

The Tibetan Diaspora and the Politics of Belonging in the Twin Cities (Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota, USA)

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ABSTRACT

Tibetans in the American diaspora express their identity in different ways. A good proportion of them emphasise the need for the renewal of Tibetan culture in danger of being lost and political engagement as a means of cultural resurgence. The new emerging identities of the Tibetans who have migrated to the United States and among the youth particularly those in the Twin Cities (Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota) have significant roles to play in this discourse. This thesis aims not just to represent their voices but also to examine the nature of Tibetan socialisation through cultural re-education, political engagement and the establishment of space. The relinquishing of political power by the 14th Dalai Lama to Lobsang Sangay in August 2011 reinforces the importance of a struggle that has contributed to how the Tibetans' negotiate their demands for self-rule in Asia and beyond.

This research focuses on the Twin Cities (Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota) Tibetan community. It not only highlights the new cultural and political fault-lines, but also shows the emerging reality of Tibetan American identity as Tibetans contrast their life experiences and memories of living in South Asia (India, Nepal, Bhutan) as expressed through their own Tibetan narratives.

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(Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota, USA)

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DECLARATIONS

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

Signed

(Candidate)

Date


26 July '17

STATEMENT 1


This thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. Where correction services have been used, the extent and nature of the correction is clearly marked in a footnote.

Other sources are acknowledged by midnotes or footnotes giving explicit references. A bibliography is appended.

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26 July '17


STATEMENT 2

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DEDICATION

My wife Dorothy Piatti whose love, encouragement and patience were expressed daily in this research journey.

My Father and Mother, Joseph and Martha Piatti.

My Father and Mother-in-Law Rowland and Hariett Edwards whose encouragement and support made this possible.

Wangyal Ritzekura who over a number of years shared with me his passion and love for Tibet and for the Tibetan youth in the diaspora to learn and maintain their language and culture.

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Table of Contents

ABSTRACT	i
DECLARATIONS.....	v
DEDICATION	vii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	viii
Table of Contents	ix
FIGURES	xv
TABLES	xvi
LIST OF ACRONYMS	xvii
Chapter One: Introduction, Research Background, Research Question and Methodology.....	18
1 Introduction.....	18
1.1 Research Chapter Outline.....	20
1.2 Chapter One Overview	23
1.3 Background and Academic Influences: Setting the Stage	23
1.3.1 Personal Background and Influence.....	24
1.3.2 Academic Influence	26
1.3.3 General Comments	27
1.4 Research Question(s): Background and Formalized Questions	28
1.4.1 Formalized Research Question and Subordinate Questions.....	29
1.4.2 Core Argument	29
1.5 Research Method and Methodology: Challenges and Opportunities	29
1.5.1 Literature Review	30

1.5.2	Participant Observation	31
1.5.3	Interviews	35
1.6	Conclusion	46
Chapter Two: Historical Background and Framework		47
2 Introduction and Overview		47
2.1	Setting the Stage: Historical Background	48
2.1.1	Challenges of Exile and Resettlement	62
2.2	Tibetans' Major Policies for Freedom	64
2.2.1	Overview of the Rangzen Policy	65
2.2.2	Overview of the Middle Path Policy	68
2.3	Similarities and Differences of the Policies	71
2.4	Conclusion	73
Chapter Three: The Tibetan Diaspora and Transnational Perspectives in the Twin Cities.....		75
3 Chapter Introduction and Overview		75
3.1	Historical Context and Critical Perspectives	75
3.2	Contemporary Scholarship	77
3.2.1	Dispersal: Concepts and Forces	80
3.3	Diaspora and Transnationalism	84
3.3.1	Transnational Examples – The Twin Cities Context	86
3.4	Identity: One Aspect	90
3.4.1	Identity and His Holiness the 14 th Dalai Lama	91
3.5	Perspectives on Homeland and Host-land	97
3.6	Summary	100
Chapter Four: The Twin Cities' Tibetan Diaspora Journey		106

4 Introduction and Overview	106
4.1 Migration and the Challenge of Numbers.....	108
4.2 “In my own words”: Living, Leaving and Arriving	111
4.2.1 Choegyal’s Story	112
4.2.2 Khorlo’s Story	116
4.2.3 Losang’s Story.....	123
4.2.4 Khando’s Story	126
4.2.5 Wangdark’s Story	132
4.3 Highlighted Themes	140
4.3.1 Identity and Assimilation.....	141
4.3.2 Politics and the Role of Institutions formed by the Tibetan Community	142
4.3.3 The 14 th Dalai Lama: Tension with Honour and Allegiance.....	144
4.4 General Comments and Conclusion	146
 Chapter Five: The Creation of the Twin Cities’ Tibetan Community: Cultural Challenges and Opportunities	 147
5 Introduction and Overview.....	147
5.1 Genesis of the Twin Cities’ Tibetan Community.....	152
5.1.1 Lumtok’s Story of ‘Why Minnesota?’	152
5.2 A Centralized Community in the Twin Cities	155
5.2.1 Gathering Data: Tibetans in Public Schools	156
5.2.2 General Observation of the School Data.....	158
5.2.3 Concentrations of Tibetans: Reflections on Minnesota Public Schools Data	160
5.3 Creation of a Community.....	165
5.3.1 Memory and its Significance	165
5.4 TAFM: The Tibetan Community’s Response to Concerns of Identity and Culture	167
5.4.1 TAFM: Not just a Building.....	169

5.4.2	Language: The Primary Concern	173
5.4.3	Concern for History and the ‘Heart of a Tibetan’	175
5.5	Tibetan Cultural School: Preserving the Past	177
5.5.1	TCS Programme	178
5.5.2	A Typical Saturday Schedule	178
5.5.3	Motivation and Concern	179
5.6	Lamton: Preparing for the Future	181
5.6.1	Tutoring.....	183
5.6.2	Mentoring	184
5.6.3	College Preparation Programmes.....	185
5.6.4	Lamton’s Vision.....	186
5.7	Connecting through Social and Electronic Media	187
5.7.1	Reflections from the Narratives.....	188
5.7.2	General Observations on the Use of Media	190
5.8	Comments and Conclusion	191

Chapter Six: The Culture of Politics in the Twin Cities’ Tibetan Community: Challenges and Opportunities..... 195

6	Introduction and Overview	195
6.1	History Revisited and Contemporary Expressions.....	196
6.1.1	Rangzen, Independence and RTYC-MN	197
6.1.2	Middle Path / Middle Way Approach: Autonomy	200
6.2	Narratives: Congruencies and Disconnections	201
6.3	Narrative Exploration: Adhesion or Tension?	205
6.4	The 14th Dalai Lama: Unifier or Separatist?	211
6.4.1	Policy Differences	212
6.4.2	Shugden Controversy	213

6.4.3	China and the 14 th Dalai Lama	217
6.5	Comments and Conclusions	219
Chapter Seven: Conclusion.....		222
7	Introduction and Overview.....	222
7.1	Research Objective.....	223
7.2	Core Argument.....	224
7.3	Methodology: How the Research was conducted	224
7.4	Research Findings	226
7.4.1	Main Finding (1) Preserving the Past and Preparing the Future.....	227
7.4.2	Main Finding (2) TAFM	228
7.4.3	Main Finding (3) Political Tensions.....	230
7.4.4	Main Finding (4) The Central Role of the 14 th Dalai Lama	231
7.4.5	Main Finding (5) Nothing is Static	232
7.5	Contribution to Knowledge.....	233
7.6	General Comments	235
7.7	Future Research Recommendations.....	236
7.8	Conclusions.....	237
BIBLIOGRAPHY		239
Primary Sources.....		239
A.	Interviews	239
B.	Personal Conversations / Communications	240
Secondary Sources.....		241
Appendix 1 Letter of Introduction		258
Appendix 2 Letter of Consent.....		259

Appendix 3 Interviewee Assigned Names	260
Appendix 4 Interview Questions.....	261
Appendix 5 ICT Document	263
Appendix 6 Poster at TAFM of those who self-immolated	265
Appendix 7 2012 Report on Asian Populations within the Twin Cities	266
Appendix 8 MDE database report	267
Appendix 9 MMC 2014 Memorial Cup Honours	268
Appendix 10 RTYC-MN Past Events (2012-2014).....	269

FIGURES

Figure 1 Map of United States referencing Minnesota	19
Figure 2 Map of Tibet	49
Figure 3 Graphed Data from Table 4	158
Figure 4 Location of TAFM within the Tibetan Community	162

TABLES

Table 1 Interviewees' Age Range and Country of Birth	39
Table 2 Interviewees' Gender and Age Range	41
Table 3 Five Selected Tibetan Stories.....	111
Table 4 Tibetan Students in Minnesota Public School	157

LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACT	American College Testing
BCE	Before the Common Era
CD	Critical Dialogue
CE	Common Era
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CTA	Central Tibetan Administration
ICT	International Campaign for Tibet
MDE	Minnesota Department of Education
MMC	Martyrs Memorial Cup
MN	Minnesota
Ph.D.	Doctor of Philosophy
PLA	Peoples Liberation Army
PRC	Peoples Republic of China
RTYC-MN	Regional Tibetan Youth Congress of Minnesota
RTYC-NYNJ	Regional Tibetan Youth Congress of New York and New Jersey
RTYC-WI	Regional Tibetan Youth Congress of Wisconsin
SAT	Scholastic Aptitude Test
SOAS	School of Oriental and African Studies
SFT	Students for a Free Tibet
TAFM	Tibetan American Foundation of Minnesota
TAR	Tibetan Autonomous Region
TCS	Tibetan Cultural School
TYC	Tibetan Youth Congress
VOA	Voice of America

Chapter One: Introduction, Research Background, Research Question and Methodology

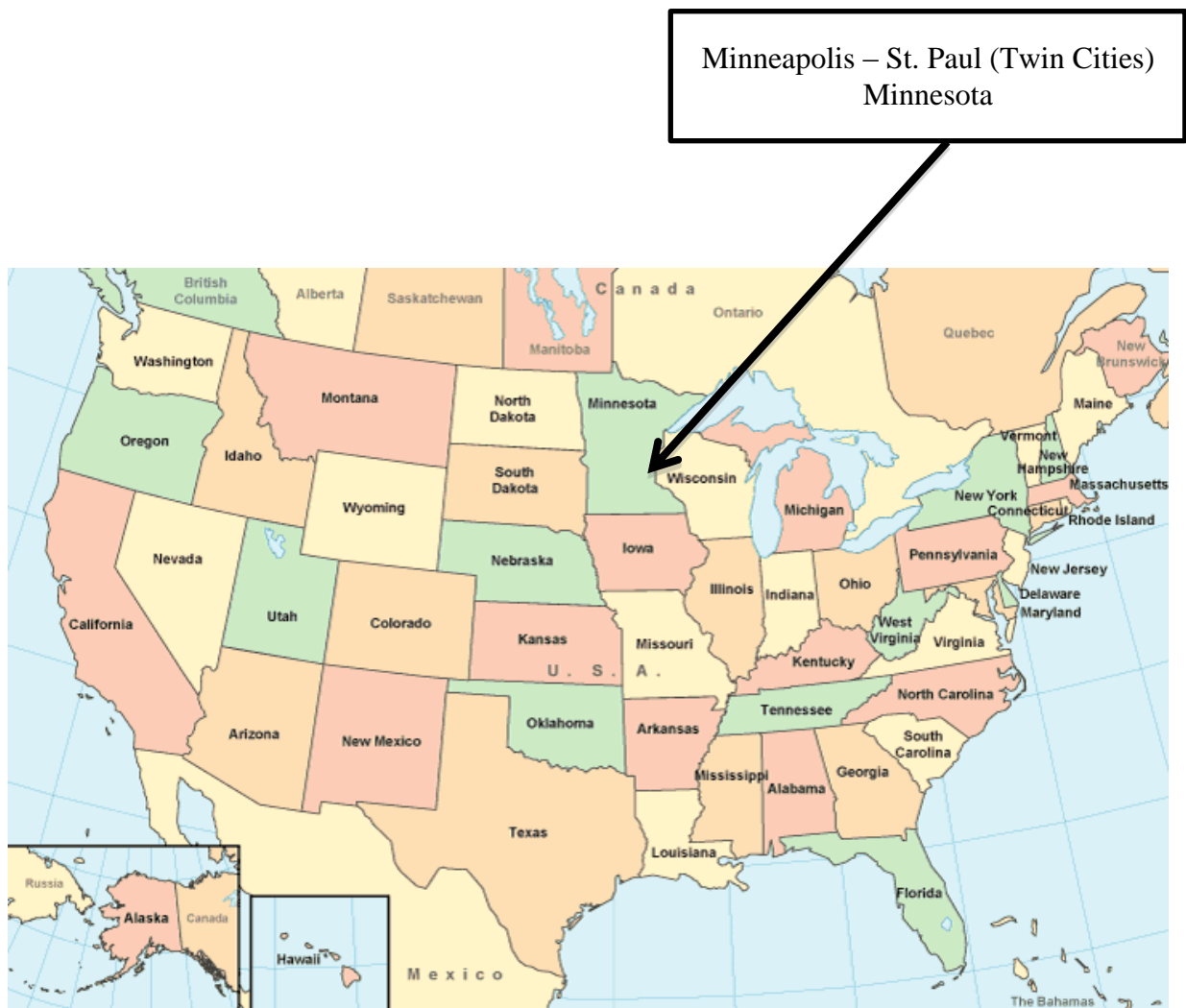
We left Tibet because the conditions in Tibet were getting worse. We didn't and still do not have freedom of speech to speak of His Holiness or of the political situation; freedom of movement within Tibet; nor the freedom to study on your own language, culture and history. If I stayed in Tibet I would have been brainwashed by the communist Chinese government on what they wanted me to say and do. (Wangchuk, 2015 p.2).

1 Introduction

This research is focused on the Tibetan community in the Twin Cities (Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota, USA). The Twin Cities is a commonly referred description for the adjacent cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul in the state of Minnesota in the United States. These two cities are separated by the Mississippi River, the largest river in the US, which runs north to south, originating in Minnesota and eventually emptying into the Gulf of Mexico, a distance of approximately 2,252 miles.¹ The state of Minnesota is bordered by Canada to the north, the US state of Wisconsin to the east, the US states of North and South Dakota to the west and the US state of Iowa to the south. Figure One is a map of the United States showing the location of the state of Minnesota within the context of the US and how the Twin Cities is situated within Minnesota, which is the geographical setting of this research.

¹ See <https://www.nps.gov/miss/riverfacts.htm>

Figure 1 Map of United States referencing Minnesota



<http://www.united-states-map.com/usa7244.htm>

There are a number of reasons this research site was selected. Firstly, the Twin Cities hosts the 2nd largest Tibetan population in the United States, which is attested by the Tibetan American Foundation of Minnesota (TAFM) and City Vision, an organization that performs demographic studies of populations in various cities within the US. Secondly, the Twin Cities is where I currently reside and thirdly my graduate degree involved research with the Tibetan population within the Twin Cities area. The Twin Cities also offered a uniqueness in that it was the site of the original group of Tibetans that settled formally under the Tibetan United States Repatriation Act of 1990,

in which 1,000 Tibetans were allowed to settle in the US from India, Nepal and Bhutan. How the Twin Cities became the initial site is described in greater detail in section 5.1.1 ‘Lumtok’s Story: Why Minnesota?’ Essentially, it was through a sequence of personal circumstances with a Tibetan who had already made Minnesota their home. Once the Tibetan United States Repatriation Act of 1990 was enacted, the connections and relationships that were already built upon were utilized to a greater extent.

It was through the oral defence of my graduate degree, which is entitled “A Critical Dialogue” (CD), that the CD committee encouraged me to pursue a Ph.D. looking more critically and deeply into varying aspects of the local Tibetan community and the challenges of relocation. One of the areas that had intrigued me was why and how the Tibetans had come to Minnesota and what adjustments, challenges and / or opportunities they had encountered in their journey. I was curious about their journey because of my own personal background: born and raised in a different culture (outside the United States), speaking different languages and then moving to the US. I recall my own personal frustration of adjustment and the longing of what I considered home, (Europe and the Middle East in my case) and being one that stood out from the rest of my schoolmates. It is through these personal and academic influences that fostered my research interest regarding the transitions and adjustments that social groups encounter when relocating to a new host location, specifically the Tibetans in the Twin Cities.

1.1 Research Chapter Outline

This research consists of seven chapters:

- 1) Chapter One discusses my background and personal location with respect to this research project. Being born and raised in Saudi Arabia and Europe and living ‘outside of the US’ in my earlier life influenced my worldview. I also explored the influence of my academic background, particularly my graduate degree, which provided me with an

introduction to the Tibetan community in Minnesota. The research questions are followed by the core argument with a discussion regarding the method and methodology, which includes the selection criteria for interviewees. Further, I discuss the adjustments I needed to undertake in this research from its original design.

2) Chapter Two examines the historical background and political dynamics influencing the Tibetans to leave Tibet and to settle in Minnesota. These dynamics and forces account for the Tibetans developing expressions of their culture, both in longing for what they had in Tibet and their attempts for the preservation of what they consider as important aspects of their culture in the United States and specifically in Minnesota. This background enables the reader to understand this research through the insights revealed by the Tibetans, which were accomplished through the interviews and my personal participation in a number of programmes and institutions the Tibetans in the Twin Cities developed to create and maintain a community.

3) Chapter Three discusses the diaspora from the perspectives of scholars in the area of diaspora and transnational studies and by Tibetan specialists. There are insights and factors to which scholars such as Cohen and Tololyan explore regarding fundamental concepts and traits of a diaspora, which are expanded upon by scholars such as Faist, Guarnizo, Sokfeld and Vertovec as contemporary diaspora(s) are examined through the conceptual lens of transnationalism. An additional discussion is presented relating to nuances that Tibetans express as being specific to Tibetans. Most significant is the role of the 14th Dalai Lama, (who throughout this research shall be referred to as the 14th Dalai Lama or Dalai Lama²) as seen not only by scholars such as Anand and Thurman, but also through the narratives of the Tibetans themselves.

4) Chapter Four explores the challenges of demographic data and highlights five journey stories of Tibetans. These were selected as representative of the thirty

² In conversations with members of the Tibetan community, the common term used for the 14th Dalai Lama is 'His Holiness'.

interviews that were conducted for this research. A total of 750 pages of transcripts were generated and analysed from the interviews. These are the personal stories of the Tibetans in their journey from Asia to Minnesota, and their efforts and challenges in the creation and the maintenance of their community. The significance of these narratives is due to a number of factors: 1) under their own admission many of the Tibetans that I interviewed revealed that they had not openly or publically told their story previously; 2) my own research into the journey and resettlement for the Tibetans in the Twin Cities, until now has remained unexamined; 3) the 1st generation of Tibetans who left Tibet in the 1950's and 1960's are getting older, leaving some of the personal narratives untold and undocumented 4) the dynamics of the Tibetan population with the associated political climate between China and Tibet are taking on more vocalized and even contested forms, as shall be seen in the interviews in Chapter Four and explored in greater detail in Chapters Five and Six.

5) Chapter Five examines various aspects that constitute a sense of 'community' among the Tibetans in the Twin Cities. These efforts focus more specifically on the cultural side as opposed to the political aspect, which is more fully developed in Chapter Six. For the purpose of this research, I define the 'cultural side' as being those efforts and institutions that are formed by the Tibetans to teach, and pass-on aspects the Tibetans determine to be significant, such as maintaining the Tibetan language as well as instruction in Tibetan history. As I argue, these cultural dimensions are a crucial part of maintaining an identity and community for the current and future generations.

6) Chapter Six explores the political aspects of the Tibetans in the Twin Cities. There are significant overlapping positions between Tibet and China over Tibet's sovereignty. This chapter examines the programmes and the role of the Dalai Lama in this political struggle, which I define as the expression of the Tibetan Cause through activism. This activism includes public demonstrations, which through social media and

networking, exposes some of the tensions from a transnational perspective, and the creation of institutions that primarily address the struggle for freedom. One such organization examined in depth is the Regional Tibetan Youth Congress of Minnesota (RTYC-MN).

7) Chapter Seven provides a concluding summary and analysis, the interviews and the results of my long-term fieldwork in the Twin Cities, including suggestions for further research. Also discussed is a discussion of the contribution this research makes in the area of diasporic and transnational studies. The role of the 14th Dalai Lama is also discussed and the challenges and tensions that the Twin Cities' Tibetan community has had and is facing and how the community meets these challenges.

1.2 Chapter One Overview

This chapter discusses the foundational components of this research and is divided into four main sections: a) personal background b) research background c) research question(s) and d) methodology. Each of these sections is significant in that it provides the reader with a perspective and context as well as an understanding of my personal location within the research. In essence, this chapter is designed to provide the 'Why' and 'What' for this research: *why* am I researching this topic and *what* am I attempting to learn from this research.

1.3 Background and Academic Influences: Setting the Stage

A review of my personal background is important because it plays a significant role in shaping this research project. Although I have sought to uphold a standard of objectivity throughout, my personal history and worldview formation also contribute to the perspective or lens through which I use in approaching and analysing my research. Mannen, citing Powdermaker, discusses this in *The Informant Game* noting: 'it is an

illusion to suggest that fieldworkers somehow remove their “personalities” from the fieldwork’ (Mannen, 1981. p.480). I interpret ‘personalities’ to extend beyond character and internal traits to physical characteristics: I am a middle-class white male working alongside and among Tibetans in the United States. As I shall express later, comments made about my role within the Tibetan community have played a pivotal role in shaping the research design and how my Tibetan informants received me.

1.3.1 Personal Background and Influence

I was born and raised in Saudi Arabia of white American (United States citizens) parents. I was the only sibling and member of my family born and raised outside of the United States. So, even at an early age, I was ‘set apart’ from the upbringing of my biological family. Upon my family’s relocation back to the United States, after my parents lived in the Middle East, Africa and Europe for over twenty-two years (and for me almost ten years), we settled in the state of Louisiana.

Once we moved to the United States, the consequence of a) being born and raised outside of the United States and b) inculcated in social groups that were highly mixed became quite apparent. In almost all of my schooling and social relationships in the United States, I was the one ‘born a foreigner’ – this was also true within my family. Further, I was one of the only children in my youth (school and social setting) that spoke languages other than English, travelled and lived outside the United States and lived among people who were of other (non-American) nationalities. It was not until our family arrived and settled in the United States that I lived almost exclusively among Americans. I still retain the memory of being introduced to others by my parents as ‘the only one [of our family] not born in the United States’.

Being born outside the United States, specifically in Saudi Arabia, still has latent effects as recently as a few years ago, when I attempted to renew my US passport - a

process that typically takes forty-five to sixty days but in my case exceeded one year. After numerous attempts to resolve the delay, I was finally advised that I was assigned to a [United States] State Department Officer to individually manage my renewal since I was born in Saudi Arabia and that I would need to obtain other documentation which included a 'certified birth certificate' from the United States Embassy in Saudi Arabia, along with my U.S. military discharge papers. The passport was eventually renewed.

In 2013 and 2014, my spouse was recruited to pursue a military officer position with a branch of the United States military in their intelligence division. After over a year of interviews, paperwork, background checks and testing, she was in the final stages of acceptance. In what was described as her final interview and review of her paperwork, she was asked for a copy of my United States passport. Upon presenting my passport, she was summarily and immediately advised that since I was born and raised in Saudi Arabia,³ her ability to proceed with the selected military field was cancelled 'as a result of 9/11'⁴ and its direct relation to my place of birth. My spouse provided documentary evidence of my previous United States military service and honourable discharge and information regarding my attainment of military top-secret clearances - all of which were of no consequence.

The effect of these examples is that even as a United States citizen and having honourably served in the US military, my foreign birth has had negative implications, especially after '9/11.' As a result of these challenges, I feel as though I have become more sensitive to those who have migrated to the US from abroad. Even though I have

³ What is surprising to me is that it had always been my impression that the United States and Saudi Arabia were close allies.

⁴ The term '9/11' has earned a place in history as the day and month in 2001 (September 11) that two American airliners were commandeered into the World Trade Towers of New York, subsequently destroying the buildings, while two other commercial aircraft crashed into the Pentagon, Washington D.C. and in a field in Pennsylvania.

the appearance and genealogical descent of a ‘white American’⁵, I was and am not on equal footing as compared to other Americans born on US soil. Further, the foreign birth not only affected me, but also other members of my family – it was not a status of having isolated repercussions.

In this research, my personal background and the challenges surrounding insider / outsider dynamics contributes to an empathetic awareness with the Tibetan diasporic population who are also experiencing the challenges of navigating a dual identity in the United States. Additionally, it is important to note that within the Tibetan community, I also experienced similar insider / outsider dynamics.

1.3.2 Academic Influence

The journey and historical context of this research not only comes from my personal background but also from my previous academic endeavours. My graduate degree earned at a university in St. Paul, Minnesota, required two one-year internships working in a multicultural environment. To accomplish this requirement, I contacted a pastor of an urban centre church in Minneapolis, Minnesota known for working with multicultural and immigrant populations. The location of this church was in the Phillips Neighbourhood of Minneapolis that according to CityVision is the most internationally diverse neighbourhood in the United States.⁶ Dr. John Mayer, the Executive Director of City Vision states, ‘the Phillips Neighbourhood, which is approximately 2 square miles, has over 150 different languages spoken and is considered one of the most diverse neighbourhoods in the United States’ (Mayer, 2014).

⁵ Though this term can easily be challenged in today’s context, there is and was a generalization that being American constituted being “white” (Caucasian).

⁶ Rev. John Mayer, Executive Director of City Vision, Minneapolis, confirmed the demographic data of the Phillips Neighbourhood. City Vision is an organization that collects and analyses demographic data of social groups.

As part of my graduate degree internship, I was asked by the church's pastor to work with the Tibetan Kids Club and alongside the Tibetan families so that his church could have a greater understanding of the Tibetan families that the church was hosting for weekly activities. My initial internship role was primarily to support the volunteers who worked with the Tibetan youth between the ages of five and twelve through involvement in sports activities, games and assisting them in gaining greater skills in reading and writing English. During the second-year internship, my role with the Tibetan Kids Club decreased as my work became more involved with the parents of the youth. It is through these internship positions that I became more involved with and connected to the Tibetan community in the Twin Cities.⁷

My graduate thesis also examined some preliminary demographic data and incorporated interviews with adult Tibetans, volunteers and missionaries that were providing services⁸ to the Tibetan community both in the United States and in Asia. Upon the completion of my graduate degree and during the critical dialogue, the Graduate Degree Examining Committee encouraged me to pursue further research into the Tibetan community in the Twin Cities through a Ph.D. It is through these experiences, both personal and academic, that influenced my interest in this research project.

1.3.3 General Comments

This dissertation examines the journey, settlement and community building of Tibetans who have relocated to the Twin Cities by means of highlighting their personal narratives and by examining through participant observation the institutions they have developed. There are important influences and sensitive topics within this research, especially in

⁷ Although some of the research data and information comes from missionary organizations and sources, this research does not have a missionary agenda.

⁸ Some of the social services included resume writing, driving lessons, and education in the public transit system. Additionally, some of those interviewed were Christian missionaries who had worked with Tibetans for over 20 years in Tibet.

the area of geopolitics and broader international relations. However, the fact is that Tibetans are moving to and settling in places outside of Tibet as a consequence of political circumstances that led to their exile in 1959 and continue to this day. These political events have a considerable impact on how Tibetans negotiate and reflect upon their identity in the Twin Cities, and elsewhere.

As I discuss in forthcoming chapters, the separation of politics and culture is not easily accomplished and in my own research I have observed that they are inseparable. How Tibetans involve themselves in the political realities in which they live and how they live their daily lives as Tibetans in a new location outside of Tibet and Asia (primarily India and Nepal) is revealed through their narratives and by the political and cultural institutions and organizations they have created.

1.4 Research Question(s): Background and Formalized Questions

Although scholars have begun to explore the myriad ways Tibetans seek to rebuild their lives in exile, especially in India and Nepal, there are limited studies that explore migration and the resettlement process in the United States. A few exceptions are McGranahan and Hess, and these scholars have certainly influenced my own inquiry and research on this topic. This project, though similar in aim, examines how the Tibetans specifically in the Twin Cities of Minnesota negotiate their sense of cultural identity in the diaspora, by focusing on the lived experiences and narratives of the Tibetans in the Twin Cities.

These narratives consist of the ‘exile’ population that includes a) those Tibetans who were born and raised in Tibet and had travelled directly from Tibet to the US or to India and Nepal then onto the Twin Cities, and b) those Tibetans born and raised in India and Nepal who have settled in the Twin Cities.

1.4.1 Formalized Research Question and Subordinate Questions

Having provided a contextual background of my personal and academic influences pertaining to this research combined with a history of the Tibetan journey, the primary research question is:

- How do Tibetans express their sense of belonging and Tibetan identity while living in the Twin Cities (Minneapolis-Minnesota)?

The primary research question opens up other sub-questions that will assist in examining Tibetan identity as reflected upon by Tibetans:

- Are there any cultural tensions or challenges Tibetans face(s) in moving to and living in the Twin Cities?
- How are Tibetans in the Twin Cities confronting the challenges and do they believe the challenges are being resolved?
- What do Tibetans view as essential components of their identity as “Tibetan”?

1.4.2 Core Argument

This research argues that Tibetan identity in the Twin Cities is fluid, dynamic and constantly changing. It is through the centrality of culture that unites the Tibetan community, yet this cultural unity is contrasted by the political tensions of the Rangzen and Umaylam policies. These political tensions are expressed not only through the policies themselves, but also how these tensions relate to the central role 14th Dalai Lama and to the institution and programmes of TAFM.

1.5 Research Method and Methodology: Challenges and Opportunities

The data gathered from this research build on three major areas: 1) literature review 2) participant observation and 3) semi-structured interviews. One of the primary reasons for using these methods, specifically participant observation and interviews, was that I wanted to focus on how the Tibetans understood and expressed themselves as Tibetans

through their personal narratives and how they viewed themselves through their journey, settlement and the creation of a community within the Twin Cities.

Furthermore, I deemed it necessary to be personally involved with the Tibetan community when opportunities presented themselves, such as the request to participate as a volunteer in the TAFM. The intent was to have direct contact with the Tibetans in an atmosphere where they were most comfortable and considered was one of their central places for community gatherings.

1.5.1 Literature Review

My research examined relevant literature, which I intentionally categorize as secondary resources that can be divided into three areas: 1) Tibet before and after 1959; 2) diaspora studies; and 3) research regarding Tibetan resettlement activities, particularly relating to any observations or narratives of settlement.

The significance of reviewing literature prior to the year 1959 is that this was the period prior to the People's Liberation Army of the Chinese Government (PLA) formally entering and annexing Tibet. There is considerable debate on both sides of the issue, as China makes claim that Tibet was always part of China to which Tibet responds that it was a sovereign nation. The discussion in the next chapter explores in greater detail the tensions between China and the Tibetan people, and the matter of independence remains at the core.

The goal of the literature review was to achieve a better understanding of Tibet's social, cultural and political history. I also felt that it was critical to attain a level of credibility in working with the Tibetan community with at least a basic understanding of the culture, history, geography and the events that surrounded their lives in Tibet prior to, during and after their exile.

Another area of the literature review is the burgeoning field of diaspora studies that is more fully explored in Chapter 3: 'Diaspora and its application to the Tibetan context in the Twin Cities'. Tololyan discusses diaspora as '[a] term that once described Jewish, Greek, and Armenian dispersion now shares meanings with a larger semantic domain that includes words like, immigrant, expatriate, refugee, guest-worker, exile community, overseas community, ethnic community' (Tololyan, 1991 p.4). He describes the field of diaspora studies as becoming more significant and relevant to academic researchers as social groups become more mobile and as scholars fully explore nuances of attributes and expressions and hence the 'defined' space of diaspora becomes more expansive.

Dispersal, memory and the longing for return are key components not only for diasporas in general, but also for the Tibetans, particularly since the loss of 'homeland' is part of their living memory and many Tibetans have a personal experience of departure in this lifetime. The contemporary relevance surrounding these events provides a greater sense of immediacy because many feel the prospect of return is still within reach.

Another component that I included in the literature review was from the Tibetan community itself, in essence the demographic information of the Twin Cities' Tibetan community. One of the realities of the Tibetan community is the difficulty in capturing reliable demographic data and other related information from third-party sources such as local government agencies and organizations like City Vision, which specialize in collecting and analysing demographic data. TAFM does capture and maintain certain data, yet gaps are acknowledged.

1.5.2 Participant Observation

This research is ethnographic in nature and participant observation was the selected

method for gathering participant data, primarily through the process of observing the activities of the Tibetans in the Minnesota community. Citing Bryman, Hammersley and Atkinson, participant observation is defined as:

In its most characteristic form it [ethnography] involves the ethnographer participating, overtly or covertly, in people's daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions - in fact, collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issues that are in focus of the research (Bryman 2001, p.1).

Following this definition, it is important to acknowledge that all my activities within the Tibetan community were 'overt' in nature. From the very beginning, I openly made my research goals and interests known to the community. The ability to interview and have access to events and to the inner workings of the Tibetan community required a substantial effort to gain trust and to be included in events and discussions not normally open to 'outsiders'.

O'Reilly refers to the pioneering work of the anthropologist, Bronislaw Malinowski, stating that his aims in fieldwork were primarily 'to describe the customs and traditions, the institutions...what people say and do...to record typical ways of thinking and feeling associated with the institutions' (O'Reilly, 2016, p.8). These aims also applied to my own research, not only through observation but also through participating in the events and organizations in which the Tibetan community was involved.

Gaining permission to be a participant in the events as a volunteer was not only a matter of time investment. As O'Reilly explains, the goal of the ethnographer is 'to spend a considerable amount of time in the company of the people he or she is studying' (O'Reilly, 2016, p.8). Although I consider participant observation a major component of my research, the critical issue was how to develop rapport and familiarity with the Tibetan community as a volunteer because a more informal connection to the community was required.

In preparing for this research, I sought approval by speaking with TAFM Board

Members regarding assistance and access to the Tibetan community in September 2011. I was asked to provide a formal request to the officers and members of the Board of Directors of TAFM followed by an interview. After the formalized meeting and the discussion of my research, the request was approved. What I was not prepared for was a request from the TAFM Board Members for me to become immediately involved (the next day) as a volunteer, with activities within TAFM. The rationale for this as explained to me by the TAFM Board Members was that TAFM felt that I needed to become a familiar face particularly at significant events such as Losar⁹ and Uprising Day.¹⁰ One of the Board Members and a Vice President of TAFM made a personal plea on my behalf. The importance of this was that his Master's thesis supervisor was Dr. Julia Hess, who is a Tibet-related scholar at the University of New Mexico and the author of *Immigrant Ambassadors*, in which she examined some of the challenges Tibetans faced in coming to the United States.

This unforeseen immediate request for my availability by TAFM for direct involvement was not part of my original research plan, yet it provided a substantial opportunity for building rapport and ties with the diasporic community. It also allowed me to gain access to several principal community resources that included the Tibetan Cultural School and Lamton (further explored in Chapter 5).

My role with the Tibetan Cultural School was to support the teachers, parents, office staff and students in areas of instruction and general office duties. On any given Saturday, there are approximately 20 parents, an estimated 130 students, in addition to TAFM leaders and Cultural School teachers with whom I interact. This involvement enabled me to develop significant relationships with the Tibetan teachers, parents and students with whom I have been able to gain considerable access for interviews and

⁹ Losar is the celebration of the Tibetan New Year calendar.

¹⁰ Uprising Day is a day of remembrance held on 10 March by Tibetans on which they recall the 'failed uprising' (Giles and Dorjee, 2005, p.139) in 1959 by Tibetans in Lhasa against the occupation and 'liberation' of Tibet by the Government of China.

observation. It is through this activity that I was able to interview Tibetans who had valuable roles in the Tibetan government in India and Nepal as well as leadership positions within TAFM.

I was also involved with tutoring students through Lamton, which is a mentoring and tutoring group under the umbrella of TAFM. The mentors and tutors primarily consist of Tibetans of college age (and above). The Lamton mentors, tutors, Board Members and Leadership oversee 30 or more Tibetans with whom I am in regular contact.

Personal involvement with the Tibetan community includes volunteering at TAFM, assisting with the TAFM Building and Grant Writing Committees, the Tibetan Cultural School, Lamton, Regional Tibetan Youth Congress (RTYC) and Students for a Free Tibet (SFT). Other events included the celebrations of the 14th Dalai Lama's Birthday and Uprising Day.

Another organization with which I have a working relationship, but to a lesser extent, is the Regional Tibetan Youth Congress of Minnesota (RTYC-MN) (examined more closely in Chapters Two and Six). I am well acquainted with the leadership of this organization, some of whom I have interviewed. RTYC-MN are involved with a number of activities such as public protests and claims to provide education and information to the public regarding Tibet's history and the Tibet Cause to have China return Tibet as a self-ruling province or county.¹¹

An additional component, which I have placed under participant observation, is the use of social media. Though not part of the original design of this research, it became an added tool as I had observed numerous Tibetans using their mobiles and smart-phones during my volunteer activities with the Tibetan community. It is not an unusual sight to observe Tibetans communicating utilizing Facebook / Facebook

¹¹ The dialogue of The Middle Way and Rangzen [complete independence] is a continuing dialogue among the Tibetans regardless of age. This is more fully examined in Chapters 2, 3 and 6.

Messenger or texting. This role of digital media is more fully examined in Chapter Five.

1.5.3 Interviews

The third component of the research methodology is the interview process. As an important tool in ethnographic research, interviewing in the context of fieldwork involves a balancing act: on one side, the researcher needs to gain trust by becoming acquainted with the informants in the hope of obtaining access and, on the other side, the researcher needs to be cautious of not becoming so close [to the informant] that he or she is no longer objective. Bryman explains this as follows: ‘Being in the field is fraught with tensions (as well as opportunities, of course) ... the participant observer is frequently enjoined to achieve rapport with his or her participants but there is also a risk of over-rapport’ (Bryman 2001, p.xx). An important component of the interview is the personal narrative when the interviewees tell their story of a journey and settlement along with their insights, reflections, opportunities and challenges. Bruner states:

The key elements in narrative are story, discourse and telling. The *story* is the abstract of events, systematically related, the syntagmatic structure. *Discourse* is the text in which the story is manifested, the statement in a particular medium such as a novel, myth, lecture, film, conversations, or whatever. *Telling*, is the action, the art of narrating, the communicative process that produces the story in discourse (Bruner, 2001, pp.142-143).

James Spradley also provides a valuable context and foundation for the value of interviews in this research, when he states, ‘An ethnographic interview is a particular kind of *speech event*...that shares many features with a friendly conversation’ (Spradley, 2001, p.331). He cites examples of various speech events such ‘as a lecture, a job interview or a friendly conversation’ (Spradley, 2001, p.331). The key difference among these, he explains, is the significance of the role of interviewee and interviewer. Primarily, an ethnographic interview is more of a friendly conversation, in that the roles of the parties require rapport, trust and open dialogue. The intent, of course, is that in a

proper ethnographic interview, as the interview progresses, the interviewee takes on more of the speaking and explaining role.

Spradley's guidelines emphasize the continuing importance of developing rapport and trust. He suggests explaining the purpose of the interview, the project (research itself), the use of the recording device and other items to ensure that the interviewee has an understanding of the interview process. Of particular importance is Spradley's notion of '*native language explanations*' (Spradley, 2001, p.335) whereby the interviewer asks, 'If you were to explain to someone who was not-Tibetan about [insert a topic or subject], what would you say?' This technique was invaluable as English was not the primary language of the Tibetans, allowing them to use their own words and provide examples for a greater understanding of terms and concepts as well as the added dimension of a freer exchange in dialogue. Further, O'Reilly states 'if you are wanting to learn about feelings and thoughts and opinions [of those being researched] ...you are aiming to produce a richly written account that respects the irreducibility of human experience' (O'Reilly, 2016, p.126). It is in this context of capturing the narratives of their journey, settlement and the creation of community that the challenges and the opportunities emerge.

Drawing on these methodological techniques, I entered the interview process to not only hear the words of the journey, but also to be present in the telling of the narrative and to capture any nuances that were detected. It became clear to me early on that the Tibetan interviewees are emotionally invested in the telling of their story. For example, in a number of interview sessions with different Tibetans, they requested a moment to collect themselves due to what they stated as a painful retelling of their loss of their country and in some cases the loss of family members during their journey. A strict 'discourse only' protocol, as described by Bruner, would not have captured this emotionally laden reflection and personal investment.

As discussed in the previous section, a key component of this research as a participant observer was to build rapport and become a 'familiar face' within the community. This research was designed in consultation with the community leaders for me to become involved in various programmes within the Tibetan community, which provided me with a more established profile.

For me to earn the confidence of the Tibetan community and for them to speak openly and confidentiality was a tedious process, particularly since a number of the questions asked of the informants related to their opinions of the Tibetan community in which they lived, its community leadership, the 14th Dalai Lama, settlement challenges and the political situation in Tibet. There are not any known quantitative metrics or algorithms that could be applied to this process.

Upon reflection and in the case of this research, it was about two years into working with the various community programmes that conversation levels were at a point that certain subjects became open for discussion in more depth about their concerns around Tibetan leadership, the 14th Dalai Lama and the political situations in Tibet. Furthermore, a number of potential informants offered their assistance to me in this research, in terms of introducing me to other Tibetans who most likely would not have otherwise made themselves available.

To address and ensure confidentiality among my research participants, I developed an interview introduction document (Appendix 1) as well as a Letter of Consent (Appendix 2). These also comply with the requirements of the UK's Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) as Ph.D. regulations of Middlesex University, London. Each informant was required to sign a Letter of Consent that specifically stated the name(s) of the informant(s) and whether their actual name could or could not be used, to which all indicated that they preferred confidentiality regarding their identity. However, the original document does have the actual names of the informants. For

purposes of the research's integrity, I maintain the actual records of the Letters of Consent, the interview recordings and a secured list, to which there is only one copy and only I have access that identifies the informants' actual names. These records will be administered according to the guidelines set by Middlesex University once this research is completed. Appendix 3 is the list of 'assigned' names used throughout this research.

Appendix 4 is the list of eighteen questions for each interviewee. The first two questions were designed to gather certain demographic details as well as an opportunity to begin developing a rapport between the interviewer and the interviewee to become better acquainted. The remaining 16 interview questions were more personal and reflective and provided space for responses in areas they considered as challenges and opportunities in their journey from Asia to the Twin Cities. Though there was an initial time estimate established at ninety minutes, the participants were advised that they could skip and not answer any question, that they could stop the interview at any time and that they could also take as long as they wanted in answering the questions. Further, they were advised if they had other details that they felt would contribute to their answers they could extend their answers to any length.

At the halfway mark of the interview questions, which was around forty-five-minutes or at or near question nine (of eighteen), I would announce that we were halfway through the interview. I would also announce when the interview reached the ninety-minutes mark in keeping with the agreed arrangement of ninety-minutes, offering the interviewee an option to complete the interview session, re-schedule for another appointment time to complete the interview, or to continue. In all circumstances, all interviewees expressed a desire to extend the initial interview time of ninety minutes.

All interviews were recorded on a digital recording device and transcribed. Experience indicated it required approximately 4-5 hours of transcription time for every

hour of recording.

Another level of confidentiality is that each informant is described by age range and only ‘country of birth’. The names of provinces, cities, villages or other specific geographic references are not indicated. The following table (Table 1) was developed to assist in providing classification categories yet without being too specific to allow identification of the informants.

Table 1 Interviewees’ Age Range and Country of Birth

Age Range	18-30	31-45	36-60	61-80	Total
Tibet	2	2	4	6	14
Other	7	5	3	1	16
					30

As seen in Table 1, fourteen (or 47%) of the thirty interviewees were born and raised in Tibet and had moved to the Twin Cities and sixteen (or 53%) of the interviewees were born outside of Tibet and in Asia, specifically, India or Nepal and had moved to the Twin Cities. Achieving a perfect fifty-fifty ratio was rather problematic as developing an interviewee pool was highly intensive and I consider that a forty-seven to fifty-three percent ratio quite close to the mark.

Another feature of the thirty Tibetans interviewed is a matter of representation. Interviewing thirty Tibetans in a Tibetan population that is between 2,700 to 3,000 indicates that over one percent (1%) of the Twin Cities Tibetan population was formally interviewed, which does not include those Tibetans with whom I came into contact either through casual conversations or working alongside as a volunteer. Many activities had an attendance between ten and three hundred Tibetans, calculated either through my

own count or through TAFM records for formal events.

Further, this research is qualitative rather than quantitative as I wanted to have a deep understanding of the Tibetan community through their own narratives. Patton writes, ‘Qualitative inquiry typically focuses in depth on relatively small samples’ (Patton, 1990, p.106). Further, a specific approach highlighted by Patton was ‘maximum variation sampling.’ My focus in this research was to explore major themes and any patterns. Patton states ‘This strategy [maximum variation sampling] for purposeful sampling aims at capturing and describing central themes and turns an apparent weakness [small sample size] into a strength’ (Patton, 2002, pp.108). His rationale is that ‘Any common patterns that emerge are of particular interest and value in capturing core experiences and central, shared aspects or impacts...’ (Patton, 2002, pp.108-109). This strategy also allowed me to explore any cross-generational or gender patterns that may exist in seeking any ‘core experiences’ and/or ‘central, shared aspects’ of the Twin Cities Tibetan community.

Table 2 identifies the breakdown of gender within specific age ranges. The table shows that the majority of those interviewed are males and the age range is evenly dispersed. Essentially, 73% of those interviewed are males and 27% of those interviewed are females, which was not the original design of the initial interview sampling. The initial intent was to have a 50% – 50% split of female to male interviewees, however, the stratification of the gender of female to male ratio was a result of the availability and willingness of the males to accept interview invitations over the females. Further, a subtle yet revealing dynamic was that females were less willing to be interviewed by me (a male) particularly those females over the age of 30. This tension within the Tibetan community around the lack of availability and willingness on behalf of females to be interviewed was commented on by a number of women, such as Khando, Lhamo and Tsekyi, who stated that the Tibetan community

remains male-orientated.

As further seen in Table 2, of the thirty Tibetans who participated in the interviews, sixteen, or fifty-three percent of those interviewed, were under the age of forty-five and fourteen or forty-seven percent were over forty-six years of age or older. Essentially one-half of those interviewed was under forty-five years of age and the remaining half was over forty-five years of age.

Table 2 Interviewees' Gender and Age Range

Age Range	18-30	31-45	46-60	61-80	Total
Female	2	0	2	1	5
Male	7	7	5	6	25
					30

One of the primary reasons for confidentiality or anonymity attested by all informants was the concern for the welfare of their families who remain in Tibet. They also expressed their concern in obtaining visas to travel to Tibet, which they felt would be in jeopardy as visas to Tibet currently need to be approved by government agencies within the People's Republic of China. An additional concern was that many of the interviewees did not want to be identified by other Tibetans in the community as they expressed some tension particularly in regard to their political orientations. These political topics relate to Rangzen and Middle Path, which are more fully explored in Chapters Two and Six.

Another added level of complexity for this research was the need for anonymity for interviewees and the ability to provide clarity for the reader as to what was being said by whom. Names of the interviewees were changed and specific details pertaining to their identities have been removed such as their exact place of birth and specific ages, therefore, I provided general demographic identifiers. Hence, when the reader initially comes to an informant, they will notice the name of the informant, followed by a

description of clarification. For example, ‘Khando (a Tibetan woman born in India of Tibetan parents, between the ages of 18-30, graduated from college in Minnesota and is working full-time).’ When Khando is again referred in the chapter, the detailed description is no longer restated.

I was also influenced in developing this technique through my readings of Clifford Geertz and his references and development of the term ‘thick description’ (Geertz 1973a, pp.6-7 and Geertz 1973b, pp.3-30). In essence, I adopted a hybridization of his application of thick description by providing the reader with a way of getting to know and keep track of the informants through a ‘descriptive’ clause. My deviation from Geertz at this stage is that I do not specifically address the semiotic application. However, how I approach Geertz’s use of thick description and its semiotic application is seen in Chapter Five in the description of the TAFM building.

Another unforeseen adjustment to the original research proposal was made in the early period of the initial participant observation stage when it came to interviewing Tibetans of the 3rd generation. I define this 3rd generation as Tibetans who were born in the United States and now live in the Twin Cities. Throughout my preliminary review of the field research design, which included discussions with members of the Tibetan community, I initially decided that interviewing 3rd generation Tibetans would add an important dimension to this project that could reveal a pronounced ‘generational shift’.

This ‘generational’ contribution was deemed significant particularly since a number of the Tibetan community members indicated that the generational split was a concern for the Tibetan community elders. Once I began the research, which included my volunteering activities with TAFM and Lamton, it became apparent that this population was limited as most of this generation is under the age of eighteen and, therefore, due to requirements of the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) to interview under-age informants, they had to be removed from the original research

design. Among other requirements, these included including the consent, either written or oral, of the underage child as well as the parent during the interview of minors. The initial response from the parents was that neither the adults of prospective Tibetan youth to be interviewed, nor the Tibetan community leaders were willing to become involved in these additional requirements. Therefore, I adjusted the interview population between the 1st generation, those Tibetans born and raised in Tibet, and 2nd generation, those Tibetans born and raised in India, Nepal and Bhutan, totalling thirty Tibetans that now reside in Minnesota.

I had expected language not to be a significant issue as most Tibetans that I had met in the Twin Cities spoke English and this also proved to be true for this research. However, there were a few isolated cases whereby the researcher enrolled the use of translators to further develop a level of comfort and familiarity with the interviewee. One component of language is that it has provided an opportunity for almost all Tibetans to educate me in speaking words and phrases and even explaining the nuances and meaning of the word or phrase. This was most apparent in interviewing Tibetans who were not totally comfortable in speaking English. For example, in one such case, an interpreter was translating the word ‘diaspora’. The interpreter indicated that during translation of the question, the interviewee used the terms ‘refugee’ and ‘prisoner’ interchangeably as the interviewee had varying inflections of meaning concerning the concept diaspora. For example, Pema, a Tibetan woman born and raised in Tibet of Tibetan parents, between the ages of 61-80, through her interpreter, told the story of her family’s farm taken over by the Chinese military. As a result, she and her family were required to move from their house and lived in the barn not able to leave the property unless escorted. Hence, according to her interpreter, Pema’s recollection was in the context of being imprisoned on her own land. Also, the interpreter indicated that the term ‘diaspora’ was not a commonly used word within the Tibetan community in Tibet,

so familiarity and the use of this word was not part of their [Tibetan] normal or daily vernacular (Yetrok, Personal Conversation, February 2013).

What ensued during this specific interview was a lengthy discussion between the translator and myself as to how she and the respondent used the word ‘diaspora’. The significance is that my use of the word ‘diaspora’ created confusion that also provided an important source of ethnographic insight. Although the concept of diaspora and the nuances around its use in the context of Tibetan lived experience is more fully explored in Chapter Three, it is important to recognize that I tried to avoid using terms such as ‘exile’ and ‘duress’ because I was concerned about imposing my own categories on the experience of relocation for my Tibetan informants. The net effect is that after the first two interviews, the specific term ‘diaspora’ was removed from the interview questions due to this confusion and instead I framed my questions around ‘living outside of Tibet’.

As I had expected, from my graduate research and literature review, undertaking this research has involved highly charged political discussions, especially in light of the numerous self-immolations occurring in Asia. Images of these self-immolations have circulated throughout the Tibetan community in the Twin Cities and are prominently displayed in the TAFM building where the Tibetan Cultural School and Lamton are held.

