Tibetan refugees then?

Tashi: Yeah, we were Tibetan refugees.

Diyin: Did you move to one of the resettlement camp areas?

Tashi: Yes, in Dehradun area, Dehradun, it's called. There was a normal Tibetan school especially for Tibetans students. Actually we had a choice to live in Bhutan or we leave, so um, we were told like we had to become Bhutanese or something if we stayed there.

Diyin: So they offered you citizenship?

Tashi: Some kind of, yeah, like rights and all. So you leave or you stay. So then um, yeah, so we left because actually Tibetan studies and all are

better in India. Because Dalai Lama never visited Bhutan you know
(Recorded Interview, August 2016).

In the west, Tibetans would be treated the same as the others, they can get a better education and most importantly, they can dream big. Lhamo said that in Canada, a Tibetan can even dream about becoming the Prime Minister.

Lhamo: Yes, opportunities, being treated equally. Simple. Because in Tibet right now that is not a possibility. Being Tibetan you don't even get house to rent, even if you can financially afford it. Even if they can, because they are Tibetan they often don't get it, yes in Tibet. So they don't get treated equally. And then in India, no matter how well you do or how successful you become there's always going to be a glass ceiling above you. You wouldn't be able to surpass and compete with Indian top CEOs if you wanted to be up there. It is just not a possibility as of right now. So coming to a place where you can start equal as everyone else, you have a chance to get somewhere. Even in India, even people not as financial well-off as you are, they can still have a chance to be prime minister. We would never have a chance because we are not even considered citizens. So coming to a country like Canada, I can dream about becoming the prime minister if I wanted to, and it's ok (Recorded Interview, August 2016).

2.2.4 Family Reunification

Dolma's story about growing up away from her family is unfortunately a common one. Families regularly send their children to the Tibetan Children's Village boarding schools and only see them during the holidays for many years. Dolma's siblings were sent to the Tibetan Children's Village boarding school while she was sent to live with her aunt in England. Dolma's parents were able to give Dolma and her siblings a better education, but at a price of Dolma losing touch with her biological siblings. Her motivation to settle in Toronto was to get to know her biological sister better.

2.2.5 Some Issues with Migrating to the West

Having grown up in England most her life, Dolma said she cannot communicate properly with her biological mother in Tibetan. Her distance from her mother is a result of her being cut off from her Tibetan community at her early age. Another negative effect Dolma mentioned is a brain drain of Tibetan talents in South Asia.

Fiona also points out how as more and more Tibetan families move to the United States or Canada, they feel less connected to India and to Tibet because “they all just moved out.”

Fiona: For me, I have some people to connect back to, talk to because some of my family members are there. So I feel pretty well connected. But for some other people I think it's different they feel like they don't have anyone living in Tibet (Recorded Interview, August 2016).

2.3 Motivation for Citizenship

Despite the CTA’s discouragement of Tibetans living in South Asia from taking citizenship, Tibetans living abroad are actually encouraged to take citizenship if possible as a way to enhance their economic and political power in the host countries in the Americas and Europe and act as “Tibet’s ambassadors” (Hess, 2003, 2006). Tibetan identity outside of South Asia takes on a dual role of preserving and displaying Tibetan language, culture, traditions and spirituality. One of my participants is a permanent resident who intends to apply for citizenship soon, another is an asylum claimant and the rest of my participants are Canadian citizens.

Diyin: So are you currently a citizen (Canadian)?

Lhamo: Yes. Making it easier for me to travel. My family too. They have citizenship. As of right now, before citizenship, we didn't belong anywhere, it's hard to travel. That's why people struggle to come from India to here. Especially Tibetan refugees because the UN I don't think have actual documentation that defines them as a refugee. And then if

they are not then they must be Indian that's what is assumed. So then they have to apply through an Indian passport but they don't have an Indian passport, they'll never have an Indian passport. Unless somehow I came here and I apply because I live here alone, I need my family and try to immigrate my family here. That's the only way it's working so far.

Diyin: Through family reunification?

Lhamo: And that process is super long and something I am working on here [at the Legal services] (Recorded Interview, August 2016).

Having citizenship gives my participants a sense of security. Rachel spoke about how with a Canadian passport it is even possible to travel to Tibet. Citizenship also makes them feel accepted in the west, something they could not achieve living in India and the other South Asian countries. Fiona also added to the point of how having Canadian citizenship makes travelling safer by recounting how one Tibetan-American film maker was arrested in Tibet and made it back to Canada.

Fiona: Did you hear about the story about this film maker? He lived in the western country but then he decided to take a tour of Tibet or China. And then he was like arrested at the airport. This film maker he was basically arrested at the airport and he was just travelling, not doing anything. He was an American citizen. So I think to have citizenship you feel more protected and you feel like...not your identity but feel like you are protected as a person when you travel around the world (Recorded Interview, August 2016).

2.4 From Refugee to Citizen

All my participants are Canadian citizens except for Shing and Tenzin, both of whom are currently in different stages of the naturalization process. It is long and tedious. Tenzin said he should have gotten his Canadian citizenship last year, but he had to leave just short of fulfilling his residency requirement. Canadian residency requires that one has to

“be physically present in Canada for at least 730 days (two years) in every five-year period. The five-year period is assessed on a rolling basis” (OCASI 2016).

Tenzin: I am supposed to apply the full citizenship last year in April, April 15 but I was going to India. If I apply, I'm not supposed to be out of the country for a few months. Because my dad had a heart surgery. He had a pacemaker and then I went to see my teacher. He was old and a little bit sick. So then I saw [at] my teacher and then I saw my father. But my teacher, he passed away April 28 so I was happy that I saw him this year in January. So if I go this year, I cannot see him, lucky, fortunate you know? Buddhism teacher is very important person who show you light, path, guidance you know. He's like my leader. My hero. He's 85 he passed away April 28. No I was not there but I saw him in January for ten days fortunately you know. I was lucky. No regrets that I saw him this, this year.

Diyin: But that's why you couldn't get your citizenship, are you applying later then?

Tenzin: No, before like a new refugee comes here, before old law is you are here, apply the paper. You approved. Two years is one year. But the Conservatives, Stephen Harper's government, they made the new law... Yeah I don't like Conservative anymore, I like Liberal or NDP. Because new law, actually don't make any sense, because that law is based on my time moving here, they said two year one year. But now the new law from since last year, like June 15, they said, 'you have no PR card 5 years, 0'. That don't make any sense, they make new law. Otherwise I'm already here for five years you know? ...But it's ok, I'll be citizen within a year...you have to fill out the form, 8 months, then nowadays the exam is so difficult for a lot of people who don't speak English, no chance...the Conservative government made it very hard for the immigrants. So a lot of immigrants don't like conservatives anymore.

Liberal and NDP more chances to win support (Recorded Interview, August 2016).

Tashi migrated to Canada with his family from Dharmasala, India. He was among the first wave of Tibetans to arrive in the 1970-1971 government project. He and his family were first placed in the city of Belleville, where his parents both worked two jobs in order to support him and his sister. They worked as cleaners in the daytime, then at McDonalds. This enabled Tashi to become independent at a very young age. He remembers having a daily routine at the age of eight; waking up to make breakfast for himself and his sister, then taking the bus together to go to school. Life was not easy. Tashi was thankful that because they were chosen through a government project, they did not have to worry about much of the paperwork that came with migrating and getting citizenship. This was a “huge burden off their backs,” as Tashi exclaimed, because his parents had no English skills at the time. They were able to focus on finding jobs, and settling down in a new environment. He also noted that there are legal services available in Parkdale to help with letter writing. This is an essential service for many Tibetan newcomers who may have limited English skills and have trouble filling out the forms properly. “You make one mistake and they send it back and that was six months of waiting” (Recorded Interview, August 2016). Sending in correctly completed forms would avoid the backlog and help speed up the citizenship application process. Dolma was the only dual citizenship holder, having both a British and Canadian passport. Though she said that since the passing of her adopted father, she has less reason to go back to the UK and will stay in Toronto with her family. Tenzin had an opportunity to get Canadian citizenship but something happened in India that forced him to leave before fulfilling the five years residency requirement. He felt that Harper’s government made the path to citizenship extremely restrictive. But it is still better than America.

Tenzin: The American law, once you get in, you go out you cannot apply for refugee. Canada is much better. Easy for the Tibetan people. Lot of Tibetans move to New York or America, they don't get that American paper. That's why they come to Canada you know. They're more generous, Canadians. But some Tibetans born in Tibet they still not

getting American papers, they get Canadian paper (Recorded Interview, August 2016).

Though the majority of Tibetans I spoke with explained their journeys of migration to Canada vaguely, ambiguously, mostly referring to their motivations for migrating. This could be because many of them came as children and did not have a clear understanding of the immigration process.

Sue: I'm not sure? I think speaking from my parents' [experience], most people who come here, people like my parents, aunts and uncles, once again it's not for them. It's for their kids. A lot of time it's like that. Back in Nepal we had a pretty decent life. It wasn't super hard. My parents had a business there and it was doing great. But just for the kids and their future. They thought that either America, Europe, Canada, can offer a better future, a more set life, proper career. I know a lot of people came for their kids. In fact, coming here it's even harder for them sometimes than life back there. They had to start from the bottom basically and go to the top. They [people back in India] think it's a land of opportunity but it's also really hard to sustain a life here. It's not the easier in the world and I know a lot of Tibetans who think it's a land of opportunity and have to work super work, working labour jobs and it's not as pretty as you imagine when you are working in those areas (Recorded Interview, August 2016).

I did get a sense that some Tibetans, such as Shing, Tenzin and Tashi, did manage to migrate to Canada on visas and then apply for refugee asylum. Tenzin said that based on his experiences having lived in New York, the Canadian immigration system is more welcoming to Tibetan refugees in comparison to the immigration system in the United States. If this is true, it would certainly be a major motivator to migrate to Canada. Of the more than 6000 recorded Tibetans living in Canada, over two thirds live in Toronto. Even though Toronto in general has a higher cost of living compared to smaller Canadian

cities and rural areas, Tibetans have more support, resources and job opportunities in a metropolis.

Tenzin: It's easy to get a job in Toronto you know, because if you go to remote area there is no job. Where my sister lived [illegible], she lose one job it takes another year to get a job. Small places very quiet, beautiful but it's difficult to get a job...to survive you need a job. My teacher call it a survival job. Just to pay your bill you get a job (Recorded Interview, August 2016).

A common occurrence for many of the youth and established Tibetan-Canadians I interviewed, is not quite remembering how their family managed to migrate here. The majority have also never been to Tibet and do not have any direct memories of the homeland. Six decades of exile have led to most of my interviewees being born in India or Nepal. Most also struggled to remember the parts of Tibet their family hailed from. But they can remember with sharp details their living experiences in India or Nepal. This was exemplified when Sue showed me her love for Bollywood movies. Dolma elaborated on how migration to the west may be the only option for Tibetan women in resettlement camps. Here she showed some ambivalence regarding her own childhood growing up in a western country. While living in the west has provided her with more opportunities than she would have likely not get in the resettlement camps, she wondered what life might have been like if she had stayed.

2.5 Tibetan Community in Canada: Precarious Work and Health

Fiona: Yeah so they have to start all over again. And then there's so much paper work to get a job permit, to get a job and if you don't speak English that's impossible for you. And the immigration office, they don't have a lot of funding and most of them work for free overtime a lot of time (Recorded Interview, August 2016).

The majority of those in the first wave of Tibetans in Canada worked in agriculture, the service industry and craft related industries. According to Brian J. Given, the Tibetan refugees "...have done especially well in the "caring professions," such as working in hospitals or homes for senior citizens..." due to the Tibetan Buddhist values of compassion and respect for life (Raska 2015). Like many new immigrants in Canada, Tibetans have to start over. They have to face a multitude of barriers from a lack of English or French skills, to limited finances. They have to find a place to live, and most importantly, find employment that would readily accept a newcomer.

Fiona: For me, language barrier was a big thing. Not being able to communicate. But I think it differs because for me, I came as a child, 8 years old. Me coming as a child the biggest barrier was being able to speak to people and learn the English education. For other people, much older and have to survive here, the barriers might be getting job, finding a place to live so it differs base on what your situation is and what your age is (Recorded Interview, August 2016).

Many first- generation Tibetans are relegated to low-income, blue-collar work, with the exception of those who have the opportunity to go through the Canadian education system and become more familiar with ways to navigate the Canadian system; how to look for work, book an appointment with a doctor, use public transportation and more.

Diyin: Do you find that for people to come here, is there a financial barrier?

Fiona: Yeah, I definitely think there is. Only thing I can say about that is that when you are in India. One dollar here is like 50 dollars there, or 48 rupees. Over there you feel like, oh yeah I have all this money and then you come here. Everything gets reduced by 50 times less. So just with that I can see that there would be a financial barrier. And then the jobs that they paid over there and the jobs here. Even if the work is the same, the pay is much less. And when you convert that it's even less. And a lot

of the times people over there have very high degrees, they come here and their degrees are not even recognized (Recorded Interview, August 2016).

Ryerson University in collaboration with community partners, recently published a report on the health impacts of precarious work on racialized immigrant women in Toronto (Ng, Sundar, Karpoche & al. 2016). 18 out of the 40 women profiled were Tibetan from India or Nepal. The study found that the majority of racialized migrant women continue to work in the 'care industry,' this includes "personal care, healthcare and childcare (ibid: 3)." Working in the care industry makes it impossible to have a normal home/work balance as often time they are part-time on-call. Their lack of control over their work schedule looms as a constant uncertainty and unpredictable interruption over their lives.

Many of the Tibetan migrant women who came as refugee claimants also have to worry about the uncertainty of their status. Because of the long and unpredictable hours, as well as the work environment in the care industry, their health may be compromised. The Ryerson report also found that 75% of the participants are in part-time or casual, on-call work. The 25% that do have full-time work, but work long, unpredictable shifts and they never knew when they may be laid off or lose their jobs should there be a workplace closure. Finally, the report concluded that the main cause of the precarious in these women's situation is the lack of social capital and networking available to newcomers.

In addition to unstable employment, Tibetans living in the Parkdale area also face the danger of being evicted and displaced. Community Legal Education Ontario published an account of the uncertainty that may be experienced by Tibetans who rent apartments in Parkdale:

Property manager Akelius Canada applied to increase the rent at 188 Jameson Ave. by 4.1 per cent in 2014; this year it doubled down, seeking a 4.6 per cent hike. At least 50 residents of the midrise apartment building, including many Tibetan refugees, say they can't afford to pay that much and are planning to protest outside Akelius' Toronto head office Monday (2015).

Parkdale Community Legal Services provides free legal help to residents who live within their catchment and fall into their financial eligibility criteria. The Parkdale Community Legal Services has helped Tibetans fight unfair evictions and other legal issues with their landlords. Tashi notes that despite the challenges Tibetans may face in adapting to life in Canada, they must still remember to represent Tibet in a good light and spread awareness about Tibet. That is the collective responsibility they have towards Tibet. A constant reminder that the freedoms they enjoy are in stark contrast to the lack of freedom and restrictions on Tibetans in Tibet.

Tashi: I try to make it a point to be active. I make a conscious effort to always be, like His Holiness say, a spokesperson. Kind of an ambassador. Wherever you go, you are always going to represent Tibet and then it's our job to always have our best foot forward. To show our best qualities and share it to other people. At the same time make them think about what's happening inside Tibet. I've probably lived my life, I think since my twenties I decided this is what I've got to do. But at the same time you've got to work; you've got to pay bills. Just surviving on a daily basis you have to do just that but then we have all this extra burden that we need to carry. And then you try to balance it physically, emotionally, financially, all those things. I think in my case Tibetans have survived up to now. They are secured and they have a job. I think they work very hard
(Recorded Interview, August 2016).

2.6 Tibetan Buddhism in Canada

As Tibetan communities strive to preserve their heritage, scholars such as Appell (1988) and Soucy et al., (2010) notice an emerging community of Westerners who convert to Tibetan Buddhism. The phenomenon holds true in the Canadian context, where there are now many Tibetan monasteries in Canada being maintained by Western monks and nuns. There is a relationship of reciprocity between the ethnic Tibetan community and non-Tibetan Canadians; a significant number of Canadians have converted to Tibetan Buddhism since the religion's debut in Canadian society three decades ago. As McLellan

explains, “Buddhism as a practice or philosophy received little to no popular recognition or support prior to the 1960s, despite a relatively lengthy history in Canada” (McLellan 1999:11, 35; Danyluk 2002:2). The popularity of Tibetan Buddhism in Canada and the United States among westerners that distinguishes it from Chinese and Japanese Buddhism traditions, and can be attributed to politics, popular media and the digestibility of Tibetan religious practices and traditions as a philosophy and mindful meditation. A quick google search will show a list of celebrities who, at some point in time, supported the Tibetan movement by hosting a fundraising concert or donning a Free Tibet bandana. “The religion of an oppressed people”, and “high-profile celebrity association” makes Tibetan Buddhism very appealing to Westerners (Soucy et al. 2010:336). This has created a “refracted community” (Appell 1988:10) of Western Buddhism that is based on abstracts of Tibetan Buddhism. The types of Tibetan monasteries/meditation centers that have one Tibetan lama (monk) and a Western membership exist “in the space between two mirrors – one reflecting elements of Tibetan culture, the other reflecting a particular way of viewing Western culture” (Appell 1988:12). Despite the growth of this refracted community that is built on an abstract of Tibetan culture and religion, scholars such as Appell (1988) and Soucy et al., (2010) remark on the lack of interaction between the ethnic Tibetan community and the refracted community. Westerners in particular are optimistic about the future of Tibetan Buddhism in the west. The relationship between Tibetans and Westerners will likely continue to be renegotiated as more Westerners become involved in the transmission of Tibetan Buddhist teachings, blurring the seemingly distinct lines between the two communities. “Events such as the “reincarnation” of a Tibetan lama in the form of a Western child are seen as particularly potent demonstrations of this possibility” (Appell 1988, 98).

