An Analysis of Bhutanese Refugees' Experiences in the United States: Understanding the Differences between Urban and Rural Resettlement

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An Analysis of Bhutanese Refugees' Experiences in the United States:
Understanding the Differences between Urban and Rural Resettlement

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Sociology Honors Thesis
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First, I must thank the Bhutanese refugees who participated in this study. My anxiety about finding participants and entering strangers’ homes quickly dissipated as I began the research process because of the kindness, generosity, and hospitality of the respondents. I left most interviews with invitations to return and participants thanking me for coming to talk with them. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of my respondents for sharing their stories, their homes, their hopes, and their Nepali tea with me. I am forever impressed by their strength and bravery in forging new lives thousands of miles away from everything familiar.

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Abstract

This study explores the resettlement experiences of twenty-one Bhutanese refugees in Laconia, New Hampshire and Chelsea and Lynn, Massachusetts. Its purpose is to determine if place significantly affects a refugee’s success and satisfaction, and to assess the differences between those effects in urban and rural locations. In addition, this study seeks to determine if one kind of place, urban or rural, is better for resettlement than the other. It draws on the theories of assimilation, social networks, and social capital, as it strives to enter the sociology of immigration discourse. This qualitative study employed a mixed-method approach in attempting to answer its research questions. Semi-structured interviews and brief surveys were conducted with ten respondents in an urban location, Greater Boston, and eleven respondents in a rural location, Laconia, NH. The samples were recruited through snowball sampling methods.

This study finds that in the rural location respondents had extensive in-group and out-group network connections, developed social capital, and feelings of safety and security, but they lacked employment and consequently economic stability. In the urban location respondents had a higher rate of employment, developed social capital, and a formal in-group network, however they lacked out-group network connections and felt unsafe in their neighborhoods. Therefore, the study concludes that there are specific characteristics of urban and rural places that affect a refugee’s sense of well-being; however, the positive and negative forces of these characteristics balanced out to have an equal effect on overall satisfaction. Where it is best to resettle each refugee may depend on his or her personal values and cultural background. While resettling refugees in one location or another may not solve resettlement issues, this research suggests that there are many systematic improvements to be made to better help refugees adapt and succeed in the United States.
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The United States has long been considered a nation of immigrants. We are German Americans, African Americans, Irish Americans, Mexican Americans, and the list goes on. From the first settlers at Plymouth Rock to the hundreds of thousands of people who passed through Ellis Island, almost every “American” can trace his or her family origins back to somewhere else. America developed as the “land of the free,” as a place of refuge for those who did not fit elsewhere. Although the U.S. still holds its reputation as the “melting pot,” immigration policies provoke fierce debate among citizens and policymakers. We wrestle with the fundamental questions of how open the country should be and to whom (Kanstroom & Skerry, 2010). Issues such as border control, deportation of illegal immigrants, and to whom we grant citizenship dominate the political agenda. As these policy debates rage on, immigrants continue to make the United States of America their home. Roughly one million immigrants established permanent residency in the U.S. in 2009 (Department of Homeland Security, 2010). A little less than a tenth of these immigrants are classified as refugees. The 1951 Refugee Convention defines a refugee as someone who:

Owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country. (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees [UNHCR], 2011)

Despite their small numbers, refugees play an important role in U.S. immigration. They receive special public services, such as cash assistance and case management because they have come to the U.S. for reasons of fear and persecution, rather than to join family or to pursue economic gains, as do many other immigrants. Even with additional assistance refugees struggle to “make
it” in the U.S. They strive to create homes thousands of miles away from everything familiar to them. Although they are one of the most supported groups of immigrants, refugees are given much less attention than policies such as border control and naturalization in American media. Where do refugees go when they arrive? What are they doing? How are they doing? These questions are largely left unanswered for the general public.

In September 2009 Kirk Semple of the New York Times wrote an article in which he attempted to answer some of these questions. He profiled eight Bhutanese refugee families that had recently moved to the Bronx from their small country in the Himalayas. He described their transition from living in bamboo and thatch huts with dirt floors to living in apartments surrounded by high-rise buildings and honking cabs. The Bhutanese, like many immigrants before them, had created their own “toehold” in a gigantic city. While they were not without challenges, they were intent on succeeding in the U.S. In December 2010, Semple wrote another article on the Bhutanese refugees in which he caught up with the eight families he had interviewed. Five of the families had moved. They had left New York for Virginia, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, and Vermont. These departures led Semple to question New York’s reputation as an immigrant haven. Despite the plethora of public services and aid organizations available to support immigrants in New York, these families ultimately felt they could better build their lives elsewhere. This small cross sectional view represents a major trend in U.S. immigration. Although immigrants have historically settled in a few urban “gateway cities” they are starting to spread out across the country. In particular refugees are increasingly being resettled in small and mid size towns and cities (Singer & Wilson, 2006).

Semple’s articles expose some of the complexities of building a life in the U.S. Job opportunities, the location of family members and friends, expenses, and many other factors
affect refugees’ success and satisfaction. They strive to create happiness for themselves and future generations. In this instance, the Bhutanese families felt they could not achieve their objectives in New York, where they were originally resettled. Despite the intricacies that factor into how one builds a life in the United States, the placement guidelines of resettlement agencies are relatively simple. The U.S. State Department controls refugee resettlement. It contracts ten voluntary agencies to provide resettlement services for refugees. Every week representatives from each organization meet to divvy up the populations the U.S. has agreed to receive. Refugees with family members already in the U.S. are placed with their kin. There is only one rule for the placement of refugees without prior connections: they must be resettled within fifty miles of an office of the agency that is responsible for their resettlement (Singer & Wilson, 2006). Voluntary agencies also try to take into consideration the availability of jobs, affordability of housing, receptivity of local communities, and specialized services available in possible areas of resettlement (Singer & Wilson, 2006). For such a complex and sensitive process these rules are surprisingly few.

The goal of this study is to provide insight into the connection between a refugee’s resettlement placement and his or her satisfaction and success. It endeavors to explain why refugees such as those who left New York felt they would have a better life somewhere else. Specifically, this study compares the experiences of Bhutanese refugees resettled in urban and rural locations. It attempts to answer the questions: Where are refugees most successful? In which type of community do refugees acculturate more quickly and easily? Where do they feel most “at home”? This study determines if there is a significant difference among these qualities in urban and rural places through interviews completed with Bhutanese refugees living in Laconia, New Hampshire and the Greater Boston area. It is possible that urban areas meet more
of refugees’ and immigrants’ needs, as they are full of physical resources and diverse populations. On the contrary, it is also possible that small rural communities are best suited to meet refugees’ needs as they are characterized by small, supportive communities. I interviewed refugees in each place about their experiences during the transition to life in the U.S., what resources they had access to, and how they have formed social networks by asking questions such as: How do you get places every day? How often do you see your Bhutanese friends? And, would you like to stay in this place or move? Through this process I was able to produce research findings that detail the patterns of resettlement experiences among the Bhutanese refugees.

The purpose of this study is to contribute to the well-being of all refugees, especially the Bhutanese refugees who have not yet immigrated. I endeavor to enter the discourse on refugee and immigrant studies by producing accurate information about the experiences of urban and rural resettlement. In addition, I propose concrete solutions to the issues refugees experience in each environment. I hope that this information will be used as a resource by international and national policymakers to improve refugee assistance and resettlement programs. Throughout the research process I was sensitive to a broad range of factors that influence resettlement and success, not simply the few rules on which agencies currently rely.
Rationale

Throughout this academic year I met many questioning faces as I explained the topic of my thesis. I eased people into the topic by starting with, “I am writing about refugee resettlement.” If the person continued to ask questions and seemed interested we would eventually get to the real meat of my topic and I could say, “I am writing about refugee resettlement. Specifically, I am comparing urban and rural resettlement of Bhutanese refugees.” Some people just nodded and said, “how interesting!” Others were curious about how I came up with such a niche topic, as it seems so distant from my life as a student at Boston College. My answer for those that wanted more is that this project is born out of volunteer experiences and curiosity.

During my sophomore year I took a class called PULSE for which students are required to do community service in the Greater Boston area for at least ten hours a week for the entire academic year. I volunteered at the International Rescue Committee (IRC), one of the ten voluntary agencies that resettles refugees in the U.S. I worked in the employment department helping people from several different countries find jobs in industries such as dishwashing, housekeeping, and janitorial work. The majority of the people I worked with were Bhutanese. My manager explained that this was the first wave of Bhutanese people to arrive in the country, as the U.S. had just agreed to accept up to 60,000 Bhutanese refugees throughout the next several years (Laenkholm, 2007). I was embarrassed to admit that I did not know where Bhutan was, much less that it was a sovereign nation. As the year progressed I learned more about my Bhutanese clients and their experiences as refugees. I watched them struggle to find employment in the midst of an economic recession and to navigate the subtleties of American culture and lifestyles.
When I returned home for my summer break I was surprised when my parents told me that several Bhutanese refugee families had been resettled in my hometown, Laconia, New Hampshire. Over the next few months I saw the Bhutanese families all over Laconia. I saw them walking to and from the grocery store, sitting outside of their homes, and practicing driving around my neighborhood (so they could get their licenses). It was easy to spot them in a town with almost no racial diversity. I was struck by how different the experiences of refugees in Laconia must be from the experiences of those resettled in Boston. I could not imagine how the refugees would find jobs and establish lives for themselves in a place such as Laconia, with no public transportation, brutal winters, and many close-minded white Americans.

Two years later the question was still at the forefront of my mind. As I was pondering thesis topics I always ended up back at immigration, curious about the experiences of the Bhutanese refugees. Their situation abroad as well as in the U.S. has seemed to slip under the radar. By asking Bhutanese people about their experiences I thought at the very least I could give them a voice in academia, as they offer a largely untapped body of information. I believe that this project is the most socially relevant and important topic that I have the background to pursue. I hope that my findings will be able to ease the transition for refugees in the future, as I have never met more dedicated and determined people than the refugees I have worked with over the past several years.
Introduction to Bhutan and the Bhutanese Refugee Crisis

Bhutan is a small country in the Himalayan Mountains situated between India and China. Michael Hutt (2003), a British scholar of Nepali and Himalayan studies, stated, “Every writer on Bhutan who wishes to address a non-specialist readership must begin by introducing the country, because it remains among the least-known of all the world’s nation-states” (p. 2). In this section I heed Hutt’s advice, introducing Bhutan with specific regard to the Bhutanese refugee crisis.

In an effort to preserve its Buddhist-oriented culture and avoid the industrializing forces of surrounding countries, Bhutan has remained largely closed to foreigners. It emphasizes its unique values and way of life by measuring its economic growth in terms of “gross national happiness,” rather than the traditional gross national product. Gross national happiness (GNH) is measured by nine dimensions: psychological well-being, time use, community vitality, culture, health, education, environmental diversity, living standard, and governance (The Centre for Bhutan Studies, 2008). By using GNH Bhutan highlights its belief that progress is not solely a result of market-based indicators, rather it is about the well-being of its citizens and environment. In its isolation from the rest of the world Bhutan has maintained this reputation as a peaceful
nation. A recent Wall Street Journal article describing Bhutan’s efforts to finally promote foreign investment and tourism stated that the changes have provoked anxiety among residents (Barta, 2010). They worry that more liberal investment and tourism policies will destroy their culture and stability as a nation. This is not the first issue to provoke concerns about culture and purity among the Bhutanese. In the early 1990s the nation expelled close to 100,000 ethnic Nepali Bhutanese, who resided in the southern half of the country, in what some have called an ethnic cleansing exercise (Hutt, 2005, p. 44). While little is known about Bhutan itself, even less is known about the Bhutanese refugee crisis, as it seems most unlikely for a country that measures growth in terms of happiness and has a reputation as a peaceful place to forcibly expel tens of thousands of people.

Michael Hutt (2005) identifies most of those expelled as “Lhotshampa”; they belonged to one of three ethnic groups residing in Bhutan during the twentieth century. As Hutt (2003, 2005) is the premier scholar on the Bhutanese refugee crisis, much of the following information comes from his book *Unbecoming Citizens: Culture, Nationhood, and the Flight of Refugees from Bhutan* and his article “The Bhutanese Refugees: Between Verification, Repatriation and Royal Realpolitik.” Hutt further explains that the Lhotshampa migrated to southern Bhutan from Nepal in the late nineteenth century as farmers—thus they are often referred to as ethnic Nepalese. They speak Nepali and are mostly Hindu. They remained largely separate from the majority ethnic groups in the north, who speak Dzongkha and are primarily Buddhist. Initially the Lhotshampa people were accepted because they paid taxes in cash, rather than in kind, as did the majority of the population (Hutt, 2005). They provided the government with capital for growth. They also occupied land that was largely uninhabited. Further interaction among the groups did not occur until the 1950s when King Jigme Dorji Wangchuck made efforts to integrate the north
and the south. In 1958 the Lhotshampa were granted citizenship in an act that also paved the way for future immigrants to become Bhutanese citizens. Following this measure Lhotshampa people became increasingly involved in government and civil services. They enjoyed equal status for about twenty years, until citizenship qualifications began to change.

While specific reasons for the reversal of these integrating measures are unclear, Michael Hutt (2005) maintains that it was largely because assimilation between the two groups was happening too much and too quickly for some. As the Lhotshampa became more involved, others rejected their introduction of democratic principles and different cultural practices and began to drive for “Bhutanization” of the country. They wanted to preserve the Buddhist-oriented culture. Citizenship acts in 1977 and 1985 narrowed the terms by which immigrants to Bhutan could become citizens. Nepali was removed from school curriculums. People were required to wear the national costume of Bhutan, which was the traditional dress of the Dzongkha-speaking population. In 1988 Bhutan conducted a census to address illegal immigration to southern Bhutan. Hutt (2003) describes the Lhotshampas’ view of the exercise: “the Lhotshampas in Nepal presented it as an initiative which was designed to strip them of the citizenship they had previously been granted and reduce the size of the ethnic Nepali population of Bhutan” (p. 153). Each family was required to present census workers with a tax receipt from the year 1958—no earlier, no later—or with a certificate of origin, which had to be obtained from one’s place of birth, to prove that they were indeed Bhutanese citizens. Previously issued citizenship cards were no longer accepted as proof of citizenship. The census found that over 100,000 alleged illegal immigrants were living in southern Bhutan (Hutt, 2003, p. 157). Very few Lhotshampa people were classified as citizens. Angered by these measures, many began to protest for civil and cultural rights. As protests swept across southern Bhutan, the government in turn increased its
resistance. People present at protests were labeled “anti-national terrorists” and were considered threats to national security. Many of the so-called anti-nationals were arrested and jailed, some claim they were tortured during their imprisonment. Prisoners and their families were forced to sign voluntary emigration forms in order to secure the prisoner’s release. Ultimately a breakdown of trust between the government and the people caused the mass movement of the Lhotshampa people. Those who were not forced to emigrate saw what was happening to respected members of their community and they fled out of fear that the same thing would happen to them.

In 1991 the UNHCR set up seven refugee camps in Nepal for the Bhutanese refugees. About 100,000 refugees lived in these camps (Hutt, 2005). Camp residents were 97% ethnic Nepali (Lhotshampa) and 60% Hindu (Ranard, 2007). Children attend schools in the camps through grade ten; the curriculum includes English language classes. Some students attend school beyond the 10th grade at Nepali schools, and others have gone to Universities in India and Nepal. Despite the opportunity for education, few have had the chance to develop professional skills. Nepal has refused to allow Bhutanese refugees to work for pay inside or outside of the camps, leaving the refugees completely dependent on international aid (Laenkholm, 2007). Bhutan and Nepal have continuously tried to negotiate the fate of the refugees. In 2000 both countries agreed to a verification exercise in which a commission of five Nepalese and five Bhutanese people would classify the members of the camps to determine who was a Bhutanese citizen, who had voluntarily emigrated (and thus given up their rights to citizenship), who was non-Bhutanese, and who were criminals. In 2003 Bhutan agreed to allow those classified as Bhutanese citizens and voluntary emigrants to repatriate, but stipulated that they must reapply for citizenship upon their return, a process that would take a minimum of two years. The UNHCR
would not be allowed to participate in the repatriation, and the refugees’ residency and employment status were left ambiguous. This settlement was not sufficient for the refugees or the Nepalese government. Over time conditions in the camps have deteriorated due to budget cuts in the UNHCR and World Food Program (Human Rights Watch, 2007). There has been fighting within the camps over the destiny of the residents. Some maintained that repatriation to Bhutan was the only option, while others protested that it was time for a new solution. In 2007 the United States agreed to accept up to 60,000 of the Bhutanese refugees for third country resettlement (Laenkholm, 2007). U.S. ambassador to Nepal Scott DeLisi stated, "We are gratified, together with our partners, to be able to help turn an unfortunate and often painful situation into something more hopeful for these people - America's newest residents, whom we welcome with open arms and hearts" (“Envoy says US,” 2010). As of June 2010 almost 30,000 Bhutanese refugees had arrived in the U.S. They have been resettled in 40 out of the 50 states and in almost 200 different cities and towns (Department of State: Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, 2010). From a little known nation in the Himalayas they have arrived in small towns and bustling cities in the most well known country in the world.
Today forced migration is a stark reality. There are 10 million refugees displaced from their homes around the globe (Oxfam International, 2007). The magnitude of this issue has promoted a large body of research. However, as Richard Black (2001) notes, the development of refugee studies has always been closely tied to policy developments. While an open dialogue between researchers and practitioners is one of the field’s strengths, it is also one of its greatest weaknesses. A close tie between academic work and policy can lead to a lack of theoretical perspective, or even to research being co-opted by outside organizations (Black, 2001). In this instance, scholarly works on the social implications of forced migration are primarily motivated by and focused on policy. The field of the sociology of immigration offers an alternative perspective. It poses a more theoretical, although less specific, perspective of refugee behavior and experiences. The differences between these two bodies of literature leave refugee researchers with a choice. They may base their studies on policy driven works that focus on refugees as refugees, that is, as migrating populations with distinct motivations and programmatic assistance. Or they may base their studies on theoretical literature that regards refugees as immigrants, as just one group among many arrivals to the United States (Haines, 1989). I base this research on the study of refugees as immigrants. While I consider policy implications and initiatives throughout, the roots of this work are based in a theoretical perspective of refugee immigration to the United States.

In the following literature review I elaborate on points in the immigration theory debate, which I believe to be specifically applicable to this study. Further, I explore research results from studies that have already been completed in the field. Because there is very little scholarly research on Bhutanese refugees, much of the research I explore is based on other immigrated
groups. Throughout the review I will be attentive to differences that exist among various ethnic groups of refugees and immigrants. This exploration of literature situates my research on Bhutanese refugees in the field of the sociology of immigration. The theories and studies explored herein provide a frame for understanding my research on the experiences of Bhutanese refugees in urban and rural locations in the United States.

**Theory**

*Assimilation*

Historically, assimilation has been the most prominent theory used to describe the process of immigrant incorporation in America. As the field of sociology was being established at the University of Chicago in the 1920s and 30s Robert Park and Ernest Burgess began to research immigration and developed assimilation theory. They defined the term as the process in which immigrants, typically European at that time, adopted the cultural practices, norms, and language of native-born Americans to achieve economic and social mobility (as cited in Gordon, 1964). By this definition successful incorporation meant shedding most ethnic practices and traditions from one’s country of origin in order to participate in the “common cultural life.” Park and Burgess considered assimilation an inevitable outcome of the immigration process. Immigrants moved up the social and occupational hierarchy by losing their cultural distinctiveness and blending in with the dominant population (Schmitter Heisler, 2008).

In 1964 Milton Gordon published *Assimilation In American Life*, which was the most developed conceptualization of assimilation at its moment of peak popularity. Gordon’s assimilation was systematic and gradual. He argued that it occurred in varying ways, to varying degrees, and as a result of various factors (Gordon, 1964). While Gordon thought assimilation was likely, it was not inevitable, and it occurred differently for each person or immigrant group.
He put forth seven types of variables of assimilation within three different frameworks. The variables included cultural and behavioral changes, large-scale structural changes, marital patterns, immigrant self-identity, attitude of receiving country, and value and power conflicts (Gordon, 1964, p. 71). The three “goal-systems” these variables corresponded to were: Anglo-conformity, the ‘melting pot,’ and cultural pluralism. The Anglo-conformity system refers to the idea that American culture is dominated by Anglo-Saxon norms, and as immigrants assimilate to American ways they adopt more of these practices. This definition was the closest to the original idea from Park and Burgess. The melting pot concept refers to the combining of two cultures to form “a new cultural product with standard consistency” (Gordon, 1964, p. 74). Finally, cultural pluralism is the tendency of ethnic groups to hold onto their own norms and practices and to insulate those practices across generations. According to Milton, assimilation can happen to varying degrees and in different ways, and immigrants adopt the norms of an Anglo-Saxon “core society” in the process of assimilation.

Milton, Park, and Burgess are only a few of the theorists involved in the development of assimilation theory from the early 1920s to the 1960s. Many other sociologists, social historians, and political scientists, such as Marcus Lee Hansen, Ruby Jo Reeves Kennedy, and Will Herberg, also contributed to this literature. However, each scholar that contributed to assimilation theory also added qualifications to its application, and as assimilation theory became more provisional it grew unpopular among scholars (Kazal, 1995). Nathan Glazer and Patrick Moynihan’s (1963) Beyond the Melting Pot essentially marked its downfall (Kazal, 1995). The academic distancing from assimilation in the 1960s and 1970s represented the political and social upheaval of the era. While counter-cultural activists rallied together to protest the Vietnam War, their movement had strong cleavages. The counter-culture was composed of women’s
rights activists, civil rights activists, and student activists. Each group had different motivations and goals. As society became increasingly divided along the lines of race, class, and gender it was difficult to conceive of the common society to which immigrants assimilate. Gordon’s Anglo-Saxon “core society” became less plausible with the rise of ethnic revival movements such as the black pride movement (Kazal, 1995). At the same time several critiques of societal conformity emerged. William Hollingsworth Whyte’s (1956) *The Organization of Man* established the concept of Social Ethic to describe the tensions that arise between the individual and the group in corporate environments. The Social Ethic led scholars to question the desirability of conformity and processes that required it, such as assimilation. This increased criticism of conformity and the emergence of ethnic revival movements led Americans to question if a “core society” ever truly existed.