Before concluding this chapter, it is important to situate this research in the broader scholarly literature. Of note is the work of anthropologist Julia Meredith-Hess and her research and subsequent publication, *Immigrant Ambassadors*. My research differs from hers in that the ethnographic focus of this project is in the Tibetan community in the Twin Cities as compared to Hess’ research on the Tibetan diasporic community primarily in Santa Fe, New Mexico, which is the southern US state adjacent to the US / Mexico border. Also, this research explores a more recent time period

(2010-2016) as compared to Hess' research in the mid-1990's. This added dimension of time has allowed for more adjustment by the Tibetan community as parents have settled into various employment patterns, children have experienced US schooling, and many students are now graduating from US universities and entering the US workforce. Further, according to TAFM, the Twin Cities Tibetan community is larger as the Twin Cities is approximately ten times the size of the Santa Fe community.

Similar research by scholars, such as Keila Diehl (*Echoes from Dharamsala*) and Anne Frechette (*Tibetans in Nepal*), have explored Tibetan settlement in various new locales. These works have primarily focused on the Tibetan communities in India and Nepal. Though similarities exist between these studies, especially in areas such as community maintenance, there are also differences in how this maintenance is expressed. For example, among the narratives of the Tibetans in the Twin Cities, they indicate that in comparison with Tibet, India and Nepal, there is a lack of cultural and religious infrastructure such as prayer wheels and *gompas* (Tibetan monasteries). Though other Tibetan communities in other parts of the US exist, they were not a focus of this research, however, comments from some of the interviewees indicated that to their knowledge and experience, the Twin Cities community was unique in terms of activities such as Tibetan Cultural School and Lamton, which are explored in Chapter Five. In Minneapolis, there is one Tibetan Monastery, the Gyuto Wheel of Dharma Monastery, which was once a church converted from a family home. The Tibetan narratives indicate that close community contact and interaction among other Tibetans on the street are what Tibetans, primarily those over the age of forty-five, miss because they were regular occurrences in Tibet, India and Nepal. Another dimension brought out by my research is how the Tibetans of the Twin Cities seek to maintain their Tibetan identity through the creation of organizations, institutions and various cultural programmes, which were not needed in Asia. At the same time, it is through these

programmes and community building exercises in a seemingly homogenous population, that tensions also appear. These tensions are not expressed in the areas of cultural preservation necessarily, but from differing political views, particularly in light of the ageing 14th Dalai Lama. The foundation for the political views and its expressions are discussed in the next chapter, Chapter Two and in Chapter Six.

1.6 Conclusion

In this introductory chapter, I have discussed my personal background, the research topic and methodology. The next chapter explores the historical and political background of Tibet primarily from the 1950s, which provides a foundation for a broader understanding of the varying reasons for Tibetan resettlement outside Tibet, including the Twin Cities of Minnesota. Also discussed are two primary organizations within the Tibetan community that relate to the political and cultural aspirations of Tibetans.

Chapter Two: Historical Background and Framework

China has taken everything from Tibet. They have stolen everything from us including the trees and the forests and the natural resources. They are even stealing and selling Tibetan water, which is pure and clean from the Himalayas. Until 1980's we were just fighting for the freedom of Tibet, because [we felt] the Chinese would go back to China - we wanted a free Tibet. Now through the leadership of His Holiness and our government (Central Tibetan Administration) we have changed from seeking independence to the Middle Path approach (Lodoe 2015, p.19)

2 Introduction and Overview

The historical context of this research is the contemporary period, specifically within the time-frame of the last sixty years. Primary attention is given to the Tibetans settling in the Twin Cities in the last thirty years, however, the historical background is important because it provides a greater understanding of the topics that surfaced from this research.

Understanding the events surrounding the exile of the 14th Dalai Lama and the Tibetans who left Tibet since 1959 and even for those still living in Tibet, is both simple and complex. Simple in that the Peoples Liberation Army (PLA) of China entered and annexed Tibet and complex in that the claims and counter-claims of China's justification for the annexation of Tibet are refuted by the Tibetans and Chinese alike. Additional complexities that are examined later in this chapter describe the events prior to and from the resulting exile. Even political perceptions and dialogue between and among Tibet, India, Britain and the United States reflect a complicated and almost schizophrenic exchange revolving around Tibet's relationship with China in the 1950s.

The truculence of each other's position on whether Tibet is a "free nation" or not, is dependent on those ongoing debates. This research does not take political sides in the debate between the primary players of China and Tibet on whether Tibet was a free and

sovereign nation. Yet the debate has a significant role in the dialogue between China and Tibet and among Tibetans themselves. It is this ongoing dispute, the annexation by China and how the Tibetans reflect upon and negotiate their identity in response to these events that underpins this research.

An additional level of complexity is the political debate among the Tibetans themselves as to the vision and possible outcome of the Tibetan Question as to who controls Tibet. How the Tibetan community expresses itself in terms of its vision for independence adds an internal dimension and dialogue that leads to both unification and division. It is also noted and discussed further in Chapter Six that the concept of ‘independence’ is also problematic for the Tibetan community and has variable definitions that can lead to tensions regarding perceived allegiances to the 14th Dalai Lama.

2.1 Setting the Stage: Historical Background

Based solely on its own geography, Tibet facilitates the imagination of a far distant and remote land. In *A Cultural History of Tibet*, Snellgrove and Richardson state that, ‘Tibet is renowned as the most remote as well as the most inaccessible country in the world’ (Snellgrove and Richardson 1995, p.19). Snellgrove and Richardson further describe this region in these terms:

It is surrounded to the south, the west and the north by massive mountain ranges, ranging from six to eight thousand meters above sea level along the Himalaya and Karakoram, and from five to seven thousand meters along the Kun-lung Range. The general level of western and central Tibet is from four to five thousand meters above sea-level, and the whole country is traversed by subsidiary mountain ranges which reach six thousand meters and more (Snellgrove and Richardson 1997, p.20).

Figure Two is a map of Tibet highlighting some of these geographical landmarks referenced by Snellgrove and Richardson. Viewing the map, the area to the lower right of Nepal is Mt. Everest—the highest peak of the Himalayas. Also referenced on the map is the Tibetan regional names of U-Tsang, Amdo and Kham. As can be seen, the U-

Tsang region is what is commonly referred to as the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) and Amdo and Kham are often identified as the being part of the Qinghai, Gansu, Sichuan and Yunnan regions.

Figure 2 Map of Tibet



Tibet's land mass is about three-quarters the size of China or about the size of Western Europe. The population of Tibet up until the mid-1950s is about 6,000,000¹ people and it is estimated that its climate and mountain ranges provide approximately 40% of the fresh water to ½ of the world's population China, India and Southeast Asia. According to *The Globalist*, 'More important, in terms of human geography, almost half of the global population currently lives in the watershed of the Tibetan Plateau. This explains the enormous importance of Tibetan freshwater for China' (Ninkovic & Lehman 2013, p.2).

¹ Estimates in 2015 remain approximately the same, though Ethnic Tibet is estimated to be near 3,000,000 and TAR is estimated at or near the same number. The concern as expressed by Tibetans is that in Ethnic Tibet, there are more Chinese than Tibetans and the Tibetan concern is that the same is happening in TAR.

The matter of geography is not just a consideration of who owns or possesses the land but is also about the type and quantity of natural resources available there. Tibetans, as shall be seen through their narratives beginning in Chapter Three and in the introductory quotation to this chapter, not only lay claim to the loss of the way of life and identity, but also the loss of their land and its natural and valuable resources.

Writers and followers of Tibet, particularly those from the West as well as the Tibetans themselves, have a ‘real-imagined’ reflection of Tibet. Historically, Tibet encompasses a constructed and imagined region shrouded in mystery. This image has also been propagated as well as resisted by Tibetans themselves through their isolationist activities. ‘Tibet-o-philes’ tell stories of a magical land elevated further by the writings of James Hilton in his 1933 novel *Lost Horizon* - a land of Shangri-La. In this story set in the 1930s, a group of travellers is stranded by a plane crash in the mountain ranges of Tibet. The author takes the reader to a hidden land isolated by the Himalayas in which the people ambiguously referred to as Tibetans live in total peace, harmony, and good health, enjoying abundant food, extended life spans and unimaginable beauty. The main character eventually leaves Shangri-La and continues to perpetuate this image of a utopian place of mystery and wonder. Reflecting on *Lost Horizon*, Llamas & Belk write:

Lost Horizon (1933) is set in a utopian land somewhere in the Himalayan region, which Hilton described as an idyllic place where man and nature coexist in harmony, a model of brotherhood and solidarity among natives, Westerners, and Easterners, with eternally young inhabitants blessed with supernatural powers, and beautiful and magnificent landscapes, all steeped in exotic mysticism (Llamas & Belk 2011, p.257).

This image of Shangri-La as the paradigm of Tibet is one of the “longest enduring myths in the West” (Halper and Halper 2014, p.2) and one that continues to persist to this day. Reflecting on this pervasive image, Kewley writes, ‘The very name Tibet seems to conjure magic and exotica. A Forbidden Kingdom a Shangri-La, that has drawn explorers and adventures from Kublai Khan and Marco Polo to the British

Younghusband Expedition of 1904' (Kewley, 1990 p.7). This fantasy of a mythical place, according to Llamas and Belk, has also 'fuelled a search that has yielded many Shangri-Las in the Himalayas, each attempting to fulfil Hilton's vision' (Llamas & Belk, 2014, p.257). These are not random examples but reflect a compendium of images that continue to circulate in texts such as *Seven Years in Tibet*, written by Heinrich Harrer and published in 1953. Harrer was an Austrian who befriended the 14th Dalai Lama in Tibet during the 1940s whose book was the inspiration for the 1997 film adaptation movie of the same name. *Kundun* was another film that was released the same year and helped to popularize Tibet and the plight of the 14th Dalai Lama. Even *Lost Horizon* was eventually filmed in 1937 and continued to perpetuate the mystery and beauty of Tibet. Tibet's aura and appeal are further strengthened by Hollywood actors and musical performers such as Richard Gere,² Belinda Carlisle,³ Steven Segal,⁴--all of whom have publically pledged their efforts to free Tibet and support its threatened culture.

Yet, as Lopez (1998) critically argues in *Prisoners of Shangri-La*, this myth of Shangri-La, though pictorially and hauntingly appealing and utopian-like, is not a reflection of reality and may have locked Tibetans into a representation that has hampered more than assisted their struggle for independence as they enter the 21st century.

While Tibet continues to embody this image of a magical land of endless beauty and tranquillity, it also bears a lesser known and popularized history as a land of

² Richard Gere holds the title of Chair for the International Campaign for Tibet (ICT). According to its own website <http://www.savetibet.org/about-ict/our-mission/>: The International Campaign for Tibet (ICT) works to promote human rights and democratic freedoms for the people of Tibet.

³ Belinda Carlisle is a rock singer most popular in the 1980's with the group Go-Go's. According to The Buddhist Channel <http://www.buddhistchannel.tv/index.php?id=9,3802,0,0,1,0> , she was influenced in becoming a practicing Buddhist after reading books written by the Dalai Lama.

⁴ Steven Segal's website http://stevensegal.com/?page_id=26 displays pictures of himself alongside the 14th Dalai Lama, holding one of the 14th Dalai Lama's books and wearing a *kata*, an honorific scarf presented to dignitaries by Tibetans. In addition to his professional achievements, he is also known as an environmentalist, an animal rights activist, and a supporter of Tsekyi Gyatso.

powerful and brutal warriors that dominated its neighbours for over two hundred years beginning around the 7th century CE. As Goldstein writes:

Political contact between Tibet and China began in the seventh century A.D. when Tibetans became unified under the rule of King Songsten Gampo. The dynasty he created lasted for two centuries and expanded Tibet's Borders to include, in the north, much of today's Xinjiang province, in the west, parts of Ladakh / Kashmir, and in the east, Amdo and Kham – parts of today's Gansu, Qinghai, Sichuan, and Yunnan provinces. Because many of the eastern and northern territories that Tibet conquered were kingdoms subordinate to China's Tang dynasty (618-907), the Chinese were well aware of the emergence of this Powerful kingdom (Goldstein 1997, p.1).

Tibet's empire under Songsten Gampo expanded into areas under Chinese rule, part of which is today identified as 'ethnic Tibet', which is partially made up by the regions of Gansu, Qinghai, Sichuan and Yunnan provinces [these are Chinese titles for the provinces]. This important geo-political observation by Goldstein provides a glimpse into some of the ongoing tensions observed to this day as the people of Tibet and China are embroiled in debates over the possession and control of this area of Tibet.

Snellgrove and Richardson also recognize the importance of the Tibetan empire as an expanding military power stating, 'The Tibetans were now [in the 7th century] certainly a formidable enemy, and their country was organized on a war-footing with a system of general military service' (Snellgrove & Richardson 1997, p.31). Both in the past and present, tension is no stranger between these two empires and, though not strictly militarily based, is as vibrant as ever.

How do we make sense of these competing images today? Was Tibet a peaceful nation or a powerful and conquering military force? I feel it is important to avoid simplifying these essentialist claims, for the conflagration of these two expressions of Tibet only provides additional weight to its mystery and appeal. More importantly, how is it that a powerful military nation has become constructed as an enduring place of peace and happiness? One important factor is due to the historical conflation of Tibetan culture with Buddhism. The metamorphosis from warrior kingdom to a land occupied by people seeking inner (and external) peace cannot solely be placed in the hands of

King Songsten Gampo's introduction of Buddhism in the 7th century CE.

Tibet's early history was essentially based upon the Bon religion and the importation of Buddhism introduced a religious element that challenged the unification accomplished through Bon. Goldstein examines this transition, which was neither rapid nor harmonious. He writes, 'The importation of Buddhism, however, produced internal conflict as the adherents of traditional shamanistic Bon religion strongly opposed its growth and development' (Goldstein, 1997, p.1). Goldstein further observes:

For the next two hundred years [from the ninth century CE], Tibet languished. The great empire became a fragmented, disunited collection of autonomous principalities. Buddhism paid a heavy price when driven out of the central part of Tibet. Then, in the eleventh century [almost two centuries from Buddhism's first introduction in Tibet], Indian Buddhist monk-teachers such as Atisha visited Tibet and sparked a vibrant revival of Buddhism (Goldstein, 1997, p.1).

Whether the transition from Bon to Buddhism was abrupt or taking three centuries, the effect of religion and the importation of Buddhism had its impact on Tibet. This conflation of Tibet with Buddhism and its profound effect on the region continues to resonate today (Snellgrove and Richardson 1968; Hoffmann 1961; McConnell 2015).

McConnell, citing Beckwith, explores the religious context [prior to the introduction of Buddhism], stating:

Pre-modern Tibet was at its most *unified* [emphasis added] and powerful during its imperial expansionist era under the rule of the first Tibetan emperor, Srongsten⁵ Gampo (618-650), with military expeditions to neighbouring territories, dynamic alliances with Nepal, and extensive regional trade networks. However, this relative politico-territorial unity was brought to an abrupt end with the assassination of King Langdarma in 842 (McConnell, 2016, p.42).

The significance of the recounting of King Langdarma is that he has been noted in Tibetan history as a protagonist against the influence of Buddhism. Jens Schlieter of Bern University explores the assassination of King Langdarma in his paper *Compassionate Killing or Conflict Resolution? The Murder of King Langdarma according to Tibetan Stories*, in which he describes the assassination of King

⁵ Emperor Gampo's first name such as Songstren or Srongsten Gampo is used interchangeably in academic journals and other written works by scholars.

Langdarma by a Buddhist monk. He states, ‘The importance of the assassination that according to the sources, was carried out by dPal gyi rdo rje (sic) a Buddhist monk of lHal ung (sic), can be gauged by the fact that he is revered in Buddhist schools as the precursor of Buddhism in Tibet’ (Schleiter, 2008, p.131). Though Schleiter states that the assassination may be a fabrication or a matter of hagiography, the important point is that it re-enforces the tensions that existed during the period and the increased significance of Buddhism within Tibet.

Underlying this religious and cultural imagery of Tibet is the question of independence that remains central to Tibetan politics and the views of Tibetans in the Twin Cities. Organizations such as the Tibetan Parliamentary and Policy Research Centre based in New Delhi, India, frequently publish reports on this topic. One such report entitled *Understanding the Issue of Tibet*⁶ claimed that ‘Tibet has [a] recorded history of over 2,000 years as an independent nation’, with particular reference to its independence from China (Tibetan Parliamentary and Policy Research Centre 2009, p.3). However, Halper and Halper (2014), Melvyn Goldstein (1997) and others address the question of Tibet as more of a matter of manifested independence that is mired in political confusion rather than one of a de facto status. According to Goldstein:

Britain and India (and later the United States) dealt directly with Tibet *as if it were* (emphasis added) an independent state, but continued to acknowledge de jure Chinese suzerainty over Tibet. That is they [Britain, India and the United States] considered Tibet a part of China. Much of the current confusion over Tibet’s previous political status derives from this Western double standard (Goldstein 1997, p.37).

Robert Barnett further explores the matter of Tibetan independence in *Lhasa: Streets with Memories* and provides additional insights into this ongoing debate:

Tibet had certainly been a nation, though not always a nation-state, for many

⁶ This paper was prepared by the Tibetan Parliamentary and Policy Research Centre and the Fredrick Nauman Foundation, which according to its website <http://www.freiheit.org/About-us/790c709/index.html> is ‘the foundation for liberal politics in the Federal Republic of Germany. It aims to promote the goal of making the principle of freedom valid for the dignity of all people and in all areas of society, both in Germany and abroad. With the safeguarding and the development of its statutory projects (civic education and dialogue, sponsorship of the talented, research and political consultation, archive-work), the Friedrich Naumann Foundation wants to contribute to shaping the future.

centuries; a thousand years earlier it had even been an empire that had for a time dominated China as well as parts of Central Asia. Whether it had also been independent before the twentieth century is harder to say, since its status varied over time and since that term seems to not have been in use in regional politics until the time of the Younghusband expedition [1903-1904]' (Barnett, 2006, p.xxii).

Tsering Sakya discusses Tibet's independence with a number of references referring back to the early twentieth century:

William Rockhill, a scholar and American diplomat at the turn of the century [20th], writes in his study of the relationship between the Dalai Lamas and the Manchus that "he [the Dalai Lama] had been treated with all the ceremony which could have been accorded to an independent sovereign, and nothing can be found in Chinese works to indicate he was looked at in any other light ... On the eve of the Chinese Communist invasion in October 1950, Tibet was to all intents and purposes an independent state (Sakya, 2009, p.99,101)

Furthermore, Norbu, a Tibetan scholar, reviewed the early history of Tibet through personal reflections of his own life being born and raised in Tibet and observing first-hand Tibet's transformation under Chinese rule. His historical account states, 'As I study Tibetan history, I feel proud of the Tibetan desire for self-determination. It is the history of an undaunted struggle to maintain Tibet's independence against the intrigues and invasions of China, and to a lesser extent Britain, Russia and Nepal (Norbu, 1997, p.52)

As seen in these debates on independence, this is a rather murky and moving target as well-informed scholars weigh in on the subject, and who at times are at odds with each other. A matter that further compounds the claim for independence is the *Seventeen Point Agreement*. As Roemer states:

A high-ranking [Tibetan] delegation left Lhasa for Beijing in 1951 to discuss the question of Tibet. There, the Tibetans signed the so-called 'Seventeen Point Agreement', where they officially acknowledged the Chinese intentions to liberate Tibet, which meant the end of Tibet's *de-facto* independence (Roemer, 2008, p.32).

The signing of this agreement remains shrouded in controversy even today as an alleged representative of the Tibetan Government signed an agreement with the Peoples Republic of China in May 1951, which essentially relinquished sovereignty to China. At a later date, the Tibetan Government and the 14th Dalai Lama claimed that the Tibetan

Representative was not authorized to sign the agreement. As Goldstein recounts:

The Tibetan government, disheartened and isolated concluded it had no choice but to send a negotiating delegation to Beijing ...these delegates reluctantly signed an agreement on May 23, 1951. It was called the “Seventeen-Point Agreement for the Liberation of Tibet.” The Seventeen-Point Agreement ushered in a new chapter in Sino-Tibetan relations since it *officially* [emphasis added] ended the conflict over the Tibet Question. Tibet, for the first time in its 1,300 history, had now in a formal written agreement acknowledged Chinese sovereignty (Goldstein 1997, pp.46-47).

Without clear lines of separation and with various scholarly claims surrounding the geo-political history of the region, combined with the ongoing socio-political tensions, one can see how the matter of Tibet and China remains deeply entrenched with limited support from the international community.

Halper and Halper examine some of the twentieth century influences that underlie this ambivalent position among western powers that have ultimately placed Tibet and its leader, the 14th Dalai Lama, in an unenviable position to ‘go at it alone’ with China – at least publically. Still recovering from the destruction of World War II, many western powers were working to realign their economies that included abandoning their former colonies such as India in 1947. All the while, India was working to mend its own political and economic relationship with China. For India’s new leaders, the Tibetan region was more of a buffer nation with China and they were reluctant to antagonize China with formal support for Tibet’s sovereignty. According to Carole McGranahan in *For Tsepey Who Self-Immolated in Tibet Six Hours from Now*:

In 1949 Mao Zedong’s communist army defeated Chiang Kai-shek’s nationalist army. One of the first things Mao said he would do was to liberate Tibet. He was true to his word, invading Tibet and forcing political agreement with the Dalai Lama’s government in 1951 that made Tibet a part of the People’s Republic of China’ (McGranahan 2014, p.4).

China’s strategy for liberation of Tibet is one of contestation, in that China was liberating the general Tibetan population from its ruling class. In *Tibet in Agony, Lhasa 1959*, Li contests the liberation perspective describing China’s efforts of liberating the Tibetan masses by using words such as ‘confiscation’ and ‘exploitation’ through the

China's Land Reform programme. However, these words carry different meanings depending on the Chinese or Tibetan perspective. China claimed it was confiscating land and property for the benefit, described as redistribution, of the Tibetan people. Yet Tibetans saw this loss of personal property under the claim of redistribution with no benefit to other Tibetans. From the view of the Tibetans, they were the ones being exploited by the Chinese. According to Li:

the [Chinese] task force cadres called a meeting of [Tibetan] beggars and other outcasts informing them that they were poor because of the "exploitation" of the headmen, "landlords," "rich peasants," and the monasteries, and inciting them to appropriate the property of their exploiters...the task force used words the local people had never heard before, such as "revolution," "social class," "reactionary," and "struggle"...declaring lamas, monks and nuns the "exploiting class," the task force organized people to surround the monastery, evict most of its inhabitants, inventory its property, and confiscate anything of value (Li, 2016, pp.4-5).

As Li observes, from the Tibetan's point of view, they were losing their way of life as an independent country as an outsider [China] professed they were coming to liberate Tibet, yet Tibetans saw themselves as an independent nation with no need of liberation. The way of life Tibetans had become accustomed to for generations was being challenged and reshaped. Li's observation reflects Tibetans' challenge and resistance to China's seemingly altruistic approach for the benefit of all Tibetans stating, 'Within a space of a few short years, almost 43 percent of the nation's land had been redistributed and landlords and rich peasants had been "eliminated as a class"' (Li, 2016, p.5).

China's interest in Tibet goes beyond liberation and property and land redistribution. This interest can be seen through strategic thinking by China earlier in the twentieth century. As noted by Norbu:

by the turn of the century [20th] the traditional Chinese image of Tibet as deeply spiritual realm was transformed in one of a high security region. In this transformation, which had fatal consequences for Tibet, the British colonial officials, though unintentionally, played no small role. It is strategic co concerns and defence that now dominate the current thinking on Tibet (Norbu, 1997, p.345).

Though the matter of security and strategic policy is not the focus of this research

it does testi that the ‘liberation’ of Tibet was carried out by a deeper and more calculated strategy than was proposed as for the benefit of Tibetans. (See Anand (2000, 2003, 2009, 2013) and Topgyal (2016)).

As McGranahan (2010) and Halper and Halper (2014) examine in greater detail, the United States’ involvement with Tibet and China, though hidden publically at the time, continued and in the latter part of the 1950s support for the Tibetans was well under way through clandestine efforts such as the Unites States’ Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). These efforts by the CIA were more of a pushback against China and its expanding borders than facilitating and re-enforcing Tibet’s position as an independent nation. Tibet, during this period of upheaval, was aligned with Western powers and India against China. Neither country (India or the United States) openly or forcefully supported Tibet’s formal independence as the People’s Liberation Army continued its occupation of Tibet, and even Tibet’s pleas to the United Nations fell silent. As Goldstein states, ‘Tibet’s *political subordination* [emphasis added] to China was repeatedly validated by the West throughout the first half of the twentieth century, particularly in the critical years during and immediately following World War II’ (Goldstein 1997, p.40).

Finally, in 1959, the PLA surrounded Potala Palace⁷ in Lhasa. Thousands of Tibetans also gathered near the palace fearing that an invitation of the PLA for the 14th Dalai Lama to attend a play was a ruse for the PLA to kidnap the 14th Dalai Lama, who was in the palace at that time, and bring him to China. Compounding the rumours was that many Tibetans who fled their homes were newly arrived in Lhasa from the borderlands adjacent to China and spoke of PLA aggression. According to Li, these stories from the borderlands and rumours had been circulating the streets of Lhasa

⁷ Potala Palace is located in Lhasa, Tibet’s capital city. The palace was the winter home of the 14th Dalai Lama.

earlier in the week, exacerbated tensions between the PLA and the Tibetans (Li 2016, Halper and Halper 2015, Roemer 2008). Fearing that the PLA may in fact attempt to kidnap or even assassinate him, the 14th Dalai Lama and his closest advisors left Tibet with other Tibetan Government officials. Further compounding the tensions, was that a provision under the Seventeen Point Agreement, which would allow for Tibetan autonomy, wherein the 14th Dalai Lama and the Tibetan people would have domestic autonomy, was being violated by the PLA. All the while, on the 10th of March 1959, Tibetans marched and chanted slogans of freedom and independence in the streets of Lhasa. Li states, ‘The day went down in history: it is known as the “Lhasa Incident” or the “March 10 Incident of 1959” by the Chinese, but remembered forever by the Tibetans as “Tibetan Uprising Day” (Li, 2016, p.135). This sequence of events over the previous decade between China and Tibet had intense geo-political ramifications, the result of which is that the 14th Dalai Lama and some 80,000 refugees went into exile and settled primarily in Northern India, Nepal and Bhutan.

Over the next six decades, Tibetans have continued their journey westward settling in countries such as Switzerland, Denmark, Australia, Canada and the United States, as well as in other countries with smaller numbers. Though substantial research and analysis of the events leading up to the exile have been documented and are still ongoing by scholars such as Hess, McGranahan, Ardley and Anand, it is from this point of demarcation in 1959 that much of the Tibetan community holds in their memory and forms the basis of their identity reconstruction outside of Tibet. The Tibetan narratives and the antecedent events provide a lens to examine their journey.

Following a period of upheaval in the 1950s up to the present, many Tibetans have migrated to United States with a majority of this migration occurring since the early 1990s, under *The Tibetan U. S. Resettlement Project*, which has its foundations in

the Immigration Act of 1990, Section 134 [Immigration Act of 1990].⁸

The motivations behind the departure from the Tibetan plateau have been and remain contentious, especially between the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the Tibetan diasporic community. The crux of the disagreement, which affects global politics and international diplomacy, is a matter of sovereignty vs. suzerainty. Neutral and clear-cut delineations of each party in the debate are not easily validated as the PRC and Tibetans make claims and counter-claims and present arguments from their respective positions.

Much of the scholarship around the Chinese occupation of Tibet refers to this as the Tibetan Cause or Tibetan Question.⁹ Goldstein describes the Tibetan Questions as follows: 'The Tibetan Question is about control of territory – about who rules it, who lives there, and who decides what goes on there' (Goldstein, 1997, p.x).

At a basic level, Tibet has claimed that it has always been an independent country (specifically from China) and China's claim is that Tibet has always been a part of China. It is without understatement that the Tibet Question is a highly charged emotional issue. Goldstein reflects upon these affective dimensions in *The Snow Lion* and *The Land of the Snows* when he writes:

The Tibet Question¹⁰, the long-standing conflict over the political status of Tibet in relation to China, is a conflict about nationalism – an emotion-laden debate over whether political units should parallel ethnic units. This question pits the right of a "people" (Tibetans) to self-determination and independence against the right of multi-ethnic state (the People's Republic of China) to maintain what it sees as its historical territorial integrity (Goldstein 1997 p.ix).

Furthermore, Roemer (2008) explains that there are ongoing political negotiations

⁸ Thomas Wiley notes that the area of ethnic Tibet, which is designated as the Amdo and Kham regions, comprised of 6 million people, while approximately 2-3 million Tibetans populated political Tibet or Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR). (International Commission of Jurists 1960, p.290),

⁹ The Tibetan Cause is generally described as the efforts by the Tibetan people to regain their independent status or how Tibet existed prior to the invasion of PLA in 1959.

¹⁰ During the interview process, interviewees were asked if they have heard of or could explain the Tibet Question. Nearly all respondents indicated they had not heard of this term. The conclusion of the researcher is that the Tibet Question is a term used in the academic field.

between the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) in Dharamsala, Northern India, and the government of the People's Republic of China (PRC) as to what constitutes 'Tibet' in the first place. The CTA considers Tibet as 'twice as big as the present' area defined as the Tibetan Autonomous Region by the PRC' (Roemer, 2008, p.9), which accounts for the varying population estimates.¹¹ Again, it is not the intent of this thesis to clarify these positions or to take a position on the debate, however, it is the intent to examine how the Tibetan community reflects upon their identity as a result of the circumstances in which they are involved.

For these reasons as noted by Goldstein, Hess, Sakya, Anand and others, it is important to have some background on the historical and present conflicts surrounding the Tibetan region. Who owns Tibet and to what extent is it owned? How is independence defined and who is in a position to define it? This research is not about the ongoing political engagements per se but about the experience of the Tibetans in the US diaspora and how their responses affect and shape their identity.

The matter of Tibetan identity is not an isolated one, as the diaspora is reflective of the challenges Tibetans face in Asia. Tsering Topgyal explores the dynamics of Tibetan identity, though primarily from a political and international relations standpoint, and his analysis does reflect upon the tensions Tibetans face in Tibet and in the diaspora. He states, 'Tibetan fears (sic) for their "threatened identity", their place in the new economy [Chinese] and the fragile ecology of their homeland' (Topgyal, 2016, p.151). Essentially, the Chinese economic forces in Tibet cause Tibetans to work in an

¹¹ Prior to 1959, Tibet included areas designed as U-Tsang, Amdo and Kham, in which each area made up what was known as Tibet. These areas are also ethnically and politically diverse as each of these regions has their own dialect and political inclinations. For example, Halper & Halper states, 'With the 1933 death of the 13th Dalai Lama, a power struggle brought a period of political turmoil. The tribesman of the eastern provinces of Kham and Amado organized a revolt in an attempt to seize additional powers and eventual independence from the central government in Lhasa' (Halper & Halper, 2015, p.88). After 1959, the People's Republic of China (PRC), annexed the Amdo and Kham regions and re-designated the U-Tsang region as the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR). Tibetans claim that the Amdo and Kham regions were and still remain part of Tibet.

economic infrastructure that favours the Chinese language, whereby storefront signage is written in Chinese and Tibetan buildings and structures are either razed and replaced with new buildings not reflective of Tibetan colours and design or they are redesigned according to Chinese traditions. All of this is without the consideration of other Tibetan challenges that are not aligned with the Government of China, but are essentially about Rangzen or Umaylam and the 14th Dalai Lama himself. Hence, the matter of Tibetan identity is not restricted to Tibetans in Tibet but has implications at an international level. Topgyal states ‘At the peak of the 2008 uprising in Tibet, the Dalai Lama told the international media he “is seeking autonomy necessary to safeguard its [Tibet’s] heritage’ (Topgyal, 2016, p.116). Heritage for the Tibetans is a matter of language, religious education and practice (in Tibetan), knowledge of Tibetan history, music, dance, architecture and the possession of Tibet, be it through Rangzen or Umaylam, all of which shape their identity.

2.1.1 Challenges of Exile and Resettlement

As expressed by a number of Tibetans in the Twin Cities and examined in detail in the following chapters, this process of exile and resettlement has created a fractured sense of cultural identity and there have been considerable efforts to preserve Tibetan culture and negotiate this sense of belonging in the United States. Relevant to this sense of fractured identity is the work of Gupta and Ferguson (1997) and their analysis of culture, space and identity. Space, once viewed as a static geographical location and a type of historical neutral grid on which cultural difference, historical memory, and societal organization are inscribed, is now changing as people move from one physical location to another under diverse circumstances including migration, forced exile and environmental causes. For example, how Tibetans negotiate their identity in the Twin Cities may be different from how Tibetans negotiate their identity in Dharamsala, India.

In other words, how Tibetans express and maintain their cultural identity in the diaspora has been a critical issue for those disparate groups that now look to rebuild their lives outside of Tibet. The varying ways Tibetans in exile negotiate their identity in these conditions of diaspora are also deeply affected by their political campaign for freedom from China. Mapping the politics of belonging in the Twin Cities is not an easy task because their identity claims are comprised of varying cultural, religious, economic, as well as political factors, including the central role of the 14th Dalai Lama.

Recent events, which include the devolving¹² of political power by the 14th Dalai Lama and acts of self-immolation by Tibetans in Asia since March 2010, that continue to this day, have reinforced the importance of an ongoing struggle that contributes to how Tibetans' negotiate their demands for self-rule in Asia. These politicized events in Tibet have fostered activism among the Tibetan diaspora in the United States and particularly in the Twin Cities. At the same time, and as I will demonstrate in this research, Tibetans believe it is the events and activities in the diaspora that will eventually affect their realization of independence.

Discussions among elected Tibetan leaders within the Tibetan American Foundation of Minnesota (TAFM), the Tibetan community, Regional Tibetan Youth Congress of Minnesota (RTYC-MN) and Students for a Free Tibet (SFT) indicate a tension among the generations between the Dalai Lama's 'Middle Way' or 'Middle Path' policy and demands for complete territorial autonomy and Tibetan self-governmental rule – termed Rangzen. The next sections of this chapter will review these overall positions among the Tibetans, primarily Rangzen and Middle Path, setting the background for a clearer understanding of how these complementary and at the same time conflicting paths are reflected upon by the Tibetans in the Twin Cities.

¹² Of note is that each Tibetan who has described this process to me [political representative of the Tibetan people from the 14th Dalai Lama to Lobsang Sangay] has used a specific term 'devolved'.

2.2 Tibetans' Major Policies for Freedom

Since the exile of the 14th Dalai Lama in 1959 in which approximately 80,000 Tibetans followed him out of Tibet to other host countries, Tibetans have been seeking a political resolution to return to their homeland. As explored earlier in this chapter, this has not been an easy task for the Tibetans on a number of fronts, not least of which is a less than aggressive stance against China or more purposely stated 'tacit support' of Tibet's struggle with China by nations such as India, the UK and the US (Halper 2015, Topgyal 2016, Roemer 2010).

India's support primarily in the late 1950s and early 1960s was in the form of resettling Tibetan refugees who left Tibet by providing land and opportunities for employment. This was considered by many Tibetans as a substantial commitment by the Indian government that has assisted Tibetans in their exile journey. Roemer (2010) and Ardley (2002) explore the subtle nuances of Indo-Tibetan relations that include Indian government ambivalence towards the formal recognition of the Tibetan Government-in-Exile as a legitimate legal-political entity. The result of this distancing has meant the 14th Dalai Lama and the Tibetan resettlement populations have had to seek a political resolution on their own, a delicate balance of self-serving interest for India (as well as other nations) in its relations with China and the seeming altruism of taking in a people with whom they had close spiritual ties.

This is a difficult task to say the least given their precarious status in host countries such as India and Nepal as refugees with very little material support. Further, what was envisioned by the Tibetans as a temporary setback has turned into several decades of uncertainty as their aspirations for an eventual return becomes thwarted by growing Chinese power on the world stage. To this day, Tibetans are no closer to the liberation of Tibet much less a return to an unoccupied land.

How do Tibetans advance their cause and generate support for independence, cultural and religious freedom in Tibet given several decades of political uncertainty? At the same time, how do they keep the demands for Tibetans alive among those who live in the diaspora under very different social, political and economic circumstances? Further, how do Tibetans advance their cause for freedom with the hardening of restrictions on communication and travel imposed by the Chinese state? This is the challenge facing the Tibetan diaspora, those Tibetans outside of Tibet, through the creation of the Tibetan Youth Congress (TYC) and its vision of a free and independent Tibet called *Rangzen*.

2.2.1 Overview of the Rangzen Policy

The history of *Rangzen* or *Rangtzen* traces its roots back to the 13th Dalai Lama in his proclamation to the Chinese government of independence. Shakya observes, ‘When the Qing [Chinese] regime collapsed in 1911 the Tibetans severed all ties with China, expelled the Amban and his military escort and declared independence [emphasis added] thus ending nearly two centuries of Qing authority in the region [Tibet] (Shakya, 2009, p.200). Almost five decades later, the Tibetan Youth Congress (TYC) was formed, which Roemer (2010), Ardley (2002) and Topgyal (2016) and others state is the largest non-governmental agency or non-governmental organization (NGO) of the Tibetans in exile. Today, there are various estimates of the total size of this population ranging from 180,000 to 200,000 Tibetans throughout Asia (non-Tibet), Europe, Canada, the US and the UK.

The Tibetan Youth Congress is at the forefront of the efforts for Rangzen or complete independence of Tibet from China. Its foundational mission and vision was to educate Tibetans and non-Tibetans about the struggle and claims for independence / Rangzen, which continues to this day. Rangzen can be defined as a Tibet, self-governed

by Tibetans, without influence or presence of the Government of China, except as otherwise determined by Tibetans. This can be easily seen in TYC's goal and mission as stated on their website, which reads 'to create awareness among the people of the world of Tibet's culture' and to continue their 'common struggle for the restoration of complete independence for the whole of Tibet' (Tibetan Youth Congress 2013).

How does TYC create awareness of Tibet's culture and its struggle for independence? Again, TYC's website provides some insights and background:

TYC also organizes (sic) cultural exhibitions and festivals to create awareness among the people of the world of Tibet's culture. Social & Educational: TYC engages in a wide variety of activities aimed at helping those in need and alleviating some of the most urgent social and educational problems. These range from organising broom squads to building public toilets, conducting health education programmes to blood donation, holding adult education classes to starting schools and planting trees (Tibetan Youth Congress 2013).

In Chapter Six, I review the local Twin Cities' efforts of RTYC-MN in achieving its outreach by creating awareness. However, regardless of the location of an RTYC chapter, each chapter is responsible for the development of programmes that support its mission of communicating the vision of Tibet's independence or Rangzen. These can be in the form of presentations, lectures, guest speakers, hosting sports events, talent shows or dances. These activities can also incorporate forms of political activism that include public demonstrations, whereby Tibetans and their supporters march through city streets carrying the Tibetan flag and chanting slogans such as 'Free Tibet', 'Tibet Will Be Free', and 'Tibet is not part of China'. On occasions, these marches may take the form of protest in front of Chinese embassies or consulates in locations such as London, Washington, D.C., Chicago, New York and San Francisco. Further, protests are also organized in other locations that may not have an official Government of China presence. For example, in 2012, the US state of Iowa was visited by the then China Vice-President Xi Jinping and busloads of Tibetans from the Twin Cities, Wisconsin and Illinois travelled there to stage protest marches.

The various TYC chapters around the world are entitled Regional Tibetan Youth Congress of x , in which x is the location of the specific chapter. In terms of this specific research, RTYC-MN is Regional Tibetan Youth Congress of Minnesota or RTYC-NYNJ, which is Regional Tibetan Youth Congress of New York New Jersey.

Each chapter elects its own Board of Directors and Officers and each member of the regional chapters supports the ‘Aims and Objectives’ of TYC abiding to the following set of principles:

1. To dedicate oneself to the task of serving one’s country and people under the guidance of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, the Spiritual and Temporal Ruler of Tibet.
2. To promote and protect national unity and integrity by giving up all distinctions based on religion, regionalism or status.
3. To work for the preservation and promotion of religion and Tibet’s unique culture and traditions.
4. To struggle for the total independence of Tibet even at the cost of one’s life (Tibetan Youth Congress 2013).

As in the aforementioned four points of TYC’s Aims and Objectives, there is a dedication to promote allegiance to the 14th Dalai Lama; for unity among all Tibetans of all regions (U-Tsang, Amdo and Kham); to strive to preserve the Tibetan culture and traditions and to struggle for Tibet’s total independence from China. The implication in these Aims and Objectives is that these are addressed to the region of Tibet in Asia, so the perspective of these goals is for the Tibetans now living in Tibet and for their freedom and independence to be performed by the Tibetans living in the diaspora.

In summary, Rangzen is a policy, goal and movement within the diasporic Tibetan community to provide for Tibetans in Tibet. Through TYC and in conjunction with its various regional chapters around the world, TYC’s aim is to educate and raise awareness for the struggle for an independent Tibet. These goals and efforts can be galvanizing as well creating tensions within the Tibetan community as a whole and to the Tibetan community in the Twin Cities.

2.2.2 Overview of the Middle Path Policy

The Middle Path or Middle Way policy is the result of an evolving process fostered and promoted by the 14th Dalai Lama. The main premise for Middle Path's vision is that since 1959, a period of thirty years, there was little headway made between the Tibetan Government-in-Exile (TGE), also known as the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) and the Government of China in the Tibetans' efforts for independence as described by the term Rangzen. The transitional usage of the Tibetan Government in Exile of CTA was done primarily for the purposes of understanding the Tibetan and English use of the terms. In an interview with the Tibetan Political Review in 2011, Samdhong Rinpoche, the first political leader of the elected by the exiled Tibetans, explained the name of the Tibetan Government, TGE, to CTA, stating:

I do not consider this [use of Tibetan Government in Exile to Central Tibetan Administration] is exactly a name change. I consider it making the two languages [English and Tibetan] compatible and an exact translation. But in 1991 during the formulation of the Charter for the Tibetans in Exile, we chose in Tibetan language *Tsenjol Bod Zhung*. *Tsenjol Bod Zhung* is used in English language as Central Tibetan Administration and Tibetan language as *Tsenjol Bod Zhung* (Tibetan Political Review, 2011).

During this thirty-year period, various meetings were held and cancelled all of which did not advance the Tibetan cause. In 1988, the 14th Dalai Lama presented his plan for the future of Tibetans and his vision for Tibet at the European Parliament in Strasbourg. According to Roemer:

In the so-called 'Strasbourg Proposal', the Dalai Lama explained his ideas of a future democratic Tibet in association with the PRC. The Chinese authorities would be responsible for Tibet's foreign police affairs, while Tibet was to handle autonomously its internal affairs. The 'Strasbourg Proposal' was a turning point in exile Tibetan politics as the 14th Dalai Lama took the decision to aim the exile Tibetan struggle towards autonomy rather than independence [Rangzen]...to achieve an autonomous Tibet, the exile Tibetan political elite focused on a non-violent struggle. The non-violent approach has since become known as 'Middle Path' or 'Middle-Way' policy of the CTA (Roemer 2008, p.83).

The relationship between the CTA and the 14th Dalai Lama has been explored by numerous scholars, including Anand (2000, 2009), Ardley (2002), McConnell (2009, 2011, 2013, 2016), Roemer (2008) and Topgyal (2016), wherein they observe the

central role the 14th Dalai Lama in regard to the CTA. McConnell provides an insight into this close relationship stating, ‘In April 1960, the Dalai Lama re-established the Tibetan Government in the North Indian Hills of Tibet of Dharamsala with the twin task restoring freedom in Tibet and rehabilitating Tibetan refugees’ (McConnell, 2009, p.343). Her observation reveals that at its inception, the central figure in the re-established of the Tibetan government was the 14th Dalai Lama.

One may ask what *are* the CTA’s role and function for the people of Tibet? To begin with, the CTA is an entity that operates as a nuanced government and much of what it does relates to the preservation of identity for Tibetans, though primarily in a diasporic context. McConnell observes ‘it has established a state-*like* polity in exile. These state-like functions include the organization of democratic elections, the provision for health and education service...a “voluntary” tax system, the issuing of Tibetan “passports”, and the establishment of quasi embassies’ (McConnell, 2009, p.343). In part, this tax or contribution provides the CTA with operating capital to pay employees of the CTA in areas such as the managing and issuing of the Danglang Chatrel or ‘Green Book’. This Green Book, which McConnell describes as a Tibetan passport, is a formalized (by the CTA) yet not legally recognizable document that identifies the bearer as being Tibetan. In the context of this Danglang Chatrel, being Tibetan is defined as having one parent identified as Tibetan. Significantly, this Green Book and tax remittance exists only outside of Tibet / China. TAFM makes substantial efforts in ensuring Tibetans in the Twin Cities pay the Danglang Chatrel through their website: <http://www.tafm.org/danglang-chatrel-greenbook/>, through numerous announcements at TAFM hosted events and by inviting CTA representatives to speak to the community regarding the importance of obtaining the Danglang Chatrel or voluntary contribution.

The CTA also functions as the representative organization in terms of its dialogue with organizations and governments throughout the world and specifically with the Government of China in terms of resolution of the Tibet Question¹³ through its Middle Path Policy. The Middle Path approach was seen as a more realistic goal by the 14th Dalai Lama and the CTA, in light of the three decades of dialogue and even non-dialogue between the Tibetans and the Chinese authorities, which had virtually achieved nothing in the eyes of many Tibetans. Further, this new policy was so well received by the world's community that the 14th Dalai Lama earned the Nobel Peace Prize for his non-violent approach in resolving the Tibet Question. In so doing, the Tibet Question became irrelevant as it set aside the issue of complete independence with what the 14th Dalai Lama considered a more achievable goal of autonomy. It was not so much a matter of who owned Tibet either through historical justification or through annexation but what would be the next step to resolve the dispute between China and the CTA? The Middle Path policy, at least in the eyes of the 14th Dalai Lama and the CTA, created a symbiotic relationship in which both players offered something to the other and each retained a negotiated control of specific parts of Tibet. This negotiated approach would offer China the overarching umbrella of infrastructure support and what can be termed as Federal authority, such as the military and the handling of foreign affairs, and Tibet would manage their affairs within the confines of Tibet in terms of language education, cultural and religious practices, and environmental affairs. As delineated in the *Middle Way Policy and All Recent Related Documents* published by the Tibetan Department of Information and International Relations, this policy states that each of the parties (Tibet and China) would recognize and respect the governments of the other (Department of Information and International Relations, 2010).

¹³ See Goldstein 1997, p.ix and indented quote on page 60.

The CTA's challenge is legitimacy on the international stage where its powers are more virtual than actual. Its formal influence and leverage is primarily within the Tibetan diasporic community and not within Tibet / China. As previously noted by McConnell, terms such as 'state-like' and 'quasi' provide a less than a formidable representation to those outside of the Tibetan community, particularly in the CTA's efforts regarding the Middle Way.

2.3 Similarities and Differences of the Policies

Concern has been expressed within the Tibetan community, in recent years, regarding some actions in the protest marches against China. Some of the described activities were in relation to the burning the flag of China and setting alight effigies, which represented Tibetan self-immolations that have occurred in regions of occupied Tibet in which Tibetans protest against Chinese occupation. The discussions among Tibetans are about whether burning the flag of China and effigies are the types of attention that Tibetans draw upon themselves that are not in keeping with the vision of the 14th Dalai Lama's Middle Path approach and the non-violent policy. Further, these actions, indicated in the narratives of this research, are not in keeping with the desires and representations of a non-violent people and do not reflect well upon the 14th Dalai Lama.

Regardless of whether one stands for Rangzen as promoted by TYC or for the Middle Path of the 14th Dalai Lama and the CTA, a central issue is the role of the 14th Dalai Lama. Many of the remaining items on the Aims and Objectives of TYC are applicable to both Rangzen and the Middle Path, such as the promotion of Tibetan unity and working to preserve Tibetan culture and traditions. The striking difference between the two policies is the goal of independence, which creates an important problematic and tension for the Tibetan community, due to the centrality of the 14th Dalai Lama in both policies.

This tension can be traced back to the organizational history of TYC when it was formed in 1970 and the 14th Dalai Lama made the inaugural address supporting Rangzen and the struggle for complete independence for Tibet. When the Middle Path policy became the new official policy of the CTA and the 14th Dalai Lama in 1988, a tension developed on a number of fronts. Initially, one of the concerns for TYC was that the CTA had already given up on an independent / Rangzen Tibet without any formal dialogue with the Tibetan people or with China. A second and possible unforeseen result was a matter of specific allegiance to the 14th Dalai Lama. The policy change created a tension in that if one supports the 14th Dalai Lama, one supports the CTA and its position regarding Middle Path. By not supporting the Middle Path, implicitly supporting Rangzen, one's allegiance to the 14th Dalai Lama comes into question. Adding to the tension and confusion is how scholars perceive the use of language. For example, Roemer by citing Sautman states, 'the exile Tibetan political elite uses different languages. For instance, the 14th Dalai Lama uses the English language when he talks about the terms "autonomy" and "federation", while Tibetan is used for the term of "independence" (Rangzen)' (Roemer, 2008, p.86). This contrasting view by Sautman in that different terminology is used between English and Tibetan languages was not seen in the Tibetan narratives of this research, but Sautman's observation does reflect that there are contrasting views on how Rangzen and Middle Path can be presented.

Fundamentally then, what is the debate about? Tsering Topgyal sheds light by stating, 'Despite their disagreements on political goals and strategies, the Tibetan struggle is ultimately about their identity...Tibetans have a rich ethnic background built upon common symbols, myths, memories and values, which are now well-documented' (Topgyal, 2016, pp.116-117). The challenge therefore, is how do Tibetans preserve their identity in the diaspora and specifically in the Twin Cities? Tibetans are creating new

lives and making their homes in locations outside of Tibet. Yet, the various political policies (Middle Path and Rangzen) have caused some Tibetans to question allegiances of TYC members to the 14th Dalai Lama.

Taklha, who is an RTYC-MN member and former officer of RTYC-MN for a number of years in support of RTYC-MN and the 14th Dalai, stated, ‘this is far from the truth, we fully support and honour His Holiness. That is why the first point of TYC’s Mission [Aims and Objectives] is about dedicating oneself to His Holiness. Also, if we already give up independence, then what do we have left to negotiate? We should start negotiating with China on full independence and if needed, adopt the position of Middle Path’ (Taklha 2015, a Tibetan born in India of Tibetan parents, between the ages of 18-30, graduated from college in Minnesota and is working full-time).

2.4 Conclusion

This background of Chinese occupation and the Tibetans’ response including current debates over political representation, particularly among those outside of Tibet, is central to this research. This chapter discussed the two policies of Rangzen and Middle Path that not only have much in common, but are also in opposition: complete independence as offered by Rangzen and TYC against the Middle Path policy of autonomy of the 14th Dalai Lama and the CTA.

Regardless of which policy one supports, I would argue that the common denominator is the 14th Dalai Lama. He is the galvanizing centre for all Tibetans and is involved in both policies. At the same time, he is the centre of tension for many Tibetans in that supporting the 14th Dalai Lama implies supporting the Middle Path policy. Conversely, not supporting the Middle Path policy suggests dishonouring the 14th Dalai Lama. The role of the 14th Dalai Lama and his significance in terms of

cultural and political aspects are more fully developed in both Chapters Five and Six.

The next chapter discusses the Tibetan diaspora in the Twin Cities.

