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Searching for home: Tibetan scholars' decision to migrate or return

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Searching for home: Tibetan scholars’ decision to migrate or return

by

Kristi Marchesani

A dissertation submitted to the graduate faculty
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Major: Education (Educational Leadership)

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Iowa State University
Ames, Iowa
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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study explored how ethnic identity, perceived obligations, and an unresolved conflict of home influenced the decision of Tibetan Scholarship Program (TSP) participants to return back to the exile community per their commitment or to make a new life in North America after their program completion. The research focused on three major questions: (a) How do moral and spiritual obligations perceived in Tibetans living in the diaspora influence their cultural identity and, as a result, their decision-making process?; (b) How is the decision of Tibetan Scholarship Program (TSP) students to return or migrate guided by opposing influences?; (c) How does the Tibetan people’s status as a diasporic people impact their connectivity to their exiled home and thus their perception of home?

Participants were purposefully selected from a pool of former TSP scholars who had responded to a pilot study survey and who represented both students who had returned as well as those who decided to migrate. Data gathered from semistructured interviews, as well as from survey results and a review of documents, were analyzed and coded into four major themes: (a) Searching for Self: Tibetan Identity; (b) Searching for Answers: Influences on Decision-Making; (c) Searching for Resolution: Inner Conflict; and (d) Searching for Belonging: Perception of Home. The findings illuminated the complex nature and multiple affiliations of Tibetan exiles and further examined the opposing influences TSP scholars negotiated as they searched for a place to call home. Implications, including specific suggestions for practice and recommendations for future research, were also presented.
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Over the last 40 years, nearly 150,000 Tibetan citizens have left their homeland in search of safety and sanctuary in the exile communities of India, Nepal, and other locations around the world (The Tibet Fund, 2006). This mass exodus was a result of the threat of war and the following occupation of the Tibetan region by China in the 1950s that has since sparked an international debate on the rightful control of Tibet. Although there is no resolution in sight for this conflict, the Tibetan people, led by their spiritual leader the 14th Dalai Lama, have worked to establish exile communities in many countries in order to bring together their people as they await the opportunity to return to their homeland.

The Dalai Lama, based in Dharamsala, India, the home of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), often has spoken of the precarious position of the Tibetan people and the dire need to build a strong cohesive community. He has acknowledged that the strength of the diaspora will play a major role in ensuring the survival of the Tibetan culture and in mounting the charge to reclaim the homeland. His Holiness has emphasized the need for education for his people that will not only carry on the Tibetan language and traditions, but also provide modern skills needed for the further development and administration of the community.

This message was never as clear as when I heard His Holiness the Dalai Lama speak at the University of Northern Iowa on May 19, 2010. Through my work with Tibetan students, which I will detail further in following chapters, I have had a considerable amount of exposure to the Tibetan culture and the teachings of the Dalai Lama. However, it was not until I heard this speech in person, by this wise and humble man, that I realized the
significance education holds for the Tibetans and their future. During his speech, the Dalai Lama stressed the value of learning, declaring, “Education for human beings is very important. Knowledge nobody can steal. Knowledge never changes when your fortune goes down.” As I reflected on the Tibetan students I have been able to assist in studying in the United States over my career in international education, I realized the importance and value of this endeavor and the many implications it has had and will have to this struggling people.

The Dalai Lama’s philosophy on education has led to the establishment of several scholarship programs to send selected Tibetan students to the United States for academic training. Over the past 30 years, The Tibet Fund, a New York-based nonprofit organization dedicated to sustaining and strengthening the Tibetan refugee community, has assisted almost 400 of the brightest Tibetan students to study in the United States as part of their Tibetan Scholarship Program (TSP; The Tibet Fund, 2006). According to the Outcome Assessment of the Tibetan Scholarship Program, the intent of the program is to “strengthen the refugee community by giving selected individuals new skills and professional knowledge that they can then use to directly assist their community” (SRI International, 2004, p. 1).

However, according to statistics provided by The Tibet Fund, approximately one third of the alumni of the program are currently working outside the exile community. Although some of the grantees returned to serve time back home before emigrating to the United States or Canada, others, who have been labeled as “defaulters,” never returned to fulfill their obligation. This has led some to claim that the investment in these students has gone to waste and that the Tibetan community will never reap the benefits of the knowledge that was gained from these individuals’ American education. A concern over what can be referred to
as “brain drain” has resulted in some scrutiny of the program and questions over the effectiveness of the efforts.

This leads to several questions as to why, in a community that is perceived as having a strong bond as a result of their shared struggles and intense spiritual focus, would students make decisions to neglect their obligation to return and instead make a new life far from “home.”

**Statement of Problem**

As stated above, there is an identified need for human capital formation in the Tibetan diaspora as a means to strengthen the community and counter the concern for the deterioration of the culture of this people. Although programs and investments have been made in the education and training process, the Tibetan community is still seeing many of these newly-educated citizens decide to stay or migrate abroad and not return to their community despite the commitment they made when agreeing to participate in the scholarship program.

There is little understanding of how these students make this decision and the conflict they may experience when weighing the pull of self-fulfillment and opportunity with the serious implications of spiritual and cultural obligation. This brings up issues surrounding a Tibetan student’s identity as it relates to both self and culture. There is also little known about how the perception of “home” and the fact that all of these students are in some way displaced from their true “homeland,” impacts their sense of belonging and the ending decision to return or not to return. More research will help to fill the gap in the knowledge about the Tibetan student experience and decision-making process and to understand the hard choices of a diasporic people such as those living in exile outside of Tibet.
Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological, qualitative research study was to better understand how the migration decision of Tibetan scholarship students is influenced by conflicting factors of self-interest with those of community and spiritual obligation. The study looked at how such influencers as cultural identity and the concept of home, as it relates to the Tibetan diasporic status, impacts the connectivity students have with their community and with a possible need to stake a claim to a place of one’s own.

Research Questions

The study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. How do moral and spiritual obligations perceived by Tibetans living in the diaspora influence their cultural identity and, as a result, their decision-making process?

2. How is the decision of Tibetan Scholarship Program (TSP) students to return or migrate guided by opposing influences?

3. How does the Tibetan people’s status as a diasporic people impact their connectivity to their exiled home and thus their perception of home?

Theoretical Framework

The epistemology of my work came from a constructivist stance. The effort to examine and interpret the Tibetan student experience to construct meaning lent itself to Crotty’s (2003) definition of constructivism as “the view that all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context” (p. 42). As I examined the issues surrounding Tibet and the
Tibetan people, there were already many differing perceptions and conflicting interpretations, which were consistent with the claim that reality can be complex and that different people can construct different meanings about the same phenomenon (Crotty, 2003).

I engaged in qualitative research and used the research tradition of basic interpretivist. This allowed me to focus on how my participants made meaning of their condition, as Prasad (2005) has asserted that the “interpretative traditions emerge from a scholarly position that takes human interpretation as the starting point for developing knowledge about the social world” (p. 13). The knowledge gained, using the researcher as the instrument and an inductive strategy, produced a study that is descriptive in nature (Merriam, 2002). This in turn informed the use of phenomenology which, according to Prasad, “assumes that the experience of any reality is possible only through interpretation” and that “reality only comes into being through acts of social interpretation and meaningful sense making” (p. 13). As I worked with a small number of study participants, the phenomenological approach allowed me to take a comprehensive look at their experiences and to concentrate on their perceptions in order to identify relationships and patterns of meaning. My theoretical framework was set up to enable me to best analyze the life choices of Tibetan students as influenced by their culture, environment, and individual choice.

There are several theories that I incorporated to help me better understand and frame my study. These include theories on migration, Lewin’s push-pull model (as cited in Baruch, Budhwar, & Khatri, 2007) and Deci and Ryan’s (1985) self-determination theory. As my subjects and subject matter was focused on a culture and phenomenon that has not been heavily studied and comes from a more Eastern or oriental way of thinking, it is important to
note that the above theories are from a Western perspective and had limitations on how they can and should be applied to this population.

**Significance of the Study**

This study was completed to help to provide better understanding, both within the Tibetan community and beyond, of the factors that influence a student’s decision to return home after studying abroad. This work can be used by The Tibet Fund and other agencies who work with Tibetan students in identifying possible changes in the structure of their scholarship programs, their assistance to students during and after their time abroad, and strategies on how to encourage a higher rate of return.

Although Tibet is a unique community in many ways, this research may also have some significant findings that can be applied to other international students, in particular those coming from other diasporas. This could provide insight for those involved in international education or immigrant advocacy on some of the needed services and support of these populations.

There is a surprisingly limited amount of research that has been done on the Tibetan experience in exile and the impact of transnationalism on this community. More research on how Tibetans make meaning of their unique situation and the impact it has on their identity, sense of belonging, and decisions, has provided insight on the many complex aspects of this community.

**Definitions of Terms**

The following terms are defined for use in this study:

*Dharamsala*: a city in northern India including the village of McLeod Ganj, which is home of the Dalai Lama and the exiled Tibetan government.
**Diaspora**: the movement, migration, or scattering of people away from an established or ancestral homeland.

**Government-in-exile**: a temporary government moved to or formed in a foreign land by exiles who hope to rule when their country is liberated.

**The Tibet Fund**: a nonprofit organization based in New York City established in 1981 under the guidance of His Holiness the Dalai Lama to provide support services for Tibetans in exile.

**Tibet**: the traditional homeland of the Tibetan people in Asia north of the Himalayas. In 1951, following a military conflict, Tibet was incorporated into the People’s Republic of China and the Tibetan government was abolished.

**Tibetan Central Administration (CTA)**: the official Tibetan government-in-exile located in Dharamsala, India and in charge of overseeing the exile communities.

**Tibetan Children’s Village (TCV)**: a school system established within the exile communities in India to provide both traditional Tibetan education and modern education. TCV currently enrolls thousands of students including many children sent from Tibet to go to school.

**Summary**

This study explored the complex aspects that influence Tibetan students’ decisions on whether or not to return to their exile community once they complete their studies in the United States. The research looked at both internal and external factors such as Tibetan national identity, Tibetan Buddhist culture, and the impact of the diasporic life that may create contradictions and conflicts within the Tibetan student. The findings should help inform leaders and advocates of the Tibetan community on how they might move ahead in
confronting the issues of brain drain and human capital depletion in their communities. International educators may also benefit from a greater understanding of this population as well as other international students coming from diasporic backgrounds.

Chapter 2 contains a review of the literature, including a more comprehensive examination of migration issues on a global scale as well as the direct impact on the Tibetan diaspora. It also takes a closer look at the unique aspects of the Tibetan community, including the influence of spirituality and nationalism on identity and how this might result in conflict and contradictions when members are faced with serious decisions. In Chapter 3, I present information on my methods and methodology and detail my data collection and analysis processes. I included details on my efforts to ensure goodness and trustworthiness in my work as well as an examination of my role as the researcher. Chapter 4 provides a short biography of the participants and presents the findings of my research and an analysis of these findings. Finally, Chapter 5 offers a summary of the findings and implications to the field. Recommendations for future practice and research are also provided.
CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Historically, the image of Tibet has been one of a place of beauty and harmony. It has been coined the “rooftop of the world” and the “land of the snow” and was romanticized in the 1933 James Hilton novel, *Lost Horizon*, as a sort of “Shangri-La” (Korom, 1997). However, history has taken its toll on this region and, to many, it is now associated with conflict and turmoil. As the Tibetan people fight to maintain some control of their land and culture within Tibet, tens of thousands of Tibetan exiles, who were compelled to flee, confront the challenge of making a home in new environment separate from their native homeland.

Although I do not plan to go into significant detail on the history of Tibet and the Tibetan people, I want to comment on the nature of many of the literary accounts on this topic and the “points of contention separating official Chinese views of Tibet from dissenting voices of the Tibetan exile community” (Kapstein, 2006, p. 269). In my review of the literature, I have identified some inconsistencies in the different accounts depending on the author and the agenda. The contradictions are often found in the wording, with some authors using the terms “invasion,” “occupation,” and “oppression,” whereas others apply labels such as “liberation,” “modernization,” and “protection” to reflect the history in this region. There is no doubt that the interpretation of these accounts will continue to be highly contested, even when there seems to be consensus on certain versions of history (Kapstein, 2006). In addition, some have even accused the literature of overly romanticizing Tibet while unfairly demonizing China (Lopez, 1998). For the sake of my research and this literature review, the conflictual nature of this topic will not be heavily addressed and the literature used will mostly represent work that contains the above-mentioned Tibetan bias.
While providing a brief foundational overview of the history of the mass exodus of their homeland, the development of exile communities abroad, and the aspirations of the Tibetan people and their leader, my main objective in this review is to give a better understanding of some of what shapes the identity of the Tibetan people including their feelings of nationalism, the influence of their religious beliefs, and the impact of their existence in a diaspora. It is through this examination that I strived to better understand the literature’s account of how Tibetans, specifically those studying abroad, make decisions about their future. I will introduce concepts related to migration theory, identity formation, the push/pull model, and theory of motivation. This will all relate back to my intent to look at the conflict between self-identity and community obligation in this unique population.

**Tibetans in Exile**

In March of 1959 the 14th Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, fled to India from his native land of Tibet and started a new life in a strange and cautiously welcoming new environment. This nighttime escape from Lhasa, the administrative center of Tibet, came after years of increasing presence and failed negotiations with mainland China as it looked to reassert control over the area (Avedon, 1984). The Chinese government maintains their stance that this land has historically been part of China and that their return has introduced freedoms and prosperity to a suffering people (Kapstein, 2006). Counter to this is the assertion by Tibetans of the human rights violations and infringements on liberties that eventually drove many of them, and continue to do so today, to seek refuge beyond Tibet’s borders (Maslak, 2008). During the 1959 Tibetan uprising, the Dalai Lama, fearing for his safety, made his move into exile and said goodbye to the only home he had ever known. Since that time, an estimated 150,000 Tibetans have followed their spiritual leader’s path and have left their homeland in
search of safety and temporary peace in exile communities of India, Nepal, and other locations around the world, including significant populations in the United States, Canada, and Switzerland (The Tibet Fund, 2006). The largest portion of Tibetan refugees have relocated to India and established new homes in one of the exile communities developed throughout the country. The Tibetan government-in-exile (CTA) was established in Dharamsala, a hill station in North India and home of His Holiness.

There is little debate, within and beyond the Tibetan community, as to the figure that is most closely identified with Tibet and the struggle for their homeland (Lopez, 1998). His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama has been described as the “primary symbol of Tibetan unity” (Kolas, 1996, p. 57) and “central to the value systems of Tibetans” (Hansen, 2003, p. 16). Not only has the Dalai Lama taken on his role as spiritual leader to his scattered people, he has also committed himself to the task of traveling the world to advocate for the future of Tibet and the welfare of Tibetans as well as spreading messages associated with Tibetan Buddhism. The current Dalai Lama has introduced a new way of thinking for the Tibetan people that has taken them from a life of isolation and mystery, to one where there is a vested interest in the promotion and education of their culture to the world community (Korom, 1997). In his book My Land and People (The Dalai Lama, 1962), His Holiness has confronted the past mistakes of the Tibetan people as he stated, “Tibet will never be the same again, but we do not want it to be. It can never again be isolated from the world, and it cannot return to its ancient semifeudal system” (p. 231). As a result of the Dalai Lama’s efforts to reach out and tell the story of his people, recognized by his receipt of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989, the Tibetan cause has gained international attention and enlisted dedicated advocates from around the globe (The Tibet Fund, n.d.b., para. 2). The Dalai
Lama makes it clear through his message on The Tibet Fund website the need for support and generosity from outside people in this effort, stating, “Were it not for our community in exile, so generously supported by individuals, organizations, and governments, our nation would be a little more than a shattered remnant of a people. . . . our culture, religion and national identity effectively eliminated” (The Tibet Fund, n.d.a., para. 1).

Although the international support for the Tibetan cause is vital, the Dalai Lama also has spent much of his time focusing on the need to strengthen the exile communities in order to sustain the Tibetan culture and identity. In a speech to his Buddhist followers, the Dalai Lama explained this by saying

As Buddhist practitioners, you should understand the necessity of preserving Tibetan Buddhism for this the land, the physical country of Tibet, is crucial. We have tried our best to preserve the Tibetan traditions outside Tibet for almost 30 years . . . but eventually, after our time, there is a real danger that they will change, that they will not survive away from the protective nurture of our homeland. So for the sake of preserving Tibetan Buddhism . . . the sacred land of Tibet is vitally important. It is very unlikely that it can survive as a cultural and spiritual entity if its physical reality is smothered under Chinese occupation. (Lopez, 1998, p. 198)

Upon resettling into exile, the Dalai Lama devoted himself to three major tasks: (a) establishing an exile government, (b) supporting Tibetan refugees, and (c) providing Tibetan children with both Tibetan and modern education (Dorjee & Giles, 2005). Upon meeting with the prime minister of India, the leaders agreed that, instead of sending Tibetan children to Indian public school, it would be to the community’s benefit to establish their own separate schools where they could teach their language, religion, and culture (Maslak, 2008).
According to Kolas (1996), the goal of His Holiness and the exile government has been to “equip Tibetan children to meet the modern world, while at the same time keeping the Tibetan heritage alive” (p. 58).

*The Basic Education Policy for Tibetans in Exile* (BEP; Tibetan Children’s Education and Welfare Fund [TCEWF], 2005), established by the Department of Education of the CTA, was created to provide a guide for the education system in the exile communities as well as to consider the day when a self-governing status is attained in Tibet. In the policy, the focus and philosophy is made clear within Chapter V1, Article 6.1: “A system of education having traditional Tibetan education as its core and modern education as its essential co-partner shall be implemented” (p. 1). To meet this goal and to manage the influx of young refugees, one of the first things the exile government did was to start a school. That school has now grown into a network of several schools called the Tibetan Children’s Village (TCV; Norbu, 1987) and enrolls thousands of exile children throughout the region; many who have been separated from their family in Tibet to live as “orphans” in exile.

**Emphasis on Education**

Behind all the efforts to rebuild a new community outside of Tibet is the concept, which the Dalai Lama has continually highlighted in his writing and speeches, that the future of the Tibetan people, and their ability to be self-sufficient, is dependent on their pursuit of modern knowledge. This is reflected in Article 3.3 of the BEP, which states that the purpose of education is

- to empower people and nation to become self-reliant, i.e. without the need to depend on the assistance and support of others; and to generate patriotic and dedicated
personas and other resources for achieving the cherished goals of the society and nation. (TCEWF, 2005, p. 2)

His Holiness has acknowledged that Tibetans have lagged behind other cultures, thus contributing to their inability to protect their land and people from Chinese infiltration (The Office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, 2006). Even before occupation, the schools in Tibet focused on religious education and did not instill in the people a value for subjects such as math and science (Johnson & Chhetri, 2002). Postiglione (2009) reinforced this assessment with his description of teaching and learning in Tibet, saying that it “remains relatively conservative due to remoteness, economics, and traditions in monastery education, as well as people’s sense of culture preservation” (p. 6). In a speech given in Dharamsala, India, the home of the Dalai Lama himself, His Holiness spoke of the importance of education in sustaining Tibetan culture:

We are today struggling for a meaningful autonomy for Tibet. But in order to achieve an appropriate standard of it, our own people would be able to fully take responsibility in every possible area of undertaking related to it and to be able to produce results. There is no way merely engaging in debates will be sufficient. We ourselves must be able to argue for and administer the autonomy. The essence of this is that we must be able to do our own work by ourselves. In order to achieve both internal and external progresses appropriate for modern times, having modern education is extremely important. (Office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, 2006, para. 12)

These words are the cornerstone for The Tibet Fund’s work to support education within the exile community as well as its efforts to enable Tibetan students to study abroad in
some of the best educational institutions in the United States. The Tibet Fund was founded in 1981 and has “played a vital role in sustaining and strengthening the refugee community” by bringing “urgently needed resources to the cultural, educational, health and economic institutions that sustain the Tibetan way of life, language, and traditions” (The Tibet Fund, 2006, p. 2). Starting in 1988, the organization has worked closely with the U.S. State Department in some of these efforts including obtaining scholarship funds to bring Tibetan students to study in the United States.

One of these programs, the TSP, is offered in conjunction with the U.S. State Department and has strived to “introduce grantees to current thought and American models in education, law, political science, public health, medicine, business administration, fields that have been deemed germane to the administration of a self-governing community” (SRI International, 2004, p. 3). The program offers funding for both degree-granting programs and 1-year nondegree programs. Applicants must show their academic qualifications, English proficiency, and work experience or community service. According to The Tibet Fund Tibetan Scholarship Program 2012 Announcement (see Appendix A) applicants need to submit their academic transcripts, refugee status papers, and medical certificates and complete the General Awareness Test on Tibetan Culture and History. After selection, TSP grantees are required to sign a Letter of Undertaking (see Appendix B) as a pledge that they will be “bound by all the directions given to me by The Tibet Fund” as well as a promise that after studies they will “return to India as per US Visa requirements and serve the Tibetan Community there for a minimum period of two years.” This is followed by a section outlining what the consequences will be if they fail to abide by the above-mentioned clauses:
• The Tibet Fund has the full authority to report my whereabouts to the Federal Authorities and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security for further actions.

• In addition, I will refund to The Tibet Fund the total expenses incurred by The Tibet Fund for my studies in the U.S. with the understanding that these funds will be forwarded to the U.S. Department of State.

In an outcome assessment completed in 2004 by SRI International for the Office of Policy and Evaluation of the U.S. Department of State, the success of the program was measured and reported. The assessment found that the TSP “is achieving its overall goal of increasing understanding as well as the specific objectives of achieving cultural learning and generating positive personal and professional outcomes and linkages” (SRI International, 2004, p. 2). This assessment focused primarily on the experience TSP participants had during their studies and the skills they obtained as a result. The fact that 100% of the 70 TSP alumni survey participants responded positively to a question about the value of their experience, gives The Tibet Fund and the public the sense of the impact of and need for this program (SRI International, 2004).

Tibetans’ Standing Within India

Tibetans in exile in India are typically not granted Indian citizenship. Even those Tibetans born in India have legal status neither in Tibet nor in India, and they are not issued passports (Maslak, 2008). The primary form of identification given to a Tibetan exile is the Registration Certificate and Identity Certificate, both granted by the Government of India and given on a temporary basis. Tibetans in India must reregister regularly, forcing them to annually, and in some cases even more often, deal with the bureaucratic complications of the Foreigner’s Regional Registration Office. Although holding these certificates provides them
some rights in India, it also denies them many privileges given to citizens including owning property, access to certain jobs, and opportunities to engage in business practices without bureaucratic hassle (Falcone & Wangchuk, 2008). In addition, travel with an Identity Certificate and without a passport becomes not only difficult in trying to enter other countries, but also then requires an Indian visa to return to their residence.

Throughout the growth of the exile communities in India, many Tibetans have argued that they should be able to claim Indian citizenship (Falcone & Wangchuk, 2008). This campaign, however, has been met with some resistance from both the Indian and Tibetan sides. The Government of India has continued to maintain that Tibetan refugees have no established rights to citizenship even if they were born in India (Falcone & Wangchuk, 2008). This is compounded by a stance by some Tibetan refugees, and unofficially from the CTA, that seeking an Indian passport is unpatriotic and to remain a refugee with no formal citizenship is a strong political statement (Falcone & Wangchuk, 2008). In addition Falcone and Wangchuk (2008) found that the CTA needs Tibetans in exile to maintain “refugee status in order to protect the integrity of the CTA, and ultimately the CTA’s bid to (re)gain control of Tibet proper” (p. 171).

**Personal and Social Identity**

As the Tibetan community continues to concentrate efforts on rebuilding a Tibetan way of life in exile, they have not forgotten their other goal of working to reclaim their homeland in Tibet (Kolas, 1996). It is these types of fragmented realities that currently influence the character of the Tibetan people and shape their unique identity. In proceeding ahead, it is important to understand the functional aspects of identity and its implications on both the personal and social aspects of an individual’s character. Identity often is seen as a
definition or interpretation of the self and includes an indefinite number of components for each individual (Baumeister, 1986). Baumeister (1986) outlined several functional aspects of identity including:

- The ability to make choices when one has a clear sense of one’s identity;
- Relationships are only possible with identity and can falter if one’s identity is in transition or not well defined; and
- Identity gives an individual a sense of “strength and resilience” that enables that individual to set personal goals, overcome obstacles, and reach a level of fulfillment.

Authors such as Hall (1993) have encouraged one to look at identity as a process that is never complete and is continually being created. This is consistent with the concept that identity is closely linked to possibility and often determines what becomes possible or not (Baumeister, 1986).

Identity becomes even more complex and carries with it wide-ranging implications when looking at a person’s affiliation with an ethnic group. According to Maslak (2008), “whereas ethnicity refers to the group, ethnic identity refers to the individual affiliation to the group” (p. 88). Shared language, religion, cultural traits, and history can serve as a very strong bond and instill a powerful sense of belonging (Cohen, 2004). Hall (1993) outlined two different ways of thinking about cultural identity. The first defines it in relation to a shared culture and the development of a “collective ‘one true self’ hiding inside the many other more superficial or artificially imposed selves which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common” (Hall, 1993, p. 223). The second view of cultural identity acknowledges that, in addition to the many commonalities within an ethnic group, there are
also distinctive differences which “constitute ‘what we really are’; or rather—since history has intervened—‘what we have become” (Hall, 1993, p. 223). This goes back to Baumeister’s (1986) assertion that identity does evolve and is in constant transformation that belongs to the future as much as it is connected to the past.

For a people in exile, identity takes on a unique construction as it grapples with the territorialized concept of culture (Malkki, 1995). According to Malkki (1995), “the social, imaginative processes of constructing nationness and identity can come to be influenced by the local, everyday circumstances of life in exile, and how the spatial and social isolation of refugees can figure in these processes” (p. 3). In addition, exiles must fight the idea that they have lost their cultural connection and identity when they crossed over to a new land. Malkki argued that displacement does not erode the collective identity of the exile, instead they have “located their identities within their very displacement. Extracting meaning and power from the interstitial social location they inhabited” (p. 16).

The Hutu are just one example given by the literature of an ethnic group that has been driven out of its homeland of Burundi in 1972 and forced to relocate to a new land. In Purity and Exile, Malkki (1995) detailed how a large number of the Hutu refugees moved to camps in parts of Tanzania and were able to re-establish their identity within their state of displacement. Also discussed was how those in the camp created their own separate society using their past memories and knowledge of their life in Burundi as a “charter and blueprint” (Malkki, 1995, p. 53) to inform the daily operations and structure within this mini society.

Malkki (1995) also looked at the differences between those Hutu who decided to move into the city and assimilate into the larger society and those who chose to isolate themselves within the more closed refugee camp. She noted that those who chose to stay in
the confines of the refugee camp were more resistant to putting down roots as an “affirmation of a collective identity based on the past and on the lost homeland” (p. 230). The Hutu used their resistance to integrate as a way to hold onto their identity as a people and remain disconnected, in a legal and social way, from their new surroundings. Malkki observed that “being a refugee signaled a tie with the homeland and hence, the possibility of an eventual return. Being a refugee meant being categorically pure not blurring boundaries” (p. 230).

There are many other parallels between the experiences of diasporas, such as that of the Hutus, that are similar to the struggle of the Tibetan people and their effort to maintain their culture and identity in a new land.

As refugees around the world consider leaving their current circumstances of exile and moving to the United States or other locations abroad, their status of displacement becomes all the more confusing. Theories on immigrant identity (LaFromboise, Coleman, & Gerton, 1993) tend to assume that immigrants lose their personal and cultural identity and history upon moving to a new culture. A more recent argument has called for consideration of a transnational identity by which an immigrant can see him- or herself as a “member and participant of both cultures, meaning . . . the individual acculturation to the new culture while maintaining relevant values and practices of old” (Gready, 1994, p. 225).