Soucy et al. believe there are two main factors that were instrumental in the Western adoption of Tibetan Buddhism. The first is the Canadian government’s acceptance and support for Tibetan refugees from the 1970s on and the second is the establishment of the Nova Scotia-based Shambhala International founded by Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche (Soucy et al. 2010:323). Shambhala International is one of the first Tibetan Buddhist teaching center that opened in Canada. Shambhala International offers a series of meditation programs to westerners that would help them reach spiritual enlightenment.

The organization has since built an international community of practitioners. In addition, the notable works of Hess (2003, 2006, 2009) and Frechette (2002), both conclude that state and institutional support are instrumental for the successful integration of Tibetan communities. This leads to the question of the impact of Tibetan identity on Canada. Senator Consiglio Di Nino, Chair of the Parliamentary Friends of Tibet, summed it up, “Canada is in a process of creating a new culture. It’s difficult to say Canada does not have a culture but we really are a very young nation [...] and I think [the Tibetan contribution] would be immense.” (Tharchin Goenpo 2010).

2.7 Chapter Summary

The majority of Tibetans who first fled from Tibet settled in Nepal because was the first point of contact after they made it through the Himalayan Mountains, and then to India where Tibetans and Indians shared similar spiritual roots in Buddhism. Unfortunately, Tibetans living in South Asia have a lot of difficulty improving their living conditions, education and employment because it is impossible to legally get citizenship. This motivated a second migration to the west in search of better education and more opportunities for future generations of Tibetans. Tibetans who decided to settle in Canada were influenced by factors such as family reunification, word of mouth regarding the vibrant Tibetan community in Parkdale and so on. It is also possible to obtain citizenship in Canada and my informants all support the necessity of citizenship as protection, making it easier to travel, to get a job and feel accepted as part of the Canadian society. Tibetan communities have flourished in Canada since the 1970s and one of their impacts in Canada is the spread of Tibetan Buddhism among Canadians.

The next chapter will focus on the Tibetan community in Toronto, Ontario and explore some of the reasons why Tibetans are finding Toronto to be an appealing location to settle down. In this chapter, I will also discuss how the Parkdale area has unofficially become ‘Little Tibet’ among Tibetans living in Toronto. My informants will share their perspectives on living as Tibetans, identify Tibetan spaces in Toronto and what Lhakar means to them. The chapter ends with an analysis of ethnic Tibetan food, how the

memories of forced migration are embedded and experienced through the consumption of ethnic Tibetan food.

Chapter 3

3 The Tibetan Community in Toronto

From the initial small number of 228, the Tibetan community in Canada has grown to over 6000, with some of my participants claiming the number could be higher as those waiting for asylum are not recorded. In this chapter, I ask: How has the community thrived for nearly five decades in exile and in a western society that generally regards Tibetan Buddhist culture as one of its many foreign, immigrant religions and subcultures?

3.1 In Search of ‘Little Tibet’ in Toronto

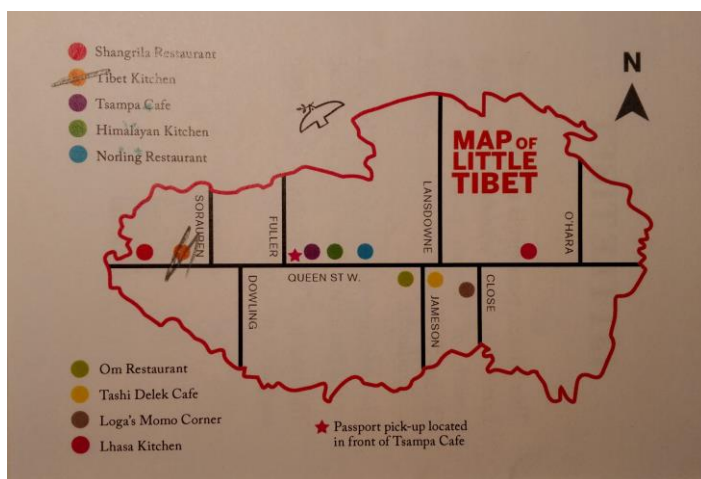


Figure 2: Map of Little Tibet, Toronto. This is the map of the unofficial Little Tibet, Toronto on the 2016 Momo Crawl Passport. Nine Tibetan restaurants are depicted as various colourful checkpoints on the map (Photo taken by myself).

One of the goals of this research is to identify some of the major Tibetan spaces of belonging (Robin 2001) in Toronto. These include events that are politically, socially and culturally Tibet-related. This chapter will share the various narratives and experiences from Tibetans living in Toronto, and discuss the notable Tibetan spaces identified by the research participants as well as from data collected during fieldwork research. These spaces can be temporary and permanent, ranging from organized activities, socials and organizations that cater to the needs of Tibetans living in Toronto.

While there are many temporal Tibetan spaces that appear, and disappear, leaving behind a trail of Facebook photos and videos, there are two Tibetan spaces that are undeniably permanent and etch out potential physical locations for ‘Little Tibet’, Toronto, albeit unofficially. The two spaces include the Parkdale neighborhood and the Toronto Tibetan Cultural Center based in Etobicoke.

My participants had a variety of opinions about the idea of “Little Tibet;” Tashi, is a 50 years old Tibetan who lived in Toronto for a long time. He first moved there with his family a few decades ago when his dad was offered a better job as a custodian at a healthcare facility that participated in elder care. He remembers feeling apprehensive at the time.

Tashi: We didn't know. A lot of people just lived in Belleville, don't move and stayed. Because back then we thought it [Toronto] was such as big city, people moving from Belleville to Toronto was like, New York you know, gangsters, a lot of crime, a lot of noise, a lot of pollution. There was a stereotype about Toronto (Recorded Interview, August 2016).

By the time they moved to Toronto, life had become relatively stable for his family. His father could speak broken English, knew the law and most importantly, he could drive. Since then, Tashi has remained in Toronto and watched the community grow and thrive over the years. Today he works as a real estate agent. He is happy with the flexibility and freedom his current job gives him. During our interview, he recalled that Parkdale actually did not experience much Tibetan migration until the last 15 years when there was an influx of newly arrived Tibetans to Toronto. More services and support such as housing, social services, translation services, were needed in response to the new influx. Tashi remembered being part of the early years of the Community of Tibetan Association of Ontario and watching it grow to the umbrella organization it is today.

Tashi: There was the first influx of newly arrived Tibetans to Toronto. At that time, just by chance I happened to [illegible] the president of the Community of Tibetan association of Ontario. At the time, when I met the president it was 120 Tibetans roughly. Meeting regularly in the morning

so you can imagine from that, going to [now]. I just happened to be in the way, there was an influx of [Tibetans arrivals] that had really nothing to do with me. But indirectly, I just happened to be in the voyage and I was helping as much as I could, to make it as easy as possible for the transition. Once they got here, a year or two later. Then they knew each other, they got the language, apartments, housing, got established. And then everybody was just helping each other. So it was less and less. I would say mostly internal [support], just the Tibetan community but definitely there was a lot of help from outside organizations. There was a furniture bank for example. The city of Toronto, they have an Ontario works program. They help with daycare while the parents can go to an ESL class. Stuff like that. They have the libraries that issue them cards so they can use the internet. And then you can use all the resources of the Toronto public library has to offer. There's a lot of programs (Recorded Interview, August 2016).

Prior to his current career as a real estate agent, Tashi was the proud owner of the Tibetan restaurant on Queen Street West. He was one of the first Tibetans to set up a restaurant in Parkdale in the early 2000s. Tashi explained to me his belief that any diasporic community needs to have certain ‘landmarks’ in their resettled place to claim that space as their territory. For him, a restaurant is the ideal landmark. Now there are nine Tibetan restaurants down Queen Street W. in Parkdale. It is the locations of these restaurants that mark out the ‘territory’ of Little Tibet in Parkdale in the annual Momo crawl event.

Tashi: Food was another way, a main way for me to talk about Tibet without being political. And my dream was one day...you see there is a Chinatown, Koreatown, Indiantown, you can see most communities are proud of that. So those are beautiful things in a multicultural society and festivals all over the place. I've always want to see one day that happen to Tibet. One of my dreams was to maybe spark that idea. So after my first restaurant there, after a few years, now we have 8 restaurants there I think. And then one or two shops. And unofficially, by non-Tibetans, now

they are calling it Little Tibet, it's kind of happening. It's beautiful I like it
(Recorded Interview, August 2016).

Sue's father had a friend in Toronto who recommended Parkdale as a good place with a vibrant Tibetan community, to settle in. Her parents chose to move to Toronto in hopes of creating a better future for Sue and her brother. She is currently in her second year at Ryerson University. When asked her opinion on the possibility of South Parkdale, or at least a part of it, being named 'Little Tibet', she supported the idea and pointed out that the Parkdale area has already unofficially become known as 'Little Tibet.' Having lived in the Parkdale area from grade two to grade seven, Parkdale really does resonant to Sue as a Tibetan area. 'Little Tibet' or not, it is a place where there are a lot of Tibetans.

Sue: Obviously there's the community center, Parkdale is a huge area, even my high school Parkdale Collegiate Institute, it felt very Tibetan to me. Like compared to any other high schools, any school you found in Parkdale, has a lot more of that Tibetan vibe to it. And then I do know that there are a lot more Tibetans residing in the Etobicoke area. So there's like a park, I know a lot of Tibetan male youths go there to play and practice basketball. So that could be kind of be like a Tibetan place. Usually just Parkdale and a little bit of the Etobicoke area (Recorded Interview, July 2016).

Lhamo is an active member of the Tibetan community in Toronto, and she is a board member of the Toronto Tibetan Cultural Center. She has spearheaded a youth engagement initiative called T-YAC, Tibetan Youth Alliance Community with nine interns¹. This was part of her current focus to bridge the gap between the generations with intergenerational activities such as the Senior Excursion to Central Island in the summer. It was a social outing organized by the T-YAC interns for the Tibetan seniors. It was a full day trip which included a picnic on Central Island, some Gorshey dancing,

¹ T-YAC was a new youth initiative Lhamo created in 2016 at the Tibetan Canadian Cultural Centre as a way to address the generational gap and engage Tibetan youths with Tibetan seniors and Tibetan community through social events such as the Senior Excursion, Volleyball tournament and more.

some interns supervised and served hot Tibetan buttered tea for the seniors who played board games and card games. Some interns took another group of seniors to see the zoo on the island. Though there was at times a language barrier and generational difference between the youths and seniors, nearly everyone joined in the Gorshey dancing. It was a fun event for everyone. Finally, Lhamo is also interning at the Parkdale Legal Services. She was enthusiastic about the idea of having part of the Parkdale area officially be called, 'Little Tibet,' because she believes it will raise awareness of Tibetan issue among non-Tibetans.

Fiona had some difficulties adjusting to Canadian culture when she first arrived because she did not know any English and she remembers how she was unable to make friends with the other students. Thankfully, she made friends with some of the Tibetan students at the Parkdale Public School that she attended and as a result she was not entirely alone during the difficult period of adjustment. Her new friends also helped by translating for her at times. Fiona personally benefited from living in Parkdale and getting support from established Tibetans who already lived there. Based on her experience living in Parkdale, she sees Parkdale community Information Center and Parkdale Intercultural Association as two important institutional support systems that are vital for any newly arrived Tibetans. She views Parkdale as a gateway community for Tibetan newcomers to acclimate to the Canadian society and learn about western culture. Fiona refuted the suggestion that the Tibetan community in Parkdale might deter some Tibetan newcomers from interacting with non-Tibetans.

Fiona: The whole point of having this well-supported community in Parkdale is to get people ready to step out and to feel comfortable in the west. But not lose their identity. And that's the other job that we have as people who are well-embedded, that they don't lose sight of their origin (Recorded Interview, August 2016).

When asked what she thought of Parkdale being officially called 'Little Tibet,' she liked the idea and argued that it would be akin to an official recognition of sovereignty.

Fiona: That would be great. What that really says is that is recognizing Tibet is different from China. Because you won't have like Chinatown, Indiantown and Pakistani town, you might but you wouldn't have like Canada town and then Toronto town. You would have like different countries so for Tibet to be recognized as Little Tibet in Parkdale, is like we're a different country (Recorded Interview, August 2016).

When Nobden's family first moved to Toronto, they settled in the Parkdale area before moving to Etobicoke. She currently lives near Square One, a shopping mall in Mississauga.

Nobden: ...I think one of my uncle lived there. So he's like, "Oh, come! Come here!" There's a, there's a Tibetan community and you just feel it right away. I understand when you are new, new to this country, you have your own, one of you, like to guide you. Another Tibetan guiding you and making you feel like it's ok to be in another country. Most Tibetans are so new to seeing all this western culture, western people. Just seeing all these different people and culture at once, I feel it's nice to just have your own people to guide you (Recorded Interview, July 2016).

Nobden was ambivalent about the idea of Parkdale being officially called 'Little Tibet.' There were two main reasons behind her ambivalence; gentrification and reputation. Ever since her family moved out of the area, she felt that the Parkdale neighborhood has become less Tibetan in the recent years. She is not wrong. In the recent decades gentrification has become a major issue in the Parkdale area. Despite Parkdale having a bad reputation as a rough area of Toronto, because of its ideal inner-city location, and scenic architectures, there is a significant number of middle-class homeowners returning to Parkdale. This has created a lot of tensions between the low-income tenants who cannot afford to live anywhere else in Toronto and the middle-class home owners who want to see Parkdale restored to its former glory and revalued (Slater 2003: 26). Landlords and investment firms have gradually raised rental prices over the years in response to the incoming middle-class homeowners and the low-income tenants find

themselves being displaced from the Parkdale neighborhood.

Nobden: The Parkdale space is being more I don't know...these days, more of the businesses that are opening are not Tibetan. There are a lot of new ones and I feel like they are taking over Parkdale! [Laugh] Yeah, I think slowly slowly...before it's more Tibetan. More Tibetan people living there, it was more crowded. I think there were more restaurants I would say (Recorded Interview, July 2016).

On the other hand, Nobden also noted that perhaps it was a good thing Parkdale is not officially known as 'Little Tibet.' Parkdale has a rather unfortunate image associated with gangs, drugs and crime; it was often referred to as "no place for a child to grow up" (Philip 2000; Slater 2003: 23). She was understandably hesitant with the idea of her community being tied with a rougher part of town that is rife with poverty and crime.

Tenzin is another one of my participants who did not feel anything about the possibility of Parkdale being official recognized as 'Little Tibet.' He has a rather cynical and pragmatic view of the world that is influenced by his Tibetan Buddhist upbringing. He explained that part of his apathy to the idea is because he is "not sure if the city would agree." For many Tibetans, Parkdale is already unofficially 'Little Tibet'; the sentiment is there and for Tenzin, that is enough.

Tenzin: Even my, two of my friends from New York came, they are monk friends, they said oh they feel like [Parkdale] a Tibetan community. They feel like a Tibetan sentiment in Parkdale, every corner is a Tim Horton and Tibetan people. If I walk out I'll see at least 10 Tibetans every 5 seconds (Recorded Interview, July 2016).

Dolma is pursuing a degree in nursing and appears rather content living in Toronto, which has a much bigger Tibetan community compared to the UK. She joked about how in the UK, nothing gets done when one meets a fellow Tibetan on the street. They would relocate to a nearby café and talk for hours on end, learning about the regions they hail from and sharing appreciation for their common identity and heritage.

Dolma: Here, there are so many Tibetans. When Tibetans meet each other on the street, they ignore each other! (Recorded Interview, August 2016).

Dolma appeared to have experienced a fascinating *Gemeinschaft–Gesellschaft* dichotomy (Tonnie 1887; Weber 1968) in Tibetan communities in the UK and in Toronto. The small, close-knit community in the UK seemed to display symptoms of a *Gemeinschaft*, in which community members seem to feel a deep sense of belonging and actively seek out social interactions that further enhance their relations with other Tibetans. In contrast, the bigger Tibetan community in Toronto appears to have progressed to a *Gesellschaft*, in which members of the Tibetan community will likely never be able to meet every other Tibetan living in Toronto. They also may not feel particularly compelled to go out of their way to meet every other Tibetans, having already established their own networks of family and friends within the community. Comparing the Tibetan community in Toronto to a *Gesellschaft* is not necessarily a bad thing, and Dolma felt she benefited personally when she settled in Toronto. Because of the bigger Tibetan community, there were more resources and she was able to pick up the Tibetan language faster. Dolma stated that when Tibetan friends who come from other western countries such as the United States visit Toronto, they would often say that it feels just like Tibet! Or like a Tibetan village in India. She feels more connected to the Tibetan community now. Though she notes that one of the negative aspects that comes with a bigger Tibetan community is all the gossips and backtalk that goes on.

Dolma: That's one thing I discovered living in this community, that there's a lot of back talk. There's a lot of talk about how and what's being done. A lot of gossip basically. And there are a lot of people who voice their thoughts but don't do anything for the community. But I think that happens in all communities, I mean it's a small community and everyone knows everyone right? (Recorded Interview, August 2016).

Part of the reason Rachel and her family settled in Parkdale was because her mother knew people and friends who lived in Parkdale and she had heard good things about the

community. She currently works at the Parkdale Legal Services. This organization has helped many Tibetan residents facing evictions, fighting unreasonable hikes in their rent, as well as most recently, supporting the unionization of Tibetan workers at the local food terminal. Parkdale Legal Services has also been involved with awareness campaigns in the past, publishing a pamphlet in 2008 which documented the experiences and difficulties of living with permanent statelessness that several Tibetans from India and Nepal experienced. Some of the main issues of their struggle in Canada were gaining citizenship and bringing their families to Canada. She made it clear that while many of their clients are Tibetan, because demographically there are more Tibetans living in the Parkdale area, Parkdale Legal Services caters to all of its residents who fits the catchment area and financial eligibility.

Rachel: Parkdale Legals has been here for over 45 years. I think we celebrated our 47th anniversary this year. In terms of the Tibetan community, my understanding is that most Tibetans started coming to Parkdale in the late 90s. Before that there was one wave of Tibetan migration that was mostly in rural Ontario and that was part of Justin Trudeau's dad's resettlement program. And that was back in the 70's. We offer legal help to everyone who lives in Parkdale and there is just two eligibility criteria. One is they have to be living in the catchment area. That's Bloor Street to the north, Lakeshore to the south and I think Ossington to the east and the Humber River to the west. So it's quite large. It's not just Parkdale, it's also Swansea, it's also High Park. The next one is financial criteria, I think if you are earning over a certain amount we can't help. So only for if you have low income or no income. And the financial eligibility is set by Legal Aid Ontario so it's provincial. Precarious workers, newcomers, low-income or people on social assistance. You know people who can't afford a lawyer. So a community legal clinic, we have many in Ontario, each has a catchment area meant to serve the needs of the community. Because we are in Parkdale, demographically, a lot of our clients will be Tibetan. You live right here. It's the closest legal clinic to them (Recorded Interview, August 2016).