Chapter Three: The Tibetan Diaspora and Transnational Perspectives in the Twin Cities

I came here to America to obtain a good education for my children. At the same time, for me personally, I thought if I came to America and became a US citizen, I would be able to get back to Tibet. So, these are the two main things (Rabten, 2014, p.4)

3 Chapter Introduction and Overview

This chapter examines various historical, theoretical and conceptual issues in the field of diaspora and transnational studies and how they relate to the Tibetans in the Twin Cities (Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota). This chapter is divided into four sections: 3.1 examines the historical perspectives of diaspora, 3.2 examines the contemporary scholarship and critical perspectives of the concept of diaspora and how they are applied to the Tibetan context in the Twin Cities, 3.3 discusses the expansion of diaspora studies toward transnational expressions and 3.4 reflects upon the major themes of dispersal, homeland, host and identity as they relate to diaspora and transnational concepts regarding the Tibetan diaspora.

3.1 Historical Context and Critical Perspectives

My starting point in examining diaspora is the Oxford Dictionary's etymological definition wherein 'diaspora' is the Jewish diaspora, which scholars such as Cohen, Kapoor, Knott, Tololyan refer to and challenge in contemporary expressions of a diaspora. According to the Oxford Online Dictionary, diaspora means:

Noun (the diaspora): the *dispersion* [emphasis added] of the Jews beyond Israel. Jews living outside Israel; the dispersion or spread of any people from their original *homeland* [emphasis added]; people who have spread or been dispersed from their homeland...The main diaspora began in the 8th-6th centuries BCE, and even before the sack of Jerusalem in CE 70 the number of Jews dispersed by the diaspora was greater than that living in Israel. Thereafter, Jews were dispersed even more widely throughout the Roman world and beyond

(Oxford Dictionary) <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/english/diaspora>

Within this definition there are three fundamental themes: dispersal, homeland and host-land. If one is dispersed from the homeland there needs to be another location to which one is being scattered – a new host-land where a social group is newly settled or at least is destined. Further, and though not specifically stated, is the importance of maintaining one's identity from 'whence one came'. It is the dispersal / dispersion that creates the conditions for the reflections of homeland, host-land and identity, particularly within the Tibetan context.

The historical framing is noteworthy in the concept of diaspora because it has been used since the writing of the early Christian Scriptures to the 13th century BCE, where it has been associated with the experience of Jews. Further, not until the 19th century CE (a span of over twenty-one centuries) has the term diaspora been used in a 'non-Biblical' sense *and* (emphasis added) in English, when the Moravians¹ made use of the word in their publications:

Diaspora (dai'aspora). [a. Gr. *διασπορά*, dispersion, f. *διασπείρ-ειν* to disperse, f. *διά* through + *σπείρειν* to sow, scatter.] The Dispersion; i.e. (among the Hellenistic Jews) the whole body of Jews living dispersed among the Gentiles after the captivity (John vii.35); (among the early Jewish Christians) the body of Jewish Christians outside Palestine) ... (Originating in Deut. xxviii, 25 Septuagint ... thou shalt be a diaspora (or dispersion) in all kingdoms of the earth). (The Oxford English Dictionary, 1933, p.321).

Charles Maurice Davies was the first person identified as using the word diaspora in English and in a 'non-Biblical' but Christianized context in his 1876 publication *Unorthodox London; or phases of religious life in the metropolis*:

Besides its Scripture Reader's Society on the North of Ireland, and Home Mission in North America and England, and the extensive *diaspora* (as it is termed) of evangelizing among the National Protestant Churches on the continent [Europe], it can boast of having carried on more extensive work among the heathen than any other religious body (Davies, 1873).

¹ According to *The New Georgian Encyclopedia*, 'The Moravians are Protestants who trace their origins to ancient Bohemia, in the present-day Czech Republic. The denomination was founded in the fifteenth century. Today, only one Moravian congregation exists in Georgia. (<http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/arts-culture/moravians>)

In Davies' work, his frame of reference for the concept diaspora was the Christian church, which examined the various social groups and their religious practices within London and continental Europe during the Victorian era. Davies also examined how these affected the Church's approach to 'new' religious practices and their effects upon the Church of England. It is through the work of Davies that the concept of diaspora expanded beyond the classical Jewish context.

3.2 Contemporary Scholarship

According to Karla, Auer & Hutnyk, 'Pre-1990, there was little academic interest in the term "diaspora" and the few publications with diaspora as a theme were primarily concerned with the historical Jewish or African experience' (Karla, Auer & Hutnyk 2005, p.6). Contemporary scholars have further expanded the concept of diaspora over the last 40-50 years creating more nuanced and finer differentiations. These further elaborations and abstractions can lend themselves to dilute the meaning rather than clarify the application and understanding of diasporas, in particular with regard to the Tibetan community in the Twin Cities. Butler cautions scholars in expanding the definition by stating that, 'since the 1980s usage of this word has become so widespread that as to force a reassessment of its meaning' (Butler, 2001, p.189). In other words, as scholars examine the developing expressions of diasporas they can also be caught in creating segments that may dilute rather than clarify the concept and definition.

Other contemporary scholars, such as Kapoor, in 'Theorizing Diaspora and the Indian Experience', argue that we should retain and reflect more fully upon the Jewish classical model as follows:

I said in the beginning that the term diaspora is rooted in Jewish history. By using the word 'diaspora' for all kinds of exiles, migrants, immigrants, colonists, missionaries, anthropologists, soldiers and castaways, I think, we negate the intensity of the original diasporic experience and terribly devalue it. I would, therefore, say that we should carefully avoid using the term unless it really

confirms to that original structure which is present in the Old Testament as a transitive as well as an intransitive experience (Kapoor 2004, p.34).

Underlying Kapoor's observations is his caution not to veer too far away from the Jewish model of diaspora. From this argument, one can begin to expand on the foundational definition. This does not necessarily mean that only those components identified with the Jewish experience are diasporic, however, Kapoor argues that foundational attributes associated with the Jews, should not be disregarded. Other scholars such as Butler, Knott, Cohen and Tololyan continue to use the classical Jewish model as a frame of reference. However, each delves into contemporary applications and nuances of the Jewish context when identifying more features that constitute a diaspora.

Thus, much of my research into the roots of diaspora(s) and the scholarship in this area refers to the Jewish model. Even though the Jewish model is not always explicit, the attribute of dispersion attributed to the Jewish diaspora appears to be a constant theme. The reference to the Jewish case is also important at an ethnographic level because Tibetans themselves draw upon the experience of Jews as both victims and an aspirational model in terms of the struggle for their homeland. Adamson makes note of the significance of the Jewish model stating, 'It is common parlance to speak of a global Jewish diaspora...forced dispersal from a homeland and the associated trauma of exile were considered to be important elements – as examples of the Jewish and Armenian diasporas (Adamson, 2016, p.292). She does go on to say that the Jewish model has expanded onto more border meanings, yet for the Tibetans the Jewish model is one that is most cited primarily due to the forced dispersal and victimization, which in and of itself brings about challenges for the Tibetans to be discussed further.

Dibyesh Anand challenges the significance of the Jewish model in relationship to Tibetan diaspora stating, 'This growing adoption of Diaspora within the academic field studying dispersed Tibetans seems to have been inspired less by the specific Jewish

example than by its appropriation within the wider field of cultural and postcolonial theory (Anand, 2003, p.p.215-216). However, I consider a primary valuation of the Jewish context is the authority provided by the 14th Dalai Lama himself who met with a Jewish delegation and specifically addressed the significance of the Jewish model for preserving Tibetan culture. As Yanez (1999) writes, ‘the Dalai Lama sought advice from Jewish leaders on preserving culture and religion while in exile. *The Jew and the Lotus* details the 1990 meeting between the Jewish scholars and His Holiness’. As Rodger Kamenetz stated, ‘In 1989, the same year he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his nonviolent efforts, the Dalai Lama turned for the first time to the Jewish people for help. “Tell me your secret, he said, “the secret of Jewish spiritual survival in exile?”’ (Kamenetz, 1995). Not least of which regarding the similarity between the Tibetan and Jewish contexts is the claim by Tibetans, seen in the narratives of this research, is that China desires to eradicate the Tibetan people and culture. The key components of cultural survival observed by the 14th Dalai Lama were through language and programmes that educate younger Tibetans on their history, which included instruction on traditional dress, dances and spiritual practices.

For Tibetans, modelling the Jewish context closely also has a potential downside and that is the passage of time. Nowak observes, ‘the Tibetan diaspora’s admiration for Israel is virtually unqualified, the exception being that they are not willing to wait for hundreds of years to get their homeland’ (Nowak, 1984, p.128). Anand observes that the Tibetans are more similar to the Palestinian example in terms of ‘time’ stating, ‘the other displaced people with whom the Tibetans share significant characteristics is the Palestinians. The duration of the Palestinian diaspora is similar to that of the Tibetans, since both “lost” their homelands in the middle of the twentieth century’ (Anand, 2003, p.219). So, the Jewish diaspora provides Tibetans with a model for preserving their culture and returning to their homeland, yet this hope is countered by the same model

that centuries may pass before returning home is realized. The Tibetan narratives for this research also bear out the significance of the Jewish model, where the foundation for the model is the ‘hope of return’, with disregard to the time element of over 2,000 years that the Jewish community experienced.

Two major definitional meanings attributed to the Jewish and Tibetan diaspora are a) loss of homeland (dispersal) and b) victimization. As noted by Cohen (1997, p.512) and other scholars, the major diaspora movements, following the Jewish model such as the African slave trade, the Armenians and the Irish, share many of these attributes, yet each have unique cultural and historical differences. *The Encyclopaedia of Diasporas* further acknowledges many of the salient features in its definition of diaspora, though the issue of external force is ambiguous, ‘A people dispersed by whatever cause to more than one location. The people dispersed to different lands may harbour thoughts of return, may not fully assimilate to their host countries’ (Diaspora 2004, p.xxvi).

Though the term ‘dispersed by whatever cause’ is problematic, it is addressed in the next section, as dispersal may be either voluntary or involuntary.

3.2.1 Dispersal: Concepts and Forces

As mentioned previously, Cohen refers to the forceful removal of a group of people from their existing homeland with particular reference to the Jewish context. He states, ‘It is impossible to understand the notions of “diaspora” without first coming to grips with some central aspects of the Jewish experience’ (Cohen 1996, p.508). Central to the classical Jewish model is its connection to the memory of victimization - a concept to which the Tibetans adhere.² ‘The destruction of Jerusalem and the razing the walls of its Temple in 586 BCE created a central folk memory of the negative, victim diaspora

² Chapter Two examined the history of the Tibetan exile accomplished through force.

tradition – in particular the experience of enslavement, exile and displacement’ (Cohen 1997, p.3). This demarcation for the Jewish context can be associated with the events of the 1940’s and 1950’s and eventual exile of the 14th Dalai Lama in 1959. As seen in Chapter Two, the encroachment by the army of the People’s Republic of China and destruction of Tibetan monasteries and shrines constitute a ‘parallel memory’ of loss by the Tibetans.

However, one of the significant diasporic concepts, as developed by Cohen and expanded upon by Tololyan, is causality. Building on Cohen’s discussion and groundwork regarding displacement and victimization, Tololyan indicates that relocation / displacement might be voluntary as well as involuntary. Tololyan states “diaspora: is merely one of several kinds of dispersion ... other forms of mobility and dispersion include ... education, jobs, land, settlement, new citizenship’ (Tololyan 2011, p.5). Victim diaspora, which has been attributed to the Tibetan, African, Sri Lankan and Armenian diasporas (Cohen 1995, Tololyan 2011, Van Hear 2014) is considered involuntary in that external antagonistic and internal forces are at play, such as seeking economic opportunities. The important point to reinforce here is that a diaspora may not be singularly aligned toward victimization as it may also be viewed as an ‘opportunity seeking’ displacement in that the lack of opportunity was a result of being a victim of circumstances, which is to a large extent the stance promoted by the Tibetans themselves.

Butler explores other nuanced traits of a diaspora and states in her journal article, ‘Defining Diaspora, Refining a Discourse’:

Most diaspora scholars seem to agree upon three features of diaspora. First, after dispersal, there must be a minimum of two destinations ... Second, there must be a relationship to an actual or imagined homeland... Third, there must be self-awareness of the group’s identity ... I would add a fourth dimension ... its existence over at least two generations (Butler 2001, p.192).

For the Tibetans, this refers to those Tibetans who moved from Tibet to India (or Nepal, Bhutan) then on to the United States. As discussed in Chapter Two, the Tibetans who moved from Tibet to India, Nepal and other locations, are the first generation. This first generation fostered the second generation, some of whom moved on to other locations while others remained settled in the new locality. At this point in time, the Tibetans are nearing their fourth generation since the original exile in 1959. As seen in the narratives, Tibetans do not draw upon this academic distinction because for them anything outside of Tibet is a diaspora and the longer time passes the more Tibet becomes a distant memory. As evident in the Tibetan narratives in the next chapter, this process of dramatic upheaval can elicit substantial emotional discomfort, especially when Tibetans reflect upon their journey from Tibet and the uncertainty of return.

The differences between voluntary and involuntary is not a straightforward line of demarcation and for many, other opportunities come into play. For example, Tibetans refer to their current status in the diaspora as a response to being *forced into exile*. They state that they could no longer remain in Tibet under the conditions set forth by the Chinese: specifically, that they could no longer openly worship the 14th Dalai Lama, or publically display his image in pictures, paintings or speak of any political issues relating to the annexation of Tibet. For example, the *Tibetan Review* on 1 September 2014, states, ‘no image of the Dalai Lama could be seen as it’s prohibited by the Chinese government’ (Tibetan Review, 2014). This ongoing victimization and marginalization under the Chinese state has also influenced Tibetans in Asia to take on another form of protest, that of self-immolation. According to Thierry Dodin in an interview states, ‘It [self-immolation] assumes that people’s lives in Tibet are so horribly miserable that they see no other choice than burning themselves...there are dozens of Tibetans who burn themselves to express their political frustration’ (Tibetan Buddhism in the West, 2014, pp.3-4).

What is important to reinforce is that the Tibetans often see and promote themselves as victims, justifiably so, of Chinese aggression and ultimate annexation. Their journey of exile from Tibet to India or Nepal is involuntary, whereas their journey to the United States and the Twin Cities particularly is more aligned to Tololyan's position of seeking opportunities not easily afforded to them in India and Nepal.

In response to Tibetans' victimization, Dibyesh Anand further expands upon the uniqueness of the Tibetan diaspora from a number of aspects:

The international media's attention is disproportionate to the size of the [Tibetan] diaspora, the good press which the Tibetan cause has in the west, and most importantly, an unchallenged question of one person with the national identity – the Dalai Lama in exile as the soul and symbol and personification of Tibet (Anand 2010, p.211).

Anand reveals a couple of key facets and potential hurdles for the Tibetans in the United States. By using the word 'disproportionate', he is suggesting that Tibetans benefit from a sympathetic or victimized aura amounting to approximately 6 million people worldwide. This includes a Tibetan population within the territory described as the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) within China which is estimated to be in the range of three million. The expanded press coverage and identity of Tibet for the Tibetans is substantially, if not completely, identified with the representation of the person almost universally identified as His Holiness or the 14th Dalai Lama.

The centrality of the 14th Dalai Lama as the figurehead of Tibet and the Tibetan diaspora is not only unique, but also problematic as the 14th Dalai Lama is currently eighty-two years old. How the Tibetans position themselves politically vis-à-vis to an ageing Dalai Lama remains a crucial issue for them and their future. As Anand states, 'Culture is an alibi for politics in the Tibetan diaspora' (Anand 2010, p.213) and the Tibetan narratives reveal not only the significance of the 14th Dalai Lama as a Tibetan cultural icon, but also the concern of what will happen when he dies.

3.3 Diaspora and Transnationalism

The concept and definition of diaspora in recent years has expanded. In the view of some scholars such as Brubaker (2005), Koser (2005), Faist (2009, 2010), Sokefeld (2006), it has become too broad. Koser, in *International Migration: A very short introduction* states:

According to theorist Gabriel Sheffer in *Modern Diasporas on International Politics* (1986): “Modern diasporas are ethnic minority groups of migrant origins residing and acting in host countries but maintaining strong sentimental and material links with their countries of origin – their homelands. Some critics feel that that the concept is far too flexible, to apply to any migrant group or situation” (Koser, p.26).

Koser elaborates upon the expanding diaspora concept and provides insight into a concept that not only provides a boundary for diaspora, but also provides space and clarity for the concept of transnational(ism) by exploring the work of Alejandro Portes:

A related concept is that of “transnational communities”. In very simple terms, the idea is that some migrants have begun to live ‘in between nations’. They maintain sustained social, economic and political contact with people and places in their own country of origin that transcend national boundaries. According to a leading scholar Alejandro Portes (International Migration Review 31, 1997), transnational communities comprise dense networks across political borders created by immigrants in their quest for economic advancement and social recognition. Through these networks an increasing number of people are able to live dual lives. Participants are often bilingual...and pursue political and cultural interests that require presence in both (Koser, p.31)

Koser and Portes observe a number of items, 1) that diaspora and transnationalism are related concepts 2) there are social and political connections 3) transnationals through their networks pursue political and cultural interests and 4) there is some form of living ‘in between nations’.

Thomas Faist in *Diaspora and transnationalism: What kind of dance partners?*, examines the parallel and tangential associations between these two concepts and explores lines of delineation between the two, as he says, these two concepts are ‘awkward dance partners’ (Faist, p.9). In his description of diaspora as compared and contrasted to transnationalism Faist states:

Although both terms refer to cross-border processes, diaspora has been used to denote religious or national groups living outside an (imagined) homeland, whereas

transnationalism is often used more narrowly – to refer to migrants’ durable ties across countries – and, more widely to capture not only communities, but all sorts of social formations, such as transnationally active networks, groups and organizations (Faist, 2009, p.9)

Clearer lines of separation between these two concepts is an ongoing process yet ambiguity remains. Luiz Guarnizo in *The Locations of Transnationalism* observes:

In the past decade the transnationalism has swiftly migrated across disciplinary boundaries. It has been rapidly “assimilated”, indeed appropriated and consumed by anthropologists, sociologists, political scientists, geographers and other scholars. The concept’s sudden prominence has been accompanied by its increasing ambiguity (Guarnizo, 2010, p.3)

Among the observations by Koser, Portes, Faist and Guarnizo, one can see the close proximity these two concepts have between each other. Vertovec observes, ‘While the term “transnationalism” is fairly new and currently *en vogue*, sociologists of migration have long recognized the migrants maintain some form of contact with family, and others on their homelands, especially through correspondence’ (Vertovec, 2009, p.13). However, transnationalism expands upon the diaspora concept as 1) living between or in both locations, these being home or imagined home and 2) transnationalism has a more pronounced sense of activity and in some cases activism, for example, in social or political areas through networks. The word network has taken on a more deeper meaning in recent years, not only in terms of connecting to others through physical associations and contact but also, as will be explored in Chapter Five, through the use of social networks such as Facebook and WeChat and even through the use of various internet sites. Van Hear also explores this complex linkage of related spaces stating, ‘it is conceivable that, either simultaneously or over time, a given household or family may have members at home, in a neighbouring country, in a country far afield or moving between these locations’ (Van Hear, 2015, p.233). These linkages are moving beyond a static relationship to ‘home’ toward a more

transnational expression, wherein the linkages become more formal and sophisticated through the use of various networks.

Vertovec (2001, 2009), Waldinger (2013), Smith and Guarnizo (1998) and Faist (2009, 2010) also indicate that though transnationalism is not a new concept, as social groups have historically traversed from one land to another and have made efforts to connect to each other. What makes the recent concept more consequential is the addition of a couple of new dimensions: one being the use of social media and recent technology via the internet and the other the easier ability to move across borders by train or plane. Though the latter is not necessarily the case for Tibetans outside of Tibet to visit Tibet, the technology aspect does play a significant role, as shall be seen in the case for the Tibetans in the Twin Cities and those in other global locations, particularly through the use of social media and the internet.

3.3.1 Transnational Examples – The Twin Cities Context

A discussion on social media is more deeply explored in Chapter Five, but the physical connection by Tibetans is worthy of discussion, primarily in terms of travel.

TAFM indicated that the majority of Tibetans who live in the Twin Cities have resettled from India and Nepal. So, connecting to ‘homeland’ has a couple of derivatives relating to homeland memory. One is that some Tibetans’ ‘homeland’ connection relates to family and friends in India and Nepal, hence travel to/from India/Nepal is comparatively easy. This group of Tibetans have either lived in India/Nepal for many years or they were born and raised in India/Nepal. An example of this connectedness in terms of transnationalism is that during the summer months a number of Tibetans from the Twin Cities will travel to India for months and visit and stay with family and friends. This connection and ‘dual belonging’ is further supported

through the use of social media, such as Facebook and WeChat, something that was borne out of the narratives within this research. The other is that other Tibetans also consider homeland to be Tibet, yet travel is much more highly restrictive if at all. Therefore, social media has become more prominent as a 'virtual' visit. Yet, the transnational linkage is not necessarily linear as Tibetans view 'home' bilaterally or even trilaterally as home can be India/Nepal, from where many Tibetans have relocated from to the US and also 'home' where Tibet is the penultimate 'home'. Visiting and connecting (internet, social media, WeChat) provide platforms for linkages to both homes either in reality or through a constructed and hopefully memory. Fiona Adamson explores this importance and significance of the internet in the transnational context stating, 'New technologies and the rise of global media and communication allow dispersed populations to engage in transnational politics in real-time' (Adamson, 2016, p.291). This is particularly true for the Tibetan community in the Twin Cities as well as the global community outside of Tibet. Yet as shall be explored in Chapter Six, this transnational connection through technological advances can also expose or even facilitate tensions within the community.

Regardless, whether Tibetans freely visit and reconnect with friends and family in India/Nepal or are restricted to visit Tibet directly, social media plays a significant role in their duality or even tertiary sense of belonging i.e. belonging to the US, while visiting home in India/Nepal all the while reimagining a return to their original homeland of Tibet.

Another component of active transnational lives for the Tibetans of the Twin Cities, relates to what Vertovec discusses as 'non-traditional' borders. Vertovec citing Schiffauer states, "Identities-borders-orders are legitimized" are reproduced through a system of narratives, public rituals and institutions, formal state bureaucracies and informal social relationships, written and unwritten regulations, sets of assumptions and

expectations of civility and public behaviour (Vertovec, 2009, p.87). As shall be seen in depth in Chapters Four, Five and Six, the narratives of the Tibetans themselves re-enforce the significance of the duality of belonging through the creation of a community through TAFM, the public rituals through events and celebrations such as Losar, and the celebration of the 14th Dalai Lama's Birthday, and Uprising Day. The institutions such as TAFM, RTYC-MN, Lamton, Tibetan Cultural School all contribute to the organizational and physical structure of belonging 'here and there'. The sets of assumptions can be seen in the community's effort for a Free Tibet, though political lines within the community are strained through the Rangzen and Umaylam approaches, yet there is unity of belonging 'here and there'.

The formal bureaucracy can be observed in the Central Tibetan Administration itself, the elections of Kalongs and the Sikyong and the Board Members for TAFM and even to the voluntary contribution or Danglang Chatrel, which also formalizes Tibetan identity and allows one to vote in Tibetan elections.

Transnational political activism and identity does not come without tensions, not only between the representatives of the CTA and China regarding China's action and policy for Tibet, but also within the Tibetan community. Again, the use of social media plays a significant role, which can galvanize the Tibetan community, but it can also be a platform to witness through YouTube that 'all is not well all the time'.

Sokefeld in *Mobilizing in transnational space: a social movement approach to the formation of diaspora*, makes an effort to clarify the diaspora/transnational borders by stating, 'I suggest defining diasporas as imagined transnational communities, as imaginations of community that unite segments of people that live in territorially separated location' (Sokefeld, 2006, p.267). Here he brings about the more static and historical view of a diaspora and moves it to a more contemporary and dynamic transnational view through the underlying efforts to 'unite segments of people'

[Tibetans] who live in differing locations around the globe. Faist discusses the concepts of diaspora/transnationalism and describes the relationship between the two as follows:

While the term ‘diaspora’ always refers to a community or group and has been heavily used in history and literary studies, concepts such as transnationalism – and transnational spaces, fields and formations – refer to processes that transcend international borders and therefore appear more abstract phenomena in a social science language (Faist, 2009, p. 13).

Herein, Faist approaches diaspora as a more static concept and transnationalism as a more dynamic side of the diaspora – two sides of the same coin. For the Tibetan community in the Twin Cities, the specifics as to how the dynamism is manifested can be seen through networks (physical and virtual), the organizations the Tibetans have created and developed such as the CTA and TAFM and institutions such as RTYC-MN and Umaylam and Lamton. All of which, as seen in Chapters Four, Five and Six, does not come about without contestations that are regularly negotiated.

Transnationalism can also come about in non-traditional forms. Though her work is focused on the Tibetan community in Los Angeles, Emily Yeh’s research demonstrates the transnational expression of being here and there can also create tensions. In her article, *Hip-hop gangsta or most deserving of victims? Transnational migrant identities and the paradox of Tibetan racialization in the USA*, she explores the both/and world Tibetans exist. Her subject is Tendola, a young Tibetan who attends a TYC event in Los Angeles, wearing baggy khakis and clothes, which she states, ‘Tibetans young and old often exclaim upon seeing him “He’s just like a black person!”’ (Yeh, 2006, p.p.809-810). Herein Yeh describes young Tibetans expressing their political alignment for an independent Tibet and at the same time their ‘other’ in a manner of dress not easily accepted by other Tibetans. For Tendola, being bi-cultural can have boundaries.

This tension has yet to be seen in such detail in the Twin Cities, as young Tibetans usually wear athletic attire of their favourite sports teams. Also, young Tibetans are encouraged to wear traditional Tibetan dress while attending RTYC-MN, Y4U and

other Tibetan community events. Yet, in a new development, local Tibetan singing groups mimic and perform Tibetan contemporary music from India.

What Yeh has uncovered is that there may still be traditional boundaries of assimilation and unwritten guidelines as to what is accepted in being transnational, at least in the eyes of some other Tibetans. Also, what we may be witnessing is the tension between perceived assimilation and the expression of transnationalism.

As can be seen in this discussion, the concepts diaspora and transnationalism are still being developed particularly as scholars such as Vertovec, Waldinger, Smith, Guarnizo Faist, Sokefeld, Van Hear, and Yeh explore resettled or displaced social groups. Also, other researchers examine social groups such as the Tibetans in their new environs as they continue to develop their new homeland communities and their expressions of being here and there.

3.4 Identity: One Aspect

The discussion surrounding the concept of identity is both simple and complex. It is simple in that one can state that ‘my identity is who I am’ as an individual or in nationalistic terms. Yet it is complex as there are so many elements that may constitute one’s identity. This was evident among interviews with Tibetans who would frequently indicate there were multiple constituent factors that defined their Tibetan identity.

As stated by Spinthouraki and Safikas, ‘The notion of identity is a complicated one and involves a complex set of relations’ (2005, p.1). Identity is not a static term especially for the Tibetans in the diaspora and specifically for the Tibetans in the Twin Cities, who face numerous challenges in preserving and maintaining a cultural identity, while at the same time acclimatizing to a new host culture. As Ting-Toomey states:

Identity is viewed as reflective self-images, constructed, experienced, and communicated by the individuals within a culture and in a particular interaction situation. The concept *negotiation* is defined as a transactional interaction process whereby individuals in an intercultural situation attempt to assert, define, modify,

challenge, and/or support their own and others' desired self-images (Ting-Toomey, 2005, p.217).

Many of the components identified in Ting-Toomey's definition are highly applicable to the Tibetan experience in the Twin Cities as discussed in the next chapter. For example, negotiation implies certain tensions around the practice of faith and the manner of dress in the new host culture. It is within this dynamic of maintaining identity, while at the same time negotiating cultural difference, that Tibetans face numerous diasporic challenges. So, what is the standard or benchmark of Tibetan identity for Tibetans? The universal standard of the 14th Dalai Lama provides some clues, but even this is not clear-cut and is highly negotiable.

3.4.1 Identity and His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama

In a March 2015 Internet blog, Tenzin Yeshe writes that, 'China³ might have sensed there is no such group as Tibetans. It all rest (sic) on one person i.e., the Dalai Lama' (Yeshe, 2015, p.1). A central theme for all Tibetans in their identity (both individually and nationalistically) is that of the 14th Dalai Lama. His importance as a socio-religious figurehead and one of the original exiled Tibetan monks cannot be understated. He is an icon of the Free Tibet Movement and a central part of understanding Tibetan cultural identity.

Anand's analysis of 'disproportionate' media coverage may be at face value true when speaking of a Tibetan population of 6 million, however, the 14th Dalai Lama has also managed to transcend a singular representation as a Tibetan leader to one with international appeal, though as we have seen not from the perspective of the PRC. He has metamorphosed into a universal champion for human rights not just for Tibetans. Tibet is undeniably the platform for this recognition, yet it is through his international

³ The significance of China and its relationship to Tibet is discussed in Chapter Two.

recognition, which is largely intentional, that he keeps the Tibet Cause on the world stage. His charisma also represents the plight of others suffering through social injustice and he is widely known for his empathy and compassion. It is through this global and humanistic appeal that the 14th Dalai Lama provides added weight and credibility to his representation for the Tibetan Cause.

As a globally recognized figure, the Dalai Lama travels the world filling large venues on his speaking tours. In 2015, for example, he spoke in locations such as Japan, Australia, India and the United Kingdom. His ‘teachings’ meld Buddhism with larger humanistic and ethical themes such as *The Wisdom of Forgiveness*, *The Wisdom of Giving and Receiving*, *An Ethical Approach to Environmental Protection*, *Thinking Globally: A Universal Task*.⁴ He frequently meets national leaders, speaks at colleges and universities, and engages with the international media. Yet, herein may be the issue for the Tibetans and their cause— what next? What happens when the 14th Dalai Lama dies?

In his book, *Why the Dalai Lama Matters?* Robert Thurman writes about the significance of the Dalai Lama and his identity for Tibetans, ‘I have seen the way individuals everywhere have embraced His Holiness the Dalai Lama and almost universally granted him a huge degree of moral authority’ (Thurman, 2008, p.ix). Thurman goes on to state ‘the Dalai Lama personally may be the most popular person in the entire world, far more than any other political leader’ (Thurman, 2008, p.xi). The 14th Dalai Lama’s position and representation of the Tibetan people is unique, as he is treated as a statesman, yet is one without a state. At the same time, he is characterized by the Chinese as a troublemaker generating instability for the people of Tibet and is declared a separatist by the Chinese government. In my own experience in university teaching, a general question put to students to identify Tibet on a map, draws blank

⁴ These teaching topics are from www.dalailama.com
92

stares, yet showing a picture of the 14th Dalai Lama brings unanimous recognition. This in fact may be a tension not only for Tibetans, but also for non-Tibetans: the 14th Dalai Lama is seen primarily as an individual representing a general cause of human rights and a man of peace and non-violence rather than a proactive and contemporary spokesman and statesman for the Tibetans' current struggle for freedom.

The 14th Dalai Lama's significance on the world stage also comes about through negative campaigns to undermine his moral authority. The more the Chinese declare His Holiness a separatist, the more significant he becomes for the Tibetan Cause. This point is further explored in Chapter Five. The Chinese campaign diminishing the significance of the 14th Dalai Lama may in fact reinforce his position. Recent events make these ongoing China-Tibet antagonisms ever more complex as the 14th Dalai Lama has recently stated that he may not reincarnate, whereas Chinese government officials demand that he must reincarnate. Thurman provides further background on the importance of reincarnation within the Tibetan cultural tradition:

Monastics being celibate, blood lineage eventually became too weak of a consideration in choosing leaders and was replaced by a commonly accepted notion of individual spiritual evolution in continuing reincarnations. Beginning in the thirteenth century, Tibetans turned to reincarnation pedigree as a factor in choosing their leaders, and by the seventeenth century it had become the dominant consideration (Thurman, 2008, p.27).

Dr. Lobsang Sangay, the current political leader of the Tibetans, also discusses the religious and geopolitical tensions surrounding the future selection of the Dalai Lama among Chinese and Tibetan leaders:

Its (China) leaders have called the Dalai Lama a "wolf in sheep's clothing", "a devil with a human face" and a "devil with horns". They ban the Dalai Lama's portrait and severely punish anyone in Tibet found carrying or displaying his image. How incredible, then, that China now claims the right to locate the next reincarnation of the spiritual leader whom they call "the devil" (Sangay, 2015, p.1).

In other words, not only is the 14th Dalai Lama a significant socio-religious figurehead for Tibetan identity but his current life and potential reincarnation have important geo-political ramifications. Neither is subservient to the other, yet in the

current environment, the political and spiritual are inexorably linked and enhance the identity of the 14th Dalai Lama not only for the Tibetan people, but also for Tibet itself.

In my interviews with the Tibetans in the Twin Cities, they indicate that the identification and acquisition of power by the next Dalai Lama is one of real concern. These concerns have also led to a contentious splintering of fractured loyalties as evidenced by the Middle Path Approach vs. Rangzen debate. Though these concerns are more fully revealed in Chapters Three and Five, a brief overview at this point should be provided.

In its most basic terms, the Middle Path Approach is one the 14th Dalai Lama has developed: China would retain its occupation of Tibet as falling under its geographic borders, yet Tibet would have full autonomy in terms of cultural-linguistic preservation and spiritual matters, in that Tibetans could openly worship the 14th Dalai Lama. This position is also supported by the CTA. Rangzen demands complete independence in that China removes itself physically and ideologically from Tibet and Tibet returns to its status as an independent and sovereign nation. The strains between these dialogues are not only pragmatic, but also have matured lines of allegiance and developed tensions. Those who seek the Middle Path Approach are aligned with and supportive of the 14th Dalai Lama whereas those of Rangzen are not as aligned or supportive of the 14th Dalai Lama.

Expressions of this tension were publically observed and filmed⁵ during the 10 March 2015 Uprising Day events in New York, when supporters aligned with the Middle Path of the 14th Dalai Lama and Rangzen demonstrators became involved in a vocalized skirmish. Allegiance to the 14th Dalai Lama was in question by the Tibetan protestors toward the Rangzen marchers. Tibetans, not specifically identified, called the

⁵ See:

<https://www.facebook.com/video.php?v=840826412645997&set=vb.100001559394681&type=2&theater> which is the video recording of interaction between Middle Path and Rangzen marchers.

police to intercede in the situation. The filming of this interaction posted on Facebook and YouTube created a vitriolic dialogue between Middle Way and Rangzen followers. This incident further exacerbated the lines of policy disagreement between the adherents of Middle Path and Rangzen. The primary issue raised by this example is that it illustrates the emotional investment surrounding the 14th Dalai Lama, his central role among the Tibetan diaspora and the related options between the Middle Path and Rangzen policies. Though not readily seen in the video and the adjacent Facebook comments, some accuse Rangzen supporters of being antithetical to His Holiness. A prominent theme from the interviews is whether one is a Middle Path or Rangzen ‘he [14th Dalai Lama] is the glue that keeps us [Tibetans in the diaspora] together’ (Gyatso 2013, p.21).

As noted above, another related concern is the period between the death of the current 14th Dalai Lama and the identification of the 15th Dalai Lama, which can be up to 20 years, assuming the two-year search period plus the eighteen years of training and assumption of power. Within this ongoing debate between Tibet and China, the Chinese government (one known for its anti-religious stance) states there must be a reincarnation. As reported by the New York Times:

Chinese Communist Party leaders are afraid that the Dalai Lama will not have an afterlife. Worried enough that this week, officials repeatedly warned that he must reincarnate, and on their terms. Tensions over what will happen when the 14th Dalai Lama, who is 79, dies, and particularly over who decides who will succeed him as the most prominent leader in Tibetan Buddhism, have ignited at the annual gathering of China’s legislators in Beijing (Buckley, 2015).

The implication for this position by the Chinese government is that a weakened and fractured Tibetan community would not be in a position to select the next Dalai Lama and decisions such as reincarnation, should rest with the Chinese Government. Implicit in this is the Chinese chosen Dalai Lama would be more closely aligned to the wishes of the Chinese. This strikes at the heart of the Tibetan Cause, which is an identity tightly wound around the 14th Dalai Lama and all that he represents. The current

Dalai Lama is Tibetan, born in Tibet (Amdo region) and is one of the Tibetan exiles who represents the disenfranchisement of all Tibetans and, most of all, he is a symbol for Tibetan diasporic identity.

What is next for the Tibetan diaspora and the political efforts of the Tibetan people, particularly in light of the 14th Dalai Lama's age and the impending reality of his death, is still open for debate. Dr. Lobsang Sangay, the freely elected political leader of the Tibetan people, has not received the empowered recognition or notoriety of the Tibetan people, the Chinese Government and worldwide recognition as spokesman for the Tibetan people enjoyed by the 14th Dalai Lama. Furthermore, the 14th Dalai Lama carries a key identity marker that Dr. Sangay does not have: he was born in Tibet and up to this point, has been an indelible connection to the Tibetans in and outside of Tibet.

In Chapter Four's narratives and Chapter Six's discussion regarding political matters, these policy tensions have surfaced publically and expose the polarization not only within the Tibetan community in the Twin Cities, but also in other locals in North America. Although the 14th Dalai Lama is the primary and most recognizable icon for Tibetans this does not mean his identity is without controversy as seen with the Middle Path and Rangzen policies discussed above.

The identity of His Holiness for the Tibetans is significant and challenging. Significant because of his stature and recognition not only to the Tibetans, but also to the worldwide community, and this includes the Chinese government, which have marked him as a separatist and an obstacle to the smooth assimilation of Tibet into China. He is also a spiritual leader that represents the Tibetan Cause not only through his leadership role, but also through his teachings. Furthermore, his bond with the current diaspora (and those in Tibet) is unique – he is one of them. It is also challenging, at this point in time, because there is no one like him in the broader Tibetan community and possibly in any other (non-Tibetan) community.

What will be the next step for the Tibetans in their cause for the Middle Way and Rangzen and for their identity as Tibetans, which is so centralized upon the 14th Dalai Lama? As noted by Thurman, ‘Quite simply put, the 14th Dalai Lama’s presence and activities embarrass the leaders of China. He is a visible, living testimony to the illegitimacy of their claims of sovereignty and the atrocity of their control and colonial aims in Tibet, and so unmasks their imperialist ambitions for the rest of Asia and indeed the world’ (Thurman, 2008, p.xx). Yet even with the 14th Dalai Lama’s age approaching eighty-one this year (2016), his role and identity for the Tibet Cause and for the Tibetans remains strong. William Forney of the Huffington Post states, ‘The Dalai Lama’s immutable role as a focal point for the movement for a free Tibet has not seen him slow up even as his age advances’ (Forney, 2015, p.1). The role of the 14th Dalai Lama and the Tibetans’ efforts for their homeland return, regardless of whether it is through the Middle Way Approach or Rangzen or some other hybrid-form, rests heavily on the 14th Dalai Lama.

3.5 Perspectives on Homeland and Host-land

Knott and McLaughlin, in their introductory essay to *Diaspora*, state ‘Classical Jewish experience testifies to the fact that at the heart of the idea of diaspora is an ideology of separation from, and a longing for return to, the homeland’ (Knott & McLaughlin 2010, p.9). As such, other social groups that were: 1) ‘dispersed’ from their homeland and 2) had a memory of ‘longing’ for their return home also met the criteria of a diaspora. The significance here is not the Jewish context (though it is the context to which she refers) but the ‘longing for or return to an original homeland’. This facet connects with feelings of victimization and identity in the diaspora and it is through this aspect of longing that a central theme of identity and victimization can be located. This longing can be overstated in its reference to diaspora(s) for as Knott states ‘not all diasporas were

necessarily seen as the victims' (Knott 2010, p.9). In other words, not all diasporas are involuntary, however, a key link for the diaspora remains the longing for the homeland and a longing for a return to the homeland.

For Tibetans, their longing is further emphasized as they do see themselves as victims. This was evident through the interviews as Tibetans who have never been to Tibet stated their longing to return to their homeland. Almost all those interviewed claimed a desire to go to Tibet and this was expressed and communicated in various forms such as the land of their ancestors, the land where their parents were born, or even the land in which they themselves were born, and a land that was taken away from them. However, the desire for a permanent return was not definitive as interviewees revealed a 'visit' or the freedom to visit would suffice, while others indicated they would seek a permanent relocation.

Malkki argues that diasporic narratives are highly significant. These narratives may enhance or overstate the positive memory of what was lost to embellish the significance of loss. For example, the Tibetan diaspora in their shared experience of exile contributes to a greater sense of community collective consciousness. As Malkki states, 'widely held common sense assumptions linking people to place, nation to territory are not so much territorializing, but deeply metaphysical' (Malkki, 1992 p.27). The everyday lives of those in the diaspora include a sense of collective memorialization across generations and, as Malkki suggests, it is through these narratives and memories of Tibet that the sense of collectivism is maintained and reinforced.

In Chapter One, I discussed the scholarly and popular construction of Tibet as the myth of Shangri-La and how this has also shaped Tibetans' perception of their homeland. In Larson's article 'Tibet is no Shangri-La' in *Foreign Policy*, she states, 'In the popular imagination, Tibet is a land of snow-capped mountains and sweeping vistas,

fluttering prayer flags, crystal blue skies, saffron-robed monks spinning prayer wheels, and, perhaps most of all, timelessness' (Larson 2005, p.1).

Scholars, travellers and film-makers continue to construct an image of Tibet that reflects a long compendium of mythical and idealized views yet, at the same time, reflects upon contemporary Tibet as a land being pillaged by the Chinese government. Countervailing views between Tibet and China's claims: Tibetans' claim of freedom (Tibet belongs to Tibetans) and China's claim (Tibet has always been part of China) clash at almost every level.

Even from a natural resource standpoint, Tibet is a substantial water source for much of Asia, including China and India. Numerous publications and documentaries reflect the change in Tibet's climate (for the worse). In 2011, *The Hindu* reported, 'Seventy percent of the glaciers in the headwaters of the Lancing had disappeared, while another group of 80 glaciers near the source of the Yellow river was shrinking, according to researchers' (Krishnan 2011), while *International Business Times* reported:

Tibet is facing a double-whammy of disasters. China's western so-called autonomous region is getting warmer and wetter; just as rampant population growth is creating pollution problems. The combination threatens to destroy fragile ecosystems and disrupt life for billions of people across Asia, according to a new environmental assessment by Chinese and Tibetan researchers (Galucci, 2014).

These news media articles foreground another important issue that has repercussions for Tibetan claims for freedom. Due to China's continued expansion and infrastructure development in Tibet, global warming and climate change concerns have also affected the aspirations for self-rule.

Carole McGranahan, in her work *Arrested Histories*, follows Malkki's discussion of memory stating that, 'Tibetans are handicapped by the myth of Shangri-La by perpetuating the image of Tibet as a mystical land that should be saved for the sake of its mystery and fanciful image'. She further observes, 'This unrealistic view denies history and humanity to Tibetans, and thereby rendering them "prisoners of Shangri-La"'

as examined in detail in Lopez's *Prisoners of Shangri-La*, holding them responsible for unreasonable expectations such skewed understandings generate' (McGranahan 2010, p.34).⁶ For the Tibetans, the memory of Tibet is a driving force for the 'return' of their country, yet the exaggerated or embellished memory can also be a constraining force that prevents Tibetans from adapting to new host countries (specifically the Twin Cities).

Other physical features of memory that affect identity for the Tibetans in the Twin Cities are at the artefactual level. As revealed in the interviews, Tibetans recall from their time in India and Nepal the importance of public prayer wheels, monasteries, stupas and even architecture that were more reminiscent of 'home' and 'being Tibetan', which are not so easily seen in their host-land – the Twin Cities. Another physical feature is walking about the streets of one's locale (in India, Nepal for example) and just hearing the voices of people speaking Tibetan, the music from the homes and street stalls and the smells of the food being prepared. It is the longing for a landscape that is rich in cultural meaning and expression that Tibetans yearn for and work to recreate. This is regarded as a blending of the old and the new. One way this is accomplished for the Twin Cities' Tibetan community is through their community centre, TAFM. It is here that Tibetans facilitate their memory and strengthen their cultural pride through dance, music, cuisine, prayer and the education of their children.

3.6 Summary

The concept of diaspora and its expanded definition has moved and advanced considerably from its original Jewish context of being primarily one of forced

⁶ Anne Frechette in *Tibetans in Nepal* addresses a similar theme that Tibetans foster an image of victims (peaceful, helpless and innocent people whose land was stripped away) using Scott's term 'weapons of the weak.' There is no real contradiction that the event of their land forcibly occupied by a foreign power; however, the matter is how do the Tibetans move on to create another identity for themselves that goes beyond the historical and contested memory of Shangri-La.

relocation. However, the Jewish model is relevant in understanding the expansion and added dimensions of diaspora and in terms of this research. As Cohen expressed, victimization is a component in its primary etymological roots. The Jews were forced to amend their lives by being relocated outside of their homeland by Babylonians or Persians in BCE.

Tibetan scholars focus on the significance of the 14th Dalai Lama's role in shaping and even holding together the Tibetan community within China and abroad. The galvanic role that the current 14th Dalai Lama holds is also a matter of concern and ambivalence, in that he is 82 years old and his tenure is coming to an end. As cited by other scholars, including Malkki, memory and homeland imagery can become greater than what actually remained.

As noted by Tololyan and others, not all diaspora groups come under duress, as there may be voluntary dispersal seeking greater economic or education opportunities. The primary catalyst for Tibetans to relocate (leaving their homeland) to India (new host-land) is the result of Chinese occupation of Tibet, which Tibetans see more as a forceful takeover and less as voluntary. Relocating from India or Nepal (another homeland) was in the form of seeking greater economic opportunities either for themselves or for their children in the US.

A related concept of transnationalism was explored and discussed. Though this is a relatively new concept, particularly compared to diaspora, it allows for a greater understanding of not only diaspora but also the nuances of dual belonging by developing various networks both physical and virtual. According to Faist diasporas are more static whereas transnationalism is a dynamic process. How transnationalism is expressed was explored in the use of networks (physical and virtual), organizations and institutions particularly for the Tibetans in the Twin Cities. Also, Yeh whose focus was

on the Tibetan community, uncovered that transnational expressions are not linear and can bring about tensions regarding the manner of dress and the genre of music .

So, how does this assist in the understanding of the current Tibetan context? The definitions and various critical uses by scholars provide a grounding or lens by which this research can approach the experience of Tibetans in the Twin Cities. In reviewing the works of those cited in this chapter, I observe congruencies and challenges. The victimization, dispersion and memory of homeland are congruent in what I have seen and observed in the Tibetan community, however, victimization seems to be waning, particularly in my discussions with the 2nd generation Tibetans (those born in India and Nepal) now living in the Twin Cities. Informal conversations, interviews and observed Tibetan events demonstrate that many Tibetans have a desire for further education that will lead to the advancement of the Tibetan Cause bringing strength and empowerment rather than perpetuating a narrative of victimization. Recent Tibetan speakers who have college education and research degrees have expressed that the future of Tibet and Tibetans lies more in the hands of the Tibetans themselves rather than pleading their case to the international community.

Many of the challenges in a greater understanding of the Tibetan diaspora are due to the lack of concrete ethnographic research among Tibetans and the US Tibetan diaspora is a relatively new phenomenon. Since 1959, the number of Tibetans is estimated to exceed 200,000 outside of Tibet / China, with approximately 23,000 in North America and 3,200 in the Twin Cities. Further, the political climate between Tibet and China is no nearer to a resolution today than 60 years ago, at least in terms of the Tibetan position. Ardley discusses this matter and I also follow her argument in that ‘This is a vast and complex area with both Tibet and China making various claims upon which there is no clear consensus’ (Ardley 2002, p.2) and it is not my intention to delve into the intricacies of this political arena. However, it is the backdrop of the varying

claims and antagonistic views that are fundamental to the expression of the Tibetan diaspora in the Twin Cities.

In my observations with the Tibetan community in Minnesota to date, the Jewish diasporic model remains foundational to the general diasporic classification as well as to the contemporary Tibetan diasporic claims in regard to victimization and relocation. I take this position primarily from my observations in Tibetan meetings and gatherings as well as comments and responses from the Tibetans themselves, who reflect upon their own situation as being similar to the historical Jewish context. However, as scholars reflect upon the Jewish model in examining contemporary diasporas, other attributes are revealed as cited by Malkki, Tololyan and others, such as voluntary dispersion, imagery of a real or imagined homeland, as well as more than one intermediate point of settlement beyond the original homeland.

Yet, the concepts of transnationalism also play a significant role as Tibetans negotiate dual and even tertiary identities within the political context that brought them to Minnesota. The building of networks has been further advanced through the use of social media and the internet as Tibetans share and reinforce their identity in locations around the globe and primarily outside of Tibet.

Through discussions and interviews with local Tibetans, the attribute of ‘volunteer dispersion’ is seen as having varying interpretations as Tibetans from India stated that even though they have come to the United States voluntarily they felt there was no other option as they wanted a better life for their children. Though their decision to move to the United States was voluntary, ‘they felt’ it was compulsory to relocate to the United States as a viable strategy to improve income generation and educational opportunities for their families.

Politics have taken on a leading role in the activities of the Tibetans as revealed by the analysis of Anand, Hess, Roemer, Ardley and others and is reflected by the

numerous local activities in the Twin Cities (Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota) by RTYC, RSFT and TNC. However, personal observations and discussions reveal that there are variations in approach with regard to not only the politics, specifically in terms of the Middle Way versus the Rangzen (complete independence), but also in the degree to which these approaches are viewed. Today, within the Tibetan community, these and other political positions are being challenged and negotiated by the Tibetans in the Twin Cities. The platform for tensions can be readily seen through the various Middle Path and Rangzen websites and as discussed earlier, even on the streets of New York, which was video-recorded for others to witness.

Further, activities such as self-immolations, which up to this point have only occurred in Asia and primarily in the Amdo and Kham regions of Tibet, also affect the Tibetan community as symbols of ongoing suffering. Banners, pictures and a numerical count of those who taken their lives have been prominently displayed in various public venues and public demonstrations among the diasporic community. In a few personal communications, Tibetans indicate these self-immolations are reflective of their ‘victimization’, while others express that these are acts that achieve very little in their efforts to regain their homeland.

It is these myriad expressions of Tibetans as victims, their evolving activism and struggle for adaptation and cultural survival in the Twin Cities that I examine in this research. How Tibetans in the Twin Cities express their identity, either through a new identity or in their efforts to retain what can be retained of their identity while they were in Tibet or even India, is the issue of the next chapters.

This concludes Chapter Three, which examined the overarching diaspora and transnationalism concepts and scholarly themes applied to the Tibetan diaspora, and how they relate to and are expressed by the Tibetan community in the Twin Cities. The next chapter examines the narratives of thirty Tibetans who were interviewed. The

semi-structured interviews highlight the journey of the Tibetans and their reflections on their settlement in the Twin Cities and the challenges and opportunities they face as they create a home for themselves and their families and for the Tibetan community as a whole.

Chapter Four: The Twin Cities' Tibetan Diaspora Journey

Every Tibetan should be responsible in some way to maintain their culture and to know their history so they are able to pass it on to the next generation. If I am not going to take the time to know about my country, to know about my culture, and if the same goes for all the other Tibetans that are in the same generation as me, then the future generations of Tibetans will not know about Tibet. (Choegyal, 2013, p.9).