**The Tibetan Identity**

As one looks at the idea of self as it relates to the Tibetan people, it is easy to see how their identity is impacted by both individual and communal influences and are “validated through civic policies of the Tibetan government in exile and socially validated through the communities’ everyday practices and cultural celebrations” (Dolma, 2001). The exile community acts as a buffer to the outside world as Tibetans in residence spend each day
speaking their native language, immersed in their culture and traditions, and gaining affirmation of their beliefs (Dorjee & Giles, 2005). In addition to seeing themselves as an individual and a Tibetan, they may also identify with other social group affiliations such as refugee, Asian, and Buddhist (Dolma, 2001). This is reinforced by the vision of the Dalai Lama when he speaks of an essential Tibetan identity that is based in Tibetan Buddhism while also tied to the “birthright” they share of their Tibetan homeland (Venturino, 1997).

According to the literature, the commonalities that Tibetans share are rooted in three main areas: a national identity that has been shaped by history as well as their current struggle, a religious bond, and the influence of living as a diasporic people. These powerful connections serve to create a sense of belonging that gives Tibetans a feeling of pride in their people as well as a sense of obligation to their larger community that goes beyond the self.

**National Identity**

The Tibetan exile community has the difficult task of holding onto their national pride and cultural heritage as they make a life far from their homeland and adapt to a lifestyle that requires the development of new ways of living to keep up with the demands of a modern world. These efforts require continual negotiation between a need for a progressive educated society and one that is based in and does not betray the familiar and traditional (Korom, 1997). It also demands a level of change, which has at times found resistance from the exile administrators whose focus on preservation and continuity often promote the status quo (Kolas, 1996). Despite the continued struggle to find balance, the Tibetans have fought to keep their culture alive and have rebuilt their communities, including Buddhist temples and schools, to reconstruct and preserve the memories of Tibet and to forward a curriculum of “Tibetanness” (Kolas, 1996). Chapter Three, Article 3.4 of the BEP (TCEWF, 2005) once
again reinforces this, outlining the purpose of education for Tibetan people: “A responsibility the Tibetan people have towards the world community is to preserve and promote the unique wealth of Tibetan culture and traditions, which are of great value to the whole of humanity, through all times and circumstances” (p. 2).

When examining Tibetan nationalism, the “Free Tibet” mantra serves as one of the primary rallying cries. According to Singer (2011), “the idea of Tibetan uniqueness lies as the center of the fight for an independent Tibet, which remains the focus of attention for most Tibetans in Dharamsala” (p. 241). The idea of “Tibetanness” comes up several times in the literature and appears to be a self-created label used for and by the Tibetan people. Anand (2007) described Tibetanness as “an imagined and contested construct, it has its own truth effect on those who consider themselves Tibetans” (p. 106). In addition, it has inspired Tibetans to write about their feelings about their national identity through poetry, including this piece by Tenzin Tsundue (2000):

“My Tibetanness”

Thirty-nine years in exile.
Yet no nation supports us.
Not a single bloody nation!
We are refugees here.
People of a lost country.
Citizen to no nation.
Tibetans: the world’s sympathy stock.
Serene monks and bubbly traditionalists;
one lakh and several thousand odd,
nicely mixed, steeped
in various assimilating cultural hegemonies.

At every check-post and office,
I am an “Indian-Tibetan”.

My Registration Certificate,
I renew every year, with a salaam.

A foreigner born in India.
I am more of an Indian.

Except for my Chinky Tibetan face.

“Nepali?” “Thai?” “Japanese?”

“Chinese?” “Naga?” “Manipuri?”

but never the question — “Tibetan?”

I am Tibetan.

But I am not from Tibet.

Never been there.

Yet I dream

of dying there

Despite this outward display of pride, the Tibetan community is facing a great challenge as the new generations of Tibetans, most of whom were born in exile, have no direct experience with the homeland. This generation “doesn’t have any firsthand experience of oppression or torture, they haven’t immigrated as adults and felt the strangeness of a new country, they have never seen their parents’ land, and everything that is supposed to be special about it.” (Sandberg Moustogianni, 2007, p. 22). As a result, they may lack the type
of understanding and attachment to the land and religion of Tibet that is primary to the unifying identity of the people and the fuel behind the effort to return (Venturino, 1997). This is viewed as a threat to Tibetan identity and, as a result, the instilling of knowledge and passion for their indigenous culture in the Tibetan youth is seen as key to the future and to the preservation of the Tibetan nation (Phuntsog, 1998). As the Tibetan language also is seen as a valued identifying bond in need of preservation, priority also is given to passing along language skills to the new generation both those born into the exile community and born abroad (Dorjee & Giles, 2005).

For Tibetan exiles, this also means fighting for identity while existing in circumstances that give them no permanent identifying papers or label of citizenship. As mentioned previously, Tibetans in India are only granted temporary Registration Certificates, making it clear that they are not official members of the Indian nation and that their stay there could be terminated at any time. In Malkki’s (1995) Purity and Exile, Michel Foucault (1979) was cited as arguing, “Documentation can come to be a very efficient technique of power by means of which people can be fixed and objectified and, in the process, rendered more visible as objects of knowledge and targets of ‘care and control’” (p. 170). A passport becomes a symbol of national identity and therefore important not only for the purpose of recognition by the individual but by other countries and persons around the world (Falcone & Wangchuk, 2008). Falcone and Wangchuk (2008) ascertained that, for Tibetans in exile, “the details, technologies and effects of documentation have very far-reaching consequences” including playing a “part in the socio-political theater of differentiating the native from the stranger” (p. 166). They went on to explain that “citizenship is a complex issue for Tibetans
in exile, irrevocably tied up with the cultural and the political, the symbolic and the legal, the patriotic and the practical” (p. 173).

The Dalai Lama also has acknowledged the transnational nature of his people as, although the majority of Tibetans reside back in their homeland or in exile communities in India, they also have spread throughout many nations around the globe. Dorjee and Giles (2005) reported that, according to The Tibet Fund, approximately 10,000 Tibetans reside in North America. The Dalai Lama often has referred to Tibetans as “citizens of the world” (Venturino, 1997), with a hope that people will embrace the Tibetan story and understand the displaced nature of his people. However, the Dalai Lama also has expressed unease over the official and unofficial move of Tibetans to Western nations such as the United States. This is a cause of concern, as the Dalai Lama sees the likely acculturation to their new environment as potentially resulting in the migrants becoming “less Tibetan” (Korom, 1997) and losing connection with their home community. The literature reinforces this concern as it examines the challenge Tibetans abroad have in maintaining their unique identity and in raising their children with a Tibetan education (Dorjee & Giles, 2005). Dorjee and Giles went on to highlight the major challenges experienced by Tibetans abroad as being the divide between the different values of the two cultures, the relatively small population of Tibetans abroad, and the lack of Tibetan schools and other cultural institutions. However this is countered by Mendoza’s (2002) assertion that “the ‘nation’” as an identity category is found to be fast losing its currency and naturalness even as its borders undergo re-definition, challenges, and redrawing” (p. 13). The Dalai Lama and the Tibetan people are confronting the implications of the increasing mobilization of the Tibetan people and are being forced to expand the definition of a diasporic community.
Religious Identity

It would be difficult to discuss the Tibetan people and culture without examining the influence of religion, which pervades all segments of society (Dorjee & Giles, 2005; Kolas, 2006; Michael, 1982). According to *Buddhism in Contemporary Tibet* (Goldstein & Kapstein, 1998), “Buddhism has played a central role in Tibetan society, defining morality and the fundamental meaning of existence through its core notions of karma, rebirth and enlightenment” (p. 5). The literature reinforces the idea that these beliefs, and the practices associated with Tibetan Buddhism, serve as a source of unity among the community and are a vital part of understanding the identity of the people. A common purpose is found through the public expressions of religion practiced within the Tibetan community and is a key element in any discussion on nationalism (Kolas, 1996).

The literature shows how Tibetan cultural identity is constructed through Buddhism and, in turn, how all areas of a Tibetan’s life, including the social and political aspects, along with language, literature, the arts, and architecture, are influenced (Dorjee & Giles, 2005). This cultural identity is also embedded in the narratives of the people with the voice of the Dalai Lama serving as the strongest messenger. When he speaks of the Tibetan people, he talks of how they are influenced by the combination of “universal principles of Buddhism with the uniqueness of the situation of Tibetan people,” claiming that a main characteristic of Tibetan identity is a “special inner strength” (Singer, 2011, p. 238).

In order to understand the influence of religion, one must examine some of the basic tenets of Tibetan Buddhism. Although there are several orders of Tibetan Buddhism, which may have unique doctrine, rituals, and spiritual practices, for the purpose of this study, I looked at some of the more general principles that are common across all the different...
schools. One of the major teachings is the “Three Precious Jewels,” which instructs followers to turn away from worldly activities and take refuge in the Buddha, his teaching, and in the religious community (Kapstein, 2006). Other virtues emphasized in Buddhist teachings include charity, self-restraint, patience, diligence, meditation, and insight (Kapstein, 2006).

The literature also has emphasized the idea of a collective well-being and of the call within Tibetan Buddhism to perform works to benefit others (The Dalai Lama, 1984). In the book, The Tibetans, by Kapstein (2006), Buddhism is described by the following:

Impermanence of conditional reality and the resulting inevitability of suffering and earth are matters of particular concern. Living beings who have not achieved nirvana, the enlightenment of a Buddha, are subject to a perpetual round of rebirth, their condition in any lifetime, being determined by the impetus of their past meritorious and demeritorious deeds. (p. 215)

This passage, detailing the concept of nirvana, highlights one of the major beliefs among the Tibetan people that relates directly to how they live their life and the choices they make throughout their existence. As my work is looking at the factors that influence decisions, it is important to note that Tibetans consider the consequences of their choices not only in the context of the short term, but also as it relates to achieving a higher level of enlightenment and possible implications for reincarnation. This, in many cases, can relate back to the sentiment of Tibetans of fulfilling one’s duty and the idea that one should make choices in one’s life and occupation to repay and serve the community (Sandberg Moustogianni, 2007). Even the BEP acknowledges the central role of Buddhism in the
Tibetan exile school system and highlights a central Buddhist concept in Article 2.4 when addressing the meaning of education:

Education is not to be recognised merely as a means of livelihood. Instead it is to be recognised as a means of achieving temporary as well as long-term welfare for the self and others. In particular, it is to be recognised as a vehicle of social welfare and service (TCEWF, 2005, p. 2).

As one comes to understand more of the basic ideology of Buddhism, it is not surprising to see the close ties between religion and politics in Tibetan culture. Using the Tibetan language, Kolas (1996), explained how the term *srid* is translated as politics and *chos* is religion. She went on to explain that

in term of *chos srid*, *srid* may be understood as “undertakings for the materialistic world” and *chos* as “undertakings for the spiritual world”. The term implies a distinction between spiritual and worldly affairs, while at the same time emphasizing interconnectedness. (p. 53)

This is seen through the Tibetan community, where the religious system is combined and integrated with other aspects of society such as politics and social and economic structures (Michael, 1982). It also is reflected in the role religious teachers and leaders have played in not only guiding spiritual pursuits but in assuming political and social leadership (Michael, 1982). This way of thinking is currently being reconsidered as the 14th Dalai Lama has announced his intentions to step back from the administrative duties within the exile community in order to give control to the people. On May 29, 2011, the Tibetan charter was amended, marking this separation of church and state (Mathison, 2011). According to Mathison (2011), “for the first time in more than 350 years, the Dalai Lama is no longer the
secular as well as the spiritual leader of the Tibetan people” (p. 1). With this move, the Dalai Lama’s formal title has changed from “Head of Nation” to “Protector and Symbol of Tibet and Tibetan People.” According to His Holiness, his reason for retiring is for the benefit of the Tibetan community:

Now, after my retirement, the institution of the Dalai Lama is more pure, more stable.
I felt we must separate political responsibility. The Dalai Lama should not carry that burden. So that is my selfish reason—to protect the old Dalai Lama tradition. It is safer without political involvement. (Mathison, 2011, p. 2).

This has shaken the foundation of some Tibetans as they look to understand a new reality that may lead to some disconnect between their faith beliefs and the governance of their community.

**Diasporic Identity**

The literature has generated some interesting contemplations on how the Tibetan people view “home” in light of the fact that they are living in exile away from the location they view as their true homeland. The Tibetan exile communities fall under the definition of a diaspora, as they are “displaced people who feel, maintain, invent or revive a connection with their prior home” (Shuval, 2000, p. 42). There is a good amount of literature that has looked at the diasporic experience lived by ethnic groups around the world who have been, in most cases, forced to leave their country yet desire an eventual return. These groups have had to make a new life for themselves in the meantime and build homes in host countries where they are sometimes welcome and at other times just tolerated. As a result, home is a complex matter and impacts feelings of “belonging” and “connectivity” within the community (Tsagarousianou, 2004). Tsagarousianou (2004) explained that:
the estrangement of a community in diaspora, its separation from the “natural” setting of the homeland, often leads to a particularly intense search for and negotiation of identity; gone are many traditional anchor points of culture; conventional hierarchy of authority can fragment. In short, the condition of diaspora is one in which the multiplicity of identity and community is a key dynamic. Debates about the meaning and boundaries of affiliation are hence a defining characteristic of the diaspora community. (p. 59)

In examining the different aspects that have influenced the Tibetan refugee community, the shared experience of displacement and yearning to return home has a major impact on the identity of this population. As I looked at the literature on the diasporic experience and connected it with the Tibetan exile reality, there were three major themes that emerged: sense of loss, connection, and desire to return.

**Sense of loss.** In looking at both Tibetans who were forced to leave Tibet in search of a new home and those who were born in exile, there is a common experience of exile and loss of native land that bonds the community. For those in the diaspora, there is a separation from the “natural” setting of a homeland that creates a greater need for a sense of identity (Tsagarousianou, 2004). Tsagarousianou (2004) noted that this search for and negotiation of identity results from a feeling of loss, and he explained that “gone are many traditional anchor points of culture; conventional hierarchy of authority can fragment. In short, the condition of diaspora is one in which the multiplicity of identity and community is a key dynamic” (p. 59).

**Connection.** As Tibetans, and members of other diasporic groups, face this loss, they often look to each other for strength and solidarity. They depend not so much on their
displacement, but on the connectivity of their experience. As they deal with their feelings of exclusion, limited opportunities, political domination and experiences of discrimination, the diasporic community helps to maintain some sense of community and belonging (Shuval, 2000). According to Shuval (2000),

this is accomplished by selectively preserving and recovering traditions so that they create or maintain identification with far reaching historic, cultural and political processes giving a sense of attachment elsewhere, in a different time accomplished by hopes or visions of renewal. (p. 47)

Desire to return. A key feature of a diaspora is the notion of the desire for an eventual return. In the case of Tibetans in exile, they survive building a home in one place while simultaneously yearning for another (Shuval, 2000). What the Tibetans may or may not realize is that their vision of home may no longer exist, as the years and the occupation of the Chinese have transformed their motherland to something beyond recognition (Tsagarousianou, 2004). This puts the Tibetan exile in a precarious position, as the identity and purpose of their community, as established above, partially depends on the vision of and aspirations to return home.

This leads to a discussion on the complex notion of home to the diasporic population. The truth for many exiled peoples is the fact that, no matter where they decide to live and how welcome they are in this new land, they do not belong to this society and may always be on the outside looking in. This may mean that for those who have journeyed from their native land, they “at once feel at home nowhere and everywhere” (Krishnaswamy, 1995, p. 125). According to Gready (1994), home is many things to the exile including “a quest, a
journey, a mission, a destiny” (p. 5). He also said that “home, like all else in exile, is a fragile and precious resource, fought over all the more fiercely for being so” (p. 5).

For the Tibetans in exile, it is necessary to attempt to claim a place of their own while still keeping sight of their real “home,” a home that in reality may end up being more of a mythical place of desire they have created in their mind (Tsagarousianou, 2004). This is true for many exiled people, as their memory of the homeland becomes increasingly fleeting and can be recreated only by an image built by memories, nostalgia, and desire (Gready, 1994). According to Tsagarousianou (2004), for diasporic people, home may end up taking on a different meaning as it can be looked at as “a lived experience of locality—varying experiences of pains and pleasures, the terrors and contentments, or the high and humdrum of everyday lived culture” (p. 57). This may mean that the Tibetan people have a need to transition their thinking from what home has meant to them and who they were, to acknowledging who they have become in their new surroundings.

This becomes even more complicated as one looks at the Tibetan exiles who have decided to migrate from the exile community to make new homes and establish lives abroad. There has been some debate as to how far-reaching the boundaries of connection may be when defining a diasporic community (Tsagarousianou, 2004). According to Cohen (2004), the migration and integration of the diasporic people have led to a new understanding as “many people now have multiple affiliations and more complex ethnic identities” (p. 88).

The new Tibetan diaspora is starting to be more inclusive of both the Tibetans living as refugees in India and those who have found their way to European or American communities. The hope is that, despite the gap in location and lifestyles, the transnational exile does not feel compelled or forced to dissolve the bonds with their ethnic community. In
fact, there is a need for this to be a concerted effort as “the notion of a heterogeneous group putting aside their differences and ‘pulling together’ is an important part of the entire struggle for independence and the maintenance of national identity” (Venturino, 1997, p 109).

**The Move Toward Migration**

This leads to an important examination of the literature on migrancy and how this relates to the Tibetan exile community. Looking at the phenomena of migration and migration theory, one must note that, “no matter how short or how long, how easy or how difficult, every act of migration involves an origin, a destination, and an intervening set of obstacles” (Lee, 1966, p. 49). In many cases, these types of trends are a result of the “failure of societies to meet the basic needs and aspirations of their citizens” (Kane, 1995, p. 16). Kane (1995) went on to explain that migration itself is not the result of just one factor and does not have to be considered as a positive or a negative thing but as a “response to working of modern economies, transportation systems and communications; to political pressures; and to individual drives” (p. 17). In many cases, leaving one’s native land is not the most desirable solution as it often breaks up families and disrupts lives (Kane, 1995). Most people would prefer to be able to stay home and “have the personal security, economic well-being, and access to education, health care, and a healthy environment” (Kane, 1995, p. 17) they desire. However, it is important to note that the self-exiled, although they may experience some of the similar emotions of loss and disconnect, cannot be compared to that of the initial pain of forced exile experienced by diasporic people.

The theories of migration relate that people move to places where they hope to be better off and that there is both an individual approach and a structural perspective to this phenomenon. When examining the individual approach, the assumption is made that
individuals evaluate the benefits of their move and make the best decision for their future. The subject of “human capital” comes into play as each person is considered a product of a series of investments and must find the best place to maximize these skills (Stalker, 2001). On the other hand, the structural factors relate to the social, economic, and political influences that determine the fate of a person (Stalker, 2001). According to Stalker (2001), both of these perspectives are combined to influence individuals’ decisions to leave their home and migrate to a new and strange place.

In the end, each migrant’s experience is unique and is rooted in differing motives and expectations. However, the result of the transnational movement of people requires a new way of thinking from both the host country and from the people on the move. Salmon Rushdie, in *Mythologies of Migrancy* (Krishnaswamy, 1995), described the impact of this movement:

> The effect of mass migrations has been the creation of radically new types of human being: people who root themselves in ideas rather than places, in memories as much as in material things; people who have been obliged to define themselves—because they are so defined by others—by their otherness; people in whose deepest selves strange fusions occur, unprecedented unions between what they were and where they find themselves. (p. 113)

**International Student Migration**

International students studying abroad often find themselves in new surroundings that offer opportunities beyond their expectations. It is not an uncommon concept for an international student to come abroad and then decide to stay on temporarily or permanently in the host country as there is “no guarantee that he will be able to apply his training
successfully” (Kindleberger, 1968, p. 141) upon returning home. According to Christofi and Thompson (2007), only up to 50% of international students elect to return to their home country after their education abroad. Some of the studies on this phenomenon have examined issues ranging from the initial intention of students before they embark on their studies, to the reverse culture shock of returning home (Bratsberg, 1995). Christofi and Thompson investigated the impact of sojourner adjustment to their host culture including “changes in their values, attitudes, behaviors, ideas, and perceptions” (p. 54). Their assertion was that many students study abroad at a significant time in their personal development when they are just formulating their core beliefs. This can lead to a disconnect with their home culture and eventually a struggle to face the challenges of readjusting (Christofi & Thompson, 2007). There is also some interesting work that has looked at the lifestyle perception of students and how they view the lifestyle in their host country as compared to their home country. Soon (2008) suggested that a student’s perception of a better lifestyle abroad may play a role in shaping his or her intention to return home.

Much of the alarm regarding a student’s decision whether or not to return home relates to the concern surrounding brain drain. Brain drain is defined as “a phenomenon in which people of a high level of skills, qualifications, and competence, leave their countries and emigrate” (Baruch et al., 2007, p. 99). This is often the case when bright students move from a developing country to a developed country, and it brings about a decrease in human capital that can impact the ability of the developing country to be productive and competitive (Mountford, 1997). The sending country loses out on an excellent medium for knowledge transfer and can experience a shortage of skilled personnel (Arasteh, 1996). Kindleberger
(1968) described this by stating, “An attempt to help a country turns out to help an individual and to result in a net loss of talent for the country” (p. 139).

There are no current studies that have looked specifically at the rate of and reason for Tibetans students deciding to stay abroad after their studies, although there is significant literature, outlined previously, that has addressed the need for human capital formation in the Tibetan exile communities.

Closely related to the research on the international student migration phenomena is the research done using Kurt Lewin’s push-pull model (as cited in Baruch et al., 2007). In adapting Lewin’s change model, researchers have taken a look at the forces that impact a person’s decision whether or not to move to a different country (Baruch et al., 2007). The “push” factors are those that cause people to move away from something and, in the case of international students, are the issues that operate within the home country and prompt an interest in studying abroad. The “pull” factors relate to the features that make a host country an attractive destination.

The literature provides examples of some of the factors that push students away from their home, most pertaining to issues related to disparity of economic opportunities. These factors include issues related to the lack of jobs, underemployment, or limited opportunities for upward mobility (Doerschler, 2006; Kane, 1995). For exiled Tibetans specifically, this negative outlook on the future relates directly to their status in India and the diminishing hope that they may be able to return to Tibet (Sandberg Moustogianni, 2007). Tibetans see the promise of more opportunities in Western countries as opposed to staying in India “where their future is uncertain, salaries are low, discrimination and corruption prevalent and no rights are given” (Sandberg Moustogianni, 2007, p. 21). Other factors, such as inadequate
facilities, minimal administrative support, quality of colleagues, and lack of intellectual life, compound the concerns regarding return (Kindleberger, 1968).

On the other hand, the literature abounds with reasons why prospective immigrants, and international students specifically, might be pulled toward the opportunities in a new land. Once again, most relate to economic opportunities and the search for a better standard of living (Alfred, 2010). According to the article “Transnational Migration, Social Capital and Lifelong Learning in the USA” (Alfred, 2010), “The basic reasons why immigrants come to America is the gap between life’s aspirations and expectations and the means to fulfill them in the sending countries” (p. 222). Alfred (2010) went on to argue that the current media technology that now reaches every corner of the globe plays a big role in sending out messages that highlight the disparity between what international students might see around them at home and the promise of what they might find in a receiving country. “Overall most people migrate to fulfill their dreams of a better life (as defined by Western standards) that cannot be realized in their home country” (Alfred, 2007, p. 59).

There are other factors in play, related to both social and political aspects, that have been identified as influential in compelling people to leave their country to move abroad. One of these is “the suppression of individual freedoms at home coupled with the promise of extended liberties” (Doerschler, 2006, p. 1101). This may mean the opportunity to more freely discuss their political views and even take action to be an advocate for their home country. The literature on Tibetan migrants has highlighted the trend of young people going abroad and getting more involved in politics as well as the effort to preserve their culture, including being able to better contribute financially to the cause (Sandberg Moustogianni, 2007).
For the Tibetan community specifically, the literature has identified some of the major motivators for migration in three primary areas, including to enjoy a higher standard of living and help the diasporic community back in India and Nepal financially; to garner better modern education for their children; and to promote awareness and gain global support for a peaceful resolution of Sino-Tibetan issues. (Dorjee & Giles, 2005, p. 150)

The literature also has introduced the idea of the embeddedness theory to help understand why international students and other international people stay in their host country (Tharenou & Caulfield, 2010). According to Tharenou and Caulfield (2010), “This theory suggests that when expats are strongly embedded in a host country, they are pulled to remain and have little intent to leave, most often meaning that they have little intention to return home” (p. 1012).

**Decision Making**

In the preceding review of literature, several theories were introduced to better understand cultural identity and migration. As this dissertation is focused strongly on the decision a Tibetan student must make to return home or migrate to the United States, Deci and Ryan’s (1985) self-determination theory was also consulted. In Deci and Ryan’s work, motivation is broken down into two distinct types of factors: intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation describes behaviors that are engaged in freely and for personal satisfaction or fulfillment. These can be broken down into three subfactors that include: intrinsic motivation to know, intrinsic motivation toward accomplishment, and intrinsic motivation to experience stimulation (Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier & Ryan, 1991). However, Deci and Ryan stated that this more internal guide “although strong and persistent, is also vulnerable to the continued
encroachment of environmental forces that are perhaps all too common and often socially sanctioned” (p. 43).

This leads to an examination of extrinsic motivation, which includes behaviors that are “performed not out of interest but because they are believed to be instrumental to some separable consequence” (Deci et al., 1991, p. 328). Deci and Ryan (1985) broke down extrinsic motivation into four types: external, introjected, identified, and integrated. Extrinsic motivation is typically prompted by the desire for “extrinsic reward or to comply with an external constraint” (Deci & Ryan, 1985, p. 49)

This review of literature has offered an introduction to many important concepts related to Tibetan culture, identity, and the trend toward becoming a more transnational people, thus providing a foundation for this research. Chapter 3 will present information on the methodology and theoretical framework used in my work as well as an overview of the data collection and analysis process, researcher role, and goodness and trustworthiness.
CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY, DESIGN, AND METHODS

The focus of this study was to better understand how the migration decisions of Tibetan scholarship students were influenced by the conflicting factors of self-interest and those of community and spiritual obligation. I used qualitative research as a way to understand the meaning behind this social phenomenon and to better comprehend the human actions involved (Esterberg, 2002; Schwandt, 2007). Qualitative research is concerned with understanding the constructs and interpretations of reality that people establish as they interact with their social world (Merriam, 2002). It is important to note that meanings can have multiple interpretations and are often in flux. According to Merriam (2002), qualitative research has other key characteristics including the role of the researcher as the primary instrument, the inductive nature of the work, and the need for inquiry to be richly descriptive. All of these concepts lent themselves to the purpose of my study and to my interest in engaging with and understanding the Tibetan community.

An interpretive theoretical perspective grounded in the epistemological view of constructivism was a fitting framework for this study, as this approach allowed me to better understand how the respondents made meaning of their experiences. The epistemology of constructivism presumes that people construct meaning and knowledge through their interactions with the world (Crotty, 1998). These meanings are impacted by individual cultural influences that affect how people understand their own experiences. In basic interpretive research, the researcher can then interpret the participant’s words and actions in light of social explanations of the phenomenon (Merriam, 2002).

In addition to using a constructivist epistemology and an interpretive theoretical perspective, I implemented a phenomenological methodology. According to Merriam
(2002), “the defining characteristic of phenomenological research is its focus on describing the ‘essence’ of a phenomenon from the perspectives of those who have experienced it” (p. 93). Creswell (2009) added to this definition by highlighting the dual nature of phenomenology as he explained that experiences have both an outward appearance as well as an internal consciousness that is created through the memory, image, and meaning of each individual. This corresponds well with the work I have done as I concentrated my research on comprehending the individual experience of Tibetan scholarship students as they related to both their own intrinsic discourse as well as the external perceptions they managed.

Although phenomenology invites researchers “to engage with the phenomena in our world and make sense of them directly and immediately” (Crotty, 1998, p. 79), it also requires some level of self-assessment and awareness of any personal perceptions and biases. Phenomenological studies require researchers to put off judgment of, or “bracket,” what is known, in order to be open to the unique meanings and experiences of the participants (Crotty, 1998). Avoiding prejudgments was important to my work, as my experience with and perception of the Tibetan community, although serving as a foundation and motivation to my research, needed to be bracketed allowing me to hear and understand the voices of my interviewees.