While the majority of my participants appears to already accept the Parkdale area as Little Tibet, it is important to note that this is an unofficial title with no involvement with Toronto City Council as of present time. While there appears to be no one person who gave Parkdale this name, Tashi attributes the growth of Tibetan restaurants as instrumental in staking out the geography of 'Little Tibet'.

3.1.1 Toronto Tibetan Cultural Centre

I conducted most of my fieldwork at the Toronto Tibetan Cultural Center. It was one of the two main Tibetan spaces that was easier for me, an outsider/researcher to navigate. Blessed by His Holiness, this was a focal point in the community where the majority of Tibetans living in Toronto feel a deep sense of connection. The origin of the Toronto Canadian Cultural Centre (TCCC), also known as Gangjong Choedenling, began with the blessing of the 14th Dalai Lama which paved way for the construction of the community center. From the small numbers of 241 Tibetans who first arrived in Canada in 1970 and 1971, the Tibetan community in Toronto has grown to over 4000. Quoting directly from the cultural center's web page, "To this day, the Tibetans here have been dedicated to preserving and promoting the values of the unique Tibetan cultural heritage in Ontario." It took another 3 years to acquire the land and finish construction, and the Tibetan Canadian Cultural Centre was officially opened on October 17, 2007. It is located on 40 Titan Road at the corner of Titan Road and Islington in the city of Etobicoke. The community center has become another permanent Tibetan space much like the Parkdale area, offering culturally and spiritually sensitive services and support for Tibetans of all ages. This includes Tibetan language and Tibetan Buddhism classes for youths, as well as a place of prayer and commune for the seniors. For many of my participants, the centre is extremely important to their sense of community. Most of them feel that the community centre is the closest place in Toronto to the 14th Dalai Lama, thus making the community centre the closest they have ever experienced of what they think Tibet, their homeland is like. Nobden, like many other Tibetan youths who grew up in the west, confessed to feeling inadequate as a Tibetan because of her poor Tibetan language. The community centre provided a supportive and safe environment to practice her Tibetan language and learn more about her Tibetan heritage. She also saw the community center

as a dynamic space where people can brainstorm ideas on how to preserve Tibetan culture in the west. Most importantly, she felt she was able to give back to the Tibetan community by working at the community centre and connecting with the seniors.

Nobden: We want to give back to the community. Most of us don't even, we barely, like us younger generation, we barely come to Tibetan events. We're so busy with our own personal lives, personal things that we forget like, ok tomorrow there is a big celebration of His Holiness. Most of us would be like, "Oh I have work." It just, times goes like that. You just lose like that whole cultural...I thought this is a way to just...summer is a very long time, summer break and I thought this would inspire me and motivate me to get hands down to community work. Being able to hear other people's ideas and communicate with others. I thought it would be a good experience and it has been a good experience. Before this, I've never really like, had a good conversation with seniors. When I see seniors I just get shy and I just say, "Tashi Delek!" and kind of you know, drift off. Because I know my Tibetan is so poor, how am I, that's so embarrassing. I don't even know how to speak my own language how can I communicate with them right? So every time I would just like, I would have that awkward feelings with anyone. But working here, I'm like, "Tashi Delek! Hi!" to grandmas and grandpas, I learn to accept that it's ok, just keep trying. Before I would have insecurities, but I would just totally shut off and walk away. But now I know that and I would say [illegible], how are you and just the little things I know. That actually makes a big difference, they are so happy. It was so nice talking to them (Recorded Interview, August 2016).

Fiona also has a similar experience at the community centre and spoke about how she learned the Tibetan notational anthem at the community centre. Everyone around her speaks Tibetan and she drinks Tibetan buttered tea prepared by the grandmothers every day. She “feel so Tibetan!” whenever she is in the community centre.

The community centre regularly hosts community events throughout the year as a way to engage Tibetan community members and also raise money for the Tibet cause as well as for the centre. In the summer, there were many events that happened at the center, Tashi Norbu's art workshops just being one of many. There was a volleyball tournament, a Tibetan music concert, a fundraising dinner and a night time social! Things whizzed by so quickly that if my participants did not share events with me on Facebook or by word of mouth, I would have missed many events. I was disoriented by the speed and spontaneous nature of the Tibetans spaces as they appeared to come and go. This was a normal occurrence for many of my participants. Tibetan organizations, and in particular the Tibetan cultural center, are always looking for ways to raise funds. While this was exciting news for me, it was normal for Tibetans living in Toronto. And they do not necessarily feel the need to attend every one of the activities. It is good, Tenzin claimed, time is more precious than money. Dolma says she volunteers a lot with the center because she wants to give back to the Tibetan community but also to be able to attend the events for free. The majority of Tibetans, Tenzin told me, have tight budgets and bills to pay. He appreciates the many events that the organizations come up with because they are spreading awareness about Tibet but he feels that even for a good cause, ticket prices should be limited. The majority of my participants, are not necessarily well-off, most of them are self-employed, students or retired. Despite their financial and time constraints, they feel a deep sense of obligation to participate in community events, where there are often entry fees. Their self-sacrificing actions in giving up their precious money and time go deeper than expected communal contributions, and are almost akin to acts of religious devotions and virtue to Tibetan Buddhism. Though for Tenzin, being a good Tibetan Buddhist can be trying at times, especially in the face of continued lack of appreciation and acknowledgement from community organizers.

Tenzin: I think it's nice (on Tibetan community events) but too much and that is cost a lot of money and it's a headache you know. Pay money, when you go to soccer, 15 dollars ticket, then have to buy food, then have to buy the cap, buy the t-shirt, it's a lot of money. But still I am happy, it goes to a good cause but it's too much! Money money money, people are not easy to live you know. Not a rich people, Tibetans are not rich people

in this country. Hard working, there too much bills they get a headache you know. Even is good cause the money should be limit. You know every time ask big money people get bored. I believe in karma is ok but you don't believe in karma [illegible] always big money. She, they give nothing to me. People get bored with that. Buddhist center they don't help me at all. What they can, they have no money to help me you know! Even I come in new, they don't have a place to move, they can't help, they don't have any idea to where I can move. This is the hard part, yeah you have to look yourself. That's why, the community and me is different. But I support otherwise, not because they did something to me. But because I am Dalai Lama's Buddhist spirit, I am helping in the community, 70 but I don't get one momo plate. I don't get one plate in restaurant you know. You work hard that's it, it's finish. But still I am happy. Buddhism is said do good things without expect something from you (Recorded Interview, August 2016).

The Toronto Tibetan Cultural Centre and the Parkdale area are two examples of permanent and physical Tibetan spaces that exist in the Greater Toronto Area. The various Tibetan social events I attended as part of the fieldwork research all occurred in these two locations. The Momo Crawl, Tashi Norbu's Art Gallery and the Wednesday Gorshey nights take place in South Parkdale, while Tashi Norbu's art workshop took place at the community centre in Etobicoke. The only social event that was outside of the two locations was the Senior Excursion to Central Island.

Dolma: I'm always comparing it to the community in England so I mean there is no comparison whatsoever! I'm a bit out of touch with the current situation in England but when I was there. You met a Tibetan there just by chance you had to go have a coffee. But here, you ignore it! (Laugh) unless it's your friend. I mean I love the community here you don't feel like you're missing out by not going to India. There's like 5 restaurants, and then if you want to catch up on news and chat you just step out your door

and meet people. The community center always has events (Recorded Interview, August 2016).

3.1.2 Momo Crawl

The summer of 2016 was the second year for the Momo Crawl and it was hosted by the SFT Toronto as a way to raise money. I bought my ticket online on tilt.com, one of the unique features of this site is the way it encourages members to invite their friends and families to whatever they are buying tickets for, and thus generates more revenue for the event organizers. The ticket cost \$20 and would go toward funding SFT Canada and their related activities and campaigns. A Caucasian lady I met said the event was wonderful when she attended last year. This event not only raised funds for Students for Free Tibet organization, it connected non-Tibetan Canadians to a temporary Tibetan space and encouraged them to learn more about Tibet in a benign and interactive way through food. SFT uses such events to nurture non-Tibetan Canadians' interest in Tibetan food and Tibetan culture, which would then garner more political support for Tibet. The event also proved to be a great source of promotion for all the Tibetan restaurants involved. Around nine Tibetan restaurants are on Queen Street West in Parkdale, a high number particularly for one area. Dolma told me that doing the Momo crawl is a good way to compare the different Tibetan restaurants, as the quality of the momo is significantly noticeable. Momo is a Tibetan dumpling dish, and it appears to be a favorite among many of the Tibetans in Toronto. Some Tibetans have also mentioned that momo is a very social food, family and friends would socialize as they make momos together and then the momos are shared in a communal setting. In order to participate in the Momo Crawl, one has to obtain a momo crawl 'passport' from the SFT booth at the Tsampa café. The passport has a map of Parkdale, with the area around Jamieson street called 'little Tibet'. It is fascinating how the Tibetan restaurants can represent important landmarks of place for the Tibetan diaspora. Little Tibet on the Momo crawl map was marked out thanks to the nine restaurants. Each restaurant was a star checkpoint. I purchased my passport at the SFT booth, as well as my first momo, every passport give the holder ten momos, as well as instructions for eating them:

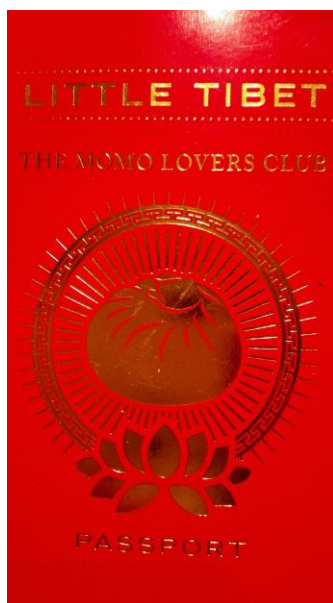


Figure 3: 2016 Momo Crawl Passport. *“The political momo has a shell that’s delicate yet firm enough to hold in the juices. One bite and the juice will squirt out if you’re not careful. They are best eaten with your fingers. You take a small bite off one end, suck in the juice, spoon in some hot sauce and then pop the whole momo into your mouth. It will go down like butter. Every bite you take, is a helping hand for the cause of Tibetan freedom”* (2016 Momo Crawl passport, photo of the passport taken by myself).

Every time we eat a momo at a restaurant, the holder must pass over their passport so that it can be checked and updated at the ‘checkpoint’ restaurant. Even though the restaurants were all on the same street, it was still quite a trek! I managed to meet up with a few familiar faces about halfway through my checkpoints. I met the organizers for Tashi Norbu’s art gallery. They recommended that I also attend his art workshops at the community centre that would be happening later in the month. As we continued on, we stopped at a craft store on Queen Street West. The store is owned by a Tibetan who sells quality merchandise from India and Nepal. I was surprised to learn that the lady store owner recognized me from the previous Gorshey night. It turned into a delightful and unexpected encounter. We spoke a while in Chinese before parting ways.

For Tibetans, the Momo Crawl was not only a way to engage non-Tibetans to the Tibetan cause through food, but it was also a way to mark out the unofficial Little Tibet, Toronto as shown on the Momo Crawl passport participants receive. This year, the passport was red, and there were various jokes by organizers and participants throughout the day alluding to its similarity to a Chinese passport, but better! When I expressed my desire to see more of these restaurants or landmarks around Parkdale, Dolma laughed and exclaimed that is a lot of restaurants in one small area! Particularly when one considers the already small Tibetan population (around 4000) in Toronto.

3.1.3 Gorshey nights

The Ontario Tibetan Women's Association organizes the weekly Wednesday Gorshey nights is a Lhakar celebration of the 14th Dalai Lama's holy day, which is on Wednesday.

Gorshey is a favorite among Tibetans, especially among elders (who always seem to be the ones starting it). The circle dance only has one requirement, to join in the circle (which can bloom to a huge size depending on participants) and dance, whether perfectly or imperfectly. It's wonderful, in that it's inviting and inclusive (Lokyitsang 2014).

Many Tibetan youths, such as Lokyitsang who grew up in the west, struggle with preserving their Tibetan culture and Tibetan language. Growing up influenced by western culture, they are always concerned that they are somehow letting the older generations down by not being Tibetan enough. There are also some ongoing tensions between established Tibetans in the west and Tibetan newcomers from India regarding who is more authentically Tibetan (Hess 2009). The arguments over authenticity are contentious and complicated. They are often based on perceived knowledge and mastery of the Tibetan culture, history, spirituality, language and proximity to the Dalai Lama and the homeland. With no easy solutions, this will likely be a long-term issue for the Tibetan community in Toronto. The Gorshey circle offers a temporary respite as an encompassing space that manages to connect all Tibetans despite their many differences and generational gaps and have them dance together.

It is the one space where Tibetans did not judge my imperfect Tibetaness but accepted the imperfections, whether I danced it right or not didn't matter, and if I wanted to get the steps down the people closest would help explain how the steps worked. It was a space of enjoyment, along with dancing came laughter for dancers and watchers. For me, as a Tibetan American-teen back in the days, it was where I found common ground and laughter with the oldest in the community (Lokyitsang 2014).

Tibetan youths must cope in a present reality in which they are being confronted with an overwhelming narrative of culture loss. Tibetan spaces such as the Gorshey nights represent a refuge, if only a temporary one, that does not judge them for their perceived lack of knowledge as Tibetans. In Bauman's words from his work on 'Community', it Gorshey is a place of community and belonging where "no one will poke fun of us, no one will ridicule our clumsiness and rejoice in our misfortune...Our duty, purely and simply, is to help each other, and so our right, purely and simply, is to expect that the help we need will be forthcoming" (Bauman 2001: 2).

The Facebook page states that Gorshey nights generally start around 6pm, and the events are held pretty much all year, taking a brief respite in the winter. The first time I went to a Wednesday Gorshey night, I got a bit lost while searching through Parkdale for the Parkdale Collegiate Institute, and by good chance, stumbled across Tashi, one of the organizers of Tashi Norbu's art gallery, taking a stroll with Tashi Norbu, the artist himself. I talked briefly with them, and they told me about the gallery opening tomorrow night and how they will both be in Toronto for the next three weeks to host an art workshop. They invited me to come by the gallery when I have some time. I bid them farewell a block later and continued on my way. By the time I arrived by the institute, I was famished. Nobden and Sue had both recommended that I try one of the Tibetan restaurants here, so I decided to go to the first one I spotted, 'Tashi Delek restaurant'. I found out later the term 'Tashi Delek' is an auspicious Tibetan greeting that translated to something similar to 'All the best!' I ordered momos (Tibetan dumplings) and gyumo (blood sausage), they were delicious. It was 6pm when I arrived outside the high school. There were middle-aged Tibetan women standing in a row, their children playing and

running across the school ground. Not knowing anyone in the crowd, I was a bit of an odd thumb. Two Tibetan ladies thought I was lost and spoke to me in Chinese, trying to help me. I explained that I was also here for the Gorshey night and they looked surprised. I realized they do not speak much English. After a while they left me alone and went on chatting animatedly in Tibetan. Despite my initial discomfort at being in an unfamiliar place at dusk and not understanding what is really happening around me, Gorshey nights turned out to be the highlight of my fieldwork and a significant space of belonging for Tibetans. After 10-15 minutes the SFT group came with equipment to play the outdoor movie that was supposed to take place after the Gorshey. I offered to watch their equipment. A bit later, Lhamo came by and introduced me to Sonam, the national director of SFT. While the Gorshey was happening, SFT had a table selling SFT t-shirts to raise money. Sonam introduced me to the director of the Tibetan Women Association (TWA). Within less than 30 minutes of attending my first Gorshey night, I had made contact with three major Tibetan organizations. It was a place where everyone seemed to know everyone and it became one of the gateways I used to get into the Tibetan community. The dancing was fun and exhausting. The steps were hard but I found that people were generally very welcoming and helpful. In fact, if I tried to sit down and take a break, someone would wave me back saying, “Don’t worry, the next song is easier.”

After the dancing, the majority of people left and went home. I stayed behind along with a number of Tibetan youths because SFT had organized an outdoor movie screening of the 1998 movie, ‘The Cup.,’ which is a film about young Tibetan monks in India who really wanted to see the finale of the 1998 world cup. ‘The Cup’ was a light hearted comedy that spared no expense in humorously decrying the Chinese occupation and influences in Tibet with a number of memorable lines such as, “The only thing they gave us is rotten rice/The United States is scared shitless of China/You don’t need this [Chinese] hat anymore, now that you’re free.” After the movie, one commenter reemphasized the message of the movie to stop thinking with ‘I’ and as such cease in seeing life as unsatisfactory. I helped the SFT volunteers move the screening equipment back to their office down the street and it was almost 11pm when I finally got home.