At the same time the world of immigration was changing. Before 1960 almost all immigrants were European. In contrast, 77% of post-1960 immigrants have been non-European (Portes & Zhou, 1993). The job market also changed significantly. The industrial jobs desired by immigrants to create better lives for their families have disappeared and been replaced by low-skill, low-wage employment opportunities (Portes & Zhou, 1993). Due to the force of the splintering counter-culture and the changing economic and immigration environments, scholars studying immigration from the 1970s onward moved away from the concept of assimilation to an ethnic-group focus. Paul Buhle, Herbert Gutman, and John Bodnar emphasized the degree to which immigrant groups remained intact over periods of time, insisting that they did not “immediately dissolve into a larger American society” (Kazal, 1995, p. 458). The work of the Vietnam-era scholars paved the way for transnationalism, one of immigration’s most popular theories today. The distancing from the assimilation paradigm also created space for theories
from other disciplines to work their way into the immigration framework. Social capital, a derivative from economic sociology and political science, is a particularly useful concept to apply to this research. As the cultural upheaval of the 1960s and 1970s led scholars away from one theory it opened the door to a host of new ones, all relating to important aspects of the immigration process.

**Social Capital**

As one of the foremost scholars in the fields of economic sociology and the sociology of immigration, Alejandro Portes has contributed many works to a body of knowledge that encompasses both topics. Portes reasons that economic sociology derives from the notion that economic actions take place within social structures. These social structures affect the outcomes of market transactions; thus they are “embedded” in society by contextual variables (Portes & Sensenbrenner, 1993). As immigrants build their lives from the ground up in their host country they must determine how to navigate structural systems and personal relationships to acquire resources. Portes focuses on the concept of social capital to understand and explain immigrant behavior as these tasks are accomplished.

Portes’ concept of social capital draws on the works of other theorists, mainly James Coleman and French sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu. Portes defines social capital as the institutionalized networks of relationships through which actors gain access to economic resources (Portes, 1998). It is not only economic resources that are measured with this concept, rather the size and complexity of the network factor in as well. Social capital is best understood by examining all three pieces relevant to transactions: the possessor of social capital, the source of social capital, and the actual resources exchanged (Portes, 1998). In refugee and immigrant communities social capital is a fundamental part of the incorporation experience. Social capital
can provide both benefits and detriments, a point Portes emphasizes. Immigrants trade tips and resources, help each other secure jobs, and navigate welfare services. However, there are also instances in which an individual may “free-ride” or become too dependent on his or her network connections to provide for needs, or an individual’s freedoms may be constrained by the norms and expectations of the group.

Portes and Julia Sensenbrenner (1993) argue that “bounded solidarity” and “enforceable trust” rationalize the prevalence of social capital in immigrant communities. “Bounded solidarity” refers to the idea that as immigrants face adversity in a host society they come to rely on those who are ethnically similar and form a relatively closed network to provide for their needs. This concept is the most relevant to my work in that the Bhutanese refugees are the “pioneer” settlers of their ethnicity in the United States and they have been resettled together in pockets of the country—there is high potential for “bounded solidarity” motivation. In addition, Bhutanese refugees may rely on the basis of “enforceable trust” to create strong social capital. “Enforceable trust” describes the process by which each individual derives utility from the transactions related to social capital. As the future possessor gains an economic resource, the source gains social standing in the community (Portes & Sensenbrenner, 1993). For example, if an immigrant who has lived in the U.S. for several years helps recently arrived co-ethnics find jobs, those helped will be better off for gaining employment, but the source may also benefit by becoming well-known in the community for his or her good deeds. While “bounded solidarity” and “enforceable trust” explain the prevalence of social capital there are several factors that may adversely affect it. For instance, if Bhutanese refugees rely on a variety of resources, including some outside the ethnic community, or if they are culturally and linguistically “farther away” from the population of the place in which they are resettled, the strength of social capital may be
weakened (Portes & Sensenbrenner, 1993). In these respective instances people may not bond as closely or they may not have any access to resources to share. Different “modes of incorporation” may also affect social capital in Bhutanese communities. Portes (1995) explains that past theorists have given attention to government policy, civic society, and public opinion in addition to the specific ethnic community in understanding how a group of immigrants incorporates. In an individual location the laws affecting the Bhutanese, public and private assistance available to them, and community reception will significantly affect the network they form and the social capital they develop. As an example, whether or not there is public health care or unemployment service in an individual location will affect the level of social capital that may be attained.

Transnationalism

Immigration theorists have also recently focused on the concept of transnationalism. Much of the work published on immigration in the past decade has argued that immigrants no longer assimilate, instead they maintain dual cultures, and hence they have transnational identities. While there is debate about transnationalism’s validity, durability, and applicability, it has grown quickly in popularity because modern immigrant experiences are so varied (Hein, 2006). Transnationalism is a perspective in which researchers describe immigrants as having “dual lives”; they speak two languages, own homes in two nations, rely on suppliers from their country of origin for businesses in their host country or vice versa (Portes, Guarnizo, & Landolt, 1999). Transnational immigrants have one foot in their host country and one foot in their country of origin. Immigrants have always maintained connection with their homelands, but transnationalism is characterized by sustained social contact over time and across borders (Portes, et al., 1999). It is marked by increased regularity, routine, and critical mass.
Technological advancements have made these kinds of relationships possible; however, Portes (2003) clearly states that not all immigrants are transnationals. He believes that the field has exaggerated the degree to which immigrants are affected by this phenomenon and that its scope is dependent on the context of the flight from country of origin and reception in the host country. Portes’ (2003) Comparative Immigrant Entrepreneurship Project (CIEP) found that a very small minority of immigrants could be classified as transnationals. High human capital, in the form of education and financial resources, and a likeliness or expectation that they will return home characterizes this small population of transnationals. By the nature of their situational context Bhutanese refugees are unlikely to be classified as such.

Many Bhutanese refugees speak two languages and remain in contact with friends and relatives still in Nepal; however, they lack the financial resources and political mobility to maintain transnational activities. The Bhutanese refugees have spent close to twenty years in refugee camps largely because a political settlement could not be reached between Nepal and Bhutan. Bhutan refuses to allow refugees back into the country, claiming that they are not citizens and that they left voluntarily, while Nepal does not allow the refugees to integrate and keeps them in the refugee camps (Hutt, 2003). By applying for third country resettlement the Bhutanese refugees did not eliminate the possibility of eventual return to Nepal or Bhutan, but until a political settlement is reached they must stay in the U.S. In addition, the economic activities that characterize transnational activities, such as importing cultural goods or exporting American goods, are impossible in this context. Nepal has refused to allow Bhutanese refugees to participate in any economic activities. They have remained dependent on international aid for the entire time they have been in the refugee camps (Laenkholm, 2007). Therefore, they do not have the financial capital or political permission to participate in starting businesses, selling
houses, or selling goods, the preconditions of participation in transnational activities. Although transnationalism has experienced booming popularity in immigration sociology, it is my opinion that it will not be applicable to the experiences of Bhutanese refugees.

**New Assimilation**

While the scholars of the Vietnam-era made important contributions to the field with their concepts regarding ethnic groups, they failed to connect these groups to the wider society (Kazal, 1995). Group-level interactions were not located within a specific context nor was it clear how groups related to each other. In the decades following, theories such as social capital and transnationalism developed to explain the processes of immigrant incorporation. These theories have gained considerable ground in making up for the deficiencies of the ethnic group-level focus, but they have not completely covered the theoretical chasm created by the abandonment of assimilation theory. As a result, scholars and researchers have drawn on the conceptual strengths of the old assimilation theory to develop a new version that avoids the weaknesses that caused its scholarly death in the 1960s. As Richard Alba and Victor Nee state, “whatever the deficiencies of earlier formulations and applications of assimilation, we hold that this social science concept [assimilation] offers the best way to understand and describe the integration into the mainstream” (Alba & Nee, 1997, p. 826). Alba, Nee, Portes, Min Zhou and many others have reworked assimilation theory to make it applicable to today’s changed world of immigration.

Alba and Nee incorporated the context of a fragmented post-modern society in which immigrants hail from all corners of the globe into the new assimilation theory. Many contemporary scholars argue that early 20th century assimilation was the product of unique historical circumstances (Alba & Nee, 1997). They reject the theory’s present usefulness because
immigration circumstances are fundamentally different than they were almost a century ago. Immigrants are now mostly non-European and the labor market has changed vastly. Alba and Nee refute this circumstance-based claim by drawing parallels between early 20th century and today’s immigrant experiences. For instance, because most early 20th century immigrants were white Europeans, it is commonly argued that they did not face the racial divide that today’s mostly non-white immigrants encounter. However, Alba and Nee (1997) point out that European immigrants were originally perceived as racially distinct from natives and only over time did they overcome this perception. In regard to the shifting labor market structure, immigrants have adjusted to the changes successfully. Instead of finding employment in the manufacturing industry immigrants form ethnic sub-economies and fill low-skilled manual labor positions. Through these parallels Alba and Nee argue for assimilation theory’s lasting relevance.

Their key addition to the canonical account of assimilation is that there is no implied direction. The minority group may impose on the majority or vice versa. For instance, while many Mexican immigrants speak English, many federal forms are now available in Spanish. Elaborating on this idea further, Portes and Zhou claim that there is not a single path immigrants take towards assimilation, nor a single group to which they assimilate (Portes & Zhou, 1993). They call this process “segmented assimilation,” the process in which immigrants of the second generation assimilate to different groups (or not), depending largely on their ethnic characteristics and socioeconomic status. Portes and Zhou (1993) observe that the traditional path of assimilation to the white middle class (Anglo-conformity) still exists—exemplified by the second and third generations of Cuban immigrants. However, they also acknowledge that immigrants assimilate to the underclass and permanent poverty, such as Haitian immigrants into the society of poor, urban African-Americans. Others, such as Punjabi Sikhs, who own many
orchards in Northern California, experience rapid economic advancement, but deliberately preserve their ethnic culture and values (Portes & Zhou 1993). Portes, Zhou, Alba, and Nee agree that the process of assimilation is a product of race, education, co-ethnic groups, and employment opportunities. Assimilation theory remains relevant as long as the various outcomes are emphasized; it is no longer a one-way destruction of culture and ethnic identity to conform to an Anglo-Saxon “core society,” but a process of groups of peoples becoming familiar with each other’s behaviors and traditions and developing a common ground.

Assimilation theory is especially important to consider for understanding the experiences of Bhutanese refugees in different environments. Their experiences may be fundamentally different in urban and rural locations because of the population with which the process of assimilation is occurring. Portes and Zhou’s segmented assimilation model makes it clear that in the absence of one “core society” there are many different courses an immigrant group may take, depending on the “society” with which they assimilate. In addition, Portes, Zhou, Alba, and Nee identify the importance of spatial placement in terms of the degree to which immigrants assimilate. Whether Bhutanese refugees are scattered throughout an area or concentrated in one part of town may make a difference in how they learn language, American cultural norms, and develop relationships with members of their communities, both inside and outside of their ethnic groups. Almost a century of exploration of assimilation has proved that interactions between minority and majority groups are significant and produce changes in behavior patterns. The manner through which immigrants assimilate is largely context dependent. Because there is one contextual variable in particular (urban versus rural) that this study explores, assimilation is one of its guiding themes.
Further Research on Immigrant Assimilation and Incorporation

As the U.S. is considered “a nation of immigrants,” immigration policy and study are hotly contested and highly researched topics (Kanstroom & Skerry, 2010). Many researchers have labored to prove the degree to which adaptation occurs in our society. Other scholars have taken a more critical perspective and attempted to determine which factors actually influence the process. The purpose of the following sections is to detail relevant findings from the large number of studies that have already been completed in this field. It begins with an exploration of the areas of social life in which adaptation has been most evident. I then explore the body of research on factors that significantly influence the assimilation process, which are especially pertinent to this study, as I endeavor to explain why immigrants are more successful in one place or another. In the studies I have examined assimilation is conceptualized in various ways. Scholars examine the degree to which immigrants incorporate, acculturate, integrate, and adapt. While each term has unique connotations, they refer to the same fundamental concept: to what extent are immigrants becoming familiar with and a part of American society?

Evidence of Assimilation

Economic adaptation is a primary concern for both policy makers and immigrants. U.S. resettlement agencies devote considerable efforts to helping refugees become economically independent by helping them find employment as quickly as possible (Nawyn, 2010). This policy is thought to benefit both the refugee and the U.S. government. It aids refugees in their journey to reclaim self-sufficiency, while they pose as little financial burden on the government as possible. In Bruce Dunning’s (1989) study of Vietnamese refugees in three U.S. cities, he found that employment ranked among one of the refugees’ highest concerns. Slightly over half of the refugees interviewed in his study were in the labor force, while many others were taking
English language or vocational classes to prepare for employment. Almost 80% of his participants acknowledged that speaking English was essential for getting a job and 70% had taken English Language training courses since arriving in the United States (Dunning, 1989, p. 72). In a study of illegal Guatemalan immigrants of Mayan descent in Houston, formal employment facilitated the assimilation process even further (Hagan, 1998). Immigrant men often found work through kin and friend connections and many worked for the same grocery store chain. They met other co-ethnics, worked with Houston natives, and had an opportunity for promotion and growth. Eventually most of the workers applied for legalization through an amnesty program that was supported by their employer. In this case economic adaptation led to political and social adaptation. Ryan Allen (2009) found similar results in his study of Somali and Sudanese refugees in Maine. Men with co-ethnic ties felt more compelled to participate in labor market activity and to conform to cultural norms. Additionally, as immigrants assimilate economically, the host community often benefits. Karen Jacobsen (2006) contends that urban refugees are highly beneficial to the cities in which they live. They rejuvenate local economies by opening businesses, bringing new skills, and opening transnational linkages (Hein, 2006; Jacobsen, 2006). Some immigrants, such as the Chinese in the San Francisco Bay area, create business enclaves, bringing in completely new industries to their host communities (Wong, 2001). The process of economic adaptation is clearly occurring in a dynamic way among many different immigrant populations. The acquisition of economic norms and behaviors often leads to adaptation in other realms as well.

Citizenship and assimilation link sociological and legal processes. Policymakers and scholars have long believed that in applying for citizenship immigrants make a commitment to American values and practices. Policymakers see citizenship as a unifying force among
immigrants and host communities. In Dunning’s (1989) study he found that 77% of the Vietnamese refugees interviewed planned to apply for citizenship (p. 78). Peter Skerry and Noah Pickus (2007) claim that actual citizenship status has lost its importance to host communities, rather, local residents care more that immigrants are good neighbors. However, other scholars, such as Dunning (1989), still emphasize the legal status of “citizen” in the process of adaptation. In applying for citizenship immigrants and refugees recognize the permanency of their residence in the U.S. They are not visitors, but legal citizens who have the right to vote and the responsibility to pay taxes. Applying for citizenship indicates adaptation on many levels. It can signify economic adaptation, as an immigrant who wants to be a citizen must want to become legally part of the economic and labor structures (Potocky-Tripodi, 2004). In a study of Hmong and Cambodian refugees Jeremy Hein (2006) found that many of his interview participants saw citizenship as a socially integrating force. By applying for citizenship refugees hoped to reduce marginalization—as citizens they would be of equal status, no one could tell them to “go home” or that they “don’t belong here.” Although in many instances citizenship clearly represents assimilation, scholars agree that its unifying powers are over-estimated (Hein, 2006; Pickus & Skerry, 2007). There are strictly legal reasons immigrants apply for citizenship as well. It facilitates travel abroad and the ability to sponsor relatives to move to the U.S. So, while citizenship can denote assimilation, it must not be accepted as the ultimate embodiment of adaptation.

Social well-being and quality of life are important aspects of assimilation that are often overlooked. Immigrants’ feelings as they grow familiar with American values, behaviors, and culture can affect the degree to which they desire to be a part of American society. In measuring refugees’ quality of life Dunning (1989) warns against being too focused on economic indicators
of assimilation. Instead he emphasizes the need to measure the extent to which immigrants participate in the social and cultural life of their new homes. Thus, well-being must be measured in a variety of ways. Dunning (1989) also found that when he asked participants to rank their level of happiness on a scale of ten, the majority ranked below the middle of the scale with respect to their lives in the U.S. Although the same participants indicated that they were satisfied with the services they had received, and confident of a better future, they were still relatively unhappy with the current condition of their lives. Only 13% felt that their lives in America were better than their lives in Vietnam (Dunning, 1989, p. 79). These findings point to some of the challenges immigrants face in the process of assimilation. Immigrants and refugees struggle to find employment, learn the language, to get adequate assistance, to be treated equally and to manage living in a new culture (Dunning, 1989; Hein, 2006; Shakespeare-Finch & Wickham, 2010; Stewart, et al., 2008). The challenges immigrants face affect their psychological and physical well-being. This has inspired researchers to probe deeper—to explore what factors affect the process and why some immigrants face more challenges than others and thus assimilate to various degrees.

The Factors of Assimilation

The process of assimilation is influenced by several fundamental factors. Age, sex, ethnic origins, economic conditions, and environmental factors profoundly shape how immigrants become familiar with and a part of American society. Essentially immigrant groups “come to different Americas” (Haines, 1996). One point of difference is economic conditions. Depending on an immigrant’s time of arrival he or she may face an economic recession and struggle for months to find employment, or he or she may enter during an economic boom and become quickly incorporated into a niche industry and earn a livable wage within a few years of work.
Policies also change over time. The timing of arrival influences where in the country an immigrant will be placed and what services will be available to him or her (Haines, 1998). In addition to these environmental variables, each immigrant and immigrant group has unique qualities that characterize their experiences in the U.S. Hein (2006) found that between Cambodian and Hmong refugees their ethnic origins, their “homeland histories,” were the most significant determining factor in their racial and ethnic adaptation (p.25). He explains that characteristics such as kin, religion, and political experiences mediate understanding of norms and behaviors in the host nation. On an even more fundamental level, the age and sex of immigrants often play a part in economic and social assimilation (Allen, 2009; Hagan, 1998; Lamba & Krahn, 2003). Several studies have found that men and women are employed in different industries, have different kinds of friends, and have different connections to cultural norms and traditions. Allen (2009) found that female refugees in Maine were less assimilated because cultural gender norms required that they stay home to take care of their children. Men who worked outside of the home were more connected to and familiar with the host community’s norms and thus more apt to adopt them. Together the context of the society into which immigrants enter and the basic qualities of their personhood explain some aspects of the assimilation process.

As immigrants arrive in their host nation, they turn to co-ethnic friends and family in the same community for support and guidance. These networks provide access to social capital as members of the network exchange employment information, facilitate accommodations, mediate friendship, and help navigate the social services system. Social capital involves dynamic interactions between social networks and resources. The network influences behaviors and norms, and thus determines the resources to which an immigrant is connected. Immigrant
networks are typically characterized by mutuality, trust and cooperation (Fernandez Kelly, 1995). Some researchers have recognized that networks dwindle with migration, as people often leave friends and loved ones behind in their country of origin (Stewart, et al., 2008). Other researchers find that networks are transported, and grow quickly upon arrival (Lamba & Krahn, 2003). In a study of refugees in Canada, Navjot Lamba and Harvey Krahn (2003) found that a vast majority of refugees arrived with at least one family member and that many refugees had extended family members living either in their homes or nearby. In regard to immigrant networks Paul Starr and Alden Roberts (1989) asked, “Are immigrants’ reference groups changing?” They wanted to determine if immigrants primarily turn to co-ethnics, family members, and friends from their country of origin, or to members of the host society for guidance in norms and behaviors. Lamba and Krahn (2003) found that refugees most often turned to kin with money and personal problems, while they were likely to seek extra-familial help for health and employment problems. The extra-familial ties they describe relate to the concept of “multiplexity,” the degree to which a network is characterized by members of differing social statuses and origins (Fernandez Kelly, 1995). Several studies have shown that networks with multiplexity often increase an immigrant’s social capital (Allen, 2009; Fernandez Kelly, 1995; Hagan, 1998). For example, in Jaqueline Maria Hagan’s (1998) study of Mayan immigrants, the men that worked in formal employment positions made connections with members outside of their ethnic group. These contacts eventually facilitated promotion in the workplace and legal immigrant status. Lamba (2008) also found results from multiplexity; refugees in Canada with both familial and extra-familial ties had a significantly higher quality of employment. Networks, and the people who compose them, influence the degree of social capital an immigrant possesses and thus the process of assimilation.
A Practical Framework

Alastair Ager and Alison Strang (2008) developed a conceptual framework for understanding integration that incorporates the assimilation outcomes and influencing factors discussed thus far. In asking, “what constitutes successful integration?” they have developed a frame that is both theoretical and empirically based. Fieldwork, secondary analysis of survey data, document and conceptual analysis and verification with policymakers provided Ager and Strang with the necessary data to construct the framework. While their studies are based on refugees settling in the United Kingdom, I believe it is relevant to the experience of refugees in the U.S. The framework is composed of some of the key domains of integration as related to four overall themes (Ager and Strang, 2008, p. 170).

The “markers and means” of employment, housing, education and health both indicate and facilitate the process of assimilation. For instance, if a refugee has graduated from a high school in his host nation, that is a “marker” of his assimilation, but his education was also the “means” by which he arrived at this point. The “social connections” explain how refugees mediate integration on a local level. Ager and Strang use Robert Putnam’s concept of social capital to explain relationships with families and co-ethnics (social bonds), with other communities (social bridges), and with the structures of the state (social links). The “facilitators,” language and
cultural knowledge and safety and stability, are the two main barriers refugees face in the process of integration. They struggle to fit in and find peace in their new host communities. The “foundation” of rights and citizenship is employed because the rights afforded to a refugee by the government dictate his place in society—these may change over time, as a refugee may apply to become a legal permanent resident or a citizen. Ager and Strang’s framework, along with the other literature reviewed, has informed the construction of my interview guide and survey as I look to measure refugees’ success. These works have helped me develop a sense of what may constitute a refugee’s success or failure in their resettlement placement. I examine economic adaptation, quality of life, social connections, and rights by using concepts such as employment, language knowledge, and social bonds.