**Role of Researcher**

My life, both personal and professional, has been greatly impacted by the opportunities I have had to live abroad, travel to over 75 countries, work in international education, and interact with people from around the world. Over the past 13 years, in my position as Assistant Director of International Admissions for the University of Northern Iowa, I have focused my energy on advocating for international students and pushing issues
of internationalization. My past experiences have impacted every aspect of my life including my world views, hobbies, relationships, and positionality. My experiences have not made me an expert on international affairs or intercultural relations; however, they have given me a unique lens through which to view my life and to relate to the world around me. Included in this is the journey I have been on over the past few years of learning about the story of Tibet, the plight of the Tibetan people, and the aspirations of Tibetan students.

It all started through my professional contact with The Tibet Fund as the UNI liaison for the TSP. In this role I learned about the efforts of that program, worked closely with The Tibet Fund staff to place students at my university, and began to interact with the Tibetan students at my school. In 2006, a staff member at The Tibet Fund mentioned to me the possibility of His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama coming to visit UNI to recognize our long-standing commitment to supporting Tibetan students in their studies at our institution. Although at that time it seemed like a far-fetched prospect, eventually it all came together and a 3-year journey culminated in one of the most-recognized religious figures in the world bestowing a Tibetan prayer shawl around my neck during his visit in May 2010. My involvement in the invitation, planning, and facilitation of this momentous event led me to become further engaged with the Tibetan community, including significant interaction with my students, Tibetan officials, and visiting Tibetan guest speakers. During this time I also had the opportunity, as a result of professional obligations and personal interest, to travel to both the exile community in Dharamsala, India, and to the Tibetan homeland within China. These trips gave me the chance to speak personally with both those in exile and those in Tibet to learn more about their struggles as well as their hopes for their life and the future of their people.
With each interaction, book read, and personal observation, I have become more familiar and, in many ways, more connected to the Tibetan community. All of this led me to a point of great interest in and deep caring for the plight of the Tibetan people. Throughout this unplanned and unexpected journey, I have learned so much about the politics, culture, religion, and humanity that makes these people so unique. I have seen the struggle and the celebration, the conflict and the unity, and the frustration and the resolve of the Tibetan people. Despite my position as an outsider, I have always felt welcomed, appreciated, and needed in my interaction and collaboration. This led me to want to understand even more about the Tibetan experience and, if possible, contribute to the literature on and the knowledge of this culture.

**Outsider Researcher Role**

In regard to my role as a researcher, I acknowledged my position as an outsider and considered the potential barriers to access that I could run up against. I took note of the warning by postcolonial writers of the unique challenges I may need to address related to trust and power as a researcher coming in from the outside (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). As in other indigenous communities, I knew that it was likely that the Tibetan people could be a bit guarded and suspect of an outsider, such as myself, coming in to “scrutinize” their people. In her book, Tuhiwai Smith (1999) included suggestions on how to make methods more culturally appropriate, including utilizing a native person as a guide, attempting to incorporate oneself into the daily life of the participants, seeking assistance from the community, and pursuing empowering outcomes. These were important strategies I implemented in my work.
Although it has been written that the interviewer should not reveal a lot about herself in order to avoid any bias (Esterberg, 2002), I decided that it was to my advantage to disclose my previous relationship with the Tibetan community and with the Dalai Lama to each of my interview participants. This helped to develop rapport and made participants aware of our shared interests and experiences. Esterberg (2002) cautioned that people may not be willing to be as honest or to share intimate details about their life when they do not feel a certain amount of trust. This is especially true when the researcher is an outsider and appears very different from his or her participants.

**Methods**

**Data Collection**

Phenomenological research looks at how people make meaning of experiences from their unique perspective (Merriam, 2002). It was thus vital to identify fitting methods of data collection to maximize my ability to gather and understand this type of information. According to Merriam (2002), “interviewing is the primary method of data collection wherein one attempts to uncover the essence, the invariant structure, of the meaning of experience” (p. 93). As a result, I utilized the qualitative strategy of in-depth interviews as the primary means of collecting data. I intentionally kept the number of participants to a small size in order to focus on the depth of the responses rather than a large quantity of insights (Esterberg, 2002). According to Creswell (2009), this is consistent with most phenomenological studies in which the number of subjects is kept small in order for the researcher to have the opportunity to better understand each interviewee’s lived experiences and thus result in information-rich findings.
I used semistructured interviews, as they were less rigid and allowed me to “explore a topic more openly and to allow interviewees to express their opinions and ideas in their own words” (Esterberg, 2002, p. 87). I brought to the interview a basic outline of possible ideas and questions but let the responses from the interviewee influence the scope and direction of the interview. I developed four broad topical areas for my interview questions (see Appendix C) including: (a) experience abroad, (b) decision-making practices, (c) identity, and (d) community.

The participants for this study were 8 former TSP recipients who previously had studied at U.S. institution of higher education. As all recipients of the TSP must meet certain minimum grade criteria, test results, and level of English proficiency to participate in the program, I was able to make certain assumptions about my participant pool. The final selection of participants was selected from respondents of the TSP Alumni Survey which was distributed in May 2011. This survey was developed as part of a required capstone project in collaboration with The Tibet Fund to elicit desired information for their organization (see Appendix D). The survey was sent electronically to 186 former TSP participants, and 37 completed the instrument. The final question on the survey asked respondents if they were interested in participating in a follow-up interview to share more in-depth information. Of those surveyed, 17 volunteered to be contacted and supplied their e-mail address. From the volunteer group, I utilized a purposefully selected sampling to identify the 8 participants who could provide diverse and profound insights that would help me better address my research problem and questions (Creswell, 2009). This included looking at both the demographic information and the survey responses in order to select those with the qualities and perspectives that would most contribute to my study.
As the primary objective of my research was to understand the differing decisions of Tibetan scholarship students to return home or to stay abroad after their studies, it was of prime importance to select respondents who represented these two diverging viewpoints. Of the survey respondents who volunteered to be contacted for an interview, 10 were living within the Tibetan exile communities in India and 7 were residing abroad in the United States or Canada. I also had reserved the right to utilize a referral sampling strategy if needed in which I could ask initial interview participants to refer me to others who might fit the criteria and who may be willing to participate in an interview (Esterberg, 2002). Fortunately it was not necessary for me to turn to this option.

Once my participants were selected, I contacted each one via e-mail to explain my intentions and discuss logistics of setting up a time and place to interview. As I stated above, my participants were spread out throughout the United States, Canada, and India making it impossible for me to conduct all of the interviews in a face-to-face format. However, as a result of the travel duties of my job, I was hoping to be able to arrange, without too much difficulty, to travel to Dharamsala during my work trip in India in order to complete some of the interviews. This was an important priority to me relating back to my concerns about the need to be able to build relationships and trust with my interview participants. I felt that an effort to travel to their “turf” and to be able to look them in the eye would have gone a long way to building the rapport needed for a successful interview. Unfortunately, a few days before my departure, my flights both to and from Dharamsala were canceled making it impossible for me to travel to the exile community and conduct the interviews in person. As a result, all interviews were conducted by phone or Skype. Interviews were conducted in
English and, although language clarification was sought at times from both sides, the use of English for the conversation was not a barrier to communication or understanding.

All necessary steps were taken to gain approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for this study, and informed consent paperwork was developed and distributed to interview participants. All interview participants were sent the informed consent paperwork electronically for review 2 weeks before their interview. Participants through Skype or phone were asked to complete and fax or e-mail it back prior to the interview. Forms were signed by me as the interviewer, and a copy was provided to the participants. In addition, as detailed in the informed consent form, all personal identifiers were removed and pseudonyms were used in order to protect anonymity. Confidentiality provisions were addressed as part of the IRB approval.

I also engaged in document analysis as part of my research methods. I requested materials from The Tibet Fund that helped me to better understand the criteria for their program, the commitment students make upon agreeing to participate, and the general philosophy of the organization. These included The Tibet Fund Tibetan Scholarship Program 2012 Announcement and the Letter of Understanding (see Appendix A and B), the Outcome Assessment of the Tibetan Scholarship Program (SRI International, 2004), and the List of TSP Scholars Since 1988. Merriam (2002) stated that “the strength of documents as a data source lies with the fact that they already exist in the situation; they do not intrude upon or alter the setting in ways that the presence of the investigator might” (p. 13). The information from these documents helped me to better understand what was communicated to and expected of my interview participants before they engaged in their study abroad and helped me to balance this with what I had learned in the field.
I also examined survey results from TSP recipients. As mentioned, I previously engaged in the creation and implementation of a survey for The Tibet Fund. The objective of this project was to assist the organization in gathering and assessing information from former TSP participants in order to better understand the impact and outcomes of the program. As I knew this also would likely be the population I wanted to study for my dissertation research, I included questions that might be of interest to my work and that might help me to identify participants for further inquiry. I analyzed these documents in order to compare and contrast them with the concepts that emerged from my interview data.

Data Analysis

The data from this study came primarily from the findings of the semistructured interviews conducted with the selected participants. All interviews were audio recorded with the permission of the participants. Each sound file was tagged with the name of the participant and the date, time, and place of interview. Transcripts were transcribed by several sources. Some difficulties were experienced in this process due to the accent of the participants and the ability to understand all statements. Tibetan speakers were brought in to listen to portions of the interviews to help decipher certain words and phrases. E-mails requesting clarification were sent to some participants to ensure the transcription of their statements were correct. All interview transcripts were kept in a secure office in a password-protected computer. Only my major professor and I had access to this information.

After each interview, I read the transcript multiple times to become familiar with the data and to better understand its overall meaning (Creswell, 2009). My data analysis was an ongoing process that was “conducted concurrently with gathering data, making interpretations and writing reports” (Creswell, 2009, p. 184). I recorded my observations,
assessments, and procedures in a series of memos that I referred back to throughout the data analysis process. The memos assisted me in providing records of my progress that served as an audit trail and helped me to develop my thoughts and organize my insights (Esterberg, 2002; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

After all my interviews were completed and transcribed, I attempted to make sense of the data by implementing a system of coding that identified both predetermined categories as well as new themes that emerged from the findings (Creswell, 2009). Creswell (2009) defined coding as “taking text data or pictures gathered during data collection, segmenting sentences, or images into categories, and labeling those categories with a term, often based in the actual language of the participant” (p. 186). The use of predetermined codes allowed me to carry over the topical categories established in the interview questions and keep those ideas at the forefront of the study. However, most of the process was directed by an open-coding method by which the data itself drove the establishment of themes. Esterberg (2002) noted that this allows the researcher to “reveal potential meaning” and “begin to see patterns and commonalities and develop a focus” (p. 158).

As I reviewed the work, in the margins I labeled the categories that were brought up frequently as well as ones that were mentioned less often but deemed relevant or intriguing to me (Esterberg, 2002). I made efforts to group these codes to reinforce or establish overarching themes that could be explored further and which related back to my research purpose and questions. Creswell (2009) encouraged these themes to “display multiple perspectives from individuals and be supported by diverse quotations and specific evidence” (p. 189). These themes were then looked at in relation to the results of my document analysis in order to check for corroboration or inconsistencies.
It is also important to note that, in my research findings, I chose to quote my participants verbatim, even when the language was not grammatically correct or was difficult to understand. I did this in order to honor the voice and preserve the true sentiment, providing clarification or explanation when necessary.

**Trustworthiness**

The issue of trustworthiness is a crucial aspect that must be considered in qualitative study. According to Merriam (2002), there are eight possible strategies for enhancing validity and reliability in research work. Of those strategies, I implemented several of them including triangulation, member checks, reflexivity, audit trail, and rich, thick descriptions.

*Triangulation* requires the researcher to utilize more than one data collection or data analysis strategy in order to provide different sources of evidence to back up their position (Esterberg, 2002; Merriam, 2002). For my work, I used two different types of data gathering strategies, which were my interviews and document analysis.

*Member checking* gives the interview participants the opportunity to validate the information that has been collected (Merriam, 2002). According to Schwandt (2007), “it is often claimed to be an important procedure for corroborating or verifying findings or of assuring they are valid and meet the criterion of confirmability” (p. 187). Interviewees were e-mailed a copy of the transcript of their interview to check the transcription and to provide any feedback or additional thoughts. Only two participants sent back follow-up notes.

*Reflexivity*, a strategy also referred to as *researcher’s position*, requires the researcher to spend time reflecting on the biases, predispositions, and preferences that he or she may bring to the work (Schwandt, 2007). I detailed in a previous section what I believe I brought to the research and how it might have affected my investigation.
The *audit trail* includes implementing techniques that help to keep a “detailed account of the methods, procedures, and decision points in carrying out the study” (Merriam, 2002, p. 31). My effort to keep memos throughout the study that described my data collection process, the notes on my emerging categories, and the details on my decision-making process served as a necessary trail of my work and assisted in authenticating my findings.

The use of *rich, thick description* in qualitative studies is an important strategy to ensure validity (Merriam, 2002). The more detailed descriptions and information provided to the reader, the easier it is for them to understand and consider the findings. Thick descriptions also assist the reader in determining the transferability of the findings to different settings or contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In my findings chapter, the thoughtful and profound perspectives that were shared by my participants make it very easy to include rich, think descriptions for the readers.

**Ethical Issues and Considerations**

There are several ethical issues that need to be considered before engaging in qualitative research. Esterberg (2002) noted the two most relevant are informed consent and confidentiality. Informed consent requires that participants are informed of all aspects of the study and any potential risks before they agree to participate in the research (Esterberg, 2002). The IRB-approved informed consent document that I provided to all interviewees let them know that their involvement was strictly voluntary and that they were able to withdraw at any time. They were given details of the study and advised of their rights as participants. I gave each respondent the opportunity to ask any questions of the project and required each to sign the informed consent document if he or she agreed to participate.
The confidentiality issue is another important ethical consideration and was strategically handled in order to protect the privacy of the research participants (Esterberg, 2002). Steps were taken to maintain the anonymity of the participants, including using pseudonyms for each participant, removing any other personal identifiers, and keeping tapes and documents in a secure area. Access to the data was limited to me and my major professor.

**Delimitations and Limitations**

The limitations of the research include a narrow participant pool from which to select interview candidates. This pool came from the 17 respondents to the TSP Alumni Survey who responded affirmatively to participating in a follow-up interview. These volunteers may have had personal agendas that could have motivated them to take advantage of this opportunity to share more of their views. At times it was hard to judge how much of their perceptions were representative of the larger population.

Although prolonged engagement is an important part of qualitative research (Esterberg, 2002), due to time and distance limitations I was able to complete only one interview per participant instead of a series of interactions. Although face-to-face interviews should be conducted when possible, the travel complications I encountered, as well as the wide-ranging locations of my participant pool, required all the interviews to be completed through telephone or Skype.

As the history and current political situation of the Tibetan people is quite complex and volatile, it was difficult to perform a comprehensive examination of all the aspects of Tibetan culture that might have impacted my research questions. A delimitation of my study was my choice to forgo thoroughly addressing the past and present dynamic with China in
my discussion of the diaspora as well as the many other unique psychological and societal
issues that came from living as a refugee exiled from a country. There are many more
avenues that could be explored related to these issues in further research conducted on the
Tibetan community.

As the researcher, I also confronted the issues of trust and power dynamics that often challenge researchers coming from the outside. As mentioned in my positionality statement, I had some very important connections to and bonds with the community that assisted me in gaining access to and trust from the Tibetan people.

Summary

It is my hope that through this work I gave voice to the Tibetan exile plight and assisted in the understanding of what influences decisions that could have an impact on the future of their community. My theoretical framework and methods were all chosen to assure that the experiences and perceptions of the individual Tibetan were central to my search for meaning while placing them in the context of a very complex and evolving society. As the image of Tibet has changed throughout the years, from one of romance and mystery to a current view that is more harsh and troubling, so should our understanding of what the burden of responsibility might be like for this diasporic people and the conflict they may experience when making these choices. The remaining sections of this dissertation examine these points and share some of what I have learned about the people, culture, and amazing potential of this society.
CHAPTER 4. FINDINGS

The findings of the study are presented in this chapter. First, a brief overview of the results of the pilot study survey conducted as part of a capstone project will be outlined. Second, interview participant profiles are described to provide an introduction to the background and current career status of the TSP scholars involved in the study. Finally, a detailed overview of the data collected for this study is provided along with accompanying explanations. The data are organized into four major areas that encompass the most significant themes that emerged and addresses the purpose of the study as well as responds to the research questions. Specific examples and participant quotations will be used throughout the chapter to illustrate these findings.

Survey Results

As detailed in previous chapters, the survey was designed and implemented as part of a capstone project and with The Tibet Fund serving as the primary client. The objective was to assist The Tibet Fund in gathering and assessing information from scholarship alumni to be able to communicate outcomes of the program to interested parties. It also served to identify potential participants for further in-depth interviews and to uncover potential topics for my continued research.

Demographics

A total of 186 surveys were distributed to alumni of the TSP program; 49 participants started the survey and 37 completed the instrument. The respondents identified 21 unique U.S. institutions as their school of enrollment during the scholarship program. Of the respondents, 55% (n = 22) received the 2-year degree grant opportunity and 45% (n = 18) were nondegree grants for one academic year. Other demographic characteristics of
Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Survey Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age category</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22–29</td>
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<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30–37</td>
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<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38–45</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46–53</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54–60</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>≥ 61</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current residence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field of study during TSP</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art &amp; architecture</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business &amp; MBA</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computers &amp; technology</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education &amp; teaching</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthcare &amp; public health</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanities &amp; cultures</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law &amp; criminal justice</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing &amp; medicine</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical &amp; earth sciences</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public affairs &amp; policy</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social &amp; behavioral sciences</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highest degree completed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelors</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters</td>
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<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

participants are provided in Table 1 with descriptive data by gender, age category, current residence, field of study, and highest degree earned

Survey Questions

The Tibet Fund TSP program has several published goals for their program and seeks to ensure participants have the opportunity to benefit from their participation. Question 8
asks students to what extent they agree that they gained certain skills and knowledge during their TSP experience. It is important to note that of the nine skills listed, all received a higher percentage of agree/strongly agree than disagree/strongly disagree. Two skill areas, enhanced knowledge of chosen profession and oral communication, received 100% agreement from respondents, whereas better understanding U.S. culture and written communication skills received 98%. The skill/knowledge area most central to the mission of the TSP, better understanding of how I can help my community, also received 95% agree/strongly agree responses. A list of all the survey items and the percentage of respondents who answered either agree or strongly agree is found Table 2.

Table 2

Skills and Knowledge Gained During the Tibetan Scholarship Program (N = 40)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey item</th>
<th>Responses of agree/strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Better understanding of United States culture</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater insight in the Tibetan political situation</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better understanding of how I can help my community</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New understanding of other faith traditions</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research experience and comprehension</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhanced knowledge of chosen profession</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership skills</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written communication skills</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral communication skills</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer skills</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Closely related to the previous question, TSP participants were asked to rank in order of importance the objectives of the TSP as it related to their experience. Of the four choices, 75% of respondents selected “to enhance my ability to contribute to the Tibetan exile community” as their number one or number two ranking. This is connected to the question on current location of employment, which illuminates the number of TSP alumni who have actually returned to India to meet this TSP objective. As revealed in Table 3, 70% of TSP participants were currently living in India and contributing to the exile community through their current employment. The remaining 30% were living outside of India with the largest percent (18%) residing in the United States.

Table 3

Current Location of Employment (N = 33)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TSP alumni were serving several different sectors of the work force, as illustrated by responses to question 10’s inquiry about the employer that represents the respondents’ current employment situation. The results given in Table 4 show that 37% of the respondents were working in educated-related positions and 27% were working within the CTA. In addition, 17% were not employed at the time of the survey.
Table 4

*Current Employment Situation (N = 41)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current employer</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Central Tibetan Administration (CTA)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tibetan Children Village School</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-profit organization</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other CTA-sponsored/affiliated institutions</td>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher education institution</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not employed</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Open-ended Questions**

The survey’s open-ended questions elicited responses that provided more insight into the experiences of TSP alumni both during and after their study experience. Survey items asked respondents to share experiences and perceptions that examined the worth of the TSP program and included inquiries on the professional opportunities that were gained, the increased skills acquired to serve the community, and the value of the program. Some significant themes emerged that reinforced The Tibet Fund’s investment in this program. TSP alumni mentioned repeatedly that their experience studying abroad gave them further insight into their field of study, greater confidence in their abilities, and improved their communication skills. One respondent commented that participation in the program had a major impact on his/her life: “The TSP experience has opened all doors for me. It has helped me to gain knowledge in my field but has also helped me to boost my confidence and has opened all avenues for my future.” Benefits such as pay raises, promotions, new
appointments, special recognition, and job offers were also attributed to the TSP study experience.

Beyond the more personal benefits, respondents voiced their feelings on how their educational experience enabled them to make a greater impact on the community. TSP scholars attributed the opportunity to learn about Western culture and immerse themselves in a mature democratic society as primary to their increased understanding of their own community and the realization of a need for change. This resulted in both personal and professional growth, according to one respondent:

TSP helped garner more understanding on Tibet and the whole world in a better way. Such program has given me a scope to engage more on political issues not only on Tibet but also to learn and understand better about India and China. My educational background on International Relations helped me tremendously in my professional line, which is connected with political issues.

Many respondents spoke of the great need for “abundant human resources to make our exile community a better and successful one.” TSP alumni pointed out that this scholarship program is one of the only avenues for Tibetans to be able to study at a U.S. university and gain the skills needed to make this impact:

I would say that TSP is the only major opportunity for young Tibetan graduates and professionals to gain the much needed exposure and avenue for exploring further studies and research. Of course, TSP has greatly helped the professionals serving in the Tibetan community, especially teachers and administrators, gain new ideas and skills in improving their performance as well as introducing better practices in their profession.
Answers by several TSP scholars pointed out that the program has produced “a lot of educated Tibetan people that will have a bearing on the evolution of Tibetan democracy.” In addition, TSP alumni were described as “shouldering important posts in the community and doing great community service.” The majority of the respondents were overwhelmingly positive about the worth of the program and its ability to make an impact on the Tibetan exile community. One TSP scholar made a strong case for this by stating:

TSP is an eye opening and looking into wider horizons for Tibetan graduates here in India. This has brought better education system and efficient staffs for the central Tibetan administration. This program is like a dream come true for Tibetans. Without this program, it is very very impossible for Tibetan refugees. Thanks to such programs, Tibetans can think about going into universities in the U.S. Currently most of the CTA Secretaries, decision-making people are all TSP alums. Also TCV school principals, administrators and teachers are also alums. Teachers are the nation builder, their guidance, advice means a lot to the students and current students are future leaders. So this program is like a caterpillar growing into a butterfly for the Tibetan refugee community.

Another respondent looked at how the program could provide long-term benefits for the future of all Tibetans: “The TSP is rendering a yeomen service in empowering our people, which in turn will go a long way in rebuilding our nation, should an opportunity does come our way in the near future.”

Some of the answers that were given in the open-ended section alluded to a growing concern within the community regarding the rate of return of TSP participants after their studies. This topic is a serious issue facing The Tibet Fund and the CTA and is what led me
to select this as the focus for my dissertation research. As shown previously, the majority of the TSP scholars do make the decision to fulfill their obligation and return to the exile community. One respondent acknowledged the importance of returning after graduation:

As one of the TSP returnee, I feel proud to be among others who had returned to our community to serve and contribute. It is the basic principle of us as Tibetans to be true to yourself. I believe mere returning to our community isn’t important but I strongly feel that returning to serve our community is more important. I am committed to serve our community at the best of my capabilities and knowledge, which I gained over the years.

Another respondent shared sentiments about not only the need to return and serve, but also the major impact it can have on the future of the Tibetan people:

Life in exile itself is a challenge and returning to serve our community is my utmost priority. Soon after completing my studies, I returned and rejoined (CTA). I believe Tibetan community needs human resource, more so intellectual resources. I for one feel that it is our responsibility to share what we learnt and make our struggle for freedom a living history for the coming generations. So that, the spirit of Tibet will stay forever till we accomplish our sacred goal for attaining freedom.

However, statistics from The Tibet Fund and commentary from survey respondents confirm that the more recent TSP recipients do not share as strongly in this feeling of a responsibility to return. Although only a few of the nonreturning respondents decided to broach this topic in their comments, the statements that were made revealed how complicated and sensitive this issue is when a Tibetan makes the personal decision to stay and make a life abroad for himself or herself. One respondent acknowledged the conflict experienced in
making this choice and ways TSP scholars have tried to “pay back” the Tibetan community with some of the activities they have engaged in within their new surroundings:

I decided not to return and it was the most difficult decision I had to make. I am still living with the guilt! I have learned to live with it and the fact that I was able to make contribution to the Tibetan community through my involvement with my local Tibetan association has helped my conscience.

Finally, several respondents detailed some of the challenges currently being faced by the Tibetan exile community and how it has impacted their ability to implement what they learned or, in some cases, how it may have deterred students to return. Several mentioned the lack of jobs available in their field or that the jobs that are available do not match their qualifications: “I could have contributed a lot to CTA if I was given a job where I can use my expertise but without any scope of using ones education, there is very limited ways one can contribute to the society. I am utterly disappointed.”

The most satisfied TSP participants tended to be those who were returning to a position that they held previous to their departure and could resume their duties and work to maximize their new knowledge and skills. However, in some cases, respondents shared how they met with resistance from some within the Tibetan community and administration and the struggle they experienced when they tried to make difficult changes. Issues related to politics and the social divide within the community were mentioned several times as barriers to TSP alumni being able to utilize their new abilities and make the desired impact. One respondent shared that

I was equipped with new ideas and wider experience but to put them in action is not an easy task because we are running a government in exile with limited financial and
human resources. Also, there is a clash of ideas with the senior administrative staffs who have grown up with the old system so change is hard to come by.

Another respondent detailed the experience and frustration upon returning home:

I came back with lots of ideas but limited resource and somewhat conservative ideology of some people in the administration and faculty was a big challenge.

However, I am not discouraged and still pursuing my ideas to improve over all face of campus life and experience in education.

It is clear from the data that, although there are areas of concern and suggested improvements, there are many positive outcomes to participation in the TSP that support the goals of the program. The responses to question 8, which asked their level of agreement with certain skills they learned while studying abroad, confirms this, as the overwhelming majority responded affirmatively. In addition, the open-ended questions reinforced the positive results and added an array of additional comments reflecting on the different ways TSP alumni had benefited from their participation and the worthiness of the program. With the emphasis on education, the resulting improvement of teaching and placement of TSP alumni in jobs in the exile schools also reinforces the intended mission of the program, the Tibetan community values, and the teachings of the Dalai Lama.

The survey results also demonstrated how gained skills and knowledge had been channeled by TSP alumni into benefiting the exile community. This is one of the main objectives of The Tibet Fund and the TSP, as documented in their publications. The responses to question 9 reveals the degree of understanding participants have to the importance of this aspiration and their level of desire to make their own contribution. Answers within the open-ended section reveal that many respondents took this very seriously.
and felt that they had been able to accomplish this upon their return. The numbers also show that the majority of students who completed this survey had returned to the exile community and currently had jobs in important sectors of the workforce, including over 60% in the education or administration field. It is notable that for those who did not return, there was still mention of ways they were able to contribute to the community externally.

**Interview Participant Profiles**

In order to provide a better understanding of the 8 scholars who participated in the in-depth interviews of this study, a brief introduction is given of their personal, educational, and professional background as well as their current undertakings and interviewer observations. Participants were given pseudonyms to provide confidentiality. Due to the small nature of the sample, some details, such as majors and jobs, were kept general in order to avoid identifying information.