I arrived a bit late to my second Gorshey night and the music and dancing were well underway. Even though this was my second time, I still felt unprepared and intimidated. I felt a sense of relief whenever I saw someone familiar at the circle, as though that gave me an informal welcome into the circle. I sat down beside an acquaintance's mother and friends. Her mother immediately offered me Tibetan buttered chai and then went around and offered it to everyone. The sweet hot beverage was perfect for a cool summer night. As I sipped my hot chai, I glanced around. As usual, the school court was bustling with Tibetans, amalas (grandmothers), palas (grandfather), acha-las (aunties). People sat in a big half circle, around the inner circle of dancers. And did they dance! Around and around the stereo. The music moved from one region of Tibet to another. For famous traditional songs, everyone does the regular 1-2-3 kick steps. The beat picks up and the steps become more complicated. That's when everyone starts watching the old men who dance confidently, though I heard that sometimes they just make it up as they go! The song finished and I decided to join in the dancing. Immediately a space opened up and the circle widened to allow me in. I tried to remember the steps but I fumbled. Like the first time I went to Gorshey night, a Tibetan man next to me quietly counted steps for me. The ladies from Tibetan women's association dressed in their beautiful green chupas (traditional Tibetan dresses) as usual, and they continued to pass around hot Tibetan buttered tea in the crowd. I spotted Lhamo and some girls from SFT on the other side of the dance circle. We danced and danced! It was so hot inside the circle. Some girls dressed full traditional chupas while other had on fancy western dresses. Most ladies had heels in order to stomp loudly. Every time a song finished, people busily began to fan themselves, soon I was doing the same. After a while, two little girls joined the circle next to me, and a space opened up for them. They struggled with the dance step and an older gentleman immediately took them by the hands and started mentoring them. All the while he showered them full of praises at their efforts. I liked that there were also people of all skill levels in the circle. For Tibetans, Gorshey night was a time for socialization. Kids ran amok, weaving in and out of the circle. The mothers use this time to relax and catch up with their friends. People sat scattered across the front yard at Parkdale Collegiate Institute, chewing on sun flower seeds and other snacks, drinking Tibetan buttered chai and gossiping animatedly in Tibetan. And when an unknown

Chinese girl joined, people noticed. At the Tibetan boutique store in Parkdale later, the lady owner remarked how she and the others were impressed by how well the Chinese girl danced! An old Tibetan man stopped me after one of the Gorsheys and told me that I must come back next Wednesday. “You have improved,” he remembered me and handed me a bottle of water. It seems that in this circle, anyone can join and have a good time. Even an unknown Chinese girl.

3.1.4 Tashi Norbu’s Art Gallery Opening and Workshops

If there is a space that was as memorable as the Gorshey nights, I would have to say it is Tashi Norbu’s open art gallery night. It was the gateway space that led to my male participants. This space was a strange mix of non-Tibetans and Tibetans who frequented the gallery and it quickly became obvious that the paintings held different symbolic meanings for non-Tibetans and Tibetans. For example, I saw that many Tibetan viewers were often awestruck by the magnificence of one of the paintings called, ‘The Void’. It is a work that covered an entire wall section and represented the Halo or glow that is behind Buddha. Was it a reminder that everyone has Buddha dwelling inside of them? Having little to no prior knowledge of Tibetan Buddhism, I had difficulty understanding the symbolism behind the artwork. Tashi Norbu is a fusion artist that mixes traditional Tibetan Thangka art style with Western art techniques. Thangka is a traditional Tibetan art style that is deeply spiritual and Thangka artists generally only paint elaborately detailed paintings of Buddha and other deities for monasteries. A unique rule of Thangka paintings is that the artist never identifies himself. Perhaps one of the most distinct characteristic of Tashi Norbu’s paintings that differentiates them from traditional Thangka artists is that he put his name on his art works.



Figure 4: Buddha painting. My Buddha Painting from Tashi Norbu's Art Workshop on August 1, 2016 at the Tibetan Cultural Centre (Photo taken by myself).

A spiritual person, Tashi Norbu's works often incorporate Tibetan Buddhist elements as well as political themes and provoke viewers to think deeply. If one looks closely at his paintings, there are many western elements hidden in plain sight, such as a small sticker of Dora the explorer, as well as a picture of a school bus. After attending various Tibetan socials and events throughout my fieldwork research, I started to recognize people's faces who regularly attend community socials and events. I wondered how many Tibetan members I was unable to reach because they did not participate in these spaces. After all, many of these spaces require a significant amount of time and money in order to attend.



Figure 5: Tashi Norbu’s Art Gallery at Gallery 1313. Tashi Norbu is a Tibetan artist from Amsterdam. His artwork was displayed at Gallery 1313 on Queen Street W. from July 21– August 7, 2016 (Photo taken by myself).

3.2 Stories of Migration through Food

As Tibetans in the west attempt to preserve their Tibetan culture, Tibetan food is also not impervious to the influences of globalization and migration. This section will highlight several cases of localized Tibetan dishes adopting a fusion of South Asian cuisine, reception in the Tibetan community in Toronto and how the changes narrate a journey of migration through food. Friedman (2002), on localization and globalization, said:

The different strategies of identity, which are always local, just like their subsumed forms of consumption and production, have emerged in interactions with one another in the global arena” (2002:245).

Most importantly, it reveals the adoption of sugar and spices into Tibetan cuisine, which quickly became a gateway to uncovering new Tibetan dishes. While some would point out that these localized Tibetan dishes and changes to Tibetan cuisine were caused by unwarranted, forced migration, I believe it is through food that one can truly tell whether any diaspora has managed to settle down in their new environment.

Lhamo: How beautiful is that, you learn Tibetan food. Originally it's not like that, but it got influence from China, India, and Nepal. They all have different taste. Like chow Mein and it wouldn't taste like Chinese food but it wouldn't taste like Indian food. It's like a mixture of both and it tells our story (Recorded Interview, August 2016).

One of the reasons Tibetan cuisine was very malleable to change, as Tashi explained, was because authentic Tibetan cuisine in Tibet was actually often very plain. They did not have an abundance of spices and sugar like their Indian neighbors to bring out the flavor of the food. When Tibetans fled to India in the 1960s, sugar and spices quickly altered the flavor of Tibetan cuisine. The Indian Railway Tea is one such fascinating case of a localized Tibetan dish. As its name hints, the Indian Railway Tea originated in India, but its origin is that of the traditional Tibetan buttered tea. As Tibetans migrate from place to place, the food they make also picks up some of the local flavours. Tibetan railway tea, as Tashi explained to me, is an Indian localization of the classic salty Tibetan butter chai. The one most noticeable difference is that this tea is sweet, as sugar was readily accessible in India.

Tashi: Indian railway tea is actually associated with the India railway station. Every time you are on the railway you know the train is packed. So you go by the train station, people and vendors, they are carrying trays of tea. Just in a cup, is full already, in a cup like this [gestured to the clay cup on the table] and they would come and bring it up to the window because the train is really high. And they would try to sell it for one rupee. And then they would push it up to them and grab their money. And all of the cups that they make, I guess it is an easy shape to make and they would make it out of this shape [gesture] like this. And after you finish drinking you throw it out the window and smash it on the ground (Recorded Interview, August 2016).

Perhaps the most visible marker of migration lies in the array of Tibetan dishes available at the various Tibetan restaurants in Parkdale. There are approximately 9 Tibetan

restaurants on the Queen Street West in Parkdale. They all offer a slightly different Tibetan flavor that is inspired by Indian, Nepalese and Chinese cuisines. There are Chinese influences as well, for example all the restaurants have Chow Mein, which is Chinese fried noodles. As Dolma remarked, there is a Tibetan restaurant to satisfy any of your cravings.

Dolma: I know I go to Om because they do really good Indian food. I go there for lamb dish and I go to Tsampa cafe because their momo is really fresh. Logar if you want momo straight away (laugh) and if you want to have a Nepalese type momo, go to the Tashi Delek. I think there would be an influence of South Asian dish in the menu. So it's a two way thing, customers supporting them but also their taste is what is being supplied there. Like the Nepalese momo, it's meaty, much smaller and has the sauce that is drenched over the momo. So people who had it growing up would go there. For that momo. Their menu list is not very big, they don't have a description of what...well I know they opened recently, so I think they are finding their footing. A lot of their business at the moment is definitely purely Tibetans (Recorded Interview, August 2016).

When I asked Tashi if there are any Tibetan dishes at any of the restaurants that he would consider authentic, he pointed out that it is natural for cuisine to change over time. Globalization has inspired many new dishes with the introduction of global commodities such as sugar and spices to traditional local cuisines. More importantly, our palates have changed significantly in the past five decades due to the availability of many different flavors and cuisines. If authentic cuisine can only be achieved by eliminating all the changes that Tibetan dishes have undergone, it would be very plain as there would be little use of spices. Tashi is not even sure if a restaurant serving only 'authentic' Tibetan dishes would do well in Toronto, given that the contemporary palates of Tibetans and non-Tibetans are used to strong flavors.

Tibetan food has also been influenced by western cuisine. Lhamo told me that in New York, a café is now selling Tsampa cakes. Tsampa is plain dough that is made of ground

barley and wheat that is mixed with water and consumed. It is a very traditional Tibetan dish that is popular with many of the Tibetan seniors. However, its lack of flavor does not suit most palates in the west. The ingenious amalgamation of western styled dessert with Tsampa will allow people to enjoy a sweetened version of Tibetan Tsampa.

Lhamo: Exactly! We just followed through and we learn from them and now like, there are lots of people creating new things like Tsampa cake and things like that.

Diyin: What's Tsampa cake?

Lhamo: Tsampa cake is the wheat and barley like powder, flour sorry, and then, so with that they make 'bao' which is like dough, and they eat the dough. Here too, we do. But now people are already taking things from western culture, making cakes and stuff, being creative because we don't have any sort of dessert in our culture right. Our tea is made of salt and butter. So there is nothing super sweet so then to create dessert. What a perfect way. Because you already have flour, that's your Tibetan culture and then with that you are using it to create a like, western culture treat, dessert, cake. Because we never had cake. So now there are stores selling Tsampa cakes, Tsampa cookies.

Diyin: Here?

Lhamo: Not here unfortunately, in New York, there are some Tibetan stores there.

Diyin: I guess you should go there.

Lhamo: Yeah, I would love to try, I'm going to try if I have time (Recorded Interview, August 2016).

I discussed the similarity of some Tibetan dishes to Chinese dishes with several of my participants. Tibetan momos are quite similar to Chinese dumplings. Though as Tashi point out, many nationalities have their own type of 'momos,' the Polish for example, have pierogis. In the end, it's not about how different the dishes are from each other.

What is important is that Tibetans have their own ethnically distinct cuisine. Food is an important marker that is also used to distinguish Tibetans from the Chinese. Food has always been an important marker of ethnic and cultural identities. And food, like people, is not impervious to different influences. This can lead to wonderful and delicious new cuisines. Tashi believes the changes in ethnic Tibetan cuisine is a good thing because it tells a story of migration, of fateful meetings and of Tibetans working together and adapting to the many difficulties and challenges of starting over.

Dolma told me that she was surprised to find chicken in Tibetan momos, a dumpling dish that is available at most of the Tibetan restaurants in Parkdale.

Dolma: Tibetan momos, you won't ever find pork momos you would really only find beef. And it's only here I've had chicken momo and vegetable momo. (Laugh) it's unheard of! You know Tibetans they are not very good with vegetables. So having their favorite meat dish in a vegetable... (Field notes August 2016).

Along with a wide array of new possibilities for Tibetan cuisine, the Tibetan palates have become increasingly global as well. Many of my participants express their love for many different nationalities' cuisines and enjoy the readily availability of international cuisine in the Toronto restaurant scene. Rachel's favorite food is Indian food, because she grew up eating Indian cuisine in India. She is also fond of Korean food, which is widely known to be very healthy. Tashi voiced a similar view in that he does not think it is productive for Tibetans to restrict themselves to Tibetan cuisine.

Tashi: I don't think we should just eat one ethnic food. Korean food, I love the way they set thing up, small items. There is Japanese food of course. So many! You don't need to eat your own type of food all the time, I mean it's nice. I don't think it's meant in our society to be like that, I think our food is meant to be shared and if you are willing to share with other people, then you have to also taste other types of food too (Recorded Interview, August 2016).

She also found Indian dishes tend to be much less time consuming than Tibetan cuisine. She acknowledges that the Tibetan dishes served in the Parkdale area are likely not authentic, many having been inspired by a fusion of South Asian cuisines. “For exiled Tibetans, I think Tibetan food is a combination of Indian, Chinese, and Tibetan. That’s what we know as Tibetan food” (Rachel, Recorded Interview, August 2016). However, she also notes that one of her friends who came from Tibet, claimed that Tibet Kitchen, one of the Tibetan restaurants on Queen Street West, is much better than a lot of restaurants in Lhasa, Tibet! The nine Tibetan restaurants in the Parkdale area not only satisfy the unique palates of Tibetans who crave a taste of Tibetan dishes with influences from India and Nepal, they also serve as an important landmark and marker of the unofficial ‘Little Tibet’ in the Parkdale area. This is exemplified when SFT use the Tibetan restaurants as checkpoints mapping out the area of Little Tibet on the 2016 Momo Crawl.

Rachel: Tibetan restaurants here for sure [as a landmark]. It’s a welcoming space where you feel at home. It’s that feeling of closeness and you want to support Tibetan business (Recorded Interview, August 2016).

As a former Tibetan restaurant owner and one of the first to start a Tibetan restaurant in Parkdale, Tashi completely agrees with the sentiment that restaurants act as landmarks. He hopes Tibetan restaurants could become a way for Tibetans living in Toronto to claim some spaces and land to call their own. That is why he supports the idea of having a part of the Parkdale area recognized as ‘Little Tibet’. Tashi used his restaurant as a space to engage Tibetans and non-Tibetans in Toronto with Tibet in a depoliticized manner.

Tashi: [on why he opened one of the first Tibetan cafe in Parkdale] I think in the beginning I was influenced by the Tibetan freedom concerts. And seeing hundred thousand people there for Tibet, I saw the possibility. When they pulled it off and I was there as a volunteer. It gave me an idea that you can talk about Tibet and it doesn’t have to be political. It can be done through different ways, musically, arts and food. So creating a way,

a conversation without pushing politics down people's throats (Recorded Interview, August 2016).

3.3 Lhakar Cultural Movement

Lhakar is the Tibetan cultural resurgence movement. A grassroots movement that first started in Tibet, it has since spread across the globe. 2015 marks the seventh anniversary of Lhakar grassroots movement since its emergence in 2008. The unrest and rioting in Lhasa and other Tibetan-populated regions now coined 3.14 (March 14 2008). What started as a peaceful commemoration on March 10, 2008 of the Tibetan uprising on March 10, 1959 disintegrated into riots as tensions and resentment mounted over the upcoming Beijing 2008 Summer Olympics. Tibetans saw this international event as a golden stage to expose the invisible cultural genocide (Wangchen 2008) conducted by the Chinese authorities to the international audience. However, the protests and riots were met with an unrelenting Chinese crackdown, militarization, and casualties on both sides. This was a sobering moment in which Tibetans realized as a collective that traditional means of resistance such as demonstrations and protests are unsustainable and unfeasible.

Tashi: Lhakar has a profound meaning, in creating positive effects. For me, on a personal level, Lhakar is a family thing. It's about collecting good merits, karma. My mom, on most Wednesdays, make us not eat meat the whole day. Other times, we might dress Tibetan. Nowadays, it has really taken a different scale. SFT have done an amazing job of bringing the community together on Lhakar and they have so many different programs. They have Lhakar diaries. I'm not sure where it started, Lhakar diaries could have been started a long but SFT joins and spreads the word about it, making it bigger, promoting it, and beautiful stories from people of what Lhakar means to them, what you do (Recorded Interview, August 2016).

Lhakar is an alternative that is a paradigm shift from past Tibetan activism. Every Wednesday, Tibetans in Tibet and Tibetans in exile engage in individually-defined acts

of assertion of Tibetan identity and rejection of exile. Lhakar can be directly translated to ‘White Wednesday’, this day of the week bears great spiritual significance to Tibetans because it is the current 14th Dalai Lama’s holy day. This movement would serve as a constant reminder of one’s Tibetan identity and compels one to act Tibetan on Wednesdays in celebration of the most auspicious day of the week for Tibetans.

Fiona: Every Wednesdays Lhakar? Yeah every Wednesday. I used to actually be in the Tibetan club at my school. I was the president so like every Wednesday we try our best to dress Tibetan, eat Tibetan food and we try to talk in Tibetan. And we even try to talk other people who are not Tibetans about us as well. When I was in grade 9, 10, Lhakar wasn't a thing. It was probably just done by the monks in the temples. But in schools and in community centers it was a big thing. Nowadays we see more Tibetans recognizing it and actually practicing it. It's an easy way to get people just to connect back to their origin. Instead of saying, come to pray every day. Well it's just every Wednesdays, do these things. And do you find that Lhakar go beyond Wednesday or is it mainly just that day as a reminder (Recorded Interview, August 2016).

What is significant is how embedded Lhakar has become in Tibetan communities around the world. All of my participants practice Lhakar dutifully in their own ways through dressing Tibetan, eating Tibetan, supporting Tibetan businesses and more. There are whole communities in India that would stop selling and eating meat on Wednesdays as part of their Lhakar practices. Lhamo explained the reason behind Tibetans foregoing meat on Wednesday has to do with Tibetan Buddhism that view all beings as sentient.

The Wednesday Gorshey nights are just one case in which Lhakar has become a part of the Tibetan community’s daily routine in which they gather and celebrate together. Individual Tibetans are realizing the potential in decolonizing individual spaces and transforming them into Tibetan territories. As such, Lhakar is decolonizing from the Chinese narration of erasure from within and assimilation outside.

Sue: Definitely Gorshey, everyone's in a circle you feel really connected and you are practicing your culture. I feel like just in general Lhakar helps keep us keep in touch. Because it's easy to forget, the days goes on. And sometimes you are not even thinking about anything. But when Wednesday comes along, you are like oh yeah! I'll wear my Tibetan clothes. I almost imagine like if I'm in Tibet, I would be wearing it every day. I get to wear it every Wednesday and represent it visually. Because in my heart I am always Tibetan but on the outside it's sometimes hard to portray that. So that really helps (Recorded Interview, July 2016).

Most importantly it offers for the Tibetan communities around the world a solution to an issue they have been dealing with for a long time; the increasing generational gap between the Tibetan youths and the language, culture and religion of their homeland. Lhakar became an intergenerational activity that bridged the gap between the older generations and Tibetan youths (Pasricha 2014). This is true for many of the younger participants I interviewed such as Nobden, Sue, Fiona and Lhamo. They actively practice Lhakar by dressing in traditional Tibetan or Tibet related clothing, spreading awareness about Tibet and going to the Gorshey nights whenever they can. There are also many different ways one could practice Lhakar and it is up to the individual Lhakar practitioner to put Lhakar into their daily routine.