**Location: Urban versus Rural**

In my survey of the sociology of immigration literature I found that the factor location is often omitted. Ager and Strang (2008) did not include location or place in their framework. While most scholars have ignored the influence an immigrant’s location has on the assimilation process, others believe that place matters. Roger Waldinger (2001) argues that the geography of immigration deserves much more attention than it has received and that immigration experiences are context dependent. The U.S. does not have a monolithic culture or set of norms. Behaviors, attitudes, and practices differ significantly among the regions. A refugee resettled in the Northeast will meet a significantly different population and climate than a refugee resettled in the Southwest. Haines (1989) acknowledges that the context of resettlement is “specific to particular localities at particular times” (p. 13). The economic climate of a specific place determines the employment opportunities for immigrants. The housing market determines where they live and what their surroundings are like. The political structure of the state determines the benefits and
public assistance available to them. In addition, the receptivity of communities varies among locations (De Jong & Tran, 2001). Where immigrants are placed impacts multiple aspects of their experiences. I propose it mediates all of the variables examined thus far. Place affects employment, housing, education, health, social connections, culture, and rights.

While some researchers believe location is influential in the assimilation process, they have only studied its effects primarily in urban or metropolitan areas. This tendency derives from the reality of immigration; most immigrants do tend to settle in cities and the majority of refugees are resettled in metropolitan areas (Waldinger, 2001; Singer & Wilson, 2006). In Jacobsen’s (2006) study of urban refugees around the world she found that refugees tend to join the urban poor or other foreign migrants in new cities. In exploring why immigrants gravitate towards cities Roger Waldinger and Jennifer Lee (2001) found that there are particular resources that draw them there. They find that immigration is a network-based phenomenon and that metropolitan areas offer the support, guidance, and resources of kin and friendship networks. Waldinger (2001) goes so far as to assert that “immigration is a quintessentially urban phenomenon” (p. 1). Immigration has remained a primarily urban phenomenon throughout its existence, but this is an area in which refugee and immigrant experiences diverge.

Refugees do not pick the place where they resettle; they are placed according to the will and volition of voluntary agencies. Audrey Singer and Jill Wilson (2006) note that resettlement patterns have shifted over the past two decades and that refugees are increasingly placed in smaller locations in the U.S. In these smaller communities refugees can have a considerable impact on the local population, especially if the percent of foreign-born population is low, as their presence is more apparent. Gordon De Jong and Quyng-Giang Tran (2010) note “the receptivity of nonmetropolitan Americans toward immigrants was decidedly cooler” (p. 2). It is
in this area of nonmetropolitan settlement that immigration research is lacking. Trends have shifted, but few have examined the social implications of these changes. Jeremy Hein (2006) is one of the few sociologists to have studied this matter. His study compared the experiences of refugees in small and large cities. He found that refugees in small cities experienced “small town hospitality and hate,” a situation in which many of the refugees’ neighbors extended a warm welcome, while others projected racist sentiments and hateful attitudes. In larger cities refugees had to carve out space for themselves in the “urban pecking order.” As they were the newest group of many immigrants, they had to work hard to make lives for themselves, just as the other groups had done before them. While Hein’s analysis is very relevant to this research, his focus is largely on identity, rather than successful economic and social adaptation.

Contributions of this Study

While many works in the immigration field inform this study, it proposes to fill two voids in the literature. First, this study examines the experiences of Bhutanese refugees. As a population that has recently immigrated to the United States, there are no scholarly works that examine their experiences. There are studies about refugees from Cuba, Iraq, Somalia, Sudan, Vietnam, and many other places. Many of these projects have produced findings that can be applied to the entire field of refugee studies, but each population must also be considered as a unique group. As refugees come from different nations, with different cultures, norms, and political systems, it is important to research them individually as well as a part of the aggregate refugee group. This study contributes to refugee studies by adding work on another specific population. In addition, few researchers have examined the experiences of refugees resettled in nonmetropolitan areas. As the economy, culture, and population composition vary significantly from place to place in the U.S., this is an important topic to understand. I hope to contribute
information to this field by determining what factors affect adaptation in a rural community. Also, by comparing Bhutanese refugees’ experiences across an urban and a rural location I will be able to determine if place is indeed a significant determinant of refugees’ resettlement experiences.
Research Methods

Variables of Interest

In order to produce reliable and usable results I have operationalized the concepts of “satisfaction” and “success.” To enhance my finding’s relativity to other research, I have drawn on the concepts of assimilation, social capital, and social networks, as explored in the literature review, to define these terms. I hope to emphasize that well-being is made up of the sum of these parts rather than just one static measure. I created a survey and an interview guide to measure variables associated with satisfaction and success. The variables I measured through both methods fall under four main umbrella categories: transition to life in the United States, access to resources in your community, social ties and community connections, and general satisfaction. Within each category there are several variables measured by specific questions.

Transition to Life in the United States

The transition category is meant to lead into the experiences of the interviewees. It allowed me the chance to become familiar with each of their individual stories. The first variable is background. Although my sample held many variables constant (ethnicity, years of residence, etc.), I wanted to test for differences at the outset of the interview. To measure background I asked:

- Can you tell me about what your life was like in Nepal?
- What did you do in the camp?
- How old were you when you moved there? Do you remember what that was like?

These questions gave me an idea of how similar or dissimilar my sample was in terms of the experiences they had prior to beginning their lives in the United States. I was able to gauge their
prior professional and educational experiences, access to resources, lifestyles, possible exposure to tragedy, and cultural norms from these questions.

The next variable I measured in the transition section was motivation. I was interested in motivation largely because of the nature of a refugee situation. The Bhutanese refugees never truly chose to leave Bhutan, much less to move to the United States. In 2002 a survey found that 80% of refugees still favored repatriation to Bhutan as the best solution to their situation (Laenkhholm, 2007). This preference could have an impact on how each person felt about moving and his or her transition to life in the U.S. I tested motivation by asking:

• Why did you want to move to the U.S.? How did you come to your decision?
• How did you feel about moving to the U.S.?

Each person’s motivation factors into his or her current experiences greatly. If refugees do not want to be here it is unlikely that they will try to build satisfying lives, as all they really desire is to return to their own country. By asking about how people came to the decision to move to the U.S. and how they felt about the decision I was able to understand how much they desired to be here and how committed they were to “making it work.”

The final variable measured in the transition section was challenges. This variable is related to the physical experience of transitioning between places and cultures. It is the first variable that may be affected by the urban / rural comparison. I was interested to investigate whether or not the Bhutanese faced similar problems as other immigrant populations and if those problems varied by location. To measure challenges I asked:

• Can you tell me about what your first few weeks were like in Laconia / Boston?
• What were some of the challenges or problems you faced?
• How have those changed over time?
By listening to the experiences each person identified and finding patterns among the interviews, I was able to distinguish the major challenges people faced in each place.

**Access to Resources in Your Community**

I measured the resources category with variables that reflected physical tools and their availability, as well as less tangible items that involved human interactions and local services. Because there are many variables in this section, each variable was measured by one question, with follow up questions asked when necessary. The variables include voluntary agency support, school support, transportation, food, luxury items, English language services, job availability and access, and finances. To gauge the level of voluntary agency support and school support I asked:

- Who helped you solve your initial challenges?
- How often did you see your caseworker? What kinds of things did they help with?
- Do your friends, siblings, or children go to school in the area? Do they like it? Have you met their teachers? What have those interactions been like?

By asking about the number, length, and quality of contact with these service providers I hoped to get an accurate measure of their importance to each person. For the more tangible items such as food, ESL services, and transportation I asked the interviewees about how they gained access to each service and the level of difficulty in accomplishing this task. Their use of such resources may “mark” the degree to which they have assimilated. The questions consisted of:

- How do you get places every day? Where do you go? Is it difficult?
- How do you go food shopping? Is the food similar to or different than the food you ate in Nepal? Was it difficult to find?
- Did you take any English classes in the U.S.? Were they helpful?
The luxury items variable measures each person’s access to resources beyond the basics need for subsistence. For this item I asked interviewees what kinds of things they liked to do in their free time and what kinds of appliances they had in their homes. By assessing these variables as a whole I was able to determine what each location had to offer in terms of the availability of resources.

*Social Ties and Community Connections*

The social ties and community connections questions were meant to measure the social network each person had established and the purpose that network served. As networks often ease transitions for immigrants arriving in the United States and facilitate their adaptation it was important for me to understand the depth and breadth of participants’ personal contacts and relationships. There were two variables I measured in terms of their social network: whom it consisted of and the strength of contact. I asked several questions to get a sense of the kinds of networks that existed in each place:

- Do you know other Bhutanese families in Laconia / Boston? How often do you see them?
- Do you have any non-Bhutanese friends? How often do you see each other?
- Do you feel like there is a strong Bhutanese community in Laconia / Boston?

Through these questions I was able to determine the members of a person’s network and the strength of the connections among the members. Next, I asked about how these networks and each individual person fit into the larger community in each area. I wanted to know how connected each person felt to the place and community they had been resettled in, to what degree they felt they had incorporated into the local society. To measure this I asked:

- Have you been to any community events?
- How do you feel about people in Laconia / Boston who you do not know?
• Have you had any negative experiences?

These questions, specifically the last question listed, also measure the degree of discrimination in each place. Although this study does not focus on the experience of discrimination, it is an important aspect of one’s satisfaction and success. By combining variables about one’s social network, larger society, and the degree of discrimination within that society I was able to deduce where interviewees felt like they fit best in society and with who they had made connections.

General Satisfaction

This final category was meant to measure more concretely each person’s level of satisfaction and success. The previous sections are composed of questions that often relate to well-being—life challenges, solutions, access to resources, and the quality and number of friends one has—however, they do not necessarily lead to a satisfying life. To deal with this issue I decided to ask directly about each person’s happiness. I asked each interviewee to rate on a scale of 1 to 10 how happy or satisfied he or she was with life in Laconia / Boston. I clarified my definition of happiness and success by saying, “1 would be the worst life you can imagine and a 10 would be the best life ever.” I also asked interviewees to clarify why they picked the number that they did. Following this question I asked about several related concepts:

• Do you ever think about moving somewhere else?
• Would you ever go back to Bhutan or Nepal?
• Do you know people who have been resettled in other parts of the U.S.? How have their experiences been similar or different?

By getting a sense of how attached the respondents were to the place in which they had been resettled I was better able to understand how satisfied they were. Also, by asking them to compare their experiences to others’, I could indirectly measure their perceptions of their relative
satisfaction or success as compared to their peers. These are the variables that I intended to measure as I began my research. As my interviews were semi-structured, I did not ask every question in every interview, however I was able to maintain a relatively consistent structure during the interviews. For the full interview guide and survey refer to Appendix A and Appendix B, respectively.

**Sampling**

As I designed this study I intended to build a sample composed of twenty adult Bhutanese men and women. I hoped to complete ten interviews in each location. I laid out several criteria interviewees had to fulfill in order to participate. First, interviewees had to be relatively fluent in English. I do not speak Nepali and I felt that using a translator for an in-depth interview about a person’s feelings and experiences was inappropriate. I feared that using a translator would allow for misunderstandings or make interviewees uncomfortable, as it would introduce a new level of formality. The second criteria interviewees had to meet was that they were responsible for contributing to household welfare. This terminology is intentionally vague, as I wanted potential participants to interpret the meaning of the phrase in their own ways. While I was interested in peoples’ experiences in the labor market I did not want to limit participants to only those who were employed. The final criterion was that participants had to have lived in the United States for at least six months before the interview took place. The questions I asked in the interview and survey required that participants have a significant amount of experiences with resources in the U.S. I felt it would take at least six months for a person to become acquainted with the resources and processes I asked about.

While I believe that my findings can generalize to other refugees’ experiences, I felt it was important to limit my sample to one ethnic group in particular. As Jeremy Hein (2006)
found in his study comparing the experiences of Hmong and Cambodian refugees, an immigrant’s ethnic origin—in this case, that is being Hmong or Cambodian—is one of the most important determinants of racial and ethnic adaptation. He explained that culture, consisting of religion and kinship norms, patterns of nation state formation, and past experiences with political cleavage affect how immigrants experience the United States. For this reason I decided to limit my relatively small sample to one ethnic group. I chose Bhutanese refugees specifically for several reasons. First, I was familiar with the population through volunteer work. In addition, the time frame of the Bhutanese refugees’ arrival in the United States fit my research design, as I hoped to ask people about their transition experiences. As all Bhutanese refugees have moved to the U.S. within the last three years, I could be sure that transition experiences were still fresh in their minds. The final reason I chose to interview Bhutanese refugees was because of the variety of resettlement locations in which they have been placed. There are Bhutanese people resettled throughout the U.S. They are everywhere from New York City to North Dakota, thus my findings in two specific locations may generalize to the experiences of peers in different rural and urban locations throughout the country.

Although I used non-probability snowball samples in both locations, my sampling methods differed slightly between Boston and Laconia. In Laconia I worked closely with Evelyn, a very involved volunteer whose role in the Bhutanese community is discussed further in the data analysis section. I contacted her early in the year to ask for information about the Bhutanese population in Laconia and for guidance in reaching participants. She agreed to help and ended up scheduling most of the interviews. As she was acquainted with all 150 members of the community, she was able to identify respondents who spoke English. In addition, she tried to find people who had a variety of experiences. She specifically introduced me to both people who
she thought were and were not leaders among the Bhutanese community. In Boston my method was a more thorough snowball sampling. I had volunteered as an English as a Second Language (ESL) tutor for Catholic Charities during my first semester for one Bhutanese woman in particular. Through this work I became acquainted with a few other members of the community. I contacted a Bhutanese caseworker I had met through tutoring to begin the research process. He agreed to participate. At the end of the interview I asked him for a list of names of other Bhutanese people he thought would be interested in participating. He gave me a list of eight names and numbers. In addition, one Laconia respondent gave me several names and numbers of friends he had in the Boston area. I cold-called the people on both of the lists, described my study, and asked people to participate. At each subsequent interview I asked participants for the names and numbers of friends and relatives they thought would be interested in speaking with me. In each location I offered participants ten dollars compensation for taking time to do the interview. I hoped that this would give people an incentive to speak with me. Through the research process I realized that the compensation was hardly necessary. Participants were interested in the interviews purely to share their experiences with me. Many interviewees tried to refuse the compensation all together. The majority of the people I contacted were eager to participate in the study and I experienced little difficulty achieving my goal sample size.

Data Collection

Each research session was composed of two parts, an in-depth, semi-structured interview and a written survey. Several reasons justify my choice to use each of these tools. In-depth interviews allow researchers to gain information on a focused topic from an individual’s unique perspective. It presents an opportunity for the researcher to learn about life from the perspective, experience, and language of those living it (Hess-Biber & Leavy, 2006, p. 128). This was
especially important for this research, as I was interested in people's own opinions of their well-being, satisfaction, and success. The semi-structured form was important because I had identified several specific concepts I wished to inquire about during the interviews. While I used these concepts to develop an interview guide (see Appendix A), the semi-structured form allowed for knowledge that I did not think of in advance to influence the course of the conversations I had with interviewees (Hess-Biber & Leavy, 2006). When respondents brought up novel or unique points, I was able to probe for further information. In addition to the interviews I chose to give respondents a survey to complete at the end of each session. The questions on the survey were similar to those asked during the interviews, but the advantage of using a survey was that I was able to obtain information about specific characteristics, behaviors, and beliefs using the same measures for each respondent (Neuman, 2007, p. 247).

The collection process proceeded similarly for each of the interviews. I set up appointment times and meeting locations with interviewees a few days in advance. In Laconia I drove to each of the respondents’ homes to conduct the research sessions. In Boston I met three participants at coffee shops, one participant at a resettlement agency office, one participant at his place of work, and I went to five peoples’ homes. By allowing the interviewees to pick the location in which we met, I hoped to facilitate a high level of comfort during the research process. Upon our meeting I introduced myself and again explained the intention of my study and the kinds of questions I would be asking. I gave each participant a copy of the informed consent form and asked him if he would like to read it alone or to go over it together. After answering any questions they had about the interview and the informed consent form I asked if it was okay to record the session and proceeded to begin asking the questions on my interview guide. As the semi-structured form of my interviews allowed for deviation from the guide, I
pursued additional questioning when I thought it would provide important information for my research. In general, I stuck closely to the interview guide. On average it took thirty to forty minutes to complete each interview. After the interviews were complete, I turned off the recorder and asked participants if they would like to do the survey alone or together. I realized soon after I began the interview process that some people had difficulty understanding the survey questions. By offering to do it together I was able to rephrase questions when participants were confused about the original wording. About half of the surveys were completed through a mutual process of my reading the questions and potential answers and the respondent selecting his or her individual answer. The other half of respondents completed the surveys on their own, asking clarifying questions when they felt it necessary. At the close of the sessions I often stayed and chatted with the respondent and his or her family, as almost every person offered me tea and food. If I acquired additional information from these post-recorded conversations, I noted it immediately after leaving the interviewee. Also at the close of the session I gave each participant an envelope labeled “Thank You!” with ten dollars cash inside. This procedure developed through experience. The first two interviewees were very reluctant to take ten-dollar bills from me. By putting the money in envelopes I tried to make the process more formal. However, many participants were still hesitant to accept compensation. In total, I was able to convince all but one participant to take the compensation. Before leaving each session I thanked respondents and reminded them of where my email address and phone number were on the informed consent form and told them to contact me if they had any questions or if they thought of anything else they wanted to tell me. Almost every participant thanked me profusely for coming to speak with them and wished me luck in the completion of my research.
**Data Analysis**

Qualitative data analysis is often an iterative process (Hess-Biber & Leavy, 2006). As I was still conducting my interviews and collecting data, I started to recognize and note patterns and themes to include in the analysis. The process I used to analyze the data I collected was a variation of the steps laid out by Sharlene Nagy Hess-Biber and Patricia Leavy (2006) in *The Practice of Qualitative Research*. The steps are: data preparation, data exploration, specification/reduction of data, and interpretation (Hess-Biber & Leavy, 2006, p. 358). To prepare my data I transcribed the interviews after each session by playing back my recording of the interview. I tried to transcribe no more than three or four days after the interview took place in order to keep the interviewee’s responses fresh in my mind. I listened to each full interview twice in order to adequately transcribe participants’ responses. During the data exploration phase I read and reread the transcripts and started to acknowledge patterns among interviewees’ responses. This particular phase was a bit overwhelming as most transcripts were around six pages in length. I decided to move into a “data reduction” phase relatively soon after producing and exploring all of the transcripts. In order to “reduce” my data I first made a list of all of the variables outlined in the “variables of interest” section and added an “important, but doesn’t fit elsewhere” section. I then went through each of the interviews and made a second document in which I broke down the transcripts according to this list. I cut and paste the most important quotes from each interview into this second document. My “data reduction” phase occurred simultaneously with the coding phase of my analysis—as I broke down the information into variables, I also cut out unnecessary and unimportant data. After getting each of the interviews in this more manageable pared-down form, I again read and reread. At that point I entered into the interpretation stage during which I outlined the most important topics, searched for supporting quotes, and wrote up
the data analysis. While I was attentive to the variables that I had initially proposed, I ultimately let the data speak for itself, and only included information on the variables that appeared most relevant to the interviewees’ experiences. As I progressed through this final stage the original outlines repeatedly changed as I continued to read the pared-down interviews and discover additional themes.

Analyzing the survey data also factored into my overall data analysis. My ultimate intention in using both an interview and a survey was to be able to triangulate the data I received. By focusing on the points where these independent measures converged I hoped to minimize error in my research (Gray, Williamson, Karp & Dalphin, 2007, p. 75). Following from this purpose and my small sample size, I utilized the survey data only for descriptive counts. As I had only ten participants in each place, any statistical analysis would not be significant. At the completion of the research sessions I tallied each of the participants’ responses and averaged numbers where appropriate. The survey data is included throughout the data analysis section specifically as supporting evidence to the information I received during interviews. A full description of the survey data collected is included in Appendix D.

**Issues of Positionality and Validity**

This section focuses on issues concerning the validity of my methodological design and subsequent research findings. The first issue of concern was the sample size. My sample of twenty-one people in two locations is not necessarily statistically significant. However, because there were only about 150 Bhutanese people in each location, I did interview roughly 7% of each population. While the actual number of interviewees was small, the portion of community members I spoke with was more substantial. In addition, it is common for qualitative researchers...
to focus on a small sample, trying to understand how those respondents illuminate social life, rather than rely on a large, totally representative sample (Neuman, 2000, p. 196).

The second validity concern regarded my sampling method. There were several issues with my sampling method. In Laconia, most of the participants were hand-selected by Evelyn, thus it was a completely non-random sample. Evelyn also came with me to each interview, introduced me to the interviewee, and then left. In the respondents’ minds I was directly associated with Evelyn. Participants might have said more positive things about the volunteers in Laconia, or simply refrained from adding negative comments because of this association. In Boston I interviewed the woman I had tutored during the previous semester. As I was having a difficult time finding female participants, I ultimately decided it was best for my study to interview her. My familiarity with her and her family may have helped or hindered the interview process; she may have been willing to share more information with me because she felt comfortable, or she may have felt embarrassed to answer the questions I asked. In addition, one man I interviewed in Boston had originally been resettled in Spokane, Washington, thus Boston was his secondary resettlement location. Because he was my initial point of contact with the community, and I was unaware of his move before interviewing him, I could not exclude him from my sample. To prevent error I asked him to specifically focus on his transition in Boston, rather than in Spokane. The more general issues regarding my sampling method were the weaknesses of the snowball method. Snowball sampling allows the researcher to control the kind of sample they refer, as well as for participants to actually act as research assistants by referring specific people for following interviews (Biernacki and Waldorf, 1981). These issues are similar to the sample size issues, as this is a small, non-random sample.
The third issue, English fluency and comprehension, emerged through the research process whereas the previous two weaknesses were built into the design of the study. As I progressed through the interviews I realized that respondents had varying levels of English ability. Furthermore, some of my questions, especially on the survey, were stated at too high of a reading level. There were a few instances in which I was certain the interviewee did not fully understand what I was asking. Therefore, misunderstanding between the interviewee and the interviewer created a third validity concern. To counter the possible negative effects of this problem I often reworded questions if someone did not understand or clarified my questions with examples. When giving examples I was careful to give several different options and to refrain from attaching value to any single response. For example, when I asked, “How did you feel about people you do not know in Laconia / Boston?” I would often change the question to “When you go to the store or on the train, how do people act?” and further clarify with “are they helpful? Mean? Friendly? Or do they ignore you?” In this way I tried to minimize miscommunications between interviewees and myself. The final issue regarding the validity of my study has to do with my positionality as a researcher.