**Diki**

Born and raised in Dharamsala, Diki had to grow up fast as she dealt with living in a household with an alcoholic father. Fortunately, she had a very strong mother who served as a role model and guide throughout her life. When it came time for higher studies, Diki chose the field of education despite the fact that she never really wanted to be a teacher. In fact, when discussing the education system in India and her years working as a teacher, she did not hesitate to express multiple issues she had with the curriculum and instructed way of teaching. However, she chose this field as she felt it provided a better prospect for future employment opportunities in the Tibetan exile community and a more stable way to help support her family.
Diki was resigned to this path until the opportunity arose for her to apply and earn the scholarship to study in the United States, a country she knew about only through Hollywood movies. Her fortune continued to change when, after arriving at her TSP university, she took the initiative that was needed and was able to change her program from teacher education and earn her masters in the field of her interest. Diki admitted, with a shy giggle, that this was a “blessed” turn of events and a “dream come true.” During her time at the university, she assisted in planning for the visit of His Holiness the Dalai Lama to the campus, which she says was her “life achievement.” She also found her voice as she was able to gain confidence and become a more outspoken person “who can speak for our community whenever and wherever it is needed or required.”

After graduation, she decided to move to another area of the United States where she had connections and try to make a life for herself. She was struggling professionally to find work in her field and was taxing away in what she described as “survival” jobs and volunteering in the community. Diki, a self-proclaimed idealist, hadn’t found post-college life in America to be as easy and accommodating as her university experience and had to face some tough realities. However, she was continuing to be optimistic that she would find a full-time career where she could gain experience, make her mark, and provide financial support for her family back in India. She was drawing on her relationship with her mother and the teachings of Buddhism to find strength during this more difficult time.

Dorjee

The only interview participant to still be in school, Dorjee was studying at a U.S. university as part of the TSP and had very strong opinions about and vision for the Tibetan community. This had developed through the years beginning with his early childhood,
having been born in a remote and holy place in Tibet. He shared that he was a case of “reincarnation” and had the opportunity to study in the monastery at a young age. However, his family decided that the best education and life for him could be found in India, and, at the age of five, he was sent away from Tibet to live in exile far from his family. He grew up in the TCV system where he studied both secular and religious education and learned to be very independent.

In his pursuit of higher studies at Indian universities, he gained a love for the teachings of famous philosophers, such as Aristotle, and writers, the likes of Leo Tolstoy and Charles Dickens. He developed a passion for the field of human rights and, after studying in this area, worked at a nonprofit organization to try to improve the conditions in the exile community. This experience exposed him to some of the best and worst of his society and inspired him to want to expand his training and become more qualified and prepared to serve his community. His selection for the TSP gave him the opportunity he needed, and he was now finishing his degree before planning to return to India to fulfill his service commitment.

Dorjee exhibited during his interview both the most ardent and knowledgeable belief in Tibetan Buddhism while expressing some of the most harsh criticism of the Tibetan community. These seemingly conflicting stances coalesced to bring out a very strong voice in Dorjee that led him to dedicate his future to the betterment of his people. Although fully aware of the challenges facing the exile community and the limitations of the Tibetan people, he combined his frustration with a passion and a spiritual foundation that had the progress of the diaspora and the fight for a Tibetan homeland as his primary focus.
Kalden

Kalden, the oldest and most educated of the participants, having earned his Ph.D., was born in an exile community in India. He did not have the opportunity to leave the country until he applied and was accepted to the TSP. He spent one year studying in education in the United States, looking to add value to his over 20 years of teaching experience. Upon returning to India, he resumed his teaching position at TCV. He credited TSP with enhancing his teaching knowledge as well as helping him to be given a promotion and pay increase. He still was having some issues with the system at TCV, complaining that after all the years of service, he should be eligible for a higher administrative position. Pointing out that this is nearly impossible “if you are a non-TCVian,” he continued to stay loyal to the school system and his students.

Kalden is a dedicated family man and talked about how happy he was to return to his wife and kids after his study abroad experience. However, it was his commitment to his family that also led him to question his decision and wonder what opportunities his children might have had if he had stayed in the United States and brought them over to live there. In fact, Kalden took the interview as an opportunity to try to share the academic accomplishments of his son and solicit some possible assistance in getting him a scholarship to study in America.

Mingma

Mingma was born in Tibet but separated from his family and brought to live in the exile community in India when he was six years old. He attended school and lived with a foster family at the TCV. This experience of being separated from his family and still not being able to see them had a major impact on his life and decisions. Although he wistfully
accepted his upbringing and appreciated his experience at TCV, he dreamt of the day when he would be reunited with his family.

Before coming to study in the United States, he spent time working at TCV, where he was able to serve his community and give back to the school. He had the opportunity several years ago to earn his masters degree in policy studies in the United States through the TSP. His experience with U.S. higher education was one of both enrichment and challenge. Mingma emphasized many times how the experience was at times overwhelming but in the end provided him with exposure to new ideas and a new perspective on the world. This included finding a balance between his upbringing that emphasized putting others first with a Western culture that is more individualistic and self-serving.

Since graduation, he lived in North America, working in the field of higher education. He was very connected within the Tibetan population in his city, and he was sitting on the board of his local Tibetan association. Mingma had a strong philosophy toward service and not only was volunteering for activities within the Tibetan community but also was serving as a consultant for a nonprofit organization working with immigrants. Mingma had great passion for his culture but was also very committed to his family including his kids who were born in and now were being raised in the West. Despite his comfort with the lifestyle he adopted, he continually referenced guilt and sadness when discussing his departure from the exile community. He knew though that as he continued to establish his residency and obtain the proper identification papers, his goal of returning to Tibet to reunite with, and in some cases meet for the first time, his family, could soon become a reality.
Norbu

Norbu had always wanted to come to America and spent his younger years growing up in an exile community in South India, dreaming of this and preparing to take advantage of the first opportunity. He learned from his family, who embarked on the long journey out of Tibet in order to come to live in exile and give their children a better life and strong Tibetan education, that anything is possible. He worked hard to gain his education and “paid his dues” working for many years as part of the Tibetan government, a job that made his father very proud. Despite the success and security he had in India, he never forgot about his goal of studying in the United States.

He finally was chosen to receive the TSP award and was given the opportunity to earn his degree in business at a well-regarded university. After completing his program, Norbu returned to Dharamsala to fulfill his commitment and to resume his job with the CTA. However, he found that the jobs he was given did not utilize the “education that I worked very hard to earn in the U.S.” He was very disappointed by the shortsighted nature of the CTA administration and their resistance to new ideas and to change. He realized that, despite his willingness to commit his life to serving his community, the opportunities in India were limited and the source of great frustration. Norbu made the difficult decision, to the dismay of his parents, to leave the exile community again and join his wife back in North America.

Norbu currently was confronting the complications of being an immigrant to a new land and had been able to secure only a part-time job in sales as he was awaiting his residency paperwork. Despite the disillusionment he had with certain aspects of the Tibetan exile community, he expressed great love for his culture and people and was committed to assuring that his children learn and understand the significance of their background. He also
had hopes that new leadership and a new way of thinking, supported by Tibetan refugees all over the world, could help the diaspora to grow and the Tibetan people to continue to fight for their land.

**Pemba**

Pemba, one of the older participants, was placed in the care of TCV when he was 10 years old after his father brought him and his twin sister to Dharamsala and then returned back to Tibet. After finishing his secondary and undergraduate studies in India, Pemba planned to continue on to get his master’s degree. However, upon meeting with a friend in Dharamsala, he had the opportunity to take a position at a newly-formed college in the exile community where he could work to help develop and expand the institution. He also started working on coordinating semester-long and summer Tibetan studies programs for American students coming to India. His experiences with this inspired him to apply for the TSP so he could learn more about American culture and the education system in order to better direct the program.

After studying for a year in the field of education at a U.S. university, he earned a scholarship to stay on and complete his degree. However, he ran into some problems with his identification papers and was unable to take advantage of this opportunity. Even in this short time, Pemba gained significant understanding about the philosophy of education in the United States and learned more about the culture both in and out of the classroom. He really enjoyed how accessible things were and how open the teacher/student relationship was on his campus. He sometimes questioned the casual nature of the American student and still had an issue with students eating in class or stretching out their legs. However, the better understanding of American society gave him the knowledge and confidence in advising and
helping his Western visitors as he has reassumed his duties coordinating the study abroad program. He also returned to his position at the college and was working to implement the techniques from his program. He recognized that it wasn’t until he returned that “he realized the limited resources and somewhat conservative ideology of some people in the administration and faculty” and has found this to be a challenge. He was not discouraged though and was continuing to pursue ideas to improve his school and community. He still held onto the hope of completing his masters degree someday.

Sonam

Perhaps the most sophisticated and well-traveled of the participants, Sonam conveyed a very balanced and sensible portrayal of her personal journey and of the plight of her Tibetan people. The foundation she gained from a lifetime of living in the diaspora in India and many years of working for the Tibetan government-in-exile gave her a perspective that took into consideration the complex circumstances in which she was living. Sonam spent years serving her community as a member of the CTA. However, she knew that there were ways for her to improve her performance and ability to contribute to the diaspora. Sonam was able to take advantage of the opportunity to study in the United States through the nondegree scholarship offered by The Tibet Fund. This experience provided her a chance to enhance her insight into the field of business, understand how a different culture operates, and grow as a person. As an outcome of her participation in this program, she developed skills, knowledge, and ingenuity that have shaped her future. She credited her participation in the TSP for all this, saying, “I am like a person who have found wings to my thoughts and it’s all because of my enhanced knowledge and confidence.” Upon returning to work for the CTA she had the opportunity to apply for an upper level position and, although she was
competing with two male applicants, she was selected for the job. She also volunteered to
give workshops to better educate the community utilizing some of the business knowledge
she gained in America. She described her professional life as a “true success story.”

Despite her positive experiences, Sonam realized the many challenges of the CTA
including the “clash of ideas” that can happen between TSP scholars returning to make a
difference in the community and the long-standing senior administrative staff. She also had
seen how the individual growth and transformation that comes from studying and living
abroad can impact personal relationships including an ongoing struggle with her husband to
come to terms with her new, more confident, attitude and approach to life.

**Tashi**

One of the more reserved but thoughtful participants, Tashi admitted that he was most
comfortable within the secure and familiar confines of the Tibetan exile community. In
addition, his passion for teaching came through as he discussed the large part of his life that
has been dedicated to the pursuit and sharing of education. As a result of this, it is not
surprising that he agreed to leave the sanctuary of his birth home of India to take advantage
of the opportunity to study in the United States as part of the TSP.

Tashi had been working as a teacher at TCV when he applied for the scholarship. His
experience in America studying education as part of the 1-year nondegree program gave him
more than he ever expected. Tashi acknowledged his limited exposure to other ways of
thinking prior to going abroad, having been raised in the isolated exile community
surrounded by his Tibetan family and friends and having grown up in the Tibetan and Indian
education system. His introduction to a new system of education enabled him to be able to
“know more techniques, strategies, and especially the use of technology in teaching.” He
benefited from the discussion and collaboration with his classmates, many of whom were professionals in the field. He also grew fond of the American people who he described as “really good, really helpful, and very generous.” He marveled at American social service programs and the system of donations to organizations such as Goodwill to help support those in need.

For these reasons he considered staying on in the United States and, at the least, trying to finish his masters degree. However, he decided he needed to return to his job and to his family, including his wife and children. Since doing so, he has been able to implement what he learned into his classroom at TCV and felt his teaching has dramatically improved in every respect. Despite making peace with his decision, he described his time in the United States as an “opportunity of a lifetime” and said that he feels like “even nowadays, I think I just visited America in my dreams.”

**Overview of Interview Findings**

The survey results provided a foundation and inspiration for further exploration into the study of the journey and decisions of TSP scholars upon completion of their education abroad. However, it is from the in-depth interviews that the most rich and fascinating perspectives were gathered and strong themes emerged to give light to the proposed research questions.

The first section of the interview findings, Searching for Self: Tibetan Identity, looks at how participants formed their identity, including the influence of nation and their Buddhist upbringing. This section comprises an examination of how the study abroad experience both challenged and changed their identity and provides insight into how this impacted their post-TSP journey.
The second section, Searching for Answers: Influences on Decision-Making, consists of an examination of the factors the participants considered when faced with the decision to return to their exile community or remain in the United States upon completion of their TSP program. This is broken up into two major themes that describe the opposing forces that compelled participants to return home to fulfill their commitment to the diaspora while at the same time dealing with the factors that pushed them away from their community and pulled them toward relocation.

The third section, Searching for Resolution: Inner Conflict, presents a discussion about the conflict that participants experienced after making their decision. This emerging theme takes a look at the possible sources of their internal struggle and how TSP alumni have worked to come to terms with and resolve their feelings of guilt or regret.

The fourth and final section, Searching for Belonging: Perception of Home, explores the participants’ perception of and relationship with home and how this has impacted their identity and life decisions. The disconnect with their exile country, the desire to be able to live in their homeland, and a strong need for belonging all intertwine to make the concept of home one that is somewhat elusive and at times fleeting.

In all the above sections, subthemes are utilized to support these major findings. The subthemes represent concepts that came out of the data analysis process and help to reinforce and add to the themes of my research. Some of the subthemes emerged from the perceptions of only a few participants, whereas others reflect a general consensus among the scholars.

Searching for Self: Cultural Identity

Although each participant had unique perspectives and individual experiences, the data brought forth a recurring theme that highlighted the extent to which identity permeates
all aspects of Tibetan life. Issues related to social and personal identity were referenced as part of discussions on the decision-making process, building of relationships, and ability to overcome obstacles. I was amazed at how the concept of being Tibetan, and additionally the unique experience of growing up in an exile community, were continually brought up, even when questions related to outside experiences. From the stories told and memories recalled, it was evident that the notion of identity was the foundation of everything else that had happened in the life of the scholars. However, because their life journey had been marked by extraordinary challenges, participants recognized that their identity was anything but stagnant and had led to a continual evolution of their sense of self. Influences on identity and their search for self can be broken down into three categories: Tibetanness, spirituality, and growth.

**Tibetanness**

Although the Tibetan community is splintered within and outside of Tibet, the common struggle to maintain their culture and fight for their homeland gave participants a strong sense of connection to their people. Participants spoke of how the significance of their shared culture and common cause had contributed to the development of their Tibetan identity and pride. Expressing this attachment to his community, Mingma claimed, “I am a Tibetan first. That is my identity. That is what I talk about no matter where I go, about the pride of being Tibetan.” For Mingma, this pride surfaced not only in words, but in his appreciation and continual practice of the traditions associated with his people, something he maintained even in his life living abroad. Sonam also shared how this cultural identity had been passed down from the older generation to the younger people through storytelling, religious rituals, and community traditions:
Then with your culture, you have this identity and your parents pass it to their kids and expect you to pass it along and all those things. So I think that this connects us very strongly with being Tibetan, and is the main cycle of Tibetans in exile.

The passion with which she spoke about this tradition led me to believe that the importance of this practice was not just about Tibetan pride, but also was connected to the desperate determination to preserve a culture that was seen as dying off or, in some minds, being killed off. Sonam pointed to the systematic destruction of Tibet and the effort by the Chinese in Tibet to suppress any indicators of Tibetan identity and pride.

Several participants credited His Holiness the Dalai Lama with the exile community’s ability to stay connected and strong in spite of its historical struggles and present circumstances. The Dalai Lama’s vision upon arriving in India was to set up Tibetan settlement camps in order to allow the exiles to live together, maintain their community, and establish Tibetan schools where Tibetan history, tradition, and language were taught. Sonam explained the impact of this by stating:

Even after 53 years in exile, we are still living in that same community, in Tibetan settlements. There we have this integral Tibetan tradition . . . the Tibetan culture . . . Tibetan people with the same way as before. That is what you call cultural intent.

Tashi credited his spiritual leader with giving the Tibetan people the primary principles to follow in their life, including influencing who they are as a people, guiding their decisions, and continually encouraging them to put the “cause” before individual self-interest. “We feel totally blessed to have him and he is the only person we rely on, we look for, we, what should I say, we ask for support like this,” remarked Tashi. This sentiment helps to explain the importance Tashi gave to the opportunities he has had to interact with
His Holiness, including a small personal meeting he was part of when the Dalai Lama visited his U.S. university. It was a challenge for Tashi to put into words the significance of this experience and the importance he placed on the instructions his mentor gave to him and his classmates on this occasion. He could only reveal that the advice given “became the principle in our life for us to follow.”

It is hard to deny that the strong cultural identity of the Tibetan exile people may also be a product of their existence living in a diaspora. Although the majority of the participants were born in exile, others came to live in the Tibetan diasporic communities at a young age, including Mingma, Dorjee, and Pemba, who were brought to TCV to go to school and live with foster families. Either way, participants were surrounded on a daily basis by fellow Tibetans and described life in such a protective community as living in a “beehive,” or a “cocoon.” Many Tibetans growing up in the exile community were exposed only to other Tibetan people, Tibetan teachings, and the Tibetan “way of life.” They rarely left their community and, as in the case of most of the TSP recipients, going to study in the United States was their first experience outside of India. For some participants, this sense of security and connectedness were key to the solidification of their identity. Tashi talked about how this insulated upbringing influenced his sense of self:

As long as I am in the Tibetan community there is no need for me to worry that much about the degradation of my Tibetan identity because right from the morning until the evening I just deal with the Tibetans only. The place where I go, I just am interacting with the Tibetan so as long as I stay in the Tibetan community and somehow I’m not that much exposed right from the morning until the evening with Tibetans and I’ll be able to keep the Tibetan identity and I will relax. So that is the thing.
However, as the interviews progressed, it was clear that the desire to go abroad and the hope for a better life was enough for participants to risk all this. For Tashi, who ironically described the United States in a kind of “Shangri-laish” way, the resulting life-changing experience of his year away from the exile community was worth the separation and threat to his comfortable life.

There were other such hazards that the participants identified for this close-knit, segregated society that were cause for concern when I asked about the community’s ability to maintain and pass along the Tibetan identity. Participants mentioned their tireless struggle to establish a status within India. Although many had been born and had spent the majority of their life living in India, they were fully aware that they were still looked upon as foreigners there. Most Tibetans are unable to gain an Indian passport and are required to renew their documents each year. This leaves the majority with no official citizenship or identification papers that connect them to a homeland. The varying and sometimes contradicting comments participants made about their life in India led me to believe that the Tibetans in exile experience quite a conflicting attitude toward their country of residence. This includes expressions of both appreciation and frustration with their hosts as well as the dissonance they may experience between their desire to be legally recognized in the country with their realization that they are not truly a member of this society.

Diki recalled how, at her Indian and U.S. university, she often was asked to introduce herself but never knew exactly how to describe where she was from. She often responded hesitantly, saying that she was a “Tibetan from India.” This tended to confuse people, and they would question why she did not just say she was from India. Diki remarked:
I feel like I’m losing myself. Seriously, I think, I think this is common among all Tibetans who were born in India. Like, you feel like losing your identity when you don’t say you are a Tibetan. Even though like there are many people who don’t know what’s Tibet. But still, you want to be known as a Tibetan.

The precarious status of the Tibetan community and the previously mentioned threats to identity led the participants to have concerns about the preservation of their culture. Pemba mentioned the ever-growing transnational nature of the Tibetan people as many move to other countries in North America and Europe. He believed that “the biggest challenge right now I think is to keep the Tibetan identity, to preserve the Tibetan culture, to preserve the Tibetan language. I think we are facing so many threats from globalization.”

This concerned Sonam as well, as she observed that many of the strongest keepers of Tibetan knowledge and pride were monks and nuns who cannot get married and pass this along to the next generation. As Tibetans in exile mix with India and other cultures, Sonam warned of the danger of losing identity and “sinking into the Indian community.” Kalden was concerned about the loss of connection with those inside of Tibet, as it was only through the media that some Tibetans learn about their homeland. Kalden emphasized the need to preserve the history and traditions of Tibet as he feared that “someday there may be no Tibetans left and there will be a country called Tibet without Tibetans. So we have some binding responsibilities, now, to our country.”

Additional concerns were expressed throughout the interviews regarding the new generation of refugee Tibetans and their knowledge and connection to Tibet, as most had been born and raised in exile and had never seen their homeland. Dorjee saw a breakdown in the transmission of knowledge and tradition from the old generation to the new and identified
a decline in education as a barrier to preserving the Tibetan way of life. He said, “It is very difficult to convince or to draw attention to young people about the Tibetan Buddhism tradition because of the distraction of the modern life and all those things.” Dorjee, who took his spiritual role as an incarnate very seriously, emphasized the need for continual study of Tibetan teachings along with a pursuit of further knowledge. He went on to say,

I want to convey to my generation that we have to, as Tibetans, we have to fight for our freedoms, our liberties, our dignity, our salvation, everything. But at the same time, we also have the burden, moral burden, to continue to preserve our tradition, our religious tradition within ourselves. Each man is not a person as such. But every Tibetan is a walking philosophy that is protecting this way of life. But at the same time he or she is a person who can also keep the faith in a modern world. So we can make use of science and technology. We can adapt to the fast changing, the latest information, the changing technology, everything as such.

Dorjee continued to express his concern regarding what he perceived as a resistance from the Tibetan people to accept change, including a more progressive philosophy and advancing technology that is needed to push forward the society. This issue became a recurring theme throughout all the interviews as participants gave personal attestations to their experiences with the barriers within the Tibetan exile structure. Dorjee had worked for many years in the area of human services and butted up against some of the bureaucracy that prohibited him from making the inroads he envisioned. Although Dorjee preached the need for Tibetans to embrace progress while holding onto their traditions, he was not hopeful:

So if you look at Tibetan culture and Tibetan mindset, it is something very bizarre, very strange because we Tibetans over centuries are incapable of adapting to the
change that is happening in modern times. We Tibetans are so resistant to ideas of change and ideas of new things. We Tibetans also love to think within the box, we don’t know how to think out of the box.

**Spirituality**

For the participants in this study, their faith in Buddhism not only provided principles to follow, but also served as a unifying source for their image as a collective people. Although participants varied in the degree in which they “practiced” Buddhism, they were all very familiar with the tenets of this philosophy and explained the many ways in which it impacted their life and decisions. This seemed to especially be the case for the three participants who attended TCV. Mingma connected this to his assertion that they were “sort of bombarded with all this Buddhist philosophies from a young age and assimilated in that sort of culture.” He explained that religious studies were a big part of the curriculum and emphasis in TCV as well as a major part of the out-of-classroom expectations. He, along with others, talked about going to temple and participating in religious festivals as a child. Norbu also took a very serious approach to his practice, explaining that spirituality is very, very important. Like every morning or almost every day you know I pray, and then it affects you and it helps you to handle situations you have and it doesn’t make you infatuated and it doesn’t make you depressed. It helps you to overcome all these problems.

Dorjee described his view on Tibetan Buddhism as being a very profound and complicated philosophy that was not so much a religion as it was a humanistic way of life: “Buddhism is based on the concept of love and care and compassion. The lack of inherent self. It is a way of life.” From the views he shared and the stories of his life, Dorjee made it
clear that Buddhism had been a primary influence starting with his time in a monastery as a child in Tibet. His approach to his spiritual life was unlike the other participants in that he spoke of his calling to “play a spiritual and a sacred religious role” within his community. His heartfelt account of the story of Lord Buddha going into the forest of India to contemplate and how he came back to the community as an awakened being grabbed my attention and led me to better understand Dorjee’s own journey and his commitment to self-betterment and to the safeguarding of the Tibetan people.

On the other hand, some of the participants, such as Pemba, admitted that they did not go to temple regularly but followed what they were taught by the Dalai Lama by living a life of simplicity and kindness. Diki, who currently was struggling to find a job and understand her future role in the world, held onto her Buddhist upbringing to help her to manage these difficult times:

When I was really depressed, at the back of my mind I always look to my religion and it helps remind me that this will not be forever. So that is the main part of the principle of Buddhism; nothing is permanent, whether it is sadness or it is happiness. It gives me the extra energy and the extra positiveness to continue doing what I am doing right now. And also, at the same time accepting the fact that if I am happy and if I am prosperous now, it doesn’t mean necessarily it mean, you know, will be throughout your life.

This influence of Buddhism on the identity of the Tibetan people became even clearer as the participants discussed the influence of the Buddhist idea of karma. This notion of cause and effect that impacts the quality of one’s future life, weighed on the life choices of the believers. Tashi explained this by stating:
As a Buddhist we believe in, what should I say, good work and there will be good protect. If you do bad things, there will be bad result like this. So whatever we do it is somewhat, what should I say, it is guided by this the basic principle of Buddhism. Tashi was able to illuminate his belief in this philosophy by sharing several examples throughout his life when he passed up on what he may have really wanted when he realized that his actions would have consequences. Along the same lines, Mingma directly related this idea to his current status as a nonreturnee: “We talk about karma. You have to pay for the consequences, for the decisions I make and not returning to the community to serve, that is there.” As I will share later on in this chapter, the impact of trying to make amends for this choice and the effort to build back up his good karma was a significant influence in Mingma’s current reality.

The Buddhist principle of “others before self” was also brought up by several participants. For those who attended or taught at TCV, it was especially significant as it was the motto of the school. As mentioned previously, TCV played a major role in the upbringing of several of the interviewees and impacted their knowledge of Buddhism through both the religious studies in the curriculum and moral education from the administration and foster parents. Pemba saw his years at TCV as a “privilege” and as an “opportunity to grow as a Tibetan and Buddhist without losing my identities.” Without family to turn to for guidance, the “family” he gained at TCV became his support system and moral compass. He explained that, although he technically still had parents back in Tibet, the students of TCV were often referred to as “orphans” considering their situation. He said that TCV was the “biggest influence in my life. My parents, my relatives, everything I left in Tibet. But I got everything here in India at TCV.”
Growth

In spite of the strong Tibetan identity the participants developed during their time living in exile, they all experienced certain degrees of challenges when they left their community to study in the United States through the TSP. As mentioned previously, this was the first time for most to leave India, and they found the United States to be unlike anything or anywhere they had ever experienced before. As much as they expressed love for their people and community, I was very interested in how much the scholars embraced their new surroundings and had a deep desire to understand and embrace American culture. Regardless of warnings some received from people back home about the bad influences of Western thinking and lifestyles, the participants took on the challenges of the United States and were all able to grow from the experience.

Adjustment challenges. Despite a pre-orientation program provided by The Tibet Fund to introduce students to U.S. culture, upon arrival culture shock was still prevalent. Mingma pointed out the struggle he had living in a culture that maintained a more individualist philosophy:

It is like a polar difference from what I was used to. I was someone from an oriental culture, with a collectivist way of thinking, finding it difficult to find success in North America culture, where you know it is so about self-interest, about initiative, taking initiative. Those sort of things I could understand where people are coming from but that is really something that took me apart.

Other participants mentioned similar conflicts as they dealt with trying to balance aspects of their identity with a new and very different environment. Tashi mentioned his surprise at how outspoken and frank he found Americans to be and how it took time to get
used to their behavior both in and out of the classroom. However, as Tashi and others talked about their experiences, it became clear that even these surprising behaviors that they mentioned were not entirely a negative assessment. The scholars all gained a respect and understanding for American college culture and expressed affection for the people.

One specific area that was brought up several times was the gap between the confidence level of American students and the Tibetan scholars. Diki recounted the challenges she faced both in and out of the classroom as she tried to build up her confidence so she could fully participate in campus life. She said that this is a common characteristic in Tibetan people and is a result of a culture that does not encourage individualism and a school system that does not seek participation and differing viewpoints. She said,

We have to learn to, you know, introduce ourselves. To be outspoken. Because once I started doing that I actually realized that people if you initiate a talk, they are always welcoming your experience and you and your kind of friendship which we offer.

Kalden, who described the Tibetan people as humble and respectful, also acknowledged this as an acculturation barrier and said he learned from his interaction that “people are respectful in the U.S., but, at the same time, they are so open and straightforward.”

For those TSP alumni who decided to relocate to North America after their studies, concerns about finding community and maintaining their Tibetan identity continued to be of utmost importance. This issue had been addressed often by the Dalai Lama in public and private conversations with Tibetans abroad and weighed heavily on those who still resided apart from the diaspora. Norbu spoke of the importance of staying connected to the Tibetan community while abroad and continuing to gather for prayers and to celebrate Tibetan holidays. At first he struggled, saying that “being away from the Tibetan community, in
America, where you don’t see lots of Tibetans you are like, ‘Oh, my god.’ You are scared of like losing touch you know.”