Sue: Having that day to remind yourself about who you are, your identity. Most of the days I am not speaking much Tibetans or I'm losing that part of me. So it's a day to remind me that you know, you need to preserve that culture and just get the opportunity to get, wear and feel that side of me a lot more (Recorded Interview, July 2016).

For some Tibetans such as Nobden, Lhakar is a platform which she uses to spread awareness about Tibet every Wednesday. Many Tibetans in the west believe that it is their duty to act as ambassadors (Hess 2009) and promote the Tibet movement to non-Tibetans. This is a responsibility they have towards those still living in Tibet and being oppressed. Lhakar help Nobden fulfil what she feels as part of her permanent

responsibility as a Tibetan in the west. She gave an example of how her choice of eating momos might lead to someone talking about Tibet at their dinner table later that night. She believes in the power of small individual actions.

Nobden: So Lhakar in Tibetan is also called the White Wednesday. This movement has taken place in Tibet, that's where it started. A non-violent way of spreading awareness. Tibetans are wearing Tibetan clothes, doing Tibetan things, eating Tibetan things. And it's such a good idea, such a good way to preserve our culture and to show who we are you know. Just taking part in this movement myself, I feel like there's so much...how do I call it? You feel like you are helping. Like oh my god, this is such a good way to show awareness. I wear Tibetan clothes on Wednesday and I try my best to eat Tibetan food and speak Tibetan. And right away like you go in the subway, and people go, "oh my god, I love your dress! Where is it from?" And then I start explain, "Oh..." like I said before, you're communicating with other people and they are going to tell other people. Right away you are creating a movement, right there (Recorded Interview, July 2016).

Lhakar is also helping Tibetan youths in the west envision new strategies to stay connected to their homeland and the Tibetan movement. Growing up in the west has meant many of the Tibetan youths have not been in touch with their Tibetan culture, history, religion, culture and language, which are often used to practice Lhakar. But Lhakar has become a space where youths found that they could freely express what it means to be Tibetan to them, whether that is through being politically active and spreading awareness of the Tibet movement or wearing Tibetan clothing. Many youths are inspired by how the grassroots Lhakar movement has become a global movement because of the Tibetan diaspora.

Nobden: I know! I have a lot of people, when I went to restaurants be like, "oh my god, I've taught at a Tibetan school." Just crazy things that you wouldn't expect and it's so cool. When I went to India, they actually don't

sell meat on Wednesday on Lhakar and they sell. They don't sell meat, all the restaurants, the place was Delhi, not the village where I went. It was Delhi, everyone were selling veggie trays, it was so normal for them. This movement has taken so much impact that it's permanent you know
(Recorded Interview, July 2016)?

Under tense political restrictions, Lhakar emerged as a paradigm shift in the way Tibetans would view activism (Dorjee 2013). Through personal actions such as wearing traditional clothes, eating Tibetan food, listening to Tibetan radio, teaching their native language at home, “many Tibetans began to use their individual space to assert an identity that has been suppressed for decades” (McConnell and Tsering 2013). Lhakar keeps Tibetans in exile culturally rooted (Pasricha 2014) and bridges the geographical and generational distance between Tibetans in China and Tibetans in exile; creating a pan-Tibetan unity and solidarity that had not existed prior to the 2008 riots and crackdowns. Fiona believes Lhakar goes beyond Wednesdays and reminds Tibetans who they are and where they are from as stateless people.

Fiona: It definitely goes beyond, like the whole purpose of having it. Other than dressing Tibetan it's really in your heart that you know that this is where you are from. It's like more of this everlasting feeling of connecting back to your community. Having this piece of platform, eating this type of food. It's really about connecting that mindset. The mindset of feeling connected to the community. Because when you dress in those things, it doesn't mean a lot when you don't feel like you are connected to the community. Or when you think about the situation Tibet is in. Even just having a thought of Tibet every once in a while, that's what we are really trying to do with Lhakar. It's really like a deep connection. Even if it's not every day, there is more to Lhakar than dressing up and eating Tibetan food (Recorded Interview, August 2016).

Tenzin Dorjee (2013), executive of Students for Free Tibet, states that Lhakar embodies an ephemeral definition that can at times be political, at times cultural, depending on the

individual's act. This can make Lhakar very frustrating to practice but also very powerful in that the Chinese authorities have a difficult time in defining and thereby containing Lhakar. But exactly why is Lhakar so symbolically significant to Tibetans and threatening to the Chinese administration? For Tibetans, Lhakar is a non-violent protest against Chinese occupation that emerged within China as a deterrence against Chinese police and military action. This is frustrating for the Chinese administration because Tibetans in China are not using traditional formats to protest and demonstrate as a collective group, which would make it easier for the Chinese administration to subjugate. On legal grounds, they would have little reasons to arrest Tibetans for speaking Tibetan or eating Tibetan food on a specific day of the week. What is likely most concerning for the Chinese administration despite there being no violence and crimes being committed, is the continuous display of subtle defiance and attempts to distance Tibetans from Chinese. Tibetans are realizing that the accumulation of individual acts can manifest in powerful ways. The boycotting of Chinese businesses is one such example, and such practices are now common in the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) and the surrounding Tibetan-populated counties in Qinghai, Sichuan and Yunnan. This has shut down many Chinese businesses and allowed Tibetan businesses to take over, as was the case in Nangche County, Qinghai (Finney 2009). For Tibetans in the west, Lhakar is a way for them to remember who they are and where they are from, as well as to give support to Tibetans back home. Singing a patriotic song on foreign soil or celebrating a Gorshey night in 'Little Tibets' around the world, they are acts that create spaces for Tibetans in exile to redefine their identity as Tibetans. For my participants who are living in Toronto, their Lhakar rituals and practices take on a dual purpose as a symbol of solidarity and support for Tibetan living in Tibet and also as a regular reminder to preserve and practice the Tibetan culture, spirituality and language.

3.4 Chapter Summary

In Chapter three I looked specifically at the ethnic Tibetan community in Toronto, Canada. The Parkdale area offers an ideal site for Tibetan newcomers due to the established Tibetan community, ease of access to public transportation, ideal location in the Greater Toronto Area, and availability of low skilled, employment opportunities in

the service and care industries for migrants. However, the Parkdale area has high rates of poverty and the Tibetans and other low-income residents living there are increasingly being faced with the threat of being displaced by an influx of middle-class homeowners returning to the Parkdale area. Tibetan newcomers also grapple with a new kind of precariousness in Canada in the realm of employment. Unstable, on-call work could derail their routines and social life with just one phone call. Research has linked decline in migrant women's health with precarious work. In this chapter, we also get a more in-depth look at the lives of the research informants in Toronto and some of the Tibetan spaces there.

While the informants gave mixed responses to the idea of Parkdale being identified as 'Little Tibet', they all agreed that many Tibetans first start out there. Tibetans make up a high number of the Parkdale demographic according to a 2014 Canadian government statistics report. Some of the Tibetan spaces identified by the informants as well as in my fieldwork research include the Tibetan Canadian Cultural Centre in Etobicoke, the 2016 Momo Crawl event, as well as a series of Tashi Norbu's art gallery and workshops.

While many of my informants did not have direct memories of Tibet, such memories are not lost but merely hidden in plain sight. They are embedded in the Tibetan dishes that are manifestations of the migration experience with distinct Tibetan, Chinese, Nepalese, Indian and even Western influence. When patrons enjoy their Tibetan momos at one of the Tibetan restaurants lining Queen Street West in Parkdale, they are also experiencing the very memories of Tibetan migration that have become localized in migrant Tibetan food. Finally, my informants explained the significance of Lhakar, the Tibetan grassroots cultural resurgence movement that emerged from within Tibet post 2008 Beijing Olympics and have since spread to many of the Tibetan communities around the world.

Chapter 4

4 Generational Perspectives on Living as a Tibetan in the West

How do Tibetans live in Canada? Through in-depth discussions and interviews, my participants shared some illuminating, generational perspectives regarding Tibetans living in the west, most specifically, in Toronto. They shared with me some of their memories of Tibet, their views on the notion of return, what it means to be Tibetan and more. An interesting distinction some of my participants have made was the careful separation between the Chinese people and the Chinese administration. When discussing the displacement of Tibet and Chinese occupation, they would often explicitly put the blame on the government and not the people. Can empathy and understanding on their part for the Chinese living under their government regime be part of the reason? How much of their behavior has to do with the fact that I (the interviewer) is Chinese? Regarding interactions between Tibetans and Chinese in free Tibet demonstrations, Tashi remarked:

I always try to make connections with the Chinese community, the Chinese citizens. Because you know, I always look at the perspective of how that a Chinese feel when we are out there screaming and shouting, "China out" and "Free Tibet". I think as a human being I think anybody that would should against you and your country and if you are not educated about the situation. You can definitely take it into a negative way and create this hate between these two people, Tibetans and Chinese. But in reality, we are fighting against the same common enemy, so I always make it a point to remember when I do any demonstrations or any seminars that whatever we say it's always against the Chinese communist government. The policy leaders, the decision makers, not the people the citizens of China, is very important to differentiate that. I think it is important for all Chinese descendants, Chinese people to really know really clearly that when we do protest, we know it could hurt their feelings, shouting against your own country that you love and you are proud of being Chinese. Everyone

should be proud of where they come from. China has a rich, long history, so many great things they have brought to the world, first of many things that the world have seen. We can learn from the Chinese people.

Tibetans can learn from the Chinese people; many nations of the world continue to learn from the Chinese nation. But it is very unfortunate that they are ruled by a communist party, a communist regime (Recorded Interview, August 2016).

Sue is 18 years old and she has lived in both India and Canada, traveling back and forth several times. She is considering going back to school for post-secondary education after having taken a victory lap this year. Nobden is 18 and has just finished her first year of university at Ryerson. She came to Canada from Nepal and can understand Hindi from all the Bollywood movies. Both Sue and Nobden have been involved with the community center since they were little girls, where they used to take Tibetan folk dancing classes. Both lost touch with the community during high school and decided to get more involved with their community this year. One of the topics we talked about was westerners converting to Tibetan Buddhism, and I told them how in London ON, there is a Tibetan monastery with western membership and no Tibetans. This is a phenomenon that Nobden feels uncomfortable with while Sue does not. Nobden feels that there is something unauthentic about the western membership, and wonders if it is all merely visual. She gave the example of how some Tibetans in India wear Tibetan monk robes but are not monks and do terrible things. Sue does not feel the same and she explained that anyone with adequate effort and time, can become well-versed in Tibetan Buddhism. Tenzin also does not see anything wrong with westerner converting to Tibetan Buddhism.

Tenzin: Like Tibetan Buddhist, Japanese Buddhist, Zen Buddhist, Chinese Buddhist. Equal. But it's more like culture based. Buddhism is same Buddhist teaching, it's not Tibetan, Chinese, same thing you know. It's more about the culture [that's] kind of different but it is white it is white. It is black it is black. It is red is red. Buddhism is Buddha teaching you know. Buddha taught the Buddhist teaching. It's not Chinese Buddhist, Japanese Buddhist, and Tibetan Buddhist you know. More like a culture

based but the essence of the teaching is the same thing (Recorded Interview, July 2016).

For the majority of older Tibetans, particularly those who migrated to the west at a later age, they view being Tibetan as being part and parcel as being a Tibetan Buddhist. Tenzin said that he will always be 100 percent Tibetan, in his heart, spirit and soul.

For Chak & Shing, being Buddhist and being Tibetan is the same thing. It is one for them (Recorded Interview, July 2016).

4.1 Tenzin's Ideals

Tenzin, a 43 years old Tibetan ex-monk, shares their views. In his views, the very essence that makes up Tibetan identity is Tibetan Buddhism. So long as Tibetans in the west successfully preserve Tibetan Buddhist culture, he believes Tibet will persevere.

Tenzin: That's why the Dalai Lama said even we lose our country, still Tibetans are united today because of Buddhism because of Dalai Lama's leadership. In political sense, in spiritual sense (Recorded Interview, July 2016).

When asked what he thinks about Tibetan youths who feel multiple identities, he shakes his head at the idea. "You cannot cut off your face!" He quotes the former Tibetan leader, "You have to practice the Tibetan language, practice Tibetan Buddhism. Without education you are not Tibetan. You need the knowledge of Tibetan culture, that's important for youths." He went on to elaborate his sentiment on being more Tibetan than Canadian because he is a Buddhist and Buddhism is not a mainstream religion in Canada. Canada is his home now, but as a Buddhist he is often reminded he is different from other Canadians. For him, and many other older Tibetans, a Canadian passport is a document and a means to travel around safely and freely.

Tenzin: I am Tibetan spiritually. I am Tibetan Canadian, but I feel stronger Tibetan. I'm only here 6 years, but my whole life based on Tibetan Buddhist culture. I speak English and Tibetan, I am proud to

speak Tibetan language. Still I respect the Canadian culture. I honor my culture stronger than Canadian culture because I'm a Buddhist follower
(Recorded Interview, July 2016).

In a similar vein, Lhamo also sees the threat of the losing Tibetan culture and language in the west and agrees with many of Tenzin's ideals. She also feels that Tibetans in the west should be proud to bear Tibetan names. She doesn't understand why some Tibetans would take on Western names.

4.2 Stuck In Between

Dolma grew up with a transgender parent, and so she was used to discussing issues of identity with her family at a young age. This has empowered her to come to a realization that she does not have to be limited by any single identity.

Dolma: Even now I sometimes feel in between. I guess I feel I don't have to be one or the other. I can be an amalgamation of both. That is my identity. And I also feel partly British, partly Tibetan. Not like I have to be Tibetan or British or have to be Canadian. Or Indian, I sometimes feel Indian right? (Recorded Interview, August 2016).

She recalled the constant feeling of discomfort and upset whenever her identity as Tibetan is questioned.

Dolma: I hated it when they ask if I am Tibetan. And then I get really offended because knowing Tibetan is important and part of your identity, sometimes you don't get the luxury of being taught it. And I don't think it should define who you are. You know you are Tibetan but you can't speak the language, it's something I hear all the time. And every time I hear it I get really irate. I have two small nieces and they are going to have that issue. Both can understand, one can speak it better than the other one. And my sister can't speak Tibetan, she can only say a few words so...I just feel like...it's aggregating. There were a lot of issues in England about Tibetans who are mixed. Half English, half Tibetan right? So some stupid

Tibetans think that because you are not fully Tibetan you are not...it's like Harry Potter and the half-blood (laugh)! (Recorded Interview, August 2016).

Dolma grew up in England where there was a much smaller Tibetan population. Learning Tibetan Buddhist culture and language was not an option that was available to her. Despite her frustrations and ambivalence, Dolma strives to be a good Tibetan in her own way. She practices her Tibetan language despite being conscious of people potentially hearing an accent, volunteers regularly at the Cultural Center, and participates in community events. I asked her if she feels that a lack of knowledge of Tibetan language is a major barrier for Tibetan youths to connect with the Tibetan community and she replied:

Language definitely, but it also goes into other areas. Like marriage. If you marry outside of Tibetan, a lot of Tibetans won't marry outside because it might cause an issue with their family. Not that it did with us (laugh)! (Recorded Interview, August 2016).

Many of the other younger interviewees, spoke about how they attended cultural classes at the center on the weekends as they were growing up. High school tended to be the period in which most of them became more distanced from their Tibetan heritage. However, many gained an interest in their culture once they began to attend university. Some express their interest by volunteering at the Center, some went to India to study and volunteer. Some also became deeply involved with activism. It is also not uncommon to find youths who are very involved in the Tibetan community. In the case of Lhamo, she juggles dizzyingly between her multiple roles working at the Parkdale legal services and at the community centre. The participants in the early 20s and 30s represent the emerging generation of Tibetan youths in exile who grew up in-between two cultures.

4.3 Generation 1.5

All my participants are first generation Tibetans. But an interesting pattern occurred when I asked each of my participants whether they were first or second-generation

Tibetans. Most of them, especially those in their twenties, have a bit of difficulty correctly identifying themselves as first generation. The definition of a first generation immigrant is very simple; he or she is born outside of Canada. The reason many of my participants struggled with the term first generation is because they feel it does not accurately portray their positionality in the Canadian society. They moved from India to Canada at a young age, they have gone through the Canadian English education system, they have little to no English accents and can navigate through Canadian society with relative ease. In a sense, my participants have more in common with second generation immigrants than first generation immigrants. Yet because they are not born in Canada, they are not recognized as second generation immigrants. Scholar Yuzefova (2012) call this group of people the generation 1.5, a group that cannot be properly defined within the confines of conventional categorizations and instead exist in a liminal space in-between. From arranged marriage to the creolization of Tibetan culture in the west, my participants share their unique perspectives gained from growing up between two cultures.

Arranged marriage was more common in the Tibetan communities in South Asia because they wanted their children to marry within the community. This practice is not popular in the west with more Tibetans now marrying for love.

Sue: I know people have opinions on this, like when I told my co-worker they were like, "Oh my gosh that's crazy, your parents were arranged marriage, I would never do that." And I understand, it's like forcing two people who have never met to get together. But I've seen it work, with my parents and my cousin. I've even told my mom that I won't mind in the future if she has any recommendations. Like if nothings working out for me, then I'm open-minded to it. I feel like in marriage, one of the hardest thing is getting the family support so if that part is already done with it just makes your life easier (Recorded Interview, July 2016).

However, having seen how arranged marriages can work out fine with the cases of her parents and cousins, Sue takes a pragmatic approach.

Almost all the participants in this study identify more as Tibetan than Tibetan-Canadian. Fiona was the only one of the participants who introduced herself as Tibetan-Canadian. This was because she felt the need to also acknowledge her life growing up in Canada.

Fiona: I would say I'm Tibetan Canadian. Like me being Tibetan will never change, but me being Canadian, that's like not what I was born in but what I was raised in (Recorded Interview, August 2016).

The reason why many of my participants' identifying as only 'Tibetan' is because of the narrative of culture loss that is dominant within many Tibetan communities. It is Tibet that they have a responsibility to preserve and protect, whereas, as Sue said, Canada is such a mosaic they are not even sure what being Canadian means. Nobden explained further.