4 Introduction and Overview

This chapter examines two facets of the Tibetans in the Twin Cities. The first facet explores the challenges in capturing migration numbers of Tibetans arriving and settling in the Twin Cities. This challenge is not restricted to the Twin Cities alone as calculating the numbers of Tibetans also affect other geographic areas in the US. In essence, the process of resettlement and the method for the US and local governments to identify Tibetans has some built-in and unforeseen hurdles for the Tibetans. These challenges also affect Tibetan organizations such as TAFM and the Tibetan community as a whole.

The second facet explores the journey of the Tibetans through their own narratives and experience, which is the result of interviews with thirty Tibetans who came to the Twin Cities (USA) from Tibet, India or Nepal. Some of the interviewees had come to the Twin Cities directly from Tibet, while others were born in Tibet and moved to either India and / or Nepal prior to arriving in the Twin Cities. Some of the research informants were born in either India or Nepal, and then arrived in the United States. The interviews were conducted at a location selected by the interviewee. This was important to allow the interviewee to feel as comfortable as possible in surroundings of their own choosing, be it their own home or TAFM, or even a more neutral location such as a restaurant or coffee shop. Throughout my initial design and contact with the Tibetan community, Tibetans advised me of the sensitivity that many of the elder Tibetans had in being interviewed and retelling their stories of leaving Tibet. For these reasons, each

interviewee was advised that their names would remain confidential. All of the respondents were presented with my signed Letter of Introduction that explained my research project. Each interviewee also signed a written consent form that allowed the semi-structured interview to be recorded for accuracy.

The five narratives were selected based upon various criteria. These included: location of birth (Tibet, India or Nepal); gender; age range; their roles in the community from elected official(s) or representative(s) of a Tibetan organization such as TAFM, RTYC, SFT, Lamton or a non-official role¹ and previous experience and memory of living in Tibet, India or Nepal. It is from these interviews that major themes and patterns were identified in this research.

The accuracy and detail of the interviewees' stories are paramount and the researcher is mindful that English is not the primary language of the interviewees. Following Robben and Sluka, it was deemed vital that the voice of the Tibetans be heard:

Modern ethnographers have sought to increase the voice of the "other" through more active involvement of research participants in the co-production of ethnographic accounts, narratives, or texts. This is done by direct quotations, co-authorship, and collaboration with research participants (Robben and Sluka, 2007, p.19).

In transcribing the comprehensive narratives for this chapter there are some minor spelling and grammar mistakes that are deliberately retained so as not to amend the intent and meaning of the narrators and to hear the tenor of their voices. Though not specifically seen in the narratives, some clarification questions were asked by the researcher to the interviewee to ensure accuracy. The 2001 Minnesota Historical Society Oral History Office document *Transcribing, Editing and Processing Guidelines* (Minnesota Historical Society Oral History Office, 2001) was used for this purpose.

¹ For the context of this research, a non-official role is considered a Tibetan who is not in an elected position within any Tibetan organization within the Twin Cities' Tibetan community.

Following the transcribed narratives, the remaining chapters reflect and analyse the major themes across the entire spectrum of interviews and compares and contrasts possible congruencies or tensions among them.

4.1 Migration and the Challenge of Numbers

Trying to capture specific demographic numbers on Tibetans living in the US is and remains a challenge. For example, I viewed a news report by MINDTV35 dated 20 May 2013 entitled ‘The Tibet Story’. At 3:30 (three minutes and thirty seconds) into the report the news reporter stated, ‘Jackson Heights (an area within New York City) home to nearly all of the 7,000 Tibetans here in New York is part of a 40,000 strong Tibetan community here in America’. Yet in speaking with TAFM and Tibet House in New York, they estimate that there are approximately 11-12,000 Tibetans who have moved from Asia (Tibet, India, Nepal, Bhutan) and have settled in the United States. Additionally, Macalester College in St. Paul, Minnesota their report *Tibetan – Refugee & Immigration Populations in Minneapolis - St. Paul, Minnesota*, stated, ‘It is incredibly difficult to determine the number of Tibetan refugees’ (sites.google.com n.d.).

According to City Vision in Minneapolis, “The Twin Cities (Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota, USA) is home to the second largest population of Tibetans in the United States totalling approximately 2,500 including parents and their children” (*Cityview Report 2009 Strategic Data for Effective Ministry*. p.2. City Vision, Minneapolis, MN).²

There are a number of reasons for the variability and the challenge of obtaining accurate demographic information: a) not all Tibetans who settle in the United States, and the Twin Cities in particular, become members of the Tibetan American Foundation

² Tibetans in the Twin Cities, to whom I have spoken from January through March 2012, indicate that the Tibetan community in Minnesota is closer to 3,000 Tibetans.

of Minnesota b) other Tibetans may not register with the Central Tibetan Administration under its Danglang Chatrel programme, also known as ‘Green Book’. The Green Book (Danglang Chatrel), as described by TAFM, is ‘the Tibetan people’s recognition of the CTA as their legitimate representation organization’ (TAFM 2014, p.8). Also, as claimed by TAFM, there are members of the Tibetan community who do not join the Tibetan Community Centre.

The significance of this Green Book and TAFM membership is that there are few other mechanisms to capture the actual number of Tibetans living in the Twin Cities. The reasons for this are varied: 1) Tibetans do not travel on ‘Tibetan’ passports. They travel on Chinese, Indian, Nepalese etc. passports, so a ‘national’ identification for a Tibetan is not always traceable in this regard; 2) several Tibetans have married in the diasporic context and have taken on names other than those considered ‘Tibetan’ names; 3) as Tibetans take on residency in secondary or tertiary countries (for example, from an Indian Passport, then Canadian passport then a US passport) the data becomes more diluted; 4) as Tibetans have children in the United States, not all Tibetans report to their local community centre (TAFM in this case) of the additional family members, and 5) as cited by Julia Hess in her book *Immigrant Ambassadors*, the database for the US government identifies cities in Tibet as cities in China.

For example, Hess describes an incident in which a Tibetan woman went to a US Immigration office to begin the process of obtaining a passport and when asked about her birthplace, she replied Tibet. The government official was unable to locate Tibet and asked what city the woman was born to which the official searched the government database and indicated that was in ‘China’. These issues are also reflected upon in other chapters relating to identity formation and negotiation. For the Tibetans, the normative process to acquire someone’s national identity is problematic at best.

Another case in point exemplifying the challenge of verifying Tibetan population

numbers relates to 14th Dalai Lama's visit to the Twin Cities for the 2014 Losar celebration. The significance for the event, other than the visit itself by the 14th Dalai Lama, was that this was the first time His Holiness celebrated Losar outside of India since his exile in 1959. Hence it was determined this would be a prophetic opportunity to capture 'real numbers' of Tibetans living in the Twin Cities regions of TAFM and the CTA. The method deployed by TAFM was that each Tibetan was handed a ticket upon arrival at his keynote speech for the celebration. Upon entering the facility, the ticket holder would present their ticket to be collected by a person designated by TAFM so that it could be counted. A few aberrations occurred: 1) there were many Tibetans from other areas of the United States, Canada and other countries who attended and had obtained tickets 2) not all tickets were collected and 3) not all tickets were handed out.

Given the numerous variances, it is estimated among the Tibetans I interviewed that there are approximately 3,000 Tibetans living in the Twin Cities, including children. Yet TAFM's membership rolls reflect a number closer to 1,100 active members. It should be noted that there are basically two types of membership in the Twin Cities. One is membership and registration 'as a Tibetan'; the 'Green Book' to help support the Central Tibetan Administration, and the other is membership in TAFM, which is a cultural community association. To obtain a Green Book, one must demonstrate through forms of documentation, such as a birth certificate or certification from the CTA, that they are Tibetan. There is no enforceable requirement for a Tibetan to obtain a Green Book or to become a member of TAFM. 'Allegiance' in relation to membership to both of these is examined in Chapter Four.

In working with the Tibetan community in Minnesota, the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE), as well as other sources for data collection including TAFM, City

Vision³, Tibet House and the CTA, the best estimate is a Twin Cities' Tibetan population (including children) at or near 3,000 for the year ending 2014. As mentioned previously, much of the TAFM, CTA (through the Green Book) and the MDE's efforts are through self-reporting by Tibetans, which may also be the case for some of the databases utilized by City Vision.

It should be noted that in communication with a representative of MDE as to how they capture data relating to Tibetans, they stated that when parents enrol students in a public school they are asked what language they speak at home. According to the Department of Education, a number of parents indicate Hindi or Nepalese and even English. It was only later, and by chance, when a school official (teacher, social worker etc.) would hear what they considered a language other than Hindi or Nepalese that the school identified the student as Tibetan.

4.2 “In my own words”: Living, Leaving and Arriving

The following five journey stories are a sample of the thirty interviews that were conducted. The criteria for selection was to provide representative experiences from a broad spectrum of the Tibetan community in the Twin Cities primarily based upon gender, age range, location of birth and initial rearing. The following chart indicates the categories of each of the five represented:

Table 3 Five Selected Tibetan Stories

Biographical Data				
1	Choegyal	India	Male	18 - 30
2	Khorlo	Tibet	Male	61 - 80
3	Losang	Tibet	Female	61 - 80
4	Khando	India	Female	18 - 30
5	Yangchen	Tibet	Male	31 - 45

³ In discussions with Dr. John Mayer, the Executive Director of City Vision, he indicated that he uses a collection of data sources, including public and (private) as he determined through his doctoral work that there are gaps and different collection techniques among various database collection devices.

Choegyal, Khorlo, Losang, Khando and Yangchen are the interviewees who tell their stories of their early life in India or Tibet, their journey, and their reflections and feelings from their homeland to their new host-land, specifically the Twin Cities.

4.2.1 Choegyal's Story

Choegyal is a Tibetan man born in India of Tibetan parents, between the ages of 18-30, who graduated from college in Minnesota and is working full-time.

I am between the ages of 18 and 30 and was born in Dehradun in Northern India. I am currently a student at the University of Minnesota. My parents and grandparents were born and raised in Tibet. As far as I can recall my ancestors were born and raised in the U-Tsang region of Tibet. My grandparents left Tibet in 1959 because of the Chinese and following His Holiness from Tibet to India. They were high-level community leaders back in their homeland and because of this they had to leave Tibet as the Chinese military was looking for my grandpa. He had to leave Tibet immediately the same night that he heard the Chinese military were looking for him. My grandparents left Tibet with their family and left all of their belongings behind in Tibet and came to India to start a new life. That is pretty much what my parents, especially my Dad also had to do when they came to Minnesota to start a new life.

In 1992, my Dad came to Minnesota as he was selected to be in the first batch of Tibetans to leave India. He came alone, leaving my Mom, my brother and me in India until he was able to earn enough money and obtain the proper documents to bring us to Minnesota, which he did in 1996.

When my Dad came to Minnesota, he lived with an American host family with a couple of other Tibetans. As you know Tibetans like to eat and the American host family ate little. My Dad said it was almost like food rationing, as the food portions were small. My Dad and the other Tibetans had to get used to that. Eventually My Dad and his friends earned and saved enough money that they moved out and lived together. Basically, when you start out you don't have much and you're able to build up enough money and that is when he brought my Mom, my brother and me over and we all became United States citizens. We have been lucky as I still have Tibetan friends here in Minnesota who are still working to become United States citizens.

Like all other Tibetans, we left everything behind in India and came here with nothing. We left our livelihood and had to start all over again. When my Dad

first came, he started to work in housekeeping at a hospital, where my Mom eventually worked and then he started his own business, which he has had for over fifteen years. Even though quite a number of other businesses near my Dad's business have closed down, we have been privileged and have done well.

When I think about living in India and the United States, I did not think about my life too much in India as that is all I knew. When I came to Minnesota, I started to notice a number of differences such as the Tibetan community in India have much more culture. For example, you don't see Mothers and Grandmothers here in Minnesota wearing *chubas* every day like you do in India. They are always walking about and going to a friend or family member's house. In India, you have lots of monasteries and families going to them every day throughout the day. For example, in India where my Mom is from there are about three monasteries within a couple of miles. You also see many more Tibetans wearing prayer beads in India, I mean here in Minnesota Tibetans wear prayer beads, but not so much. Another difference is that here we have cars and if I am going to a friend's house, I just drive my car and in India you walk. Here in Minnesota we take things for granted for what we have, small things like getting water, we have an unlimited supply of water, which is difficult in India.

When I came to the United States I spoke mostly Tibetan and when my other relatives and friends came here, they mostly spoke Hindi, so my parents enrolled me in English pre-school. I attended English as a Second Language (ESL) until fifth grade. I recall that when I started at regular school I was the kind of student that would be away from the crowd and sit by myself because of my lack of English until the 6th or 7th grade.

There is a strong Tibetan community here in Minnesota. Even though New York may have a larger community, the community here is very strong, much stronger. Here in Minnesota, even with Tibetans living in other parts of the state, there is a strong connection with other Tibetans. At the social events, you can see the sense of community. I am guessing that maintaining cultural identity is very important to every Tibetan family and that every Tibetan lectures these cultural things to their children. Keeping and remembering our culture is one of the only things that are keeping Tibetans Tibetan. One of the main components of our culture is the language and religion. I think these are the two main ones: Tibetans practice their religion daily and the Tibetan New Year. So, the key aspects of what makes a Tibetan are things like language, religion and the different things Tibetans do such as celebrate Losar. You can try and come to me and say I am not Tibetan and I am OK with whatever you say, but I know I'm Tibetan because I know the language and religion.

Let's say fifty years from now and my parents taught me the Tibetan culture, then even my grandchildren would know because I would teach it to them. I'm Tibetan and if someone comes up to me, they'll know I am Tibetan because I speak Tibetan just as my parents did. As my parents taught me is how I'll teach my children. I also believe knowing Tibetan history is really important – knowing your own country's history. I am not going to sit here and say I know all of the history of Tibet, but being able to learn and know your own history and share it with others and to pass it down to other generations is really important too.

There have also been some difficulties for me in maintaining the Tibetan culture here. Sometimes I feel I lose my culture when I get so involved in school and sports and some of my non-Tibetan friends would come up to me and say a 'couple of years back you used to go to Tibetan Cultural School on Saturdays and now you live here'. There are so many opportunities and you have other responsibilities that I guess one of the setbacks is less time for the Tibetan things. For me, I am in college and in a couple of organizations and in a fraternity. So, I have to say that now that I am doing these things I need to sit back and say, 'okay I am doing these things, but am I doing them to preserve my culture?' You do not always end up thinking about such things and I have felt that I am being assimilated into the American culture and losing my Tibetan culture.

Every Tibetan should be responsible in some way to maintain their culture, to know their history and be able to pass it on to the next generation. If I do not take the time to do these things, then how will the Tibetans of future generations keep our culture going? To help me be more connected and preserve my culture I got involved with Students for a Free Tibet (SFT) in high school and then volunteered at their headquarters for a summer and in my last year in high school I helped set-up a chapter for SFT. SFT works in solidarity with the Tibetan people for their freedom and freedom for independence. Basically, it is a grass roots initiative educating non-violent direct action. So, it's a lot about being able to advocate for the issue of Tibet, but also to enable individuals to take action themselves. One of the things that SFT does well is that it connects Tibetans with their Tibetan history, but also SFT connects Tibetans with non-Tibetans. Right now, we are looking at expanding SFT more to the non-Tibetan community. For example, one of my best friends, who is not Tibetan, is now leading an SFT chapter at local high-school and other chapters are opening in Iowa and Missouri and many members are doing something, which I feel is really great. Within the next several years, we need to see more of these kinds of initiatives. Non-Tibetans are taking the initiative, which is really great. There is also Regional

Tibetan Youth Congress, which started way back and most of its members are Tibetans and with SFT there are a lot of younger individuals and members are not necessarily Tibetan.

In India, a lot of Buddhism is physically represented. There are a lot of monasteries nearby. You do not see physical things as much here in the US and whatever exists is primarily in the Tibetan homes. In India, many Tibetans live and or work in the Tibetan settlements, so it is normal for Tibetans to be praying at work or while walking to work. This is not the same here in the US. But being a Buddhist is not a requirement to being Tibetan. I am not quite sure, but I believe there are three yellow strips on one side of the flag, representing Buddha's teachings and there is no yellow stripe on the other side, which represents the acceptance of other religions. So, being Buddhist is part of our culture, but not being Buddhist does not mean you are not Tibetan.

I feel that maintaining the culture and the community through Tibetan American Foundation of Minnesota (TAFM) is important. TAFM have many programmes and I am part of a few of them, such as Lamton. The importance of TAFM is really the place where Tibetans connect with each other and it serves like a home. It enables events to be held and for the Tibetan community members to come together and it brings Tibetans together and builds a bond to show their identity. TAFM gives programmes to Tibetans around the Twin Cities whether for social events or helping Tibetans fill out tax forms and little things like that helps Tibetans to live easier lives and gives them resources to fulfil what they need to do to live here in the Twin Cities. For example, TAFM helps build solidarity among the community. For example, the Prime Minister came here and TAFM was packed with hundreds of Tibetans – it just shows that being at TAFM is memorable and that all Tibetans are together for the same purpose.

I think that one of the greatest concerns is with the younger generations being assimilated into American culture. Though not much of a concern here in the Twin Cities because the Tibetan community is so knit together, but it may be a bigger concern in other areas around the US, such as New York. There everyone is so spread out and I know this through Facebook. Also, I travel there at least once a year and I see it there first hand. There are younger generation Tibetans there that do not even know they are Tibetan and they hang out a lot with non-Tibetans and they are starting to lose their own culture. I have good friends there and they are starting to realize they are losing their identity. There is always a concern that Tibetans are going to lose their identity yet as I said, the Twin Cities Tibetan community is quite strong. In speaking of identity, I think it is knowing one's history, your country's background and culture and knowing the

traditions of Tibetan Buddhism too. You know someone 10-15 years from now will ask you to tell what it means to be a Tibetan and it goes basically back to knowing your country's background, your family's background and your traditions. We need to realize that we are Tibetan and it is our personal responsibility to maintain our culture and identity.

I think we are at a stage where Tibetans are also confused regarding their exile, even here in Minnesota. There are so many things going on inside Tibet and I do not think the exiled Tibetans understand everything about the self-immolations and everything else that is going on. Tibetans in Minnesota, New York, California, Canada, India and Europe are looking for a direction or goal to take where they know something is going to happen. I think right now it is really important for the Tibetan Government in Exile and other people to work together so there is a clear goal, because right now one organization is saying Middle Way and another is saying independence and the media does not know how to handle this. We need to find a clear and true goal from which we can develop strategies to which we can build from and develop tactics. Right now, we have no clearly defined goal and it is difficult for Tibetans in exile, no matter where they are, to figure out what they want to do (Choegyal 2013).

4.2.2 Khorlo's Story

Khorlo is a Tibetan man born in Tibet of Tibetan parents, between the ages of 61-80, who graduated from college in India, worked full-time in India and Minnesota and is now retired.

My name is Khorlo and I was born in Kham, the Chamdo region of Tibet and I have two different ages: an actual age, how long I have been in this life and an official age, which is the age on documentation. The reason for the two different ages is that in Tibet we did not actually record on birth certificates and when my family had to register my birth date, they just selected the day.

In 1956 my family and I escaped in exile and reached India and went to a work and refugee camp and then I served in the Indo-China war in 1962. I again made an escape and went to the middle of India. While there I was selected to do road construction for two years and in 1964 all of the Tibetans of my age were sent to Dharamsala to attend Tibetan School, it was not Tibetan Children's Village (TCV) as TCV was too small then and was just for orphans. This year I celebrate the jubilee of the starting of the school I attended. I remember when I finally got to Dharamsala, I think I was fifteen, we met His Holiness and he asked all of us 'What is your age?' I answered that I was fifteen and he said it was 'too big' for me and told everyone I was twelve. He then said that I could pick my own birth-date, but on that day, I was twelve.

When I left my native land to go to a distant country I was eleven years old, we had eight family members. On the way, I lost my grandmother, father and two brothers as they died when they became sick and from hunger. When we reached India, my elder sister was sick and short term it was OK, but in the long term it was no good as it would make your body swell and give you dysentery, but luckily, I am OK. We were all so tired.

I remember when we arrived in the northern frontier of India I would see other Tibetans coming from Tibet and all the kids looked like skeletons. Each day we needed to add more places to live so we made them from bamboo, which we cut every day. I had to go into the jungle and cut two to three bedrooms' worth of bamboo, but I had to be careful because of the elephants and one day one even chased me, but being young I was fast and able to escape. After two years, we grew the compound into a school made of bamboo that was very, very nice and we started learning the Tibetan alphabet and to read and write in Tibetan.

Then the Indo-China war took place in 1962 and this was a most difficult time for us. We left everything behind again because India was defeated and we had to leave, millions were running away. So, we walked day and night and finally took a ferry to get to New Delhi. There were so many Tibetans there, almost 30,000 coming from Tibet and from all over northern India and again I was sent by the Indian government to do road construction. This was my first paid job and I did it for two years about two rupees per day. I was too young to work, but I hid behind the elders and when my name was called I said, 'I'm here' and the official looked at the elder and then I just walked to do the work.

One of my best memories when I was young was in 1964, we went on a pilgrimage to see His Holiness in Dharamsala and we had an audience with him. I remember what he said to us, '...so many children here you cannot trek back to your camps. You have to lead them to the school here'. He advised our parents to leave us there in Dharamsala. Once I finished school I wanted to go to the military since there were no job opportunities in India, but the school head master offered me a job with no pay, but I would have a place to sleep and food and I remember saying 'Okay, then I need shelter!' I did very well and one day the head master asked me if I wanted to go to Delhi for a course?' I said yes and the course was a technical school to learn bookkeeping, accounting, typing and all types of secretary jobs. From there because of my schooling and training I was sent to Nepal and became president for the Tibetan Congress. I was then arrested by the Nepalese government and sent to prison for twelve days. They said they

thought I was part of the Nepalese Congress and in those days, the Nepalese Congress was exiled from India.

When I was released from prison a friend of mine came to me and said, 'I think you are causing too many problems in this country and I can get you out of here'. I told her "no thank you" as I was determined to work at least thirty years for the Tibetan people. It was a pledge I made to myself for the Tibetan people. I worked for the Tibetan government for thirty years in India and when I retired I was joint secretary. As joint secretary, I had many responsibilities and one was working with the 1,000 Tibetans to go to the United States. There were different types of seats for the 1,000. Some for poor Tibetans, some for educated Tibetans, some for families living in Nepal and some for Tibetans who worked very hard for social services. As a result of my work, I was number 32 of the 1,000.

I told my wife I did not want to go because I wanted to keep working for the Tibetan people in India and gave my number to my wife, who came to the United States in 1992. She came, to Minneapolis, my children stayed in the Tibetan school in India and I was working as a senator for the Tibetan government. Eventually my wife was able to sponsor me in 1996 and that is when I came to Minneapolis.

I did go back to Tibet with the help of my cousin, who was in Boston and did I tell you Lobsang Sangay is my uncle? Anyway, after forty-five years I went to Tibet in 2005 and we both had US passports. We worked with a Chinese travel agent and went to China. There we meet a group of foreigners who had authorization to go to Tibet and we decided to join them and paid them 300 yen and went to Tibet. I felt so happy and I said 'Okay, now we can at least see Lhasa!'

When we got to Lhasa two people from the Chinese Ministry started to watch us and stopped us and said, 'What are your names?' and then said, 'You are not supposed to be here because you do not have a permit'. Then they said 'Okay, you are Tibetan, you are already here, so you can come but you two will be under observation'. So, they told us to get in the car and they drove us around Lhasa. They also found us a room to stay.

For eleven days, we had to go to the Chinese government office to be interviewed almost every day and they told us they already knew our stories and our names. When they asked why we were there we said 'We want to go on a pilgrimage. We don't have any relatives in Lhasa and had none to meet. We just wanted to be on a pilgrimage and our main goal was to go to our birthplace'. After eleven days, they said we could stay in Tibet for a month but that we were not to 'indulge in any political activities, do not take photos or any military or

police or any security matters’. These security men, who were Tibetans working for the Chinese government, became our friends and we stayed for the full month. Then we left to go back to the United States.

I do recall being in Nepal in the early 70s during the time when the Chushi Gangdruk was being disarmed at the Mustang base. The people in the Chushi Gangdruk were trained in Colorado. The Nepalese government wanted to close down the operation quickly because of the pressure from the Chinese, but the general for the Chushi Gangdruk wanted to keep the operation going and sent messages to Dharamsala and made radio announcements. The situation for Tibetans in Nepal at that time was very bad because the Nepalese government did not want to let the Chinese government know they were recognizing the Tibetan exiles, so the Nepalese government made it very difficult for the Tibetans and did not want to show any connection with His Holiness for the benefit of the Chinese government. This was a very humiliating time for Tibetans and they disbanded all Tibetan schools and we were also imprisoned for twelve days. After I was released and went back to Dharamsala. My whole time in Nepal was trouble.

But my time in India was quite good then. They welcomed us and His Holiness. All you would have to say was ‘Dalai Lama’ and immediately the Indian people said ‘Oh you like Dalai Lama, come over here.’ They gave us food and other things because of His Holiness. So, India was very positive for me and the Indian government leaders were very generous for Tibetans. Yet, there we also faced many challenges too. The first challenge was the heat and climate. There were also insects and snakes and we Tibetans were not used to this. Many Tibetans died. In my camp, you would see at least five or six dead bodies every day. This was the number one challenge for me – the climate.

The second big challenge was the language. Hardly any Tibetans spoke Hindi, they only spoke Tibetan and it was very difficult to get work or do any kind of business. Yet, India is very kind. At the same time, there is no real future for the younger generation in India. When a Tibetan finishes Tibetan School there is no place to go or to work.

Education was and is very important, but in India there are not many opportunities, yet the Tibetan community in India does need Tibetans who speak Tibetan, Hindi and English to be able to help them. If Tibetans became more educated it would be easier for them to go to other cities and get jobs. Even today, it is difficult to get a job in India. That is also why I eventually moved my family and myself to the United States. In India, most of the time you think about your food and clothing and little time to consider your future.

When I finally arrived in Minneapolis my wife said to me 'It is time for you to rest' since I was working so hard for the Tibetan government in India. After a few months, I wanted to work again and went to the Walker Library to look for jobs and made an appointment with an employment agency. They found out that I was geography major and tested my language skills. I walked 30 blocks each way to a temporary job, which was not a problem. I worked well and was then asked if I wanted to work for American Express? I said yes and worked for them for fifteen years.

When my wife first came, she worked two jobs because we did not have any health insurance, which was important because of our children. She finally got a job with a hospital and has health and other benefits and she has been there for over fifteen years.

When I first came to Minnesota I saw we needed a kind of community centre to organize our community and TAFM was set-up. It was also set-up to help bring other Tibetans to the US to help find sponsors as we had another 160 Tibetans who were on the list to come to the US. We first started TAFM under the umbrella of Tibetan Foundation – New York until we were able to get our own community centre. Then we had about 700 Tibetans and now we have over 2,500. I remember an Italian lady who came from the US. She said to me 'Don't go, I've been there, but their culture is different, the language is different ... you'll never be happy there'. I told her 'I am a homeless guy, I have no home, I have nothing in Tibet or in India. I only have work and I have worked in twelve different places and positions since I left Tibet'.

I have read a lot about America, the economy, about every state and I know every capital. I have read about George Washington, Thomas Jefferson and America is a great place. Actually, I remember thinking that I would like it in America because when I go there it will be like my nature. Straightforward people and also, my wife was already here in the US. The US is now my home and these people have accepted me and this country has accepted me as their own.

I remember when I met His Holiness before I came to the US he asked me 'Are you going to America? And I told him 'Yes, because my wife and family are there and I do not want us to be separate anymore.'

When I came to America it was exactly as what I had found in the books I read. I like the people and knew them because of my work with aid, sponsors, official visitors and we talked. On top of all that, this is a free country and I got actual citizenship, because all my life I have not had citizenship. Before in Nepal

and India, I could not have property or a bank account, there were so many restrictions.

The main pillar of our Tibetan community is of course His Holiness and through the CTA (Central Tibetan Administration) because everybody believes in him. He is the main connection for all Tibetan people. His Holiness is the heart and soul of Tibet. He has the responsibility of Buddhism, harmony of all religious denominations in the world and to solve the Tibetan problem. I believe there will be a lot of changes when His Holiness passes on. Unity with Tibetans in exile will not be the same as now. A lot of different groups and parties will come up and try to take control, but our basic CTA will be there, yet the system will be fractioned. His Holiness is the main unity and representative of our Tibetan culture.

The connection is important even for the local community because some of them have been away from Tibet for over fifty-five years. Here (in the Twin Cities) it seems like they know a lot, but actually don't know much about Tibetan or Tibetanness. Because we have been separated from Tibet for such a long time. So, looking at the second generation, they were born in India and now another generation is being born here.

I remember in 1963 we sent 100 or so Tibetans to Switzerland to foster homes and adopted by Swiss families and now most of them have forgotten everything about Tibet. When they grew up they forgot everything with no attachment with Tibetans and Tibetan parents. But when they grew up they will run Swiss schools, Swiss Universities because that is where they were educated. When they came back to India, they tried to learn the Tibetan culture and the language. These are the kids who will one day be our Tibetan leaders, yet they do not know the Tibetan culture or language. Tibetan culture now is all mixed-up: it is Indian, Tibetan or American and even others.

I do know there will always be a problem of losing our culture, the kids will lose some too. I mean Tibetan culture and language and these things will be slowly lost, but since we are out of our own country, we are losing it. Even in India, the kids are adopting the Indian culture. So, it is the same anywhere we live...unless we all live in Tibet.

Tibetan Buddhism is very important to me to maintain my culture. If we do not practise this, we have nothing left, no sign left of Tibetans. Tibetan culture emerges from our Buddhist roots, but practising like we did in India is impossible here because of the environment that we are living in. There are many distractions here in the US. In India, most of the Tibetans are working hard for

food and clothing. And they come here now that they have better conditions and try to be American.

We cannot be like a Tibetan living in Tibet or even a Tibetan living in India because every situation is different. Look at the Jewish people, they live in different countries, but they have maintained a kind of Jewishness. The Chinese also do the same thing.

So Tibetanness is in the Tibetan literature. Tibetans need to read Tibetan literature and they, especially the younger generation, are not doing this. The problem is that there is so much Tibetan literature, yet it is all written in Tibetan and this need to be read.

The biggest problem I see for Tibetans is that the younger generation is losing their culture and language and that is why we are working hard at TAFM and the Tibetan Cultural School. That is also a problem, because not all Tibetans here are part of TAFM and we cannot force them to join, we can only talk about the benefits. The main way to keep our culture is dealing with Buddhism – Tibetan culture is not separate from Buddhism. Every aspect of our life from getting up in the morning until you sleep should be based upon Buddhist beliefs. As you know, all cultures change, according to the environment, but there should be a base for that culture and for Tibetans it is Buddhism and for us Buddhism is highly important for us here in the US. But many Tibetans who came here are not highly educated and many have to work many jobs and the kids are more influenced by American culture, a culture clash. Yet, the parents work hard for their kids to have a better life and that is why they came here and at the same time the parents need to have a greater influence on the kids learning the Tibetan culture and language.

We could not walk, but somehow, we reached India. I remember my brother looked like a skeleton and my mother had to carry him. This journey to walk from Kham and then across the Himalayas to India took over three months. I remember for almost two months we did not eat human food, we ate the leather from our shoes, belts and whatever other leather we could find. Once the leather was eaten we tried eating leaves, clover, roots and whatever we found along the way. I remember along the way we found a tree and cut it into pieces and then ground it up to make something similar to *tsampa*.

These are challenges and many parents work to have their kids involved in a Tibetan Cultural School or even send their kids back to India to be in a Tibetan community for the summer.

Also, the stories of our past, through the elders should be told to the younger generation, it is the storytelling that will bring the kids into the community. The kids are our future leaders (Khorlo 2013).

4.2.3 Losang's Story

Losang is a Tibetan woman born in Tibet of Tibetan parents, between the ages of 61-80, who worked full-time in India and Minnesota and is retired.

My name is Losang and I was born in Lhasa, Tibet in the 1940s, I do not remember the year since we do not have birth certificates. I had one sister and brother. Both of my parents were Kham. In Tibet, our family had a successful food and clothing business and we worked on what was called the Kham Tunnel, between Kham and Lhasa. When the Chinese started coming in Tibet in the 50s my grandparents watched and saw what the Tibetan and the Chinese people needed, so they began selling these things. We moved to the Kham area for a while and came back to do business in Lhasa. It is in Lhasa where my Dad and Mom met, married and settled. So, when my parents settled down my father worked hard at the business and they bought a house, actually, it's a big house. The house had 30 rooms, so it was nice and big and we had lots of land around the house. Since the Chinese invaded there are 21 different families that stayed in this house.

When my parents first built the house, they rented rooms to people, so we can make additional money and help other people. My parents helped others start their own business too such as our first neighbour, my family helped him get a store. We eventually had seven to ten people to do our work around our house. So, life was really good. We didn't have any cars, we relied on the horses and donkeys.

Before China came and after China moved in Tibet it was different like earth and sky, it was a big difference. The Chinese saw Tibet as a slave country - this was not true. It's not that kind of situation. We did not have slaves for the rich people, it was not what China said, they all lied. Tibet was always free.

In 1959 the Chinese came over to Tibet and started the war. When they came in to Lhasa, it was at night that they started the killing. They killed so many Tibetans and at that time, lots of people died even the beggars. The Chinese Government said they wanted to make all the people equal. They wanted to give the wealth to the poor and then they wanted to give it to everybody in equal. Since then they took our house and everything - we lost everything. So, China took all our assets and then with my mom, with five young kids plus my auntie, which is my father's older sister, we lived together in a barn next to our house, it was like the bottom part it's very, very dark, and they made our family stay in that barn. When we were sleeping in the room, you could not fit

seven people in there to sleep. We were all really tired all the time. We lost everything and everything was taken away from us by the Chinese.

When China started coming, the Tibetan army and Chushi Gangdruk went to fight against the Chinese armies. My father left to fight with Chushi Gangdruk and we did not know if he was alive or he had died. When my father left for the Chushi Gangdruk, the Chinese made our whole family criminals and we could not contact any outside people, we could only talk with each other in the family – there was no connection with other people. This was not just our family, it was for any family that was fighting against the Chinese, and all families had the same problem. I remember the Chinese would bring a big board around the necks of people they stated were criminals and have them wear it round in public. We would also have to wear paper hats that had ‘Criminal Family’ written on it. Some Tibetan family members could not stand this system and committed suicide.

Because the Chinese knew my father worked with the Chushi Gangdruk, which was working with the CIA, the Chinese would interview us many times. I was tortured because my father was with the Chushi Gangdruk. The Chinese had me stand and they placed a wire around my neck with one knee on a chair near a fire to make me tell them about my father and ask me how many people worked for the Chushi Gangdruk, where they were located and they did this with me in public. I had no idea what happened to my father, yet they still kicked and beat me and I was still a child. This was such a hard time for me as I missed my father, our lives were taken away and I was being punished and tortured.

I remember I had to go to Chinese Government classes every day so they could tell us each day how good China was to us and how bad Tibetans were and then we had to apologize to the Chinese for being Tibetan. This was so hard for me.

There was no information on him until 1981 when China, India and Tibetan Government started having discussions and the first group that came to Tibet to discuss the Tibetan cause. The Dalai Lama’s older brother, his name Lobsang Sadden, was in the first group, came in Lhasa for discussions with the China Government. In this group, there was a colleague who told me that my father had died in Dehradun in India. I had no idea that my father had died or still alive until 1981. I found out when speaking to the colleague that my father had actually died in 1965 and I did not know anything about this until 1981.

When I was eighteen I was sent to work for the Chinese, to do like hard labour work, like when people build houses - construction work. In one day, I would only earn 25 cents in American money and it was work the Chinese would not do. It was really hard labour - all day. The only food I ate was black tea with *tsampa*, but Chinese Government brought in their own food or took the best of our own food and animals for

themselves – they ate different and better food. We only had tea and *tsampa* and whatever we could gather. From 1961 to 1965 I was doing that hard labour construction. And then, in 1965, we (my family and me) had a permanent job so they sent my mom down to the Congo area so she can earn little more money, which is one Chinese Yuan and two, like about like quarter.

Finally, I was able to go to Nepal in 1982 and I was so happy because there were not any Chinese and I felt freedom. Then there were twelve Tibetans from Lhasa who came and took us to India and I felt even happier because I was able to see His Holiness. It was hard to control my happiness and emotions, all of us cried and could not control ourselves. I remember His Holiness took us into a private room, it was like a dream, I was not sure if it was real-life or just a dream to see and be with him. I could not stop crying and he said to me ‘Oh, please do not cry, do not cry. Just be calm, and whatever you have to tell me, just tell me.’ I was so excited to see him could not talk, I just cried, the only thing I could say to him was ‘Long live the Dalai Lama’.

I finally came to the United States in 1988 to be with my daughter and her family. The United States is a great country because everything is equal and I can always pray. I also have medical treatments and get home visits from medical people too. Yet, I do miss my country of Tibet very much, but the enemy has taken over my home and I do not like going back. It is hard to go back because our culture is being destroyed and is being banned by the Chinese. Here in the United States we can maintain our culture. The Dalai Lama says we need to keep our culture alive and it is important to keep our country. Our culture is the language, the dances and our religion and we can do all of these things here and knit in our home country of Tibet. Yet, language is the biggest difficulty here with the kids. My youngest grandchildren struggle with the language.

Religion is very important to me but the biggest difference is that in Tibet you can’t practice religion in the open, here I can though I do it mostly in my home because the monastery is so far away. But I do go to Monlom [at the Gyuto Monastery] with my daughter and family. In Tibet, China says religion is poison and here I am free to practise my religion – it is like always sitting on needles in Tibet.

One thing I see is that the younger children here are more involved in politics and even in Tibet with the self-immolations – there is so much politics now.

I am so thankful for being in the United States, my husband was one of the first of the 1,000 chosen to come here. We do not have freedom back home in Tibet and that is why I came here to the United States – America is freedom (Losang 2013).

4.2.4 Khando's Story

Khando is a Tibetan woman born in India of Tibetan parents, between the ages of 18-30, who graduated from college Minnesota and works full-time.

My name is Khando. I was born in India, a town near Delhi and I am between 18 and 30 years old. I would say my life was a bit different than other Tibetans because I was not born in a settlement and I wasn't raised in a Tibetan household – just my Mom raised my brother and me. My Dad was in Dharamsala working for the Tibetan Government or he was in the US making money so we could all be together again. My Mom was kind of playing the role of a single mother kind of thing. She was a nurse in one of the best hospitals in India and we were living in staff quarters with a bunch of other families, mostly single women.

Both of my parents were born in Tibet on the U-Tsang area in very small towns, which were about a day walk from each other. I think the area was close to Nepal. They speak Tibetan and my Mom speaks good English. My Dad can understand English, but he does not like speaking English to me. So, at home as our primary means of communication my parents speak Tibetan to us and we speak English to them.

I went to Indian school up until the third grade when we came to the US, which was in 1998, and at that point I did not speak a lot of Tibetan – actually I didn't know any Tibetan. So, when we came to the US, on top of learning English I also had to learn Tibetan, which I did every Saturday at the Tibetan Cultural School at TAFM. Also, my Dad was a stickler for learning Tibetan.

I also had a communication barrier with a lot of Tibetans here because first of all I have never seen so many Tibetans unless we were on vacation in India or visiting a settlement. But now I was immersed in the community on a daily and weekly basis and I now have Tibetan friends. Back in the day in India, I really did not have Tibetan friends and we only visited the settlements two or three weeks a year, something like that.

So, in India, I just spoke Hindi and wrote a few letters in English, but beyond that Hindi was the official language. So nowadays I get confused when I am asked 'What is your native language?' because technically it is Hindi not Tibetan, but I feel most comfortable in English. It is really a push and pull as to what is my native language and what is my identity. Even in college I would ask myself 'What would I consider myself?' because I felt more Indian and I was born and raised in India and had mostly Indian friends. But then I would consider myself as an American because I spent nine years in India and another nine years in the US as well. So, it is a bit of both. I learned English well and graduated from college here.

Usually Tibetans don't tend to use Indian [languages] like they say they are Tibetan or Tibetan American, but not Indian Tibetan, but Tibetans have a close

relationship with India. So, for me I would say I am Tibetan American Indian because I have spent equal time in both places, but now it is easier to say I am Tibetan American because I have been here the longest.

My brother was born in India, but he started school here, so he did not really have the immigrant experience since he was so young. He adapted easily and does not really understand there is a difference 'between me and them'. Even though he first started speaking Hindi, he was readily able to accept English as his first language. He is much more Americanized, has different values, different understanding of life and he does not want to go back to India at all.

One of the different values he has is that he values his personal space a lot and I think it is because Tibetans have a collective culture because of our time in Asia versus American culture where individual space is very much prized. It is one of freedom, it is kind of freedom for yourself. He is also very secretive of what he wants and his personal space versus me where I depend on people and I am not in such need of personal space and privacy. I value my personal space too, but to a certain degree, but I do not go as far as hiding my personal belongings or I am not able to hug somebody. It is because I am an immigrant I have to balance my own identity with what is happening around me and where I am placed at that time.

My Dad was one of the original 1,000 Tibetans and came to the US in 1998 and he came directly to the Twin Cities. I believe we came here because of the growing Tibetan population here and the host family was here too – there was more support and resources.

Since the time I left India I have been able to go to Tibet, but it depends what is meant by Tibet. I did go back to the Amdo region, which is called ethnic Tibet and wanted to go to TAR, but the Chinese government would not allow me at the time because China controls the visitation permits.

My best experience was going to what we called Blue Lake, which was blue upon blue. We used to sing about this lake when I was a kid. When I saw the lake, I felt so connected to my country, not the country, but to the land, to Tibet and the idea of Tibet, because we never stepped foot there. My parents did but our generation hasn't. Tibet for me is more than a country, it is an idea that a lot of Tibetans had that I think is the identity itself. An idea of who you are as a Tibetan is like part of me, an idea that helps me become who I am. Because when we were younger you only heard about Tibet, it was an idea, not concrete. Once I was there it was no longer an idea it is concrete – it is where my life is now. But before seeing the lake and going to Amdo, it was just an idea.

India was a good place for me and though I looked differently than others around me I had a really good childhood and had great friends, though I am not in contact with

them anymore. Some things just change when you go abroad and are immersed in a different community.

For me settling here is different than other Tibetans as other Tibetans came from Tibet, or Tibetan settlements and I did not. I went to an Indian school and did not have many connections with Tibetans until I came here. So, when I came here I was not really connected to the Tibetan community because I could not speak Tibetan and did not have Tibetan friends. On top of that I had to learn English. I remember the first day of school here I had to take a test and I flunked it and I started crying as I could not understand any of the English. So, I had to work hard continuously on my English and Tibetan and to start connecting with people and other Tibetans. When I started in Tibetan school I did not know anyone and I did not speak Tibetan so I really couldn't talk to anyone. I had the hardest time connecting with Tibetans here. This is even true now sometimes as we did not have the same shared experiences coming from settlements or from TCV schools. Also, we celebrated different holidays rather than many of the traditional Tibetan holidays. For example, Holi, which is an Indian tradition not a Tibetan one. Also, since my Mom was like a single Mom, we did not have much chance to go to the settlements to connect to the Tibetan events. I had my family and that was about it. So, language was probably the biggest adjustment for me coming here and another difference is that here I play basketball instead of other sports.

Another aspect that I find different here is that Americans are confident. We as Americans may not be smart or as healthy as other countries and people, but we are very confident and even sometimes we are over-confident. Tibetans do not really express self-confidence. I think this is something Tibetans should take a hold of – being confident.

The Tibetan community here is very close knit. It is small enough where you can know most people and large enough that you can always meet someone new. So, it is a nice mix of both. People can choose to be very close to the community or they can raise their families on their own. Both are OK and you can almost have two different lives: one within the community and one outside. I think that is the way it was for me. During the week while in high school and college, I was going to class, playing sports, being in the National Honour Society and hanging out with friends and on the weekends, I was at Tibetan Cultural School, being with Tibetan friends and doing Tibetan Performing Arts. So, my whole week was booked and these two worlds never interacted. I would say that being in Tibetan Cultural School taught me more about being Tibetan and living with other Tibetans and being more aware of who I am as Tibetan has helped me understand more of what it is like to be Tibetan. Also, when I arrived here I knew I was Tibetan but I was not like them so I thought how could I become more assimilated into the Tibetan community and the Tibetan Cultural School and the community helped me.

Maintaining my cultural identity is very important and probably more so for my parents than me. I do value the language but I am not much of a stickler for it as do my parents. They want me to know the language and the religion and these two main things basically. I remember a while back my Mom said 'You and your brother are Tibetan and your Tibetan is really, really bad. Just do it'. Even when I was younger my parents set such high standards for me and I had to be good at everything: Tibetan music, Tibetan school, American school or whatever else. Because my parents would say yes, you are utilizing all the educational opportunities here in the US but you should never forget about you being Tibetan and understand that part of your identity too. So, for nine years I was going to school almost every day of the week and on weekends at the Tibetan school we had tests too.

Just being here in the US makes everything difficult to maintain our culture. Being in a different nation alone is hard and I am always conflicted with what my parents want and what my friends want from me. Tibetans and Americans have different expectations. My American friends say 'Oh, freedom, your own independence. This is what you should be aiming for right now'. Whereas my parents say 'No, you should be aiming at perfecting your mind. You should be focusing on education and career' and having importance for the family too. So, it has been hard going between two cultures.

American culture is more liberal in comparison to Tibetan culture. We are also more narrow-minded and even sexist. Both societies have sexism, but it is much more apparent with Tibetans just because of the roles and expectation that women are given. In the Tibetan community, the woman has to prepare food every day, and she has to work. People are writing about this and it is taboo in our culture to talk about it. Look at our board members there are only one or two women on the boards. This is just as it has always been, it is this sexism that is in our culture, and it is looked at as something natural. But now it just seems impractical and I think this needs to change. But you do not want to be the weird person that is the odd one out that says 'no this is not the way I want to live' because I also want to assimilate into the Tibetan community. Back when I was frustrated I would say 'Why is the Tibetan community this way?' I would want to escape the Tibetan community completely, but I choose to stay because there are things I like and things that need to be changed and it won't change if I am outside of the community.

I used to attend almost all the Tibetan gatherings, but nowadays not so much as most of my friends are just not there. The community and the people attending have changed. Early on when my friends and I were kids we had to be there because of our parents. Now we don't have to be there and it is always the same people over and over again. But now all of my friends aren't coming anymore so I don't want to go as much

either. I really do not want to attend the events unless I know one of my Tibetan friends is attending.

Some of my biggest concerns are that I have noticed that a lot of the younger generation that were born here are very Americanized. You can't distinguish between them and Americans at all because they are just so much like Americans. I feel like we need to do some sort of programming where they are able to speak the language and feel comfortable. I really, really believe in creating more educational opportunities for Tibetans online and I think we are really lacking in that aspect. So, I have always wanted to have a programme to create like a game or something on your phone where you can play and learn Tibetan. Make sentences up, those little things that are fun but then you also learn so that one day in the future Tibetans are able to communicate on Facebook through language, their language. Just typing it on the computer, just like talking to each other that way. So, it is language and also their way of thinking. As I mentioned they are very individualistic and I do not see a collective nature that much. Also, I do not see much compassion. Americans are so privileged and do not show gratitude and this is seen in the younger generation too. They also do not have the drive that immigrants tend to have and I really want to teach this to the younger generation.

Adjusting to these concerns of language, individualism and compassion, I believe the Tibetan Cultural School is good. But I think it needs more than that. Lamton also helps, but some form of on-line platform is needed because that is natural for the younger generation. Also, to stress to communicate with each other in Tibetan, which is what we encourage and work on in Lamton. Practice makes perfect. Also, almost all the kids are online so it's natural for them.

In thinking about His Holiness, back in high school I hadn't really been exposed to a lot of Tibetans out of state. Within different parts of the country and outside of the country I used to think that after His Holiness passed away there wouldn't be any connection, we wouldn't be as unified as we are now. But now I am starting to get away from that and I am more optimistic than not about us staying connected about us staying united. But still I do think that we are not going to be as united as before. United as in this identity that we have as Tibetans will kind of just not go away but there will not be as much importance on it. Because the people will naturally assimilate to the culture that they were raised or living in whatever, and just live life that way. If they want to be connected to the Tibetan community they can, but there is no pull. Tibet is through His Holiness and once that [he] is gone the outside world won't be reminding that "Oh your Tibetan? Oh, His Holiness is awesome blahblahblah" because that generation may not have lived through His Holiness and his teachings in books.

To me, being Tibetan means that I have a different life that I can live on days that I don't want to live my usual normal life. It means that I have a shared history, past

connection to others who, we may not know each other, but because we are Tibetan we share certain things and we can become friends that way versus just meeting someone off the streets you may not have similarities you may not share things with them, right? With Tibetans, you know the struggle, you know the struggle of coming from India to America, or the struggle of assimilating to a new culture or the struggle of living, just that kind of a thing. You also just kind of know that your parents did that too, that your parents raised you a certain way. You know that you can connect not just through the experiences but also through the language, the music, and the arts. Whatever it is, there are a whole slew of things that you can connect to that person with.

It is also self-identity – to identify yourself as a Tibetan, I think that is a really big important thing. More and more language and religion is becoming a big thing. Religion not so much but mostly language because if you have experienced that communication barrier, then obviously, you are not going to connect with the other person because you can't talk about certain ideas, you can't connect to them on a personal level because depending on the language that you speak, you have a different personality with that as well. So, your personalities may not be compatible if one person speaks in Tibetan and the other in English. I've seen that, I've actually read about how different languages bring out different personalities in people and that is really an interesting idea because then if you think about it Tibetans who are speaking two different languages are not going to be able to interact with each other even though they are Tibetans and they have the shared history, they have the shared connection, all that stuff it won't matter because they have different personalities and they won't want to meet, they won't want to become friends because they are so different, their mind-sets are different. So, language is big. Language and I think self-identification. Those two are the biggest for me. (Khando 2014).

4.2.5 Wangdark's Story

Wangdark is a Tibetan man born in Tibet of Tibetan parents, between the ages of 31-45, who works full-time Minnesota.

My name is Wangdark and I was born in Tibet, Ü-Tsang province, really close to Mt. Everest. I am in my mid-forties. My family was semi-nomads. We had land and animals. My Dad and my Mom had 8 kids, 5 daughters and 3 sons and I am the oldest one.

While I was growing up, it was one of the darkest parts of Tibetan history, Tibet was under what the Chinese called the Cultural Revolution, which started in '75 and ended '85. So, I was right in the heart of Cultural Revolution and Cultural Revolution I guess is different but back there, I was actually born in a kind of a wealthier family, so my Dad had a bad background because he got some connection with anti-Chinese, there were some spies. There were some anti-Chinese Communists, actually lot of members in Tibet, so he was one of them and so right around '68 -'69, Chinese found out, so he was imprisoned for a long time. When he was released after the prison, lots of them were killed, his friends who were involved in that revolution were killed, and so he was lucky, luckier that he didn't die in prison or he wasn't killed on what you call site job or whatever you want to call it and then he was released he was – they gave him up almost like I guess, I don't know what you call it here, almost like, people with a criminal record, so you have to be under a watchdog, they call it 'black head' in Tibet.