Mingma had no problem linking up with the Tibetan community in the university city in which he resided during his studies. Although the community served as a support system and provided the opportunity to connect with his culture, he also admitted that it may have been more beneficial if he could have had more contact with American families. He said that there are “so many things you can learn from talking to people and that is something that didn’t happen.” Now that he was out of school and living permanently away from the exile community, his perspective had changed a bit. He said he now valued even more the contact he had with the Tibetans in the North America city in which he lives and was spending significant time volunteering for his local association. He also helped to organize the visit of His Holiness to his city several years ago. Initially I thought that his motives for this activism related only to his efforts to atone for his “abandonment” of the diaspora, however it became clearer later in the interview that he had other reasons to keep this connection alive. As he has had children, Mingma has started to realize how important it is to introduce his children to Tibetan culture so that they understand and appreciate where their parents came from and are able to continue to pass along the traditions. He admitted that it is a challenge and that he is concerned about the ability of Tibetans displaced from their community to maintain their identity:

You have to be proud of your identity because I have a feeling a lot of our people in North America struggle with that. That is a big issue for us. We try to tell people, we try to teach Tibetan language in our Sunday classes here. We try to still celebrate our Tibetan festivities here, we try build a cultural center here, we try to build libraries,
we try to do all sorts of things here. If the people here, the Tibetan people here are losing the pride or feel that they are inferior because of their identity, I think that our struggle is even more difficult in that sense.

**Readjustment challenges.** For those participants who made the decision to return home, it was vital that they acknowledged and dealt with the impact their time abroad had on their sense of self and personal aspirations. Although the TSP granted some scholarships to stay for 1 year and others for 2 years, all participants felt that they experienced a certain level of integration into their new surroundings. Several participants recounted opportunities they had to travel within the United States, bond with American classmates and community members, and observe and engage in the local environment. The experiences recounted by both the returnees and the nonreturnees were mostly positive and complimentary of their time studying and living abroad.

Dorjee, although still in his program and yet to return at the time of the interview, already recognized the positive impact that his stay in the United States had had on his viewpoints:

Now this is perhaps the gift that America has given to me. It has given me a new perspective of my society. This education had given me this opportunity and this ability to have a different perspective, to have a different way of looking at Tibetan society.

Kalden had the opportunity to study at a U.S. university where he had a lot of contact with diverse cultures and new ideas. He made friends with students from around the world, and they all shared their experiences and cultures. He felt he was impacted by his time
abroad and gained a better appreciation of the world community, which changed his way of thinking as well. He explained,

Until now, and before I left for the USA, I had this strong sense of belongingness to a country, to a community, to my own people. But now I think that changed. We are all just human beings. No? Because everyone’s pain and we show pain because we are one people. We are the same but we are different cultures. Yeah, so there have been changes in my perspective and what I’m thinking.

Not all of the changes in the TSP participants were met with positive responses upon returning home. This was most evident in the difficult experience Sonam had in transitioning in both her professional and personal life as her new-found confidence was off-putting to those who knew her before her time abroad. In her work place, Sonam said, people looked at her differently and responded negatively when she spoke up to say that there was a problem or something wasn’t right. Initially this was the only struggle Sonam was willing to share; however, later in the interview I was able to encourage her to talk about an even more painful result of her evolution abroad. This related to the problems she started to have at home in her role as a wife and mother:

I had no idea how I should be living my life. Then once I came [to the United States], I had a different lifestyle. Married woman and the single woman with kids, they have a different lifestyle. They do work but still they have their life of their own. Back then, I didn’t have that.

This new philosophy caused problems in her marriage as she decided she could no longer compromise and so confronted her husband on several issues. She explained without apology, “Then I said, ‘No, I won’t be taking things like before, how you use to do that.’”
explored this issue further, trying to discover how this new attitude was received by her family. She admitted that this put a serious strain on her relationship and she detailed how her husband accused her of being more demanding since she had returned and not being the same woman who left to go to the United States. She said:

I couldn’t compromise anymore. So, he started saying that ‘Oh yeah, you go to U.S. and then you have this different idea and then big change in you.’ So, we argued a lot. He did not understand the new person living with him.

Sonam’s experience exemplifies the major issue facing the Tibetan exile community today as they look at their identity as a people. Although there is plenty of evidence of the strong bond of cultural identity and belief in the Buddhist philosophy to build upon, there is an ideological struggle taking place as to whether this is enough to sustain the future of the Tibetan community. As the Dalai Lama and The Tibet Fund work to provide Tibetans with an educational experience, ideally in the United States, that will give the community the skills and expertise needed to meet the needs of the modern society, the risk of lines becoming blurred and loyalties being lost becomes more of a reality. Whether the study abroad experience reinforced, strengthened, or changed the identity of the participants, the challenge remains for the Tibetan community to be able to live with this “new person” in their house and to continue to unite for their cause and to dream of the day that they can return to their homeland. Norbu refocused this discussion as he brought it back to the importance of celebrating their Tibetanness no matter where they all end up: “So, you have to maintain your identity and you have to maintain your Tibetanness and someday like, if not in your generation or if not in your kids’ generation, maybe in future generations.”
Searching for Answers: Influences on Decision Making

The Decision to Return

This section will help in the understanding of what influenced the participants’ decision-making process as they considered the implications of returning home after their studies abroad. It begins with an examination of why students were motivated to study in the United States and then looks at both the social and the personal factors that influenced the scholars’ poststudy decision. Taken into consideration is the implications of these decisions, focusing especially on those who made the choice not to return to India and fulfill their commitment.

Examining what led a student to pursue an international study experience may help in understanding the factors that influence the decision to return after the completion of studies. Initially, TSP scholars must have had both the motivation and the academic background to make it through the application process and to meet the stringent selection criteria of The Tibet Fund. As part of the process, candidates were required to participate in an interview where they had to describe their future goals and intentions. Participants reflected on how they answered this question and identified a multitude of reasons they gave for their desire to receive formal training in the United States.

A common theme that emerged from the data was the desire to improve one’s craft to then be able to return and use it to benefit their community. For Pemba, this included being able to learn the methods and techniques of teaching that he could bring back to his school. He explained that his own educational experiences, as well as his years in teaching, were influenced mainly by a more rigid system that placed more emphasis on memorization rather
than active learning. To gain this insight, Pemba applied to the TSP and decided to leave his position and home temporarily; he explained why this was the best course of action:

Still being a Tibetan I have this rare opportunity to go to United States and study and so I think I got the best influence of my life. I think I also wanted to dedicate and do everything that I could do to continue giving back to the community.

Sonam talked about how she and other young Tibetans were motivated to study abroad in order to make their friends and family proud. She also strongly agreed with the Dalai Lama’s assessment that education is the only way to make changes to oneself or to one’s community: “So, we aspire to have a very good education and then you can do anything.” Dorjee also was driven to go abroad to better position himself for the sake of his community. After years of training and professional experience in India, he felt as if he had reached a limit as to what he could do for his people. His motivation to go abroad was deeply rooted in the Tibetan cause:

As a person who can be a spokesperson for my community I have to study and learn the way that the Chinese student and the Chinese professional do in countries like U.S. and Britain. So in order to beat the Chinese at their own game, I have to be a person who receives a formal training from the best university in the world.

I then posed a question regarding the types of students who seek out the TSP scholarship. Dorjee classified these students into two groups: one being those students looking for a ticket to America and the other being “seekers” wanting to improve themselves and their environment. It was evident to me that he classified himself in the latter group and viewed this as a higher calling, going on to describe their mission:
To seek a knowledge. To explore the other side. They come to see the other half of the universe. And they also come to affirm or reject the prejudices or prejudice emotions. So one kind of student are coming here to seek advanced knowledge and to seek answers to larger questions in one’s life and also come here to really learn some skills to learn a craft to become a professional or to really pursue a higher studies that gives them a sense of happiness and contentment. And then afterwards they have this kind of realistic goal or they have this sort of conviction and love for one’s country people to go back themself and fulfill the desire and the mission of the Fulbright mission of this project.

Upon completing their studies abroad and gaining the skills and knowledge they desired, all the participants were faced with the decision of whether to return to India and their life in exile. In reviewing all the data collected from the interviews, a multitude of reasons for their decisions were given, but it became clear that most of them stemmed from issues surrounding the scholars’ affiliation with and responsibility toward their community. This communal influence persuaded some of the participants to look beyond their own personal aspirations when considering their future options. Participants, especially those who did return, consistently sighted external factors, such as their signed agreement with The Tibet Fund to return, the obligation to give back to their community, and the influence of their Tibetan Buddhist upbringing, as guiding their decision.

**Commitment.** The Letter of Undertaking, introduced in previous sections and signed by all TSP recipients, was a commitment taken very seriously by many of the participants. The document was a formal pledge that each scholar would return to India to serve the Tibetan community for at least 2 years. Kalden said that every student knew before they
departed for their studies in the United States, that they had to sign these legal papers and that they had to follow the established rules and regulations. His return to Dharamsala and fulfillment of this expectation led him to say, “I am really happy that I came back and lived up to my commitment.”

Sonam, in the first portion of the interview, was adamant that students needed to fulfill the obligation they made when agreeing to participate in the program. Initially, I was taken by her steadfast conviction to this course and the following statement piqued my interest:

Nobody can question that, “Are you going back or not?” because we have to go back. That’s our commitment or what do you call it, that’s an agreement we made. Before we came here, we knew that we have to go back. So there’s no question of asking whether you want to go or not.

However, it wasn’t until later in the interview and hearing comments I will share later in this chapter, that I realized that the initial strong response represented more what Sonam thought the “correct” answer to the question was rather than her own conflicted stance.

For those participants such as Kalden, Sonam, and Pemba, who had positions waiting for them when they returned, their decision also was tied to an obligation to return to their previous job. Pemba admitted that staying in the United States was never a real option as he “had a kind of commitment to continue my service here at the college.” He recognized that the school let him leave for a year in order to gain skills that then could be utilized upon his return. The job security provided by this arrangement, as well as a passion to apply his new competencies, was motivation enough for Pemba to return. He added, “We still have a lot of things to do, work to be done.”
**Desire to give back.** Sonam spoke of the decision to return as not only an individual choice but as a responsibility to the Tibetan people as a whole. She described it as a:

collective responsibility that each of us have to go back and live up to our pledged commitment so that our own children, our own brothers and sisters, and relatives, have the same opportunities which we got.

The idea of giving back, or the desire to serve their community, was prevalent in all the interviews regardless of the participant’s eventual decision. Dorjee, the only participant yet to finish his studies and make this decision, expressed a strong passion to contribute as he said he had always dreamed of becoming “a trained professional so he can be a pioneer or a pathfinder.” Although it sounded at times as if he was speaking of a more internal ambition, throughout the interview, he credited any motivation he had to get ahead back to his passion for his community. He attributed the motivation he had for his past and current studies to the desire to gain the knowledge and skill he needs to become a better journalist and said he would “brand myself properly and I am going to work for my own people.”

The passion to help others also emerged as a popular theme in most of the interviews and, for some participants, was directly influenced by the teachings and inspiration of the Dalai Lama. Diki spoke of an increased desire to serve her community after meeting His Holiness during his visit to her U.S. university. She shared that he explicitly urged the Tibetan students to work to benefit the Tibetan cause and that this motivated her as she started her career. Kalden also mentioned the message that he and other Fulbrighters received from the Dalai Lama before leaving for the United States: “He says we must come back and serve the community so that the upcoming generation has good role models and an opportunity for a good education.” Pemba gave credit of his return to the Tibetan spiritual
leader saying, “I think that the only reason why I am so committed to serving my community is because of the influence from the Dalai Lama.” He noted, “His Holiness tells us that we must carry on and do our own reform because the Tibetan community in India is in need of our service.”

The message of service and reparation was strongest among those students who had attended TCV. All three TCV alumni mentioned the school motto of “others before self” and applied this to how they were trying to live their life. Mingma credited TCV with being the strongest influence in his upbringing and a major factor in his decision after graduation: “I always wanted to go back to TCV to work. That made this an even harder decision.” Although Mingma eventually decided not to return, Pemba did and credited TCV with the motivation and inspiration for his return: “I had to return because I owe this to my community. I received everything from TCV and what I am now is because of my community.”

**Need for change.** Underlying all the discussion on commitment to the community and desire to serve was the idea of the dire need for change and progress within the Tibetan diaspora. All participants shared their perspective on the necessity for the exile community to continue to grow and develop and the human resources necessary to make that happen. A few of the scholars spoke about the current status of the leadership among the CTA, mentioning the Dalai Lama’s recent decision to step back from his leadership position to allow for the Tibetan people to take more responsibility for the future of the exile community. Norbu saw this as an opportunity for citizens, especially TSP graduates, to participate more and influence future policy. He saw the election of the new prime minister as an opportunity and shared his optimism for the future: “The Prime Minister is Harvard
Dorjee was not as confident in the future of his community and its ability to change. From his work in the area of human rights and his background in journalism, he had gained a perspective of the Tibetan diaspora that provoked feelings of discouragement. He realized that “if we Tibetans still think and behave in the same consistent lines, we have no future.” He had seen how the field of journalism had supported the status quo and had not challenged the people to think or act differently. He acknowledged the role that Tibetans, and especially those in the TSP, can and should play in improving upon this fate: “I think these kinds of programs facilitate these Tibetans students to come here and open their minds and eyes and when they go back they can be constructive players in their own communities.”

Sonam, who had spent many years working for the CTA, also emphasized the need for the Tibetan people to be responsible for their own future. She said, “If we Tibetans don’t serve our country in exile, government in exile, then nobody else would do that because we are working on a very low pay.” Sonam acknowledged the importance of the Tibetan government investing in the development of human capital to fill the needs of the community with qualified and motivated people. Tashi emphasized this point by talking about the important role of those TSP scholars who had gone abroad to improve their teaching skills: “We are learning skills that we can implement in our classroom, and improving our students’ ability to learn and to eventually be leaders for Tibetans.”

Diki also brought up the importance of TSP alumni serving as positive role models or mentors to young Tibetans. She explained that, throughout her time studying in the United States, she kept in touch with her students to share her experiences and encourage them to be
more confident. She admitted that she “really wanted to go back and you know share what I have learned and really tell them what the outside world is like . . . so they know what they can expect in the future.”

**Judgment.** Although the TSP alumni had to grapple with their decision and its impact on their community, family, and personal ethics, there are further-reaching issues that were also considered by the participants that impacted their ultimate choice. One of these implications, mentioned mostly by those who had chosen to reside in North America, was the disapproval and, at times, outward criticism of fellow Tibetans. Diki said that in the year since she had graduated and lived in the United States, she had encountered some visiting countrymen who have been critical: “I have met some who have said, ‘You shouldn’t have stayed here because it is not the main reason why you got the scholarship.’” Norbu also felt that some people back in India were judging him: “They say, ‘Oh, he only went to America because of his own interests. He loves money and he loves the dollar therefore he is in America.’”

Participants explained that The Tibet Fund or CTA have tried to use this fear of criticism and shame as a way of compelling program-completers to return home. Mingma spoke of a new policy where the pictures and names of “defaulters” have been published in newspapers. He shared an incident that happened recently:

It was kind of funny. I was in a board meeting here in our Tibetan Cultural Center one Sunday and we have quite a big facility so when I was coming from the wash room there was a couple of people sitting in the lounge, one of them was a Tibetan teacher who teaches Tibetan language. He called me over and said ‘Mingma, your
picture is here . . . you look very smart.’ I said, ‘Where?’ It was there in the paper with a lot of others I know. It was kind of embarrassing.

Despite the embarrassment he felt, Mingma did not feel this would be a true deterrent. He said, ‘I don’t think it will help. It is just short sighted from the decision maker and it is unfortunate.’ Mingma added that neither he, nor anyone that he knows that hasn’t returned, has yet to be approached to “refund The Tibet Fund the total expenses” as stated in the signed Letter of Undertaking.

Although the intensity of this debate reflects the loyalty some have toward the TSP and its intended outcomes, the concern of scholars and community leaders may have been more a product of how the decision of the graduates could end up impacting the future of the scholarship program. All of the participants who returned acknowledged this as a major consideration and believed it should be central to a student’s decision to migrate or to return.

One of the most vocal advocates of the group, Sonam, explained that, as students continue to default on their commitment and, in some cases, stay illegally in the United States, it may become harder for future students to apply and get approved for visas:

I want to see the other Tibetan people, Tibetan students, getting the same privilege, but with that, everybody should work for that. That could be possible only if we go back and return to our community and work there for 2 years and then we can tell the embassy, back in U.S. and India, we can say, 15 students went back and 15 are not here, now what’s the problem? We can’t tell that if 15 are coming here and only if seven are going back to India, then how can we show them?

Sonam reported that already she had started to hear that more TSP scholars were getting their visa denied as a result of the trend toward migration. She said that she had spoken up several
times during her visits to the United States when she encountered someone who had decided to stay on. “Sometimes I’m a little blunt, you know, to students who are much learned and who have stayed back here. They would feel a little uncomfortable talking with me because I would be blunt with them.”

Tashi worried that defaulting on the TSP agreement would not only result in “brain drain” for the community, but also that a negative perception of the program could impact future financial support from the U.S. government and individual donors. He said, “The future of the program is in our hands and it would be a great loss for the Tibetan community if it did not continue.” Sonam once again agreed, saying that she wanted the program to continue so that her friends and relatives could have the same opportunity that she had. She did not want those who had not returned for what she labeled “selfish reasons” to deny them that chance and said, “We need to make an effort to continue this scholarship program, and for that, each and every one of us should work and it would happen only if we return back, right?”

**Personal influences.** Although the external influence of the collective was evident, especially for the participants who had returned home, these were not the only considerations in a scholar’s final decision. There also were several more personal motivators that were contemplated such as personal satisfaction and spiritual reconciliation. Although these were not identified as the primary factors, they were seen as important dynamics in the decision-making process.

For several scholars, such as Kalden, their spirituality provided them with an “inner voice” to consult when making any big decision in their life. Kalden explained that this part of his religious life was separate from the more communal Buddhist influence that includes
the expectations of fellow believers and the pressure to fulfill one’s role within the faith community. Kalden noted that this spiritual direction is more of an internal source that serves as both an inspiration to meet life’s challenges as well as an inner gauge of what is right and wrong.

Also searching inside, Dorjee referred back to his study of religion and the teachings of Lord Buddha as an influence to his internal ethical compass. This included listening to what Lord Buddha said as he summarized his way of life, emphasizing the accumulation of wisdom, the continued practice of mediation, and the ethics of love. Dorjee made it clear that this meant turning way from personal desire in order to find inner peace in life and in one’s choices:

Before I came here I had a verbal kind of agreement that I am not supposed to stay back after my education. So, if I stay back, then I violate my own ethics, my morality. That is against my beliefs so I am going back.

Participants also drew upon other Tibetan Buddhist philosophies to explain the reason that some Tibetans may feel compelled to return home and fulfill their commitment. Tashi noted his belief in karma as a guiding force behind his decision to return so as to avoid the consequences of what might happen if he would “do something bad in his life;” whereas Pemba noted that the belief in impermanence, that even suffering is temporary, helps his people to make tough decisions. He said, “Every Tibetan, especially those Tibetans who have received good education and who have received good opportunities, should give up their personal happiness and serve the community.”
The Decision to Migrate

Although participants explained the many intrinsic and extrinsic factors that led them to feel compelled to return to their exile community, there were also significant data supporting the reasons that TSP scholars stayed in the United States. The factors that pushed students to leave their community, as well as those that pulled them to a new life in North America, were easily identified by both returnees and nonreturnees.

**Push to leave.** Despite the strong tie participants had to their community and to a shared commitment to Tibet, they all admitted the challenges of living in the diaspora and explained what had led them, or what might lead others, to consider abandoning their community for a new life abroad. In some cases, this “push” away from their old life, and everything they had ever known, was a reflection on the current state of the Tibetan exile community and the growing concern about its future.

Dorjee, particularly, possessed strong feelings about the shortcomings of his Tibetan exile community, including the highly authoritarian nature and lack of transparency of the government, limited opportunities for those without privilege, and the resistance of the Tibetan people to change. He commented:

Because when I work in the Tibetan community, especially Dharamsala, I was happy to serve the institutions and organizations. But later on as I observed the society very closely, I saw many of the kind of like flaws in the system, so many of the limitations in the systems which in many ways discourages the young internationals or people who are passionate about the advancement of our society.

Tashi similarly acknowledged that there was much need for political and systematic reform, but felt as though those in power were not implementing any of these changes and
did not represent the common people. He cited the Dalai Lama’s effort to step back from governance and to push for Tibetans to take charge of their own affairs: “Despite his insistence, there are people within the system still holding on to the old ways so I do not have much optimism, much hope, for my own people.”

This discouraging view on the structure of the Tibetan exile community was confirmed by Sonam as she talked about the difficulties people, and especially returning TSP alumni, have in trying to change the system and way of thinking. She had seen young people who had returned from abroad with expectations to make a major impact only to give up after a few years: “They come with new ideas but the system is the same here. The high authorities are like same people with no changes. Then it is difficult to fit into that old system with new ideas.” As mentioned previously, Sonam had first-hand experiences with this kind of resistance and still today was fighting through bureaucracy and with coworkers to push through any changes. She had stayed on to “continue to fight” but understood why others may not be strong enough to withstand the struggle.

The discussion on professional life within the diaspora led participants to describe scenarios where the fear of limited job opportunities or experience with dead-end careers pushed Tibetans to seek employment elsewhere. Mingma described situations in which TSP students had returned to the community and were unable to find any jobs: “It is not like the CTA has things ready for the returnees. It is not that the community always has something for these people. They sometimes end up being tossed around.”

In some cases, participants described situations in which TSP students went abroad to study in one area but were given jobs in a different field upon return. Pemba explained that, “the programs they do in the U.S. are not really related or connected to the jobs they do here
in India so because of that many of them get bored with what they are doing.” This was similar to Diki’s experience whereby she had originally chosen to pursue teaching in order to have a better chance at getting a job in Dharamsala and supporting her family. She admitted that she never really wanted to be a teacher:

In the small Tibetan community of the exile government we have very few choices.
Growing up you can’t always follow your true passion because you know there is no future for you in that area. You realize that either you work for the government or you become a teacher or you become a nurse.

Although she ultimately ended up changing her field to business once she arrived at her U.S. university, she knew that if she had returned to India she might have been forced to go back to the education field.

Kalden described how some Tibetans who went abroad to gain higher qualifications and knowledge experienced frustration when they returned to their same job only to have their new skills underutilized. He is an example of someone who had been laboring in a position for many years, hoping to get some opportunities for advancement. His plan was that his TSP experience would get the attention of the TCV administration and qualify him for a promotion. Although he did get an improved position upon his return, he still felt as though his skills and experience were not being utilized and he was being discriminated against for a leadership job because he did not attend TCV growing up. He was concerned that this kind of predicament pushed some students away from fulfilling their commitment:

Perhaps we Tibetans have failed to facilitate to for instance give them a job or position or to promote them through the ranks and to give them some kind of
autonomy or facility or some sort of stage to perform and to the further advancement of the exile community.

As previously mentioned, participants described their status as a diasporic people being a factor in their conflicted identity and need for connection. This also was brought up when discussing factors that might push a Tibetan to leave India and make a new home beyond the exile community. Pemba mentioned the limited opportunity to gain Indian citizenship and the annual renewal of the identification papers as a reminder that one does not belong: “You sometimes start to think that you are Indian but this a reminder that you are still a foreigner in this country.”

Several interviewees talked about their experience with racial discrimination and limited opportunities as a result of their status within India. Although there was a general appreciation for India taking in the Tibetan exiles and providing them land to build a new society, the sentiment of some participants was that they never would be totally accepted. This extends to concerns regarding the future status of the diasporic community within India. Sonam questioned what might happen when His Holiness passes away:

Nobody will look after us and then Indian, they haven’t signed the refugee treaty. So, they are living there as a foreigner and every year, we have to renew our stay permit in India. So once they didn’t renew our staying permit, then we have to—they would do anything, like if they get friendly with the China, then we have no option but to go back to Tibet. They would hand over all the Tibetans to China. So, I mean that’s the fear.

This unsettled future and fear of the fate of the exile community in India was a concern for several participants.
Pull to stay in the United States. Although frustration over the Tibetan exile community pushed some to consider alternative options, the influential pull of opportunities in North America was strong as well. Once again, both staying and returning students were able to identify the factors that made the potential of life in America attractive for a Tibetan. It was evident from their stories of life in America that the lessons they learned, and experiences they gained during their studies in America, gave them a glimpse of the possibilities.

For some participants, like Diki, who used to watch American Hollywood movies when she was growing up, coming to the United States was a fulfillment of a dream, and she believed that “the opportunities here are endless.” Tashi learned a lot about the work ethic of Americans and mentioned how easy he perceived life to be as compared to his upbringing in India. He also was impressed by the American people and continually told his students, “They are really good. They are really helpful. They are very generous.” Kalden also found the American people to be very helpful and friendly and enjoyed being surrounded by all the diversity. He explained that it was somewhat difficult to adjust at first but, “after staying for several months in the U.S., I got used to their culture and to the Americans and I really liked them.”

Sonam thought that North America appeals especially to young people as they are “totally amazed with the new lives and the new lifestyle,” not to mention that “technology is there and so many opportunities for young people.” Mingma agreed that the pull may be stronger for young people who have fewer obligations to home and less to lose. He believed that the decision to migrate is best suited for “someone who is younger, who can take the risk in U.S. or Canada to fulfill their individual career dreams.”
Along with the general allure of America, participants acknowledged the powerful draw of economic prosperity with Diki admitting, “The money factor is always a big reason.” She explained that she knew what it is like to struggle economically, as her family had limited means growing up, and it is hard not to consider the possibilities when one sees wealth and prosperity all around oneself in the West. Whether it was realistic or not, the perception that there are brighter career options in America, and a greater capacity to earn money, led Pemba to believe that some Tibetans are motivated by this factor. He said, “So the students they stay back thinking that if they stay in America they can contribute to the Tibetan society more, what should I say, stronger financially like this.” Pemba continued by explaining that this economic stability could not only help in supporting family back in India or Tibet, but could also provide a better future for one’s children:

It is very difficult for you to land in America so once you land in America then you have to there are so many things that you have to think about. Your future. You have to think about your family. You have to think about your kids like this . . . to have a bright future for your family.

The ability to pass along the “American dream” to his children was a factor for Norbu as he considered his options. Although he initially had returned to India, the pull of this promise for a better future brought him back to North America. He explained that “when you finally become a citizen of this country then you have your own, I should say, you have identity, you have nation, and especially you have given your children a future.”

Norbu brought up an important theme that emerged regarding the search for identity and a home for a diasporic people. The potential of this promise provided participants with one of the most compelling pulls to uprooting themselves from the exile community to a
strange new land. The opportunity to stay in North America could lead to the possibility of gaining residency and eventually citizenship. This would not only provide the sought-after security that many Tibetans crave, but also the official paperwork they need to be able to freely travel abroad. Sonam explained that this is most important, as it relates to a Tibetan’s ability to travel back to their homeland. She explained:

If you are in India, you can’t do that. We don’t have this opportunity. If you are in U.S., if you stayed back and get the green card and citizenship, then as American citizens, he or she can travel to Tibet and meet their families.

Mingma said that this was the main factor in his decision to stay in North America: “In my case, not to justify anything, but I left Tibet when I was six and have only seen my dad a few times. I have never seen many of my siblings. Now I may be able to go home and meet them again.” This last statement was very revealing as I came to the realization that some Tibetans were inclined to move away from their community as a means to be able to eventually reach home.

In the meantime, Tibetans abroad also passionately defended themselves when accused of abandoning the Tibetan community. Although the earlier discussion on serving the community focused solely on those who had returned to India, some participants argued that there were other ways to support the Tibetan cause outside the community. Even those who returned agreed with and supported the efforts of Tibetans who live throughout the world and continue to contribute in different capacities. Tashi reinforced his validation of this concept by saying,
It is not that much important for you to come back and serve like this in India. As long as you have the Tibetan identity, if you, as long as you have the love for Tibet like this you can serve where ever you are. This is what I know.