As a young, white, female, American, college student I was about as different from the participants as one could be. Being an “outsider” as a researcher can pose significant threats to the validity of one’s findings (Hess-Biber & Leavy, 2006). Respondents may have withheld information during interviews because they did not think that I was qualified, because they did not want to say something negative about the United States to an American, or because they simply did not identify with me. In Lisa Dodson and Leah Schmalzbauer’s (2005) study on poor mothers and their “habits of hiding” one respondent stated “No one is going to tell you, an American, that there are problems with your country…they won’t attack the system” (p. 952).
This concept and the subsequent “habits of hiding” that people engage in threatened the validity of my data. In order to counter the possible negative effects associated with my positionality, I both tried to move to an insider position and engaged in reflexivity. The process of reflexivity allowed me to recognize and examine how my background influenced the research process (Hess-Biber & Leavy, 2006). I made it a point to note in the data analysis when I thought that my positionality might have affected the outcome of certain questions or themes. In addition, I worked to make myself more of an insider. As mentioned previously, I volunteered as an ESL tutor for a Bhutanese woman during the fall semester. My intention was to make myself a familiar face within the Bhutanese community. While I did not meet too many members of the Bhutanese community during this time, I was able to meet enough neighbors, friends, and caseworkers to establish my first interviews in the community. In Laconia it was more challenging to make myself an insider because I do not live there full time. However, during my Thanksgiving break I spent a day with Evelyn going to various Bhutanese people’s homes to distribute prescription medicine discount cards. I did not have any sustained interactions on this trip, but I was at least able to meet a few members of the Bhutanese community in Laconia before beginning the interview process a month later. While sample size, sampling method, English fluency and communication, and positionality are important concerns to the validity of my study, I do not believe that they were grave enough to compromise the authenticity of my findings.
Sample Locations

The premise of this study was to compare Bhutanese refugees’ lifestyles in urban and rural places. To achieve this end I conducted interviews in two specific locations. The rural interviews were conducted with people resettled in Laconia, New Hampshire. The urban interviews were conducted with residents of Chelsea and Lynn, Massachusetts, two cities in the Greater Boston metropolitan area. In the following sections I offer demographic, economic, and environmental descriptions of each of these locations in order to provide a context for understanding the kinds of places in which the interviews took place. The descriptions also serve to enhance the generalizability of this study, as the qualities that exist in these specific urban and rural locations relate closely to conditions in many other towns and cities in the United States. The following narratives are composed of subjective, descriptive information from personal observations as well as objective figures gathered primarily from U.S. census data. As 2010 census data has not been released in its entirety, I used estimated figures from the American Community Survey (a partner of the census), which based its estimates on data collected between 2005 and 2009.

Laconia, New Hampshire

Laconia has a population of just 17,080. It is technically a city because of its mayoral-council and city manager system of governance, however it maintains a small-town atmosphere. Laconia is located on the shores of three major lakes—Lake Winnipesaukee, Lake Winnisquam, and Lake Opeechee—and in the midst of the White Mountains. Residents and tourists alike partake in outdoor sports in the summer and winter months. There is a small downtown area, one major grocery store, a hospital, several schools, professional offices, and a few hotels and restaurants sprinkled throughout the neighborhoods of the city. The landscape is mostly forested,
save for a few commercially developed areas. Although residents are primarily of French, French-Canadian, and Irish decent, over half of Laconians were born in the state, and only 4.6% of the city’s population is foreign born. Furthermore, the city’s population is 95.4% white—well above the national average of 75.1%. In accordance with the small number of foreign-born residents, 91.7% of inhabitants speak only English at home. Clearly, Laconia lacks ethnic-linguistic diversity as compared to the rest of the United States. Walking on the streets, shopping in stores, and sitting at sporting events the vast majority of people are white and speak English only. In terms of economic status, the median household income is about $47,000, falling slightly below the national average of $51,000. The average weekly wage is $763. With a 6.9% unemployment rate and many low-wage service positions available, 9.8% of families in Laconia live below the poverty level. However, most residents are home and vehicle owners. About 40% of people rent homes, with the median rent costing $790 per month. Vehicle ownership is much higher, as the public transportation system is very limited (it consists of one or two buses that stop at ten designated stops, three times a day). The crime rate in Laconia is relatively low. In 2009, 63 violent crimes and 703 property crimes came to the attention of local officials (Federal Bureau of Investigation [FBI], 2009). Since 2008 about 150 Bhutanese people have moved to this small, culturally homogeneous city, increasing its foreign-born population by just over 25%.

**Chelsea and Lynn, Massachusetts**

Although Chelsea and Lynn are separate cities, each with its own unique qualities, I group them together for the purpose of this study, as they are both racially diverse, lower-income cities in the Boston metropolitan area. During the past several decades it has become increasingly expensive to live within city limits in most regions of the U.S. Subsequently, lower-income residents, historically the residents of the inner city have been pushed to the outer corners
of the United States’ metropolitan areas. Chelsea and Lynn are located on commuter lines, just past the last stops of the subway system. Multiple bus routes provide residents with transportation to and from downtown Boston as well as within their respective cities. Lynn is significantly larger than Laconia with 87,196 residents, while Chelsea is a bit smaller, just over double the size of Laconia, with 36,166 residents. Both cities host downtown areas, shopping plazas, homes, apartment buildings, restaurants, offices, factories, hospitals, and schools. Their populations are visibly more diverse, as 61.2% of Lynn’s population is white and 58.4% of Chelsea’s population is white (both well below the national average). As the second most present ethnic group is Hispanic/ Latino, many billboards and signs are in Spanish. The cities host a plethora of people from other cultural backgrounds as well. Lynn and Chelsea’s respective percentages of foreign-born residents are 27.4% and 38%. Standing at a bus stop one can hear a number of languages spoken. Upwards of 38% of Lynn’s residents and 64.1% of Chelsea’s residents speak a language other than English at home. Economically, residents are generally of lower socioeconomic status as both cities’ median household incomes were lower than the national average and lower than the Laconia residents’. The median household income of Lynn residents is $41,933, while Chelsea’s is even lower at $39,710. These lower incomes coupled with higher costs (median rent was around $900 in both places) and unemployment rates close to 10% result in higher levels of poverty. In Lynn 15.1% of families live below the poverty level while 19.4% of Chelsea’s families do the same. The crime rates in Chelsea and Lynn are distinctly higher than in Laconia. In 2009 there were 663 violent crimes and 1,532 property crimes in Chelsea, and 819 violent crimes and 2,884 property crimes in Lynn (FBI, 2009). Even given the population differentials these differences are significant—Chelsea’s population is about two times the size of Laconia’s, yet its violent crime rate was ten times greater. Comparing
Chelsea and Lynn with other Boston suburbs helps to contextualize their crime rates. Cambridge is a city with a population around 100,000 and is less than a twenty-minute car drive away from Chelsea and Lynn. It only had 497 violent crimes in 2009 (FBI, 2009). In 2008 Bhutanese families began to join the ranks of these ethnically diverse, high-crime, urban centers. To date there are about ten Bhutanese families that live in Chelsea and 130 Bhutanese people that live in Lynn.
Sample Population Characteristics

By the conclusion of the research process I interviewed twenty-one people. I interviewed seven males and three females in Laconia and eight males and two females in Boston. While I had hoped for a more even male / female distribution the nature of my sampling method provided an unbalanced turnout. As the Bhutanese culture is traditionally paternalistic males are often the most prominent figures in the family. Males tended to recommend other males, and females were shyer in talking with me. Despite the male skew in actual interviewees, I did acquire additional female input. As the interviews mainly took place in peoples homes, other family members often gave their input on my questions. On numerous occasions individual interviews turned into family interviews. While I remained astute to the individual’s perspective, I noted their friends and relatives opinions. In the data analysis I refer to participants’ spouses or friends on several occasions.

There was also uniformity in the age of participants. The average age of interviewees in Boston was 28.9 and in Laconia it was 27.6. Their respective ranges were 24 – 43 and 18 – 39. The sample tended to have a younger skew because of the English language requirement. The older generation of Bhutanese refugees did not learn English in Bhutan or in the camps, as their children did, thus I was limited to speaking to the 20-year-old / 30-year-old generation. In both cities seven interviewees were married and the rest were single. The vast majority of married participants had one or two children—no one in the sample had more than two children. Participants most often lived in homes with their extended families, usually the husband’s parents and siblings. On average my sample consisted of mostly married men in their late twenties, having one or two children, and living with their extended families. For graphical representations of additional demographic data see Appendix C.
Data Analysis

In conducting interviews with Bhutanese people my main objective was to discover the differences in experience according to place—ultimately to deduce whether one place was significantly better to live than the other. In addition, I sought to give voice to the Bhutanese population in general, as they are a relatively new population in the United States and they can offer valuable feedback about the resettlement process and government programs that greatly impact their lives in the United States. The data I collected presents a picture that follows from these objectives. There were several clear differences in experiences that were evident from the data. I also found that participants had many similarities in experiences, whether resettled in small town Laconia or metropolitan Boston. Similarities and patterns of response emerged especially in regard to questions about their backgrounds, initial challenges, and current level of satisfaction. Each place, Boston or Laconia, had advantages and disadvantages. Bhutanese people in Boston or Laconia experienced tradeoffs among resources, social networks, and community connections based upon their location. In order to provide an idea of the discussion to come, I first present descriptions of two respondents that represent the archetypal experience of each place.

Lalit lives in Laconia with his two children, wife, and parents. His brother-in-law and his family live in the house next-door. Lalit is in his mid-thirties and worked as a teacher and then as a security guard during his time in the refugee camp. He was nineteen when he left Bhutan. Since moving to the United States in 2008 he has moved to a new house, gotten his license, and purchased a car, but has only been employed in temporary positions. He spent one summer working as a busser at a restaurant and a winter shoveling snow. He complained of the idle feelings that come with being unemployed and told me that his family was “just making it”
financially, as his son worked part time at McDonalds and his wife worked part-time at a nursing home. He emphasized what a beautiful place Laconia was and expressed dismay about the possibility of leaving to find better work. His home served as a hub for Bhutanese family and friends passing by as well as a favorite spot of a Laconia Library employee and her husband, who had befriended him when they volunteered to teach him how to drive. He complained only briefly about his neighbors across the street who slashed his car tires and yelled things outside of his house. We finished our meeting by talking about the difference between Democrats and Republicans, as Lalit told me how much he loved to listen to National Public Radio and to hear President Obama give speeches.

Abhi lives in Lynn in a basement apartment with his wife and two children. He graduated from Delhi University in Bhutan and taught social studies in his refugee camp and in private Nepalese schools. He works full time at a hotel in downtown Boston, while his wife has a part-time job as a school bus attendant. They both take public transportation to work every day, his journey taking a little over an hour. He told me that he was surprised that people on the bus usually read or sleep. He started to bring books to read during his travels too, specifically a large Jane Austen novel, but ultimately decided that it was too heavy to carry back-and-forth every day. Although he briefly tried to adopt this American norm, he noted that he thought it made everyone feel isolated. In Lynn he felt he was completely cut off from “the bureaucrats” and said, “There needs to be a bridge between the administration and the newly resettled refugees. There needs to be orientation to the fire department, the police, from the city council.” He told me that because Lynn was a dangerous place, he was hesitant to interact with strangers. Instead, he maintained strong connections with other Bhutanese families in the area, visiting them often, especially if any sort of problem arose. He told me of the difficulties he had during his initial
transition, especially in trying to figure out how to get fuel assistance and mentioned that it took him two weeks of work just to pay the rent each month. His children were both on the honor role, but he said they would rather watch movies or TV than read the books in his collection. While he acknowledged his struggles he said that he was happy he had decided to move to the United States and looked forward to the day that he could apply for citizenship.

In the following sections I further explore the Bhutanese refugees’ urban and rural experiences. I begin with the findings that are distinct between the two places. My descriptions attempt to create a comprehensive understanding of the significant aspects of life in each place. I use the variables developed in the methods section to gauge similarities and differences, as well as any subjects of interest that emerged naturally through the research process. Following the examination of each place I detail the important similarities in experiences of the participants. Through this analysis I am able to assess the pros and cons of resettlement in urban and rural locations, the levels of integration, and subsequent levels of satisfaction and success.

**LACONIA: THE RURAL EXPERIENCE**

**Social Network, Community Connections, and Social Capital**

*Voluntary Support*

I found mixed reviews of the level of support provided by caseworkers from Laconia participants. About half identified their caseworkers as useful resources in resolving their initial problems and challenges, while the other half did not think that their caseworkers offered any services of value. Most of those who thought that their caseworkers had been helpful mentioned receiving help in official matters such as transportation from the airport, getting help figuring out their social security, or receiving their monthly payments:

Lutheran Social Services they helped for us providing cash assistance, food stamps, teaching us to do this and that. – Hari Prasad, Male, Laconia
Lutheran Social Services helped take us shopping, to apply for social security and food stamp programs. They help by giving rides. They helped with the first medical appointment. We saw them for five months sometimes once a week sometimes twice a week. – Hari Maya, Female, Laconia

[My] caseworker helped in the beginning. They used to come and talk about how you’re doing. They helped us apply for social security and they took us to the food stamp office. – Lalit, Male, Laconia

However, other interview participants thought that the caseworker’s help had been minimal, or that their caseworker had not been helpful at all. They reasoned that their caseworkers were far away (in Concord, about a thirty minute drive) and that they had many other cases to deal with. One interviewee had heard from friends in other parts of the United States that their caseworkers had been much more helpful throughout the resettlement process, which provided him with a basis for measuring the helpfulness of his own caseworker:

Caseworker didn’t help much. I heard this kind of thing from other state, that case worker will help them, like put in job... They brought us here and took us to the social security office, but after that they didn’t come at all. – Gopal, Male, Laconia

But we didn’t get much help from them [caseworkers]. They didn’t help very much. I saw a caseworker once. They brought me from Manchester [airport] to Concord, but then my own relative brought me to Laconia. – Narayan, Male, Laconia

When I asked interviewees who had helped them with the issues they had encountered since moving to Laconia the conversations shifted from talking about voluntary agencies to discussing community volunteers:

In the context of Laconia it’s not Lutheran Social Services. They are doing good from their side, but that’s not enough. Volunteers in Laconia make a big difference. – Ram Lal, Male, Laconia

I can give a lot of thanks to our volunteers rather than to our caseworkers. They are few in number so they didn’t give much time to us. They didn’t help us to find any jobs here. Peggy and Evelyn would give us rides to apply for jobs. – Dhan Bhadur, Male, Laconia
Evelyn and Peggy, mentioned in the above quotation, are both official volunteers of Lutheran Social Services, the only agency that resettles Bhutanese people in Laconia. Evelyn and Peggy have gone far beyond the duties of average volunteers. Evelyn serves as the chairperson of the Laconia Refugee Connections Committee, an organization she helped to start with the mayor. The committee aims to ensure the successful resettlement of refugees in Laconia. Peggy essentially serves as a liaison between the refugees and the local medical facilities. While Evelyn and Peggy are indeed official volunteers of the voluntary agency a respondent named Gopal explained to me “Evelyn and Peggy are volunteers of Lutheran Social Services, but they are not the real people of Lutheran Social Services.” Their actions are sanctioned by the voluntary agency, but their help extends beyond what is required, as well as beyond the eight-month resettlement timeline.

*Out-group Network*

Evelyn and Peggy are largely responsible for why the Laconia network is significantly more outwardly connected than the Boston network. As a professional diversity consultant, Evelyn was highly aware of race and ethnicity dynamics within communities. She said there were two options for Laconia upon the arrival of the Bhutanese: integrate or polarize. She promoted integration by getting as many local people involved with the Bhutanese as possible. When each new family moves to Laconia Evelyn and the police chief go to their home to introduce themselves. The fire department brought a group of Bhutanese people to the station to acquaint them with emergency response services. Groups like Kiwanis, Head Start, the hospital, and local leadership teams have asked refugees to come speak to them about his or her experiences. In addition, Evelyn and Peggy have organized a base of volunteers that take individual families to get groceries once a week, teach people how to drive, or serve as English
as a Second Language (ESL) tutors. On the survey ten out of eleven interviewees listed “volunteer” as the first most helpful person during the resettlement process. Every single interviewee mentioned receiving help from volunteers, especially Peggy and Evelyn, in some capacity:

Lisa Smith, a schoolteacher, helped me to do the driving classes. She worked very hard with me. She used to come every day after school and take me places to drive. – Ram Lal, Male, Laconia

A lot of volunteers [help], Peggy and Evelyn, help us a lot. Peggy helps when someone is sick and has prescription to fill out. Evelyn help with job placement. She looks for who comes new, she helps bringing TVs and clothes, things like that. – Hari Prasad, Male, Laconia

Volunteers take us to get groceries. They help us with everything. They ask if we have everything. If we don’t have boot and pant and clothes, we tell them and they buy for us, they give us everything. They teach me all kinds of things. – Tila Rupa, Female, Laconia

Evelyn and Peggy help so much they are like our godparents. They help our relatives who don’t know English. They help any time, day or night. – Gopal’s Wife, Laconia

At the beginning it was cold so we had a lot of health problem. We didn’t need insurance in Nepal so we didn’t have that idea either. Volunteers teach us. It was mostly Evelyn and Peggy. We have family volunteer too. They bring us to get groceries and rides to some appointments. – Geeta, Female, Laconia

The volunteers’ support had not gone unnoticed, as many of the participants expressed gratitude and “thanks to god” for the volunteers that had helped them. One story in particular represents both the dedication of the volunteers in Laconia and the appreciation on behalf of the Bhutanese. Ram Lal is a young man in his twenties who moved to Laconia with his two older parents. While discussing how he found a job he told me this story:

I still remember Evelyn taking me to work. I was working in summer 2009. Every night she used to take me to work (because I did not have a license at that time) at 11 or 12 at night and pick me back up at 7 or 730 [in the morning]. She did that for six months. I cannot forget that in my life.
While the volunteers were friends that respondents spent time with, several stories emerged in which locals became friends or supporters through more informal connections. Many of these stories centered on learning to drive or simply getting a ride from a stranger. As there is almost no public transportation in Laconia new refugees must get rides everywhere or walk to their desired destination. Walking makes them even more visible to the community. Thus it appears local people have stopped on the road to pick people up, help an acquaintance learn to drive, or to aid them in navigating the process of buying a car:

A European man that lives on Lyndon Lane taught me to drive. At first when we come here, he have car and we have no car. He would pick us up and bring here, sometimes we have to go to store and our volunteer is busy, we called him and he would take us. – Hari Prasad, Male, Laconia

A friend who owns a grocery store helped me to buy a car. I don’t know what kind of car is good, I know Toyota, and I have driven motorbike, but I have never driven a car. He said buy this one, it’s good. – Ram Lal, Male, Laconia

An American man my mom knows came over our home. I said I am refugee I don’t have anything, can you teach me how to drive? He came for 15 days to teach me how to drive. How did she meet him? My mom was walking from ESL class and he was in the road and he gave her ride because it was so hot. Then he came to our home and also he help me. – Tila Rupa, Female, Laconia

The result of this network, including volunteers and locals, is a high percentage of drivers in the Bhutanese community. Seven out of eleven of the interviewees had a car and a license, while two others had drivers that lived in their immediate homes. The acquisition of driving skills, licenses, and cars demonstrates a way in which the network facilitates social capital resources.

Driving provided a common ground for developing out-group ties for some respondents, but three interviewees developed connections in other ways. Two interviewees were still in high
school and had many American friends at school, and one family in particular had developed a very close relationship with their American-born neighbor:

If I am doing homework they [American friends] ask me for help, they can also help me, then we make friends and talk with each other. If I saw them I talk with them and they talk with me. – *Tila Rupa, Female, Laconia*

We have a very good relationship with our neighbor, Jane. In the morning my wife has to go to school, it is fifteen minutes walk but Jane will bring her. [In the afternoon] my wife’s friend [another American friend] brings her home from school. – *Gopal, Male, Laconia*

During the interviews discussions about respondents’ interactions with members of the out-group almost always centered on tangible resources. Volunteers, neighbors, peers, and strangers served as a resource by providing access to transportation, food, employment, and ESL classes. Thus, while caseworker support reviews were mixed in Laconia, the “official” and “unofficial” volunteers in the community filled the “who helped” void. In considering the quality, length, and number of volunteer contacts to measure the strength of this resource, an aspect of social capital, I believe that it can be deemed a “very strong” resource in Laconia. As discussed in the literature review, researchers have found several functions of out-group (extra-familial) ties. Using Patricia Fernandez Kelly’s (1995) terminology, the Laconia social network would be classified as having a high degree of multiplexity—many connections among people of various social statuses. This multiplexity can lead to a change in a population’s reference group, especially in the areas of employment and health (Roberts & Starr, 1989). This finding is supported in my research as the interviewees often utilized their out-group connections in seeking medical attention, employment, and driving skills. Whether by strategy or accident, community familiarity with the Bhutanese in Laconia has led to out-group connections that facilitate access to resources.
In-group Network

The Bhutanese in Laconia also had strong in-group connections. The majority (eight out of eleven) of participants said that they knew “everyone” when I asked about other Bhutanese families in Laconia. This is a remarkable feat, given that there are 35 families and about 150 Bhutanese people spread all over the city. In addition, though there are several extended family clans, most of the Bhutanese people did not know one another prior to immigrating to the U.S. Despite these hindrances they have developed a supportive community, as is typical of their culture. These in-group connections served a different function than the out-group connections, which were extremely resource oriented. The in-group network was important in celebrating life rituals, especially in continuing to practice Bhutanese culture and traditions. There were instances in which the Bhutanese in Laconia helped each other with resources, but the in-group was exclusively responsible for aiding in celebration and mourning. For example, when I asked about what kinds of things the Bhutanese helped each other with respondents mentioned attending weddings and birthday parties, visiting sick friends, and mourning the loss of community members:

We get together sometimes; we would have cultural celebrations together. Whenever we have some trouble we share each other. We help each other. I did not know anyone, but now I know everyone. I go to some peoples houses but sometimes we just meet somewhere for some occasion. – Narayan, Male, Laconia

In Laconia Bhutanese people cooperate. They help one another when they get trouble. Marriage, that is quite high level, or if someone dies. – Ritesh, Male, Laconia

Sometimes families come to visit, sometimes we go to visit them. Sometimes we go to say hello in our free time and just to have a talk. Other times we go to wedding ceremonies or birthday parties. Or if people are sick we go to visit them. – Hari Maya, Female, Laconia
We can help at any time. Like when there is a marriage, people bring things and help cook. Any type of ceremony or festival people collect things. – Gopal, Male, Laconia

We have a community form in Laconia. We have meetings to decide about programs. Especially during the festivals and if somebody dies we have the community to help. – Lalit, Male, Laconia

Volunteers like Evelyn and Peggy, who have become an integral part of the Bhutanese community, are sometimes invited to join in such traditional celebrations; however these practices remain specific to the in-group. While a strong community presence has allowed the Bhutanese to form extensive out-group connections, they have maintained their in-group connections by providing one another with an intangible means of preserving cultural traditions.