So, people who are anti-Chinese who are from a high family background who had lot of servants in old days, like any religion heads, they used to be different, they set them aside. So, my Dad because he was kind of wealthier before and then also involved in anti-Chinese, anti-Communist activities, so even though he was released from the prison, he can't eat with the local people, he can't talk to anybody, he has no—like the local people because when the Cultural Revolution was there, everything was owned by the public, so they took all the animals from my house, all the land, everything was owned by Chinese public and everybody had to work for Chinese public and they pay you accordingly. So, my Dad had to work harder more hours even though the public went off, my Dad had to work for no pay. In cold days, he had to—the kind of, the way in old days, the way we built houses with mud bricks. So, when they make the mud you have to get into the mud so you can smash it with your feet in the cold days, so he has to be out there, that's why he has got a really bad knee right now.

I grew up in that and then that was the worst—one reason why it was the worst time because everything was owned by Chinese public and 90% of the income, all the harvest that Chinese takes them and so the local people are hungry. So, that was the worst starvation that happened in the '75 to '85 era, so that's why kind of—I left in '81,

'75, '76 '77 '78 '79 '80, I was there for 7 years in that duration, so everybody hungry, we hardly get a meal a day and we do have something called school but all they do is a propaganda school, so we go there in the morning, recite Maoist red booklets they call it, so it's all praise to Mao, like I know when I was a little Marxist and Leninist I know those names, but I didn't know who they were, what they were because they were included in Chinese propaganda songs. In Chinese, they say the Marxist Lenin way of governing is the pillar of success and then they say, "Long Live Mao, whatever he does, prospers."

So, those are the propaganda songs that we have to sing every morning and then we have to go to the field we have to work, so that was my childhood memory and then I don't know, I am not told about that. Then we have to carry a basket, where we have to carry soil because all the animals back there, it's still there too, all natural minerals, all the sheep, goats, cows, yaks, they got a special place they sleep at night time, so in the morning when they take them out we have to put fresh soil, so when they come in they got fresh soil but at the end of the season they dig all that thing and put it in the field, so it's just a natural what they call fertilizer. That's our job, kids' job, there might be 10, 15, 20, big places where we keep all the – now, all the animals that are being owned by the public, so we have to carry all of this fertilizer. After all the reciting, singing, dancing then we have to go and do all this stuff.

When I was little I didn't even know, Tibet was under Chinese occupation because it was that strict because nobody, as a child my Dad knows but nobody can tell anybody and I remember few times I watched movies. The Chinese would bring the screens, the movies, on a donkey bag and then they go to village to village and then they show the movies, it's all about Chinese fighting with Japan, all those war movies and at the end Chinese always win, and we were like Oh! Yes, Chinese win, we were really happy because we had no clue what was going on but what happened.

Sometime about '79-ish my Grandma died and then my Dad crossed Himalaya, called Nangpa La pass, one of the craziest passes and we lived so close by it. He had to go from my house to Nangpa La pass, which was maybe a four days' walk. So, he crossed Nangpa La pass and he went to up there in Nepal side, there is a one of the biggest Nyingmapa temples or the monastery, so that monastery actually the original was in our location. He sneaked out to do the prayer for his Mom, my Dad's Mom. And so, when he was in that monastery he found out that his brother, younger brother who escaped in '59 was living in Dharamsala. He called his brother who said my Dad should go to Dharamsala. So, he went from Nepal side, went to Kathmandu. He came back to Kathmandu, so they met at Kathmandu and then his brother took him back to Dharamsala and showed him everything. At that time, he might be (my Dad's brother) the first when escaped up to '59 and in the '69 eras and then he found the schools. He

got a chance to see Dalai Lama but back in Tibet I didn't even know where my Dad was gone, my Mom knew but nobody told each other or anything because it was so strict at that time and my Mom was afraid for my Dad and for the family's safety.

Within a month or so, my Dad came back and then within a few weeks we left Tibet because my Dad learned so much about Dharamsala, all the schools. So, me, my Dad, my older sister and at least 4-5 other Tibetans secretly met my Dad and they all wanted to go to, so we snuck out. I would say this was right around November, we snuck out and went through Nangpa La pass to Nepal.

My Dad left Tibet because of the suffering. He had been through so much and right now he is like 84. His knees are so bad, if he sits he can't stand up but when he stands up and start going he would go like that but then after a while I guess it gets loose so he can't go far but then when he sits down you know. He had such a strength, he didn't really care about himself but he asked me one time, I didn't even know we were sneaking out but at that day we were ready to go, my Dad told that me and my older sister that we are going out, so now we are escaping, so I have to leave my Mom and the rest of my family back in Tibet, so I was crying, crying, crying, and my Dad asked me again, you want to go or you want to stay? And I told him, I want to go.

So anyway, we snuck out. At that time, my older and middle sister were able to work, so they earned some credit but rest of us were so little we can't get credit, so that means we get no share from the harvest, so everybody was hungry. I don't think my Dad, really wanted to escape but I think he had such a desire for me and my sister to have a better life because he knew there was nothing back in Tibet and it was so harsh ever since the Chinese took over. TAR region is such a harsh nature; we could only grow one crop a year. In the summer and spring, it's beautiful. Everywhere you look is green, even the mountains but when it starts getting cold, there is nothing, it's just an old bare mountain, it's really cold. I think my Dad's main aim of taking me out was to have a better life for me because he knew that if I were to stay back there because of what he had done, I would get the share of that bad reputation too, so I think that's the main reason and we went to Nepal first.

When we escaped through Nangpa La pass, before we got to Kathmandu, way up there Namche Bazaar is a main camp, they call it base camp from Mount Everest. So, we have to come through Mount Everest, Namche Bazaar so that's the only way we can come out and I would say 3 days' walk and one day by bus. There is a Tibetan settlement up there, so we stayed there for at least three months after we escaped from Tibet. There was a handicraft centre and they make carpets. So, my Dad and my sister because when we escaped we had nothing to carry, only thing we got was few sacks of *tsampa*. From this point forward if we were planning to go to India, we needed to go from the handicraft centre to Dharamsala, that's a long way to go, so we needed money

for travel and for food, so we stayed there for three months and worked in that handicraft business. We finally made some money and then we went to Kathmandu and from there we went to Dharamsala.

I think '81 December, I was in TCV and then I was in TCV till '89, '89 was in 10th grade and I completed all of my examinations. India is a little bit different than here, because 10th grade got what they call board exam and then 12th grade it's a board exam. For 12th and 10th grade, no homework, regular credit doesn't come immediately. All the papers are set up through the Indian central government and then they send all the question sheets, then we (TCV) do everything, we send it back to Indian board and then they do everything and then they send us our results.

So, when I did my exam in 1989, 10th grade, we have three months' time off because they take so long to correct all the tests. What I did was I went to Nepal with my younger brother, but he and I were in the same grade, even though I was 3 years older we both gave 10th grade exam, so we went to Nepal and at that time another one of my other sisters escaped through Nangpa La pass and she settled in Namche Bazaar. So, we went to Kathmandu and then to Namche Bazaar to see her.

She sent us some money, so we went by railway passes and then we went to Kathmandu, Kathmandu to Namche Bazaar. At that time, it wasn't much, they got that small one engine airplane, so we flew in that, it was really scary. We flew up there for like 30 minutes and then we have to walk a whole day to get to Namche Bazaar. We stayed there for few days and my sister told me, she says 'why can't you sneak out back in Tibet so you can see your parents.' So, now that's in '89, at that time actually it was quite loose in Tibet, it wasn't that strict because after '85 Chinese opened the gate so there was lot of Tibetans came out, they went in, so there was no problem. So, before that Lhasa demonstration everything was quite loose. So, I snuck in to Tibet again through the same pass, to see my parents and then I snuck out.

My Dad left us in Dharamsala and he went back to Tibet because if he stayed in Dharamsala or in Nepal, the whole family that was back in Tibet was going to suffer. So, he went back, so that's like 81 to 89, that's like 9 years, so I went back to see my parents with my younger brother.

I finally escaped in '81 and then went back to Tibet '89. I was outside Tibet for 9 years and so missed my parents, I snuck back in to see my parents for about a month. During that time, I would say I could have stayed as long as I had wanted. As long you had a really good relationship with the leader of the local village, you don't have to worry about because they are the ones who speak to the Chinese authority. I could have been in trouble but if they don't say anything and we didn't even go out anywhere, except that small village, we had no problem, and then I snuck out back to Nepal and India.

When I went back to Tibet I did not stay with my family because they had nothing, the Chinese took everything away from them. I could have stayed because at that time I knew some English, there might be a good opportunity for me. But a lot of Tibetan kids of my group went back to Lhasa, they are still in Lhasa and because there was such opportunity to be a tourist guide because there are so many Americans, Europeans, coming back then there wasn't much Tibetans or Chinese who know English so I guess there was some opportunities but I didn't want to stay because it's hard. Now, I mean after staying in India for 9 years, went to school, I learned about everything, what happened in Tibet how Chinese did – occupation, how many Tibetans died, all that stories now we clearly know, I didn't feel like staying. If I were to look back, it was my responsibility because I am the oldest son in the family to take care of the family but there wasn't much.

When I was in Dharamsala, I was in TCV school and there was nothing to worry about, everything is taken care from food, lodging, books, everything is taken care, only thing was I mean, you could miss your parents, I mean everybody does, but there is so much especially being a student in TCV school. There is so many privileges, so I would say I really enjoyed it and I mean not just I enjoyed it I used it in a proper way, I was school captain for so many years. I was monitor from the start to the end. I was captain of the houses, because TCV was divided into four houses. That's why I never even had a girlfriend because I was always the lead. I was school captain, I was captain in the house, I was classroom monitor, and then when I was in high school, 11 and 12 grades, I was captain of the hostel. So, I mean there was so much opportunity. Maybe I had suffered more than lot of kids that in TCV, maybe that gave me what do you call it some benefits. Even here too, I don't take everything easy. When I go to work, I really appreciate the workplace, I do my best, lot of times you see your co-workers complaining, too long hours, stuff, because they didn't suffer like I did. So, I guess I got little bit more appreciation for everything that I get in my life.

Finally, I came to the United States in '96. I didn't even know it was that cold from Minnesota, so I flew from New Delhi, I came by Air France, so I went to New Delhi to France, Chicago and then Minnesota and so it was in December and I didn't know it was that cold and when I got out from the airplane, in the airport everything was so warm and so when we get out from the door, I was like, Wow! That's cold? I mean I was born in mountain areas, so I still have that I guess my experience with the cold, so, I was kind of shocked though, I didn't know it was that cold.

It wasn't too bad to settle here, because when I met Lumtok, his wife and Lumtok's brother and sister. I was actually kind of lot of other Tibetans that I can be with, so it wasn't that bad. It was the hardest part was I gave up everything back in Tibet and India, spent all my money, everything to get here, and so now you have to

plan for another thing. It's funny because I left Tibet with nothing, got all that education and so when I graduate now I have to start my life with nothing, only thing I got is whatever I learned, I started my life in Nepal and then I gave up everything in Nepal, went back to Minnesota and now I have to start again. I mean it wasn't because it was not my first time and I know kind of through experience that I can do it. And the good thing is I had at least compared to lot of Tibetans who immigrate here they have such a hard time just adapting to language. At least I am prepared for it, I know English quite well, actually at that time I was better in writing than speaking because back in the schools, even though it's an English medium school we hardly speak in English, we speak in Tibetan but do everything writing in English. So, it wasn't that bad because I had been through so much.

I have been here about 18 years and my experience is that there are a lot of opportunities here, that's a good thing. Opportunity, there are a lot of opportunities here in the US, like they say, "the land of freedom". I mean I guess as long as you want to work, there are always opportunities. I mean I started with nothing. I can't say I have everything, I don't want to say that but I have a house, I drive a decent truck, I have a good job, they pay me when I started working at [company name], they got another company I started making \$7 an hour, now I am make little bit over \$20 an hour which is over the last 15 years, and so you have to have a satisfaction otherwise you will never be happy. I just want to say I have done all right, I mean I could have done better, but...

The negative things about being here in the United States the parents' issues with kids. In Tibet, we grew up in a strong relationship with our parents, when we were little they take care of us, so when we grow up we take care of them but it's not like that here. I am not talking about Tibetans but as a whole. When kids grow up here around 16, 17, 18, they tend to move and then the parents are left behind. Sometimes they hardly even see. I mean I got a neighbour, I guess I should say they are married, and they don't have biological kids but the wife got I think 3-4 kids through a different marriage. So, all the boys were gone, but she had her daughter with them and so that's my next neighbour and we are close, talk every day but she moved out few times but then she came back and when she moved out first time they were so happy, Oh! She is gone. I was like, damn, I would never be happy, just that different I guess experience. I guess lot of other ethnicities do the same as we do but that's not the way I was brought up. We worked really hard not just for ourselves but try to make-try to work hard so that they will have a better life. I hope my kids will stay in my house, so they don't have to worry anything because after a while I don't need my house, we work so hard for them. So, when I see such a thing happening in my neighbourhood, what do you want to call

it, it makes me feel bad about it, I mean still now I take care of my parents, send them money, go there, see them whenever I can.

For my family and me our culture is the most important thing for us. I don't think it's not hard for me and my wife or my girlfriend because we have been through schools, Tibetan schools. So, we have no problem with the language, we can read. I am really good with Tibetan dance, from every part, faith basis, my cultural, we have no problem. But my kids now they have to grow up, go to American school every day, all they see on TV is American, and then community basis, you know this place, so. My older son, both my sons went through language school here, my oldest son graduated when we had only 7th grade and there was no more to go, so he graduated 7th grade. My youngest one graduated 8th two years ago, so he was the first student graduated 8th, so now there is nothing more we can do.

I mean we are trying to do at home but it's tough, because I work, 2 in the afternoon, you never know, and she works in the morning, and then in the middle they have go to school, so that's a tougher thing. But my little one, older one is kind of little bit laid back, but my little one I think he will be all right because he has got such a—he reads really well in Tibetan, he has such a—I think—I don't want to say that but I think he is one of those reincarnations, rebirth, maybe one of the Tibetan older people back from Tibet or Nepal, because he got that, he wants to dress up matured, he likes leather shoes, he doesn't like much of jean pants. Whenever he comes to the community centre [TAFM] he wants to wear *chubas* and then his room he got Dalai Lama's portrait, everything in his room. So, then he likes to read prayer books.

Last year I sent them to Nepal and so, we are trying to keep them and he was telling me—one day I was talking to both of my kids, I said, hey, do your best, try to find a good college, we will try to help you as much as possible so that you have less burden and my wife she told them, she said, yes, when you guys grow up and find a good job you guys can pay us back. My older one didn't even care. My little one, he says, no, Mom, I don't know how much I can pay because I am going back to Dharamsala to work there. It was just out of blank, he got that kind of thing in his head. That doesn't mean I worry but still at least when they went to Nepal they can talk in Tibetan with their grandpa and grandma, which is good, otherwise they might need a translator. Lot of kids do need translator nowadays and so but still there is such a burden on us trying to do our best but still it's not enough. Language is a major part of who we are.

I mean nowadays at least in Minnesota because of such close community, we come here almost every weekend. So, I guess it's little bit better than lot of other communities but now they are going to college, you never know who they are going to meet. I always hope that they will find a Tibetan girl, so that they still have that blood, little bit different. I mean I am not talking about humanity in a sense or human being but

through my cause, it's always better to have a Tibetan than any other race, so there is always risks about that.

I mean in Tibet, in Nepal one thing is we have more time like in India or in Nepal you got so much time, most of the people they – I don't want to call it self-sufficient but they do their businesses. They always make time to stop by and stop, take few rounds, one thing is its good exercise. The second thing is you are making some positive energy and third thing is you meet all your friends and go for a cup of tea. So, they got more, I guess the biggest difference is – I mean you can practise anywhere you want but in Minnesota we got less places. The only thing we got here Gyuto [monastery] but in Dharamsala if you walk a block there is a monastery, there is a stupa. Like in Nepal, every corner there is a monastery. So, it's kind of more easier to practise if you were to practise in the monastery, but here it's only Gyuto and then lot of times they are not open, if I have time, I mean that's like if you want to read scriptures, get to teaching, but that's really important but I hardly get much time because whenever there is something going on, unless on the weekends I have to go to work and my shift is in the afternoon, so that's always the time they do that, unless I call in, but I try to make a difference other ways, try to work for community do something here.

Also, being part of TAFM is part of my identity, I guess, it might be all right to say it because this is the only place where we as Tibetans get together, have fun, good times, bad times, and whenever like I said before, whenever there is something happening here, I will be always here. A good thing about community services is mostly on the weekend, so I will be always here.

One of my other concerns is also that only 800-900 Tibetans are involved in the community and paying their dues at the community centre which is I think that's the first sign of how much you are involved, what you consider a community but other part is that at least these 900 are involved. It's positive and negative. There are so many other Tibetans that should be coming here and then put little bit more effort and lot of Tibetans in Minnesota. I don't want to say all, I would say 50%-60% people in Minnesota they came from that and 90% of the kids that they don't come here I would say they don't speak Tibetan.

The adults and parents don't have to worry about their language because they grew up in India or Nepal so they are educated they did higher education, they went through TCV or Mussoorie, they can speak Tibetan and read Tibetan, no problem, but their kids I mean there might be few parents that put effort to make them – I mean if you can't speak Tibetan that puts so much barrier for the kids to what do you want to call it, involvement. So, that's the biggest worry I got.

As an individual I have to go to work every day, not like in Nepal or India where you have more time to practise my religion, practise my regular day to day prayer, that's

one thing I miss because I don't have enough time because I go to work at 2, sometimes I am done at 2 in the morning, sometimes I am done at 3 in the morning, sometimes 12:30, that's the earliest, now 12:30 I have to go to bed, let's say I need a wine, eat a little bit, so that's 12:30, 1:30, maybe 2 o'clock I might go to bed, then I have to try to get up at 8 because that's when I have to drop my kids and then if I don't go back to sleep because now that's like only 3-4 hours, then I can't do my job right, and I try to go back to bed, and then okay, 10-ish I get up, there is nothing I can do. I got lot of prayer that I can recite through what do you want to call it because I got everything in my memory, those I can do it but I can be—I hardly get time to sit. I have a really nice prayer room but I hardly get a chance to sit there and say a prayer. Thank God, when I get up I always try to appreciate what—I am awake one more day, hope this day would go better, not just for me but for my co-workers, my neighbours, for all Tibetans, I pray that we can be reunited, but that's the hardest thing (Wangdark, 2015).

4.3 Highlighted Themes

Analysing Choegyal, Khorlo, Losang, Khando and Yangchen's stories of their journey from Asia and settlement in the Twin Cities along with the remaining twenty-five interviewees, revealed major themes, which are the core of this research. The major themes are reflected not only in their expressed concern for these areas, but are also reflected in the institutions / programmes and actions the Tibetans of the Twin Cities have implemented, developed and maintained. Many, if not all of the concerns arise from various tensions about their identity such as a) cultural expression and assimilation challenges b) the political expressions and the role the institutions formed by the Tibetan community and c) the 14th Dalai Lama.

These topics overlap into other areas because they are not mutually exclusive. For example, in the interviews, one cannot speak of Tibetan identity without addressing language and language was difficult to separate from the role of the institutions. Further,

when speaking of institutions, it was difficult not to associate them with politics. Yet, even though these links indicate some cohesion each of the areas contains elements of tension.

4.3.1 Identity and Assimilation

Identity for the Tibetans is challenging with some expressing a deep-seated fear of cultural loss while others view social change as part of a natural adjustment. As Choegyal revealed in his story, ‘I think that one of the greatest concerns is with the younger generations and being assimilated into American culture’ (Choegyal, 2013, p.19). This concern is also expressed by Khando, ‘Some of my biggest concerns are that I have noticed that a lot of the younger generation that were born here are very Americanized. You can’t distinguish between them and Americans at all, because they are just so much like Americans’ (Khando, 2014, p.13).

The concern for assimilation, which Tibetans indicate as a loss of their identity, their language, their history, their religion, their culture of traditional music and dance and even their values of compassion⁴ is a common theme in all the interviews. As discussed in the next chapter, the Tibetan community of the Twin Cities created TAFM to address such concerns and aspirations to not just maintain, but to enhance the cultural aspects among the Tibetan community, such as speaking, writing and reading the Tibetan language, the knowledge of their history, and being able to perform their traditional dances. It is through TAFM and its programmes, such as the Tibetan Cultural School and Lamton, which is the middle-school and high school academic mentoring and tutoring programme, where their hopes for the preservation of cultural identity and

⁴ Throughout the interviews, the word “compassion” was used as something the Tibetans stated was unique to their group. From the interviews, examples of compassion included thinking of others first, serving a guest food and in larger portions than one (Tibetan) would serve themselves. A number of the interviewees indicated that this sense and expression of compassion is slowly being lost now that Tibetans are settling in the West.

the return to Tibet are found. These programmes are specifically focused on the youth of the community – the approximate age range is six to eighteen years old.

In the narratives, the loss or challenge of Tibetan identity, be it through a natural assimilation, as in the case of the relocating and settling in the Twin Cities (or the United States) or through forced assimilation as in China, is no stranger to the Tibetans. How the Tibetans hold on to or negotiate their identity in the Twin Cities is explored in the following chapters.

4.3.2 Politics and the Role of Institutions formed by the Tibetan Community

The political involvement of the Twin Cities Tibetan community is through the activism of RTYC and SFT and TAFM. The expression of Tibetan freedom varies among these organizations. As per the RTYC website, their vision is, ‘The Tibetan Youth Congress (TYC) is a worldwide Organization of Tibetans united in our common struggle for the restoration of complete independence for the whole of Tibet’ (Tibetan Youth Congress, 2013). One of the key phrases in their ‘About Us’ webpage link is the ‘Restoration of complete independence for the whole of Tibet.’ This is a more aggressive political stance as compared to the Middle Way Approach, which is aligned to the 14th Dalai Lama’s vision of autonomy. A comparison of the two policies was discussed in Section. 2.1 ‘Setting the Stage: Historical Background.’

As Khorlo explained, ‘The political situation is very bad between Tibet and China and I believe the Middle Path is the best way’ (Khorlo 2013). Yet Khando reveals, ‘Nothing will change politically because both sides have their own versions and I’ve experienced that as well and that is why I don’t want to believe everything that the Tibetan government [CTA] says and I don’t want to believe everything the Chinese government says either’ (Khando, 2014).

As recently as the spring of 2015, the CTA officially announced a new initiative to expand their understanding of the Middle Way Approach (as compared to the current situation and the independence policy). According to the Voice of America (VOA), ‘Lobsang Sangay, head of the Tibetan administration in exile, launched "UMAYLAM: Middle Way Approach," a global awareness campaign on the Middle Way Policy’ (Voice of America / Tibetan, 2015). The VOA article refers the reader to the Umaylam site, which states ‘For Tibetans, the Middle Way Approach implies not seeking independence, but genuine autonomy within the framework of the People’s Republic of China’ (Umaylam, 2015).

The major theme of the internal Tibetan political tensions is between the Middle Way Approach and Rangzen. There are various organizations that align themselves to either Rangzen or Middle Way: Rangzen is most identified with RTYC, SFT and TYC and Middle Way with the CTA. Each side has a nuanced vision and expression for Tibet’s freedom. Yet, as explored in Chapter Two and throughout the narratives, it is evident Tibetans are seeking to achieve a favourable framework for Tibet and for the Tibetan people living in and outside of Tibet, either in the form of Rangzen (independence) or Umaylam (Middle Path). At this point, the end result of either of these policies is something not yet agreed upon by the Tibetan community.

In my observation, regardless of the Middle Path Approach or Rangzen, supporters of these policies are active and also highly respectful regarding the 14th Dalai Lama. Yet, tensions among these sides remain and were publically displayed during Uprising Day on New York on 10 March 2015, when individuals identified who were aligned with the Middle Way Approach and the 14th Dalai Lama’s political vision and Rangzen became involved in a volatile vocal exchange.

Though Tibetan freedom in Asia is a desired goal for many Tibetans, the path to achieve freedom is not as clear. The Middle Path Approach, which the 14th Dalai Lama

supports as the most reasonable, honourable (for all parties, meaning the Government of China and the Tibetans) and realistic, is not fully agreed upon by the Tibetan community. So, even though freedom is a common goal among the Tibetan community, the tensions between the respective approaches become more visible. This tension becomes particularly relevant as Tibetans contemplate what will happen when the current 14th Dalai Lama, who is approaching eighty-two years of age and the author and lead campaigner for the Middle Way, is no longer alive.

4.3.3 The 14th Dalai Lama: Tension with Honour and Allegiance

In Chapters One and Two, the role of the 14th Dalai Lama was discussed in terms of his political calling and as a focal point of identity for Tibetans. For the Tibetans, he is the face of the Tibetan Cause. He led the Tibetan's on their exile journey as the spiritual leader and he is the most recognized representative of the plight and hope for the Tibetan people for their return to Tibet. Being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989 is a testament to his recognition as a promoter of peace that has brought greater attention to the Tibetan Cause on the world stage and their claim for independence.

Anand (2011), McGranahan (2010), Thurman (2008), Topgyal (2015) and Yeshi (2010), have all examined the multi-dimensional facets of the 14th Dalai Lama, and the responses of the Tibetans in the interviews bear out their analysis and findings. For some Tibetans, he is the sole galvanizing force for the Tibetans as well as their cause of freedom, yet at the same time others see his political policies as outdated and ineffectual.

Some of the interviewees in the community expressed that the lack of support for his Middle Way policy is non-supportive of the 14th Dalai Lama himself. These coexisting and seemingly opposing and even polarizing positions, demonstrate the crucial role the current 14th Dalai Lama plays for Tibetans, though none of the

interviews or comments in any conversations reflected anything but honour and respect for 'His Holiness'. Tibetans are unequivocal in their support of the 14th Dalai Lama as a person, political representative, spiritual leader and as the one who holds the Tibetan community together.

The significance of the 14th Dalai Lama for the Tibetan people cannot be understated from cultural expression to political representation and as an identity marker for the Tibetans themselves. Further, Khorlo in his story, expressed that 'we as Tibetans need to take care of ourselves with our language and culture and the political situation will take care of itself through His Holiness and the CTA' (Khorlo, 2014, p.31). Here she expresses the centrality and concern for the 14th Dalai Lama's role for Tibetans. In one aspect, she expresses that Tibetans' need to take care of themselves, yet at the same time, 'the political situation will take care of itself through His Holiness.'

The dialogues throughout the interviews and my period of observation on the Middle Way Approach versus Rangzen were almost exclusively without personal accusations or the use of derogatory terms directed toward the 14th Dalai Lama. His representation of Tibet and Tibetans is unquestioned especially since he has captured attention on a global scale as a recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize and the US Congressional Gold Medal of Honour. Also, his teachings throughout the world (except China) to packed concert halls and sports stadiums on topics such as The Wisdom of Forgiveness, The Wisdom of Compassion and the Ethical Approach to Environmental Protection⁵ have substantial appeal. Yet, since the annexation of Tibet in 1959, over fifty years ago, and with his own advancing age, many Tibetans are becoming anxious and unsettled in the claim for freedom. For those Tibetans who disagree with the 14th Dalai Lama's policies are reluctant to speak against His Holiness directly and rather concentrate on the policies.

⁵ See www.dalailama.org

4.4 General Comments and Conclusion

This chapter explored the challenge of capturing specific demographic and social-economic information on the Tibetan community. As noted, this is not exclusive to the Twin Cities as the CTA, TAFM and Tibet House in New York collecting data on Tibetan communities has been problematic not only for the Tibetan organizations, but also for local and state governments. Moreover, the narratives of five Tibetans were examined, which identified major themes of concern for the Tibetan community in the Twin Cities. These major aspects are identity, cultural challenges and expressions, political expressions and institutions. As seen in the narratives, there is not total congruence in how these identity and political expressions are represented. The narratives also revealed tensions regarding the role of the 14th Dalai Lama. He is unique as his high public visibility was brought on mostly by the turmoil between Tibet and China. His policy of non-violence has earned him considerable fame and global influence as the primary identity marker for Tibet, the Tibetans and for the Tibetan Cause. Tibetans and even scholars, such as Thurman (2008), argue that he is ‘the solution’ for the Tibetan Cause, not only for Tibet, but China would also be a benefactor of his teachings and practice of love, compassion and non-violence. Yet, this unification does not come about without tensions within his own policies, though allegiance to him within the Tibetan community remains intact locally as well as globally.

The next chapter examines the cultural aspect of the Tibetan community in the Twin Cities in the areas of education and instruction, which includes learning the Tibetan language and traditional music and dance. The voices of the Tibetans reveal the importance of these cultural programmes and the challenges for the community and how they are negotiating these challenges.

Chapter Five: The Creation of the Twin Cities' Tibetan Community: Cultural Challenges and Opportunities

Let's say fifty years from now and my parents taught me the Tibetan culture, then my grandchildren would know because I would teach it to them as my parents taught me. I am Tibetan and if someone comes up to me they'll know I am Tibetan because I speak Tibetan just as my parents did. I also believe knowing Tibetan history is really important – knowing your own country's history (Choegyal, 2013, p.6).

5 Introduction and Overview

This chapter discusses the establishment of the Twin Cities' Tibetan diasporic community. It also explores some of the challenges and the efforts of the Tibetan community to address those challenges. Insights into the community are through the interviews and the programmes created in response to the community's concerns. The major themes discussed in this chapter build on the five narratives presented in Chapter Four by Choegyal, Khorlo and Khando, Losang and Yangchen, as well as my interviews with an additional 25 informants, whose stories are representative of the thirty Tibetans interviewed.

The central foci of this chapter are the constituent elements and social institutions formed by the Tibetans to maintain their language, traditional songs, dances and the playing of Tibetan musical instruments as well as instruction in Tibetan history. This cultural aspect is contrasted with the political side, which I define as the expression of the Tibetan Cause through activism, which includes public demonstrations and the creation of institutions that primarily address the struggle for freedom, such as the Regional Tibetan Youth Congress (RTYC) and Students for a Free Tibet (SFT).

The cultural and political aspects are not mutually exclusive as there are a number of areas that overlap. However, the difference between them is that in the cultural arena, politics is not in the forefront, yet the cultural aspect has a significant role in their

political activities. The political side includes the political expressions, programmes and institutions that are at the forefront and preserve the cultural aspects of the Tibetan community. As discussed by Barabantseva and Sutherland, some of the characteristics of diasporic communities are, ‘members of a diaspora might feel and express their sense of belonging to their (ancestral) homeland in different ways, be it through upholding its cultural customs and traditions, some form of political activism, or economic’ (Barabantseva & Sutherland, 2012, p.4). Building on this statement, in this chapter, I focus on how the Tibetan diaspora ‘feel and express their sense of belonging to their (ancestral) homeland’. The political expression [read activism] for freedom, I would argue, is bolstered through the heart and passion of the cultural aspect [read preservation], whilst the cultural aspect provides the *raison d'être* for the activism.

Anand makes a case for the dynamic tension between culture / politics in his work *(Re) Imagining Nationalism: Tibetan Diaspora* stating, ‘even traditional cultural practices are often laden with cultural political meanings. For example, the dolls [Tibetan] made in the traditional style at the Norbulingka¹ carry “Free Tibet” badges’ (Anand, 2000, p.279). Though Anand’s observation is within the Asian context and specifically in Lhasa [Tibet], his analysis suggests that the divide between culture and politics is neither clearly differentiated nor static and that the dynamics of both sides of the equation spill over to the other. As discussed previously and seen more extensively in Chapter Five, *Free Tibet* is a slogan seen on clothing, flags and other merchandise to raise awareness of the Tibetan Cause for freedom.

Roemer also addresses the cultural / political dynamic by identifying CTA’s vision for the Tibetan exiles stating, ‘In 2003, the CTA described the goal of the exile Tibetan struggle as follows: The purpose of the Tibetans in exile is two-fold, viz., to seek justice for our homeland and, to preserve our identity and language by practicing

¹ Norbulingka or Norbulingka Palace is the summer home of the Dalai Lama in Lhasa.

our culture and traditions’ (Roemer, 2008, p.67). Roemer’s insight into the two-fold purpose is reflected in organizations such as the International Campaign for Tibet that also express the cultural / political tensions in which they state there are political consequences for what Tibetans consider as cultural expressions. For example, in July 2015, during a capital-raising campaign by ICT, a letter was posted with an attached chart entitled ‘By Order Of The Chinese Communist Party, The Following 20 Activities Are Now Forbidden In Tibet. Any Tibetan Accused Of These “Crimes” Is Subject To Arrest, Imprisonment And Torture’. Appendix 5 contains the aforementioned documents, which identifies numerous items of concern for the Tibetan community as a whole. Of note is item four, which states ‘Undertaking prayer activities for the 14th Dalai Lama on the occasion of a festival at a monastery or in a public place’.

For Tibetans, the worship of the Dalai Lama is not only a spiritual act but also one of cultural significance. Yet, as seen in Appendix 5, other items are also listed, which have a greater political significance than spiritual. For example, one bulleted element states ‘Flying the “Tibet Independence” flag, putting up posters, spreading publicity materials and promoting discussion.’ The interaction between the cultural and political among the Tibetan diaspora demonstrates how they both reinforce one another.

My observations and field notes acknowledge that pictures were displayed with associated names of those individuals who performed self-immolations. These were prominently displayed in the TAFM building in the same room where the Tibetan Cultural School held its classes. Appendix 6 provides a picture of the posters displayed within TAFM. This prominent display of those individuals who undertake the act of self-immolation provides an additional example that in the midst of Tibetan cultural education, the political impact of events regarding the Tibetan Cause is inextricably linked to cultural survival and preservation.

Other activities such as the Martyrs Memorial Cup (MMC) hosted by RTYC in Minnesota also memorialize those who have committed self-immolations and / or other sacrifices in the name of the Tibetan cause. The MMC is a multi-day event in which football [soccer] and basketball teams compete against Tibetan communities throughout the United States and Canada. During the three-day event, activities also include talent and fashion shows in which Tibetan food is served along with poetry and music that celebrate the cause for a free Tibet.

From the MMC website, it reads ‘Organized by the Regional Tibetan Youth Congress of Minnesota, through MMC sporting events, RTYC strive to Unite Tibetans in exile, strengthen our Tibetan identity, and to further heighten our solidarity’ (Rtycminnesota Rangzen, 2015). My field notes record that during the opening ceremony of the 2014 MMC sports event, the pictures of Tibetans who had self-immolated were displayed on the football pitch (see Appendix 9). A time of silence and prayer was offered for all those who had died for Tibet’s freedom and for the return of Dalai Lama XIV to Tibet followed by the singing of the Tibetan and United States National Anthems. However, it was observed that in the 2015 MMC event, the pictures were not displayed on the football pitch. In discussion among members of RTYC-MN, they stated the decision was more logistical rather than having any political or spiritual meaning. Taklha stated:

We just do not have the time to place all the pictures on the field. It also takes a lot of time to print the pictures, make them into posters, attach them to stakes, placing the posters on the field and then removing them before the games started. We still honour them with the singing of the Tibetan National Anthem and a time of silent prayer as this event is in their memory (Taklha 2016).

This was corroborated in speaking with other members of RTYC-MN at MMC-V event in September 2016. Though the outside football event was not held, RTYC-MN announced to all participants and attendees that a time of silent prayer was offered to those Tibetans who offered their lives in ‘Tibet’s struggle for independence’.

Whilst RTYC is political in nature, its efforts such as the MMC are to ‘Unite Tibetans in exile, strengthen our Tibetan identity’. The political side of the multi-day playing of sports, as promoted by RTYC-MN, supports the cultural side of the Tibetan Cause by means of other activities such as fashion shows or concerts.

The uniqueness of the Twin Cities Tibetan community as compared to other Tibetan communities in the US is multi-faceted. Some of the initial unique cultural aspects of the Twin Cities community are seen in as the Twin Cities Tibetan community was the first to purchase building to house TAFM, the development of the Tibetan Cultural School and more recently Lamton, all of which are discussed in greater detail in this chapter. As other Tibetan communities in the US grow, the ability for these communities to acquire assets such as a building or implement cultural and academic programs becomes easier. The uniqueness of the Twin Cities community comes about through the age of the Twin Cities community, which informally (see 5.1.1 Lumtok’s Story. Why Minnesota?) has roots dating back to the late 1980’s and more formally since the early 1990’s through the Tibetan United States Repatriation Act of 1990.

Another aspect of TAFM as compared to other Tibetan communities in the US is noted from a Tibetan from the Twin Cities who stated,

Other places such as New York have a larger Tibetan population, but everybody’s so spread apart. I know this through Facebook friends too there are Tibetan younger generations inside New York that do not necessarily know they’re Tibetan, but they hang out with non-Tibetans. It is to the extent that they’re starting to lose their own culture. TAFM and the community [Twin Cities] is much closer than other Tibetan communities in the US (Choegyal ,2013, p.14).

Choegyal’s observation of the close proximity of the Twin Cities community is discussed in greater detail in Section 5.2.3 Concentrations of Tibetans: Reflections on Minnesota Public Schools Data.

5.1 Genesis of the Twin Cities' Tibetan Community

Throughout the initial stages of this research, I was curious to know how the Twin Cities' Tibetan community was initially formed. How were the Twin Cities selected and how did the Twin Cities become the 2nd largest population of Tibetans in the United States?

Nearly all the explanations and my supplementary literature review cited the Immigration Act of 1990² in which 1,000 Tibetans were granted permission by the United States Government to enter the United States on a programme to become US citizens. But why Minnesota specifically? It was not until the latter stages of the interviews, especially during an interview with Lumtok that the Minnesota site selection became clearer. An abbreviated story of Lumtok's journey will help illuminate this further.

5.1.1 Lumtok's Story of 'Why Minnesota?'

Lumtok was the twenty-fourth of the thirty Tibetans I had interviewed. At this stage of the research, I had completed over eighty percent of my interviews before I was able to gather an understanding of the genesis of the Minnesota Tibetan community. I shall not repeat Lumtok's complete story about his life journey as I had with Choegyal, Khorlo, Losang, Khando and Yangchen in Chapter Four, yet I did extract the salient parts of his experience and recollection, which helps to account for the emergence of the Tibetan community in Minnesota.

Lumtok is a Tibetan man born in Tibet of Tibetan parents, between the ages of 61-80, who works full-time in Minnesota.

My name is Lumtok and I was born in Tibet, near the Nepalese border and near Mt. Everest. My parents were farmers. My father was also the head of the

² The Immigration Act of 1990 was more fully explored in Chapter One. In essence, the US government granted 1,000 Tibetans visas to come to the United States. The 1,000 Tibetans were selected through a lottery overseen by what was then called the Tibetan Government-in-Exile (TGE).

community and represented as head of the district - like a mayor type of thing. We had a lot of land which we grew Tibetan barley and wheat and also a lot of animals, especially sheep, we had over 1,000 sheep and many horses and yak. Then, in 1959, when the Chinese occupied the area, that is when His Holiness escaped and my parents also escaped because of the Chinese destruction and also Chinese were targeting any community leaders in the past. So, they were either killed or they were put in prison. So, my father, as I said, was the head of the village, had to escape before being caught by the Chinese.

I entered the monastery in India and became a monk and later gave-up my robes and moved to Dharamsala and there I married a woman from Minnesota. We moved to Minnesota and I became involved in the Sakya Centre here in Minnesota. The founder of the centre asked me to help build-up the activities for the centre as there were only one or two people in it. We started to have teachings and meditations in the basement of my home.

In 1988, Tibetan monks were coming on a singing tour and I was asked to help with the tour since I had many connections in New York, California and Minnesota. So, everybody encouraged me to have some type of Tibetan centre in Minnesota. Then in 1990 I was contacted by a gentleman who said he was involved in a resettlement project that was about to be approved by the US government to bring 1,000 Tibetans to the United States. He contacted the Tibet Office and then I was contacted by the Tibet Office to help find sponsors. My wife and I had many contacts who could be sponsors here in Minnesota.

The primary goal was to be sure we had the first group of Tibetans well placed with sponsors and with jobs. The way I was able to get jobs for the 1st group of Tibetans was that in the late 1970's the CEO of Hyatt Hotels had come through Bhutan and he wanted to meet Tibetan monks and at that time I was still a monk and one of the few monks that spoke English. He and I became friends. Then when I was with the singing monks on their tour in Chicago in 1990 we stayed at a Hyatt hotel. The same CEO greeted me and we talked about the new Tibetan relocation project and he asked if he could help. I told him I needed to find jobs for twenty Tibetans. He told me to come back the next day and then he gave me a letter stating he would hire twenty Tibetans. I took this letter to everywhere I could in Minnesota and showed them the letter and said, 'Hyatt is offering jobs to arriving Tibetans, can you also help?' and many did. Because of this letter we had

jobs for all Tibetans in hotels and hospitals in the housekeep area and we did this for other parts of the US (Lumtok, 2014).

Lumtok's story reveals that Minnesota was not so much 'selected' per se by any predetermined design by the US government or the CTA, but was the result of personal relationships and connections in identifying qualified US sponsors, which initially occurred where he and his wife had lived – Minnesota. Lumtok also stated that the initial sponsors had personal and professional relationships with other like-minded individuals and families in other US states (New York, California, Wisconsin to name a few), who also became sponsors. In other words, based on these narratives, one could argue that the wide geographical spread of the Tibetans throughout the United States was attributed to the location of sponsors / sponsorships rather than based upon a governmental or strategic plan.

Yet, what initially set the Twin Cities Tibetan community apart from the other Tibetan communities was that it was the first formalized concentrated settlement for Tibetans relocating to the US. As such formalized programs such as TCS, Lamton and even the TAFM building itself became benchmarks for other communities.

Among these settlements, New York has the largest Tibetan population as reported by members of the Twin Cities Tibetan community, TAFM, Tibet House (New York) and the Central Tibetan Administration. However, the actual population numbers are problematic for the reasons stated in Chapter One (see section 1.3.2). Tibetans in the Twin Cities state that one of the reasons for New York's large Tibetan concentration is the comparative ease in which one can obtain employment due to its large heterogeneous population, and job opportunities in the non-skilled labour market, albeit as waiters or cooking staff in restaurants, general (casual) labour or in the hospitality industry.

5.2 A Centralized Community in the Twin Cities

This section examines the demographic numbers more fully as they specifically relate to how Tibetans centralized their community within the Twin Cities. Earlier in Chapter Four, I discussed some of the overall challenges in capturing the number of Tibetans in the United States. However, regardless of the data source, the Twin Cities are the second largest Tibetan population concentration in the United States, currently estimated around 3,000, which includes children under the age of eighteen. The gathering of specific demographic numbers specifically related to the number of Tibetans in Minnesota is somewhat problematic for a variety reasons. For example, on several levels there is a lack of clearly defined Tibetan identification markers such as: Tibetans travel with passports³ of other countries; specific identification as to place of birth, if born in Tibet, is listed as ‘China’⁴ and as Tibetans settle in the United States it is challenging for the Central Tibetan Administration to maintain accurate numbers as reporting to the CTA is voluntary. As Stephanie Roemer states:

It is important to note that the accuracy of the Tibetan exile figures has varied ... First, because of the lack of information about the scope and scale of the exile Tibetan community in general, and second, because of the use of the available data by the exiled administration for its own political objectives (Roemer, 2010, p.61).

Though her analysis and observations were related to those Tibetans coming from Tibet into India and Nepal, interviews with Tibetans who work with TAFM support Roemer’s conclusions specifically in relation to Minnesota. One of the TAFM leaders interviewed by Roemer in India substantiated Roemer’s findings to me in an interview (Namgyal, 2015). A number ⁵ of Tibetans arriving from Tibet, India and Nepal, though highly encouraged by the CTA, still do not register with the local Tibetan organization

³ Tibetan passports only existed for a small trade delegation of six (6) Tibetans in the early 1950s and for only a limited time period.

⁴ Julia Hess, in her book *Immigrant Ambassadors*, describes the interaction between a Tibetan woman in her attempt to obtain a U.S. passport, when the Passport Officer stated that her place of birth (Lhasa, Tibet) was listed as China not Tibet.

⁵ Again, quantifying ‘a number’ has the same inherent problems as collecting the overall numbers of Tibetans moving into the diaspora. Not knowing how many move en masse precludes knowing or arithmetically determining how many of those relocating are registered with the CTA.

or with the CTA upon arrival in the United States. In an interview with Dr. John Mayer, Executive Director of City Vision Inc., an organization in the Twin Cities that collects and analyses data of social groups moving into Minnesota, he stated ‘there are approximately 3,000 Tibetans in the Twin Cities’. Further, in speaking with Namgyal who has an official capacity with the Tibetan community and is charged with keeping track of the Tibetans in the Twin Cities, he supports the view that there are ‘close to 3,000’ (Namgyal, 2013, p.5). Another accounting discrepancy for the Tibetans in the Twin Cities is from the Asia-Pacific Leadership Council that did not have a classification for Tibetans as a separate social group as evidenced by their report noted in Appendix 7. As can be seen in the report in which the nine counties are considered to be the Twin Cities area calculated, other Asian populations have representative populations as low as 39 such as indicated in St. Louis County. The major point in this discussion is that the two metropolitan counties of Hennepin and Ramsey, which according to the State of Minnesota and TAFM, had an excess of 2,500 Tibetans in 2012, yet Tibetans were unclassified whilst other Asian populations with lower numbers were captured for the same two counties (Council on Asian Pacific Minnesotans, 2012, Available at: <http://mn.gov/capm/pdf/StateoftheAsianPacificMinnesotans.pdf> [Accessed: June 5, 2012]).

5.2.1 Gathering Data: Tibetans in Public Schools

The following table (Table 4) was created utilizing data provided by the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE), which is an extract from the government agency’s database. The table lists the number of Tibetan students in public schools between the grades of kindergarten and twelfth grade (the last year in high school). The accepted terminology for this grade range is ‘K12’ or sometimes stated as ‘K through 12’ and the general age group is between five (5) and eighteen (18). It does not include any Tibetan

students who may be in private schools or even home-school. However, from conversations with several Tibetan students and parents, they are unaware of any Tibetan children in private schools, primarily due to the high cost of private tuition and, in general, private schools do not provide transportation services between home and school.

In Table 4, it can be seen that the number of Tibetans attending Minnesota public schools has steadily increased since 2008, though the percentage increase has varied between a low of 4% and a high of 26%. The initial two years increase of 26% is reflective upon the implementation of a process by the MDE to capture the number of Tibetans children in their database. The remaining years' percentages, which are in the 4-16% range, can be attributed to a normalization of reporting and the natural growth of the Tibetan children becoming of school age. TAFM confirms the growth in the Tibetan Twin Cities population is in the range of 4-16 percent and that they do not see a 26% growth. Calculations by TAFM are further supported in their information from the CTA regarding Tibetans re-settling from either Asia or from other locations within North America.

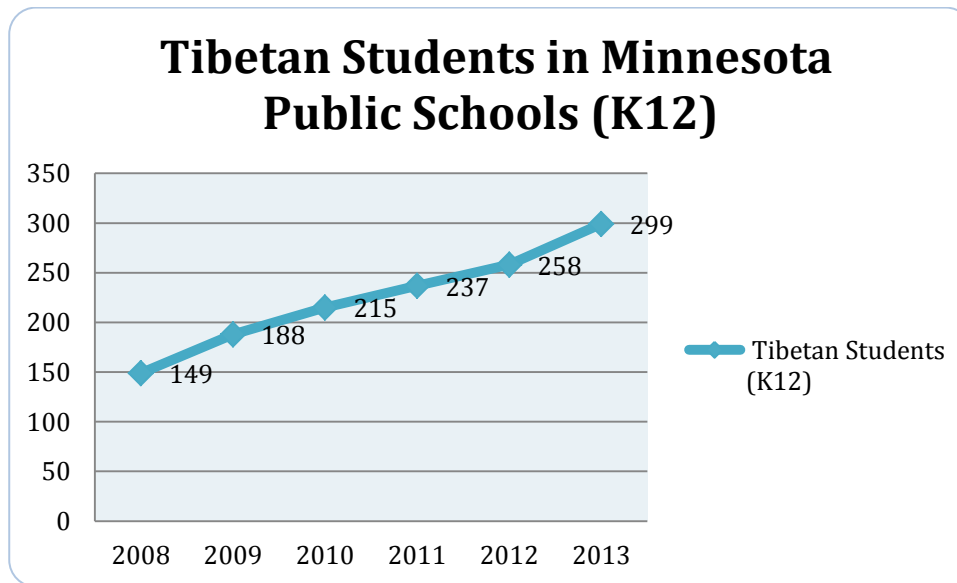
Table 4 Tibetan Students in Minnesota Public School

<u>Year</u>	<u>2008</u>	<u>2009</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>2012</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>% Change</u>
Tibetan Students	149	188	215	237	258	299	
Percent Change		26	4	10	9	16	100%

Figure Three is a visual representation of the data from Table Four. As the demographic data illustrates, there is a steady increase in the number of Tibetan children entering public schools in Minnesota. There are a number of reasons for this increase: 1) many of the children of parents who came to Minnesota in the late 1990s and beyond have become of school age 2) the number of Tibetans coming to Minnesota has

increased and 3) children are being born in Minnesota. It is projected by TAFM that approximately three hundred new families arrive from Asia each year (TAFM Building Project, 2015).

Figure 3 Graphed Data from Table 4



5.2.2 General Observation of the School Data

Some general observations are made from the MDE data: 1) a school year is calculated from the Fall (usually August or September) to the Spring or early Summer (May or June), such as ‘Fall 2007 through Spring 2008’ and is therefore listed as 2008. Hence, 2009 is for ‘Fall 2008 through Spring 2009’ 2) according to the MDE, the tracking of Tibetans began in the 2007-2008 school year, identified in the chart as 2008 3) Tibetans are tracked by self-identification as to ‘the language that is spoken in the home’ 4) there is an increase in the number of Tibetans enrolled in Minnesota public schools: a 100% increase over the years in which data was collected by the MDE. Additionally, according to the MDE data, the tracking of Tibetans was not made and / or the data was not captured by the MDE for years prior to 2007/2008

Although the MDE school data provides some quantifiable data, what has been unverified is that lack of accessible or even verifiable information as to how the public-

school numbers correlate with the Tibetan population. This concern has been expressed with TAFM, CTA, Tibet House New York, as well as scholars such as Roemer. With a 100% increase in public school enrolment, it is not clear as to what percentage this represents as compared to the Tibetan population at large. The reasons for this are varied: 1) only those Tibetans who register with TAFM or CTA are recorded, so that if a family does arrive in the Twin Cities, the tracking of the family size and ages is unavailable 2) not all families report a childbirth within the community 3) not all families report a death within the community and 4) individuals and families may not report a relocation from the Twin Cities to other locations in the US, Canada or other locales.

Tenzin Yeshe, in his doctoral thesis, also cites the problematic of capturing demographic trends when he writes, ‘it is impossible to determine the total number of Tibetan immigrants in the United States using government records’ and the existing Office of Tibet in New York City only provides a ‘symbolic representation of Tibetans in the United States’ (Yeshe, 2011, p.29-30). Even though Yeshe addresses the issue in general terms, the reasons are well established and support my findings in terms of acquiring accurate population numbers.

The ability to acquire Tibetan population figures is quite difficult unless Tibetans themselves, which is not always the case, volunteer such information to the CTA or TAFM. Moreover, these statistics are not necessarily tracked by the Department of Education as to changes in family sizes and again, this is primarily through Tibetans’ voluntary efforts.