Nobden: Yeah and I feel like most of my friends have these insecurities, when we are inside the Tibetan community. Like oh wait, do I really know this? So then we just drift off. But that's not the mentality you should have as a Tibetan. You should be like, ok I know that is but how can I improve and just keep pushing yourself. That's something we should do (Recorded Interview, July 2016).

Most of my participants who are in their twenties expressed some insecurities regarding being Tibetans. This stems mainly from a lack of comprehension of the Tibetan language. Nobden admits that at times she even feels hesitant to tell people she is Tibetan because of her lack of knowledge about Tibet. Based on our conversations, it is clear that she believes one of the key responsibilities of Tibetans in the west is to act as 'ambassadors' and spread awareness about Tibet. She shares the concern of many Tibetan youths that they may not be qualified for such an important role.

Nobden: You know, every time someone ask me, "Hey, are you Tibetan or are you from Tibet?" I would be hesitant of even talking about my background because I feel like I don't know much. I think in a way it's OK not to know...like you're learning and we're still so young and we're

exposed to all these things. Every day we can't always be like Tibet.

(Recorded Interview, July 2016).

Sue's trepidations come from the fact that she can only speak 'basic Tibetan.' She states that the Tibetan that many Tibetan youths speak is a different type of Tibetan than is spoken by the Tibetan seniors as well as other fluent Tibetan speakers. She calls it 'basic Tibetan.' It means acquiring just enough vocabulary to make small, everyday conversations but not enough to understand the depth of the language. An example in which many of them have experienced the gap in understanding due to their 'basic Tibetan' is how they often do not understand Tibetan jokes.

Sue: I don't understand Tibetan jokes. They always try to crack joke in random moments but me and my friends, we are always talking about how we don't understand Tibetan jokes. We just laugh because we don't get it. It's not because it's actually funny, we're laughing because we don't understand what the joke means! (Recorded Interview, July 2016).

Knowledge of the Tibetan language is one of the major markers of Tibetan identity. Tibetan communities around the world emphasize that one of the main purposes of the Tibetan diaspora is to preserve the Tibetan language, culture and religion. It is difficult for many of the Tibetan youths growing up in the west and immersed in the Western culture to have the necessary support to become proficient in the Tibetan language. Learning and maintaining a minority heritage language requires not only effort and practice but also time. Unfortunately, time is a limited resource in the busy lives of many Tibetan youths today who must balance school, work and social life. For the youths struggling to meet the expectations of the older generations despite the generational and geographical distance to their homeland, spirituality and language, activism and community involvement have increasingly become new facets for them to redefine their Tibetan identity.

Lhamo: I think the older generation often, the way they think, it's not backward-minded but it's more like, traditional. It's more education. Yeah, education is important but here there are other means of education,

you can always be learning. Like art courses. For them here, art is not considering an education and then other things like traditions. Knowing our traditions, culture and values, knowing our language right? It's so important to them and it's important to us too. But the way we live our lives like for me, even if I have the interest to learn Tibetan, so much. Like I really want to learn! But how am I supposed to take the time off to learn Tibetan like full, full heartedly if I'm doing this. I'm supervising 9 interns, I'm doing an internship myself and doing full-time school. And then also trying to apply for things, other opportunities during school year. And then keeping up with sports and trying to be physically active for yourself, and then trying to maintain a social life for your friends and you also have a boyfriend. Like you know, how are you supposed to handle all this?! And then it's sort of like there is a big gap in understanding, like you know, there is a difference in how they would perceive us to be Tibetan and how we do our best to be Tibetan right? But I think it's all in good intention. So, in that sense it makes it better but the older generation do expect a lot. (Recorded Interview, August 2016).

My participants expressed the difficulties and challenges they face in meeting the high expectations of the older generations and achieving their personal aspirations. They shared some of the strategies they use to make up for their low basic level Tibetan language and actively seek opportunities to improve on their Tibetan language. Lhamo explains that one of the reasons she is so active in the Tibetan community is because it gives her an opportunity to practice her Tibetan.

Lhamo: I can speak it [Tibetan] and that's why I'm partially, quite active in the community because sometimes I'm guilty of the fact that I can't speak, and read and write as well as I can in other languages. But I'm learning. I'm learning. I've learnt my alphabets and I can read slowly now. And I hope to become better at it.

Diyin: So you attend daily classes?

Lhamo: Not daily classes but I tried to practice as much as I can at home. Because I know the alphabets and characters, it's just a matter of practicing it and reading more (Recorded Interview, August 2016).

Nobden went back to her village in India to volunteer at the Tibetan Children's Village boarding school last summer. At the school, she was given her own period to teach the children English classes. The experience made her feel connected to India and gave her the confidence to become more active with her community back in Toronto. All of my participants in their twenties are also very involved with political activism, with most of them being former or current members of SFT. They share a common view among Tibetan youths that activism is an intrinsic part of their identity as Tibetans. In a humorous and at times self-deprecating manner, many of my younger participants bluntly evaluate their own perceived failings to measure up to certain Tibetan markers, most often Tibetan language skills. And some of them appear to address their perceived lacks through self-discipline, community involvement and political activism.

Nobden: The teacher, I give credits to her, she gave me so much advice. Every day she would educate me with how the system works, what kids do on breaks. Our school times is really different from theirs and she just told me all about that...That was like the best experience. When I left, I was...I got really emotional because I develop such strong attachments with all the kids. And they respected me so much on top of that. It was so different, like the whole school system. The lack of supplies and just everything it was so sad. You can just see and compare. It was a lot to intake (Recorded Interview, July 2016).

“Social relations are the foundations of transnationalism” (Glick-Schiller 2003:3) and this certainly holds true for many Tibetans who are born in exile. Tibetan families send their children home to relatives in India or Nepal for periods of time in order to help them reconnect with their Tibetan heritage and language. But not everyone can go back and forth all the time. For Fiona and many other Tibetan youths in the west, they often feel

cut off from their Tibetan culture and language. They worry that western culture is slowly eroding their sense of Tibetan identity.

Fiona: I found when I got here, I didn't really know much about the Tibetan culture and I wasn't involved at all. Like the only events I went to every year was New Year and the March 10th protest but that's it. And so when I got older I felt like I wanted to do something for Tibet. So that's why I decided to join and I wanted to connect back to my community, where I am actually from. Because if I'm like learning English and doing things like western people would do, I felt like I was being taken away from my original identity and the things that I do (Recorded Interview, August 2016).

Being actively involved with political activism and spreading awareness about Tibet connects Tibetans in Canada back to their culture by reminding them who they are and where they come from. It reminds them that despite their comfortable lives in the west, Tibetans are stateless and without a homeland. It is this knowledge that grounds them. They also feel a deep sense of frustration with Tibetans who appear to be preoccupied with their lives and don't give back to the community. As Sue expressed:

It's hard to get them to be involved and make it sound exciting. Sometimes it bothers me, like you're Tibetan why do we need to grab you and remind you, hello we are losing our culture! It's something that should be innate in what they want to do. I feel that back in high school I was one of the people that they need to grab and pull out the house. But just being here this summer kind of made me realize that whatever they are doing, they are doing it for a good thing and they are doing it to preserve the culture and get everyone involved and make the community stronger. Going forward, I would definitely attend a lot more and join. I am trying to get my brother and his friends to come out more. It's always harder to get them [Tibetan male youths] to come out (Recorded Interview, July 2016).

Lhamo on the other hand said she has always been involved with philanthropy work since she was in high school. She was an active volunteer with Me to We and helped with several housing and water well projects in Africa. It was her mother, she said, that reminded her to first help the children in her community who are suffering from the intergenerational impacts of statelessness and poverty. Lhamo changed her direction and became actively involved with her community.

Lhamo: Because I grew up in a Tamil society I didn't understand what it meant to be Tibetan, not that I know now. But still I just never even questioned that part of me being Tibetan. I knew I was Tibetan, spoke Tibetan but I didn't know what it meant to me [illegible] one. So when I came here, I was very involved with Free the Children, Me to We. So in grade 6 we finished a project where we built a school in Kenya. And then in grade 8, in my middle school I started a club and we finished a water project in Sri Lanka. And then in high school, I did it again and we finished a project in India, a clean water project where we built a well in a village. And then I called my mom one day and she was like, what's up [illegible]. And I was like, you know we built a school in Africa and like, we built a well in India and like Sri Lanka and poor areas where they don't have water and like. And she was like, you know how many Tibetan kids, your brothers and sisters are dying out of starvations, not having no families and living alone? And I was like, shit. That was my turning point. Since then I've tried my best to be more involved in the Tibetan community (Recorded Interview, August 2016).

Sue explained how it was always harder to engage male Tibetan youths to get involved with the community for some reason. However, she notes that more male Tibetan youths get involved when there are community sports events. The community center holds annual summer volley ball and basketball tournaments in order to engage with more male Tibetan youths. Through volunteering and political activism, Tibetan youths such as my participants demonstrate that they are fully aware of their weaknesses and areas in need of improvement and they are ready to take on the legacy and responsibility of preserving

their culture from the older generations. Tashi, a 50 year old male and active member of the community, is confident in the next generation's efforts. He remembers that he went through similar experiences in the past with his father.

Tashi: My father once said something to me, and it wrenches my heart a little, he said if I don't get to see a free Tibet, I will do my hardest to make sure my children get to see a free Tibet. And now I feel like I'm repeating his words. It's still possible, anything can happen...I teach my kids, all the Tibetans children to be proud of who you are, your Tibetan culture, language, the food, the religion, what makes you Tibetan. It's important not to forget that. And I think the majority of the youths that I see, that are growing up and going to college and university now, they do get that. Very politically active, very conscious of how and what they do. And always have indirect way, some way to do something with Tibet. Because that is who they are and they know that we don't have a country. They are doing their best (Recorded Interview, August 2016).

For Tibetan artist Tashi Norbu, known for his unique art style that fused traditional Tibetan Thangka art and western art style, it does not matter to him what others think of his unique style.

Global issue, Tibet issue. Tibet issue, global issue. So it's like a, because in that way, we try to, artists, artists think globally you know. And technically, artist clients are global you know? You got [illegible] a small [illegible] client from Belgium or Canada you see? So you have to rely on the global clients. So your art automatically becomes global. Expression for the global [illegible]. World will see you. That's why some of the biggest artists are known by the world you know? So you can't be local. So in that sense, Tibetans are a part of it you know? And I think, depends on how successful you are. Your own local people will accept you. They cannot go against it. So in a sense we have a, it depends on what you make out of it you know? And if you are an artist, from a local point of view,

from a Tibetan point of view, over the edges a little bit you know?

(Recorded Interview, August 2016).

Despite the dominant narrative of culture loss that is prevalent in Tibetan communities in the west, Sue believes that the creolization of both western culture and Tibetan culture could be an asset. Tibetan artist Tashi Norbu echoes this sentiment, stating that materialism is a part of the world and that is fine. But Tibetans should not make material success their end goal and must keep Tibetan Buddhist teachings in the forefront of their mind. As such, Tibetans in the west can focus on achieving their personal aspirations (i.e. employment and financial stability) in the west while being good ambassadors of Tibet.

Sue: I feel that is good because I can see both sides. In some instances, maybe some believe a certain way of thinking. Or just in Asia, it's very old school, and I feel like being here I'm a lot more open to new ideas and new perspectives. I feel like I am able to think about it more and juggle and think about what kind of person I want to be. Do I want to have this faith, and how do I feel about this certain group of people? I feel like it balances out the Tibetan and Western side of me. I don't know how others would feel, "oh look at this girl, she's so westernized!" But then again, I'm the next generation!

(Recorded Interview, July 2016).

4.4 Tibet is My Home Too: Notions of Return

When Tenzin expressed his concerns over the westernized Tibetan youths taking over preserving the “last bastions of Tibetan culture (Hess 2009),” it sounded familiar. He was voicing a common worry many of the older Tibetans have over Tibetan youths becoming too westernized. This raises an important question: Apart from being as proficient in Tibetan language, what are some of the markers of difference that the older generations perceive between them and the younger generations? In this section, we look at the changes in the notion of return between the different generations, how the older and younger generations remember their homeland differently, and address the pressing

question of where is Tibet? Among my participants, the older generations exhibit a stronger notion of return than the younger generations. The Tibetan seniors, Chak and Shing, would pack up immediately if Tibet gains autonomy tomorrow. For Tibetans like Tenzin, Tibet is a place that would have the institutions and structures to support a society found on Tibetan Buddhism and be able to support Tibetans in their journeys to spiritual enlightenment.

Tashi: There definitely is, I've never been there. At one point, I was considering going. I was looking at the places I can go and visit. And then after all the activism and then I start learning about what's happening with the Chinese government. The cameras everywhere, those scheduled tours that they have. I couldn't go there and here and it just turned my mood totally off. I didn't want to see it that way (Recorded Interview, August 2016).

Tenzin and Tashi have both said they would not go back to Tibet until the 14th Dalai Lama returns, because they cannot bear to see Tibet as it currently exists under Chinese occupation. When asked whether they would consider returning if in the future Tibet does gain autonomy, both immediately replied in the affirmative. While the older generations demonstrate a more literal sense of the notion of return, in that they can envision a life in Tibet, this is not necessarily the case for the younger generations. Many of them grew up for most of their lives in Canada and can see a career, a family and a life here.

Fiona: I want to be here, even if it's not an issue for me to go back I would still want to get an education here. And maybe get a job here. But for them, if we had the chance to go back they would go back. Visiting and stuff, for them is like their home and they have memories there. But for me, I have memories there and I see a life here too. I can't just... [Laugh] (Recorded Interview, August 2016).

Nobden also expressed some ambivalence at the notion of return but could not explain why. “Yes, home is Tibet. Home is Tibet but...” (Recorded Interview, July 2016). In

Canada where Tibetan education is not readily accessible, youths may not have the luxury to learn how to be what is societally perceived as a proper Tibetan. They must pragmatically juggle the expectations of the older generations and their personal aspirations to find employment, start a family and more in Canada.

Diyin: Would you stay in Toronto?

Sue: Yeah, I want to, I'm so comfortable here. It's like, essentially the place I grew up. I can't really see myself living anywhere else. I've been to other places but permanently I'd like to live here (Recorded Interview, July 2016).

The younger generation, particularly the youths in exile, will be redefining places of belonging in Tibet's future.

4.4.1 Two Tibets

Lhamo: When I think of Tibet, I think there's two views. There's one, the reality, current situation, which I never let, I don't know how to put it...so that's one view. The real situation that's aware of what's happening, of all the facts. And then there is another image when I think of Tibet, it's beautiful snow top mountains. Something I always grew up drawing too, like anytime I drew something, I drew mountains, and sun shining through the mountains and river. Like a valley running through the mountains. Because we are always knew about how beautiful the Himalayan is, how we lived in tents and not like in big mud houses, and there'd be yaks all around and sheep. And it's just the lifestyle. And Mastiffs. So that was the first thing I would think about. And then I think even today, I struggle to put the two images together. Maybe in denial. It's in denial in the sense that I don't want to accept that my home is being destroyed but I feel like it has and I need to learn to accept it. I haven't yet. I should, eventually. I just never have, I guess until the day I go back I won't know (Recorded Interview, August 2016).

In some of my participants' views, Tibet in the Tibetan consciousness has become a reflection of an ideal past untouched by Chinese occupation, Westernization and globalization. Tibetans strive to get back to this pristine place, despite the fact that many do not have direct memories and connections with that homeland. Many older generations of Tibetans are Tibetan Buddhists, and while they enjoy the freedom that comes with living in a western society such as Canada, it is also a constant reminder that they are no longer in a Buddhist country. As the memories of migration and nostalgia for the homeland are passed down from one generation to the next, Tibetans maintain nostalgia for a homeland they may have never been to. This nostalgia is fostered by a notion of return to the homeland, has created two images of Tibet. One in which Tibet is an autonomous region of China and in the view of Tibetans living outside of Tibet, a place that is increasingly becoming too sinicized and 'disneyfied' to attract tourists (Sydenstricker 2014). It is an image of modern Tibet that is associated with intense development, skyscrapers and industrialization. The alternate image juxtaposing the above noted image of development and modernity is associated with imageries of a pre-modern Tibet that is beautiful, peaceful and 'natural'. It was an image that initially appears to be anti-development, but in actuality it is an attempt to purge any association with China, a reimagining of what Tibet might look like if it was independent from China. It is important to note that the pristine view of Tibet filled with high mountains and snow is a carefully constructed image in the Tibetan nation building efforts. Fiona points out the problems with Tibet being represented as mountains and snow.

Fiona: In the mountains and in your heart. The only reason why I say you get a sense of nationalism from the flag and stuff is because [illegible] some people who have never been to Tibet, never stepped on the land. They don't know exactly where Tibet is, how it looks like. All they think about is mountains. It doesn't all look like that, only in the remote areas but in the city, it looks like just city-life [laugh]. That's why you know these things give you a sense of, in your mind, to reinforce doing certain Tibetan things. There are areas of Tibet that are very mountainous but like you know how in Canada we have different provinces? To say that Canada is full of mountains you are only referring to British Columbia

and you are leaving out Toronto and everything else that's city life. In Tibet there's three provinces, and some provinces are more up north and they are more in the mountains and their way of life is a little bit different. Different dialects, and then the southern Tibetans are more city life and the dialect is also different so it kinds of leaves out. That's where I'm from, I'm from the south, I've lived in city. So for me, Tibet is not the mountains but literally some parts of it is in the mountains. Most people say is because they connect back to the root of Tibet which is all up north. And then in the south [there] is more mixing with the Chinese community, a little bit (Recorded Interview, August 2016).

4.5 Where is Tibet

In the literal and physical sense, Tibet still exists as a region of China. But that is not the Tibet that Tibetans want to see. I asked my participants where they feel Tibet exist today in a spiritual and emotional sense. For many, the closest place they can call Tibet is Dharmasala because the 14th Dalai Lama resides there.

Sue: The place I lived in India, that's Dharmasala. That's the place where the Dalai Lama resides. There's just something about that place that's just super calming and nature and stuff. It's not as busy and people and stuff. The place I lived in Nepal, it's the capital, Kathmandu. It's a lot more like city like and more polluted everywhere and people. Maybe it's just the scenery. When I go to Delhi, India I don't like it as much. It's just Dharmasala that my heart is really connected to, that place. It's my favorite place of all (Recorded Interview, July 2016).