Community Fit: “Small town hospitality and hate”

After asking each person about his or her social network, I tried to figure out where this network fit in the larger community. In order to accomplish this I asked how interviewees felt about the larger community, about strangers in the store or on the street. I wanted to know how people who were unconnected to the Bhutanese acted towards them. On the survey the vast majority of respondents chose that people in the community were either pleasant or courteous, or extremely friendly (eight selected the first response, four selected the second—some respondents chose more than one response). The responses to the oral question were relatively brief; most people again confirmed that community members were kind or friendly:

Most people are helpful and good. – Ram Lal, Male, Laconia

People here are friendly. – Hari Prasad, Male, Laconia

They are friendly, they are not mean. I like them. They help us, they suggest things to do that will help us. I like that way. – Geeta, Female, Laconia

Most of the people are friendly, I can say this. Each and every place has good people and bad people. I can tell that most of the people are good for us. – Lalit, Male, Laconia
Next, I asked interviewees if they had had any negative or bad experiences, or if they had heard about anything happening to their friends. On the survey nine respondents said they had never been discriminated against, two were unsure, and no one selected the affirmative. However, when I asked about negative experiences in the interviews several stories emerged. Their stories involved possible discriminatory acts centered on vandalism and verbal abuse:

One of my friends had a bad experience, but nothing has happened to me. My friend that lives by LRGH, someone broke his car windows at night about a month ago. And someone [was] flattening the tire. They don’t know who did it. – Ram Lal, Male, Laconia

I have found that most people talk in a friendly way, we cannot say all of them. Sometimes when people are walking on the street, they tease. But those are not that miserable. – Hari Maya, Female, Laconia

I have not had any bad experiences. One bad experience does not go far. There is a family that used to live across the street. We didn’t have a good relation. They were awful; they were not good to us. They slashed our cars tires, they took at the car logo, [and] they yell at night and shout in the road while they drink beer. We told the police and they started coming. I don’t think they live there now. – Lalit, Male, Laconia

But we had an incident in my house. We were about to sleep, it was 9 o’clock, and some people came in a car and hit the glass and broke the windshields of three cars—mine, my brother’s, and my landlord’s. – Narayan, Male, Laconia

These stories show that there is some negativity towards the Bhutanese population in Laconia. Jeremy Hein’s (2006) description of locals’ reactions to Cambodian and Hmong refugees in small midwestern cities is very similar to what has occurred in Laconia. The chapter title, “Small Town Hospitality and Hate,” vividly depicts the confluence of two opposing forces. Many members of the small communities demonstrated ethos of volunteerism and believed it was their moral obligation to help the newcomers, while others blamed refugees for the town’s problems and acted their sentiments out through bigoted words and actions. Like the Cambodian and Hmong, at least three of the Bhutanese have been the victims of some hateful and possibly racist
crimes. So, while the Bhutanese in Laconia do have an extended out-group network, there are still some members of the community who resent their presence. These negative acts create an obstacle in the path of successful resettlement.

The question that remains to be answered is: why didn’t the respondents identify these experiences as discrimination? Even those interviewees who did admit to having negative experiences were reluctant to do so. They qualified their stories by saying that it “wasn’t that bad,” or even saying, “I have never had a bad experience, but…” Only one interviewee suggested the negative actions could have had race-oriented motives:

I have no idea why anyone did it. I don’t have any enemies…The same thing happened to my friend. They slashed all four tires of his car. Maybe its only Bhutanese, for what reason, I have no idea about that. – Narayan, Male, Laconia

These opposing answers—refuting discrimination and stories of “bad things” happening—suggest that respondents either define discrimination differently and thus did not recognize these acts as discrimination, or that they were reluctant to admit something negative about their experiences in America to an American. In a study of perceptions of U.S. society among Latin immigrants Portes, Robert Nash Parker, and Jose Cobas (1980) found that greater cultural familiarity and higher socioeconomic standing led to greater perception of the experience of discrimination and a more critical assessment of the host society overall. This finding suggests another possible reason as to why respondents did not identify their experiences as discrimination; their average time in the U.S. was just a year and a half, and their socioeconomic standings were all relatively low. My data cannot confirm any one of these reasons; however, the fact that respondents did not identify their negative experiences as discrimination is important to consider in understanding and assessing their quality of life, happiness, and success.
While the Bhutanese in Laconia have formed an extensive network characterized by both in-group and out-group connections, and they find the people to be generally warm and amiable, there are some tension-filled relations beneath the surface of the community reception. As the Bhutanese have entered an almost all white, all English-speaking community, they have attracted the negative attention of some community members. However, respondents tended to brush off negative experiences, and maintained that Laconia was a safe, happy place to live.

**Attachment to Place**

After learning of such negative experiences, it was a bit surprising to hear about how safe participants felt in Laconia. They were comfortable walking along the street and enjoyed the physical landscape. Although some expressed dismay about the cold, slippery, snowy winters, several others maintained that the “environment” was their favorite thing about life in the United States. Respondents had much praise for Laconia:

> Everything is good here in Laconia. – Hari Maya, Female, Laconia

> Everyone [Bhutanese friends and family] who visits Laconia says that it is good to live here—the environment is nice, the people are kind, people follow the rules and laws. – Gopal, Male, Laconia

> I think we have good medical facilities here. Hearing by my relatives it is better than other places. – Geeta, Female, Laconia

> Laconia is a beautiful city and a peaceful place. All of the people cooperate. They are kind and good. We don’t have much crime in this area. It is safe to live. – Lalit, Male, Laconia

> Because it is a small place. Nothing is crowded. There is a lot of security; there is no robbery or theft. – Dhan Bhadur, Male, Laconia

Gopal’s wife told me a story that exemplifies how most respondents felt about Laconia. She told me about a trip she took to Texas for her brother’s wedding. She explained that you had
to be careful walking on the streets there because if you were carrying money someone might try to take it, or even try to stab you. She then told me that they do not have to worry about things like that in Laconia. This finding becomes even more relevant when examining the feelings of vulnerability of Boston respondents. Ager and Strang (2008) included safety and security as one of the main facilitators or hindrances to successful integration. Thus it is important to not that for the Bhutanese in Laconia it served the former purpose.

While respondents affirmed that they did like living in Laconia, I hesitate to claim they had a high degree of attachment to place. The majority of the interviewees would move in a heartbeat for a employment, or even the possibility of a better job. Many of the previous accounts of happiness and safety in Laconia were qualified by statements about moving to find lower expenses or better employment. Four of the interviewees regarded moving for employment opportunities as a necessity rather than a choice. They expressed dismay about the thought of leaving Laconia to pursue opportunities elsewhere:

In Laconia this is a challenging thing. We don’t have sufficient work here. I don’t know, when my wife completes the course… She had to spend a lot of money to take it... If she doesn’t get a job we may have to move. – Gopal, Male, Laconia

I love it here, but I need to do something better. – Dhan Bhadur, Male, Laconia

But when we first resettle in this area, it is such a beautiful place, it is difficult to move. – Lalit, Male, Laconia

I don’t want to move. It is better here. – Tila Rupa, Female, Laconia

In the following section I will detail the issues surrounding employment in Laconia. These problems are highly interconnected with each person’s access to resources as well as his or her sense of well-being and overall satisfaction.
Job Access, Availability, and Quality

Concerns about employment seeped into every part of the interviews. In the United State’s capitalist society, one is almost completely dependent on employment as a means to survival. This practice contrasts greatly with how the Bhutanese refugees were forced to live in Nepal. As Dhan Bhadur so aptly described, “In the refugee camp we relied on someone else, here we only rely on ourselves.” While many refugees were informally employed as teachers or social workers, they relied primarily on international agencies to provide food, clothing, and shelter. It is understandable that the issue of employment is so incredibly relevant to the Bhutanese as newcomers in a capitalist society. In Laconia the Bhutanese had difficulty finding employment to the extent that most community members viewed it as a systemic problem. The few who did find employment experienced steep downward mobility, as they found that they were only qualified for minimum-wage positions. The Laconia respondents’ difficulties with employment have led to both financial struggles and a return of feelings of idleness, similar to those that dominated life in refugee camps. In Nepal the Bhutanese were not allowed to work. In Laconia they cannot find work. The Laconia respondents understand their experiences in the broader context of the Bhutanese experience in America. They believe that their compatriots resettled around the country have had an easier time finding employment. Although discouraged, and as previously mentioned, prepared to move to seek employment, several of the interviewees also mentioned that they believed further education would resolve their employment problems.

Job Access

The vast majority of Laconia respondents were unemployed. Only three out of eleven were working outside of the home at the time the interviews took place. Over half said that there was only one worker in their home, while average home sizes were between 4-7 people. It is also
worthwhile to restate that I conducted interviews only with English speakers. These people are likely to be the most employable portion of the population, yet they were still without jobs. As Laconia’s economy is largely seasonally based on a summer tourist industry and winter holiday ski season, some respondents had been employed in the past, but had been laid off, quit, or were fired. As the respondents spoke of their past experiences and current states it was clear that employment was a major concern in their daily lives:

I used to work but I work in home care now, I look after my mom and I am thinking of going back to school. This summer I had a job at the front desk of the resort. It was hard to work the night shift. – Ram Lal, Male, Laconia

No one [in my home] works. My mother is sick, my father is sick, and my brother takes care of them. – Krishna, Male, Laconia

My brother is young, my brother and me go to school and my mom and dad don’t speak English, so they can’t find job. They were hard workers in Nepal. Sometimes I say to Evelyn my mom and dad want job, but I know if they can’t speak English how can they have job. I say don’t worry, I can work when I graduate. – Tila Rupa, Female, Laconia

I have no job now. Two month ago I was working in the Walmart. I worked there for two and a half months; it was just a temporary job. I liked working there. – Ritesh, Male, Laconia

The lack of employment opportunities for the Bhutanese in Laconia tied to a host of problems they encountered throughout the resettlement process. However, as the Bhutanese had a relatively strong network in Laconia, interviewees recognized through conversing with their peers that their problems were greater than individual issues. Although the respondents clearly desired to find employment, there was no sense of blame or shame in not having a job—it was seen as a problem with the place. Gopal’s wife shed light on this issue by stating, “In Laconia a job is like a gift from God.” The effects of unemployment were felt by many and accordingly, it was viewed as a systemic rather than an individual problem:
Only one thing, people are having difficulties because of lack of job, there is job scarcity. If people have job, they have better life…I am doing job, I don’t have anything to say regarding my job, I got the job and I am doing the job. But if five people could work in the same family, and only two are getting the jobs, and two to three people have to remain idle sometimes... – Hari Maya’s Husband, Laconia

In Laconia this [employment] is a challenging thing. We don’t have sufficient work here. – Gopal, Male, Laconia

Here it is very hard to find the jobs. A lot of our people are sitting without any job. Those who speak English they have a little bit, but those without they have no job. Here there is no transportation. Due to transportation we have very hard time. – Geeta, Female, Laconia

All of the Laconia respondents mentioned their struggles with employment. It was an issue so present in their lives that it was an unavoidable topic.

*Job Quality*

Downward mobility is a common experience among immigrants to the United States. Having worked in the employment department of a resettlement agency, I have seen this issue first hand. Many foreign degrees are not acknowledged as legitimate in the U.S. To become recertified takes a lot of time and money, and immigrants’ families have an immediate need for income. Present needs take precedence over future careers. As a result, immigrants are forced into low-paying, low-status positions. Because the majority of Laconia respondents were not currently working, I asked them to answer some questions relating to their previous employment experiences. The few respondents who had jobs, or those who had had them in the past, told me that they were unsatisfied with their positions. When I asked them if they liked their jobs there was a sense of “Of course I like it, because I have a job, but…” On the survey over half of the respondents selected the answer “my job is okay, but I would rather do something else.” There
was a distinct pattern of frustration with the employment opportunities for which respondents were qualified:

I have a part time job doing house keeping. Whole life we have to be in entry level, that is hard for us because we did different things in Nepal. But I am glad to do any type of job. – Gopal, Male, Laconia

I have a job prepping vegetables. Of course, I like, because I am doing it, but I would prefer to do something else. – Hari Maya’s Husband, Laconia

My life was good [in Nepal] compared to here, regarding to my profession. Here I am an environmental service aid. I would wear a coat and tie to lecture in front of students [in Nepal], but here I am doing a housekeeping job. I cannot compare them. It creates frustration. – Dhan Bhadur, Male, Laconia

No, [I do not like my job]. It is different from what I did in Nepal. I would like to do something better. It is better than having no work but it is not of my interest. I taught in school there but I cannot teach here. If I want to be a teacher I have to study equivalent things here. I would like to do that. – Narayan, Male, Laconia

Five respondents had at least some college education; six had served as teachers inside and outside of the camps in Nepal. While refugees were barred from formal employment, they had achieved positions in which they gained respect from their co-workers, students, and the rest of the community. In Laconia I heard of people working as table bussers at restaurants, landscapers, housekeepers, prep cooks, cashiers, and maintenance persons—all minimum wage positions associated with relatively little status and respect. Although respondents were grateful to find any employment at all, there was still a desire to “do something better.”

*Result of Employment Problems: Concrete and Emotional*

There was both an emotional and a concrete result of the employment problems in Laconia. Five respondents expressed that life was not that different in the U.S. than in the camps in Nepal. Without employment they felt purposeless—they sat idly in their homes, waiting for an
opportunity to do something more. Although this was not the majority feeling, it was a definite pattern among the respondents:

Life is better over here. It’s nice to be in a country like this, everyone wants to be here. But [there is] not so much difference. – Ram Lal, Male, Laconia

And we think oh, it’s the same as Nepal. We exist here. – Hari Prasad, Male, Laconia

In Nepal there is more inlands. There are not plenty of job opportunity. But here is also the same as there. We didn’t find more jobs here either. – Ritesh, Male, Laconia

Our life is good compared to Nepal, but it is not much higher, but not much lower, it is a medium level. – Hari Maya, Female, Laconia

Everybody stays leisurely without a job. I like everybody to work if they are able but we don’t have that chance here. – Narayan, Male, Laconia

Emotionally there was a sense of defeat, as most respondents had expected to find better opportunities in the U.S. Respondents felt that without employment they were not able to live life to the fullest. They were still waiting for something more. In addition, the employment issues led to financial difficulties for almost all of the respondents. Consider that there was typically one worker per home, being paid between $7.26-$11 an hour (on average), living in a home or apartment that cost between $701-$900 per month. At the lower end of wages ($7.26), working full time (40 hours per week), with a 15% tax rate, one would make about $250 a week. It would take three weeks of work just to cover the rent. A family of four or more has many more expenses than rent. Many of the Bhutanese in Laconia relied on federal welfare programs such as, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), food stamps, and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) just to get by. Others were forced to ask for additional help from family members and local agencies. There was a general consensus among the interviewees that it was a struggle to cover rent and food every month:
I don’t have enough money. I am just living; at least I am making it. Yes, I can pay for rent and food because I have public assistance because I have children in school. I was laid off last October and I have been living like this. – Lalit, Male, Laconia

Since I am pregnant I got food stamps for food. During summer time it is sufficient because he [my husband] worked overtime. But now he works only 20 hours a week, but it is ok…it is quite challenging to pay for food and rent. The room rent is quite high. No one is asking for help these days. – Hari Maya, Female, Laconia

We don’t have enough money right now. My father gets SSI and my brother is caregiver of my father. We just paid rent with my father’s SSI. – Krishna, Male, Laconia

Three respondents recognized the long run implications of these difficulties, rather than just the short-term reality. Dhan Bhadur, who rode his bike to be the 4:30AM opener at McDonalds for a year (through the winter), told me, “The life has become tougher because the responsibilities are coming. If I am laid off tomorrow I cannot imagine the situation.” He was concerned for his own future and for the future of his newborn son. He could not imagine how he would survive if he was laid off from his job, as so many of his community members had already experienced. Ram Lal said, “But just working, low paid workers, that doesn’t help, it is like hand to mouth. Going to work and using the money. If you don’t have money saved for emergency basis it is going to be very hard in times to come.” He realized that his current position was not sustainable and he desired to do something more. As a result of lack of employment opportunities the Laconia respondents were struggling economically and for some, emotionally. They reconciled their feelings with resolve for the future.

A Way Out: Education and Elsewhere

There were two common responses in regard to action plans to solve employment problems. One option was to move. As I explored in the section about attachment to place, Laconia respondents were ready and willing to move for work. Their willingness was provoked by stories from family and friends resettled around the country. There was a definite belief that it
was easier to find employment elsewhere. The second response involved the opportunity for education. Several interviewees believed that they could improve their quality of employment by taking classes and earning a U.S. – recognized degree. These ideas were not mutually exclusive, rather respondents often mentioned both opportunities. Some of their comments regarding education as an opportunity were:

The difference may come after years and years, and going back to college, studying here could make a big difference in ones life. – Ram Lal, Male, Laconia

I like to go to college… then maybe I can [rate my life to] be a 9 or 10. – Krishna, Male, Laconia

We would like to take classes but we cannot afford it right now. If we could do those, I think that would be very helpful. – Hari Maya, Female, Laconia

I want something better. I am still looking, I want to go to school for radiology tech, surgical tech, nursing, a small course, but I don’t want to leave a job, because of the economic condition. If I take a class life will be more beautiful here. But the schedule of my job and classes do not match. At the same time my economic condition is not enough to be able to go to school. – Dhan Bhadur, Male, Laconia

In addition to education, there was the possibility of finding employment elsewhere. Every one of the Laconia respondents answered “yes” when I asked if they knew people resettled in other parts of the United States. When I asked where their friends and family were resettled, people said Ohio, California, Texas, North Dakota, Vermont, Massachusetts, Kansas—or they simply said, “all states.” The Bhutanese have a network that extends across the United States. When I asked if their friends and family in other places had had similar or different experiences, there was consensus that others had been more successful, as there were more employment opportunities in other places:

We heard that in some states even uneducated people get jobs. – Gopal, Male, Laconia
We talk to people all over the country. They have better jobs and more money. – Lalit, Male, Laconia

They say life is better in some cities. They have work. Everything is money…My sister moved from Oregon to Pennsylvania, but at first she was in Georgia. She moved for a job, looking for opportunity. – Narayan, Male, Laconia

Two specifically identified the urban / rural dynamic in their comparisons:

If I go to a bigger city it might be more crowded but there would be more job opportunities. Industries and factories. I would be able to switch jobs frequently. Here is a small place and there are not many job openings… Other Bhutanese people have jobs whether they speak English or not. But here it is very difficult. – Dhan Bhadur, Male, Laconia

In big cities there are more industries and more companies, automatically more jobs. Here it is a little bit harder to get jobs, as compared to other resettlement places. – Hari Maya’s Husband, Laconia

Education and moving were the obvious solutions to the employment problems in Laconia. The respondents realized that the systemic nature of unemployment required that some action needed to be taken in response. Although they realized that actions were necessary, most spoke about them taking place in at an unspecified future date.

**Rural Conclusion**

To assess Laconia, a rural environment, as a resettlement location requires that I consider all of these factors together, valuing each as did the respondents. The participants’ in-group connections facilitate access to cultural preservation, while their out-group connections serve as an integrating force and provide access to tangible resources. Despite some instances of discriminatory crimes, the Bhutanese like the community of Laconia, and many local community members have become involved with helping the Bhutanese. There is a relatively high degree of assimilation between the Bhutanese and the local community. Members of the Bhutanese community in Laconia are familiar with American systems such as education and employment.
and desire to be a part of these them. Their adaptation is marked by their friendships with out-
group members and the acquisition of resources through these connections. The result of this
mutual assimilation is an environment in which the Bhutanese feel safe and secure in their daily
actions. The factors reviewed thus far contribute to the satisfaction the Bhutanese in Laconia.
They are satisfied and successful in that they have access to networks that provide for their needs
and live in an enjoyable location; however, employment problems pose a serious threat to the
Laconia respondents’ general well-being. In Laconia the Bhutanese struggle to find employment,
only to experience downward mobility upon acquisition of any kind of job. The result is
emotional turmoil and financial difficulties. The response to these issues is a resolve to make
changes in the future through education or relocation.