In an email exchange in June 2014, the person responsible for the data collection at the MDE also stated the following items that affect the accuracy of this data: 1) students or parents do not accurately self-report their language affiliation as Tibetan 2) some Tibetan families do not speak Tibetan at home (according to what some teachers

report to the agency) and 3) teachers may report / amend the data based upon observations in the classroom (changing from Tibetan or to Tibetan or any other language), which may or may not be done in consultation with the Tibetan family. These methodological approaches are not identified as a failure in the process of capturing such information, rather they are seen as improvements in capturing information about the diversity of the population within the Twin Cities. This should not be construed that this is a random and wide-open process, however, it does indicate that the gathering of data through self-reporting language criteria most likely skews the data and as a result the under-reporting the number of Tibetan youth population attending Minnesota public schools.

5.2.3 Concentrations of Tibetans: Reflections on Minnesota Public Schools Data

Appendix 8 is an actual sample report provided through MDE's database. Some of the columns have been deleted from the original report to accommodate the number of column headers that did not provide data relevant to this research.

The 'District' heading indicates the specific school district number that is associated with each 'School'. The 'Number' is the total number of children in the specific school and 'Count' is the specific county in which the school resides. A 'County' can have numerous districts and schools.

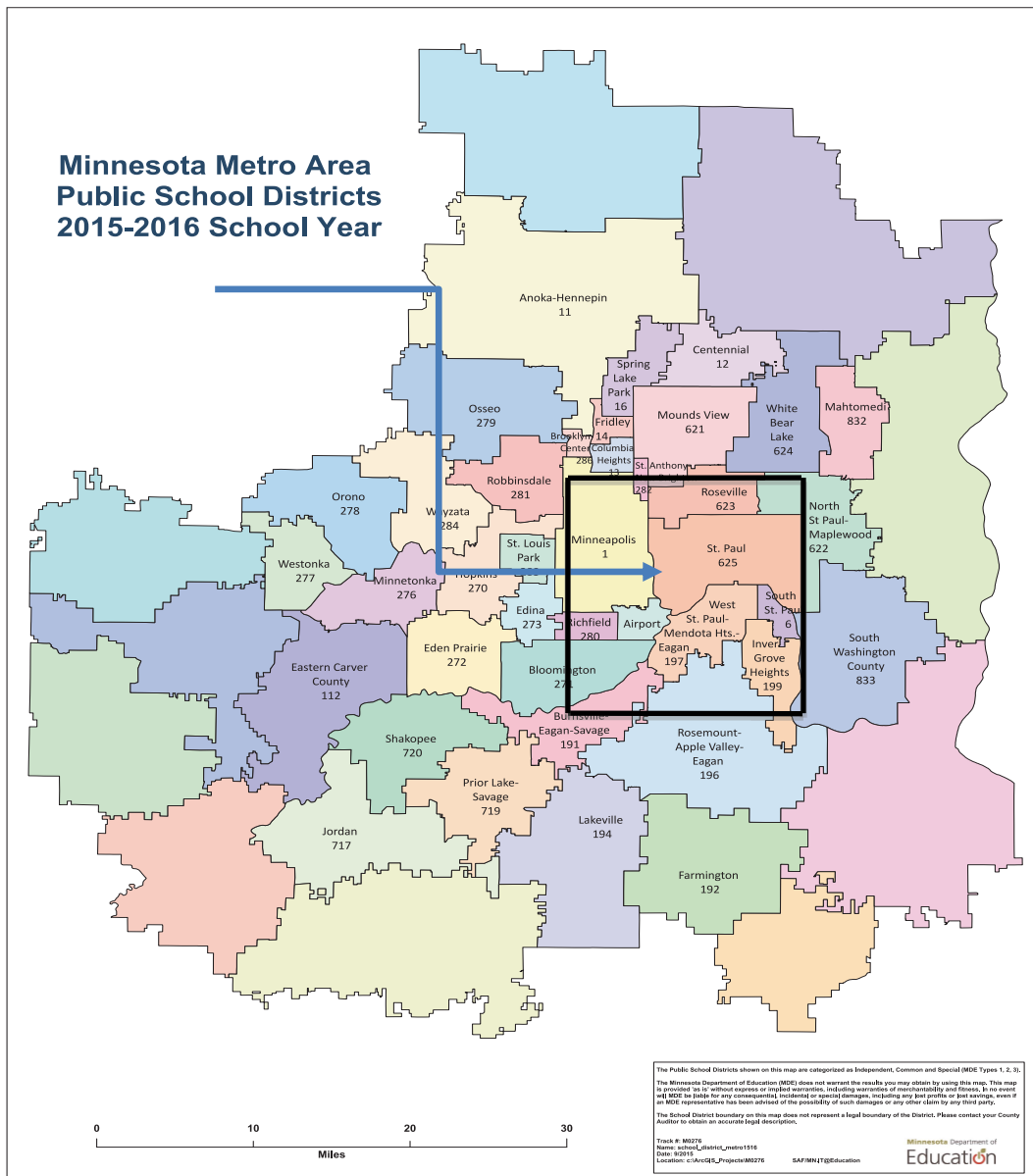
From the data provided by the MDE, the area of concentration of Tibetans is primarily within 15 miles of TAFM and the Guyton Wheel of Dharma Monastery. This is quite significant as it implies that the connections to TAFM as a community centre are important factors contributing to settlement patterns among the Tibetans. Another factor is the centrality of the city centre of Minneapolis, which leads to greater opportunities for employment and access to mass transportation.

When looking at the data from the 2008 district, as compared to the most recent report for 2014, the concentration of Tibetan students in public schools continues in this area. Slight variances are the result of students progressing to advanced schools from grammar or primary school to middle or secondary school and even to college or university, which are not apparent in the MDE data. In some cases, these schools are on the same school campus and, in other cases, these schools are in a completely different location. This different location can also have an impact on transportation logistics as siblings who once travelled to school together now travel on different buses and even at different school starting times.

Another factor affecting the numbers for 2008 is there were not as many Tibetan students in the 15-18 age range attending high school as compared to lower grade schools and many of these high schools are in the outer rings of the city centre and possibly even further away from their homes than the primary and secondary schools.

The following map provided by the MDE indicates the area covered by the school districts identified by the MDE as containing Tibetan students.

Figure 4 Location of TAFM within the Tibetan Community



Source: <http://www.mngeo.state.mn.us/maps/SchoolDistricts/>

A rectangle is drawn around the area identified by the MED as having significant concentrations of Tibetan students in public schools, which also correlates to the concentration of where the majority of Tibetans reside within the Twin Cities. The arrowed line points to the locations of TAFM.

A few observations can be made: 1) the area in which Tibetan students attend public schools is a highly confined geographical area 2) the 277 Tibetan students [from the 2008 data] are located in 21 schools 3) the 21 schools are located within what is called the 1st and 2nd ring of the urban centre and 4) TAFM is centrally located among the schools and residences of where a majority of Tibetans reside.

Dr. Mayer, in his City Vision Report, identifies the 1st ring as approximately two miles within the centre of the city of Minneapolis and the 2nd ring as approximately nine miles from the centre of the city of Minneapolis (Mayer, 2015, p.60). TAFM is within the 1st ring and the ‘centrality’ of TAFM is noteworthy as TAFM is considered by many Tibetans as the centre or hub of Tibetan community life particularly with its culture and language programmes. The programmes range from the Tibetan Cultural School (TCS), Lamton to Monlom. In addition, The Gyuto Wheel of Dharma Monastery is also within a short distance (approximately a 12-15-minute drive on city streets) from TAFM (see Figure 1). Dr. Mayer, as well as TAFM, has identified that the Tibetan community has continued to expand not only in numbers but also in spreading out from the urban centre as far as twenty miles.

So, what does all of this mean? In one respect, the spread of the community and expanding student attendance at various schools reinforce the central importance of TAFM to get students from school and to participate at cultural events. This is of particular concern during the school week as transportation becomes more of a strain on the family as they co-ordinate their children’s school and transportation schedules, particularly since TAFM is not located on a public transit route that is convenient for the Tibetans. Another aspect is that as Tibetans become more settled over time as residents and in their occupations, they tend to move out of the urban centre to locations further away from their initial residence. As Jorden stated:

Before living in Fridley⁶, we used to live in another city called Columbia Heights, where we lived for two years. Then we moved here because we thought the area was a little bit unsafe for our young children and not a safe neighbourhood. It was loud and too crowded and we lived near a very busy street. Emergency police would go down the street all the time day and night. We now live in Fridley where we think it is safer and we have a park close to the house (Jorden, a Tibetan man born in India of Tibetan parents, between the ages of 31-35 and works full-time in Minnesota, 2013, p.5).

In response to these expanding settlement trends, which includes migration from Asia and other parts of North America and the growth of families, TAFM has launched a Building Committee, which is reviewing the impact of the current location in response to the changing demographics of the Tibetan population. One of the major considerations of the community is related to expanding the current building or acquiring a new building and how these meet the requirements in terms of a physical structure.

Referring to the research and insights of Fiona McConnell (2016) regarding structures, she states, ‘there is a logical attachment to, and nostalgia for, the settlement where those born in India have grown up...connections and attachments with exile settlements are also evident, with an increasing investment in property by some within the diaspora’ (McConnell 2016, p.85). Though McConnell’s context is that of the Tibetan diaspora in Asia, her analysis is applicable to the Tibetan diaspora in the Twin Cities. As shall be explained, TAFM not only brings about a form of nostalgia, seen through programmes in the education of Tibetan youth to which the elders are a part, but also a connection through symbolic presentations. Though TAFM’s building was not ‘purpose built’, meaning it was acquired as an existing structure, it has been ‘purpose enhanced’.

⁶ Fridley is a city further north from downtown Minneapolis than Columbia Heights. According to MapQuest (www.mapquest.com), Fridley is 10 miles from Minneapolis and Columbia Heights is 5 miles from Minneapolis.

5.3 Creation of a Community

Lumtok explained how and why Minnesota was selected as a major site for the settlement of Tibetans coming from Asia. The next phase of the settlement, which is more significant, is the aspect of community, the cultural aspect, which I defined earlier, ‘as being those efforts and institutions that are formed by the Tibetans to teach and maintain the Tibetan language as well as instruction in Tibetan history’. What are the components that Tibetans identify as essential in strengthening the Twin Cities’ diaspora community?

5.3.1 Memory and its Significance

As discussed in Chapter Three, Cohen and Malkki observed one of the attributes of a diaspora is their memory of homeland and / or the memory of return [to the homeland] (Cohen 1997, Malkki 1992). Citing Breckenridge and Appadurai, Malkki writes, ‘Diasporas always leave a trail of collective memory about another place and time and create new maps of desire and attachment (Malkki, 1992, p.29). Malkki’s observations signal the importance of recollection and the longing for a homeland that speaks to the affective attachments among the Tibetan community in the diaspora. This is not to say that the memories are necessarily a fabrication but, as Cohen and Malkki indicate, the loss of a homeland and how it is imagined from a distance can reinforce and reinvigorate attachments to a place and an eventual return.

For example, Choegyal and Namche recall not only the memory of living in Asia, but also address the significance of these memories:

The Tibetan community there [India] had much more Tibetan culture. For example, here in the Twin Cities you don’t see Tibetan moms and grandmas wearing chubas⁷ every day, like you would in India, even if they are just going to a friend or family’s house. (Choegyal, a Tibetan man born in India of Tibetan parents,

⁷ A *chuba* is a traditional Tibetan garment. For women, it similar to a Western ‘wrap-around’ dress. *Chubas* can vary in style based upon the occasion or upon the region of Tibet and can also represent the region of Tibet in which the *chuba* is associated (U-Tsang, Amdo or Kham).

between the ages of 18-30, graduated from college in Minnesota and works full-time, 2013, p.2).

For me in India, I loved living there. There everything is open and I would see a lot of [Tibetan] people and talk to them and then I would go and drink some tea and eat from the street vendors. There was more community there and have more life than here. Here, everyone drives in a car (Namkha, a Tibetan man born in India of Tibetan parents, between the ages of 46-60 and works full-time in Minnesota, 2013, pp.4-6).

These comments provide some insight into the differences surrounding the everyday diasporic experience of India versus the Twin Cities and how that affects the attachment and identification with a broader sense of community. These images, memories and views of India are also reinforced by major themes presented by Tendar, who remarks, 'In India, one thing is you always get to see a lot of Tibetans - always. You are almost in your own country [Tibet] wherever you go. We lived in our own community.' (Tendar is a Tibetan man born in India of Tibetan parents, between the ages of 31-45, graduated from college in India and works full-time, 2013, p.9). Tendar also contrasted his life in Asia with his new life in the Twin Cities noting, 'here, everything is rush, rush, rush, so thinking from this perspective, in India you stayed relaxed. Nothing in India is busy...if you go out into the street, you see a lot of [Tibetan] people, everybody was outside...here everybody is inside' (Tendar, 2013, p.9).

The memory and significance of this public culture and sense of community are not only reflected in cultural dress, buildings and / or proximity to other Tibetans, but also in the language, which is perhaps the most significant marker of identity for the diasporic community. As Dhundup describes, 'here [in the Twin Cities] we speak English and you don't speak Tibetan. In India, we spoke Tibetan all the time and here we speak English, I feel like a foreigner here ... when I speak Tibetan with my friends in the Twin Cities, I feel more Tibetan.' (Dhundup is a Tibetan man born in India of

Tibetan parents, between the ages of 18-30, graduated from college in Minnesota and works full-time, 2013, pp.4,7).

Choegyal's, Tendar's, Namkha's and Dhundup's memories and reflections upon these contrasting geographies are not isolated examples and reinforce Lumtok's vision to create a Tibetan community centre in the Twin Cities. Memory for the Tibetans is not just a reflection of what they had as a community in India, but also as a foundation for their efforts to recreate a similar community in the Twin Cities. The Twin Cities' Tibetan community's centre (TAFM) is not only a place to meet and speak Tibetan, but also a place to create social memory and strengthen Tibetan culture for future Tibetan generations. The importance of language and cultural education, especially through learning Tibetan history, songs and dances, builds on the major themes identified in Chapter Four and are central to the goals of TAFM and their vision of community.

5.4 TAFM: The Tibetan Community's Response to Concerns of Identity and Culture

Taking what the 14th Dalai Lama learned from the Jewish delegation (discussed in Chapter Two), knowledge of Tibetan history, language and learning traditional songs and playing music instruments are foundational for the Twin Cities Tibetan community. Questions posed to each interviewee addressed what they considered to be of greatest concern to the Tibetan community at large and from a personal and individual perspective. Based on these responses, the most significant concern on both levels was the maintenance of their culture primarily through the Tibetan language:

The only negative [living in the Twin Cities] is the kids. There is a big problem losing their culture, their language. That is why we are working hard every day (Khorlo, 2013, p.31).

The greatest concern I think it's the language because you can see it [the loss of language] from the second generation to the third generation here in the city [Twin Cities]. You know the young kids barely speak Tibetan at all. They always talk to each other in English (Tawang is a Tibetan man born in India of Tibetan parents,

between the ages of 61-60, who graduated from college in Minnesota and works full-time, 2014, p.23).

Maintaining the language, which is our real culture because Tibetan language is our cultural identity and it is being destroyed by China in Tibet, so it's our duty as Tibetans outside of Tibet to preserve the culture of our language...Tibetan identity means [knowing the Tibetan] language...I think my own kids will be able to maintain the language, I'm more worried about once we leave and they [my children] raise their own kids our [Tibetan] language will be lost (Namgyal is a Tibetan man born in India of Tibetan parents, between the ages of 18-30, who graduated from college in Minnesota and New York and works full-time, 2014, pp.2,12-13).

Language is so hard to maintain here [Twin Cities]. With our kids whenever we speak to them in Tibetan, no matter what they will reply in English. It's OK to speak English, but we want them to learn and preserve our culture and language is the key (Tsekyi is a Tibetan woman born in India of Tibetan parents, between the ages of 46-60, who graduated from college in India and Minnesota and works full-time, 2015, p.13)

It is very hard to maintain our culture [in the Twin Cities] because the kids go to school and most of the kids speak English and when they study their school homework, it is all in English and they become American...it is very hard to keep alive our [Tibetan] language (Ringzin is a Tibetan man born in Tibet of Tibetan parents, between the ages of 61-80, who works full-time in Minnesota, 2015, pp.12-13)

Another shared concern around the preservation of Tibetan culture was the importance of passing on the knowledge of their history. This knowledge of Tibetan history provides an important context for their origins and lends greater weight to the maintenance of the language:

[What makes one Tibetan is] knowing your own history and background of our culture and knowing about the specific rituals and traditions ...someone is going to ask to tell them [younger generation] about Tibet and they are going to say I am Tibetan, but if they do not know the history or anything else about who they are it will be hard for them to identify themselves as a Tibetan when they do not know much. It is basically knowing your own background, your family's background and your country's background even knowing the holidays (Choegyal, 2013, p.13).

One needs to have a sense and knowledge of Tibetan culture, the way you live ... we need to have our mind in Tibet and we need to know our culture. We live in Minnesota, but our minds are in Tibet (Tendar, 2013, p.18, 24).

Maintaining and preserving my culture is for my life and the life of my family, without this I would have nothing (Dawa, a Tibetan man born in Tibet of Tibetan parents, between the ages of 46-60, and works full-time, 2013, p.12).

A large concern is keeping and knowing our culture. In American culture, individualism is pretty important. In Tibetan culture, the community is more important...thinking about others ...you have to think about others and especially Tibetans and we are losing that here (Dhundup, 2013, pp.9-10).

For me, being a Tibetan, is hearing and knowing the stories of our history and hearing it from our elders, because they are Tibet. One of the greatest concerns for me and I think for other Tibetans, is losing our culture, especially for the younger generation who have been born in America. We need to keep this alive through education (Tenpa, a Tibetan man born in India of Tibetan parents, between the ages of 18-30, graduated from college in Minnesota and works full-time 2013, pp.11,22).

Though these narratives highlight the concerns of the community, they also point to the significant role of TAFM as a mediating organization and a reflection of the 14th Dalai Lama's vision for cultural survival. As seen earlier in this chapter, TAFM is located in the physical centre of the Twin Cities' Tibetan community and has become the central institution dedicated to the preservation and promotion of Tibetan culture as defined through language and the knowledge of their history.

Examining the institutions and programmes that the Tibetan community has created reveals what the community considers as significant in their maintenance of identity and the challenges they face in their adjustment to a new host location. TAFM was created and formed based upon two primary and interrelated goals. According to their mission statement they are '*preserving* and *promoting* [emphasis added] the rich Tibetan cultural and spiritual heritage under the leadership of His Holiness the Dalai Lama' (TAFM, 2015).

5.4.1 TAFM: Not just a Building

Building on Geertz's observation in relation to this research, I posit that the matter of establishing rapport, developing relationships with informants, and transcribing texts have been central in my study of the Tibetan community in the Twin Cities. These activities are significant and yet do not tell the whole story of the significance and meaning of TAFM. In order to better understand the significance of the Tibetan narratives regarding their journey and the creation of a community, it is helpful to provide a description of the building and activities that take place there.

In Chapter Four, I discussed the physical location of TAFM as being centrally located within the Tibetan community in the Twin Cities. It is not by chance that TAFM's location was selected, as the community was seeking a location that was not only easily available in terms of transportation and access, but also affordable and within the community's financial ability to acquire a building.

In geographical terms, TAFM is adjacent to a major motorway, Highway 280, that is approximately five miles long and is orientated in a north and south direction connecting major east-west motorways. To the south is Interstate Highway 94, which transits east to west, and to the north is Interstate Highway 35 West, which transits north-to-south. Another motorway, Minnesota Highway 36, also carries traffic in an east-west direction. The building is approximately one mile east of Highway 280 and one-mile south of a major US university, the University of Minnesota.

As one approaches from the car park of TAFM, multi-coloured Tibetan flags are prominent, waving on flag poles near the front entrance, which are approximately thirty feet tall. On the northern perimeter of the car park is a fence that runs the full length of the property perimeter on which numerous prayer flags are displayed. The Tibetan flags on the front entrance, like the Tibetan prayer flags on the fence, remain on display throughout the year regardless of weather, to which Minnesota can have temperatures that drop below -40c in the winter with snowfall that can exceed 70 inches in any given year.

These prominent visual symbols help communicate to Tibetans and non-Tibetans alike that this building is uniquely Tibetan. It is a place that Tibetans can claim both literally and visually as their 'settlement'. Further, during Losar, a traditional celebration of the Tibetan New Year, the car park is where *tsampa* (roasted barley flour that is considered a staple and an identity marker for Tibetans) is burned as an offering to bring in the New Year.

Entering TAFM, there is an aroma of burning incense, emanating from the Prayer and Shrine Room down to the left. Entering the Shrine Room, one notices the gold and red painted display cabinets containing fine silk embroidered wrapped boxes of Tibetan scripture, called *peja*. Members of TAFM have personal ownership of these boxes. A portrait of the 14th Dalai Lama is prominent in the room with a *khata* (a ceremonial scarf presented as a symbol of respect, reverence and honour) and offerings surrounding his portrait.

Entering the Main Hall of TAFM, one again notices another portrait of the 14th Dalai Lama, also with a *khata* and various offerings, prominently and centrally placed in the front of the Main Hall's stage. Most walls are bare except for a series of images that commemorate those who took their lives in self-immolation as well as a display of students' Tibetan writing skills, which is part of the Tibetan Cultural School.

This multi-oriented display symbolically represents two similar and differing aspects of the Tibetan community and TAFM. On one side, images of Tibetans who have sacrificed their lives for the cause of Tibet's freedom and the return of the 14th Dalai Lama to his homeland, and on the other side, a symbolic representation of cultural continuity among young Tibetans for the current and future struggle for Tibet in the diaspora. It is in this Main Hall that TAFM members celebrate weddings, birthdays, graduations, Losar and other events. Also, in this Main Hall, prayer vigils are held for those Tibetans who have offered their lives in the cause of Tibet either through hunger strikes or self-immolations.

The TAFM building is more than a physical structure providing a space for Tibetans to meet and congregate, it is also a symbolic and nostalgic representation of the Tibetan journey, be it in Tibet, India or Nepal. The narratives and description of the buildings reveal that TAFM is an organization that strives to keep the memory of the past and present alive for the Tibetan diaspora in the Twin Cities. The symbolic

importance of the TAFM building, the display of Tibetan national and multi-coloured prayer flags, the burning of incense, pictures of the Potala Palace, portraits of the 14th Dalai Lama, posters of Tibetans who have offered their lives for a Free Tibet, and the display of the school work of younger Tibetans, all contribute to solidify their identity in a new host country. As McConnell states, ‘Underpinning this project of preserving identity and culture in exile is the perceived need to foster a very particular population in exile: a cohesive, united and homogenous community that shares a single national identity’ (2016, p.123).

This struggle to create Tibet outside Tibet is not only for the cause of freedom through Rangzen or Middle Path policies, but also to maintain their Tibetan cultural identity through the symbolic representations and the development and implementation of cultural and educational programmes.

TAFM’s external structure and surroundings are not only a location made to be distinctly recognized as Tibetan, but also a location in which Tibetans use for rituals. What do these external symbols say about the TAFM? My research and analysis, and reflections upon McConnell’s work and that of the Tibetan narratives, reveal that these physical symbols represent the TAFM building as unlike the other surrounding buildings. In a number of narratives, Tibetans complained that as compared to Tibet, India and Nepal, the physical artefacts to which they were accustomed were missing in the Twin Cities. Choegyal reflects on the lack of physical representation in the Twin Cities as compared to India, ‘In India you’ll see a lot of Tibetan families going to the different monasteries. For example, in Southern India where my Mom’s from there’s you see at least three monasteries just within a couple of miles. You do not see that here [Twin Cities]’ (Choegyal 2013, p.2). TAFM is not only a nostalgic representation of home, be it Tibet, India or Nepal, but also a place that is markedly their own.

5.4.2 Language: The Primary Concern

As mentioned, language was a unanimous concern of all the Tibetans I interviewed and tied in to the Jewish delegation discussion with the 14th Dalai Lama. For many of the Tibetans, language was both a carrier of cultural meaning and a symbol of difference in a new social landscape. As an identity marker, Tibetans stated it symbolizes that one is Tibetan not only to other Tibetans, but also to non-Tibetans.

Additionally, combined with the loss of the homeland (discussed in Chapter One), language preservation has become more significant for the younger generation.

The following comments speak to those concerns:

I think the greatest concern we have is our culture. Speaking Tibetan and reading Tibetan must be handed down to our children. Knowing the language also helps our children to also think like a Tibetan too. We must make strong efforts through our language and cultural programs now that we live here [in the Twin Cities] (Dhundup, 2013, p.9).

Over here [Twin Cities] and even in India, English is the language of power. I've noticed that English is the most overpowering language that once you start speaking it, all of your other languages just sort of die. To become so assimilated, to become so westernized that you lose touch with your roots like forgetting how to speak Tibetan, reading and writing Tibetan (Norbu, a Tibetan man born in India of Tibetan parents, between the ages of 18-30, attending college in Minnesota, 2014, pp.9-10,19).

The fear of losing language proficiency among Tibetans appears to be on the rise for many of the Tibetans with whom I am in contact. This practical everyday loss of language, as well as the perceived threat of extinction as a result of generational ties, as well as the political and cultural tensions within Tibet, have increased the Tibetans' efforts to maintain the language. Van Driem, in his article, *Identity Lies More in the Language Than Genes*, states, 'Because we live in the age of globalization, and the whole planet is being reduced to a single tightly interwoven community, languages are now going extinct at the highest rate in human history' (van Driem, 2013, p16). This observation mirrors the concern for the Tibetans in the Twin Cities: the link between the loss of their identity and the loss of their language.

Another aspect of language that surfaced in the interviews and recorded in my field notes, was that knowledge of Tibetan enabled one to read and recite the Tibetan scriptures. One interviewee stated, ‘Our culture and history and who we are written in our scriptures and without knowledge of our language we will be unable to read the scriptures. You need to be able to read Tibetan as there are so many books about Tibetan history written by Tibetans and still are not translated – they are still in Tibetan’ (Khorlo, 2013, p.28). According to Tsering Shakya, ‘Besides the common faith, the other threads which hold diverse groups together is the written language and the corpus of literature produced over the centuries. The written [Tibetan] language, which is often referred to as *Chos khed* (language of Dharma, and to some extent the Lhasa dialect), formed the *lingua franca*’ (Shakya, 1993, p.9). In a discussion with Shakya, he stated, ‘Though the term *Chos khed* is more closely associated with Bhutanese usage today, this is not historical practice. The term *Chos khed* was used more widely throughout Tibetan culture throughout the Tibetan cultural world’ (Personal Communication, Shakya, 17 April 2017). Although Shakya’s article addresses the concern for retaining the Tibetan language in Tibet, the concern is applicable and reflected by the Tibetans in the Twin Cities as well.

One of the founders of the Minnesota Tibetan Cultural School stated, ‘We fought daily to maintain our language and culture in Tibet because of China and now that we are here [in the Twin Cities] we need to still fight because English [language] will take over. Our children speak English in schools every day more than they speak Tibetan at home and they are losing their [Tibetan] language’ (Ritzekura, Personal Conversation, April 2013). Khenpo Lodoe⁸ offered additional insights, ‘The fact is that Tibetan

⁸ According to the website HighPeakPureEarth.com, ‘Khenpo Tsultrim Lodoe (in Tibetan: མཁན་ཚུལ་ཁྲིམ་ལོ་དེ་ལྷོ་ཤེས་པ་ in Chinese: 堪布慈成罗珠) was born in Darlag in Kham in 1962 and became a monk at the age of 22. Today he is the Khenpo (Abbot) of Larung Gar Buddhist Institute. As the recent post by Woesser tells us, “The Larung Gar Buddhist Institute was established in 1980 by Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok and became the Buddhist school hosting the largest number of monks and nuns in the whole of Tibet; it was also the most

language is struggling in the deep waters of decline and devaluation. The august and exalted teacher and founder of Larung Gar, His Holiness the Khenchen Jigme Phuntsok once remarked, “a pure” Tibetan must know and speak Tibetan. If we desist from dressing in Tibetan traditional clothes and stop speaking and using our mother tongue, the Tibet is already a lost cause’ (Lodoe, 2015, p.1).

In summary, the Tibetans I spoke with in the Twin Cities were deeply concerned about the potential loss of the Tibetan language as a foundational aspect of their culture and central to their identity to other Tibetans as well as to non-Tibetans. A related concern was the importance of the language retention for reading Tibetan literature that includes reading and reciting Tibetan scriptures that provide an important link for the current generation of Tibetans with their ancestral heritage.

When speaking of the relevance of speaking Tibetan, Yetrok tells her children ‘the first thing is you have to speak Tibetan and you need to know your language to know your culture’ (Yetrok, a Tibetan woman born in Tibet of Tibetan parents, between the ages of 36-60, working full-time in Minnesota, 2015, p.9).

5.4.3 Concern for History and the ‘Heart of a Tibetan’

There is another related aspect of Tibetan identity revealed in the narratives that can be divided into two aspects: 1) knowledge of their own history and 2) ‘the heart of the Tibetan’. For Tibetans, it is not just the historical ‘facts’ and dates that contribute to their cultural identity, but also the intangible aspects of cultural heritage associated with traditional dance, music and other performances.

The following statements are representative of these concerns:

well-known Buddhist campus in Chinese areas, with thousands of Chinese Buddhists living there. This is also why the Larung Gar Buddhist Institute is very different from other Buddhist campuses, it has been home to some of the most outstanding Buddhist teachers who are proficient in both Chinese and Tibetan, like Khenpo Tsultrim Lodoe or Khenpo SoDargye.”

First, I tell other Tibetans to make your child Tibetan. You make your kid's heart Tibetan by telling them about our country (Namkha, 2013, p.23).

I want my daughter to learn the basic stuff of being Tibetan not just the language, but the dances, the history, it's very important to know the things that make up our cultural identity such as where you come from (Gyatso is a Tibetan man born in India of Tibetan parents, between the ages of 31-45, working full-time in Minnesota, 2013, p.15)

It is very important to keep our culture alive and not only the language. We are losing our culture here [Twin cities] so we need to keep educating our children. If we do not educate and share our culture with the children we will lose it (Jorden, 2013, p.7).

In Tibet, we are losing our culture and one of the greatest opportunities to keep our culture is coming to the Twin Cities, because in Tibet we could not openly speak about our history or culture. Culture is also how we think and act and we need to be sure we teach that as we can easily lose that (Tawang, 2014, pp.4-21).

I am seeing the increasing importance of learning other things that are Tibetan, like dances, music and stuff. This helps me stay connected with who I am as a Tibetan and with other Tibetans (Taklha is a Tibetan man born in India of Tibetan parents, between the ages of 18-30, who graduated from college in Minnesota and is working full-time 2014, p.5).

I am worried about our younger generation not knowing our culture, other than just language. I am more worried that once we leave [die] our children will have to raise their own children and not remember our history. I can't imagine what it would be like for future generations to not know our history and culture (Namgyal, 2014, p.4).

Being Tibetan is also knowing our traditions. I recall that while in India, we celebrated a lot of Indian traditions and festivals and here [Twin Cities] we celebrate more Tibetan festivals (Khando is a Tibetan woman born in India of Tibetan parents, between the ages of 18-30, who graduated from college Minnesota and works full-time, 2015, p.7).

It is very important for us to keep our culture from now to the next generations. This is our generation and we need to pass on the customs and traditions to the next generation, if not we'll just fade away. Of course, the main concern is language, but we also must teach about our culture, history. If we do not do this now sooner or later I think we'll be in danger of losing our culture especially as the younger generation grows up here (Pema is a Tibetan woman born in Tibet of Tibetan parents, between the ages of 61-80, who graduated from college Minnesota and works full-time, 2014, p.6).

The Twin Cities is one of the most diverse cities in the US. If you want to keep your Tibetan identity alive, then it's very important to keep up your language, your customs and your culture. If you want to be Tibetan then you need to keep up with your culture and traditions (Sangyal is a Tibetan man born in Tibet of Tibetan parents, between the ages of 46-60 and works full-time, 2014, p.8).

The above narratives reveal that the major cultural concerns for the Tibetan community are language and knowledge of the Tibetan culture (other than language).

These other dimensions include dance, music and learning about their own history through arts and entertainment. The importance of preserving cultural traditions is a central tenet of TAFM but it also aims to prepare the community for a future outside of Tibet. This tension requires a delicate balance: holding on to the traditions and the hope of an eventual return to their Asian homeland while at the same time preparing for a life that in all likelihood creates a new home and settlement in the Twin Cities.

In the next section, I examine in more detail how the Tibetan community in Minnesota responds to these cultural concerns through the Tibetan Cultural School and Lamton. Neither of these programmes operates independently, yet they do create a synergy knowing that the past provides greater significance and meaning for their future as they struggle to adapt to new diasporic conditions.

5.5 Tibetan Cultural School: Preserving the Past

In 1997, the Tibetan community in Minnesota founded the Tibetan Cultural School (TCS). The purpose of the school, according to the school's website, is 'to assist MN (Minnesota) Tibetan children to learn their language, history, religion and cultural heritage and instil in them basic values of compassion, humility, respect and nationalism' (<http://www.TAFM.org/tibetan-culture-school/>> [Accessed: August 15, 2015]). Given the emphasis on 'cultural' in the school programme, it begs the question: what does one mean by cultural? Based on my experience and research with the Tibetans, I take this to mean a 'shared' way of life that includes beliefs, behaviour and it is through the commonality of the knowledge of their roots and their journey that binds the Tibetan community together.

In examining the TCS' mission statement, one can see parallels with the earlier narratives (Dhundup, 2013, Norbu, 2014, Namkha, 2013 et. al.) I cited above, where language along with history and memory are transmitted through the generations.

5.5.1 TCS Programme

The TCS programme is primarily designed as a Saturday (weekend) programme. The main reason for the Saturday programme is that the parents of most Tibetan families work in more than one job. As a result of their parents' multiple employment and public transportation challenges, children are unable able to attend TCS on weekdays. Many of the children share rides with other friends and families, so a number of children are reliant on other families and friends for their transportation.

Though TAFM is centrally located within the community, the building is not on a readily accessed public transportation network as the centre is located on the fringes of an industrial area and the children attend school classes with the MDE during the weekdays. Another factor is that teachers within TCS are also employed, so are not otherwise available.

5.5.2 A Typical Saturday Schedule

The programme's school year is from September to July and begins each Saturday at 0900 and ends at 1300. TCS is open to all Tibetan children within the general age range of 6 to 18, which is the basic school age for students within the public-school system (kindergarten through twelve grade). According to TAFM, approximately 135 children attend TCS. The total number of children attending TCS is estimated to represent about 1/3 of the Tibetan children in the community.

The school day begins with the recitation of prayers (led by a student), the singing of the Tibetan National Anthem followed by any announcements relating to TCS. Afterwards, students, parents and volunteers prepare the various rooms. It is noted that having served as a volunteer for TCS, the reconfiguration is in itself a challenge for TCS as there are approximately twelve classes and only four rooms. As a result, the

common room of TAFM is divided into approximately five class areas utilizing portable wall dividers, collapsible tables and folding chairs.

During the day, each grade level is taught language (reading, writing and speaking), history, dance, music through the playing of the *draymen* (similar to a lute) and the flute as well as the teachings of Tibetan Scripture and moral values such as practicing compassion and humility. In my observation, the teaching of history serves multiple purposes. One purpose is to ensure the preservation of the Tibetan language and the knowledge of Tibetan history in a factual form, according to their own textbooks and even to the extent of personal testimony of those that have made the journey from Asia.

Another aspect is that the teaching of history also generates and, in some cases, reinforces the memory of their homeland of Tibet as almost all the children of TCS have been born outside of Tibet.⁹ For parents of children born in the United States, the significance of this enculturation and what it means to be Tibetan becomes even greater as the passage of time between the events of 1959 and the present becomes longer. Tibetans who have first-hand knowledge of the exile journey and memory of living in Tibet are becoming quite old and are passing away. Therefore, the teaching of language, and knowing Tibetan music, songs and dance provide a greater sense of collective belonging and connection to their past and to their forefathers.

5.5.3 Motivation and Concern

Recalling and preserving the past does not necessarily prepare Tibetans for life in the United States. However, among the Twin Cities' diaspora, it is foundational for

⁹ According to TAFM, the majority of Tibetans currently residing in Minnesota have (are) arrived(ing) from India and Nepal. There are few families that arrive directly from Tibet. According to TAFM, if 5-10 families arrive a year from Asia approximately 2-3 families come directly from Tibet.

Tibetans to know their past, retain their language and bind their community through the understanding of their common heritage¹⁰ that is perceived as under threat.

As TAFM (and TCS) intentionally works to ensure a memory of their homeland and a sense of *belongingness* with Tibet through enculturation and transmission of history, language and religious practices, the pressure to succeed in a new host country and city also requires new skills. For example, learning English is not only seen as a necessity to succeed in Minnesota, but also adds greater pressure to preserve the past as the youth begin to evaluate a measure of success from a western perspective.

This concern is evident in Norbu's observation:

I've noticed that English is the most overpowering language that once you start speaking it, all of your other languages just sort of die. To become so assimilated, to become so westernized that you lose touch with your roots like forgetting how to speak Tibetan, reading and writing Tibetan (Norbu, 2014, pp.9-10,19).

Norbu's insight reveals a common fear expressed among other Tibetans I interviewed:

I know I am Tibetan because I know the Tibetan language which is what makes you Tibetan...the greatest concern is for the younger kids ... you have to know English here, but you have to remember to speak Tibetan (Choegyial 2013, pp.6,13).

I think the greatest concern living here (Twin Cities) is the language because you know it's just especially you can't see that from the second generation, third generations here in the city you know the young kids they barely don't speak Tibetan at all they always talk to each other in English and I think you know that's a big concern (Tawang 2014, p.14).

The only way we can keep other things in our culture is when we preserve a language and that it is unfortunate about Tibetan exiles here [in the Twin Cities] is that we are losing our language (Ngawang, 2015, pp.25-26)

The most difficult thing for us is maintaining our language. When our kids go to school they speak English all day and when they come back home they still speak English. Now when I ask a question in Tibetan they reply in English. So, yes, language is a big problem (Yetrok, a Tibetan woman born in Tibet of Tibetan parents, between the ages of 36-60, working full-time in Minnesota, 2015, p.9)

¹⁰ There are different Tibetan dialects such as Amdo, Kham and U-Tsang. TCS teaches the U-Tsang dialect as it is the most widely understood among Tibetans and is used in Tibet.

The concern for the loss of language is not isolated within the Twin Cities as evidenced by events and actions from other Tibetan communities, specifically in Asia. In speaking with a group of Tibetans during my volunteering time at TAFM, Taklha mentioned that Tibetans themselves need to do more and he directed me to an article entitled ‘Learn Tibetan: Win a Car!’ The article stated:

While Tibetans in Amdo in the far east of Tibet (<http://freetibet.org/about/location>) have been forced to stage a protest over the failure of their local [Chinese] education system to support Tibetans’ needs, elsewhere in Tibet, Tibetans have organized a competition to promote the use of Tibetan. With the lucky winner taking home a car and prizes... Free Tibet, 2016. Available at: <<http://freetibet.org/news-media/na/learn-tibetan-win-car>> [Accessed: February 3, 2016].

Though the geographical context is different, the significance of and pressure to maintain the language in Minnesota is evident. How these geographical disparities are related is that the common denominator for Tibetans, regardless of their physical location, remains the same. The significance of preservation is not limited to boundaries or borders, however, such incidents within Tibet are used as an emotional and practical catalyst by the Tibetan community to further expand its desperate need for maintaining its language. As Taklha observed, ‘the loss of [Tibetan] language is a global concern (Personal Conversation, Taklha, July 2016).

Though TCS does not offer material incentives, it does incentivize the learning of the language through public competitions for all grade levels in TCS with awards of recognition among the students’ peers.

5.6 Lamton: Preparing for the Future

My research indicates there is another component other than preserving the past and that is preparing Tibetans for the future as Tibetans become more acclimatized and settled as their third generation is born and raised in Minnesota. This is particularly pertinent among the younger generations who may have little or no memory of living in Tibet.

One of the emerging concerns for the Minnesota Tibetan community in the early 2000s was how to prepare Tibetan students not only for success in their current academic work, but also for those who were graduating from high-school and desiring to enter college. As seen in the earlier narratives in Chapters Three and Four, one of the primary motivations for Tibetans to leave Asia to come to the US, was the opportunity of a better life in the form of jobs and education, particularly for their children.

One of the early concerns for the newly settled families, other than obtaining employment and housing, was learning how the education system operates in Minnesota from the early ages of pre-school or kindergarten through high school and college. Many factors came to bear on the Tibetan diasporic families such as: registering for school; identifying the appropriate grade level; which courses to enrol for and how to apply to college or university; how tuition fees are paid; how financial aid for education operates; how to apply for and even the details of the academic field on which to focus or major in. Many Tibetans were not familiar with FAFSA (Free Application for Student Aid), which is a US Government programme that guarantees student tuition loans needed to be repaid with interest.

It is within these concerns of lacking knowledge in preparing for and accessing university and college level education that Lamton was created and Lamton's website provides insight into the programmes' creation and development:

LÂMTÖN was founded by 7 Tibetan students from Carleton and St. Olaf College in 2008. Having, themselves, benefited from similar programs during high school, these college students saw a need for, and the value of, having such a program in the Tibetan community (Lamton, 2015. Available at: <<http://lamtonmn.org/about/history-2/>> [Accessed: July 20, 2015]).

The formation of Lamton is another example that set the Twin Cities Tibetan community apart from other Tibetan communities as it was the first of its kind in the US. Tenpa, who was one of the original founders of Lamton, provides a personal insight and motivation for the creation of Lamton:

I think for me growing up, you always hear from your elders saying, “you know, now our time is almost passing and if our young kids aren’t prepared to take over, then we’re going to lose”. So, that’s what they preached. And I’ve heard that a lot and that is why I became involved in Lamton. Lamton prepares the kids for the future, especially here in the US (Tenpa, 2013, p.25).

In Tenpa’s narrative one can see not only the desire of the elders to honour and remember the past, but also for the younger generation to prepare for the future.

Essentially Lamton is a programme operated by Tibetan college students that not only provides tutoring assistance for junior and high school students in their academic work, but also provides the students and their families with opportunities to learn about the education system in the US. Lamton also offers a number of programmes through TAFM’s sponsorship. The Lamton programme meets on Friday evenings at the TAFM Centre from 1800 until 2000 when approximately 40 students gather along with 10-14 mentors and tutors. The success of this program is being benchmarked by other Tibetan communities in the US.

5.6.1 Tutoring

The tutoring programme provides academic assistance to middle and high school students. Tibetan students are paired with tutors who are college / university students and educators and receive assistance on their assignments and projects. The tutors provide their time on a voluntary basis and come from various backgrounds including educators and professionals such as chartered accountants and professors from a number of universities such as the University of Minnesota, St. Olaf College, Carlton College and Hamline University.

TAFM provides a Board Member to oversee and represent Lamton as well as to obtain needed resources including the TAFM building that provides physical space and associated maintenance. Lamton’s own records indicate that since its inception in 2008, 100% of the Tibetan students who have participated in Lamton’s tutoring programme have been accepted by a college or university.

The value of Lamton to the Tibetan community was also evidenced by the testimony of one of the tutors, who is a university student about their experience with Lamton: “Working at LAMTON has taught me the importance of community in the Tibetan culture” (Lamton, 2015. Available at: <http://lamtonmn.org/2015/09/> [Accessed: October 10, 2015]).

5.6.2 Mentoring

Mentoring is an added dimension to the tutoring programme in which a student is paired with a Tibetan college student to work on more specific issues such as essay writing, application for tuition grants and / or scholarships and even to meet with parents so they can more fully understand the various college application processes. What is significantly different about the mentoring and tutoring programme are two important aspects: 1) the student and mentor endeavour to speak Tibetan and 2) to connect the significance of the Tibetan culture to the student’s education or aspirations.

It is this link, through the mentoring, that the cultural aspect is carried over from the TCS to the academic arena. For example, in my interviews, it was clear that there were some worries that as students become more westernized they become more independent and less communal. This was directly expressed by Khando in speaking about their younger relative who, though born in Asia, has spent more time in Minnesota schools:

He values personal space a lot, I think because we are Tibetans we have a collectivistic culture because we were in Asia, versus the American culture where individual space is very much prized. It’s kind of like freedom for yourself, right? And so, my relative is very secretive of what he wants, and what is his personal space, versus me where I, depending on the people in my family, friends and relatives (Khando 2014, p.3).

Khando, who is also one of the seven founders of Lamton, mentioned in a conversation that in the mentoring programme, the cultural dimensions of family and community are frequently emphasized (Khando 2015). Furthermore, students are also

encouraged to give back to the community in some form. For example, if one becomes a medical doctor they should consider helping other Tibetan students in Lamton or even consider serving the Tibetan people in Asia. Also, students are encouraged to look at other aspects of strengthening Tibetan culture such as becoming involved in TAFM activities, learning traditional Tibetan dances and advancing the learning of their language.

5.6.3 College Preparation Programmes

Other programmes offered by Lamton support students with preparation for college entrance exams such as the ACT and SAT testing. The ACT¹¹ and SAT tests are US national tests used by many colleges and universities as a component for the evaluation of the admissions process in conjunction with a written entrance essay, high school grade transcripts and letters of recommendation.

These tests (ACT and SAT) evaluate a student's ability to perform effectively in a college / university environment through specialized sections such as maths and grammar and there are sections relating to reading comprehension and essay writing. It is these specialized sections of reading comprehension and grammar that a Lamton tutor provides needed assistance. Further, Lamton arranges with certified ACT instructors to assist the Tibetan students in the preparation for the test. According to the ACT site (<http://www.actstudent.org/faq/actsat.html>).

The focus of this discussion is not on the tests themselves but Lamton, as part of TAFM, seeks to ensure academic success for Tibetan students through its mentoring, tutoring and college application assistance programmes.

¹¹ According to the ACT website, 'The ACT® is a curriculum- and standards-based educational and career planning tool that assesses students' academic readiness for college. The ACT is the capstone of our College and Career Readiness System.' (ACT, 2016 Act, 2016, Available at: <<http://www.act.org/products/k-12-act-test/>> [Accessed: July 20, 2015].

5.6.4 Lamton's Vision

One item that I have observed, and that was reflected in the interview narratives, is that Tibetan parents relocated to the US from Asia in order to provide greater opportunities than they had as parents in Asia. Many of these first-generation migrant parents are not college educated and some do not have the equivalent of a US high school education. For these reasons, it can be difficult for parents to have the ability to provide effective guidance in the area of advanced education. It was for these reasons the '7' Lamton founders and college students, took upon themselves the role to assist and strengthen further generations in their aspirational goals to obtain a college education.

Another level is the communal and compassionate aspect as stated by Khando. The Lamton ethos is to help and serve others as can be seen with their 100% college acceptance rate. An additional component implied, but not directly stated, is to prepare future Tibetans for the possibility of returning to Tibet as well as in honouring their parents and elders for their sacrifice to bring their family to the US. This is clear in the following comments provided by my Tibetan research informants:

I need to do well and I feel you know I personally owe whatever we have achieved to our parent's generation because they worked very hard. Almost all Tibetan parents' generation worked very hard' (Namgyal, 2014, p.14).

My parents had a very hard life. They have to work road construction in India. It was a very hot climate [and] many people died from heat. My parents worked hard for us to have a better life than them (Pema, 2014, p.18).

Many Tibetan parents have difficulty getting their children a good education because the children's performance and they work hard to help them. Lamton does help them and we want our children to have a better life (Rabten is a Tibetan man born in Tibet of Tibetan parents, between the ages of 61-80 who is retired, 2014, p.11).

So, does Lamton help prepare Tibetan students for the future? As a tutor who has volunteered for Lamton for over four years, and after reviewing the results of the programme and discussing it with its leaders, the answer is yes. Academic success has come with improved grades in school and acceptance to a college and / or university.

This is evidenced by my own review of many of the students' school report cards and graded assignments, including discussions with the students' parents.

Further, Lamton in their reports to the TAFM Board states that students who attend Lamton have a 100% acceptance rate to a college or university. At the same time, Lamton strives to maintain Tibetan values such as compassion and service to others. If the ethos of instilling a more communal appreciation and service to others is measured by the numbers of students participating in Lamton, then this is an important link to Tibetan culture and a measure of success.

5.7 Connecting through Social and Electronic Media

The narratives revealed that the use of social media and the internet is an important component for the Tibetan community in the Twin Cities. Among the Tibetans I met and interviewed, Facebook and Facebook Messenger are the primary platforms used. A number of websites were also indicated as being accessed, but to a lesser extent.

The use of social media and the internet is not necessarily new, however, its use for connecting diverse diasporic communities has accelerated as a 'binding tool' for Tibetans. Jennifer Brinkerhoff, citing Rheingold in *Digital Diasporas: Identity and transnational engagement*, examines the use of digital media and emphasizes the importance of the internet in fostering community solidarity (Brinkerhoff 2009, p.11). For the Tibetans of the Twin Cities, the use of digital media not only helps to foster a community ethos, but also brings about discussions of political tensions, a topic explored in Chapter Six. Regardless of whether or not the internet is used for debate, the mere dialogue that the internet provides creates a platform and tool that Tibetans use to connect with one another.

Further, digital media is a natural next step in connecting communities that have been separated from their homeland, regardless of whether the cause of separation was

by force or voluntarily. Alonso and Oiarzabal describe this natural transition, ‘diasporas have historically utilized a variety of means of communication—from newspapers, newsletters, and radio and television programs to the Internet – as ways to overcome barriers of temporal, spatial, and psychological distance’ (Alonso & Oiarzabal 2010, p.9). Access to these technologies provides a crucial platform to negotiate their diasporic cultural identity among populations settled in locations around the world from Australia to Denmark to the United States, Canada and Brazil to name a few.

An analysis of the narratives also reveals a multi-generational use of the internet, albeit with slight differences and nuances. For example, Tibetans below the age of forty-five are more likely to use Facebook and Facebook Messenger to engage in and maintain *social connections* and to keep up-to-date with local Tibetan events. It is also used as a general news source as to what is happening with Tibetans in other locales. Tibetans over the age of forty-five generally also use Facebook and other various websites to keep updated on events affecting the Tibetan community around the globe. The major difference noticed was that the younger (under forty-five) Tibetans enhance the use of Facebook for social connections. Though YouTube was cited as an important interface, it was not a definitive source for community building connections, though it was valuable for viewing recorded events such as teachings by the 14th Dalai Lama or viewing and listening to Tibetan musical entertainers.

5.7.1 Reflections from the Narratives

The importance of using social media and the internet as indicated from the interview narratives varied from maintaining social contact to accessing relevant new media related to the diasporic Tibetan community in the Twin Cities and the Tibetan community on a global scale. The following examples are cited by the Tibetans as the rationale for using social media:

I use Facebook extensively. I find it valuable because you're not just reaching your friends, which I have around 1,500. When I post something on Facebook it reaches all 1,500 and then they can share it with their list of friends on Facebook, so I reach a lot more people. I could never do that with email or texting. Also, using social media helps me know when and what events are going on because I am not always at TAFM nor do I look at the TAFM's site (Choegyal 2013, p.10).

These days I mostly use Facebook because Facebook is more popular. Also, the TAFM website does not have everything on the site, yet TAFM will put information on Facebook first. Even the young Tibetan people are interested in looking at Facebook so they can see what's going on in Tibetan community. The young Tibetan generation don't use Tibetan or TAFM's website. Facebook's the most effective way to know what's going on. Personally, I use Phayul [www.phayul.com] because that's the most effective, reliable and up-to-date news for Tibetans right now (Jorden 2013, pp.8-9).