Dharmasala is the closest to Tibet because the 14th Dalai Lama is there. When asked what place in Canada reminds them of Tibet, most of the participants point to the Tibetan cultural center in Etobicoke because it was blessed by the Dalai Lama. It shows that the Tibetan spiritual leader is the core marker that has re-rooted the Tibetan diaspora. For many Tibetans such as Tenzin, as long as the Dalai Lama is around, Tibet will go on. Lhamo explained her sentiments further by saying that because the Dalai Lama is always

travelling around the world giving seminars, in a way, Tibet is everywhere as well. But in a way, it also makes Tibet nowhere. Does this mean most of my participants feel most connected to Dharmasala? This is definitely true for Sue, who states that despite the short time she has spent there, she feels more emotionally connected to Dharmasala than to Canada, even though she has lived in Canada for so many years. In this sense, Canada is her country of citizenship but Tibet is her home. Lhamo feels connected to India, but not necessarily because it is the closest place to Tibet; it is because her mother still lives in India. Nobden on the other hand, explained vaguely how she feels that home could be wherever Tibetans settled. Even after decades of statelessness, Tibet continues to exist because there are Tibetan communities that continue to remember and preserve memories of the homeland.

4.6 Tibet in the World

Throughout his interview, Tenzin often used the terms ‘Tibetan culture’ and ‘Tibetan Buddhist culture’ interchangeably.

Tenzin: That's why the Dalai Lama said even we lost our country, still Tibetans are united today because of Buddhism, because of Dalai Lama's leadership. In political sense, in spiritual sense (Recorded Interview, July 2016).

What Tenzin and my other participants tried to communicate to me was that Tibet is not just based on the land. In Tenzin’s view, Tibet is mainly the preservation of Tibetan Buddhist culture. His use of the word culture, at least in the context he was using, is very similar to the concept of community. According to Jeffery Week, quoted in Bauman (2001:100):

The fact of identity or similarity of the typical situation in which a given individual and many others find their interests defined, would not suffice to transform a mere similarity of individually suffered deprivation into a community ready to fight for the ‘common interest’. Among additional requirements which had to be met for that transformation to occur, Weber

names ‘the possibility of concentrating on opponents where the immediate conflict of interests is vital’, and ‘the technical possibility of being easily brought together’ (Bauman 2001: 84).

Many Tibetans in the west may not be from the same Tibetan regions but they were brought together in Toronto through forced migration and a shared desire to return to Tibet with the Dalai Lama. Hess (2009) describes in her works with the Tibetan communities in America, how Tibetans in the west act as ambassadors of Tibet. But what are the criteria for an ambassador? The responsibility of Tibet’s ambassadors appears to be divided into two main functions: spreading awareness about Tibet and representing their individual best; and contributing to the positive image of Tibet around the world.

Tenzin: Dalai Lama said you should be a representative of Tibet around the world. You should be a good person wherever you go. You should be a good example in the community wherever you go. That way, people remember, oh what a nice Tibetan guy, nice Tibetan woman. So Dalai Lama said Tibetan around the world don't make shame, bring goodness in the world. Talk about Tibet. Tibetans in Tibet still suffering. So many in America and Europe get job, buy house, buy car. That is a shame that is not Tibetan. Tibetan has a lot of responsibility (Recorded Interview, July 2016).

Nobden also gave an example of how if she becomes a successful lawyer, everyone she helps will know her as a good Tibetan lawyer. Thus, her personal success would also become the collective success of Tibet. Pennesi (2017) spoke of the obligatory interrogations that immigrants must go through every day. Such interactions are racist, othering and uncomfortable. Many of my participants discussed how they often dress in traditional Tibetan clothing in Toronto and how just by wearing something different, they can easily engage non-Tibetans in conversations.

Sue: [On wearing traditional Tibetan clothing in public] if people are really curious, then I'll say. But usually they just want to know whole

ethnicity. With what happen with Tibet, maybe it speaks for itself. And then sometimes people ask oh where's that from? And you get to explain. Help others be more aware of my culture and stuff.

Diyin: Like where are you from.

Sue: Yeah! Like where are you REALLY from?

Diyin: They ask you that too?

Sue: Yeah and they get confused. Where are you born? Nepal. What, are you Nepalese? No, I'm Tibetan. What's that? And then you have to say your whole story, your life story. My grandparents and my parents came here...and they know my whole life story of how I landed here (Recorded Interview, July 2016).

By acting as Tibet's ambassadors, Tibetans in Canada have taken advantage of obligatory interrogation as daily opportunities to educate and spread awareness about Tibet. The rationale behind why they might welcome such uncomfortable interactions is because they do want to be reminded that they are stateless.

Tashi: Tibetans, wherever they seem to be put at, they seem to make something of themselves. And they try their best with what they have and all these things that we do, you're doing it knowing you are homeless. You are actually homeless, I call Canada my home but it's not my true home. I want to go back to Tibet (Recorded Interview, August 2016).

4.7 The Tibetan Brand

Many western non-Tibetans know about Tibet issues thanks to mainstream media, which often portray Tibet and the Dalai Lama positively. In an episode of the Simpsons, for example, the Dalai Lama was referred to as the epitome of ethical morality. This has propagated a powerful idea that Tibetans around the world are all good Tibetan Buddhists. Tibetans are not only aware of this image of Tibet in the world, they also reinforce it within the Tibetan community by advocating non-violent actions, as well as

having a Tibetan mindset. In this way, Tibet and Tibetans will continue to be known throughout the world as peaceful Tibetan Buddhists who have been wrongfully displaced. It is a way of raising awareness about Tibet by juxtaposing the image of the moral Tibetan Buddhist against the Chinese administration. The more Tibet shines, the darker China seems to become in comparison. Tibetan artist Tashi Norbu acknowledges the confines of the global Tibetan image. He also demonstrates how he has been able to use the global image of Tibet as an effective platform to display his art and promote awareness about Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism.

Tashi: The world sees us as Buddhist, not as chemists or you know. We have medicine but we don't have Tibetan doctors, the world will not see that. They wouldn't see Tibetans as great cooks. Tibetans are very much Buddhists and they know the best [in Buddhism]. So I'm trying to communicate with the world through that culture and in a way trying to save that culture. So I make my monks [in his paintings] fly because that's what the world expects from us. And recognition is learning about you, so if the world wants to know me through my art and the subject of Buddhism. I should be smart and use that medium to talk to the world. That's what I'm doing (Recorded Interview, August 2016).

Tibetans in the west have found varying degrees of success by using the positive perception of Tibet. While Tashi Norbu has a successful career as a renowned Tibetan artist with his artworks that are filled with Tibetan Buddhist elements, Tenzin found it is much harder to thrive as a Buddhist monk in the west. Tenzin grew up in India and had a Tibetan Buddhist education. He lived as a monk in India. But when he migrated to the west, he soon found that he had to become an ex-monk to make money. He said several times, almost wistfully:

Tenzin: It's not a Buddhist country [Canada]. Nothing's free in this country. In Tibet, a lot of farmers are Buddhists, so they support the monks, nuns. Easy, it's a Buddhist country but this [Canada] is not a

Buddhist country if I have to work for money (Recorded Interview, July 2016).

Tibetans first fled Tibet in the 1960s in order to protect and preserve the Tibetan Buddhist culture. But some Tibetans in Toronto, especially the older generation, feel they now face a dilemma of being alienated from their sociability and way of life. Tenzin views the Western society with a great deal of cynicism and distaste,

Tenzin: as a Buddhist, you have no money what you can do here? Even I can't have a cup of tea in Tim Horton for free. Even I go seven years in Tim Horton, I cannot get a free cup of tea. It's the system you know? Modern world is based on money so no money, you have no modern world (Recorded Interview, July 2016).

Although he has never been to Tibet, he spoke with authority and deep nostalgia for the homeland.

Tenzin: A slow life. One thing I like in Tibet. If you go from Gêding to Lhasa, it takes two months. You can go anywhere you can knock the door you can stay in the house people are pure people trust. They give you food. Here you don't even get a cup of water in Canada easy. People don't trust you. They'll call the police on you. Seriously. 50 years ago, nobody lie, nobody kill, and that is a pure culture. Somebody did something is shame on whole family, as a culture. Here is you and me that is not a culture. That's I call western culture, me and you. Even you go to subway in India, people talk, here you talk what you want, what you need. Even you ask direction they ask what you want, what you need. Some of them [say] shut up, fuck off. That is so strange, that is the modern culture. Too selfish. Too rude (Recorded Interview, July 2016).

Yet simultaneously, he also attributes the freedoms Tibetans in exile have living in the west to allow them to preserve some facets of Tibetan Buddhist culture. He even went as far as saying Tibetan culture would be gone without Tibetans in exile. Tenzin is concerned about the uncertainties of the globalized world and Tibet's future in it. He worries about whether or not the next generation can take on the responsibility of

preserving Tibetan Buddhist culture in the west. Many kids are taken up by money, sex, drugs and drinks. This again, he blames on the western influences and the western way of disciplining children.

Tenzin: You cannot teach the kids too much. Too much talk, they call the police. Parents don't have a lot of rights to do a lot of things. Kids are too spoiled here. Lot of Tibetan kids spoiled here in this country, in this system (Recorded Interview, July 2016).

For Tenzin, and many other Tibetans, Tibetan Buddhist culture and philosophy represent the solution to the ills of the west. Tashi, another one of my participants, recalled how the Dalai Lama once said that this is Tibet's gift to the world, ironically made possible by Chinese occupation. A blessing in disguise.

4.8 The Tibetan Mindset

Having a Tibetan mindset is one of the two main functions of being proper ambassadors to Tibet as discussed earlier in this section. Lhamo explained her concept of the Tibetan mindset and how it guides Tibetans on family building and work in the west. This is a mindset that is opposite to the western concept of individualism, and Lhamo believes it is a concept that is deeply embedded in the Tibetan community. She elaborates on how the Tibetan Children's Village boarding schools in India started teaching children how to think collectively at a young age, as demonstrated by its motto, "others before oneself."

Lhamo: I think living in, especially in this society where you are often bombarded with, with the, what you have to look like, standards of social media and things like that. It would have affected us a lot differently if we were not. If we didn't have the mindset that Tibetans do in general. I would say. And then in general, it's not like saying specifically Tibetans are very good at this, but I think we've learn this from the Indian culture and just in general, the South Asian culture to respect our parents, like truly respect parents, have a deep respect for them. In the sense that, I don't know if things have change but I know that I would never be able to

not talk to my parents for like ten years. Which is something common that people do here apparently and leave their parents in old age homes and never see them, never come to see them until they died because they want to hear their will. And these type of stories are so like, different or indifferent to what I've been used to. And in Indian culture, you often don't leave your parents until you are married. Which is the same case I guess we've picked up and I can never imagine a time where like I would raise my hand on my parents or like you know? And these things you hear here, and that's like, surprising. And not just that in general. You know like, in terms of respect, like here you hold the door and that's respectful and nice and everything. But it's also, for us it's like who goes to eat first and things like that. Anything like small things, like gestures. Our dad, head of the family always eats first, or like my parents always sit at the top, like if they're sitting on the floor, we never say like sit at the floor you know, we're like, 'please sit on the bed or something and then we sit on the floor right? Like we take the bad side of the stick often, like lower than our parents, because we treat them, we know how grateful they are. I think yeah, partly other things also like, the way you are like you are not an individualistic mindset. Your mindset is not individualistic. You come from a collectivist background, you are going to be a very collectivist person (Recorded Interview, August 2016).

Despite my interviewees holding diverse views on what it means to be Tibetan in the west, they all shared a sense of Tibetan moral responsibility. While the concept was somewhat ambiguous for many of the Tibetan youths, who mostly had a sense that they must not act shamefully and subsequently bring shame to their Tibetan family and to the Tibetan community as a whole. Tenzin, one of my older interviewees, laid it out explicitly that Tibetans living in the west have a moral responsibility that goes beyond one person. This is because one's conduct goes beyond one's person and can affect others positively or negatively. It is a permanent mindset and way of thinking empathically. He gave me several examples. Earlier before our interview he had been in Tim Horton's for a while. There was no soap in the washroom, he explained, so he had

to let the manager know. This was for sanitation reasons but also to ensure the next person will be able to use the soap. In this way, his individual actions have benefited someone other than himself. This is a Tibetan Buddhist concept, he explained, to always be aware that our actions go beyond oneself. Having this kind of mentality in the West is not easy, Tenzin admitted, but that is the Buddhist philosophy and way

Tenzin: He [Dalai Lama] always say first his commitment is to human rights. Second religious freedom in the world, third is Tibet. Tibet is small in the world. That's a Buddhist concept, first other than you. But here [the West] is first me. As I tell the lady, there is no soap, the next person will get soap. It's my job, my responsibility. Even at school, I see garbage, I pick up it's not a big problem I can do [it] every day. Wherever you go, you make the society better and clean (Recorded Interview, July 2016).

4.9 Tenzin: a Name with Deep Roots

If you shout the name ‘Tenzin’ at a Wednesday Gorshey night down by Parkdale Collegiate Institute in Parkdale, chances are you will get an entire crowd of people looking at you in response. One of the first things I noticed was the abundance of Tibetans, male and female, with the name Tenzin. This was because His Holiness’s name is Tenzin. Tibetans’ dedication to things, places and activities that have a tie to the Dalai Lama gives outsiders a glimpse at the complex mechanics of Tibetan Buddhism and the unwavering devotion Tibetans hold for their spiritual leader. All in all, it is common practice of Tibetans to name their children Tenzin.

Tenzin: Because Tibetan name is not given by parents, they always ask the high teacher, high lamas, Rinpoche, high masters. Dalai Lama's name is Tenzin that's why he's our leader. Most have Dalai Lama's name...Tenzin is a special name. Spiritual holder. Karma practitioner, good name...When I was a monk, I got the name from [the Dalai Lama] and I

was only ten. Anyway [in] Parkdale everyone's Tenzin (Recorded Interview, July 2016).

Even more intriguing, many Tenzins are also individually blessed by His Holiness or his representative when they are born. Tibetans shared a special relationship with their spiritual leader the Dalai Lama through the name Tenzin. As such, the name comes with great responsibility and Sue explained how she is compelled to act properly and be a 'good' Tibetan.

Sue: If your name is Tenzin, then people know you are Tibetan. In some sense, that name hold pressure and meaning. If you have that name you are identified as a Tibetan and you have to paint yourself and live in a way that will live up to that name. I'm named after His Holiness, and for me I don't want to do injustice to that name. He means so much in our community so I want to live up to that name and the culture and beliefs and faith. And how Tibetans are supposed to live. I don't think about it a lot but we had this one assignment in class, you had to look at your name and think about the meaning behind and write a poem about it. In that moment, I realized that there is actually a lot of responsibility behind my name (Recorded Interview, July 2016).

It is a heavy responsibility if you think about it, Sue admitted. She is worried about Tibetans who bear the name Tenzin and commit acts that might tarnish the name. Despite her concerns, she is thinking about naming her children Tenzin in the future. The name Tenzin connects the Tibetan diaspora and keeps it grounded. It is also a marker of Tibetan identity. As time passed I began to realize that this name served a multitude of purposes. The name 'Tenzin' serves an unexpected and significant function as a gateway between insiders and outsiders of the community. This initially complicated my search for participants for my research within the Tibetan community. In one case, an informant told me about someone who was potentially interested in being interviewed but then left me with only the name, Tenzin. It was like looking for a needle in a haystack. Tibetans will introduce themselves as Tenzin to people they are not familiar with and reserve a

second name, usually their last name or a nick name, for their friends and acquaintances. In this way, the name becomes a shield that protects them from strangers with unknown agendas.

All my participants told me about how the name must not be tarnished, that all Tibetans who bear the name must act and live properly in order to live up to the name they shared with the Dalai Lama. Fiona describes her experience having the name Tenzin as a name “I don’t own myself.” Because so many Tibetans are named Tenzin, she feels that it is a holy name that is collectively owned. When a Tenzin does something bad, every Tenzin is affected.

Rachel: A young Tibetan boy was arrested, 18 years old. He broke into a house, he had a gun...in Toronto. So I was just thinking you know, how does that happen? And I know that crime is not unique to any community, it happens in every community. I shouldn't worry about it too much but...so I don't necessary think that [Tibetans have to act a certain way] that's not what we should think of. But I can't help it when we hear about it on the news, we share the first same name. The kid's name was Tenzin so I was thinking, what can we do as a community so that kids are not growing up in the gang culture, with guns and violence. Is there something we can do to prevent a 12 year old today in 6 years, becoming like this? In terms of programming, are there activities we should focus on that? Soccer and other sports are great, but you have to notice that often times it's the parents that brings the kids to these games. What about the kids with parents who are not available. Where the parents are working two shifts. That's a concern that the community has, the parents are working two shifts and the kids are left alone. Is that it? Are there other factors and what can we as a community do? (Recorded Interview, August 2016).

Parents naming their children Tenzin are common in Tibetan communities, but there are those who give their children English, western names. While this is a trend that is used

by many migrant families as a strategy to better integrate their children into the western society, Lhamo is disappointed by their actions. Most Tibetans in the west share a belief that they are Tibet's ambassadors (Hess 2009). She feels having a Tibetan name is an essential part of being Tibetan in the west because it makes one stand out. Having a Tibetan name can be a gateway in educating curious Canadians about Tibet. The act of naming one's child a non-Tibetan name can be contentious, given many may view such actions as further validating the narrative of culture loss that is dominant in ethnic Tibetan communities.