When I asked interviewees to rate their happiness or satisfaction in Laconia on a scale of
1-10, the average response was 6.8. Interviewees explained that they were happy to be in the
U.S., and that it was better than being in the refugee camp, but that they were still struggling. As
Ram Lal explained, “Every day is a new day and there are challenges whatever you do. What
you did yesterday is passed, tomorrow is going to happen, but work on today. That’s how I think
about life.” The numerical rating shows that there are forces pulling the Bhutanese in both
directions—towards satisfaction, as well as towards strife and struggle. While the Bhutanese in
Laconia had an extensive support system and were engaged in the community, I do not believe
that those factors were enough to counter the negative impact of unemployment in their overall
satisfaction with their current lives.
As was the case in Laconia, Boston caseworkers received mixed reviews. Some interviewees mentioned the help they received in the beginning, while others felt that they had been placed in Boston and then left to fend for themselves. Those who did identify receiving help from their caseworkers talked about official matters, such as gaining access to social security and food stamps, as well as receiving help learning how to use public transportation. On the survey six respondents listed their caseworker as the person who was most helpful during the resettlement process. In Boston, the caseworkers seemed to have more direct involvement with their resettled clients:

Our agency, IIB [International Institute of Boston] helped us in every situation in the beginning... We spend time with caseworker and we are getting help now also. They help us to find jobs, other things, to apply for official works. – Durga Prasad, Male, Chelsea

I got a lot of help from the volunteer agencies, like the IRC. I used to bring my parents to the New American Center. I got some ideas for help from here too…Especially to adjust in the new system. For example, how to complete the medical stuffs, I was researching on my own to help myself and others. I discuss my needs and the needs of my people with others and they help me make appointments, how to use public transit. – Sukman, Male, Lynn

Our case manager Will and our brother, also our case manager, Bhampa, he help us solve the problem. They are helping us still now also. They took us to the office to make the card for food stamps then to the social security office, to the hospital, in this way they help us. – Rekha, Female, Lynn

However, two respondents gave more mixed reviews of their caseworks:

There are many peoples who help us, the resettlement organization helps us to find jobs. They work for us but the work they found for us was so far from our home. It would take
three or four hours to get there... He told me to work there but I said I cannot. It is so far. When I get off from work I have to go back to my home. – Gyan, Male, Chelsea

During the initial stage he [caseworker] was very helpful but later maybe there were more people coming from different countries and he was not able to help us whenever we need him. – Abhi, Male, Lynn

The rest of the respondents, about half, maintained that their caseworkers had not been helpful at all. On the survey eight respondents out of ten answered that they needed more help than they had received during the resettlement process. When I asked who had helped interviewees solve their initial problems and challenges, two people stated that no one had helped them—they had figured things out themselves. Yadu, a married father of two, told me that his caseworker was away on vacation when he arrived and as a member of the first Bhutanese family to be resettled in Chelsea, he was forced to figure things out on his own. When his casework finally did return she told him that he needed to figure out a way to cover the rent, which was $400 more than his monthly cash assistance, or he would be kicked out onto the streets. In general the respondents agreed that the caseworkers’ involvement did not last long enough and was not comprehensive enough:

The IIB did not help find a single job. I walked from Chelsea to here [Harvard Square] because I had fear because they said I had to pay the rent. I needed a job. I did not know how to take the train. I had never seen a train system. – Yadu, Male, Chelsea

No [no one helped me]. Just for a couple of months. I was resettled by Catholic Charities and they showed us how to use the train, where to buy the food… – Bhim, Male, Lynn

They brought us here and left us. We did it all ourselves. Nobody help us for that. Ourselves. – Kazi, Male, Lynn

Like the case manager took us once and the second time we are expected to go ourselves. Sending the children to school, we were given the names but we did not the location, to check the map we did not have a library card or access to internet at home. – Abhi, Male, Lynn
While most Boston residents responded that their caseworkers had been the most helpful person during their resettlement process, it appears that the level of support they received from these people was not very high. This fact was supported by the inquiries I received about the nature of my work. Boston respondents were curious as to the purpose of my project and wanted to know if I would be sharing my findings with resettlement agencies. Although I was initially unsure if this was a self-protection measure, to assure that their names were not attached to negative statements about specific agencies, I came to believe that many participants were looking for an outlet through which to give feedback. During the Boston interview process, I left many meetings feeling like I had been imparted with a message to give to the resettlement agencies.

Boston interviewees made suggestions for agencies and the government to provide technical job training, to extend the resettlement support period, and to improve the quality of their work:

Especially the people, all of the people, we were in the refugee camp for seventeen years, we don’t have any skills. Here each job ask you to relate it to your skills. They also don’t have English. If the resettlement agencies or NGOs can provide vocational training that would be really helpful for finding jobs. – Chura Muni, Male, Lynn

If the U.S. government provides grants to give us special training for the specific group, not ESL class only, like special job training, that is relative to the interest of the people, it would be a good idea. – Sukman, Male, Lynn

When you first get here it is quite tough for me, the case manager was here only once in a while. If you show them how to go to the store for a couple of months. If you help them, like you have to show them to go this way, if they help us it is more easy... Like transportation, you have to take this bus, this train, this is how you get to your home. – Bhim, Male, Lynn

I feel that the resettlement agency must have a kind of interaction with the resettled refugees biannually for three successive years. Ask about the problems, areas of the improvement, the difficulties we face. There is no place without difficulty, but some difficulties can be eradicated. – Abhi, Male, Lynn
The level and quality of social capital caseworkers provided was relatively low. The Boston respondents spent minimal time with their caseworkers and the quality of contact between clients and caseworkers was generally poor. In addition, most respondents felt something was lacking in the resettlement system and made suggestions of things that could be improved in the future.

While in Laconia there were volunteers and community members to fill the out-group connection void left by caseworkers, there was no equivalent in Boston. In fact, respondents in Boston felt significantly disconnected from the surrounding population, as they noted the busy, individualistic nature typical of most American cities.

“Everyone is busy in America”: The Non-existent Out-group and Community Fit

During my final interview in Boston, my respondent’s wife asked if I would like something to eat. She said, “everyone is busy in America, one doesn’t get time to eat, no?” Her question was ironic, as I had rushed from interview to interview that day, without a break for lunch. Her inquisition encompassed a theme that appeared throughout my urban interviews. Respondents used the word “busy” in several different contexts. Many interviewees described themselves as busy in their new lives. Others saw that the busyness typical of America manifested itself in individualistic behavior, which was drastically different from their own cultural practices. While a few liked the individualism of America, the majority responded with dismay about the behavior of those around them, as they felt that “nobody cared.” The busy and individualistic nature characteristic of a metropolitan area had major implications for the Bhutanese network and their fit in the community over all.

Busyness was most often associated with respondents’ responsibilities. They were busy working, taking family members to appointments, and helping their community members. Like the Laconia respondents many of the Boston respondents had worked informally before;
however, the change to a formal employment positions and a system in which one was expected to make appointments and be on time was drastic. While in general being busy was a positive aspect of their new lives, three respondents told me that they had had to cut back on activities, as all of their responsibilities became too much of a burden:

Taking my parents to the hospital, getting myself ready for the job, this is the busyness… I like to be busy all the time in my own way in the job. It’s good. I am very glad to be here in the United States. – Durga Prasad, Male, Chelsea

In September 2009 I joined my college Salem State and then it was too much to do my job, so I worked as a translator full time, it was too much for me, this year I am part time student. – Sukman, Male, Lynn

When you go outside, I move in my community, because before I was so busy I could not move anywhere else. In my day off I take my parents to the hospital or help them to do something. Now it is better (after two years)… in terms of busyness. – Bhim, Male, Lynn

Yadu, the same man who had walked from Chelsea to Harvard Square in search of a job, struggled to find balance in his life in America. For a period of time he worked days as a cashier at a café, evenings as a cashier at a newsstand, and at night studied to pass his driving test. He worked about seventy hours a week and slept only two hours a night. He told me that period of time had been very difficult and he was glad to have cut back to fifty hours a week, working only at the newsstand. While his struggle was unique, it relates to many of the feelings of other Bhutanese people in the Boston area. Respondents were surprised by the system of appointments and schedules in America, which demanded punctuality and constant busyness. They were a bit uneasy about this way of life, as their cultural practices were vastly different, however their adoption of such practices marked their adaptation to American norms.

As respondents were conscious of their own transition to busyness, several also noticed it in the people around them. The busy quality among other people led to recognition of the
individualistic nature of American society. They noticed that people are so busy that they are concerned only with their own well-being. When I asked respondents about their experiences with strangers in their community, giving examples of people on the bus or in the store, several stories emerged in which they expressed curiosity at this difference between American and Bhutanese cultures. The Bhutanese typically practice an open door policy in their homes. In the camps in Nepal and in Bhutan they left their doors open to friends and people passing by, to stop in for food or tea. While traveling they typically conversed with the people they met along the street. During the interviews respondents noted that people act remarkably different in Boston:

> What I have experienced in comparison with my country is that the people don’t bother with each other. They like to do things independently. It’s like: who will start first to talk. In our country whenever we meet someone we used to talk, but here people don’t talk in the street or in the store. When I ask questions they answer but they do not ask back. – Sukman, Male, Lynn

> I think in urban areas it is more individualistic. In Bhutan people live in the valley and on the hill. We rotate among houses for meals. If I have a guest my neighbor would be angry if I did not introduce him. – Abhi, Male, Lynn

> Other people don’t have close family like us. We have love and affection for people in one family. The village people are one family. But not here. There is an individual system here. – Gyan, Male, Chelsea

While these respondents’ recognition of the cultural differences does not necessarily assign value to this practice, there was a general consensus that the individuality of American society was negative in that it has an isolating effect. The implication of isolation for the Bhutanese network was a very limited out-group network. In a society in which they feel “no one cares” it has proved difficult for them to develop connections with native-born Americans, or even people of other nationalities. They have a network characterized by a very low degree of multiplexity
Respondents mentioned several ways in which the individuality of the people around them manifests itself:

We don't get chance to interact with the people. If I were a student here I may have a lot of friends, but [now] I just work and go back home. There I help my community people. There is no chance to meet the neighbor people. Here no one cares. We don’t know who sits in the first apartment. Nobody cares. – Gyan, Male, Chelsea

You talked about the bus, and I have been travelling on the bus five days a week for six months. Some people are reading to themselves and some people get tired from work and don’t feel like talking and me too. If there is some social thing they will talk but not much. I think everyone feels isolated that way. – Abhi, Male, Lynn

As I specifically mentioned experiences taking the bus in asking how people acted towards respondents, two people told me stories about the drivers of the buses. The individual nature of society noted by others, manifests itself here as an “every man for himself” attitude. Respondents were disillusioned by the behavior of the bus drivers, as they refused to help people who were unfamiliar with the logistics of the system:

It was in the bus. A long time ago…My card didn’t have sufficient money and I was trying to add one dollar but maybe I pushed the wrong button and a new ticket came. I said I want to add this here but he [the bus driver] said, “No no you didn’t do this thing.” I said you have to teach me, I don’t know. He said, “You don’t know? Why you take the bus?” People who don’t know should still have the right to ride the bus. – Chura Muni, Male, Lynn

Some of the drivers they are so mean. Some people ask where are you going. They don’t know this is the way they can go. On the bus or the train if the people don’t know the way you have to tell them… some people don’t know how to put the money in, it is too difficult for them. And some of the drivers are so rude. – Bhim, Male, Lynn

Given the nature of the environment in Boston, the Bhutanese developed few out-group connections. They did not feel very attached to the community around them. A few individuals had connections through their own volition, such as joining a church congregation or getting in touch with the Nepali Association of Boston. Several respondents had weak connections with
their co-workers, who were usually also immigrants to the U.S., but the majority of respondents had very limited out-group connections. As the Bhutanese in Boston were busy, unconnected to the population around them, and received little social capital from interaction with caseworkers, they turned inward to find support. The respondents I spoke with talked of a highly developed, formal network in which the Bhutanese provide their own community members with tangible and intangible resources.

*The In-Group Network*

Whereas the in-group network in Laconia served to connect the Bhutanese to mostly intangible resources, the Boston in-group network was distinctly more oriented towards tangible resources. It made up for the lack of out-group connections by providing a formal means to social capital. As Kazi explained, “Because of busyness, because everybody is busy all the time, because America is busy, we need to work in our community to give them the basic knowledge.” Respondents felt a distinct sense of responsibility towards other people in the Bhutanese community. Two respondents were formally employed as community caseworkers, while others volunteered to help their friends and family. Although my sample was a bit divided, as three people were from Chelsea and seven from Lynn, most people knew the majority of the Bhutanese people in their own location, as well as some of the others in the opposite location (they also mentioned friends and family living in Lowell, Springfield, and Dorchester). Through their connections they work to acquaint newcomers with systems, help one another find jobs, and aid each other in navigating the medical system.

The in-group orientation of the Boston network is partially due to the nature of the people surrounding them—the busy people without time to help others—however, several respondents explained it in another way. They spoke of helping each other because of their own cultural
norms. They described it as the way they preferred to do things; two respondents went as far as to say that the Bhutanese cannot do things on their own, that they need the community form to function. In contrast to the individualistic culture of city dwellers in America, the Bhutanese preferred to work collectively to provide for the well-being of their entire group. They described their actions within the community as normal behavior and reasoned that it was their duty to help their peers:

We can work easily, if some people need something, like especially in our culture, we cannot do by ourselves. We all do things together. If I have a problem I call me friend and say I have a problem can you come here? We work as a team. Is something happens we work all together. – Bhim, Male, Lynn

Bhutanese people like to work together... We are always united. One thing, we have to be because of our culture. Our culture can’t be celebrated separately. We are always united. We like to work together. – Sukman, Male, Lynn

Yeah, I see them, I have to help them…The newcomers, we give them an idea of the systems. We are from a small place. The system is not as advanced. We don’t know how, our people still... some can’t read and write. – Gyan, Male, Chelsea

As a literate person from the community I experienced a lot of adjustment pressure from my community, they need help and they come to me. They don’t know how to read letters that come in the mail. Some people can’t read even Nepali translations… They give us pressure, pressure in a positive sense, but they always ask for help. – Sukman, Male, Lynn

Almost in rejection of the practices they see around them the Bhutanese in Boston have created a network in which able members of the community help those who are less capable in terms of literacy, English ability, and age. Members of the community see each other frequently; on the survey over half of the respondents said they see other Bhutanese families a few times a week. In addition, the Bhutanese share a sense of cultural loyalty towards one another. The strong connections they have built within their community facilitate access to social capital, as well as serve to provide intangible resources, as the network did in Laconia.
Often one or two particularly resourceful members of the community will figure out a system or process and show the other members of the community how to accomplish the task. Over time newcomers transition to the more seasoned role and help others who have arrived after them, or those who are still struggling. In this way the Bhutanese have gained access to the physical resource aspect of social capital. Their connections facilitate transportation, employment, medical assistance, and public assistance, as well as more basic tasks such as paying bills or understanding documents from resettlement agencies. I emphasize that this was a community wide function, not limited to the appointed community caseworkers, evident as all of the following quotes come from people who are not caseworkers:

Here there is a lot of society and sometimes I help to pick them up from the hospital, from school, from some other place. If they have appointments, I will help them because to help the society is better, no? – Kazi, Male, Lynn

On the weekend we go and see what’s going on. Sometimes they call me and ask for help. I will help them make appointments for DTA [Department of Transitional Assistance] and food stamps. – Bhim, Male, Lynn

I show them how to pay for the phone. Medical appointments also…. I help them with the train system and bus system. Their parents also. – Gyan, Male, Chelsea

I take two bus by myself. Then I took the trains, the blue line. First I took one of my friends, our neighbor [a Bhutanese man], he showed the way once then after I went by myself. – Rekha, Female, Lynn

When a new family arrives they start from zero. Like the bus in our country is different, we help them figure out how to ride, how to get a job, how to buy items, how to manage money, social security. It is easier for new comers. To get a job is the main thing. Voluntarily I help all of the families. Sometimes they have a lot of problems. Some people cannot speak English. – Yadu, Male, Chelsea

The process of accessing social capital differs between Laconia and Boston. While in Laconia access to tangible resources was the product of out-group connections, in Boston the in-group
was forced into this role, as they were isolated within their own community. As a result the Boston in-group network was extremely resource-oriented; however, a few respondents did mention intangible purposes such as continuing life rituals and visiting friends. Thus the in-group networks in Laconia and Boston maintained a few similarities. Three respondents in Boston mentioned visiting friends, helping sick community members, and coming together to celebrate cultural festivals:

We also do some community events in our own Bhutanese community. In our church with a lot of people and food we celebrated the New Year, like that. Sometimes we do that; it depends on the necessity of the people. – Chura Muni, Male, Lynn

Whenever there are difficulties we help each other. Whenever somebody is sick. In any kind of problem like shifting the houses we get together. – Abhi, Male, Lynn

They come here and we also go there, Saturday and Sunday. They have to take class but in free time we like to visit. – Rekha, Female, Lynn

The Bhutanese in Boston have continued to pursue collective cultural practices, despite the individualism that surrounds them in their local communities. Respondents discussed their roles in the Bhutanese network as consisting of responsibilities and duties. Most felt that it was necessary to help their fellow community members. Through these strong network connections the Bhutanese in Boston were able to gain access to social capital, such as learning how to use the public transit system or finding employment, as well as to more intangible resources such as cultural preservation and friendship.

Experiences with Social Capital: Transportation, Employment, and Finances

While the previous section provided a detailed description of the network through which the Bhutanese gain access to social capital in Boston, this section further details the functions and consequences of the tangible resources to which respondents had access. Throughout this section I focus on the resources that were most relevant to the interviewees: transportation and
employment. I also discuss the implications of resource accessibility on respondents’
socioeconomic statuses.

Transportation: The Woes of Boston Public Transit

In Laconia the out-group connections and nature of transportation facilitated a high
percentage of drivers in my sample. Seven out of eleven Laconia interviewees owned and drove
cars, however only three of the Boston respondents owned and drove cars. In addition, one
respondent told me that there were only three cars among all of the Bhutanese in Lynn, thus I
spoke with the only three drivers. As a result the Boston sample was very well acquainted with
the public transit system. Eight people responded that they used the bus and subway (T) for
transportation on a regular basis. As Lynn and Chelsea are located on the outskirts of Boston,
respondents’ journeys often involved multiple legs. They used the transportation system
primarily to get to work or to visit voluntary agencies and take classes downtown. Three
respondents commended the public transportation system, especially in comparison to what they
were used to in Nepal and Bhutan:

Here sometimes we used to get rides…otherwise bus or train. The public transportation is
good here. – Chura Muni, Male, Lynn

I must say the transportation system is good here. We get transportation whenever we
like, taxi, public bus, the train, it’s good here. Back in my country it’s not like this, it’s
very poor. Here we can get the bus after five or ten minutes, back in my country we had
to wait for the bus for two or three hours, that is the problem. – Durga Prasad, Male,
Chelsea

We took the train. Our house is nearby train station so it was easy for us. We learn
quickly. – Chandra Maya, Female, Lynn

Despite these accolades, the majority of respondents expressed frustration and confusion with
public transportation. As I discussed previously, bus and T drivers were sometimes
unaccommodating and would not help newcomers figure out how to use the system. Other
respondents expressed confusion about the direction, exits, and entrances to subway stops. In addition, many expressed dissatisfaction with the bus schedules, especially on snowy days. As I travelled to Lynn several times during the interview process, I sympathized with their struggles—buses often left between twenty and forty minutes later than scheduled. The result for the Bhutanese often meant spending a great deal of time taking and navigating the system:

At Haymarket there are different ways to go out. I always used to get lost. Our class started at nine but I would leave at seven because I knew I would get lost. – Yadu, Male, Chelsea

Sometimes it is quite difficult at snow time, we cannot find the bus, it is delayed, but we still have to go to work. It is a struggle. – Bhim, Male, Lynn

Transportation is difficult for me. Both of us [my wife and I], I go by blue line and the bus from wonderland, she goes by bus to work, we don’t have a car. I went to the bus stop first and asked the MBTA officers about the Charlie cards, it was very difficult. – Abhi, Male, Lynn

Due to the imperfections of the public transit system, occasionally people needed to get rides to special appointments. One of the drivers expressed to me that it was burdensome to have only three drivers in the Lynn community—as they felt responsible for helping their 130 Bhutanese peers. Two other non-drivers expressed that it would be much easier if they had cars, especially when it came to getting groceries. When they went to stores they often chose to go nearby, as they had to walk home, or pay for an expensive taxi:

No I don’t drive. [We get groceries] By walking, there is one by Lynnway, it is a half an hour walk. Sometimes, especially in the winter it is very tough. In the summer it’s fine. – Bhim, Male, Lynn

It is very difficult. Shopping, we don't go that far because we may have too many things to carry. We all go to get it and hang it on our hands. During this winter season I have realized it is difficult without a car, it is slippery everywhere. – Abhi, Male, Lynn
Nobody in my family drives. For groceries we walk on foot, if we have a number of bags we take taxi from market to home. – Durga Prasad, Male, Chelsea

Transportation was more relevant and mentioned more often by Boston interviewees than Laconia interviewees. Because of the respondents’ constant involvement with a sometimes-frustrating public transit system, it was of high concern in their daily lives. Although public transit provides a resource in terms of independence and facilitation of travel, this system was not without its weaknesses.

*Employment: Job Access and Quality*

There was a distinctly higher rate of employment among Boston respondents than among Laconia respondents. Eight out of the ten Boston interviewees were employed at the time of the interviews. One of the respondents who was not working had just recently quit her job to stay home to take care of her newborn baby. On the survey eight Boston respondents stated that they had two or more workers in their homes, whereas in Laconia over half of the respondents had one worker or less. Work-related conversation remained at the forefront of many of my conversations. Respondents were eager to tell me about their experiences with and opinions of the employment system in the United States. Due to the high rate of employment in Boston, four interviewees had worked in multiple positions since moving to the United States. Each of these respondents valued his multiple experiences. They felt they had learned something valuable from each job:

I liked every job. When I worked in Fenway—from there I learned how to eat the US sandwiches, when I arrived I didn’t know how, but when I worked there I knew how to order the sandwich I liked, I learned many things, it was a nice place to work. Even at Bon A Petit I learned many things, like the food items. After when I worked as an interpreter I learned many medical things. Before that I did interpretation training. When I started working I learned many practical things. – Sukman, Male, Lynn
I enjoy my jobs here. The system is new, I like the system of job here. It is a new experience for me. I never worked in a restaurant or in an airport. I liked working at the airport. At the airport I worked with the wheelchair for the older people and disabled people. … Subway I learned to make sandwiches, I had no idea before, there I learned to make American food. – Gyan, Male, Chelsea

Despite the high employment rate I found in my sample and the multiplicity of jobs obtained by at least four respondents, interviewees disagreed about the availability of jobs in the Boston area. There was a split in opinions about the relative ease of finding employment in the Boston area. While in Laconia there was total agreement that it was challenging to find a job, the Boston population disagreed about this issue. Three respondents explicitly stated that they thought it was easier to find jobs in Boston than in other places:

I didn’t find a job [in Washington] and I heard that many people had not found a job and I thought oh I need to do something. I thought I would have a better chance in Boston. I heard from friends that everybody got jobs here. I trusted them. – Chura Muni, Male, Lynn

I think it’s easier to find a job here. We have to start with entry-level job, but some people say its difficult to find entry level. Here we have to be disciplined and punctual but we will get it surely. – Durga Prasad, Male, Chelsea

For myself and for my wife I sought a job, later on I put my brother at the airport. Now if someone comes it’s no problem, 1,2, I can solve the problem and find them a job. – Yadu, Male, Chelsea

These three men worked as a caseworker, cafeteria worker, and cashier, respectively. While their positions represent varying levels of status, they agreed that employment opportunities in Boston were better than in other places. Four other respondents had the exact opposite opinion:

Even in Boston, some people are facing employment problems. They always say, “we don’t have job, how can we go ahead?” Number one problem is jobs. – Sukman, Male, Lynn

I am satisfied but one thing is very difficult, in other states there are many companies and all the people get jobs within one or two months. Here it is very difficult to find jobs. If
we got a job here it would be very good and very happy. A job is to survive. – Rekha, Female, Lynn

It is difficult to find jobs, especially in Massachusetts. If we don’t have a job it is difficult to survive. – Kazi, Male, Lynn

I didn’t have a job for ten months. It was really difficult… There is not much option of jobs right now, if someone gets an opportunity it is a good idea to take it unless there is better opportunity, jobs are scarce now. – Abhi, Male, Lynn

The respective employment statuses of these respondents were a caseworker, unemployed, waiter, and hotel house-person. Again there was variation in terms of job status, but agreement on the point of the challenge of finding jobs. The remaining three respondents did not assign value to job availability in positive or negative ways. It is difficult to reconcile the difference between these opinions without more concrete evidence of the employment rate of the entire Bhutanese population in Boston. However, I believe that comparing the Boston and Laconia samples can settle this debate. As respondents had to speak English to participate in this study, I spoke with the more educated members of each of the communities. In addition, there was uniformity between the samples in terms of respondents’ previous professional experiences, average age, length of residency in the U.S., and gender. Despite these similarities 27% of Laconia respondents and 80% of Boston respondents were working. Therefore, I believe that when Boston respondents referred to the challenge of gaining employment they were identifying an issue the less educated and older members of their community faced. In Boston young, educated people could find jobs. In Laconia they could not. Thus while the Boston labor market did not provide endless employment opportunities for the Bhutanese community, there were sufficiently more positions available than in Laconia.