I primarily Facebook mainly to keep in touch with those I know and to know what events are happening here [Twin Cities] (Norbu 2015, pp.13-15).

I stay connected to the Tibetan community here [Twin Cities] through TAFM and the internet. It [Facebook] is really good to keep me connected to Tibetans and to what is happening abroad. So, I use Facebook to connect with other Tibetans and news updates about Tibet. It is a great because it puts everything that is out there on your news feed because your friends are probably sharing it and then you can go read the whole article. Using Facebook, I am able to have different connections to different parts of the world through Tibetan's eyes rather than through non-Tibetan's point of view. It's like hearing through their word of mouth. I also use Facebook as a way to network and connect with people, because those are all people that I have met at some point in my life. A lot of them are my family members. So, I have over twenty family members that I keep in contact with through Facebook back in India. They don't come to the US very often and Facebook helps me stay in contact with them (Khando 2014, pp.11-12).

I use Facebook to keep track of the events in the community [Twin Cities]. Also, through Facebook I can see what else is happening around the world Sometimes I use other websites such as Voice of America or Tibet TV (Lumtok 2015, p.15).

I use Facebook because obviously, I see a lot of news and even some of the news I never heard about through newspapers or TV. On Facebook, we can sometimes see what happened in Tibet. You know it's very sad to see what is going on in Tibet and how it affects my family and friends. Using Facebook allows me to see talk [write] with my family and friends who I rarely see any more (Yetrok 2015, p.10).

Facebook is what I use to connect [with the Tibetan community]. On Facebook, I can see things about Tibet that I cannot see through websites. I also use it to let the rest of the world know what's going on in Tibet, in that way you have more people watch you like Facebook, so I try to keep my Facebook account busy. If you look at my Facebook page you will see things about what's happening here and in Tibet (Wangchuk 2015, p.8).

Jorden (above) mentioned the website Phayul, which is the website most cited by Tibetans as their main source for Tibetan news. According to its own Facebook page, Phayul is the 'Pioneer English Language News Portal of the Tibetan Diaspora',

(<https://www.facebook.com/phayul>). Dawa stated ‘I either use Phayul or Voice of Tibet [websites] as I trust them to be more reliable’ (Dawa, 2013, p.15). These comments are indicative of the use of digital media such as connecting the community through Facebook and other popular websites. Yet, the digital media also offers another important cultural optic in that it can provide a platform for expressing tensions as well as consolidations within the Tibetan community. This example is discussed in more detail in Section 6.3, where a struggle ensued among Tibetans during the March 2015 Uprising Day and the video that was posted on the internet.

5.7.2 General Observations on the Use of Media

The use of social media and the internet for the Tibetans of the Twin Cities is not necessarily stratified by age differences. According to the narratives, Tibetans under the age of forty-five are more inclined to use Facebook and Facebook Messenger for social engagements and to keep up-to-date on events relating to the Tibetan community and as they seek quick access to their like-aged community. In general, Tibetans over the age of forty-five use Facebook, but rely on other websites that are more organizational such as Phayul (www.phayul.com) and Voice of Tibet (<http://www.voatibetanenglish.com/?z=2736>).

A number of Tibetans did reveal that they did use WeChat to communicate with their friends and family in Tibet. They expressed a high degree of caution in that they specifically do not discuss matters of politics or the 14th Dalai Lama due to security concerns by the Chinese government. This concern was expressed throughout the Tibetan community in an article by the CTA stating, ‘While WeChat offers many benefits of connecting, bonding and bridging the communication gap between Tibetans, it also creates significant obstacles. The growing popularity of applications of WeChat shows the continued wish of the Tibetan people throughout the world to remain

interconnected breaking down geographical and political boundaries’ (Central Tibetan Administration, 2016).

The cautious use of WeChat in connecting families and friends between the Twin Cities and Tibet was expressed by Yetrok:

WeChat is the main way we connect to our family in Tibet. Even though I believe WeChat is hosted in Hong Kong, I have heard that it is monitored by the Chinese government. My family in Tibet does not have Facebook, which I would prefer, so when we use WeChat. We can’t say anything His Holiness or politics because they could get in trouble. We only talk about family things. Many Tibetans here [Twin Cities] use WeChat, but they do not talk about it and use different names (Yetrok, 2016, p.10)

In speaking with a number of other Tibetans, they affirmed the use of WeChat, but were reluctant to discuss specifics by using euphemisms such as ‘something similar to Facebook’ or ‘another message service similar to WhatsApp’. The expressed concern was that if their use and/or identity was revealed their one connection to speak to their family would be cut-off.

The narratives and the use of social media through the internet reflects upon the earlier discussion regarding diaspora and transnationalism, primarily through the transnational ‘process’ of developing and expanding connections/networking. The networking enables Tibetans in the Twin Cities to maintain contact with their families in friends not only in the diaspora, but also with those in Tibet, though caution was expressed in the use of WeChat. Regardless, the transnational networks assist the Tibetans to ‘being there and here’. The development and use of institutions, organizations and programmes such as TAFM, Tibetan Cultural School and Lamton facilitate their ability in their connectedness not only in their efforts to preserve the past, but also in their efforts to prepare for the future.

5.8 Comments and Conclusion

As the narratives and the discussion around TAFM and related programmes reveal, the making of the Twin Cities as the second largest population of Tibetans in the United

States was more related to circumstances than a grand plan or design by the CTA or the US government for a large settlement in Minnesota. What helped establish the Twin Cities as a cultural hub for incoming Tibetan migrants was a favourable climate of sponsors and sponsoring organizations spearheaded by Lumtok who fortuitously arrived in Minnesota in the late 1980s.

The greatest concern for the Tibetan settlement population was not only how to create a sense of belonging for those currently residing in the Twin Cities, but also for those who are likely to settle in the future. In order to strengthen this sense of belonging in the diaspora, language retention and knowledge of their history have been central to preservation to ensure they are passed down to future generations. The creation of TAFM, therefore, has played a significant organizational role as a catalyst for preserving and promoting Tibetan culture.

Though there are numerous programmes that operate within TAFM, only two were specifically addressed in this chapter: the Tibetan Cultural School (TCS) and Lamton. I have chosen to focus on both of these programmes because they speak directly to the mission statement of TAFM and reflect the broader concerns expressed by Tibetans in their narratives: How do we as Tibetans ensure our children learn and remember their language and culture, as well as prepare them for the future? As I have shown in this chapter, both TCS and Lamton seek to address these concerns and have had considerable success.

However, TAFM still has its challenges, especially due to its physical location and the difficulties surrounding access when Tibetan parents work in multiple jobs throughout the city. For example, one of the hurdles I noted above is how to offer TCS programmes to the younger children, those under eighteen, who have limited transportation access to TAFM because it is not centrally located on an easily accessible public transportation network. There is still a large percentage of the Tibetan population

in the Twin Cities that are not yet members of TAFM, which operates on TAFM membership dues.

The settlement in Minnesota has brought other challenges in the area of advanced education such as choosing a college, applying to college, how to pay for college fees and learning how to prepare for college life for Tibetan youth. The next step, beyond TCS, is what happens to the youth once they are removed from TCS programmes. How do they stay connected to the community and how do they maintain their cultural identity such as by language retention?

For many Tibetan students, Lamton was a bridge to assist former TCS students with additional mentorship along with gaining assistance in their academic studies before entering college. Additionally, Lamton mentors also receive the benefit of having a greater connection to the Tibetan community through generational familiarity with Tibetans more closely aligned to their own age.

TCS's efforts focus on the youth in learning and preserving their past and their sense of belonging as Tibetans and Lamton prepares the students for further education success. An unspoken tension that was evident in my research among the Tibetans in the Twin Cities was: should Tibetan families be preparing students for success in this new diasporic landscape and how does this affect their dreams and struggle for Tibetan autonomy and freedom? In essence, are we preparing our children to remain in Minnesota and the US or to return to Tibet? Although not always stated, this tension and ambivalence is central to many first-generation Tibetan migrant adults in the Twin Cities, especially as their children are born and raised in the US school system. Herein lies the significance for TAFM and its TCS and Lamton programmes: remembering the past and preparing for the future.

Looking at the transnational conceptual expressions, the narratives revealed the use of social media and the internet in building a community especially through the

platform of Facebook and the internet by accessing various websites. Of those interviewed, Facebook and Facebook Messenger are more likely to be used by those below the age of forty-five to maintain social connections and event updates. The use of social media enhances the Tibetans in their ability to not only remain connected locally, but also globally.

The next chapter will discuss the political efforts and institutions of the Tibetans in the Twin Cities of Minnesota and whether these efforts are unifying or divisive forces for the Tibetan community.

Chapter Six: The Culture of Politics in the Twin Cities' Tibetan Community: Challenges and Opportunities

First of all, I would say that Tibet needs to be free and back to being an independent country, yet I am also conflicted between the two main policies of Rangzen and Middle Way. I like the Middle Way because it seems so reasonable and at other times I support Rangzen and independence (Dhundup, 2013, p.12).

6 Introduction and Overview

This chapter examines some of the political expressions and varied discussions by Tibetans in Minnesota. The Tibetan diaspora in the Twin Cities is a rather unique phenomenon primarily because it is a relatively new diasporic community in light of the Tibetan United States Repatriation Act of 1990. It was through this Act that the door opened to allow the sponsorship of one thousand Tibetans to move to the United States.

As mentioned in Chapter Four's introduction, the cultural and political aspects are neither mutually exclusive nor are they entirely congruent, yet both support the others' aims. Though there is an agreement on the importance of popular slogans such as 'Free Tibet', the meaning and application of these terms have different interpretations based upon the context. For example, what is meant by 'free'? Does it mean complete independence from Chinese governmental rule? Can it also refer to a negotiated settlement for the people of Tibet in terms of governance and how does this affect the Tibetans in Minnesota?

Referring to the interviews, politics for the Tibetan community in Minnesota not only provides an arena for Tibetans to express their aspirations and desire for freedom, but also shows their ambivalence surrounding these different political approaches such as Umaylam (Middle Path or Middle Way) and Rangzen (independence), and how these tensions relate to the role of the 14th Dalai Lama.

Kaufmann observes that ‘I believe that Tibetans want to stay as masters of their own development and destiny...and they have a certain pride in thinking of themselves as independent’ (Kaufmann, 2015, p.79). It is significant that he observes Tibetans seeking independence either in the form of Rangzen or Middle Path. As can be seen, the word independence has implications in terms of not only being independent or reliant upon the international community for their political goals, but also independent in terms of a form of self-rule in Tibet, either through Rangzen or the Middle Path approaches. Hence, Tibetans maintain a careful balance of the use of *independence* not only in their internal [Tibetan] dialogue but also in their external [international] dialogue. Anand (2008, 2009), Kaufmann (2015) and Roemer (2008) and others cited in this research explore the Tibetan political realm extensively but not for the Tibetan community in Minnesota.

6.1 History Revisited and Contemporary Expressions

Chapter Two examined in greater detail the historical backdrop of the Chinese occupation of Tibet, which essentially created the Tibetan diaspora that we see today in many parts of the world (India, Nepal, Bhutan, UK, US, Canada, Switzerland, Germany, Australia) and in the context of this research - Minnesota. One of the ongoing debates is whether or not Tibet is and has been a Chinese territory that was reclaimed by the PLA culminating in 14th Dalai Lama leaving Tibet for India in March 1959. Even if the debate is in favour of Tibetan political autonomy, then what is next?

The resulting exile of the 14th Dalai Lama in 1959 was the culmination of a series of events that were set in motion much earlier in the twentieth century during the reign of the 13th Dalai Lama and the PLA’s efforts to bring Tibet under greater control (Roemer, 2008, pp.25-27). As an extension of the 1959 exodus of the Dalai Lama and nearly 80,000 refugees, we have seen the resulting migration of Tibetans moving from

Tibet to India and Nepal and onwards to other locations, such as the US through the Tibetan US Repatriation Act of 1990.

In section 2.2, I explained that a possible resolution surrounding the sovereignty of Tibet is highly controversial as both Tibet and China have claims and counter-claims that validate each other's position and rights (Ardley 2002). Regardless of these diverse claims, and it is not the intent of this research to clarify them, the net result is that 80,000 of the followers of the Dalai Lama left Tibet over the next few years to settle primarily in India and also in Nepal and, to a lesser extent, Bhutan. According to CTA's own estimates, as of today, there are approximately 200,000 Tibetans living outside of Tibet.

In light of these challenges, Tibetans have left the Tibetan plateau seeking a better life in other countries, mindful of their claim of sovereignty and hope for return. So how does the flight of the refugees and broader geo-political events affect the experience and identity of the Tibetan diaspora in the Twin Cities?

As expressed by Tibetans and their various political institutions, many Tibetans are demanding self-rule for Tibet, however, there are two primary views of how Tibet is to be returned: one is through complete independence within a movement termed Rangzen and the other is termed Middle Path approach or Middle Way. The Middle Path and Middle Way are often used interchangeably. Sections 6.1.1 and 6.1.2 examine and discuss these similar yet different political movements followed by section 6.2 that explores tensions between these two approaches through the narratives of the Tibetans themselves. In the concluding section, I examine the central role of the 14th Dalai Lama in regards to these efforts.

6.1.1 Rangzen, Independence and RTYC-MN

The term Rangzen is applied by Tibetans to define the goal of complete independence for Tibet from the government of China. Jamyang Norbu in his article *Independent*

Tibet – The Facts, from the website Rangzen Alliance (www.rangzen.net), argues that Tibet has always been an independent country and that Tibetans are seeking the return of what has always been their own land ruled and governed by Tibetans:

Tibet was a fully functioning and independent state before the Chinese invasion. It threatened none of its neighbours, fed its population unfailingly, year after year, with no help from the outside world, and owed nothing to any country or international institution. Although insular, theocratic and not a modern democracy, Tibet maintained law and order within its borders and conscientiously observed treaties and conventions entered into with other nations (Norbu, 2010, Available at: <http://www.rangzen.net/rangzen-facts/independent-tibet-the-facts/>) [Accessed: July 10, 2015]).

Some of the major key words in light of the current contested rule by China is ‘[Tibet was a] fully functioning and independent state before the Chinese invasion’. Reflecting upon Norbu’s observation is that he also describes what a return of independence would most likely look like, such as ‘no help from the outside world...owed nothing to any country...maintained law and order *within its own borders* [emphasis added] and...observed treaties and conventions entered into with other nations’. Norbu’s view of independence is not only shaped by historical antecedents from the perspective of a Tibetan, but also provides a vision of what Tibet as an independent nation should look like in the future.

In *Tibet: the issue is independence*, Edward Lazar states, ‘Lumtok Rabgey [a Tibetan] has written “If we have learned one thing, then, it is our very survival depends upon the achievement of a genuinely free Tibet. The issue then is independence. Towards this end, our cries will be relentless and our cries will be heard, we will not be silent”’ (Lazar, 1997, p.85) Again, we see not only the vision of independence, but also the passion to reach this goal.

The way Rangzen or Rangzen Alliance relates to the Tibetan community in Minnesota is expressed primarily through the efforts of the Regional Tibetan Youth Congress (RTYC), which is a chapter of the Central Tibetan Youth Congress domiciled in Dharamsala, India.

This connection with the 14th Dalai Lama has generated some challenges for the Tibetan community over time. On RTYC-MN's website, one of the four primary declarations is: 'To struggle for total independence of Tibet even at the cost of one's own life' (RTYC MN Mission. 2015). It accomplishes this through a number of methods, such as hosting educational seminars that focus on the demands for Tibet's independence. These are held at various locations such as TAFM and at local colleges or universities. Larger events are also hosted each year such as the Martyrs Memorial Cup (MMC). This event is held in the Twin Cities in late summer and is open to Tibetan football [soccer] and basketball clubs from around North America. In conjunction with the sports events, there are meetings among RTYC-MN leaders and members, dinners and gatherings in which issues related to Tibetan independence are discussed.

Further, at different times throughout the year, there is a fashion show of traditional Tibetan clothing as well as a talent show that focuses on traditional and contemporary singing, dancing and music. The themes are primarily directed toward the memory or longing for a free Tibet and many of the other events express political undertones of resistance. The significance of this event is to remember those Tibetans who have offered their lives for the Tibetan cause primarily through the self-immolations in Asia and to maintain the aspirations and struggle for an independent Tibet. Another public example to memorialize the Tibetans who sacrificed their lives in the cause of independence was through displaying their portraits on football pitch during the Opening Ceremony of the 2014 MMC. Pictures of those who had suffered and died for the Tibet cause through self-immolations were honoured and a moment of prayer and silence was offered by football participants and observers.

Appendix 10 is from RTYC-MN's website that indicates the various events sponsored by RTYC-MN since 2012. These events highlight efforts by RTYC-MN for the cause of an independent Tibet. The events include sports events, prayer services

(Monlom) honouring those who sacrificed their lives through self-immolation and imprisonment and public protest gatherings. Referring to Appendix 10 and the MMC of 2014, one can see the objectives of RTYC-MN stating, ‘The reason for hosting MMC is to unite Tibetans in Exile and to honour those who have sacrificed their lives for Tibet’s Freedom’ (RTYC-MN, 2015). It is through these efforts that RTYC-MN creates and fosters political awareness for the Tibetan community.

The protest component of RTYC-MN’s campaign is often observed when interested Tibetans travel from the Twin Cities to a city where a Chinese government embassy or consulate has a presence such as Chicago, New York or Washington D.C., or when a Chinese dignitary visits a US city. The campaigning is marked by banners indicating slogans related to Free Tibet, displaying the Tibetan flag and vocally expressing slogans regarding the Tibetan struggle against the Chinese occupation of Tibet. Those who are unable to attend are encouraged to prepare the banners and other signs that support the various campaigns.

According to the Tibetan research informants who support complete independence from China, the efforts of the RTYC-MN are to uphold the values as set forth in their mission for the total independence of Tibet.

6.1.2 Middle Path / Middle Way Approach: Autonomy

In simple terms, those who support the Middle Path aim to regain self-rule over their daily lives and for education, practice freedom of religion including the open reference and respect (pictures, statues and public honouring) of the 14th Dalai Lama, as well as other demands relating to environmental protection to counter the Chinese government’s extraction of resources. In essence, the Chinese people and its government could remain in Tibet, while allowing Tibetans self-rule. According to Roemer:

In June 1988, the 14th Dalai Lama elaborated in his plan in an address to the European Parliament in Strasbourg...the Dalai explained his ideas of the future democratic and self-governing Tibet *in association with* [emphasis added] the PRC. The Chinese authorities would be responsible for Tibet's foreign affairs while Tibet was to handle autonomously its internal affairs...to achieve an autonomous Tibet, the exile Tibetan political elite focused on a non-violent struggle...the nonviolent approach has since then become known as the 'Middle Path' or 'Middle Way' policy of the CTA (Roemer, 2010, p.83).

On face value, this approach appears more diplomatic for Chinese political relations in that it sets a path towards resolving the Tibet issue in line with Dalai Lama's Middle Way approach and non-violent ethics that earned him the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989. It is worth noting that the RTYC-MN mission statement also includes the words 'non-violence', which is in keeping with the Middle Path policy of the 14th Dalai Lama. Despite the support from many Tibetan and international sympathizers, over the last twenty-seven years, Tibet is no closer to independence, much less achieving the Middle Path's autonomy.

6.2 Narratives: Congruencies and Disconnections

To gain more insight into these unfolding political dynamics, interview questions were directed towards the expressions and positions of Rangzen and Middle Path among the Tibetan informants. These questions (see Appendix 4) were posed to gather and collect the thoughts of Tibetans in the Twin Cities on the past and current political situation within Tibet. In all cases, they cited either Rangzen or Middle Path in their responses. I asked clarifying questions such as 'What is your understanding of Rangzen?' or 'What is your understanding of Middle Path / Middle Way approach' and 'What do you think are the differences of between Rangzen and Middle Path / Middle Way?' Due to the sensitivity and centrality of this issue I provide a number of responses below to illustrate these dynamic tensions:

For me running our own country as Tibetans is the ultimate goal, which means going back to the history of Tibet when Tibet was an independent country and that is why I support RTYC. We had our own government, currency and practiced our own religion, we ran our own country. And that is where Free Tibet comes in, for Tibetans to be free to run its own country without China just as it was before 1959 and not

having the Tibetan Autonomous Region [TAR] (Choegyal is a Tibetan man born in India of Tibetan parents, between the ages of 18-30, who graduated from college in Minnesota and works full-time 2013, p.15).

I personally stand by the Middle Way policy. I say this not because I do not demand for independence, but the first question I put to myself is “What am I going to do to achieve independence?” I cannot do anything from here [in Minnesota]. If I am demanding something, then I must do something and I cannot see how I can do anything here to achieve independence. I am really hopeful for the Middle Way and in the Chinese constitution it says there are rights for ethnic people (Tendar is a Tibetan man born in India of Tibetan parents, between the ages of 31-45, who graduated from college in India and works full-time, 2013, p.29).

I am for the Middle Way all the time. It is the way of the 14th Dalai Lama and it is his path and I am 100% for the Dalai Lama. There is independence, which calls for the Chinese to leave the country. I do not see how this will happen. We will take care of what is inside the Tibet boarder and China can take care of what is outside the boarder. Look at the Tibetan Youth Congress [RTYC] they want full independence. Number one that is very difficult and it may take a few hundred years. We cannot really expect the Chinese to leave [Tibet] (Namkha is a Tibetan man born in India of Tibetan parents, between the ages of 46-60 who works full-time in Minnesota, 2013, pp.29-31).

In the long run independence is most important. For the short term Middle Way is the best and quickest solution and I really do not think we will get our country back, I do not think so. For so many years there has been so much talking and talking and nothing has changed for us. We can say independence and talk about it and until now nothing has changed. The 14th Dalai Lama is always open to talk to China, but China will not change (Dawa is a Tibetan man born in Tibet of Tibetan parents, between the ages of 46-60, who works full-time, 2013. pp.23-24).

To me independence and an independent Tibet is impossible (Gyatso is a Tibetan man born in India of Tibetan parents, between the ages of 31-45, who works full-time in Minnesota, 2013, p.17).

This is really tough. For a long time, I was thinking independence. It seems if we fight for independence we are fighting against the Middle Way. Right now, if you look at the situation the Dalai Lama's right because he does not want all the Tibetans to die and the culture destroyed because independence will take a long time. He does not want our culture destroyed. At least with Middle Way we can live in our own country. If you have Middle Way, even without independence, we can still live in our country. The Dalai Lama is thinking right with Middle Way. The Chinese will not give us independence (Jorden is a Tibetan man born in India of Tibetan parents, between the ages of 31-35 who works full-time in Minnesota, 2013, pp.13-14).

Before China took over, we were a free Tibet. A free Tibet is without China and we would have our own country and our own freedom. I want independence and for the Dalai Lama to return to Tibet, but so many people are dying through prison, torture and self-immolations in the fight for independence (Losang is a Tibetan man born in Tibet of Tibetan parents, between the ages of 61-80, who worked fulltime in India and Minnesota and is now retired, 2013, p.19).

The Tibetan political situation is very complicated and it is not as simple as the Chinese are not always the bad guys and the Tibetans are not always the good guys. Over the years there has been a lot of debate between Rangzen – independence and the CTA's official stand on Middle Way. At this stage in time we have His Holiness and the CTA and they are proposing the Middle Way policy and this is a great avenue to

resolve the Tibetan issue with Middle Way, but in the heart of all Tibetans you know we all want independence, but I do not think the time is right for this. We can shout and demonstrate for independence here in Minnesota, but given our current situation and the results from these we are limited and these things will not change just by pushing for independence (Tawang is a Tibetan man born in India of Tibetan parents, between the ages of 61-80, who graduated from college in Minnesota and works full-time, 2014, pp.16-17).

For me the term Free Tibet is rather vague, though I do think it means free from China, but I am not sure exactly if it means Rangzen or Middle Way. If you ask most Tibetans, they'll say Free Tibet means "China, get the hell out of my country!" and honestly, I do not see Rangzen happening. Many Tibetans will say 'This will happen and then this will happen' speaking of Rangzen and I can't even connect the dots as to how independence will happen. Middle Way is a lot more realistic even though the word autonomy I find is a little hard to understand. The first thing we Tibetans need to do with China is be realistic and maybe the first move is to get the Dalai Lama in Tibet. That is the first step (Norbu is a Tibetan man born in India of Tibetan parents, between the ages of 18-30, who attends college in Minnesota 2014, pp.26-27).

I know everyone wants Rangzen, yet Rangzen is hard to get right away. His Holiness is working hard to get the Middle Way because I think once we get autonomy we can stay in Tibet and at least we can live there and maybe once day we can do more political things like Rangzen. At least with Middle Way we can have our own culture on our own land and someday who knows (Pema is a Tibetan woman born in Tibet of Tibetan parents, between the ages of 61-80, who graduated from college Minnesota and works fulltime, 2014, pp.17-18).

I do not know if either of these policies of Rangzen or Middle Path are going to have any sort of impact. Tibetans look at issues in black and white terms it's either independence or autonomy. I think Tibetans need to reimagine the Tibet issue and think more realistically and get over the Tibetan exile mind-set. We are only representatives of the Tibetans inside Tibet and we really do not know what is going on inside and we do not really have many connections to what is going on there. So, we do not really know if the Tibetans in Tibet are more for Rangzen or for Middle Way, we do not really know what they think or really want (Lhamo is a Tibetan woman born in India of Tibetan parents, between the ages of 18-30, who graduated from college in Minnesota, 2014, pp.12-13).

Middle Way is the best policy for Tibet and Tibetans. It allows us to promote our culture, language and our religion in Tibet. The policy of the Rangzen group is a lie and is not what His Holiness sees for us. We have global support because of Middle Way not through Rangzen (Rabten is a Tibetan man born in Tibet of Tibetan parents, between the ages of 61-80 who is retired 2014, pp.12-13).

In my thinking, the best way to solve the Tibet issue is through the Middle Path by His Holiness and the Tibetan government. The Chinese will more easily accept the Middle Way. For us to say to the Chinese "Let's sit down and talk about Rangzen and independence" will not come to anything. The Chinese can say "We have the military, the people, and the money". Though our ultimate goal would be independence it is too challenging. Whatever is decided either Rangzen or Middle Way it is the Tibetans in Tibet that is the main concern, so regardless of which policy we are talking about people in Tibet (Rangdol is a Tibetan man born in Nepal of Tibetan parents, between the ages of 46-60 who graduated from college in the US, 2015, pp.14-15).

Tibetans see Middle Path as the only solution that they can see happening soon. But in the core of every Tibetan's heart I think they wish for Rangzen and independence. Through Rangzen we introduce young people to independence because we were an

independent country and young people need to know this, but I am not sure if either will happen and if either does happen I do not see them happening soon (Sangyal is a Tibetan man born in Tibet of Tibetan parents, between the ages of 46-60 who works fulltime, 2015, p.18).

Every Tibetan especially the elder Tibetan want Rangzen and some people do not like to hear the word Rangzen, but all Tibetan's heart wants this. So many things to consider no matter what path is chosen it is so complicated and involved many countries, but I would choose Rangzen (Lumtok is a Tibetan man born in Tibet of Tibetan parents, between the ages of 61-80, who works fulltime Minnesota 2015, pp.22-23).

If you look deep down inside my head and you will see Rangzen and complete independence, to have freedom to live and freedom to have our own government. Who would not want to have independence? Right? But Middle Path is what we would accept and may be easier to obtain. It is like how Tibetans live in India. In India, we could practice our religion and live in our culture, have our own community and our own schools. We had a government but it did not function as a real government, we were not really citizens. That is how I see Middle Way (Tsekyi is a Tibetan woman born in India of Tibetan parents, between the ages of 46-60, who graduated from college in India and Minnesota and works full-time, 2015. pp.20-21).

The ideas behind Rangzen and Middle Path are both very noble. I think both policies have the best intentions and I believe Tibetans overlook that. I think today people are at a stage that they are saying "Ah! We have had enough of those Rangzen and Middle Way people." To me, I think the other way, because as long as we are having these dialogues we are keeping the political space on the Tibet issue alive (Ngawang is a Tibetan man born in India of Tibetan parents, between the ages of 31-45, who works full-time 2015, pp.48-50)

I do not see major differences between the Rangzen and Middle Way policies, because our ultimate goal is to solve or help the Tibetans inside Tibet. The problem I see with Rangzen is the time it may take for this to happen and the people most affected are the people inside Tibet. So, the Rangzen people outside of Tibet can talk about independence because they have the time, but for the people inside Tibet are hungry and whose stomachs are empty are looking for food. For those outside of Tibet they are choosing what jewellery to buy or what delicious food to have, in Tibet it is a matter of survival (Ngawang is a Tibetan man born in Tibet of Tibetan parents, between the ages of 31-35 who works fulltime, 2015, pp.14-15).

Umaylam [Middle Path] is the best thing for everybody (Yetrok is a Tibetan woman born in Tibet of Tibetan parents, between the ages of 36-60, who works full-time in Minnesota, 2015, p.23).

The US government is not going to help Tibetans fight with China or the European Union to help Tibetans fight with China, just for the cause of Tibet to be independent. So, the best solution is Middle Path that will help the Chinese government and Tibetans and there will be no blood shed. It does not matter whether you are Rangzen or Middle Path the main focus is what's going on with the people in Tibet. You have to look for their desire first, but I believe right now that Middle Path is most suitable for all of us in the long run (Wangchuk is a Tibetan man born in Tibet of Tibetan parents, between the ages of 31-45, who works full-time in Minnesota, 2015, p.12).

If we fight for Rangzen it's a big gamble. How long will it take? If we look at Israel, it took them 2-3,000 years before they had freedom again. They were everywhere in that time. So, for Tibetans I am not sure if we are as strong as Israel. Can we preserve our culture, our traditions as they did for thousands of years? So, it's a big gamble

especially with the Chinese. I wish the British took over that would have been the best thing. At the core Tibetans want freedom and you have to open your heart and look at everything and then maybe autonomy might not be that bad. So, that with autonomy we can have much of Rangzen and hopefully if China collapsed or changed like Russian at the end we would have a chance. Also with Middle Path we could have a lot of things under China and we would not have to worry about defence (Wangdark is a Tibetan man born in Tibet of Tibetan parents, between the ages of 31-45, who works full-time Minnesota 2015, pp.17-19).

As seen in the above narratives, the opinions and support of the Rangzen and Middle Path policies are varied. Although this is not a complete review of all the Tibetans interviewed, they are representative of the larger data set and capture some of the ongoing tensions within the diasporic community. My calculations indicate that of the thirty Tibetans formally interviewed for this research, approximately 70% are in favour of the Middle Path policy. In analysing the narratives, one of the underlying reasons for support of the Middle Path approach is that a majority number of the interviewees note that at least the Middle Path approach would be more easily achieved as compared to Rangzen or independence (Namkha, 2013, pp.29-31, Jorden, 2013, pp.13-14, Norbu, 2014, pp.26-27). The other 30% indicate that the 14th Dalai Lama and the CTA should hold out for Rangzen. So, what does this mean for the Tibetans in the Twin Cities? The next section will examine the possible tensions and opportunities for unity.

6.3 Narrative Exploration: Adhesion or Tension?

The Tibetan narratives reveal a number of considerations for the Tibetan community in Minnesota. Regardless of whether the respondent made a claim for either the Rangzen or the Middle Way approach, the underlying theme is that Tibetans in Tibet should have some form of self-rule in terms of governance. Further, even though the Middle Path adherents make a claim for autonomy, the prevailing response at the heart of every Tibetan is independence. All Tibetans asserted their claim that independence is their ultimate desire as expressed by Choegyal, 'For me running our own country as Tibetans

is the ultimate goal' (Choegyal 2013) and this theme is expressed by others, such as Tendar, Namkha, Dawa and Rangdol.

Of the thirty Tibetans interviewed, none indicated that independence was not the ultimate goal for Tibetans. However, this position is tempered by words such as 'realistic' to which Norbu stated 'Middle Way is a lot more *realistic* [emphasis added] even though the word autonomy I find is a little hard to understand' (Norbu 2014). Lhamo took the issue a bit further stating, 'I think Tibetans need to reimagine the Tibet issue and think more realistically' (Lhamo 2014) and that the dialogue among Tibetans should explore other options. In other words, is there another option other than just Rangzen versus Middle Path? Though Lhamo did not reveal other options, the challenge moving forward is whether or not the divided Tibetan community can transcend the deadlock between these two policies.

Another tension among the diasporic community involves limitations around time. Those expressing support for Rangzen state that the Middle Way approach has not advanced the cause for either independence or autonomy since it was first proposed by the 14th Dalai Lama. As Ngawang stated:

The problem I see with Rangzen is the time it may take for this to happen and the people most affected are the people inside Tibet. So, the Rangzen people outside of Tibet can talk about independence because they have the time, but for the people inside Tibet are hungry and whose stomachs are empty and are looking for food (Ngawang, 2015, p.14).

The tension raised here is that those who support Rangzen in the Twin Cities approach, the goal of independence from a safe distance, while those who are most at risk are struggling within the Tibet Autonomous Region. The issue Ngawang is expressing is not to pit one Tibet against another, but to realise that those who face the greatest risk are those who have the least amount of time for a resolution of the Tibetan issue.

Interestingly, both policies make a claim regarding temporality. Middle Path proponents claim that it will take less time to achieve autonomy and Rangzen states that

time is running out for the effectiveness for the Middle Path particularly since the Middle Path approach has been in place since 1988. This is in line with Smith's observation:

The announcement of the Middle Way policy in 1988 caused consternation among many Tibetans, who imagined that the Tibetan cause was still about independence, even though they were aware that the Tibetan envoys had negotiated with China in the early 1980's on the basis of an autonomous status for Tibet and the PRC...the Middle Way created a division in Tibetan society that has only widened as the policy has failed to produce any resolution with China (Smith, 2015, p.1).

Patience on both sides has become more strained as time passes. Though Ngawang expresses the concern for the people inside Tibet for the Rangzen policy to develop, impatience goes well beyond this. As Taklha explains, 'With the Middle Way I don't think we are getting close to anything, because His Holiness has spoken about Middle Way for a long time and his envoy has been going back and forth and it is going nowhere' (Taklha 2014).

These frustrations have become more prominent as witnessed on the internet in March 2015 at the Tibetan Uprising Day march in New York City. During the protest march, a group of reported TYC leaders and members from various locations [identified through Facebook transcripts] and supporters of the Middle Path Approach clashed on the streets of New York. From the Facebook dialogue, members of both TYC and the Middle Path were observed and filmed yelling at each other, which quickly escalated into pushing and shoving. Furthermore, the police were called upon to stop the other party from protesting. A Facebook post helps encapsulate what some of Tibetan protestors were feeling that day:

My heart broke today. For the first time in my life my own people tried to ostracize me for simply standing up for Free Tibet. I saw the unity of the Tibetan people and our struggles falling apart in front of my eyes. I never thought I would see the day when a fellow Tibetan, an organizer and community leader, would yell at me and call me 'Sham day' or 'Shameless'. But this is indeed what happened (Yoko 2015).

The video of the interaction was posted on YouTube and on various Facebook pages: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1UAjApA8yle>. The following are

comments by Tibetans regarding the incident in New York. To protect the identity of those involved in the websites, all names have been changed to Tibetan 1, Tibetan 2 and so forth:

Tibetan 1

West is SFT and Old is TYC. Blind faith is dangerous-it erodes your logic and sense. Look at them men, they are a pure example of nobilities who destroyed Tibet during pre-Chinese occupation. What if I say, Dalai Lama and these people are paid by Chinese not to ask for free Tibet? Just like they did to Dorjee Shugden people and they are now trying on SFT.

Tibetan 2

This is the result of sycophancy. Sad, sad.

Tibetan 3

There are many banner sign free Tibet and shame shame China in rally other than sft stand thank you

Tibetan 4

March 10th is not exclusively exile government created celebration, in fact, it is not a celebration at all but a day to remember the ultimate sacrifices made when the common people of Tibet all rose up in unison against the muscular communist invaders. March 10th does not belong to CTA only, to do what they like with this tragic day. A great man once said, (taking some liberties) which is equally applicable in our case regarding the March 10th National Uprising Day and all those who died for Tibet, and still continues to do so.

The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here on March 10th dedicated to the great task remaining before us -- that from these honoured dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion -- that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain.

Tibetan 5

This is just sad. It's a damn shame our brothers and sisters in Tibet protesting for the struggle and we can't even stay united for the same struggle.

Tibetan 6

You people made a big disappointment for all Tibetan people around the world and burned their heart!

Tibetan 7

Not shame on China it's shame on us...

Tibetan 8

Who is interfering with the commemoration of the Tibetan National Uprising day? Tibetans wearing Tibetan national flag-the symbol of Tibet, Tibetans and Rangzen-while saying we don't want independence, China needs to be out of Tibet, etc. Even Hong Kong Chinese have called for Chinese out of their area. Since 1959 Tibetans have marched, sacrificed their lives and honoured the memory of Tibetan patriots. Now we have Tibetans who are running with hares and hunting with hounds.

HH the Dalai Lama's noble gesture of peace and harmony has been met with Chinese insults and blood libel.
And these Tibetans who should be carrying the Chinese flag and commemorating China's annexation of Tibet --are leading the Tibetan National Uprising Day?
Wow! EmaHO!

Tibetan 9

This is horrible and blunt mistake of Organizers. We are remembering the past event and carry on the same spirit of struggle that started on 10th March 1959. The Tibetan government and parliament have made no rules or laws how Tibetan should express their solidarity and concern about Communist regime's merciless suppression of our people in Tibet. We are not on the negotiation table rather on the street to protest illegal possession of our nation and undermining the legitimate government. It is very shameful act and New York organizers must apologize all those who are being bar from expressing their rights. Tibet is not free, China is not free from dictators.

Tibetan 10

March 10 is a day of unity for Tibetans around the world, however you guys simply asking the police to do such acts is embarrassing. New York City is one of the world most watched cities but this year you guys have completely the ruined the spirit that we as Tibetans represent. To the Tibetans negotiating with the police: You are unqualified to be the heads of these organizations and this year have embarrassed the Tibetan name (NYC Uprising Day 2015)

Building on these online comments and sentiments was an article in *Journey of a Tibetan* stating the following, ‘what happened in New York on the March 10 will be regarded as a black day in the history of Tibetan Americans’ (Yeshe 2015). Yoko and Yeshe’s observations, though in the context of New York City, are reflected in the narratives of the Tibetans in Twin Cities in that the tensions within the community are related to differing policies, primarily Rangzen and Middle Path. Also seen, is that networks through the use of the internet viewed from a transnational perspective can also draw attention regarding tensions within the wider Tibetan community and beyond.

After the 14th Dalai Lama presented the inaugural address of the formation of the TYC in 1970, which at that time demonstrated his support for independence, in 1988 he formulated the Middle Path approach that is now seen as tangential to the RTYC charter. So how are these different policies to move forward and coexist while retaining solidarity among the Tibetan community in the Twin Cities, and as a whole? This is something the Tibetans themselves will need to address, yet the tension between these

two policies is becoming more apparent as the incident in New York in 2015 demonstrates.

Furthermore, in the fall of 2015, RTYC-MN hosted a talk at TAFM by Lukar Jam, a candidate for Sikyong and a proponent of Rangzen. According to postings on Facebook, the venue was changed at the last minute as Lukar Jam was identified as making derogatory comments regarding the 14th Dalai Lama. As one Facebook post stated, ‘Lukar Jam failed to grasp the sacred bond between His Holiness [14th Dalai Lama] and Tibetans...It wasn’t his stand on Rangzen that people were turned off by but his clever and craft stance and constant attack on Kundan [14th Dalai Lama] (Jam, 2015). Another posting stated:

Had he [Lukar Jam] ran a campaign convincingly outlining a broad strategy to sustain the movements, while in exile, and ultimately regaining Rangzen against a backdrop of failing “Umay-lam” approach, many moderate Tibetans would have supported him (Facebook-1, 2015).

Again, the tensions reveal not only a friction between the policies themselves, but also the sensitivity regarding those involved in the policies and any comments directed towards the 14th Dalai Lama that may be considered dishonouring or disrespectful.

The narratives, articles and Facebook posts reveal a line of demarcation separating Rangzen and Middle Path and, at the same time, a symbol of unity with His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama. His role is unique in that it helps to bind the Tibetan diaspora in Minnesota and throughout the world. He is also at the centre of the Rangzen policy as item number four of RTYC’s mission states:

Members of TYC 's mission is to perform the following tasks: To dedicate oneself to the task of serving one’s country and people under the guidance of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, the Spiritual and Temporal Ruler of Tibet (RTYC 2015).

This statement is the first of the four declarations. In a personal conversation with Taklha in August 2015, he stated that Tibetans who dedicate themselves to His Holiness remains the number one mission of RTYC (Personal Communication Taklha, 2015). At the same time, the Middle Path approach, which seeks autonomy not independence, was

developed by His Holiness and approved by the CTA in 1988. As Taklha stated, 'RTYC's allegiance is first and foremost to the 14th Dalai Lama, yet the challenge of the policy of the Middle Path is not a challenge to him personally, but to the policy itself' (Taklha 2015).

The centrality of the 14th Dalai Lama in both policy camps is unique and undeniable and one that the Twin Cities Tibetan community and the Tibetans communities around the world find challenging.

6.4 The 14th Dalai Lama: Unifier or Separatist?

The 14th Dalai Lama can be seen as a statesman without a state and yet recognized by many world leaders, politicians, scholars, and spiritual leaders from various denominations and faiths around the world. In a documentary, *Fire in the Land of Snow*, prepared by the Voice of America, Steven Marshall, the US Congressional Executive Commission on China stated:

The Dalai Lama is much more than a very important religious teacher. He symbolizes to Tibetans I believe what is long-lasting, great and tremendously civilized about the Tibetan culture. He is the embodiment in one person of much of what Tibetans feel is their historical property and their current identity (Voice of America 2013).

Tibetans in the Twin Cities also share this view of the 14th Dalai Lama and his prominent role in the lives of Tibetans:

There is not a single Tibetan individual anywhere on this planet, not a single Tibetan individual, who did not get benefit from the Dalai Lama. They are all blessed by the Dalai Lama (Tendar, 2013, p.56).

My father used to tell me that I'm your father and you feel that I'm very important to you. But my father also said that the Dalai Lama is more important than I am to you. And I said, yeah, but you are my father, and he said, yeah, I'm only good to you. But Dalai Lama, he is for every Tibetan. Without the Dalai Lama, I would not have been able to live in India, the government wouldn't let me stay here. Because of the Dalai Lama I get the opportunity to raise you (Namkha, 2013, p.23).

His Holiness, he wasn't elected, but you know everyone respects him and trusts his judgment and decisions (Dhundup, 2013, p.14).

When I left Tibet to go to India we were without food, water, clothes and many of us were dying. The only thing that saved us was saying the name Dalai Lama and it

saved many of the Tibetans. The Indian people would say, “Oh you like the Dalai Lama, come over here.” They would then give us food, water and clothes. So, they were acting this way because of the Dalai Lama and even today I now feel lucky, you know. We came to a very good place because of him (Khorlo, 2013, p.17).

Yet alongside these expressions of support for the Dalai Lama are voices of dissent that are contrary to the unconditional support and these countervailing voices can be divided into three camps: 1) supporters of a policy that differs from the 14th Dalai Lama 2) Shugden supporters and 3) Chinese state officials.

6.4.1 Policy Differences

As described above, the difference rests on the policy of independence offered by Rangzen or through the policy of self-rule offered by the Middle Path approach. Yet these differences in policy express a tension that is either specifically directed or related to the 14th Dalai Lama.

As the Twin Cities Tibetan narratives indicate, by supporting Rangzen, does this imply that one does not fully support the Dalai Lama? Narratives, discussions and even the website of RTYC-MN indicate this is not the case. Yet, at the same time, a possible undercurrent was exposed when the Lukar Jam talk hosted by RTYC-MN was cancelled due to comments that were seen as dishonouring the Dalai Lama. Other subtle tensions exist as to events that RTYC-MN host at TAFM. Various personal communications with Taklha (2015), Choedak (2014) and Ngawang (2015), who are aligned with RTYC-MN, state that TAFM charges RTYC-MN to use TAFM facilities, yet other organizations such as Lamton, are not charged the rental fees. The explanation provided was that RTYC-MN is aligned with Rangzen and not the Middle Path.

Although substantiating these claims was not the focus of this research, the explanation by members of RTYC-MN of how RTYC-MN is perceived is notable.

6.4.2 Shugden Controversy

The subject of Dorjee Shugden is becoming a highly complex and divisive topic among the Tibetan community in general, and though it is not a major theme within this research, it did express itself subtly yet strongly with a number of interviewees. There are a number of reasons for this: 1) Shugden was mentioned in only a few narratives and to a limited extent and 2) the public attention of this debate has been in areas outside of Minnesota and 3) Tibetans in the Twin Cities avoided open discussions on the topic. However, the limited discussions were rather revealing as to the sensitivity of the topic. The controversy does play a role when it comes to the image of the Dalai Lama, who is a focal point for the Tibetans, as was evident in a number of my interviewees and in a few informal conversations around unification or separation. The concern is that the Shugden issue could undermine the integrity of the community and give rise to internal friction within the community in their allegiance to the 14th Dalai Lama.

My field notes among interviewees indicate that there are a number of Shugden followers in the Twin Cities. The informants stated they knew who the Shugden followers were and did not associate with members of TAFM or attend TAFM functions. By what I have been able to gather, the subject is more publically displayed as a global issue rather than a localized (Twin Cities) concern. TAFM does not openly discuss or reference the Shugden debate on their websites and I have not observed open discussions in any gatherings. At present, the debate is mostly readily seen at the national or international level, yet the local concern is that it may eventually affect the local Twin Cities community.

In a personal conversation with Tsekyi, they stated, ‘There are a few Shugden practitioners here in the area [Twin Cities] and we know who they are, but we do not associate with them and they do not attend TAFM functions. The Shugden matter is a

very strong concern and we purposely do not discuss it openly (Personal Conversation, Tsekyi 2016). In an interview with Norbu, they expressed a more personal concern regarding the Shugden topic, ‘If I discuss Dorjee Shugden or anything related to Shugden I would lose my Tibetan friends and it would be a concern for the community. This is especially a concern for my parents, who have told me not to discuss anything about Shugden’ (Norbu, 2015, p.17).

So, what is the Shugden issue and why the concern and controversy? In the article, *The Shugden Affair: Origins of Controversy*, George Dreyfus examines the Shugden issue in detail, outlining the history of Dorjee Shugden as a deity, tracing its origins back to the 5th Dalai Lama in the 17th century by the Ge-luk (or Gelug) Tradition of Tibetan Buddhism to which the Office of the Dalai Lama posted this article on the Internet: <http://dalailama.com/messages/dolgyal-shugden/ganden-tripa/the-shugden-affair-i>

According to Dreyfus, as a result of the controversy:

Several Tibetan monks have been brutally murdered [in 1997], and the Tibetan community in general and the Ge-luk tradition in particular have become profoundly polarized. Outsiders have been puzzled by the intensity of this dispute, for it concerns an unusual type of deity, the dharma protector (chos skyong srung ma), the concept of which is difficult to understand within the modern view of religion as a system of individual beliefs (Dreyfus, 2015).

One anti-Shugden video, *Dorjee Shugden: The Spirit and the Controversy*, attributes the killing of the monks directly to Shugden followers and accuses the purported killers as being supported by factions within China to degrade the 14th Dalai Lama’s role. Furthermore, the controversy’s foundation rests on the followers of Dorjee Shugden, who until the 1980s was acknowledged by the 14th Dalai Lama as a protector of the Ge-luk tradition. After the 1980s, the 14th Dalai Lama, who is head of the Ge-luk tradition, stated that under fuller examination, Shugden should not be followed as a deity of the Ge-luk lineage. For these reasons, the current followers of Shugden claim the current Dalai Lama is not the ‘real Dalai Lama’.

There are numerous websites and YouTube videos by Shugden followers protesting at public teachings of the 14th Dalai Lama. Out of the Shugden controversy, a number of pro-Shugden organizations have also developed. One such organization, which is the most active and visible, is the New Kadampa Tradition, founded in the UK by Geshe Kalsang Gyatso. In addition to the New Kadampa Tradition (NKT), there are a number of other websites that are supporters and advocates of Shugden. According to various Facebook postings, pages and a conversation with a former NKT member, the predominant membership of NKT are Westerners and not Tibetans. According to one website <https://buddhism-controversy-blog.com/2015/09/15/who-is-demonstrating-against-the-dalai-lama-questions-and-answers-about-the-new-kadampa-tradition/> of former NKT members and/or anti-Shugden followers, ‘They are supported on the ground by other NKT followers and a minority of Tibetan Shugden practitioners who have proven links to Chinese interests’ (McGuire, 2015).

Who then are the NKT followers? According to Carol McGuire, a former NKT member, NKT is made up primarily of Westerners and non-Tibetans as NKT seeks a Western experience. McGuire observes, ‘In the UK, the NKT offers a very ‘British’ experience – tea, gardens and ‘pure’, simple meditation teachings with very few foreign words given by friendly teachers of your own nationality and culture (McGuire, 2015). According to McGuire, the British experience is a designed strategy to ‘localize’ NKT’s efforts using local NKT teachers. She states, ‘They focus on having teachers from the local country they want to expand in. They want people to feel safe and secure and at home using familiar language and surroundings’ (Personal Communication, McGuire, 2017), therefore, NKT’s focus is not specifically on Tibetans.

Some of the prominent pro-Shugden sites include: <http://www.westernshugdensociety.org/our-cause/public-announcement/> and <http://kadampa.org>, hosted by the Western Shugden Society, UK and New Kalama

Tradition, UK respectively. There are also numerous Facebook pages, websites and YouTube videos that are ‘non’-Shugden and can be viewed as pro 14th Dalai Lama such as: <https://www.youtube.com/embed/CNj2QYOI3Z8?rel=0&wmode=transparent>, www.dalaialama.com, and the official website of the Central Tibetan Administration www.tibet.net (<http://tibet.net/dolgyal-shugden/>). Dreyfus observes that the debate has deep spiritual roots and is now being expressed in the political area to the extent that the role of the 14th Dalai Lama is being challenged by Tibetans and non-Tibetans alike in the public realm, both in the streets of New York and London as well as on the worldwide web through the sites indicated above.

The discourse on Shugden has an added dimension in that it initially attracted sympathetic Western supporters. In reviewing the videos produced by Shugden affiliated organizations, many are non-Tibetan spokespersons, whether nuns, monks or supporters or members of the Shugden community. The debate does not stop there, as a number of the Western¹ Shugden followers have left the Shugden community and have come out in the open to criticize the Shugden movement. This controversy only adds to the tension and debate among the Tibetan diasporic community as a number of the anti-Shugden sites mentioned make the claim that Shugden is supported by Chinese political leaders in an effort to create further tensions and disunity among the Tibetan diaspora.

In August 2014, the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London hosted a conference entitled ‘The Shugden Controversy and the 14th Dalai Lama’. Both sides of the issue were brought together in a formal discussion facilitated by Dr. Nathan Hill. By observing the archived debate (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ba-pdha1noE>), the demarcation lines are far from clear at least from the others’ perspective and neither side has clearly convinced the other. Yet, such debates are important because they also indicate that unity, clarity and identity claims regarding the 14th Dalai

¹ The term ‘white-Western’ primarily addresses those followers of Shugden who are not Tibetan.