Lhamo: But I don't know. I think mostly like the community here where I can see like the parent's generation are I guess, kind of lost. In the sense that they try to fit in to the white community, and they want their kids to fit in. There's a wide range of Tibetans, ones, there's ones they want to fit in so bad they name their kids white names instead of Tibetan names. Then they're the actual like, butchers of the culture, right? To move on and they're not really spreading the culture or keeping up or preserving it right? Because your name is something that you stick with. Like it's an attachment... Something like the greatest attachment you would have in life and you name it 'white'. So then like, there's not that connection anymore for your child right? And your child wasn't there to decide for themselves, you decided for him that he's more white. Or he'd be better off as a white boy than a Tibetan boy right? For me I think, personally I think, if I had, say I a name like Cindy, I would, I wouldn't connect to it you know? If I say hi my name is Cindy, you'd just be like oh ok. But if I say [Tibetan name], then you would be like, oh interesting you know, different name, like something you've not heard, something you'd ask about. I'd be like, oh I'm Tibetan and then you'd be like oh where is Tibet and then even, even if I wasn't like as involved, I think I'd be connected to my Tibetan side because you are questioning me about my country and I'd be like, where actually is Tibet? I don't know I've never been. And then I'd go home one day, you know as a child, and dad where is Tibet? Is that where we are from you know? And then I learn about these things that

way and at that age you are not smart enough to, you know, grapple with these ideas of identity and things like that. But it's embedded in me now. If my name is Cindy then nobody would question me, I would never gone home [asked dad about Tibet]. Like that scenario would have never happened right? So for me, I think name is important. And so when I see Tibetan kids with white names, I'm always like, what are you doing? Yeah, yeah I think it's quite heartbreaking for me to see that the parents are choosing for them that they'd be better off with white names than ethnic Tibetan names. And especially for us Tibetans, at a time like this, it is so crucial to be preserving our culture. There's only 6 million of us, and more Chinese, like mainlanders living inside of Tibet than us. A lot more. Some of them get paid to move to Tibet right? Just so the demographic change to more Chinese people than Tibetans right? Like, like we Tibetans living outside of Tibet think we have... every single person carrying a responsibility, duty to do their best as a Tibetan (Recording, August 2016).

4.10 Chapter Summary

In Chapter four, I reviewed the diverse generational perspectives my informants have regarding living as a Tibetan in Toronto and being a Tibetan outside of Tibet. Some of them such as Tenzin and Lhamo outlined a moral obligation on the part of Tibetans living in Canada and outside of Tibet in general, to live as 'good Tibetans'. This includes speaking Tibetan as fluently as possible, practicing Tibetan spiritual beliefs, advocating for Tibet's Independence to their respective host countries and most importantly, preserving their Tibetan heritage to be passed on to the next generation. Some of my informants revealed ambivalence regarding the particularization of the Tibetan identity in their community. Dolma and Sue seemed to support the creolization of Tibetan identity, which past research stated that Tibetan communities strong rejected creolization with the rational being to preserve 'pure' Tibetan culture. Both of them stated that they are proud of their Tibetan and western affiliations and use them interchangeably as needed in their daily lives. The willingness to challenge notions of Tibetan identity and the notion of

return to the homeland is more readily adopted by my informants who are in the ‘generation 1.5’ category. A group that is in a permanent liminal and ambiguous space between generation 1 and 2. My informants show a keen awareness in how the world views Tibetans, with Tibetan artist Tashi Norbu, pointedly noting that Tibetans are seen as Buddhists, but not chemists. This positive image of Tibetans and Tibet prevail in mainstream media, where the Dalai Lama is often referred to as the epitome of ethical morality and righteousness. Keeping this in mind, many of the informants agreed that they have to represent the best side of Tibet in the world, this could mean being successful in professional fields in order to increase Tibetan representation. But it also means do not commit crimes and let the public associate bad behaviors with the Tibetan community. This mentality is exemplified when Rachel shared her distress at the news of a local Tibetan boy who was arrested for a break-in and enter, she felt personally affected as well because they shared the name ‘Tenzin’. Because this is the name of the Dalai Lama, many of my informants who have this name, said that they often feel pressured to not tarnish this name in any way. We see in this chapter the ways in which my Tibetan informants have a mental image of a shared affinities that connect them with other Tibetan communities around the world.

Chapter 5

5 Conclusion

Tibetans in Toronto, like other Tibetans living in the west, have effectively curated and maintained a political Tibetan identity. It is an identity construct that emerged out of particularism, a particularization of certain markers of Tibetan culture to be preserved that have also come to represent the ethnic Tibetan community in Toronto and the west.

In the Introduction to this thesis, I identified four main areas of importance that would guide my research. The first area of concern focused on how Tibetans in Toronto carefully maintain a political Tibetan identity based on particularism that is how clothing, food, language, spirituality, culture and activism set Tibetans apart from others in Toronto. If you walk down Queen Street West and Jamieson in Parkdale, Toronto on a Wednesday, chances are you will see an increase of Tibetans wearing chupas and other traditional Tibetan clothing. They are practicing Lhakar, a weekly event that celebrates the Dalai Lama's holy day. The regular Lhakar rituals Tibetans perform became a perfect platform to observe the particularization of a political Tibetan identity in Toronto. Lhakar practitioners appear to have great flexibility in defining what can be a Lhakar practice; eating Tibetan food, wearing Tibetan clothes, reading and writing Tibetan. There is a diverse array of creative ways in how Tibetans are defining and exercising Lhakar. But what I have realized as is that many Lhakar practices and rituals are associated with creating a platform to educate and spread awareness about Tibet, as well as a space to engage with non-Tibetans in the form of vigils and demonstrations for Tibet's Independence but also fun, light-hearted and interactive events such as Gorshey nights. While the core of Lhakar is Tibetan Buddhism, the ritualization of the weekly display of Tibetan clothing, demonstrations and other events has also become a convenient way for Tibetans to engage non-Tibetan Canadians first in a non-political, spiritual way to the very political endeavor of Tibet's Independence. For example, the

Student for Free Tibet (SFT) will often set up a table at the Wednesday Gorshey nights in order to spread awareness about Tibet as well as sell SFT merchandise. The 2016 Momo Crawl was another example of how the Tibetans are engaging with the wider Canadian community in a seemingly non-political space in order to effectively communicate and educate participants about the ongoing plight of Tibetans and Tibet. Tashi explained in Chapter three how food can be a great way to engage people in the Tibet movement. He marveled at how Tibetan youths in Toronto have been able to directly or indirectly connect their daily actions to Tibet, whether it is through their fashion statement, political actions or even something as simple as uploading a Tibet awareness video or blog on a Wednesday. It is apparent for my Tibetan informants living in Toronto that activism has become intrinsically linked with being Tibetan.

The second area of focus for my study is Tibetans' keen awareness of the Western perspective on Tibet and how individual Tibetans are actively taking advantage of 'obligatory interrogation' (Pennesi 2017) that is routinely performed on immigrants and turned into opportunities by Tibetans to further the Tibet cause. Tibetans in Toronto such as the participants in my study are keenly aware of the West's images of Tibet as peaceful Tibetan Buddhists. Tibetan artist Tashi Norbu for example, has a successful career as a Tibetan artist that with a unique fusion style of western and traditional Tibetan art forms, by incorporating Tibetan Buddhism and political elements into his visionary works. The international community only sees Tibetans as Tibetan Buddhists. Tibetan artist Tashi Norbu emphasized this point saying, "You won't see a famous Tibetan chemist. That is not how the world sees us" (Recorded Interview, August 2016). As such, many of my participants believe in the importance of Tibetans succeeding in many different fields and careers as a way to change the image of Tibetans as more than Buddhists.

Discussions with participants in my fieldwork revealed the fascinating way in which Tibetans have been utilizing their cultural and spiritual capital as Tibet's ambassadors in Toronto to creatively display their Tibetan identity and engage with non-Tibetans in political spaces through initial interests in Tibetan food and culture. These spaces range from dressing in traditional Tibetan clothing every Wednesday for Lhakar, the annual

Momo Crawl and other social events, to simply having a Tibetan name. Tibetans are finding opportunities to educate Canadians in a politicized way about Tibet and get more people involved with the political Tibetan movement.

“Obligatory interrogation” (Pennesi 2017) refers to the everyday informal routines in which first and second generation immigrants to Canada feel obliged to explain themselves to members of dominant society. Such questions include: “Where are you from?”, “What kind of name is that?”, “How long have you been here?”, “Do you speak X language?” What makes these seemingly benign conversation ‘obligatory’, according to Pennesi (2017), is that they are often prompted by factors such as physical appearance, accent or a marked ethnic name that seems to betray an outsider ethnicity. In her research, Pennesi states that immigrants are generally ambivalent towards obligatory interrogations. Tibetans in Toronto appear to welcome such demonstrations, even at times actively encouraging them by dressing in traditionally Tibetan clothing, speaking Tibetan, eating Tibetan food and more. In one case, Lhamo stressed the importance of how having an ethnic Tibetan name can be an opportunity to engage Canadians in conversation about Tibet and become an important and permanent marker of Tibetan identity that connects Tibetan youths to their eroding heritage. As such, obligatory interrogations appear to not only helps further a collective goal of the Tibetan community to act as Tibet’s ambassadors, but they also serve as an uncomfortable reminder that Tibetans are not home.

The third area of concern in my study focuses on the impacts of years of exile and displacement on perspectives and notions of return, land, and the loose transnational network on ethnic Tibetan communities around the world. Tibetans in Toronto, especially the youths, do not have a direct memory of their homeland. The youths have ambiguous and rather ambivalent feelings towards the notion of return. The older generations do support the notion of return and take the meaning quite literally. What is interesting to note is that some of the older generations who support going back to the homeland, have also never been to the homeland and have lived their entire lives in Canada. I conclude that the notion of return grew stronger as they aged and became satisfied with the things they have done and the family they created and so they are ready

to leave it all behind if necessary. The youths however, still have not fully started their lives; they have dreams of finding a good career, starting a family and settling down in Canada. They are not ready to start over. But when they get older, perhaps the notion of return will grow stronger as was the case with some of the older generations. Everyone had fond memories of Dharmasala, India. A place they called, the closest to Tibet for Tibetans outside of Tibet. A few of the key transnational ‘checkpoints’ in the imagined Tibetan nation that my participants pointed out include Dharmasala, the Parkdale area, the Toronto Canadian Cultural Centre and most importantly, the Dalai Lama. While many participants, in particular the youths, liked the idea of South Parkdale being called “Little Tibet,” some of the older generations thought it was unnecessary, given that many Tibetans already call Parkdale, “Little Tibet.” The differences in their responses, I believe, also stem from an awareness that there are non-Tibetans living in Parkdale and an attitude that Tibetans should share the space with their neighbors.

The final point of interest in my study is how the history of forced migration is being embedded and experienced through ethnic Tibetan food. Even while my participants do not remember much of the Tibetan migration from Tibet to Nepal, then to India and finally Canada, they embody the memories of migration in their love of Tibetan, Nepalese and Indian food. The fusion of Tibetan dishes available at the Tibetan restaurants in Parkdale is an entanglement of spices and flavours created when the dishes became localized adaptations to the palates of those living in South Asia, and then in Canada.

5.1 Gaps in My Fieldwork and Directions for Further Study

When I first began my fieldwork, the research was originally designed to have a multi-generational aspect. It would have been interesting to interview different generations of the same family to observe more closely the dynamics within the family, who passes memories and recollections of Tibet within the family. Who speaks Tibetan? What role does the younger generation have in mediating the livelihood of the family and what role does this have in re-shaping identities? However, it appeared that most Tibetans I came into contact with all migrated to Canada recently or at a young age. This could be

because the Parkdale area in Toronto is a gateway community for immigrants with its migrant support networks and having some of the cheapest permanent rentals in Toronto. The higher number of Tibetan newcomers settling down in Toronto might have attributed to how all my participants are 1st generations. Another more likely reason is due to my small sample size of 11 participants. It is therefore important to point out that the narratives provided by my participants are not necessarily representative of the ethnic Tibetan community in Toronto as a whole. What they do provide, is a glimpse at the lived experiences of Tibetans in Toronto and in a wider context, contribute to the growing literature on Tibetan communities in the west.

Another issue that I think may have influenced the results of my study is the male and female ratio of my participants. I was only able to get four male participants with difficulty, while I have seven female participants. As well, the male participants I did secure are all between 40-70 years old. Many of my female participants are in the 20-30 years old bracket. Sue mentioned that a majority of the male youths are disengaged from the community whereas a lot of the female youths were actively involved. I wonder if there is something in the gender dynamics going on here, in that the potential male participants could not take me seriously. That is a possibility. Though given that I found all my participants through going to community events, it would make sense that I was only able to connect with a certain group of the Tibetan community, its most active members. Another participant in my study points out that Tibetan women have always been at the forefront, in the community and activism. There had been a few male youths who seemed interested but changed their minds when they saw the length of the interview. I also think the short duration of my actual fieldwork was another important factor. I believe I would have been able to get some more male participants had I stayed in Toronto longer and gotten to know more people.

While this research looked into the experiences and motivation of migrations, it neglected analyzing the procedural aspects of the migration. Perhaps a potential future research could look at whether all Tibetans living abroad began by being stateless, whether their statelessness came about from a deliberate rejection of Chinese documents?

Finally there was the researcher-subject power dynamics. How did my positionality as a researcher, an outsider who is also Chinese affect my research? While I can never be sure, I realized in going through the Recorded Interview, that a majority of my participants focused on forced migration and avoided or smoothed over the role of China in their displacement. Is this because of their awareness of the ethnicity of their interviewer? Or worse, did I unconsciously steer the interview in this way despite assuring the participants that they could share whatever they wanted in the interview. Lhamo and a few of the participants from the older generation did make a point to mention China's complicity in creating the Tibetan diaspora. Shing became nervous when I asked him about his immigration status, concerned that somehow my knowledge could obstruct his application. Lhamo explained that some of the older generations and her initial apprehension to be interviewed by me, was because Tibetans have experienced working with Chinese researchers. She talked about a Chinese man who befriended Tibetans for many years and conducted many interviews, but he published a narrative that cast Tibetans in a negative light. This researcher, whoever he is, appears to have become a bit of an urban legend or cautionary tale Tibetans warn each other about when interacting with Chinese researchers. Lhamo said she would know when I publish my findings. While their expectations did not steer my research in a certain direction they certainly did add an element of pressure. Tashi on the other hand, seemed to welcome interactions with the Chinese. He wondered how the Chinese view Tibetans if they only see them in protest and demonstrations yelling, "China out" and "Free Tibet". And he believes that it is time for them to know the truth about Tibet and decide for themselves. I wondered what Tibetan-Chinese relations are like in Toronto. SFT Canada national director Sonam Chokey, told me of one encounter a few years ago when she tried to chase down a Chinese student caught ripping off SFT posters on her university campus. For the most part, the two ethnic minority communities appears to ignore each other rather successfully. Though some of my participants remarked that Chinese counter protestors have begun showing up regularly at big Tibetan protests, demonstrations and the Dalai Lama's public visits. The Dalai Lama has apparently been interested in opening up a dialogue between Chinese and Tibetan youths. In 2015, Sikyong Dr. Lobsang Sangay, the democratically elected political leader of Tibet, attended a dialogue

between Chinese students and Tibetans in Washington DC (Shonu 2015). But I have not heard of any results from that dialogue.

5.2 In Conclusion

Living in Canada has affected many of my informants' sense of being Tibetan in unexpected ways. While they do not necessarily feel Canadian, they also do not necessarily feel completely Tibetan. This is especially true for my informants who are in their 20s and 30s. Many of them have been physically and culturally separated from their Tibetan communities in India or Nepal at an early age, and many admit they are not as fluent in Tibetan as they are in English. In Canada, a country that tolerates religious freedom, diasporic Tibetan identity and culture survive but some Tibetans continue to have a nagging sense of culture loss and erosion. From the ritualization of Lhakar, to having a Tibetan name, Tibetans in Toronto, at least in the case of my participants, demonstrate a strong sense of Tibetan cultural and political identity, constructed with the fragmented memories of Tibet that they pick up from their family and Tibetan communities around the world. In sum, the Tibetan identity is reshaped by the Canadian experience in that my participants are simultaneously feeling the threat of losing their cultural identity to westernization, at the same time their political identity is bolstered by Canada's freedom of speech and religion. As well, their positionality as Canadian citizens affect their sociability with their friends and families back in India and Nepal, who see the west as the land of wealth and opportunities. The research concludes then, with the belief that many Tibetans living in Toronto, at least among my participants, possess a relentless drive to preserve and pass on the memories of loss. There is a sense among the Tibetans that I met through this research, that they will "spend the rest of their lives trying to regain" (Towell 2008: 145).

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Appendices

APPENDIX 1: ETHICS APPROVAL FORM



Research Ethics

Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board NMREB Delegated Initial Approval Notice

Principal Investigator: Dr. Sherrie Larkin
Department & Institution: Social Science\Anthropology, Western University

NMREB File Number: 107809
Study Title: Little Tibet Toronto: Memory and Memory-making of Tibetan Refugee Migration among the Tibetan Exiled Community in Canada

NMREB Initial Approval Date: June 22, 2016
NMREB Expiry Date: June 22, 2017

Documents Approved and/or Received for Information:

Document Name	Comments	Version Date
Western University Protocol		2016/05/29
Letter of Information & Consent		2016/06/14
Recruitment Items	in person recruitment	2016/05/29
Recruitment Items	recruitment poster	2016/05/29
Recruitment Items	recruitment email	2016/05/29
Other	Interview questions	2016/03/01

The Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board (NMREB) has reviewed and approved the above named study, as of the NMREB Initial Approval Date noted above.

NMREB approval for this study remains valid until the NMREB Expiry Date noted above, conditional to timely submission and acceptance of NMREB Continuing Ethics Review.

The Western University NMREB operates in compliance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2), the Ontario Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA, 2004), and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario.

Members of the NMREB who are named as Investigators in research studies do not participate in discussions related to, nor vote on such studies when they are presented to the REB.

The NMREB is registered with the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services under the IRB registration number IRB 00000941.

Ethics Officer, on behalf of Dr. Riley Hinson, NMREB Chair or delegated board member

Ethics Officer: Erika Basile ___ Nicole Kaniki ___ Grace Kelly ___ Katelyn Harris Vikki Tran ___ Karen Gopaul ___

Curriculum Vitae

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Professional Activities

Migration and Ethnic Relations 2016 & 2017 graduate student conference organizer, University of Western Ontario, London, Ontario.
2016 – 2017

Conference presenter “The making of a global refugee diaspora” “The Production of Forced Migration”: 11th Annual Center for Refugee Studies Student Caucus Conference. The Norman Paterson School of International Affairs, York University, Toronto, Ontario
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