This service to the Tibetan people is shown in several different ways according to participants. Several noted that those Tibetans who stay in America can contribute much more to the Tibetan society financially. For Norbu, his financial support of family back home is his way of fulfilling his obligation: “We send a lot of money to my sisters so they can pursue their studies in India. And my wife sends money to her cousins to help them survive.” Norbu noted that they cannot send too much, as they need to pay their own rent and feed their kids, but “we send what we can and help them to stand, you know.”

Pemba also believed that there are nonreturning TSP students who are doing many good things for the Tibetans including their involvement in becoming leaders within their Tibetan communities in cities like New York, Minneapolis, or Toronto. Mingma is a good example of this, as he noted that the exile diaspora in India has heard a lot about the efforts of Tibetans in his North American city. He noted that His Holiness had visited and was very impressed with the efforts of his association to engage the community. He said that the Dalai Lama commended them on their “contributing to preserving the language, the culture, and continuing to educate people on Tibet.” Mingma and other participants recognized the role relocated Tibetans can play in the political arena to enlist support for the Tibetan cause. Many of these kinds of efforts could not be attempted within Tibet or even in the exile communities in Asia. Not only does the Western society allow more freedom of expression, but participants pointed out the somewhat sympathetic nature of the North American media regarding the Tibetan situation. This led me to understand the greater opportunity for
Tibetans abroad to educate about, as well as lobby and advocate for, their cause. This is also seen as part of the reason the Dalai Lama travels to North America to tour different cities and make appearances.

**Searching for Resolution: Inner Conflict**

Regardless of the factors that impacted the decision to stay in the United States or to return to the Tibetan exile community, virtually all participants expressed some conflict over their final verdict. It was evident that the choices they made were not without some regret and that they continued to wonder what might have been if they had come to an alternate conclusion. As the participants experienced this inner conflict in unique ways, each case will be presented and examined separately.

**Guilt Over Staying**

For those participants who made the choice to migrate to the United States, the feelings of guilt over this decision stayed with them as they established their new home. Not only did they struggle with their failure to fulfill the written and emotional obligation to return and serve, but they also experienced challenges to their national identity and connection to their people. The three nonreturnees talked about the experience of inner conflict, knowing that they chose to leave behind their exile community, the security of the “cocoon,” and to make a new life abroad.

**Mingma.** Mingma, who described himself as a “typical TCV student,” had always planned on going back to TCV to work to pay back all that he received from this community and from the teachers and workers: “When I first came to U.S., there was no doubt I was coming back. I always wanted to go back.” However, through his 2 years of studying in the United States, he started to think a lot about his future and the opportunities that staying
would provide for him and his family. For Mingma, one of those opportunities was the potential to gain citizenship and finally be able to return to Tibet and see his family. He said:

Not to justify anything but I like to see myself differently in that respect. Others grew up with their parents in India but I left home as a kid when I was six. I always think I would love to go back and live with them. So that is how I rationalize my decision.

Mingma talked about his participation in the Tibetan community and all the work he had done to uphold and spread the Tibetan culture and traditions. He admitted that part of what was driving him to make to these efforts was the need to fulfill his service obligation even though he did not return to India. Although Mingma did not regret his decision to migrate, he explained that he was dealing with the inner conflict of his decision on a daily basis:

The guilt is still there. Like there is a saying in Tibetan, ‘Even if you ask someone who kills his father, he has his reasons.’ So I have my reason. I think that the guilt it is always there. And we talk about karma. You have to pay for the consequences for the decisions I make and not returning to the community to serve, that is there.

Diki. Diki also experienced feelings of guilt as a result of her decision not to return. This decision was very difficult for her: “When I was at university I was really struggling with myself. Um, like half of my mind was telling me to go back and half of my mind was telling me to stay here.” She explained that the guilt she felt was in letting down her community and not fulfilling her obligation to go home and serve her people. She was especially regretful that she did not return to carry on the work she was doing mentoring young people and encouraging their social and educational development. She struggled with the feeling that she missed an opportunity to make an impact on the exile community:
Maybe I would have brought a little change, I don’t know. But, what I feel like, even now, I feel like I should have gone. But the next day I feel like, no, no. The process is still going on in my mind right now.

Diki said she still was planning to go back, maybe 5 or 10 years down the line, when she had more experience and could contribute more in her profession of choice.

Diki also mentioned that she was feeling as if the idea of service should go beyond just the Tibetan exile communities. She learned, during her time in North America, that the meaning of community is larger than just the Tibetans: “I feel that the whole world is a big community.” She therefore had found solace not only in volunteering to help the Tibetan community in the United States, but also in trying to help many people from all around the world. She said, “The whole world, like America, and other countries have helped us. So that’s why we are where we are right now. So I work for this community as a whole community.”

Norbu. Norbu struggled with the feelings that he abandoned his own people with his choice to migrate to North America. By leaving behind his community, the Tibetan government, and His Holiness, he felt as if he showed that he did not have confidence in his people:

Sometimes you think that you are weak or that you are a coward you know. Because you chose to leave your community or you chose to come to America and stay. You are now for your own selfish interest you know?

He felt that the perception of those who leave is that they have turned their back on the Tibetan cause and no longer experience or care about the suffering of those back in exile. He explained, “People would say like, ‘OK, he went to America because of his own interests.”
He loves money and he loves the dollar therefore he is America you know.’ These people don’t understand.”

The guilt that weighed on Norbu was evident, as he spent a good amount of the interview justifying his actions, even when questions did not pertain to this issue. Norbu brought up several times that his decision was more about the opportunities that he could now give his kids raising them in America and providing them with an education and citizenship that will open many doors. However, raising his family in the West did not come without consequences, as he acknowledged that they will not learn proper Tibetan language and culture and will not be able to get to know their relatives:

And then all my sisters are in India and all my son and my daughter they wouldn’t be able to have a good connection with them, you know. Their outlook on life would be different and the things will be different. The things will be different and there would be no much conversation between them, you know.

Thinking about the separation between his kids and family, he expressed: “This kind of thing makes me sad you know.”

Norbu continued to live with his decision and made the most out of the opportunity America could provide. When asked about whether he felt like he made the right decision, he said, “So, I don’t know. I can only tell you that I will only know maybe after 10 years or 20 years or 30 years. I wouldn’t know, like right now, whether it was a good one or a bad one.”

**Second Thoughts on Return**

For those who returned home, there was a strong expression of satisfaction in their decision and pride in the fulfillment of their commitment. However, this did not prevent
participants from expressing second thoughts on their life choice and considering what could have been if they had stayed. The exception to this was Pemba who, while admitting that he “thought about staying longer,” did not express any strong feelings of regret regarding his chosen course.

Tashi. Tashi did not hesitate to answer “yes” when questioned if he ever thought about staying in the United States. He said he took a long hard look at the pros and cons of the situation, evaluating how this might affect his life and his family. He explained, “In the beginning there is some kind of, what should I say, dual attitude . . . some kind of conflict going on in my mind.” Although Tashi carried with him aspirations to return home to his teaching job, he admitted that he was drawn to the work ethic of Americans and to the potential to have a successful career.

He said that to study there was an “opportunity of a lifetime” for him, and he knew that he may not be able to get back to America. He shared,

> It is very difficult for you to land in America so once you land in America then you have to consider so many things to think about: your future; you have to think about your family; you have to think about your kids like this. So that is the thing.

In the end, Tashi seemed to have found peace with his decision and was reveling in the good memories he cherished and lessons he learned during his time abroad.

Sonam. Sonam started the interview with a very firm opinion on the obligation and responsibility of TSP scholars to return to serve the community. As the conversation progressed, it became clear to me that, despite a true passion for this stance, she also fully understood why others might have made a different decision than she ended up making. In fact, Sonam was the only one to bring up a different kind of strain that had been experienced
by some TSP alumni who encountered pressure from family members and other Tibetans to actually stay in the United States. She said that several people questioned her when she said she was going to return home, and even her own husband said he was going to wait to see if she actually boarded the plane to return. She said she understood why people may have wondered why she would not consider migrating:

I’m not trying to fool anybody because you know the fact is that this is a land of opportunities. Once you land in a place like this, you start comparing the life back home in India or in any other developing country, you start comparing that life. Then, I’ll bet you they would choose this life.

There also was a confused reaction from some people upon her arrival back in India. They wondered why she did not like the United States, assuming that her return home indicated a rejection of her host country. She said it was very difficult to explain to people how torn she was. She explained,

In your heart we know that [the United States] is the place you may feel like living but you may have other plans. I mean this is a place of opportunities. I want to stay but if I would stay . . . I mean I don’t want to stay. I made an agreement to go back to India. That’s the first thing before I came to the U.S.

Sonam acknowledged that having a job waiting for her when she returned, with the opportunity to vie for a promotion, gave her another compelling reason to make her way back to Dharamsala. She conceded that those who did not have that kind of employment commitment, would have faced a much-more uncertain future upon their return.

Kalden. Upon being asked about his return to India, Kalden initially expressed confidence in his decision and strong support for the need for TSP scholars to take leadership
in the exile community. However, eventually he admitted that there were times that he questioned this decision. Although he was happy to get back to reunite with his family, he said that “sometimes I feel regret now because I do have conflicting ideas.”

Kalden’s main conflict was the impact it would have on his children. He knew that, if he had been able to bring his family to the United States, he might have been able to offer them a brighter future. “Sometimes I feel now I made a wrong choice. Sometimes I feel that way now because I have got two kids. Okay, I don’t think of my own life. I need to think of their life and their future.” This has led him to feel differently about his decision and wonder what might have happened if he had remained in the United States:

If I had stayed back that would mean that in some year’s time my family would also have come to the United States and then they might have become a citizen of the country and it could become our country.

Kalden was working to rectify this potential mistake by trying to find a way to send his son to the United States for further education. He bragged about how bright and motivated his son was and solicited my assistance in finding scholarships. It became evident that Kalden’s hopes for his son were that he could have the opportunities that were not afforded to him; and in his mind, this led right back to the “American dream.”

**A Search for Belonging: Perception of Home**

Another emerging theme that pervaded all aspects of the discussion was the idea of “home” and the search for “belonging.” Whether talking about identity, decisions, or life struggles, the participants continually referenced their feelings and experiences of homelessness and displacement. As the interviews progressed and each participant echoed a similar sentiment, it became clear to me that the impact of living in the diaspora had left them
with a complicated perception of their true home and a constant yearning to find where they belong. As participants looked at their current “place of residence,” whether it was their life in North America or their livelihood in India, the data revealed that they would continue to search for their identity and grasp for connectivity as long as they were not allowed to return to their homeland in Tibet.

When asked how they perceived the idea of home, study participants struggled to respond as they contemplated the bleak prospects for themselves and their people. Initially, I thought that this was because, especially for those who had migrated to North America, they could not determine their true home between their native homeland in Tibet, their makeshift home in exile in India, and their newly established home abroad. However, it wasn’t until I completed several interviews that I realized that the problem wasn’t with discerning between several homes but with the feeling for all participants that they weren’t even sure they had a home. Dorjee was one of several who were taken aback by the question and who shared his feelings of homelessness:

I have never ever considered or never ever crossed my mind that I have a home. So I never had any emotion or any kind of idea in my mind so far that I have anyplace to call home. I don’t have a feeling of what is called home. Wherever I go, I don’t feel home.

Several participants reluctantly identified India as their home, but not without adding a disclaimer that clearly showed their true detachment from this temporary residence. For Pemba, his influential experience as part of TCV will always connect him with Dharamsala and the exile community, and therefore, this will always be a place he considers home. However, although he felt this emotional connection to his school, he also harbored some ill
feelings toward the country as a whole due to the “treatment by the Indian government toward the Tibetan people.” Pemba pointed out that the message is clear to the Tibetans in exile that they are seen as foreigners in India, required to complete the same paperwork as any other visitor, even if they were born there. Sonam agreed that it was difficult to embrace India as her home, as she felt like she was looked upon negatively and sometimes treated poorly as a refugee. She said, “I feel like what you call a disconnect from India.”

Other participants were able to find sanctuary in being with their family wherever that might be geographically. Tashi knew he could and needed to be able make a home wherever he was in order to provide sanctuary and security for his wife and children. For the time being, he was able to do this in Dharamsala and found contentment in this life, although he too remarked, “That is not the actual home. The actual home is in Tibet.” Diki also initially responded by saying that “home is more about where your family is.” However, after thinking about it more, she reconsidered, saying, “I would say, okay, Dharamsala is my home. But if you look inside my heart, it would be more like, okay, only my family is there, but my home, you know what I mean, not completely my home.” With her choice to live in North America, she was far from some of her family, including her mother who had had such a strong influence on her life. All of these incongruities put Diki in a position where she said she just could not answer this question. She said, “100% of my heart prefers that my whole family would be able to live together in Tibet. Only then will I be able to give a complete answer that, okay, this is my home.” Interview after interview revealed the sentiment that Diki mentioned above. Although I kept asking, I soon realized that there was no real answer to this question for these participants. I saw that they were all in a kind of holding pattern,
waiting, some with more hope than others, that there would be some resolution that would be able to change their reply and give them a chance to say “this is my home.”

Throughout this dissertation, the storyline of the Tibetan exile people is dominated by their desire to return to Tibet—their native land and foundation of their faith and people. Complicating this matter is the notion that, for most Tibetans in exile and for our participants, they have either never set foot in Tibet or left many years ago when they were very young. Yet this did not seem to deter their longing to be able to someday make this their home. It was interesting to note that even those who had never been to Tibet spoke of their desire to “return.” Norbu described his feelings toward this far-away homeland by saying:

You don’t know what your home is or where your home is. I call Tibet my country. Tibet is my home and I have never been there and I have never seen it you know. I only—you can only imagine your home and that’s it.

Kalden also said that, although he was born in India and had never seen his native country, “India is my second home. My first home is Tibet.” He went on to connect this to the current state of the Tibetans in exile and their continued struggle to return to Tibet: “We are a stateless and homeless people. Since we are living in India as refugees and we will, how should I say, until we get Tibet independence we will have no real home and no future.”

Pemba echoed this sentiment as he explained that “home is where the heart is” and for him that meant Tibet. However, he acknowledged that it was difficult for him to know exactly what this means: “My understanding of Tibet is mainly through movies or through videos and through pictures. I’ve not lived there long enough to understand the life of Tibet.” However, this did not stop Pemba’s desire to be able to go to his homeland as Tibet
provided the convergence of two of his dreams. One was to see a day when all Tibetans could live freely in their native land, and the other to be reunited with his family, many of whom he had not seen for years or had never met. “Then I will finally be home,” he ruminated.

Living with the loss of their homeland and the endless search for their identity has had a major impact on the Tibetan diaspora and their need for connectivity and affiliation. Sonam, who had traveled abroad previously and lived for a short time in Europe, claimed, “I don’t feel like I belong to anywhere.” Diki continued to search for this connection as she acknowledged that, whether she was in India or in America, there was always a “longing to belong.” She knew she was not alone in this sentiment: “I’m sure all the Tibetan people must be going through this. That’s what I’ve gone through throughout my life you know. There is a kind of sadness and emptiness I think is in everyone.”

This led several participants to think of the Tibetan exile people as nomads and, as Dorjee said, “constantly on the move, on the move, on the move.” Diki also agreed with this notion and said that it may be a reason why some Tibetans are more apt to migrate away from their exile community as she did. She clarified that right now we are not leaving our country. We are just leaving the house. We are leaving the, you know, the house, the car. Whatever there is. But, you know, you’re not leaving your country. Because for us, we don’t have a country right now. So that makes it easier for us to leave and go from one place to another.

Summary

The findings of the study were presented in this chapter. Survey results and profiles of the participants were offered at the beginning of the chapter to give background and
context to the findings. The information provided in the profiles, including educational history, current career, and living circumstances, helps in understanding the journey and status of the TSP alumni participating in this study. In organizing the findings of the study, information was arranged into the four main themes:

The study started out by examining the social and cultural identity of Tibetans in the first section: Searching for Self: Tibetan Identity. Beyond looking at the national, spiritual, and diasporic influence, this section highlighted the evolution of identity as a result of the participant’s experience abroad and challenges after completion.

The second section, Searching for Answers: Influences on Decision-Making, exposed the intrinsic and extrinsic forces that motivated the participants to return home or stay abroad after completion of their TSP program. This section showed how the influence of the diasporic community, the shared Tibetan cause, and the Buddhist influence served as powerful factors in the decision-making process. There was also data provided that gave light to the push/pull dynamic that led some TSP alumni away from their exile community and into staying abroad.

The next section, Searching for Resolution: Inner Conflict, looked at the experiences of guilt and/or regret that had troubled the participants since making their decision to either return to the exile community in India or relocate to North America. The theme explored in the fourth and final section, Searching for Belonging: Perception of Home, examined the participants’ perception and relationship with home as a result of their experience as a diasporic people. It explored how this search for belonging had impacted their life decisions and their identity.
Chapter 5 will further explore the topics introduced in this chapter and provide a discussion on what the implications of the findings may be. It will draw in the literature and conceptual framework to address the research questions and provide recommendations for future research.
CHAPTER 5. SUMMARY, FINDINGS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore how the search for home for Tibetan scholarship students is influenced by their cultural identity, perceived obligations, and their unique concept of home. With an increasing percentage of TSP scholars choosing not to return to serve their community, the Tibetan exile cause is experiencing a loss of human capital that is seen as impacting their ability to both preserve Tibetan culture as well as strengthen their community. As the literature reflects, and the findings confirm, the move toward migration is often a result of the disillusionment of citizens with their society’s ability to meet their needs and future goals (Kane, 1995). To better understand this difficult situation within the Tibetan diaspora and any growing feelings of discontent, reflections and experiences of the participants were provided to offer insight into the decision they made to return home or stay abroad and how it has impacted this multifaceted and resilient community.

The literature review introduced the current embattled history of the Tibetan people and their move to exile led by their spiritual leader, His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama. This background is vital in understanding the Tibetan diaspora and how the influence of Tibetans’ shared cause, religious beliefs, and exile experience has shaped their identity as a people. Previous literature on the migration motives and theories related to internationals worldwide provided understanding into why people, especially those already forced to live outside their homeland, decide to uproot, once again, to search for a new home. Finally, Lewin’s push/pull model (as cited in Baruch et al., 2007) and Deci and Ryan’s (1985) self-
determination theory were introduced to help frame this decision and how it is impacted by the conflict between self-identity and a larger communal obligation.

Qualitative research methodology was used to better comprehend the experiences of these scholars as they shared examples of socially constructed meaning stemming from their studies abroad and subsequent life decisions. The study was guided by a methodology of phenomenology, which served as a roadmap throughout the research process. Phenomenology was the best fit for this study, as the primary purpose was to understand the true essence of the phenomenon from the lived experiences of the participants (Merriam, 2002).

Participants in the study comprised 8 TSP scholars, half who had returned home to serve their community and half who were currently living in North America. A pilot study was completed first as part of a capstone project, and the results of the survey supplied potential interview candidates as well as informed the research topics and survey questions. The final 8 participants were purposefully selected with the intent to identify candidates with rich and unique experiences and perspectives. Data were gathered primarily through telephone interviews that were semistructured in nature.

The interviews were recorded and transcribed for analysis on an ongoing basis and memos were made to note initial thoughts and insights (Esterberg, 2002). Due to the language issues that arose in this process, all transcriptions were checked over several times by the researcher, by native Tibetan speakers, and, when needed, confirmed with the individual participants. Transcripts were then coded and organized into themes that reflected both predetermined categories and new ideas that emerged from the findings (Creswell,
The survey results review and document analysis also were conducted to help enhance and corroborate the discoveries made from the interviews.

The themes that surfaced were organized into four sections in Chapter 4 and all relate to the search that the Tibetan participants had undertaken and continued to pursue as they struggled to find a place to call home. These themes and sections include: (a) searching for self: Tibetan identity; (b) searching for answers: influences on decision-making; (c) searching for resolution: inner conflict; and (d) searching for belonging: perception of home.

This chapter includes a discussion of the findings of the study and revisits the research questions posed in Chapter 1. Implications for practice and suggestions for future research are also included. The chapter concludes with my final thoughts on the plight of the Tibetans and on my experience working with, and gaining inspiration from, these courageous people.

Findings

The findings of my research provide a thought-provoking array of interesting insights into the Tibetan people and community. My initial assumption going into this project was that one would be able to see a clear distinguishing pattern between the values of and influences on those who returned home and those who decided to stay in North America. I expected, by applying Deci and Ryan’s (1985) self-determination theory as a means to explore the factors that serve as the impetus to certain actions, that distinct opposing views would be found between these two groups. I suspected that those who had returned home to fulfill their service obligation were heavily influenced by extrinsic factors in the community, whereas those who defaulted were pulled by more selfish intrinsic motivators. However, the eventual findings led me to realize several things about these initial speculations.
First, it became very clear that the limitations of Western theory and ways of thinking could not provide the depth of understanding and context needed to truly embrace and absorb the fragmented reality and unique struggle of the Tibetan exile people. Although I will continue to refer to and consult some of the terminology and basic philosophy of these theories, the discoveries that I made went beyond the somewhat rigid confines of these philosophies. Therefore, I will try to comprehend and relay the findings of my work mostly by honoring and illuminating the words and experiences of my participants.

Second, my research led me to recognize that the Tibetan exile experience is teeming with complexity and conflict. As Cohen (2004) explained in describing the life and plight of those living in a diaspora, it is not surprising to discover their “multiple affiliations” and “complex ethnic identities.” However, although I had expected to find discord between the distinct intrinsic and extrinsic factors influencing their decision, such as the pressure from their community versus their own personal aspirations, this was not the case. I realized that the true conflict was actually rooted within each of the individual considerations—that the above-mentioned pressure from community did not lead to a clear path or set decision but instead introduced its own conflicting issues for Tibetans to navigate. Upon looking back at my initial comments in chapter 3, written before the research was complete, I see that I already had some sense of this dissonance as I described the “struggle and celebration, conflict and unity, and frustration and resolve” of the Tibetan people. It is this idea, that Tibetan scholars are tugged in opposing directions and must continually negotiate their reality, that I will explore further in this chapter. In order to do this, I turn back to my research questions, as they present three very important concepts: identity, decision, and home.
Identity

The literature, as well as the survey and interview findings, made a strong case for a proud and cohesive Tibetan identity. The exile community, specifically, is one that is intensely bonded by the shared experience of living in a diaspora and validated by a common struggle to preserve their culture and to fight for their homeland (Dolma, 2001). Participants recounted their experience growing up in such a secure, insulated environment where they were surrounded by all things Tibetan. Tashi described a childhood during which he never had to doubt who he was or what he believed, as there was guidance and validation at every turn. For the scholars who attended TCV, their ties to the community and knowledge of their “Tibetanness” was even more pronounced, as they grew up engulfed in Tibetan culture and Buddhist thought. Pemba affectionately talked about his experience at TCV where they learned from religious teachings, Tibetan history class, celebration of Tibetan festivals, and from regular opportunities to interact with the Dalai Lama. He saw all of this as having helped him develop as a “pure Tibetan.” The findings show that the carefully coordinated efforts of the CTA and the TCV to encourage this type of cultural immersion, supported the goals set forth by His Holiness of preserving the Tibetan culture for future generations.

However, beyond a seemingly cohesive and resilient façade, Tibetans in my study spoke of their concerns over the many threats currently facing their community. Dorjee was candid in his assessment of the biggest danger to Tibetan identity coming from within. His experiences working in a human rights organization and in the media has led him to believe that, if the Tibetan people do not open their mind and embrace change, they will not be able to strengthen the diaspora, much less be prepared to take leadership when they return to Tibet. The Dalai Lama himself has tirelessly pushed his people to cautiously embrace the
realities of globalization and the need for modern knowledge. He has warned of the destructive history of isolation and resulting downfall of Tibet and has told his people that they need to “fully take responsibility” and to “do our own work by ourselves” (Office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, 2006, para. 12).

This leads to the examination of the first of many conflicting influences identified within the Tibetan exile experience. In this case, it is the pull the scholars felt toward their commitment and call to safeguard and preserve Tibetan identity, as opposed to the necessity and directive to advance the Tibetan diaspora through ascertaining and adopting new ways of thinking. In the examination of documents and literature coming out of the CTA and The Tibet Fund, it is evident that both of these goals are considered in exile policy and endeavors. The Tibet Fund mission statement states clearly that one of its main goals is “cultural preservation and economic development” of the community. However, issues arise when one looks at the congruency of these two aims to determine if they are mutually exclusive or not.

On first analysis, the investment in the TSP initiative supports the importance the Tibetan community puts on providing opportunities to their members to acquire further education and skills. And the research findings confirm that the former TSP scholars value the program and the opportunity to gain a Western education. However, although the main objective of the TSP scholarship, as stated in The Tibet Fund literature and validated by the survey results, was for students to gain skills needed to help the community, it was other aspects of the experience that were highlighted by scholars as having some of the most profound impacts on their lives. One participant spoke of gaining self-confidence, another of acquiring greater appreciation of diversity, whereas others talked of developing a new
perspective on the world and of their own community. Participants even found that some of the lifestyles and values they encountered and adopted in the West, were, in fact, contradictory to the Buddhist philosophies such as self-restraint, patience, selflessness, and rejection of worldly activities, with which they had been raised. In the end, the analysis of the participants revealed that they had grown in many ways as a result of their experience and, for those going back, were returning to the exile community as a transformed individual.

Although this might seem like a positive and desired outcome, the data show that these enriched scholars were not always met with positive reactions—that although they were sent to be exposed to Western thinking and techniques, their newly acquired attitudes and ideas were counter to the way things had always been done. In a sense, they were now what the community had been trying to resist—they were perceived as “less Tibetan” (Korom, 1997). Sonam experienced, in both her personal and professional relationships, a resistance to change and unwillingness to give up control, which eventually led to a breakdown in communication and collaboration. At home, her newfound voice and confidence from her year in the United States clashed with the expectations and traditional values of her mate. At work, the new ideas and strong voice she developed, at times, left her ostracized and frustrated. For Sonam, who answered the call to better herself though education for the sake of the community, the resulting division she experienced left her wondering about the community’s true commitment to change and support of their citizens. This sentiment was echoed by most of the interview participants and came up as an emerging issue in the survey results.

I was fascinated when I realized that although Tibetan loyalists are asked to respond to the expectations set forth by their community to contribute to the greater good, the exile
leadership and infrastructure is not fully ready to deal with the transformation and new identity and ideas of the citizens they help enable to go abroad. This is sending out conflicting messages to the scholars as they finish their TSP and look to take their next step. It is not surprising then, when looking at the nonreturnees, that a great deal of their commentary centered on their feelings of discouragement when they considered their options back in the diaspora. It was with heavy hearts that Mingma, Norbu, and Diki spoke about their eventual decision to abandon their community in exile. Norbu illuminated this in his commentary about his feelings of weakness or cowardice when he chose to “leave behind your community, leave behind the Tibetan government, and leave behind the legacy of His Holiness.” However, I am fully persuaded from the findings that, in many ways, it is the very desperate attempt of the Tibetan exile government and community to hold onto its culture and protect its people that is pushing some to turn away and seek an environment that can fully appreciate their individuality and utilize their new capacities.

**Decision Making**

As the original impetus of this study was to look at elements that play into the decision TSP scholars make upon conclusion of their program participation, multiple themes emerged to assist in comprehending this phenomenon. The findings presented in Chapter 4 provided some basic understanding of how the concepts of internal and external motivators and the push/pull model can account for some of the factors at work in the minds of the scholars. However, once again, it was the push/pull within the different dynamics that offered the most fascinating and telling findings.