Lama are not unanimous for the scattered Tibetan community and this includes the diasporic community in Minnesota.

6.4.3 China and the 14th Dalai Lama

The relationship between the 14th Dalai Lama and China is also relevant in this context. For China, the matter is relatively straightforward in that Tibet is and has always been part of China. In contrast, many Tibetans, including those in the diaspora, claim that Tibet is and always has been a sovereign country (Roemer 2008, Ardley 2002, Anand 2007).

Topgyal also makes note of China's intransigent position and strategy regarding 'non-dialogue' with the Tibetans, whereby China essentially maybe waiting for the death of 14th Dalai Lama:

The hard-line faction in Beijing and Lhasa has been pushing for a unilateral solution to the Tibet issue by remorsefully persisting with policies that in time, they hope, will render the Tibetans demographically and politically insignificant in Tibet, and by side-lining the Dalai Lama, whose death could be the beginning of the end of the Tibetan struggle (Topgyal, 2016, p.185).

Carl Gershman of the *Washington Post* states, 'The Chinese government has broken off negotiations of Tibet's status, accusing the Dalai Lama of deceitfully trying to split China and of inciting the 2008 Lhasa uprising' (Gershman, 2015, pp.1-2). The matter of dividing China and instigating uprisings and or violence is in juxtaposition to the 14th Dalai Lama's international recognition as a Nobel Peace Prize winner for his non-violence approach to the Tibet issue. Related to this juxtaposition, Denyer also comments on China's position towards the Dalai Lama noting that 'China has quashed talk of rapprochement with the Dalai Lama, insisting that greater autonomy for Tibet is "not up for discussion" accusing him of consistently inciting violence within the region and demanding that he seek forgiveness for attempting to split China' (Denyer, 2015, p.1). The resolution of this is not the topic of this research but it does demonstrate the polarization and ongoing tensions between China and the 14th Dalai Lama. The words

of Topgyal may in fact become prophetic with the increasing age of the 14th Dalai Lama.

Another component that adds to the ongoing source of tension relates to an article written in the Indian news media entitled, *Tibet wasn't ours, says Chinese scholar*, where the author quotes Professor Ge Jianxiong:

A leading Chinese historian and a veteran of the committee that advises on official Chinese history textbook has broken step with the official Chinese line on historical sovereignty over Tibet and said to claim that the ancient Buddhist kingdom “has always been a part of China” would be a “defiance of history” (Venkatesan, 2015, p.1).

While some Chinese scholars have openly critiqued the Chinese state for its historical claim over Tibet, a resolution in the near future seems unlikely given the ongoing unrest within the borders of China. Further, as the 14th Dalai Lama travels the world, his sponsorship by a number of countries is tested by the influence of the Chinese government. As reported by the Kyota News International in August 2014, the Mongolian government withdrew its invitation for the Dalai Lama to visit. The news story reads, ‘The Dalai Lama's planned visit to Mongolia this month has been cancelled under pressure from China, which labels the Tibetan spiritual leader as a separatist, according to multiple sources (Kyodo News International 2014). Further, the *Guardian* reported in 2014:

This is the third time in five years the Dalai Lama has been refused a South African visa. In 2012, a South African court ruled that officials had acted unlawfully in failing to grant the Dalai Lama a visa in time for a 2011 trip to celebrate Tutu's 80th birthday celebrations, *largely out of fears of angering the Chinese government* (emphasis added) (The Guardian 2014).

The reports by the media and scholars around the world reinforce the prominent and central role of the 14th Dalai Lama in international affairs despite Chinese efforts to restrict his travel. On the one hand, China will not entertain a dialogue with the 14th Dalai Lama on the Tibet issue yet, at the same time, observers of the Tibet – China tensions report of negotiations being ‘broken-off’, which implies there were

negotiations, when, in fact, no negotiations have taken place. This further reflects the diverse and muddled nature of the politics between Tibet and China. Though for China, the matter of Tibet appears quite clear. Also, the international media continue to observe and report China's influence on countries to deny visas for travel or to host the Dalai Lama. All the while, the Tibet issue remains unresolved, not least for China.

6.5 Comments and Conclusions

This chapter examined the political influences and expressions of the Tibetan community in the Twin Cities. The contentious modern history of Tibet remains a significant factor that impacts the political identity of the Tibetan community and how it negotiates its sense of belonging in the Twin Cities.

Examining the two major policies that exist within the Twin Cities revealed that both Rangzen and the Middle Path approach bear similarities, primarily a negotiated political solution for Tibetans to have self-rule within Tibet. Moreover, both policies reflect a sense of belonging for Tibetans as the struggle for a free Tibet is common to all Tibetans as well as the centrality of the role of 14th Dalai Lama. From this point, the similarities begin to differ as Rangzen's goal is for an independent Tibet with no Chinese influence and in the words of some Twin Cities Tibetans, China would have no presence. The Middle Path approach, on the other hand, seeks a negotiated agreement in which Tibetans would have autonomy and self-rule within its borders, for example, in the areas of education, language and religious practices, while China would essentially maintain the federal infrastructure such as national defence.

It is from these two policies that tensions begin to appear as the Rangzen group, primarily represented by RTYC-MN, seeks to apply greater pressure for independence in comparison to the Middle Path approach. The Middle Path approach was implemented in 1988, which has seemingly not brought Tibet or Tibetans any closer

than where they were in the early 1960s, much less 1988. As can be seen, local political tensions are also a reflection of national (US) and global (beyond the US).

Based on the Tibetan narratives, it is clear that these aspirations for independence are at the heart of Tibetan identity, yet supporting the Middle Path policy, as articulated by the 14th Dalai Lama, is an approach that is easier to attain, especially since those within Tibet are the ones most at risk. Agreement as to which is the best policy is also strained as they relate to their allegiance to the Dalai Lama who is the main architect of the Middle Path approach. According to Smith, ‘the Middle Way policy in 1988 caused consternation among many Tibetans, who imagined that the Tibetan cause was still about independence’ (Smith 2015). As one Tibetan stated, ‘If we start at independence we can negotiate toward Middle Path but if we start negotiating at Middle Path there is no place to go from there’ (Taklha 2015). Also, there is an ‘allegiance tension’ regarding Rangzen supporters and its perception relating to 14th Dalai Lama. RTYC-MN counters this perception as they state their primary (first of four mission statements) mission is allegiance to the 14th Dalai Lama. Tension in this area was seen not only in the Uprising Day protests in New York in 2015, but also in the change of venue for Sikyong candidate Lukar Jam’s talk as he made statements that were considered by Tibetans as shameful to the Dalai Lama.

Further, the Shugden controversy has become more public in recent years and its presence in Minnesota is increasing as it does influence how Tibetans in the diaspora view the 14th Dalai Lama and Tibetans more generally. Furthermore, it causes some Tibetans to be concerned about how non-Tibetans perceive the 14th Dalai Lama.

In China, many of the state officials see the Dalai Lama as a separatist and claim he has played a role in inciting riots within Tibet. These accusations are in contrast to the 14th Dalai Lama’s reputation in the West (and elsewhere) as a recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize and for his ongoing ethics on non-violence for resolving the conflict over

Tibet. These contrasts are heightened during public speaking tours by the 14th Dalai Lama to various countries and have led some governments to cancel his visits under pressure from the Chinese government.

The transnational use of internet was also observed. The internet provides a platform to communicate various political and unification aspirations as well as providing a space wherein the lack of solidarity can be seen. The interaction posted on YouTube between supporters of Rangzen and Umaylam in New York of the bifocal approaches to Tibetan political aspirations is such an example of sensitivities that can arise in using social media.

In conclusion, is evident that tensions exist in the political expressions of Tibetans as is seen from the Rangzen and Middle Path policies. These policies affect not only the Twin City Tibetan community, but also the Tibetan communities in other locations. The 14th Dalai Lama's role is central to the negotiated political identity and stance of Tibetans, be it globally or locally within the Twin Cities. His role is neither static nor uncontested.

The next chapter examines the overall findings of this research as it relates to the research questions and recommends topics for further research.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion

To be Tibetan I guess would be to understand the sufferings of all those Tibetans who have suffered since 1959 and appreciate their sacrifices. You have to be helpful to everyone and help each other. To be kind and then to try to make everybody understand about the Tibet situation, their cause, their suffering and their dignity. The hardest question you asked me was what it means to be Tibetan (Wangdark, 2015, p.18).

7 Introduction and Overview

This research set out to explore the cultural and political expressions of belonging by the Tibetan diaspora community in the Twin Cities (Minneapolis-St. Paul) Minnesota. The approach was to examine the Tibetan community primarily through the narratives of the Tibetans themselves and by observing and participating as a volunteer in a number of organizations within the Tibetan community. The study also sought to learn about the journey, settlement and creation of a diasporic community in the Twin Cities and the opportunities or challenges they face as a new generation of Tibetans are being born in North America.

The changing expressions of identity among the elder and maturing younger Tibetan generation in the Twin Cities are becoming more apparent as the 14th Dalai Lama and his followers approach sixty years in exile. These new forms of expression and adaptation also bring about tensions primarily regarding political goals and aspirations among the Tibetans coming to the Twin Cities from Asia.

I deemed it necessary to gather an understanding of the general body of knowledge related to diaspora, cultural and migration studies from scholars such as Brubaker, Cohen, Galucci, Tololyan, Knott, and Malkki and to correlate the works of these scholars against the backdrop of the Twin Cities context. Further, I felt it was crucial to have a more specialized understanding of the Tibetan context by examining

the works of Tibetan scholars such as Anand, Ardley, Hess, Li, McConnell, McGranahan, Shokdung, Shakya, and Topgyal and Yeh.

The original and primary contribution of this research is the advancement of knowledge on the Tibetan diaspora / community in the Twin Cities, which has not been academically pursued. Much research to date has been focused on the Tibetan diaspora in Asia and primarily with those communities residing within India and Nepal as seen in the works of Anand, Diehl, McConnell, McGranahan and others.

The remaining sections of this chapter will: a) review the research questions b) discuss how the research was conducted c) examine the research findings in light of the exploratory questions d) recommend future research areas based upon the findings of this research and e) make concluding comments.

7.1 Research Objective

The objective of this study was to answer the primary research question:

- How do Tibetans express their sense of belonging and Tibetan identity while living in the Twin Cities (Minneapolis-Minnesota)?

The primary research question opens up other sub-questions:

- Are there any cultural tensions or challenges Tibetans face in moving to and living in the Twin Cities?
- How are Tibetans in the Twin Cities confronting the challenges and do they believe the challenges are being resolved?
- What do Tibetans indicate are components / indicators for someone to be a Tibetan?

The development of these guiding questions was more evolutionary in nature through the process of gaining insight into the community through literature reviews and observation. It was only after two years of working alongside the Tibetan

community by volunteering in activities sponsored by the organizations within the Tibetan community that I was able to earn their trust to begin the process of formalized interviews. It was also through additional efforts made in building rapport and making acquaintances with the Tibetan community that I came to a better understanding of some of the primary concerns expressed by the Tibetan community in the Twin Cities.

7.2 Core Argument

The Core Argument of this research is that Tibetan identity in the Twin Cities is fluid, dynamic and constantly changing. It is through the centrality of cultural and politics that at the same time bind and separate the Tibetan community as a cultural unity is contested by the political tensions of the Rangzen and Umaylam policies seen through the Regional Tibetan Youth Congress of Minnesota (RTYC-MN) and Youth for Umaylam (Y4U). These political tensions are expressed not only through the policies themselves, but also how these policy tensions relate to the central role 14th Dalai Lama and the institution and programmes of TAFM such as Tibetan Cultural School, and Lamton. Section 7.4 'Findings' bear out the fluidity and dynamism of the Tibetan community. The evolving expressions of cohesion and identity also demonstrate a negotiation of the expressions.

7.3 Methodology: How the Research was conducted

The focus of the research was on the Tibetan community within the Twin Cities of Minnesota. The objectives of this research were determined by a number of factors: 1) my current residence in the Twin Cities that provided me with direct contact and easy access with the diasporic community 2) according to numerous publications by scholars, demographers and Tibetan American Foundation of Minnesota (TAFM), the Twin Cities is host to the 2nd largest population of Tibetans in the US and 3) there has

not been to date any significant ethnographic research that has focused on the Twin Cities' Tibetan community.

In consultation with a number of Tibetans with whom I had developed close ties during my years as a graduate student, I was advised that the initial step to gaining access to the community for a Ph.D. level research would be through 'permission granting' and relationship building with and through TAFM.

The reasoning provided by my Tibetan contacts was that an affiliation and thereby approval, either formal or tacitly, with TAFM would provide me greater access to the community who primarily gathered at TAFM for various community functions. Once approval was given, it was suggested by TAFM Board representatives that I become a more of a 'regular face' within the community through volunteer work with a number of programmes such as with Lamton and the Tibetan Cultural School.

As my relationship with the community developed and as my research became more intensive, I also volunteered with the Regional Tibetan Youth Congress of Minnesota (RTYC-MN). While not part of the original design, my participation with RTYC-MN became a significant contribution to this research as it provided me with another layer of inter-personal connections that I would not have had otherwise. Further, it was through RTYC-MN that I became more aware of the political / cultural dynamics within the Twin Cities' community. Other volunteer activities included volunteer assistance in the March 10 Uprising Day, events related to visits by the 14th Dalai Lama, preparation of food and tea for prayer and celebration events, and working alongside the TAFM office personnel on grant requests.

It was through these organizations and activities that I became better acquainted with members of the Tibetan community, which allowed me to extend my research with a greater insight into the narratives that grew out of the formal interviews. Therefore, my research was a combination of a scholarly literature review, volunteering with the

Tibetan community and participating in programmes and events. The average amount of time devoted to working alongside the community over the four years was approximately fifteen to twenty hours per week.

These volunteer hours needed to coincide with the operating hours of the various programmes. For example, TCS met (meets) on Saturday's between 0900 and 1300, Lamton on Friday evenings from 1800 until 2000 and various other events were as per the respective event schedule, such as Uprising Day, visits from dignitaries and the like. I would arrive early to assist setting up the work spaces and to have time to discuss personal activities such as employment and leisure activities with the Tibetans with whom I worked.

7.4 Research Findings

The research findings are topic specific and classified into two main areas a) cultural and b) political. These demarcations came from the narratives themselves, which were the result of over 750 pages of transcribed interviews with thirty Tibetans, which represented over one percent (1%) of the known Tibetan population in the Twin Cities and through participating in the various events and programmes. This combination of research approaches allowed me to understand that the cultural and political boundaries are neither mutually exclusive nor mutually compatible.

Also of note, is the challenge of capturing accurate demographic and socio-economic data for the Twin Cities Tibetan community, which is also a concern for other Tibetan communities in the US. Local and state government agencies, academic institutions and organizations specializing in researching social groups support the claim of the 'data challenge'.

7.4.1 Main Finding (1) Preserving the Past and Preparing the Future

Tibetan identity and its sense of belonging in the Twin Cities derive from a shared past and from common aspirations for the future. The interviews among the Tibetans revealed that the past was not only expressed through their exile journey from Tibet to India or Nepal, but also their shared memory and experience in settling in the Twin Cities of Minnesota. The sense of loss that is attributed to exile and resettlement is compensated by a shared desire for the preservation of culture such as language and the knowledge of their history. It is through the language and cultural programmes of TCS that Tibetans not only identify themselves as Tibetan to other Tibetans, but also set themselves apart from non-Tibetans.

The desire for cultural preservation of the past finds expression in the creation of TAFM and the Tibetan Cultural School (TCS) and, to a lesser extent, Lamton. Students from the pre-school age up to high school age attend the TCS classes on Saturdays to learn to read, write and speak Tibetan, to learn about their history in Tibet, and to learn traditional Tibetan musical instruments and dances. It is the linguistic enculturation and shared knowledge of the past that also propel some youth and adults into politics to support either Rangzen or the Middle Path. The narrative interviews revealed that one of the main concerns parents have is the loss of the Tibetan language for their children. 'Knowing our language' and 'knowing our past' provide an important link with senior Tibetans and prepare the younger generation who are the carriers of knowledge for future generations. In other words, a generalized anxiety and fear of cultural loss underlie the Tibetan narratives.

Preparing students for the future was most readily seen in the Lamton programme, primarily designed for students in middle, junior and high schools. The significance goes beyond students receiving academic assistance to enable them to succeed in their current schools and their entrance and achievement in colleges or universities. The key

component of the programme is the mentorship by an older Tibetan (usually college age or recent college graduate). This relationship signifies the importance of maintaining the Tibetan culture and values in their future vocation. It is reported by Lamton and TAFM that since its inception in 2007, 100% of the students from the programme are accepted into colleges. The fundamental components of this programme are that the mentor is 1) Tibetan, 2) speaks the Tibetan language and 3) has graduated from or is in a college or university. These shared visions of preserving the past and preparing for the future bind together Tibetan youth, their families and members of the community.

However, there is not total congruence within the community as to how preparing for the future for the younger generation shall be reflected in the efforts for the resolution of the Tibet Question. As the narratives revealed as students became more successful in their academic and vocations, the concern is that the line between acclimation and assimilation into the US/Minnesota cultural fabric is becoming less pronounced. Further, as the Twin Cities diaspora becomes more expressive with its transnational activities to connect the local community through the greater Tibetan community in the US and beyond, the linkages are not necessarily linear as home and identity can be either India/Nepal in a real form or Tibet in the form of memory. Though travel to India/Nepal is relatively easier than to Tibet due to the political tensions between Tibet and China, the ‘ultimate’ home is Tibet. This in and of itself is problematic, as the number of Tibetans directly from (or born in) Tibet that reside in the Twin Cities is smaller than those Tibetans born and raised in India/Nepal, the balancing of the two ‘homes’ becomes one of experience versus hope.

7.4.2 Main Finding (2) TAFM

TAFM was created in 1997 with the intent of having a community centre where Tibetans could gather to socialize, educate their children, worship and pray and to

process any administrative paperwork needed for the TAFM membership. All my Tibetan research informants agreed that TAFM plays a central role in building a diasporic community. Words such as ‘TAFM is where I keep my identity’ and ‘TAFM is the bond for the Tibetan community’ are common phrases among the community. TAFM’s leadership struggles to maintain the balance between culture and politics as tensions ebb and flow between the various political camps of Rangzen and Middle Path, both of which have the 14th Dalai Lama at the centre.

In the previous chapters, I noted that TAFM is where TCS and Lamton are hosted, including formalized training and education in Tibetan language and history. TAFM provides a sense of cultural continuity in a new country under difficult circumstances. The key aspect of TAFM is that it provides Tibetans in the Twin Cities with a geographical / physical space that they call their own. In this space, Tibetans speak Tibetan, eat Tibetan food, dress in traditional Tibetan clothes, listen to Tibetan music and play Tibetan table games. It is a place of nostalgia and social engagement displaying Tibetan symbols, flags, posters, pictures of Tibet and Potala Palace, and portraits of the 14th Dalai Lama, where Tibetans can plan and organize cultural and political events.

Additionally, related to TAFM’s role in creating community centeredness, is the use of social or digital media to assist in this effort. Though not managed or centred on TAFM, social media allow Tibetans in the Twin Cities to communicate as a diasporic group with organizations such as TAFM, Lamton, and RTYC-MN. The interviews expressed the valuable role social media has within the community as it also allows Tibetans to maintain connections and relationships with other Tibetan family and friends from around the world.

As explored in Chapter Three, the transnational aspect and network development connecting and expressing a dual belonging through digital media platforms does come

at some cost for the Tibetan community as was seen on YouTube with posted comments regarding the skirmish in the streets of New York in March 2015 during Uprising Day. How that was videoed and posted on YouTube and the subsequent comments posted, Tibetans negotiate the digital media remains to be seen. On one side of the equation, it allows for Tibetans around the Twin Cities to further communicate, consolidate and connect their community (locally and globally), yet on the other side, it allows for tensions to be more readily seen (literally) among the same community where they wish to generate a greater cohesion.

7.4.3 Main Finding (3) Political Tensions

The primary tensions revealed in this research relate to the political positions between Rangzen and the Middle Path approach and the role of the 14th Dalai Lama at the centre of both debates. Some Middle Path followers suggest that supporting Rangzen is tacitly not supporting or even dishonouring the 14th Dalai Lama. Yet, as members of RTYC-MN state, their number one item in their four points' mission statement (*Aims and Objectives*) is allegiance to the 14th Dalai Lama. Further, the Rangzen group counters that there is a historical foundation to the Rangzen approach when the 14th Dalai Lama presented the inaugural address in 1970, at the original formation of TYC, the organization that promotes Rangzen.

Tensions along these political lines have been publically witnessed and posted on Facebook and on YouTube. These postings display a scuffle between the Tibetan Rangzen and Middle Path supporters in New York at the 2015 Uprising Day protest. The video shows that one group, which is not specifically identified, called the police to stop the other group from participating in the protest. The video link also contains 'Comments' on the video that reveal the tensions within the commentary, with words such as 'shameful' or 'sad day for Tibetans'. These comments are purportedly written

by Tibetans. This is the only known public video display of disagreements and tensions among Tibetans relating to the political debate, which, up to this point, remained behind closed doors or, at least, were rarely in the public eye.

7.4.4 Main Finding (4) The Central Role of the 14th Dalai Lama

The role of the 14th Dalai Lama remains central to Tibetan identity in the Twin Cities. All narratives, regardless of support for Rangzen or the Middle Path, bear out the Tibetans' allegiance to the 14th Dalai Lama. Tibetans attribute His Holiness for saving the lives of Tibetans in Asia and by finding settlements for the Tibetan exiles, albeit as refugees, in India, Nepal and beyond, by his negotiations with the respective governments throughout the world and for his efforts to maintain and promote the Tibetan language and culture.

The 14th Dalai Lama was also a central figure in facilitating the approval of the Tibetan US Repatriation Act of 1990 that enabled 1,000 Tibetans from outside Tibet, and primarily from India and Nepal, to settle in the US. His non-violent efforts in working toward a peaceful solution for Tibet earned him the Nobel Peace Prize, an award that brings further recognition for Tibetans around the world. The symbolic importance of this international recognition plays a central role in shaping the identity of the Tibetan community in the Twin Cities.

Yet, at the same time, this development and implementation of the Middle Way approach by the 14th Dalai Lama and the CTA was a departure from the vision of Rangzen or an independent Tibet. He is also at the centre of debates about the allegiance to him by Rangzen or the Middle Path approach, even with the devolvement of his official political position. Furthermore, the Shugden affair also has the 14th Dalai Lama as a focal point as public protests, allegedly by Shugden supporters, make claim the he is not the real Dalai Lama because he does not fully recognize the deity, causing another

flashpoint of tension among Tibetans. Regardless of the political camp or various controversies, the 14th Dalai Lama remains a central figure who cannot be overlooked.

7.4.5 Main Finding (5) Nothing is Static

This research on the Twin Cities Tibetan community demonstrated that belonging and identity are dynamic rather than static entities. This finding directly relates to the Core Argument. Some young Tibetans in the Twin Cities are losing their language skills and do not have the extensive knowledge of Tibetan history and their heritage and yet consider themselves Tibetans. This fluency gravitates toward proficiency as the younger Tibetans adopt Western views and associate more with non-Tibetans who do not speak the Tibetan language. Therefore, though language is a primary concern, the change is from fluency to ‘having the ability’ to speak Tibetan. At a number of RTYC-MN events that I have attended over the last year, I observed that much of but not all of the formal presentations were in Tibetan, which would align with RTYC-MN’s commitment to preserve the culture as seen in their *Aims and Objectives*.

TAFM’s role has changed over time. Previously, the emphasis was focused on the preservation and maintenance of culture. This has also expanded to prepare the youth for a future primarily in the area of college / university enrolment in the US and for a life in North America. This is evident through its sponsorship of Lamton. The original political agenda of seeking independence (Rangzen), once a position of the 14th Dalai Lama, has changed to the Middle Path approach, yet choosing sides may cause a perceived allegiance conflict related to the 14th Dalai Lama. For these reasons TAFM, though more closely aligned with Middle Path through the CTA, does not entirely reject the Rangzen group as this would lead to further fracturing of community and identity that most Tibetans do not desire.

The role of social media is taking on a greater role as Tibetans negotiate what it means to 'being here and there'. As viewed through a transnational lens, physical and virtual networks are being developed, implemented and refined. These networks facilitate oneness as 'Tibetans' and also support a new duality as an increasing number of Tibetans are being born and raised outside of their homeland Tibet and even India, Nepal and Bhutan. Becoming citizens of their new host-land and, in the case of this research, learning what it means to be Tibetan-American in the Twin Cities. This balance is being analysed and negotiated daily.

Furthermore, the age of the 14th Dalai Lama is also an ongoing concern. His eventual passing is something that the Twin Cities' community, and all Tibetans throughout the world, will have to face and this will undoubtedly play a pivotal role in shaping cultural, religious and political aspirations for Tibet in the near future. It remains to be seen how his passing will affect the cultural and political aspirations of the Tibetan community as the 14th Dalai Lama is the central figure not only for Tibetan identity, but also in the Government of China's dealing with Tibetans and the CTA regarding the Tibet Question.

The main findings do not challenge prior research as there is little published on this topic in the US context and specifically in the Twin Cities. I expect future interrogations as more research is completed and published regarding the Twin Cities' community.

7.5 Contribution to Knowledge

This research explored the Tibetan community in the Twin Cities [Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota], which here-to-fore has not been examined from an academic standpoint. Scholars, such as Diehl, McGranahan, Hess, Anand, and Yeh, have researched Tibetan communities in locations outside of the Twin Cities, primarily in Asia and on the West

Coast of the US (Hess and Yeh). The journey and settlement of the Tibetan community from Asia to Minnesota and the US in general is a recent phenomenon facilitated by the Tibetan United States Repatriation Act of 1990.

As highlighted in this research, the Tibetan community in the Twin Cities reflects not only cohesiveness, but also tensions, which up to now have not been previously noted. These cohesion/tension touchpoints have been identified relating to topics such as politics, the role of the 14th Dalai Lama and cultural expressions of Tibetanness. Though not specifically analysed in comparison to other Tibetan communities, the Twin Cities community, according to the narratives of the Tibetans themselves, is the most active of US Tibetan communities. Distinctions include the creation of TAFM as an institution and as a community centre, Tibetan Cultural School and Lamton.

The transnational expressions, as they relate to the Twin Cities Tibetan community were explored in Chapter Three and in greater detail in Chapters Five and Six. What is noted is the cohesion the transnational expressions create, particularly through the media and social networking, but also the tensions as was discussed with the skirmish in New York during Uprising Day in 2015 and posted on the internet (section 6.3). Further, the transnational concept for Tibetans has not only a two-country representation, (US and India/Nepal), but also a tri-country or triangular relationship: US to India/Nepal to Tibet. As explained in Chapter Three, these transnational expressions are not linear as they are between and among countries. This is because Tibetans have now been born and raised in India/Nepal and have no living memory of Tibet as 'home'. This bifurcation and trifurcation creates a longing for multi-homelands as the India/Nepal homeland is one that many Tibetans have physically and emotionally experienced adding to the 'being here and there', where for many Tibetans in the Twin Cities the extended 'there' of Tibet has not been physically realized. Yet as the narratives revealed, the 'Tibetan Homeland' is one aligned to an emotional and virtual

connection through various websites and social networks and even through the creation of institutions such as TAFM that create a sense of 'home' and 'being there'. All work together to retain the sense of belonging to a local and global Tibetan community as well as keeping the fires burning for a resolution of the political situation between Tibet/Tibetans and the PRC.

7.6 General Comments

Reflection on this research journey has caused me to look at a number of opportunities for the future. I initially under-evaluated the significance and time investment needed for developing trust among the Tibetan community to engage in interviews. Yet I quickly learned that the interview process was not necessarily a transaction, but a transformative journey of trust and granting of permission by the Tibetans. The value of working alongside the community in a number of capacities for a number of years cannot be overstated.

In the initial stages, I viewed this research as one that needed to be done quickly. Yet, as I became involved in the Tibetan community and made acquaintances and even significant friends, I realized that this research required deeper levels of inter-personal relations.

Further, I came to know that research in a short time-frame was not only not academically discouraged, but also was not honouring the Tibetan community that had opened itself to me as an outsider to discuss topics that were difficult, sensitive and emotional, such as the loss of a country, friends and family, and the struggle to start a new life in the United States. For it is their story of a journey, settlement and the creation of community that needed to be told in their own voices. This research moved from being about me to being about the Tibetans themselves and what they felt was most important on their journey.

I recall what a friend of mine, Jules Compaore from Burkina Faso, had told me. His uncle who was from a Mossi tribe told him as a young man, ‘if one wants to travel fast he should travel alone, but if one wants to travel far he should travel with a companion’ (Personal Conversation, Compaore 2016). For me this proverb is most significant as I reflect upon my learning with the Tibetans on this personal and research journey.

7.7 Future Research Recommendations

Based upon this research and a detailed examination and analysis of the Tibetan narratives, there are a few avenues for future research to augment this study. For example, one aspect I did not touch upon was the role of mixed marriage / mixed heritage for the Tibetan community in the Twin Cities. As Tibetans settle in locations in the US, Europe and beyond, the marriages of Tibetans with non-Tibetans have become and most likely will become a greater reality. This issue appeared only a couple of times in the narratives, yet a number of younger Tibetans spoke of how a number of elders expressed their concern that Tibetans would marry non-Tibetans.

Future researchers and scholars may address the central role of the 14th Dalai Lama in the Twin Cities’ political debates although to date I have not observed any direct linkage. The Shugden controversy, though not publically discussed within the Twin Cities Tibetan community, is a topic of concern as evidenced by some posting on various Tibetan websites and by the comments contained in the narratives, in which a number of Tibetans state that the community desires to not discuss the subject. Further, the lack of research is also primarily due to the fact that the US Tibetan diaspora is a rather new phenomenon and scholarly attention has been more focused on the international and Asian contexts.

Another related research topic is the role of women, particularly women under the age of forty, in the Tibetan Twin Cities' diaspora and how gender shapes the experience of community and the politics of belonging. Further, the topic of religious expression should be of consideration for research. In particular, how this is manifested in the Twin Cities as a new generation of Tibetans are raised and educated in a largely multicultural and non-Tibetan environment.

Finally, research interest will have to focus on the Tibetan community when the 14th Dalai Lama passes away. As the 14th Dalai Lama is approaching the age of eighty-two he has been the central figure for Tibetans navigating enormous social change and political upheaval and he continues to inspire Tibetan supporters around the world.

7.8 Conclusions

This research examined the Twin Cities' Tibetan diaspora and their efforts to develop a sense of belonging through their journey, settlement and creation of a community as they travelled from Asia to the Twin Cities of Minnesota. The core argument that Tibetan identity in the Twin Cities is dynamic and fluid was not only expressed through the narratives, but also through the institutions and organizations of the Tibetan community. These challenges are also reflective of the greater Tibetan communities as witnessed by the videotaped incident in New York on Uprising Day in March 2015, wherein political expressions and allegiance challenges to the 14th Dalai Lama were seen.

The significance of this research rests on the voices of the Tibetans themselves and my efforts to situate these narratives within a broader social, cultural and historical context of ongoing change. It adds information to the body of knowledge of the Tibetan diaspora in the Twin Cities as they continue on their journey, which will be fraught with

challenges as well as opportunities as they settle in this location which hosts the 2nd largest Tibetan population in the United States.

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Appendix 1 Letter of Introduction

MIDDLESEX UNIVERSITY
C/O OCMS
Woodstock Road, Oxford, UK OX2 6HR



LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

Date: _____

Dear: _____

My name is Norman Piatti and I am a PhD research scholar through Middlesex University, London, UK. Since 2006, I have been conducting research with the Tibetan community in North America. In particular, my PhD dissertation research title is '*The Tibetan Diaspora and the Politics of Belonging in the Twin Cities (Minneapolis – St. Paul, Minnesota)*'.

I will be involved in key interviews with many members of the Tibetan community in the Twin Cities (Minneapolis – St. Paul, Minnesota) along with gathering other statistical and observational data.

There are no benefits or compensation to participate in this study other than contributing to developing a broader understanding of how Tibetans express, conserve and develop their identity in a new host country.

I would be grateful for your participation in this research endeavour.

Sincerely,

Norman Piatti
PhD Research Scholar
Np627@live.mdx.ac.uk
UK: (44) 07885 569921
US: 651-354-8669

Middlesex University
C/O OCMS
Tel: +44 (0) 1865 556 071

Appendix 2 Letter of Consent

MIDDLESEX UNIVERSITY
C/o OCMS
Woodstock Road, Oxford, UK OX2 6HR



LETTER OF CONSENT

Name of informant: _____

Date of interview: _____

My name is Norman Piatti and I am a PhD research scholar through Middlesex University, London, UK. Since 2006, I have been conducting research with the Tibetan community in North America. In particular, my PhD dissertation research title is '*The Tibetan Diaspora and the Politics of Belonging in the Twin Cities (Minneapolis – St. Paul, Minnesota)*'.

I will be involved in key interviews with many members of the Tibetan community in the Twin Cities (Minneapolis – St. Paul, Minnesota) while gathering other statistical data as well as observing the activities and interactions within the Tibetan community. I would be grateful for your participation in this research endeavour. If you are willing to participate then I would like to ask you a few questions. There will be at least one interview that should last approximately 60-75 minutes and most likely another two or three 15-20 minute follow-up interviews to clarify any questions or responses.

There are no benefits or compensation to participate in this study other than contributing to developing a broader understanding of how Tibetans express, conserve and develop their identity in a new host country. If you do choose to participate, the records of this research will be kept private at all times. Unless you provide consent to have your name published (see below), I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you. Research records will be kept in a locked file, and only I will have access.

If you do agree to participate in this research, your participation is completely voluntary. I want to assure you that if you decide not to answer a particular question or wish to discontinue the interview altogether at any point then that is completely fine. If you have any questions about the study in the future, following the interview, please feel free to contact me. All of my information is on the card I have given you. If you would like I can provide you with a printed transcript of the interview when I have it ready. The transcript is for you to keep.

Provide consent to use name [*sign here*]: _____

or

Provide consent but with strict anonymity [*sign here*]: _____

Middlesex University
C/o OCMS
Tel: +44 (0) 1865 556 071: +44 (0) 1865 517 722

Appendix 3 Interviewee Assigned Names

Assigned Name	Country of Birth	Gender	Age Range
Choegyal	India	Male	18-30
Choedak	Tibet	Male	18-30
Dawa	Tibet	Male	46-60
Dhondup	India	Male	18-30
Gyaltsen	India	Male	31-45
Gyatso	India	Male	31-45
Jorden	India	Male	31-45
Khando	India	Female	18-30
Khorlo	Tibet	Male	61-80
Lhamo	India	Female	18-30
Lodoe	Tibet	Male	61-80
Losang	Tibet	Male	61-80
Lumtok	Tibet	Male	61-80
Namgyal	India	Male	61-80
Namkha	India	Male	46-60
Ngawang	India	Male	31-40
Norbu	India	Male	18-30
Pema	Tibet	Female	61-80
Rabgyal	Tibet	Male	46-60
Rabten	Tibet	Male	61-80
Rangdol	Nepal	Male	46-60
Sangyal	Tibet	Male	46-60
Taklha	India	Male	18-30
Tawang	Tibet	Male	18-30
Tendar	India	Male	31-45
Tenpa	India	Male	18-30
Tsekyi	India	Female	46-60
Wangchuk	Tibet	Male	31-45
Wangdark	Tibet	Male	31-45
Yetrok	Tibet	Female	46-60

Appendix 4 Interview Questions

1. Please tell me about your background, both personal and family? (i.e. where were you born, age, family members, and work, what part of Tibet is your family history from? Specific region? Kham, Amdo, U-Tsang? Etc.)
2. Have you been to Tibet? When were you last there and can you tell me about your experience?
3. Have you ever lived in India or Nepal? Can you tell me about your experience living there? What kind of challenges did you face?
4. Where is your current residence and how long have you lived there?
5. Can you tell me about your experience settling in the United States?
6. What aspects both positive and negative do you like about living here in the Twin Cities, and the United States more generally?
7. How important is it for you and your family to maintain your Tibetan cultural identity here in the United States? What are some of the difficulties you face? (I.e. language, religion, refugee status, racial stigma)
8. How do you stay connected with the Tibetan community here in the Twin Cities? What kind of Tibetan functions or cultural gatherings do you frequently attend here in the Twin Cities or elsewhere in North America? Why do you attend them?
9. Do you use any social or Internet media such as Facebook or Twitter? Which ones) do you use? What is your purpose for using these? Do you use any other forms of Internet media? Why do you use these other forms of Internet media? How do feel about these forms of media?
10. Do you practice Tibetan Buddhism and how important is your religious identity here in the United States?
11. How is it different practicing Tibetan Buddhism here in the United States than in India or Tibet, for example?
12. Are you involved in the Tibetan American Foundation of Minnesota (TAFM)? And what are your thoughts on this organization and others that represent the interests of Tibetan people?
13. What do you feel are the greatest concerns facing Tibetan people [in general] living in the Twin Cities, and the US more broadly?

Interview Questions – continued

14. How are the Tibetans adjusting or confronting these concerns? Do you feel these concerns are being resolved? Why or why not? What would you change?
15. What do you feel are the greatest concerns facing you as a Tibetan living in the Twin Cities, and the US more broadly?
16. How are you adjusting to these concerns? Do you feel these concerns are being resolved? Why or why not? What would you change?
17. How do you feel about the current political situation in Tibet and what would you like to see changed?
18. Are there any other issues or concerns that were not raised in this interview that you feel are important to understanding the Tibetan community that has moved and or relocated to the Twin Cities or the United States in general?




BANNED IN TIBET

ILLEGAL
Prayer

ILLEGAL
Speech



ILLEGAL
Thought

BY ORDER OF THE CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY, THE FOLLOWING 20 ACTIVITIES ARE NOW FORBIDDEN IN TIBET. ANY TIBETAN ACCUSED OF THESE "CRIMES" IS SUBJECT TO ARREST, IMPRISONMENT AND TORTURE.

1	Flying the "Tibet Independence" flag, putting up posters, spreading publicity materials and promoting discussion.	
2	Writing, producing, selling and distributing books, drawings and audio-visual recordings dealing with "ethnic separatism" and "ethnic extremist thoughts."	
3	Displaying photos of the 14th Dalai Lama and images of "Tibet Independence" at public gatherings.	
4	Undertaking prayer activities for the 14th Dalai Lama on the occasion of a festival, at a monastery or in a public place.	
5	Going to foreign countries and participating in religious activities of any kind there.	
6	Encouraging, discussing and "glorifying" self-immolation as a form of protest.	
7	Reciting prayers, making incense offerings or lighting butter lamps as prayers for self-immolators or greeting their families.	
8	Promoting discussion of "Tibet Independence" in schools.	
9	Establishing organizations and undertaking activities under the pretext of "protecting the mother tongue," "environmental protection," etc.	

MORE ATTACKS ON TIBETANS' RIGHTS →

ICT Document – continued

10	Organizing assemblies and public demonstrations using the excuses of "linguistic equality," "food safety," etc.	
11	Showing images or playing recordings with "Tibet Independence" content in vehicles and transportation facilities.	
12	Collecting donations for "foreign ethnic separatist" forces or individuals.	
13	Downloading messages, images or video with "Tibet Independence" content and listening, watching and sharing them.	
14	Listening to and watching radio and TV programs by "hostile forces" talking up "Tibet Independence."	
15	Sending communications of any kind to "foreign hostile forces."	
16	Using the powers of religion, philosophy or genealogy to "create resentment" towards Communist Party officials.	
17	Forming organizations to oppose the government.	
18	Using religious and traditional activities to "incite others."	
19	Associating religious activities or different public activities with "Tibet Independence."	
20	Interfering with infiltration of the "foreign Tibet Independence separatist" movement.	

**CHINA'S LATEST CRACKDOWNS ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN TIBET
ARE 20 MORE REASONS WHY TIBETANS NEED YOUR HELP.**

**PLEASE RUSH YOUR URGENT CONTRIBUTION TO
THE INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET TODAY.**

Thank you!

INTERNATIONAL
CAMPAIGN
FOR TIBET

Appendix 6 Poster at TAFM of those who self-immolated



Appendix 7 2012 Report on Asian Populations within the Twin Cities

Counties with High Asian Populations

Asian alone or in combination

Hennepin County			Ramsey County			Dakota County		
	Number	Percent		Number	Percent		Number	Percent
Total Asian	84,123		Total Asian	65,144		Total Asian	21,455	
Asian Indian	17,659	21.0%	Hmong	35,647	54.7%	Asian Indian	4,416	20.6%
Hmong	17,446	20.7%	Chinese*	4,971	7.6%	Vietnamese	3,212	15.0%
Chinese*	11,371	13.5%	Asian Indian	4,573	7.0%	Chinese*	2,535	11.8%
Vietnamese	9,328	11.1%	Vietnamese	4,074	6.3%	Korean	2,099	9.8%
Korean	7,188	8.5%	Burmese	3,109	4.8%	Filipino	2,093	9.8%
Laotian	4,755	5.7%	Other Asian, not specified	2,980	4.6%	Cambodian	1,435	6.7%
Filipino	4,181	5.0%	Korean	2,826	4.3%	Hmong	1,303	6.1%
Other Asian, not specified	3,340	4.0%	Filipino	2,000	3.1%	Laotian	1,247	5.8%
Japanese	2,787	3.3%	Cambodian	1,483	2.3%	Other Asian, not specified	793	3.7%
Cambodian	2,150	2.6%	Japanese	1,115	1.7%	Japanese	778	3.6%
Anoka County			Washington County			Olmsted County		
	Number	Percent		Number	Percent		Number	Percent
Total Asian	15,789		Total Asian	14,046		Total Asian	9,332	
Hmong	4,008	25.4%	Hmong	4,584	32.6%	Cambodian	1,679	18.0%
Vietnamese	2,589	64.6%	Asian Indian	2,156	15.3%	Asian Indian	1,580	16.9%
Asian Indian	2,308	89.1%	Chinese*	1,632	11.6%	Chinese*	1,351	14.5%
Chinese*	1,682	72.9%	Vietnamese	1,224	8.7%	Vietnamese	1,154	12.4%
Korean	1,376	81.8%	Korean	1,190	8.5%	Laotian	785	8.4%
Filipino	1,105	80.3%	Filipino	1,032	7.3%	Korean	654	7.0%
Other Asian, not specified	858	77.6%	Other Asian, not specified	541	3.9%	Filipino	602	6.5%
Japanese	502	58.5%	Japanese	487	3.5%	Other Asian, not specified	390	4.2%
Laotian	396	78.9%	Cambodian	453	3.2%	Japanese	299	3.2%
Pakistani	345	87.1%	Pakistani	187	1.3%	Hmong	280	3.0%
Scott County			Stearns County			Carver County		
	Number	Percent		Number	Percent		Number	Percent
Total Asian	8,700		Total Asian	3,723		Total Asian	3,164	
Vietnamese	1,907	21.9%	Vietnamese	679	18.2%	Asian Indian	438	13.8%
Asian Indian	1,576	18.1%	Chinese*	610	16.4%	Korean	435	13.7%
Cambodian	1,174	13.5%	Asian Indian	426	11.4%	Chinese*	433	13.7%
Chinese*	919	10.6%	Laotian	402	10.8%	Vietnamese	412	13.0%
Laotian	760	8.7%	Korean	386	10.4%	Filipino	341	10.8%
Korean	596	6.9%	Filipino	297	8.0%	Laotian	316	10.0%
Other Asian, not specified	553	6.4%	Other Asian, not specified	176	4.7%	Cambodian	229	7.2%
Filipino	437	5.0%	Japanese	167	4.5%	Japanese	133	4.2%
Hmong	172	2.0%	Hmong	165	4.4%	Other Asian, not specified	131	4.1%
Japanese	160	1.8%	Cambodian	103	2.8%	Hmong	130	4.1%
St. Louis County								
	Number	Percent						
Total Asian	2,579							
Chinese*	488	18.9%						
Korean	445	17.3%						
Asian Indian	323	12.5%						
Filipino	309	12.0%						
Vietnamese	274	10.6%						
Japanese	219	8.5%						
Hmong	174	6.7%						
Other Asian, not specified	86	3.3%						
Pakistani	45	1.7%						
Thai	39	1.5%						

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2010, Summary File 1

*except Taiwanese

Appendix 8 MDE database report

2007-2008 Fall Enrollment by Home Primary Language by District

Source: MARSS Fall FY08

Fiscal Year	DistrictNumber	DistrictName	LanguageName	PrimaryLanguage	enrollments	CountyName
07-08	0011	ANOKA-HENNEPIN PUBLIC SCHOOL DIST.	TIBETAN	073	7	Anoka
07-08	0013	COLUMBIA HEIGHTS PUBLIC SCHOOL DIST	TIBETAN	073	18	Anoka
07-08	0014	FRIDLEY PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT	TIBETAN	073	3	Anoka
07-08	0016	SPRING LAKE PARK PUBLIC SCHOOLS	TIBETAN	073	1	Anoka
07-08	0192	FARMINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT	TIBETAN	073	2	Dakota
07-08	0196	ROSEMOUNT-APPLE VALLEY-EAGAN	TIBETAN	073	2	Dakota
07-08	0270	HOPKINS PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT	TIBETAN	073	3	Hennepin
07-08	0271	BLOOMINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT	TIBETAN	073	6	Hennepin
07-08	0273	EDINA PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT	TIBETAN	073	16	Hennepin
07-08	0279	OSSEO PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT	TIBETAN	073	6	Hennepin
07-08	0280	RICHFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT	TIBETAN	073	31	Hennepin
07-08	0281	ROBBINSDALE PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT	TIBETAN	073	1	Hennepin
07-08	0282	ST. ANTHONY-NEW BRIGHTON SCHOOLS	TIBETAN	073	21	Hennepin
07-08	0283	ST. LOUIS PARK PUBLIC SCHOOL DIST.	TIBETAN	073	6	Hennepin
07-08	0284	WAYZATA PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT	TIBETAN	073	2	Hennepin
07-08	0535	ROCHESTER PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT	TIBETAN	073	1	Olmsted
07-08	0621	MOUNDS VIEW PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT	TIBETAN	073	21	Ramsey
07-08	0622	NORTH ST PAUL-MAPLEWOOD SCHOOL DIST	TIBETAN	073	1	Ramsey
07-08	0625	ST. PAUL PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT	TIBETAN	073	6	Ramsey
07-08	0720	SHAKOPEE PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT	TIBETAN	073	3	Scott
07-08	4108	GENERAL JOHN VESSEY JR LEADERSHIP	TIBETAN	073	1	Ramsey
07-08	6067	EAST METRO INTEGRATION DISTRICT	TIBETAN	073	1	Ramsey
07-08	9999	STATEWIDE	TIBETAN	073	159	UNKNOWN

Appendix 9 MMC 2014 Memorial Cup Honours



Appendix 10 RTYC-MN Past Events (2012-2014)



MMC III: Martyrs Memorial Cup 2014

Labor Day weekend: Aug 30th, 31st, and Sep 1st, 2014

MMC III, Martyrs Memorial Cup 2014 tournament was held on Labor Day Weekend 2014. The tournament took place in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The reason for hosting MMC is to unite Tibetans in Exile and to honor those who have sacrificed their lives for Tibet's Freedom. This year's MMC was a grand success and this would not be possible without the support of business and individual sponsors who recognize the value of what we do every day in this great organization. A huge part of success was also from the very strong community minded volunteers who have spent hours of working together during MMC.

Thank you all.

FLAME OF TRUTH TORCH RELAY: End Destination Minnesota

Saturday, November 3, 2012

The Tibetan Parliament in Exile's 'Flame of Truth Torch Relay' is set to end in Minnesota with a grande finale attended by North America's Chithue, Lumtok Namgyal la. This was a joint event organized by TAFM, RTYC-MN, RTWA-MN, and SFT-MN.

URGENT PROTEST: TIBET BURNING

Friday, November 2nd 2012

Over 62 Self Immolations in Tibet since 2009. We cannot remain silent. Tibet needs us now!!!

PROTEST

- To amplify the voices of our Martyrs inside Tibet
- To stand in Solidarity with our brothers and sisters inside Tibet
- To spread the word about the ongoing wave of Self Immolations
- To highlight the brutal and illegal occupation of Tibet
- To restore Freedom and Independence for Tibet

Organized by Regional Tibetan Youth Congress Minnesota and Regional Tibetan Youth Congress Wisconsin

TYC FOUNDING DAY

Sunday Oct 7, 2012 5:00pm at TAFM

In 1970, Tibetan Youth Congress (TYC) was established in Dharamshala with the blessing of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. 315 delegates from 16 different Tibetan communities in India and Nepal attended. The founding of TYC in 1970 came at a time when the first group of young Tibetans who had received a balanced modern and traditional education were graduating from schools and colleges. TYC's constitution, aim and objectives, and organisational structure were decided, and the first Central Executive Committee (CENTREX) elected to lead it. The movement gathered momentum with set-up of regional chapters, called Regional Tibetan Youth Congress

(RTYC).

The Minnesota chapter of Tibetan Youth Congress (RTYC-MN) was founded on November 14, 1998. RTYC-MN engages in promoting the just cause of Tibet reaching out beyond the Tibetan community with seminars, campaigns and talks. RTYC-MN sets out to accomplish the mission explicitly stated in the objectives of its parent organization 'The Central Executive Tibetan Youth Congress' based in Dharamsala, India.

FACE TO FACE WITH TSEWANG DHONDUP

Sunday, September 30, 2012

Mr. Tsewang Dondup la, who participated in peaceful demonstration in Lhasa in 1993 against Chinese brutal rules in Tibet. He was shot twice, one on his kidney and another on his elbow by Chinese police while he was leading peaceful demonstration in Kanze, Tehor in Kham Eastern, Tibet on the 24th of March 2008. Consequently, he fell on the ground and became unconscious. He was then taken to the mountain area by his elder brother and other acquaintances where he had to remain hiding about a year.

He was in bed for about six months with intense pain. So much so he even became unconscious as pain intensified. Moreover, he was unable to eat and drink well and went through tremendous amount of suffering. Chinese government had publicized his arrest warrant everywhere in the region. As a result, he had no opportunity to undergo treatment.

He escaped to India in 2009, he has been a unique voice for Tibetan freedom. Ever since He came to exile and he visits different places to share pain and suffering he had undergone. Not only to share his own experiences but also all of our Tibetan brothers and sisters who participated in peaceful demonstration and went through unimaginable pain and suffering.

TIBET BURNING - Global Protest for Tibet

Sept 18 @ United Nations Headquarters New York

On Sept 18, member nations of the UN will convene in New York for the 67th General Assembly Session. The general assembly is attended by 167 members of United Nations and is a forum where discussion of the full spectrum of international issues are covered. Focusing on this important day, North America Regional Tibetan Youth Congress is organizing a global mass protest at the United Nations Headquarters, New York.

MMC Soccer Tournament

Sep 1-3, 2012

A Tribute to our Martyrs - to honor those who have sacrificed their lives for our Nations Freedom and to Unite Tibetans in Exile.

24 Hours hunger strike by RTYC-MN

February 22, 2012

STATEMENT from Regional Tibetan Youth Congress of Minnesota

24 Hours Hunger Strike and Lobbying by Board Members of the Regional Tibetan Youth Congress of Minnesota on February 22, 2012. The first day of Tibetan Losar (New Year).

Source: <http://www.rtycminnesota.org/past-events.html>