While there was disagreement about the accessibility of employment, I received more unified answers about the quality of employment in Boston. Respondents did not sight
downward mobility as specifically as did Laconia respondents, despite having similar backgrounds in terms of education and previous work experience, however they did generally agree that they would prefer to do different kinds of work. On the survey six respondents selected the response “my job is okay, but I would rather do something else.” They realized that their “something else” would require going back to school or completing professional training:

Job is job. Now I am a cashier. I meet people from other countries, Harvard students; I meet different kinds of people. It is interesting. I come to know their culture a little bit... I would do other… I am going to do a medical assistant training. – YADU, Male, Chelsea

But the intellectual [level], it will just stay the same working at a restaurant. I saw that the newsstand was hiring. I thought I might learn something to grow my mind. The newspapers, magazines, what is happening in the world. To move here will be good for me, for my language and everything else…Job is okay… I haven’t gotten the opportunity to join the college. – GYAN, Male, Chelsea

If I get better opportunity I would quit my job and join a new one. Actually, I would like to study more, complete my bachelor’s degree. – ABHI, Male, Lynn

I will work again after some months. I am planning to work in senior service. I have to do a training to do that. I am planning to do that at the community college. – CHANDRA MAYA, Female, Lynn

Sukman, who had already returned to school and was taking courses to complete his degree in mathematics explained, “Educated people, like myself, we are not getting resources to figure out exactly where we fit. I need to explore this.” The Bhutanese in Boston did not feel that they had found employment that was the right “fit” for them. While not specifically sighting downward mobility, many respondents had a clear desire to find professions that were more intellectually demanding, paid better wages, or gave better benefits. The positions of Boston respondents included: caseworker, hotel house worker, cashier, restaurant supervisor, cafeteria worker, and waiter. One reason why there was less talk of downward mobility among Boston respondents may have been because these respondents attained positions of relatively higher status than did
Laconia respondents. For instance, being employed as a caseworker or a supervisor carries more prestige than working as a part time prep cook or laundress. Overall the employment situation in Boston was more positive than it was in Laconia. Employment provided the Bhutanese in Boston with wages and thus tangible social capital to contribute to their well-being and success. In addition, participation in the labor market was one of the dominant “markers” of successful integration that Ager and Strang (2008) identified in their model. The Boston respondents quickly adapted to the American employment system to gain and keep jobs to support their families. Through employment they became busy, like the people around them, and learned American norms, such as how to make a sandwich, or customer service.

Financial Implications

Although Boston respondents were employed, they still struggled financially. Six out of ten respondents agreed that it was still difficult (at the time of the interviews) to pay for basic expenses like food and rent. Their challenges were enhanced during the winter season, as they had to pay high heating bills. Each of the six identified his or her difficulties and some cited specific reasons:

We get benefits from different agencies. Not for a long time, it is very helpful to pay for rent, bills and utilities. I think it will be very difficult for me to manage everything but I hope it will not be too difficult [when benefits end shortly]. – Durga Prasad, Male, Chelsea

We need money. We need money to help our child. We came here to see the future of our child. – Rekha, Female, Lynn

Sometimes it is quite difficult. The house rent is too expensive, it is 1000 a month. The utilities, the phone, everything is too expensive, especially in the winter, the heating, it is quite tough. We hope it will be quite more better, but now in the winter it is quite tough for me. – Bhim, Male, Lynn
It's really difficult. I have to work for around 12 to 13 days just to pay the house rent alone and there are other amenities like electricity and the gas bill, telephone, internet. The gas cost is skyrocketing with heating. – Abhi, Male, Lynn

Gyan, a man that moved to the U.S. by himself, and later convinced his parents to join him, gave perspective of the grave seriousness of this issue as he choked back tears telling me “Someday if we could not work…If we are sick instead of asking for sick leave, I pretend ‘I am okay.’” His financial situation was so precarious that he could not conceive of what he would do without his weekly paycheck. Even without children to support Gyan questioned his ability to provide for himself and his parents.

The Boston respondents’ financial issues are related to the higher cost of living in a metropolitan area. While five of respondents made between $9-$11 an hour, and the other three made more, these wages were still not enough to cover the increased costs. Half of the respondents paid between $1101 and $1300 for rent each month. This is significantly more than the average in Laconia, which was around $700 per month. If two people worked full time (40 hours a week) at $9 an hour, with a 15% tax rate, together they would make about $600 a week. It would take them two weeks’ pay to cover just the rent. Three respondents specifically identified their financial issues as relating to the higher costs of living in a city. When I asked Gyan if he had enough money to pay for rent and food he stated, “We are struggling, we are not doing better, still we are living in the city. It is hard for the city dwellers because it’s expensive here. Sometimes we cannot meet our expenses.” So, although employment represents adaptation and the attainment of physical social capital, it does not automatically lead to greater economic success. Financial difficulties posed a serious threat to the overall well-being of the Boston respondents.
Attachment to Place

“Lynn, Lynn, city of sin”: Safety and Security

Discussions about safety and security emerged as a theme in the last half of my interviews in Boston. Although only three (one from Chelsea, two from Lynn) out the ten respondents discussed this topic, I believe it is an issue that may affect the entire Bhutanese community in Boston. Ager and Strang (2008) noted that issues with safety and security are some of the most significant obstacles to successful integration; therefore, this factor may greatly affect the overall well-being of the Bhutanese community in Boston. I was very surprised during the first interview in which the subject came up. Gyan told me story after story of threats, violence, and robbery. He stated vehemently that the biggest problem for the Bhutanese in America was their security. It was the sixth interview I had done in Boston and no one else had broached this topic. At first I thought that he may have been an anomaly, but the topic came up again in two later interviews. In my last interview Abhi asked if I knew that Lynn was nicknamed “the city of sin” after telling me about a fight that happened at 4AM right in front of his house two nights before our meeting. Although a minority in reporting such issues, these respondents strongly believed safety was a major concern in their daily lives:

We are not feeling secure in the USA. That is our main problem. The Bhutanese in USA... A lot of people are beaten or robbed. I was chased when I was going home from my closing duty. I have to walk five or ten minutes from bus to my home. I ran from him, but I don’t know the intention of him, why he chased me. – Gyan, Male, Chelsea

And he said, “Hey, stop!” I didn’t listen. I walk and walk, but he is following me. I wasn’t afraid. When I turned from Hammond Street to Brunswick Ave. He is sitting in a chair. I hate that. In nighttime it is difficult for us to roam here. – Kazi, Male, Lynn

This is Lynn and we can't trust anyone as a close friend. There has been a rise in crime in this area. They may be criminals and say “hello and hi”... There is an expression in English, “the birds of a feather flock together.” That is what is happening here. – Abhi, Male, Lynn
Each of the three respondents had at least one story about encountering violence or the threat of violence during his time in the U.S. Moreover, they did not view these events as isolated, rather as a general problem with the community around them. In addition to these events being described as a systemic problem, the interviewees reasoned that the situation was exacerbated by their own cultural norms, as their peaceful and innocent nature made them easy targets:

We fear when we are walking in the street. Our people are innocent kind. The other people want to rob, they see something in us. They see we are from another country. – Gyan, Male, Chelsea

In order to protect that we have to have tight security here. Bhutanese people they are simple because they are farmers. – Kazi, Male, Lynn

The manner in which these respondents worded their responses leads me to believe that their experiences are not unique among the Bhutanese in Boston. The respondents’ answers made it seem as though dealing with violence and vice was a new experience for the Bhutanese people. As refugees are resettled in areas of high crime in Boston, it is inevitable that they run into such issues. Other interviewees may not have valued security enough to tell me about it, or they may not have wanted to share negative thoughts about their resettlement location with a native-born American. However, because of the all-encompassing terms these three respondents used to describe this situation, and the prevalence of crime in the areas in which they live, I believe other members of the community may have had similar experiences. Feeling safe and secure is an integral component of one’s mental and physical well-being; as such, this theme poses another barrier to achieving success and happiness in the United States.

Desire to Stay in Boston

Like the Laconia respondents, the vast majority of Boston respondents knew people who had been resettled in other locations. They knew people in Kansas, Chicago, Texas, Arizona,
Atlanta, New Hampshire, and many other locations. A few had even taken trips to other states to visit family and friends. Respondents described a Bhutanese network that incorporated all of the United States. Gyan told me that if something happens in one state, the Bhutanese everywhere hear about it very quickly. When I asked respondents if they thought their friends and family in other states had different or similar experiences there were a variety of responses. A few thought each place was unique. Yadu explained, “The people in Pennsylvania say the room rent is very cheap. In New Hampshire they say there aren’t a lot of jobs, but it is nice to live. In Vermont they say it’s expensive, but a lot of jobs. In Atlanta it’s a little worse. There were stolen cars.” Others thought their peers had had similar experiences, but Rekha, the only respondent with zero members of her home working, thought that life seemed better elsewhere. Despite this seemingly positive appraisal in comparison to other places over half of the participants responded on the survey that they were not sure if they would move in the future. Only four were committed to staying in Boston. Thus, respondents did not seem very attached to Boston. This could be due to the issues with security or their lack of connection to the people and communities around them. Whatever the reason, the Bhutanese in Boston expressed that they were willing to move for family, jobs, or happiness elsewhere.

**Urban Conclusion**

There was a mix of positive and negative experiences among the Boston Bhutanese sample. The majority of respondents lacked adequate caseworker support. They made this point clear by relaying their suggestions for system improvements during our interviews. In addition to the lack of agency support, the Bhutanese in Boston found themselves isolated among typically unfriendly city dwellers. Respondents noted the individualistic tendencies of their neighbors, people on the bus, and strangers on the street. As a result, they had very limited out-group
connections. Despite these limitations the Boston Bhutanese network adapted by turning inward. Instead of looking outward for connections to social capital, they created it among themselves. Formal systems developed in which community members helped acquaint newcomers with resources like public transportation, federal and state assistance, and employment application processes. Respondents stated that they actually preferred to work this way, as a collective community, because it was what they were used to. The in-group facilitated access to tangible resources as well as emotional support. As a result, the Boston respondents obtained social capital in the form of transportation and jobs. Participation in the labor market allowed the Boston respondents an opportunity to integrate. They were busy working full time schedules and learning how things work in the American service industry. This was especially important, as their social connections with members outside of their community were very limited. Although the majority of respondents were employed, they still struggled economically due to the high cost of living in Boston, as well as mentally, because of issues of safety and security in the places they live.

When I asked Boston respondents to rate their happiness or success on a scale of 1-10 I received a variety of responses (ranging from 5-10). The average rating among all of the interviewees was 7.7. Most people agreed that they were glad to be in the U.S., they were happy with what they were doing, but realized that life could be better. Gyan shed light on this subject when I asked him if he could explain his number rating in more detail. He said, “My life in U.S.A is a six. Not too much bad, but not a ten. Bill Gates, he’s a ten. I pick six because everything is a struggle.” Thus, while the Boston sample found success in employment and the creation of an in-group network that sustained social capital and cultural practices, they still struggled to achieve total satisfaction and happiness in their new homes.
IMPORTANT SIMILARITIES

While the goal of this study was to compare the differences between urban and rural resettlement, and those differences have been emphasized in the analysis up to this point, there are several important similarities to note as well. As this is one of few scholarly works on the Bhutanese populations’ experiences in the United States, I believe it is important to share the information I found throughout the entire interview process. Unsurprisingly, I found similarities in regard to the variables of background and motivation to move to the United States. As the Bhutanese refugees were in a unique situation, they shared relatively comparable stories about life in the camps and deciding to resettle in the U.S. More unexpectedly, I found commonalities in regard to the initial challenges the Bhutanese faced in both locations, their feelings about American culture, the growing generation gap, and their belief in the possibility of a better life.

“I was bewildered”- Initial Disorientation

I found the most overwhelming similarity among experiences in response to my questions about what the first few weeks had been like in each place and what kinds of challenges the respondents faced. There was almost unanimous agreement that the first few weeks had been a very difficult period, as most people experienced a sense of complete disorientation. Many respondents said they did not know who to talk to, where to go, or what to do. They were unaware of the laws and regulations in the U.S. and had trouble communicating with people. Even those respondents that had learned English in the camps had trouble communicating because they had learned British English and they found the American pronunciation so different that they could not understand what people were saying. Abhi told me that he was so baffled by the way people were speaking in Lynn he thought it might not be English at all. He went to the library to double check that the books were in English, and was surprised but relieved that they
were. For some participants this confusion led to a kind of paralysis; one respondent told me she was so unsure of everything that she and her family just sat in their apartment until the caseworker came four days later. Most surprising was that there did not seem to be any difference in this experience according to place. Despite having different network connections and resources availability, respondents in Laconia and Boston experienced the same sense of complete disorientation upon arrival in the United States. For instance, most Laconia interviewees gave answers similar to these responses:

At first in Laconia, we are one of the first few families. At first we were really nervous. When we move outside there is nobody there. It was difficult because we have no language at the time… We didn’t know where to go, where to go for market. – Hari Prasad, Male, Laconia

We think that we are in the woods. We don’t know where to go, what to do. At first it was very difficult to understand the language because we speak English, but we have different pronunciation. – Geeta, Female, Laconia

It was too bad. I was the second family in Laconia from the Bhutanese community… It was very difficult. I didn’t know what to do. I didn’t know the rules and regulations: if I could walk outside, what to drink, what not to drink, what to eat, what not to eat. So many things. – Lalit, Male, Laconia

In the first few days I thought: Where am I right now? I don’t know anything. I would roam here and there. It was sad. If someone said do you want to go to Nepal right now, I would say yes I want to go back. Everything was new. We didn’t have transportation. I speak English but I might not understand people. – Dhan Bhadur, Male, Laconia

In comparison most Boston interviewees gave answers similar to these responses:

I have a different story than others. I was the first family in Chelsea. I think I was the first Nepali speaking person in Chelsea. That time was very difficult. I didn’t know how to go to Market Basket, how to take the subway. I didn’t have any friends. – Yadu, Male, Chelsea

Challenges because we can’t talk with people, our language is different and our tongue is quite different as well. It is a different style. All your things are different, the rules and
regulations of the office, it is different from us so we got uncomfortable here. – Rekha, Female, Lynn

When I came here first time everything is a surprise, everything is unique. It is completely different from Nepal. It is difficult for us to know each and every process, like going to the market to do the shopping, everything is different. – Kazi, Male, Lynn

For the first couple of weeks I was bewildered. Although my relatives had already been in Lynn they were also unaware of the locality. Because we need somebody to interact and lean about the things here, we found ourselves a kids of solitary family… – Abhi, Male, Lynn

It is very clear from these quotations that respondents in both places struggled during their initial resettlement period. In both sets of responses people mentioned difficulty communicating, knowing where to go to get food, how to get from one place to another, and a lack of information about the laws and regulations of the area. Moreover, this period of confusion did not seem to vary depending on a respondent’s length of residency in the U.S. While those who were the first to resettle in each area emphasized this point, as to explain why they had difficulty, I still received very similar responses from people who had resettled just six months ago or three years ago. It seemed that despite the unique network connections and resource availability that have developed over time in each place, newcomers still face unsettling feelings upon arrival.

The Growing Generation Gap

Another important area of agreement between respondents in the two places was in regards to the growing generation gap among grandparents, parents, and children. While the period of initial disorientation gradually improved over time for respondents, they pointed out that their parents had not had the same luck. They noted the difficulty of the older generation in particular, as few of them learned to speak English before arriving in the United States. Their lack of language skills make them less employable, thus they have had even greater difficulty finding jobs than the respondents I spoke with directly. As a result, they are extremely isolated.
Many respondents noted this plight of the older generation as a distinct problem in their individual families and in their communities:

- It was okay for young guys like me but for the old people, who don’t study and speak English? It was very challenging. – Ram Lal, Male, Laconia

- In my view life is a nine, but in my parents view it is a six or seven. It is difficult for my parents because they don’t speak English. It is difficult for them to go to the store. – Krishna, Male, Laconia

- They [older people] have a very hard time with the language. Our old people talk about the old country. They are unable to go out and talk to anyone else. At least we can communicate, but they cannot, so that makes us a little bit no good. – Geeta, Female, Laconia

- For me it is okay but for my parents it is difficult. They think maybe we shouldn’t have come… They become frustrated. – Bhim, Male, Lynn

During many of the interviews I conducted respondents’ parents were home. They sat nearby dozing off, playing with grandchildren, or making tea. Respondents made it clear that the older generation was unhappy with their current isolated position. Some even stated that their parents wish they had not come to the United States at all.

The older generation’s difficulty adjusting was exacerbated by the growing gap they felt developing between their own desires and those of their children and grandchildren. While they prefer to maintain traditional cultural norms, many members of the younger generation have already adopted more “American” practices and tried to distance themselves from their parents’ control. As Chura Muni, a father of two from Lynn, explained, “Our generations will have a struggle with cultural thing… We have grown up in Nepal and then we came here, but we still have our cultural things from our country and we want to maintain that. But our kids who grow up here will be totally like Americans.” Respondents described children’s “American” behaviors as disobedient. Younger Bhutanese people want to have control over their own lives and to have
less involvement with their families. They prefer video games and movies to studying or helping with household chores. Respondents anguished over the problems that have emerged between the generations since coming to the United States:

Our people fear that the coming generation, the small children if they grow up then all the systems here. Our culture is not that. We accept and love our parents and take care of them and they also take care of us…. They may spoil their minds by doing nonsense things. Most of the families the children don’t obey. – Gyan, Male, Chelsea

Even in my family I feel a generation gap. The bigger they become the more distant they go. There are conflicts like we are a more conservative culture… I ask them to study but they are much more fascinated by movies. I get upset and my children say I am an old grumbling figure. I have asked elderly people here also and it is the same thing in their home. – Abhi, Male, Lynn

The respondents in this study were in a unique position, as the average age of respondents in Laconia was 27.6 and in Boston it was 28.9. The participants fell in between the two extremes of the generation gap. Those who were already parents felt the reality more acutely, but even those who had not yet had any direct experiences voiced concern about the topic. The Bhutanese traditionally have very close families in which the children are expected to care for their elders. Respondents feared that as they or their parents grew older, there would not be anyone to take care of them. As they sought explanation for why the changes in their younger generation had occurred, a few respondents blamed the unlimited freedoms that exist in the U.S.:

The thing I don’t like is freedom. There is too much freedom. I used to be a teacher, we used to control the students, but I couldn’t be a teacher here because the students have too much freedom. – Lalit, Male, Laconia

The young people they don’t respect their parents. Young kids like 16, 17 they say they hate their parents… they never listen. We think the same thing may happen to our children, we are afraid of that. They watch dirty movies, its open and free, these things are not allowed in Asian countries. That should be banned. – Gopal, Male, Laconia
Krishna told me he thought that the U.S. had “over freedom.” The freedoms in the United States were too many, too much, and happening too quickly. As a result, the older generation sat isolated in their homes by language skills, watching their grandchildren grow more and more distant from their traditional culture. Despite this negative assessment of the “Americanization” of the younger generation, respondents maintained hope for the future by believing a better life was possible for their children.

“Life will be better for them”: The American Dream Lives

As I sat chatting with Kazi and his wife after an interview in Lynn he looked at his daughter watching American cartoons and back at me and said, “Life in America is difficult. But for them I think it will be easy.” Many respondents shared this sentiment. They told me that they had not moved to the United States for themselves, but for the better future of their children:

I am here in the U.S. not for me but for the coming generation. If I stayed in Nepal I would be a refugee forever. Here if I work hard and save money he [his baby son] can be whatever he wants to be…It is the land of opportunity. It will take time but life will be better in the U.S. – Dhan Bhadur, Male, Laconia

We came here to see the future of our child. – Rekha, Female, Lynn

Here is good, but I will suffer here also…I have to do something for the future, for the next generation. I came here for the next generation. – Gyan, Male, Chelsea

We come here to build our future for our coming generation as well as for our society. In Nepal it is a small country but there is not any peace, and the education system is not good. We came here to improve our society. – Kazi, Male, Chelsea

Here the Bhutanese echo a traditional puritanical American sentiment: hard work is rewarded by success and good fortune. One can achieve whatever he wants as long as he is willing to work for it. While respondents recognized that it takes time for this effect to take place—as many of them are working hard and still struggling—they believed that it would occur for the next
generation. With superior English skills and American education, they believed their children would be equipped to succeed. Many respondents felt their sole purpose in America was to provide a better future for the next generation. They were working hard to pave the way not for themselves, but for the benefit of the children of the Bhutanese community.