As previously mentioned, the communal influence, to a Tibetan in exile, is a very strong factor in every aspect of that individual’s life. Repeated references by participants to
the teachings of the Dalai Lama regarding the duty to serve others, and particularly their
community, shed light on a significant value held by the collective. This concept of loyalty,
according to Kalden, is intertwined with a Tibetan’s Buddhist faith and learned
understanding of an individual’s role in society. Kalden was quite eloquent when he spoke
of how Tibetans are special in their belief in and observation of Buddhism and, as a result,
their “compassion for others.” He described the reverence the Tibetan people have for His Holiness and how he guides their life resulting in “getting influence towards our own
conscience.” Although many see conscience as a more personal aspect of an individual, it
was enlightening to learn how, for Tibetans, it is often viewed as more of a communal
conscience. This gives additional context to what Kalden was referring to when he talked
about conscience playing an important role in “making your own decisions and having good
sense.”

This collective conscience was evident as participants spoke of the influence their
community had on their deliberation to stay or leave after their TSP studies. What was
surprising, however, was that this influence did not always exclusively support the idea of
returning to fulfill their service obligation. Although participants acknowledged the more
“official” expectations they felt to return, they also spoke of a more unofficial or unspoken
validation by the community to take advantage of the opportunity to make a life abroad.
Sonam detailed the outright pressure she received from some of her Tibetan peers to stay in
the United States and the surprise reaction from some in Dharamsala when she actually
returned. When looking at this conflicting attitude in context of Mingma’s account of the
CTA’s plan to use “shame” tactics by making public the names and pictures of defaulters, it
is no wonder participants believed this would not be an appropriate strategy. This
phenomenon goes back to the reality that, although all the participants could articulate why they “should” return and the resulting value to the community, each of them also was very aware of why people would consider, and do end up, relocating to America. Participants such as Sonam and Dorjee, who were the most critical of the defaulters, eventually admitted to their mixed feelings about this decision. As one survey respondent stated, “Everyone wants to look for a better and greener pasture.” This mindset can be validated by revisiting the findings introduced in chapter 4, which revealed how those who ended up staying expressed guilt over their decision, whereas those scholars who returned had experienced some regret. This same kind of paradox was found when examining other obligations the scholars considered in their decision, including their commitment to family, engagement in Buddhism, and their own personal aspirations. It is these internal struggles that once again complicated the life choices of the Tibetans and led to the many shades of grey that engulfed their existence and decisions.

Hand-in-hand with the concept of obligation is the theme introduced throughout this research with regard to the Tibetans’ sense of responsibility to serve their community. Whether it be The Tibet Fund’s TSP rules and expectations, Buddhist teachings on goodwill, or a true internal desire to make a difference, participants spoke extensively on this notion. However, another incongruity faced by Tibetans is revealed as one measures the desire of TSP scholars to contribute in relation to the limited opportunities to do so. Referring back to the challenges expressed by TSP survey respondents and interview participants, it is evident that there was a level of frustration with the power structure and infrastructure within the Tibetan exile community. Norbu, who used to work with the CTA, pointed out that many TSP alumni came back with the best intentions to work for the diaspora, only to find a lack
of opportunities. This account reinforced an emerging theme in the data of the perception held by participants of a shortage of opportunities for them in the diaspora. These shortcomings included: lack of jobs, limited careers in areas related to skill areas of scholars, underutilization of modern skills learned abroad, and lack of appreciation for Western education and thinking. As one survey respondent said, “During my study in the U.S., I learned a lot and had lots of dreams that I would like to implement after returning to my job. But due to many cultural differences and politics at work, it was not that fruitful.”

Diki’s story of choosing a career to fit the needs of the diaspora instead of her personal aspirations is a good example of the limitations put on those who stayed and worked in the community. Diki expressed her apprehension that, even now, if she returned to India, it might become necessary for her to go back to teaching despite the fact that she worked hard to earn her degree in business. One additional interesting observation was that all five of the participants who had jobs waiting for them after their TSP decided to return to the community, reinforcing the importance of this kind of job security.

It is important to note that, although the concern and frustration expressed over the limitations and faults of the community were clear, it is these above-mentioned issues that provided even more inspiration and passion for some of the participants to want to return and help deal with all of these problems. Young Tibetans, such as Dorjee, are fully aware of the potential barriers and likely detours but realize the extent to which their community needs them. This steadfast loyalty also could be seen as true for the 70% of TSP scholars who reported their return to the exile community in the survey findings. And it is also noteworthy that over 40% of survey respondents who did return are currently serving their community through positions in the government or employed within the exile school system.
Another interesting issue related to the commitment of service is revealed in the participants’ discussion of the contribution of Tibetans who live outside the exile community. Contrary to the idea that “serving the community” can be done only by returning to India, participants living in America gave several examples of their efforts to promote the Tibetan culture. Mingma, in all of his volunteering and advocacy, made a case for the idea that even greater involvement and impact can be made when living abroad. This reinforces the literature’s contention that migrants go to great lengths in their new surroundings to find alternative ways to educate about their culture, promote their cause, and financially support their community (Dorjee & Giles, 2005; Sandberg Moustogianni, 2007). One survey respondent even admitted that he did not feel like he contributed much upon his return to Dharamsala, but claimed, “While in the U.S., I did help in spreading the knowledge on and about Tibet, Tibetan culture, tradition and religion.”

**Home**

A significant theme that was a thread throughout the work and provided some of the most fascinating findings is that of the perception and experience of home for the Tibetan diaspora. All the participants heartbreakingly admitted that they did not feel like they had a home and described themselves and their exiled people with terms such as, “stateless,” “homeless,” and as nomads who are always “on the move.” This is consistent with Gready’s (1994) description that “home is reality which becomes an expectation, a dream, whereas exile is an expectation, a dream, which becomes a reality” (p. 94). The reality that emerged for participants in this study hinted that the exile life could never provide the security, familiarity, and sanctuary necessary for them to embrace it as a true home.
The complicated relationship the participants noted with their exiled fate in India provided more incongruities to examine as one tries to understand the vision of home for those living in a diaspora. On the one hand, participants acknowledged the appreciation they had for their host country and shared some positive aspects of their life in India. However, issues related to their official recognition and documentation resulted in feelings by participants of exasperation and experiences of discrimination as they recounted the bureaucratic and personal scrutiny they received from the Government of India and by some of the Indian population. While exploring such challenges, Pemba commented on the negative treatment felt by Tibetans in India, due to their religion, culture, language, and different lifestyle, thus highlighting the disconnect mentioned by several participants. Although India as “home” had the remote promise to meet the more functional need for Tibetans to acquire proper identification papers, the inclination to reject Indian culture and classification, for a fear of losing one’s own identity, was significant in several accounts. Sonam was cognizant of this dilemma as she spoke of her own resistance to “blurring boundaries” in order to avoid “sinking into the Indian community.” The literature supports the idea that a defiance to mix with Indian influences is a way for Tibetans to resist becoming rooted outside of Tibet (Sandberg Moustogianni, 2007). A perfect example of this is Diki’s account of having to introduce herself to friends at her Indian college:

I interacted with Indian friends and whenever we used to talk about, you know, where are you from, I used to say, “I was from Tibet.” But they would tell me, “But you are born in India, so you’re not from Tibet.” But then I was like, well I was born in India, but I’m from Tibet. So you know, there is a kind of emptiness as far as belonging is concerned.
The idea of home also gets tricky as participants shared their desire to migrate to the United States as a means to eventually securing the opportunity to return to Tibet. Mingma admitted that one of his primary motives in defaulting on his TSP obligation was to gain the documents he needed in North America to take his family back to their homeland. He acknowledged the irony of having to move far away from everything he had ever known in order to even dream of the possibility of reuniting with his parents. However, one can understand how he was willing to reject the reliable surrogate guardianship of the Tibetan exile community back in India in order to take a chance on finding his way back to his homeland.

The study of diasporas in the literature reveals many different thoughts on how the exile experience can impact the feelings of displaced ethnic groups on issues such as connectivity and stability. Although Malkki (1995, p. 16) believed that exiles can “locate their identity within their very displacement,” the TSP scholars shared a different perspective that has led me to believe that the diaspora can at the same time make a community more attached and yet lead it to feelings of detachment. Arguments were made in both the literature and the interview/survey findings supporting the notion of a greater identity and affiliation for those refugees who bonded together after losing their home. As discussed earlier, the leadership within the CTA has been very intentional in their efforts to assure their citizens are educated about, integrated with, and secure within the Tibetan exile community. However, Diki’s description of how she viewed her arranged “home” within India, provides a potent understanding of what may be the true lack of connection, or even divide, that she felt about the exile community. As much as she cherished the shared identity and pride in her Tibetanness, in the end, the idea of her leaving Dharamsala came down to leaving “a
house” and “the car” and “some property.” This attitude, whether a true outlook or a defense mechanism, exemplifies how it was easy for her to move “from one place to another.” In connecting this nomadic identity with the Buddhist philosophy that “everything is temporary” and nothing is truly permanent, one can see how the spiritual and physical life of the exiled Tibetan lends itself to a state of uncertainty, thus allowing for the afore-mentioned detachment and the ongoing search for belonging.

It is this desire to return to Tibet and reclaim their homeland that permeates the dreams and aspirations of the participating Tibetans. All the scholars, no matter their past or current path, spoke about the longing they had to see their people reunited in Tibet and to be able to experience firsthand what they have only been able to fantasize about. However, it became clear from listening to the participants that their idea of this haven in Tibet may not even exist anymore and that their final return could prove to be disappointing, if not devastating. It was humbling to come to the realization that, other than for a few in their childhoods, I, the interviewer, was the only one who had ever been able to visit their native land, walk along the streets of their capital of Lhasa, and see for myself the shell of a place it has become compared to what I had read about in history books and captured in the daydreaming eyes of my Tibetan friends. The participants were the first to acknowledge that most of the exile community has never been to Tibet; as Pemba admitted, the only understanding he has of his birthplace is through movies, videos, and pictures as well as some blurry childhood memories. The final irony is that Tibet once again becomes a sort of “Shangri-La,” but this time, not as perceived by the outside world but by the exiled Tibetan people. Although the vision of Tibet may not be accurate or ever realized, it provides at least
some semblance of a definition of home for the Tibetans to continue their search. And for this concept, there are no opposing views.

**Implications**

The study’s findings have implications for those working to support the Tibetan diaspora, including the Tibetan government-in-exile, The Tibet Fund, and nonprofit organizations within the exile community. However, there also may be findings that can be used by professionals in the field of international education and immigrant support services. Although the purpose of the research was to look at the unique Tibetan exile experience and their migration dilemma, lessons learned from this study may be transferred to other international groups, especially to those exiled refugee populations who are on their own search for an ever-elusive place to call home.

The issue of identity and the Tibetans’ conflicting efforts to maintain their strong heritage while also trying to develop as a people and a community was a recurring theme throughout the research. The study revealed that the issue of identity has created a paradox that has left Tibetans, especially those who have answered the call to further their education through TSP, with an obstacle that is pushing some away from the exile community and from their desire to serve. The Tibetan exile leadership needs to realize that they will continue to lose their human capital if they do not find a way to change the thinking within their society and become more open to the necessity of growth and change for both their citizens and for their society. By providing insight into how the isolation and control of the Tibetan exile community may be stifling Tibetans, instead of empowering them, this study may encourage the leadership to take the steps needed to make sure TSP scholars are embraced upon their return. These steps will make it evident to the scholars, and set an example to the
community, that the new outlooks and transformed identities of returning TSP alumni are accepted and appreciated and do not make these individuals any “less Tibetan.”

This goes hand-in-hand with the issues that emerged related to the perception of a lack of opportunities for those who are committed to coming back to serve. It should be noted that The Tibet Fund and the CTA can take a greater role in assisting students upon their return to India in not only finding positions, but also in trying to identify jobs that best utilize their skills and in companies and organizations that will welcome such an addition. A recent development from The Tibet Fund indicates that they have already identified this as an issue and have hired a company in India to assist TSP students in finding jobs upon their return. It is important to note, and for the Tibetan leadership to understand, that if TSP alumni are able to find promising, financially favorable, career opportunities back in India, the factors that pull them toward the promise of a better life abroad may not be as strong.

Most of the participants made it clear that they would choose to reside back in their exile community if they knew that there were ample opportunities provided to find a career and provide for their family.

There also should be consideration of putting in place support mechanisms within the community to help TSP scholars network and communicate in order to provide encouragement and collaboration. The Tibetan leadership may be advised to consider how they can utilize and empower this group beyond formal employment and look to them for volunteer leadership on community projects and think tanks. The value participants may feel as a result of their sought-out involvement could have a positive impact on both the job and life satisfaction of TSP alumni as well as the perception of future opportunities for present and prospective TSP scholars. As a result, these success stories, and a new generation of
TSP alumni making an impact on the community, will serve as a powerful example for the program and may help to fuel a renewed passion for service and community revitalization.

Unfortunately, none of these efforts can resolve the dilemma of official recognition and documentation that currently eludes Tibetans living in India. As the findings of this study suggest, this will continue to be a major issue and one that will push Tibetans away from returning. This study may encourage the CTA to continue their negotiations with the Government of India to demand that their people receive full recognition and paperwork that will allow them to travel freely, including to their homeland of Tibet. In addition, concerns over losing the cohesion and identity of the Tibetan diaspora in India, should be outweighed by the needs of the population for proper identification and the privileges that go with it.

This leads back to one of the major findings of the study and an issue that influences all aspects of Tibetan exile life: the continued search for home and belonging. Tibetan leadership, as well as international educators and immigrant advocates, should consider this dynamic when navigating any issues or creating new policies related to the Tibetan exile. As an international educator myself, I will take away a better understanding of the conflict between the overwhelming pride and cultural identity my Tibetan students have and the inner conflict they battle when figuring out where they belong. As The Tibet Fund has started a new mentorship program, asking professionals to serve as guides to TSP students currently studying in the United States, this realization of Tibetans’ continual search and unsettled nature may assist mentors and advisors in providing support and understanding.

There is also an important conversation that needs to be had regarding the attitude toward Tibetans who eventually make the hard decision to relocate away from the exile community. Although it is understandable that the Tibetan exile leadership does not want to
encourage this behavior, it can utilize the study’s findings, especially all the positive examples of those TSP alumni making a difference in their new community, to re-examine the role these migrated Tibetans can have in the advancement of the exile community. Is there a way that these “defaulters” can “repay” the investment through other types of service? Is there a way to keep them involved in exile affairs and utilize their position in communities across North America to further the cause?

**Recommendations for Practice**

It is an important time in the Tibetan exile community with the Dalai Lama stepping back from his leadership role and challenging his people to take hold of their own fate. The new prime minister, a TSP alumnus, has expressed that progress is a priority and all exile citizens hold a responsibility in that effort.

Although this study has uncovered many interesting facets of the Tibetan exile experience, TSP program benefits, and issues surrounding the migration problem, it has also led me to develop some suggestions for The Tibet Fund, CTA, and Tibetan advocates to consider when creating policy and considering practices. That being said, it is fairly certain that progress will be stunted if the three groups mentioned above do not collaborate together and jointly empower the Tibetan exile community to embrace and participate in these efforts.

**The Tibet Fund and CTA**

- Review the selection process and requirements of the TSP to ensure that the program is attracting the most qualified and dedicated recipients
  - Engage in research to look at the demographics of past recipients to compare with rate of return and current employment
- Complete a move toward funding only degree-seeking candidates who have a higher rate of return and elevated qualifications
- Review policy on required work experience to maximize applicants with secure jobs or strong prospects upon return
- Involve CTA in the TSP selection process in order to match selected candidates with future needs within the community.
  - Develop mechanisms within the program to support TSP scholars during and after their participation
    - Continue the newly implemented mentorship program as a means of guidance for current students
    - Consider developing a policy that allows TSP scholars to stay one additional year to participate in optional practical training (a work program allowed by the U.S. government) to gain experience in their field
    - Support and manage new partnership with an Indian company retained to assist returning TSP scholars in their job hunt
    - Grow and better utilize the TSP Alumni Association
      - Reacculturation support for returning scholars
      - Networking opportunities for those working in the community
      - Use as role models and sounding boards for incoming TSP participants
      - Work with CTA to involve alumni in conversations on and leadership efforts related to renewal and reform.
  - Expand promotion of TSP program through a marketing campaign
    - Make clear the objectives and outcomes of the program
- Highlight success stories of TSP participants becoming leaders in their field
- Show statistics that emphasize the positive rate of return and employment in important areas such as government and education.
- Cease all “shame” efforts to publicize the identities of defaulters
  - Consider direct and indirect efforts to support and utilize TSP alumni who have relocated to North America
- Organize an Overseas TSP Alumni Association
  - Coordinate efforts within their city to participate in advocacy or education efforts
  - Work together to gain their insight and involvement in exile community affairs
- Continue efforts to negotiate with the Indian government for full recognition and paperwork for Tibetans born and living in exile within India.

**International Educators, Immigration Supporters, and Tibetan Advocates**

- Continue support of TSP and lobby the U.S. State Department for more funding
- Encourage participation in the TSP mentorship program
- Support private and government efforts to raise awareness and funding for the Tibetan exile community
- Understand the complex nature of Tibetan immigrants trying to maintain cultural traditions at home as well as within host country.

In the end, my assessment is that Tibetans want to find reasons to return to their exile community. Despite the allure of the United States, I do not believe that most Tibetan exiles desire such a far-off and foreign displacement; they want to be near their family, be engulfed
in their culture, working to forward the cause, while at the same time developing as an individual and feeling they are valued and appreciated within their community. The above-mentioned suggestions are only a start to some of the efforts that need to be considered when examining the future of the Tibetan diaspora and the continued search for home.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

While considering the valuable information gained from this study, there are several opportunities to expand upon the findings and to explore other issues related to the Tibetan exile community.

When focusing primarily on The Tibet Fund’s TSP program and the current phenomenon of nonreturn, there is some extensive quantitative work that could be done to better understand the correlation between the demographics of their participants and the tendencies to migrate. Looking at such indicators as age, gender, work experience, birthplace, location of family, TCV attendance, academic major, and program type, a clearer picture may emerge of the students who stay in the United States and those who are more compelled to return. The Tibet Fund may also be interested in how these factors correlate with the success of the participants in finding jobs within and outside the exile community.

Some interesting findings also emerged related to the Tibetan scholars’ experiences in the United States and on their university campuses. Although most of this was not relevant to my current work, there may be some important implications for The Tibet Fund and international educators, if one were to pursue this research. Participants were very eager to talk about the acculturation process during their time abroad, the challenges they faced living in the United States, and how they changed as a result. Research also could be focused on the readjustment issues that some Tibetans, and other international populations, experience
upon returning to their community. All of the above-mentioned topics could provide insight into the Tibetan study abroad experience and assist advocates in helping to understand and support the population.

Finally, I made a mindful decision, during the planning of my research, that I wanted to look at this population and situation through a phenomenological lens. I felt strongly that it was of upmost importance to let the experiences and voices of the participants be central to the process and findings. However, as I learned more about the exile existence and the challenges of the diaspora, other theoretical perspectives and research methods came to mind. There certainly are a multitude of issues related to power structures and social justice, considering the history and relationship with China as well as the feudal past of the Tibetan society, that would lend itself to a more critical approach. The interesting facets of the diaspora, including the struggle of the leadership to let go of past traditions and embrace change, could even be examined through a postmodern lens bringing in concepts related to postcolonial work and the study of Orientalism. There are also many fascinating possibilities when considering work that could be done to compare those still living within Tibet, under Chinese rule, to the Tibetan population in exile. Even issues introduced in this work, such as identity, obligation, and perception of home, would make for an interesting comparative study. All of this potential research would help add to the literature on the Tibetan experience and contribute to the knowledge base on this population.

**Personal Reflexivity and Transformation**

This has been an amazing journey. To think it started just 10 years back when I took on what seemed like a fairly insignificant responsibility of working with The Tibet Fund to place students at my university. I never imagined it would take me across the world,
traversing the bumpy, gravel roads of Dharamsala in the mountains of India; witnessing how
the Tibetan people have tried to find contentment and peace far away from a dream of their
homeland. I didn’t expect the emotional rollercoaster I experienced, witnessing firsthand the
fading away of Tibetan culture and pride in Lhasa, Tibet, where the people I met were left
with only fear and hopelessness. I am still in awe of the moment His Holiness the Dalai
Lama took my hand during his visit to my university and conveyed a heart full of compassion
and promise with one weary smile. And I am forever thankful for the opportunity to work
with the courageous Tibetan students who traveled far from their homes and implanted
themselves in a strange foreign culture, in the middle of Iowa much less, in order to better
themselves and their community. However, it was a card that I received from one Tibetan
young lady who I had helped to find funding for her education, that will stay with me for the
rest of my career. In the card she wrote, “Thank you for giving me my life.” Here in the
United States, we often take education for granted, viewing it as a necessary function of our
development. However, I think it is hard for us to understand how important it is to the
Tibetans and to the future of the Tibetan community. It is in many ways their lifeblood and
their hope. It helps keep their dream of their homeland alive as they see the strengthening of
their exile community and of its members—a key to surviving and thriving until they can
return home. Education, and in this case the TSP program, is giving participants
opportunities of a lifetime and optimism for their future. I am humbled that I have been able
to play a small part in that effort and that I can offer this work as another means of
empowering the community and advising its leadership.

However, I continue to struggle with the feeling that there is much more to be done.
As I look at the information I collected through this relatively small research project, I am
aware that there is so much more yet to be discovered and shared. What I have presented is only a small portion of the fascinating findings, and my interpretation is limited at best. I fully recognize the limitations of my study including the small sample size, the limited exposure, and the inability to conduct face-to-face interviews. I recognize now some of the questions I wished I had asked and background information I should have gathered to understand my participants more deeply. As mentioned above in my recommendations for further research section, I cannot help but wonder where the research journey would have taken me if I had chosen to frame my research differently or introduce certain concepts into the discussion.

However, I am reassured by the idea that this does not need to be the end of the road for my research work with the Tibetan community. The binders full of unused quotes, files overflowing with fascinating articles, and the passion I have gradually developed for this subject, will provide me the impetus and foundation to continue my efforts. My concern of the delimitations stemming from my position as an outside researcher, as brought to light in chapter 3, also have been pacified. The overwhelmingly open and honest reception I received from my participants was evidence of their comfort and willingness to let me into their life. Almost every interview ended, to my embarrassment, with the TSP scholars expressing appreciation for my efforts on behalf of their community. Mingma addressed this issue, saying,

If it is an outsider’s work it is always more valuable, the value is different. Whereas if it is someone internal who is doing this type of survey, I am sure it would not make as big of impact. So I am sure you will make a lot of impact. So in that respect I am very thankful.
So despite the fear, frustration, insecurity, and long, long hours, I am proud to put forth the first edition of my study on these Tibetan scholars. As I reflect, I can now appreciate how much I learned about myself throughout this journey and how thankful I am for the opportunities in my life to encounter people with different stories and experiences than my own. I will always feel a special bond with the Tibetan people, and my heart will go out to them as they continue to search for a “home” and face the reality that they may never be able to return to the homeland of their ancestors and the heart of their culture. In the meantime, I am confident that they will continue to pursue the preservation of their culture and identity as a Tibetan people and as followers of Buddhism. They will look to strengthen their exile community to make it a better place while at the same time yearning to be able to leave it behind. They will search for belonging within and outside the diaspora and make hard decisions that weigh the external influences of their community with the intrinsic dreams and aspirations held by each individual. The search for a home has led them many places, but it has not taken away their passion and pride for their culture. This is the hope they hold onto and the lesson we all can learn from them.
APPENDIX A. TIBETAN SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM ANNOUNCEMENT

THE TIBET FUND

241 EAST 32ND STREET NEW YORK, NY 10016

Tibetan Scholarship Program 2012 Announcement

The Tibet Fund is pleased to announce the US State Department’s scholarship for Tibetan refugees in India, Nepal and Bhutan. The distributions for the year TSP 2012 scholarship are as under:

Category ‘A’ Degree Program (10 seats)

a) Applicant for two-year Master program in the United States must have secured a minimum of 45% in the Bachelor or Postgraduate program.
b) The applicant must have at least four years of academic work after class XII, (e.g.: BA/B Sc/B. Com + B. Ed). Partial Computer Course, Vocational training and Diploma from Non-University will not be accepted under Degree Program.
c) Applicant under this program must produce a copy of their TOEFL iBT score with a minimum of 90/120 for Degree applicants.
d) Degree applicants must produce GRE with a minimum score of 960/1600 and GMAT 550/800 after the selection.
e) Applicant should be born on or after January 1st, 1976.

Category ‘B’ Non Degree Program (9 seats)

a) Applicant must furnish an introductory letter from the Public Service Commission (PSC) stating that the applicant is currently a PSC appointed staff with the duration of services cited therein. Non CTA staff’s are also eligible to apply provided he/she gets an introductory letter from your employer.
b) Applicant must produce the copy of their TOEFL iBT score with a minimum of 75/120 for Non Degree applicants.
c) Applicant for Non Degree program must have completed minimum of 5 years of community Service at the time he/she applies. Certificate to this effect shall be obtained from the Head of CTA departments or other institutions or organization where he or she has served or serving.
PROCEDURE FOR THE SUBMISSION OF APPLICATIONS & CRITERIA FOR AWARDING SCHOLARSHIPS

1) **RC**: Photocopies of the RC of applicant, parent and spouse (If married). Applicant without Registration Certificate from Nepal and Bhutan must obtain a letter from their respective Office of the Tibetan Freedom Movement (Bhod Rawang Denpai Legul) certifying that the applicant is a bonafide Tibetan refugee with a certification from the concerned Settlement Officer or Local Tibetan Welfare Office.

2) **Green Book**: Photocopies of the Green Book of applicant, parent and spouse (If married).

3) Applicants whose parents live in Tibet, Divorced or have passed away must produce certificate to this effect from the concerned Settlement Officer where they live.

4) **School Certificates**: Applicants must produce year-wise Mark Sheets and Certificates of graduation from the respective schools from which you have graduated.

5) **Attestation**: All the documents submitted for the TSP must be attested by a gazette officer.

6) **Medical Certificate**: Fitness Certificate from the registered medical doctor should be submitted. The medical form can be downloaded from the DoE and TF website.

7) **Application Process Fee**: Each application form must be accompanied by bank draft of Rs.250.00 for postage and processing fee drawn in favor of **Tibetan Children’s Educational & Welfare Fund (TCEWF)**.

8) **Travel Document (IC)**: As there is no provision for Identity Certificate (IC) extension for TSP candidates studying in the United States, applicants should make sure that they have their IC renewed or extended during the entire study period in advance.

9) **US Visa**: It is cautioned that the US Embassy have denied the visa for TSP candidates who have had their visa rejected earlier. In the event you have a prior visa denial from the US Embassy, The Tibet Fund cannot guarantee that your exchange visa will be granted during the visa interview.

10) **No Objection Certificate**: If the Applicant is serving in any institution, he or she should furnish “**No Objection Certificate**” from their respective employer.

11) **Incomplete Application**: In the event of an in-complete application has been submitted, your responsibility will be to submit those missing documents before the application deadline. No application or missing documents will be entertained after the deadline has passed.

12) **Photo**: Applicant must submit five passport size photos.

13) **Program**: Applicants should choose one major study program from any of the following field of studies as indicated. The fields of studies specified below were drawn based on the needs and the ones that could benefit the Tibetan government in exile or community and they are arranged in alphabetic order.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field of Studies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture/ Horticulture/ Animal Husbandry/Agronomy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auditing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banking Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer Science</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Counseling (Career, School, Unemployment)
Development Planning
Environmental Studies
Food Preservation and Processing Technology
Geo Hydrology Technology
Human Resource Development
International Law
International Relations (Negotiation/Protocol)
Inter-Religious Studies
Library and Information Studies (Archives)
Mathematics; Physics; Chemistry; Biology
Management & Development
Mass Communication / Journalism
Master in Social Work
Micro Entrepreneurship Development
Natural Resources Management
Public Administration
Public Health/Medicine
Renewal Energy Technologies
Rural Development
School Curriculum
Security and Intelligence Study
Sinology and Chinese Studies
Special Education
Waste Management and Recycling Technology

14) **Deadline**: Interested applicants may send their application forms and other relevant documents to this department on or before **May 16\(^{th}\), 2011 before 5.00 pm**.