This belief in the American dream helps to explain another similarity among urban and rural respondents, the desire to be a United States citizen. All twenty-one respondents answered, “yes” to the question, “In the future would you like to become a U.S. citizen?” One possible reason respondents were so committed to making life work in America was because they believed strongly in the American dream. While they were often struggling financially and sometimes emotionally as well, they still believed in the possibility of a better future for their children. In addition to the desire to provide a better future for the next generation, a few respondents described citizenship as their main reason for moving to the U.S. Citizenship is especially important to the Bhutanese because they have been without it for such a long time. Abhi explained, “The most inspiring thing is that we will be getting nationality here in five years. When all the property was lost… when the nationality was lost, I feared everything had been lost.” The Bhutanese have been stripped of a nationality, an integral part of every person’s identity, for almost twenty years. Life in America presents them with an opportunity to regain the title of “citizen.” This dedication to American ideals and a commitment to acquiring the rights and responsibilities associated with citizenship marks the adaptation of the Bhutanese in Laconia and Boston. Largely because of hope for a better future for the next generation and the promise of nationhood the respondents in both locations were committed to staying in the United States and discovering happiness and success.
The first motivations of this study were to determine if place significantly affects a refugee’s resettlement experience and subsequent adaptation, and to assess those differences between urban and rural locations. I am able to conclude that the characteristics of a place do matter in the resettlement experience. There were many differences in respondents’ experiences between urban and rural locations that appeared to have strong effects on overall well-being. However, the second purpose of the study, to discover if one kind of place is better for resettlement than another, did not draw a decisive result. From the outset of the project I knew that it would be challenging to measure and compare people’s satisfaction and success. As these concepts are multidimensional, I was concerned that the variables I chose to measure or the responses I received might not lead to a clear answer. However, I believed that the experiences would be so vastly different that I would be able to draw a conclusion about which kind of place was better for resettlement. What I did not expect to find was that almost the exact same level of satisfaction existed for the Bhutanese respondents in each place. As I stated in the rural and urban conclusions, the average ratings on the “satisfaction / happiness” scale were 6.8 and 7.7, respectively. Furthermore, when I threw out the highest and lowest rating from each calculation the rural number increased to 7.1, while the urban value stayed constant at 7.7. I believe the similarity of these medium-satisfaction ratings speaks to the tradeoffs that exist between urban and rural locations. For instance, being resettled in a rural community may allow refugees to build strong out-group connections, as small-town communities are often much more cohesive and people feel attached to their neighbors, however it may also expose refugees to discrimination. Being resettled in a city may present refugees with more opportunities for employment, however they may sacrifice feeling safe and secure in their neighborhood. These
kinds of distinct characteristics in each place affected respondents’ satisfaction and success; however, the positive and negative forces of these characteristics balanced out to have an equal effect on overall well-being. Where it is best to resettle each refugee may depend on his or her personal values and cultural background.

Interestingly, adaptation and incorporation occurred to some degree in both contexts. This can be better understood by using Ager and Strang’s (2008) conceptual framework of integration. In Boston the Bhutanese population’s adaptation is primarily marked by their participation in the labor market. They have adapted to the American capitalist employment system, found jobs, and work full-time to earn money to support their families. Their participation in employment is facilitated by their “social bridges” or in-group connections and founded in the desire to become U.S. citizens with rights and responsibilities. Despite the fact that they are hindered by a lack of safety and security, and have very few social bonds (out-group connections) and social links (governmental ties) they demonstrated a high degree of familiarity with American culture and want to become further connected. The Laconia Bhutanese demonstrated their adaptation through alternate “markers.” Their community involvement shows the degree to which they have successfully integrated. It was facilitated by social bridges, social bonds, social links, and feelings of safety and security. Their adaptation was also founded in a commitment to becoming true “Americans” through applying for citizenship. Although the Laconia Bhutanese exhibited more of the “core domains” of integration they were not necessarily any more adapted, successful, or satisfied. Like the Boston sample, they struggled financially and had a medium-level happiness. Thus, it seems that there are certain facilitators and connections that are more important to adaptation and incorporation than others. The Laconia and Boston Bhutanese respondents held in common social bridges and a foundation in
the wish to become citizens. Having a network of Bhutanese friends and family, and being motivated to legally become part of the American society were the most significant factors in determining these two Bhutanese populations’ assimilation.

So, what is at stake? If the Bhutanese in Laconia and Boston are adapting, what more could we ask for? The refugees’ overall well-being and success is at stake. While both populations adapted to some degree, they were by no means fully incorporated. The Bhutanese in Boston were isolated from their neighbors and the people in the city around them, while the Laconia Bhutanese were isolated from participating in the labor market. The Bhutanese refugees partially adapted through individual determination and the resourcefulness of their ethnic communities, but they were still teetering on the edge. Moreover, because of scarce resettlement resources we create a situation in which refugees’ only opportunity to incorporate is into the American underclass. As in Portes and Zhou’s (1993) segmented assimilation model, the Bhutanese refugees must take the path that is most accessible to them. Without training or opportunities to recertify professional skills, joining the lower class is the only path available.

Therefore, adaptation may mean remaining below the poverty level. In a worst-case scenario, refugees may end up homeless and dependent on the American welfare system. While the Bhutanese in Laconia and Boston are assimilating to American society to a degree, the lack of support they receive during the resettlement process and thereafter prevents them from achieving higher levels of satisfaction and success. Simply placing refugees in one kind of place or the other does not appear to solve this problem. However, the resettlement system can be improved to ease their transitions and better help them adapt to the complexities of life in the United States. Many of the subsequent recommendations follow from the suggestions respondents made about the resettlement system throughout the interview process.
Systematic Improvements

The UNHCR’s ultimate goal is the protection of refugees. It works towards this end by finding durable solutions for the world’s forcibly displaced people. Durable solutions are lasting resolutions to displacement; the UNHCR defines them as voluntary repatriation, local integration, or resettlement in a third country. These durable solutions are rooted in the notion of human rights put forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and specifically for refugees in the 1951 Geneva Refugee Convention. Each person has the right to basic dignity, mobility, and a home. The UNHCR admittedly favors voluntary repatriation and local integration over third country resettlement. Only about 1% of the world’s refugees are resettled in a third country each year (UNHCR, 2011). The UNHCR holds that third country resettlement can be both rewarding and challenging, as refugees are often placed in societies in which the language and culture are completely new to them (UNHCR, 2011). It relies on governmental and nongovernmental agencies in the country of relocation to aid refugees in this difficult transition. I argue that the system as it currently stands does not represent a “durable” solution. As was evident through my study, refugees are often left feeling isolated, disoriented, or afraid in their new host society and they have minimal resources for improving their economic and social positions. It is the responsibility of the resettlement agencies to minimize these feelings, and with the help of the U.S. government there are several concrete steps that they can take toward this end.

The first issue to address is the sense of initial disorientation that respondents faced. Many respondents told me that they did not know where to go, what to do, or who to talk to upon their arrival. As resettlement agencies exist to aid refugees in the transition process, adequate orientation should be their primary goal. As the system currently functions, caseworkers pick
refugees up at the airport, bring them to an already furnished apartment, leave them there, and then check-in on them within twenty-four hours. After this stage, procedures vary by agency. The issue here is not what caseworkers are failing to do, but that they are failing to do these things enough. This process can be improved by increasing the amount and quality of contact between the refugee and the caseworker during the first few weeks of his or her move. Caseworkers should check-in with families at least once a day within the first week of their arrival. During this time period caseworkers should acquaint their clients with the transportation system (or lack thereof), show them how to get to the grocery store, connect them to public assistance, and explain important U.S. laws and cultural norms. These orienting procedures must happen multiple times and be reinforced in a number of ways, as many of the respondents said that they were shown how to do something once, but that was not adequate for them to learn the process. In order for this increased contact to truly be of value there is a secondary need for adequate skill on behalf of the caseworker, especially in terms of language and experience. He or she must be experienced and trained in helping refugees adjust and be able to speak the language of his or her clients. As translators are often very expensive, some resettlement agencies only use them in emergency situations. However, to fully counter refugees’ initial disorientation and fears, they must be able to speak with someone who shares their language.

The more over-arching reformation that needs to occur is an extension of the resettlement timeline. Eight months of financial support and minimal contact with a caseworker is not long enough. With resettlement support ending so early, refugees face increased pressure to become employed in any position available. There is no chance to become recertified in a specific profession, or to take classes for further education and training. Consequently, refugees must often accept low-wage positions and remain below the poverty line for many years. By
continuing monetary benefits and caseworker assistance refugees would be better equipped to provide for themselves and their families in the future. In addition, they would benefit greatly from specific professional training programs. English language classes were highly accessible to and valued by the respondents in this study. In some instances employment services were also available. The next step in this process is to provide equally accessible professional training courses to help refugees find positions to fit their individual skills and prior experiences.

While these recommendations may seem to be exceedingly critical of the voluntary agencies, I emphasize that this is more of a criticism of the system, rather than of individual agencies. I realize that the kinds of reformations suggested are most likely desired by the voluntary agencies themselves. Like many federally run programs, several problems of the resettlement system boil down to issues of funding. In 2009 the United States Department of Health and Human Services’ Office of Refugee Resettlement budgeted $633 million for its programs (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2009). Though this number seems great, when broken down to the individual or family level the assistance it provides is not adequate. For example, in Washington a family of six with no income qualifies for only about $870 cash assistance each month (Washington State Department of Social and Health Services, 2011). In Laconia or Boston that would barely be enough to cover monthly rent. In order for systematic improvements to be made, there must be increased funding for refugee resettlement programs.

Recommendations for Further Research

The major contribution of this work is to serve as a gateway to further research. Its sample is limited to twenty-one people and two places. The findings discussed provide valuable information about the resettlement experience, but demand further verification and testing.
Specifically, there are several themes on which further research would provide the most insight. First, the effects of location on resettlement experiences are still an issue. While I determined that there are different characteristics that affect one’s experience in each place, I was not able to determine if one kind of place was better than the other. Further research on this subject may lead to a more decisive result. Especially because immigrants and refugees are increasingly being resettled in or moving to smaller cities and towns, it is important to consider the implications of location on how refugees adapt to life in the U.S. In addition, studying secondary resettlement might provide clues in determining the effects of location on satisfaction and success. Why do refugees move from their initial resettlement locations? If movement is prompted by a belief in better resources, what exactly are those resources and are their beliefs verified or denied upon secondary resettlement? A second theme to pursue in further research is the effect of employment on refugees’ satisfaction and success. As the respondents showed through this research, employment is of the utmost concern throughout the resettlement process. One’s employment status as well as his or her occupational mobility has unique implications on overall well-being. Although this study included employment, its broad focus did not allow for a complete exploration of the topic. Lastly, there is a need for increased refugee studies from a theoretical perspective. This study began with an examination of immigration literature because refugee literature lacked the necessary theoretical background. As refugees are particular types of immigrants, arriving under different circumstances and with different benefits, it is of the utmost importance to study them as a unique population. They are a population with rare resilience and courage that deserves further attention from their host country.
References


Envoy says US has resettled 30,000 Bhutanese from camps in Nepal to date. (2010, September 1). *BBC Monitoring South Asia - Political Supplied by BBC Worldwide Monitoring.*


http://michaelolaf.net/AIBhutan.html


Appendix A: Interview Guide

The Transition

Can you tell me about what your life was like in Nepal?
  Did you work or go to school?

How did you prepare for life in the United States?
  Did anyone help you prepare? What kinds of programs were there?

How did you feel when you found out you were moving to the United States?

What were your first few weeks like in (name of place)?

How is (name of place) similar to or different from Nepal?

What were some of the challenges you faced when you first arrived?
  Are you still dealing with those challenges? How did you overcome them? Have any new challenges arisen?

Access to Resources

How much time did you spend with your caseworker? What did he or she help you with?

How did you learn to speak English?
  How much did you know when you arrived? How comfortable are you speaking?

How do you get places everyday?
  Where do you go? How do you feel about walking / biking / taking the T / bus?
  How did you get your car / bike?

Do you watch TV or movies, read books, use a computer or listen to music?
  Do you have these things in your house? If not, where do you use them?

How do you get your food?
  Is it similar to or different from the food you ate in Nepal?

Do your children / siblings go to school in the area?
  What is it like for them? Have you met any of their friends or teachers? What were they like?

Do you have a job? What is it? How did you find it?
  How do you feel about your job?
What is your financial situation like?
   Do you have enough money to provide for the needs of your family? Do you
   Make enough money at work to cover these expenses?

**Social Ties / Community Connection**

How do you spend your time?
   What do you do on an average day? Who do you spend your time with?

Do you know other Bhutanese families in (name of place)?
   How many? How often do you get together?

Do you have non-Bhutanese friends?
   How did you meet? How often do you get together?

Have you been to community events (like parades, concerts, festivals or sports games)?
   What was it like? How often do you go?

Do you feel there is a strong Bhutanese community in (name of place)?
   Why or why not?

How do you feel about the larger community?
   Are non-Bhutanese people friendly or helpful?

**General Satisfaction**

Rate how happy you are with your life in (name of place) on a scale of 1-10.
   Why did you pick this number?

Do you ever think about moving somewhere else?

Do you miss your life in Nepal?
   Do you want to go back?

Do you know people that have been resettled in other parts of the United States?
   How have their experiences been similar or different?

Do you wish that things had been different for you in any way?

What is your favorite thing about life in the US? What is your least favorite?
Appendix B: Survey

Demographic Information
Circle: Male / Female
Age: __________
Circle: Married / Single
Do you have children? Circle: Yes / No
   If yes, how many? __________

The Transition
1. When I learned I was moving to the United States I felt (circle all that apply)
   a. Happy
   b. Sad
   c. Excited
   d. Afraid
   e. Indifferent
   f. Nervous
   g. Other: (How? ______________________________________________________________________)

2. During my first few weeks I felt the transition was:
   a. Very easy
   b. Somewhat easy
   c. Neutral
   d. Somewhat challenging
   e. Very challenging

Access to Resources
3. During the resettlement process I felt:
   a. I needed more help than I received
   b. I received enough help
   c. I received too much help

4. Rank these people in order of helpfulness throughout your resettlement experience. The number 1 is the most helpful.
   a. My caseworker

   _____
b. A volunteer from the resettlement agency
   _______

c. My family that arrived before I did
   _______

d. My friends that arrived before I did
   _______

e. Other Bhutanese refugees that I did not know prior to arrival
   _______

f. Other: (Who? _________________)
   _______

5. How many people do you live with (not including yourself)?
   a. 1-2
   b. 3-5
   c. 6-8
   d. 9-11
   e. More than 11

6. How did you learn to speak English? Pick all that apply.
   a. I learned in Nepal
   b. I taught myself when I arrived
   c. I learned in school in the US
   d. I took an adult ESL class in the US
   e. I had a tutor in the US
   f. Other: (How?________________________________________________)

7. What forms of transportation do you use? Pick all that apply.
   a. Walk
   b. Bicycle
   c. Subway (T)
   d. Bus
   e. I get rides
      i. If yes, from who?
   f. I drive my car
   g. Other (What?________________________________________________)

8. Do you have a job?
   a. Yes
      i. What is it?________________________________________________
   b. No
9. How much money do you make an hour?
   a. Less than $7.25 per hour
   b. $7.25 per hour
   c. $7.26 - $9.00 per hour
   d. $9.01 - $11.00 per hour
   e. $11.01 - $15.00 per hour
   f. $15.01 - $20.00 per hour
   g. More than $20.00 per hour

10. Do you have health insurance?
    a. Yes
       i. Who provides it? (Government / Work)
    b. No

11. How many people in your home have jobs?
    a. 1
    b. 2
    c. 3
    d. 4
    e. 5
    f. More than 5 people work

12. Circle all of the following things that your family owns:
    a. Stove
    b. Refrigerator
    c. Vacuum
    d. Microwave
    e. Toaster
    f. Television
    g. Cable Television
    h. DVD Player / VCR
    i. Computer
    j. Internet access
    k. Stereo
l. Bicycle
m. Car

13. How much does your rent cost each month?
   a. Under $300
   b. $300 - $500
   c. $501 - $700
   d. $701 - $900
   e. $901 - $1100
   f. $1101 - $1300
   g. $1301 - $1500
   h. $1501 - $2000
   i. More than $2000

Social Ties / Community Connections

14. How often do you socialize with other Bhutanese people (other than family)?
   a. Every day
   b. A few times a week
   c. Once a week
   d. A few times a month
   e. Once a month
   f. Every few months
   g. Never
   h. Other: (How often?______________________________)

15. How often do you socialize with non-Bhutanese people?
   a. Every day
   b. A few times a week
   c. Once a week
   d. A few times a month
   e. Once a month
   f. Every few months
   g. Never
   h. Other: (How often?______________________________)
16. I feel people in the community are:
   a. Openly hostile or mean
   b. Unfriendly
   c. Indifferent to me
   d. Pleasant / Courteous
   e. Extremely friendly

17. How do your coworkers treat you at work?
   a. My coworkers are mean to me
   b. My coworkers ignore me
   c. My coworkers are friendly
   d. My coworkers are my good friends

18. Have you ever felt that you were discriminated against?
   a. Yes
      i. Where were you?_______________________________________
      ii. What was the situation?_______________________________
      iii. How did it make you feel?____________________________
   b. No
   c. I’m not sure

19. Things that I do in my free time (circle all that apply):
   a. Spend time alone
   b. Spend time with my family at home
   c. Spend time with my Bhutanese friends
   d. Spend time with my non-Bhutanese friends
   e. Go to the library
   f. Go to the movies
   g. Go out to eat
   h. Go to community events (parades, fairs, shows, talks, dances)
   i. Go to church
   j. Shop
   k. Other (What?___________________________________________)
**General Satisfaction**

20. How do you feel about your job?
   a. I do not like my job at all
   b. My job is okay, but I would like to do something else
   c. I am satisfied with my job
   d. I like my job very much
   e. I do not know how I feel about my job

21. How do you feel about your life here in (name of place)?
   a. I am very unsatisfied and unhappy
   b. I am somewhat unsatisfied and unhappy
   c. I feel neutral about my life in (name of place)
   d. I am somewhat satisfied and happy
   e. I am very satisfied and happy

22. In the future, I would like to:
   a. Stay in (name of place)
   b. Move to another place in the United States
      i. Where?
   c. Move back to Nepal
   d. Move back to Bhutan
   e. Move to another country
      i. Where?

23. In the future would you like to become a US citizen?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. I’m not sure yet
Appendix C: Sample Distribution Data

Age Distribution

Length of Residency Distribution

Additional Demographic Distribution

Status (participants not listed are in the opposite category)
Appendix D: Survey Results

The Transition

The transition questions revealed that both participants in Laconia and Boston experienced a variety of feelings before moving to the United States; however, almost every Laconia respondent experienced happiness, while only three Boston respondents listed this as a primary feeling. In addition, the majority of both Laconia and Boston respondents chose that their transitions were either “somewhat challenging” or “very challenging,” which supports the finding I discussed in the similarities section of the data analysis, regarding feelings of initial disorientation.
Access to Resources

Q3: During the resettlement process I felt:

- I needed more help than I received
- I received enough help
- I received too much help

# of Participants

Q4. Rank these people in order of helpfulness

- Volunteer
- Caseworker
- Family/Friend

# of Participants

Ranked first most helpful

Q5. How many people do you live with (not including yourself)?

- One - Two
- Three - Five
- Six - Eight

# of Participants
* In Laconia one participant responded, “yes” to this question, as he is paid by the state to stay home to take care of his elderly mother. In the analysis section I did not include this as employment outside of the home.
*Respondents who had been previously employed answered job-related questions in regard to their last job.*

**Q9: How much do you make per hour?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># of Participants</th>
<th>$7.25 - $9.00</th>
<th>$9.01 - $11.00</th>
<th>$11.01 - $15.00</th>
<th>$15.01 - $20.00</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Laconia</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boston</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Q10: Do you have health insurance?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># of Participants</th>
<th>Yes, government provided</th>
<th>Yes, through work</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Laconia</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boston</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Q11: How many people in your home have jobs?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th># of Participants</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Laconia</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boston</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This question has a large amount of error. Some respondents did not circle the things that their landlords technically “owned,” while other respondents did. In addition “family” may have been defined differently by different people (immediate versus extended).

The access to resources sections measured many different variables. Questions three and four support the finding that Boston respondents experienced relatively less support during their transition period, as the Laconia respondents had the help of local volunteers. Question six shows that participants had equal access to ESL classes. The following question shows a higher percentage of drivers in Laconia, while Boston respondents tended to utilize public transportation. In addition to having a higher rate of employment and receiving higher average wages, Boston respondents had larger home sizes (number of people) and higher rent expenses, thus their financial mobility was limited. Questions ten and twelve reveal findings not discussed in the data analysis. Boston respondents had a higher rate of health insurance coverage, as
Massachusetts has a state program called Mass Health that compares families’ incomes to the federal poverty level to determine eligibility. Most of the families in this sample qualified for the program. Just by looking at the graph of question twelve it appears that the Laconia participants had much more physical capital, as there was a higher number of Laconia participants for almost every resource. However, I believe this discrepancy was due to a poorly worded question and various possible interpretations of the question by respondents. Overall, the survey questions about access to resources supported the interview findings.

Social Ties / Community Connections

**Q14: How often do you socialize with other Bhutanese people?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Laconia</th>
<th>Boston</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Every day</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Few times a week</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Few times a month</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a month</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every few months</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Q15: How often do you socialize with non-Bhutanese people?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Laconia</th>
<th>Boston</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Every day</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Few times a week</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Few times a month</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a month</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every few months</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Q16: I feel people in the community are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perception</th>
<th>Laconia</th>
<th>Boston</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Openly hostile or mean</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unfriendly</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indifferent</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pleasant / Courteous</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extremely friendly</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q17: How do your coworkers treat you at work?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Treatment</th>
<th>Laconia</th>
<th>Boston</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>They are friendly</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They are my good friends</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q18: Have you ever felt that you were discriminated against?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Laconia</th>
<th>Boston</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I'm not sure</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The survey questions about respondents’ social networks and community ties raise a few new, interesting points. The Bhutanese in Boston see each other slightly more often than those in Laconia do, however contrary to the data analysis discussion it appears that the Boston sample socializes with non-Bhutanese people more often than the Laconia respondents. I believe this difference can be attributed to the higher rate of employment among Boston respondents, as they saw their non-Bhutanese coworkers (or “friends”) at work often. Laconia respondents felt people in their community were slightly more polite and friendly and they stated less experience with discrimination than the Boston respondents did. Respondents engaged in very similar activities during their free time, the vast majority of it being spent with Bhutanese friends and family.

**General Satisfaction**
Similar to the previous sections, the survey data produced by these questions mimics the findings detailed in the data analysis. On question twenty Laconia and Boston participants responded that their employment situations were okay, but that they could be better. In addition,
they both responded that they were for the most part satisfied with their lives (similar to an average rating of about 7 in each place). Question twenty-two reveals that both Laconia and Boston respondents felt conflicted about whether to stay in their current location or to move within the United States. In Boston this was caused by a lack of connection to the community and expensive prices, while in Laconia it was largely caused by a lack of employment.