15) **General Awareness Test on Tibetan Culture and History**: The applicants will have the option to take the test either in Tibetan or in English. The applicant who takes the test in Tibetan will be given two (2) additional points towards the total marks he has achieved.

16) If you have any further questions or doubts regarding the scholarship, please send your queries to the attention of TSP Program Coordinator, Tenzing Choephel Chumeego, tchoephel@tibetfund.org
Send in your applications materials to the following address:

Scholarship Section (TSP)
Department of Education; Central Tibetan Administration
Gangchen Kyishong; Dharamsala - 176 215
Dist. Kangra (H.P.) INDIA
Tel.: 01892 – 222572; Fax: 01892 223481
E-mail: education@gov.tibet.net

www.tcewf.org
APPENDIX B. LETTER OF UNDERTAKING

LETTER OF UNDERTAKING

In consideration of having been selected by the High Level Scholarship Committee of the Central Tibetan Administration, Dharamsala, District Kangra, Himachal Pradesh, under the Tibetan Scholarship Program for □ Degree or □ Non Degree Program Course Studies in the field of __________________________ in the United States of America, which are funded by US Department of State and administered by The Tibet Fund.

I, _________________________________, Son / Daughter of _________________________________, born on __ __ / __ __ / __ __ __ __ (dd/mm/yyyy) placed at(School) ________________________________, IC #: __________________________ valid till: ______________________ (dd/mm/yyyy) hereby covenant and undertake that:

- I shall at all times during the course of the scholarship be bound by all the directions given to me by the High Level Scholarship Committee and The Tibet Fund concerning my study, stay and conduct, and successful completion of my education in the United States of America under the Tibetan Scholarship Program.

- I do hereby Covenant and Undertake to abide by the direction of the Department of Education of the Central Tibetan Administration, after completion of my studies in the US, to return to India as per US Visa requirements and serve the Tibetan Community there for a minimum period of two years.

- If I fail to comply with the above clause:
  - The Tibet Fund has the full authority to report my where about to the Federal Authorities and the US Department of Homeland Security for further actions.
  - In addition, I will refund to The Tibet Fund the total expenses incurred by The Tibet Fund for my studies in the US with the understanding that these funds will be forwarded to the US Department of State.

Student signature:

Student’s Name: _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _
Oath or Affirmation from the Student

I acknowledge that I have read the Instructions, and I am aware of my responsibilities as an exchange student to the US under the Tibetan Scholarship Program.

I swear (affirm) that I understand and agree to the contents of this “Letter of Undertaking” signed by me and that the statements are true and correct.

Signature of Student: . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .

Subscribed and sworn to (affirmed) before me this day of __________________ in __________________. My commission expires on __________________.
APPENDIX C. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview Protocol for Tibetan Scholarship Participants

Experience Abroad

What were the three most significant lessons you learned during your TSP experience?
What challenges did you face in returning home? (returner)
What challenges do you face living far from home? (defaulter)
How do you compare the lifestyle you experienced/experience in the United States with the lifestyle in your home community?

Decision Making

What made up your decision to pursue participation in the Tibetan Scholarship Program (TSP)?
Why was it important for you to study abroad?
After completing your TSP studies, what influenced your decision to either return or not return to the Tibetan exile community?
What internal conflicts, if any, did you experience when deciding to return home after your studies abroad? (returner)
What internal conflicts, if any, did you experience when deciding to not return home after your studies abroad? (defaulter)
What is the strongest influence in your life decisions?

Identity

How has your upbringing in the Tibetan exile community influenced your identity?
How has your religious beliefs impacted your life decisions?
What is your definition of home?
How do you feel your perception of home as a Tibetan is different from other people who are not living in exile?

Community

How did you stay connected with the community while you were studying abroad?
How strong do you believe the sense of belonging is within the Tibetan community?
How do you currently stay connected to the Tibetan community? (defaulter)
How do you perceive the choices made by those TSP participants who decided to not return home? (returner)
How do you currently contribute to the Tibetan community and take actions to further the Tibetan cause?
# APPENDIX D. TIBETAN SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM (TSP) SURVEY RESULTS

## 1. Section A - Tibetan Scholarship Program (TSP) Information

Name of United States academic institution attended through the TSP:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emerson College, Boston, MA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Wyoming, Laramie, Wyoming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monterey Institute Of International Studies (MIIS) Monterey, California</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Wisconsin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Massachusetts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middlebury college, Vermont</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Massachusetts Amherst</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Wyoming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Wisconsin-Madison</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brandeis University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of San Francisco</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Northern Iowa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Northern Iowa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Of San Francisco, California</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers College, Columbia University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syracuse University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brandeis U</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York University - School of Continuing and Professional Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University at Buffalo (SUNY)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Northern Iowa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Massachusetts, Amherst</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Utah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of San Francisco</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columbia University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UMASS, Amherst</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Wyoming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Northern Iowa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ball State University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utah valley state college</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brandeis University, Waltham, Boston</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York University</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey
Indiana University
University of Utah
University of Northern Iowa

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistic</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Responses</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Term and Year of TSP study completion:

<table>
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<th>Answer</th>
<th>Responses</th>
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<tr>
<td>Spring ~ 1994</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall ~ 2008</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall ~ 1998</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall ~ 2007</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring ~ 2002</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall ~ 2002</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer ~ 1999</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring ~ 2006</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring ~ 2009</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer ~ 1996</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring ~ 2010</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>40</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistic</th>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Most Common</td>
<td>(62.5%)</td>
<td>(66.67%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Responses</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
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</table>
### 3. Type of TSP grant received:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Two-year master’s degree grant</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>One-year non-degree course grant</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Statistic**

- **Min Value**: 1
- **Max Value**: 2
- **Mean**: 1.45
- **Variance**: 0.25
- **Standard Deviation**: 0.50
- **Total Responses**: 40

### 4. Did you extend your studies in the United States beyond the TSP program duration?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Answer</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>%</th>
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<td>Yes</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Statistic**

- **Min Value**: 1
- **Max Value**: 2
- **Mean**: 1.87
- **Variance**: 0.11
- **Standard Deviation**: 0.34
- **Total Responses**: 39
5. Please state why you decided to extend your studies in the United States beyond the TSP program duration?

Text Response

I thoroughly enjoyed my experience and system of education in US, therefore I decided to extend but due to my I.C. problem I had to return. I got scholarship to completed masters degree in Adult and Post Secondary Education from UW.

need one more year to get the diploma

Ongoing program

I got a paid internship opportunity with the Office of Refugees and Immigrants under the Massachusetts State which closely relates to my field of study

To do PhD

Total Responses 5

6. What academic field did you study as part of the TSP?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Art &amp; Architecture</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Biological &amp; Life Sciences</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Business &amp; MBA</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Computers &amp; Technology</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Education &amp; Teaching</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>26%</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Healthcare &amp; Public Health</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Humanities &amp; Cultures</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Law &amp; Criminal Justice</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Nursing &amp; Medicine</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Physical &amp; Earth Sciences</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Public Affairs &amp; Policy</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Social &amp; Behavioral Sciences</td>
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<td>10%</td>
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Total Responses 39

Statistic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Min Value</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max Value</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>6.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variance</td>
<td>12.89</td>
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<tr>
<td>Standard Deviation</td>
<td>3.59</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Responses</td>
<td>39</td>
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</table>
7. Specify the name of the major you studied as part of the TSP:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Journalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult and Post Secondary Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Public Administration (IPA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Chemistry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Statistical analysis chemistry and environmental science (your academic field and some other doesn’t give you much choice)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum and Instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non degree program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library &amp; Information Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainable International Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral Communication and French</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching of English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digital Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainable Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Documentary Film-making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Relations - Political Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MFA in digital video</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational leadership, School Superintendency, etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters in Public Policy and Administration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>computer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Law and Diplomacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accounting &amp; Auditing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum and teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Counseling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Counseling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multimedia web production</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercultural communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i am an audit student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainable Development Studies</td>
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<tr>
<td>M.A. International Relations</td>
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<td>Human Resource management</td>
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<td>Central Eurasian Studies</td>
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<td>accounting</td>
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<tr>
<td>Master of Business Administration</td>
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<tr>
<td>Master of Business Administration</td>
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### Statistic | Value
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Responses</td>
<td>39</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**8. Section B - TSP Study Experience**  
To what extent do you agree that you gained the following skills or knowledge during your TSP experience? For each question, please mark the space that best reflects your feelings:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neither Agree nor Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Better understanding of United States culture</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>4.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Greater insight in the Tibetan political situation</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>3.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Better understanding of how I can help my community</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>4.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>New understanding of other faith traditions</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>4.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Research experience and comprehension</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>4.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Enhanced knowledge of chosen profession</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>4.60</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Leadership skills</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>17</td>
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<td>4.21</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Written communication skills</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>4.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Oral communication skills</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>4.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Computer skills</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistic</th>
<th>Better understanding of United States culture</th>
<th>Greater insight in the Tibetan political situation</th>
<th>Better understanding of how I can help my community</th>
<th>New understanding of other faith traditions</th>
<th>Research experience and comprehension</th>
<th>Enhanced knowledge of chosen profession</th>
<th>Leadership skills</th>
<th>Written communication skills</th>
<th>Oral communication skills</th>
<th>Computer skill</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Min Value</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max Value</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>4.53</td>
<td>3.80</td>
<td>4.56</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>4.41</td>
<td>4.60</td>
<td>4.21</td>
<td>4.38</td>
<td>4.54</td>
<td>4.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variance</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>0.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std Deviation</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>0.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Responses</td>
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<td>40</td>
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<td>40</td>
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<td>40</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
9. Rank in order of importance the following objectives of the TSP as it relates to your experience. Rank the most important objective "1," the second most important objective "2," etc.:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>To contribute greater insight into my field of study</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>To contribute to my subsequent career choices</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>To enhance greater insight into my chosen profession</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>To enhance my ability to contribute to the Tibetan exile community</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistic</th>
<th>To contribute greater insight into my field of study</th>
<th>To contribute to my subsequent career choices</th>
<th>To enhance greater insight into my chosen profession</th>
<th>To enhance my ability to contribute to the Tibetan exile community</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Min Value</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max Value</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>1.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variance</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>1.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Deviation</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>0.74</td>
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<td>Total Responses</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10. Section C - Post-TSP Experiences Select the employer that represents your current employment situation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Central Tibetan Administration (CTA)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Tibetan Children Village School</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Non-profit Organization</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Other CTA-sponsored/affiliated institutions</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Higher education institution</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Not Employed</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Other

College for Higher Tibetan Studies  
NYC Public School  
Worked with CTA for 5 years, and currently pursuing further studies in the US  
currently studying in US  
phayul.com  
Central Tibetan Schools Administration, New Delhi  
Tibetan Homes School  
Delek Hospital

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistic</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Min Value</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max Value</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>4.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variance</td>
<td>5.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Deviation</td>
<td>2.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Responses</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11. Current location of employment:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Country</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boston</td>
<td>MA, USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dharamshala</td>
<td>India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CTA- DHARAMSALA</td>
<td>INDIA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dharamsala</td>
<td>India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>geneva</td>
<td>Switzerland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NYC</td>
<td>US</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palampur</td>
<td>India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York</td>
<td>USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington University in St Louis</td>
<td>USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dharamsala</td>
<td>India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dharamsala</td>
<td>India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dharamsala</td>
<td>India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEW DELHI</td>
<td>INDIA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Varanasi</td>
<td>India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calgary</td>
<td>Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York</td>
<td>US</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canberra</td>
<td>Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dharamsala</td>
<td>India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shimla</td>
<td>India</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
12. **Have you received any professional honors, awards, or appointments that you could attribute, in some way, to your TSP study experience?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
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<th>Statistic</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Min Value</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max Value</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text Response</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have been appointed to the post of Assistant headmaster after having come back from my study program. Furthermore, as a Fulbrighter, there has been increment in my monthly payment (salary). After returning back to India, I was promoted and given more responsibilities at the Shantarakshita Library, CIHTS, Varanasi and took charge of Collection Development and Technical Section. The present job as a Librarian at Trace Foundation’s Latse Library is also the result of TSP. I have been appointed as the Project Coordinator as soon as I came back to work. Since 2009 I have been again appointed at the Sponsorship Coordinator. Currently I work as the Sponsorship and Project Coordinator at the Head Office of the Tibetan Children’s Villages. Currently working in the Australian Agency for International Development which is directly relevant to my field of study and helps a lot... I was appointed the Assistant Director of Tibetan Center for Human Rights and Democracy soon after I returned from the States. I have also elected Member of Tibetan Parliament in exile since 2005 and recently reelected for the second term. I believe that TSP program has somewhat contributed to these appointments and election. Currently I am running an NGO that works towards youth empowerment in particular Tibetan youth. Recognition from employer and got promotion As a stipend I am being given special recognition and extra allowance. Lots of job offers Because of my educational background on International Relations, CTA appointed me as the Coordinator of India-Tibet Coordination Office, based in Delhi, India</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Total Responses | 9 |
14. The following questions provide you the opportunity to share your experiences and contribute valuable feedback about the TSP program. Please respond to each question with your thoughts and reflections. How has your TSP experience assisted you in gaining professional opportunities after completion of the program?

Text Response

Yes, it does.

I tried to register myself with courses that are related to Education during the first semester and at the same time I applied for MA Adult and Post Secondary program. My application was approved and I was a full time graduate student in Adult and Post Secondary Education. I am currently working for College for Higher Tibetan Studies, Sarah near Dharamsala. My TSP experience therefore has direct impact on my day to day functioning. I would say I have become more professional in carrying out my duties and making a greater impact in the our students experience at Sarah College.

-Got a huge experience in how a developed economy and democracy functions
-Learned about positive aspects of western culture and education system
-Learned more insightknowledge in my field of study

TSP didn’t help in gaining any professional opportunities.

TSP is one such good opportunity for younger minds of Tibet to get an access to the American Universities. I think every single upcoming generation of Tibet should and must avail such a golden chance offered by the State Department. Having received scholastic education at the UMass, Amherst for one academic session (2007-2008), I came to know about the American way of life and the diversity of culture in the United States. My mental horizon got really expanded by being in the United States. As a TSP recipient, I would like to extend my sincerest thanks to the Department of State for the timely help rendered to the needy Tibetans. God Bless The United States of America.

It helped me a lot with my confidence level on many aspect of the professional world. My writing and speaking of English improved. I learned how to look for more information or do research.

TSP program helped to master in the field of my profession and I was honored and selected for the job at the Library which I joined on February 9, 2008.

TSP experience has given me exposure to new opportunities in the field of academic research. After five years of research work with CTA, I was able to get into a graduate program in cultural anthropology in the US.

I felt like a person who have found wings to my thoughts and its all because of my enhanced knowledge and confidence. It gave me encouragement to apply for higher job post and on the first opportunity I grab it with my both hands. On completion of the program and after my return, I appeared for our Tibetan Public Service Examination for the vacant post of Joint Secretary and as there was only 1 seat so I am extremely proud to get selected and that too after competing with 2 male contenders. A girl who was just a section officer and now a Joint Secretary is a dream come true successful story.

To me basically it was the exposure and the US educational experience that was rewarding. No doubt this has helped in self development.

I am yet to complete my program, but i am sure that this experience will surely add up to my professional acumen.

I have yet to return to India. I am going back in August 2011. I hope whatever i have learned here will add up to my professional skill.

I had a job to return to right after my completion. But I was transferred to the Department that was able to use my learnings from TSP Program.

I haven’t finish my studies...in US...so can’t really share my experience but i am sure my exposure to world of Documentary film-making, through this scholarship, has opened my eyes and made me aware of exciting possibilities...

...my experience with TSP helped my understanding of the problems faced by various communities, peoples...
and governments around the world which naturally helped me gain further insight into development challenges and in framing relevant strategies in addressing the issues...

The opportunity of studying in a pluralistic society, integrating classroom instruction with educational technology and the dedication and devotion of the professors attached with the university left an indelible impression on my mind. These factors helped me immensely in defining my role as a professional.

I moved to Canada after completing my studies. My TSP experience and the graduate degree from the US enabled me to integrate into the labour market relatively easier.

I gained lot of professional opportunities after completion of the program. I became more confident and get more respect and appreciation from our community.

TSP experience has opened all doors for me- I have always been a confident person and the exposure has further boosted my confidence and opened all avenues.

Gained more confidence in my field of work and greater knowledge and exposure helps me doing my job with more efficiency and effectiveness.

I was exposed to totally a new system of education. Till now I have been exposed only to the Indian system of education. Because of this scholarship, I was able to know more techniques, strategies and especially the use of technology in education. I have also gained more knowledge in the field of my teaching. The discussions that I used to have with my classmates who happened to be all in the teaching field proved very useful. Over all it was a constructive study abroad.

These two years helped me understand in-depth about the importance of school counseling in our community and also the need of professional counselors in rehabilitating Tibetans arriving from Tibet. It is difficult to say that I would be able to implement things that I have leaned due different academic and culture environment however, I am pretty confident to mention that I would be able to contribute in a much better way. These two years also helped me redefine my future endeavor.

Now I got specialized profession and I got confident which I have initiate www.dalailama.com and www.tibetonline.tv. Currently I am Director of www.dalailama.com and www.tibetonline.tv. I have not got any professional opportunities.

Broaden my knowledge in area of study and exposure to wider perspective of the worldwide.

helped in managing better health care to the patient on daily basis since we have hospitalized patient in d elek.

TSP has been a whole new exposure for me and it was a great learning experience from professor who were development staff in UN, OXfam and other developmental agencies. It was a practical learning experience from experienced professors.

TSP Program helped garner more understanding on Tibet and the whole world in a better way. Such program had given me a scope to engage more on political issues not only on Tibet, but also to learn and understand better about India and China. My educational background on International Relations helped me tremendously on my professional line, which is connected with political issues.

After I returned to India to resume my job with CTA, I did not get the job where I can specifically use the education that I worked very hard to earn here. I felt very disappointed in Dharamsala. But now I am in New York City trying to find a right.

i have not got any professional opportunities.

TSP experience has not only helped me gain knowledge in the field of my study but also helped me how to communicate and use it in my day to day life activities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistic</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Responses</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
15. What were the biggest challenges you faced upon return to your community? If you decided not to return, please explain the challenges you faced in this decision.

Text Response

Perhaps, certain view points they hold to be true, but which I found it otherwise after coming here. For instance, the Tibetan society is not a truly democratic, fair and transparent society. There is a great social divide in the society, it is not an egalitarian society, for the first time, there is a new leader coming from a commoners’ roots, society has a whole is run by few movers and shakers, (few interest groups). The society doesn’t encourage frank and candid discussion, there is a section of people who benefit immensely by professing loyalty to the Dalai Lama while peddling their narrow minded interests.

I came back with lots of ideas but limited resource and somewhat conservative ideology of some people in the administration and faculty was a big challenges. However, I am not discouraged and still pursuing my ideas to improve over all face of campus life and experience in education. I still wish to further my knowledge and understanding in Education, especially Adult and Post Secondary Education. It would be great to complete my Masters and gain some experience in the field to tackle the challenges more professionally and maturely.

-biggest challenge was in understanding the difficult circumstance under which Tibetan government in exile have to function under and difficulty in implementing learned knowledge

The main challenge I faced was unavailability of any position on which I could have used my experiences.

I served 3 years teaching in TCV before I got the scholarship and then served another three years after I got back from US. No major challenges.

One of the confidentialities that i want to share here is, my promotion is long overdue. Prior to joining i worked as the senior section headmaster in for six years. Nobody in the TCV headoffice cares about seniority of staff when it comes to the question of promotion. What matters to them is whether you are TCVian or Non-TCVian. If you are non-TCvian,there is no likelihood of getting promotion in the TCV schools’ administrative position. However, i spent my whole career in serving TCV. I will not bog down even if i am denied promotion. My very purpose of returning to my community after the completion of my course from the Umass is, i have a strong urge working to the community. So, the biggest challenge in my life upon return is getting struck in the same pavilion even after working for more than 23 years in the same organization despite having a lot of credits in my credentials.

Getting the job that suits my interest and education.

I returned back on time. The biggest challenges was to make understand the need of change and progress. During my study at the UW-Madison, I learned a lot and has lots of dream that I would like to implement after returning to my job. But due to many cultural differences and politics at work, it was not that fruitful.

I did not face any major challenges upon return to India, since I have worked with CTA for 3 years and knew pretty well why I chose the program under TSP and where I could contribute in the exile community. Though equipped with new ideas and wider experience but to put them in action is not an easy task because we are running a government in exile with limited financial and human resources. Also there is clash of ideas with the senior administrative staffs who have grown up with the old system so change is hard to come by.

None

No major challenges.

I am going to return in August 2011. I have to return back to my job at Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) as I am here on study leave. But I don’t really think I would face particular challenges because... though I could be assigned any job, unrelated to my studies, I can always work on my ‘documentary’ project during “off” hours..

on completion of my program, I returned to Dharamsala to resume my normal duties as a employee...

Well, the question of not returning from the States after the completion of my program never struck my mind. The few challenges that I faced upon my return to India included the not too plentiful educational technology and the too rigid hierarchal set up that we have in our work place.
I decided not to return and it was the most difficult decision I had to make. I am still living with the guilt! I have learnt to live with it and the fact that I was able to make contribution to the Tibetan community in Toronto, Canada through my involvement with the [omitted], helped my conscience.

Getting job as per my degree and interest. And a little community pressure that I have returned back.

I do not face any big challenges but there are some small challenges that I faced in the initial phase and continue to face now - I expect a high degree of professionalism at work and often in the community that is lacking in many spheres.

Our host country India being not a developed country, create a desire in me to stay back in America, but greater number of Tibetan exiles live in India and the US government grants his scholarship to us so that we can serve our community better, so I came back and I didn’t face any challenges.

Everybody wants to look for a better and greener pasture. I myself wanted to extend my studies by applying for a scholarship at the first instance but later I decided to stay contented with one year study break and serve the community. Before returning here, I said to myself that I would miss the good opportunity but I consider coming back and stay with my small family as much as I can.

It’s not applicable at the moment.

To convince my senior to start [omitted] for CTA where we can broadcast our issue in better and faster way.

Being refugee without country, minimal job prospect and with family faraway were the biggest challenges and influenced heavily in decision to stay.

Biggest challenges is whatever I studied last one year not only academically but also about, big country, I want to share with my colleagues who did not get the opportunity.

It was normal for me. I came back to my old job.

Life in exile itself is a challenge and returning to serve our community is my utmost priority. Soon after completing my studies, I returned and rejoined CTA. I believe Tibetan community needs human resource, more so intellectual resources, I for one feel that it is our responsibility to share what we learnt and make our struggle for freedom a living history for the coming generations. So that, the spirit of Tibet will stay forever till we accomplish our sacred goal for attaining freedom.

Biggest challenge was that the kashag run by the Monk Prime Minister doesn’t really have much regards for western education. Upon my return, I made a request to the kashag to give me a job where I can use by educations and HR tools that I have learnt to improve the CTA public service commission. But my request did not even solicit any response at all. Very disappointing.

I as a CTA staff, have to continue with my previous job. The challenge is not getting the job related to my subject of study in the US.

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<tr>
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<tr>
<td><strong>16. How has your TSP experience assisted you in contributing to the Tibetan exile community?</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Text Response</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>I have no idea.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The only objective for my participation in TSP was to educate myself and mature myself to contribute more in the field of higher education for the Tibetan youngsters. Since my return I have consistently working very hard to make the educational experience on Sarah College campus lifelong and experiential. I also coordinate semester long Tibetan studies program for Miami University and few other summer programs for American students. My understanding of American University and education system gives me confidence in advising and helping them.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Understanding successful process development to even implement small project. How important the planning is in doing project development work and administration</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Perhaps the experience has helped me in approaching differently with the same problem in the exile community.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I was able to teach better while working in TCV for 6 years in total.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Yes, of course in many ways.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other than my professional development, I don’t see anything tangible here to write. However, while in the United States, I did help in spreading the knowledge on and about Tibet, Tibetan culture, tradition, and religion. I was able to provide better reader services to the students, teachers and staff of CIHTS. The quality of library work was a big contribution.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Since my specialization both before and after TSP program was in development studies and research on contemporary Tibetan society in exile as well as Tibet, the professional approach to research methodology and practices gained through TSP experience definitely contributed to the quality of the data collection and presentations on contemporary Tibetan society.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Yes indeed in a huge way. My profession requires me to meet lots of non Tibetan people so with my great communication skills I could communicate better with them and urge them to make a positive decision.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I have been working at TCV for the last 19 years and I believe strongly that I am contributing to the Tibetan community in general. Helping educate the younger generation is one of the greatest contribution to the future of Tibet.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I work in a Tibetan library and i am sure that whatever i have learned here will be of great help.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I was able to take part in bringing some positive changes to the community development initiatives.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I think i will be able to contribute something to the Tibetan community through my future ‘film’ project. So definitely the skills and training that I get to learn here, through this wonderful opportunity, will have direct overbearing.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>.. my broadened outlook and exposure to the outside world made it easier for me to communicate effectively and reach out to people at all levels while serving as a [Name of position] in Australia and helped my work of establishing and running the [Name of organization] to the satisfaction of TGIE authorities as well as government and people of the host country.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In broadening my outlook, attending to minutes details in functioning as an educator, etc.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>If you consider Tibetans in Canada as exile community, I think it did. We have one of the second largest Tibetan community in North America in Toronto and majority of the people are recent arrivals. I have been a member of the board and executive team of [Name of organization] for the last 3 years and during this short time, we were able to make quite a substantial progress in designing and delivering programs to our community members, gaining government matching grants for Tibetan cultural centre, leveraging the profile of Tibetan culture, history and the cause etc.</td>
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</table>
I gained all round development through TSP program academically and culturally. It gave me a good leadership and lot of confidence to face and live up to today’s world.

The TSP experience has helped me tremendously in my work for the community. The exposure and wider perspective I gained from studying in the States has made me a better asset to the community.

I think TSP experience has assisted me great in term of building confidence and gaining knowledge. With better knowledge and skill definitely one can perform better in whatever field one is engaged in.

Here in my profession, as compared to my earlier teachings, I have dramatically improved my teaching in every respect. And I can vividly see the change in myself not just in academic field but also the way I interact with the others.

Yet to experience it.

Lots.

with the TSP experience gained, I have been actively serving Tibetan exile community in various capacities from hosting dialogue with mainland Chinese students, His Holiness visit, to community education and cultural development.

though I was serving Tibetan community last 12 years but TSP assisted me in enhancing my knowledge and gave opportunity of exposure

I was more confident and able to write project report, proposal and organize workshops more confidently.

As one of the TSP returnee, I feel proud to be among others who had returned to our community to serve and contribute. It is the basic principle of us as a Tibetans to be true to yourself. I believe mere returning to our community isn’t important but I strongly feel that returning to serve our community is more important. It has been around 3 years now, and I am committed to serve our community at the best of my capabilities and knowledge, which I had gained over the years.

I could have contributed a lot to CTA if I was given a job where I can use my expertise but without any scope of using ones education, there is very limited ways one can contribute to the society. I am utterly disappointed.

offcourse. for example there are many systems which you can replicate in our community. Your confidence level also goes up after having been studied in the reputed institution of US.

TSP has made me a much more confident and outspoken person who can speak for our community whenever and where ever it is needed or required.

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17. Please state why you feel the TSP is a worthwhile program to the Tibetan community?

Text Response

It produces professionals in our society, which is what we needed to build a fair and transparent modern nation. TSP is definitely the best educational program for Tibetan community. There may be many non-returnee TSP Alumni’s but there are more TSP Alumni’s working wonders in Tibetan community. Very often, many of TSP Alumni’s are shouldering important post in the community and doing great community service. This is by far the best gift US congress gave to Tibetans.

1. The experience that we get in US is immeasurable and helps us in fine tuning the administration and implementing developmental programs and projects in all the fields.

1. I think through this program new approach and ideas has been generated in the Tibetan community and specially in the organisation where the TSP returnee works. This has helped in the institutional capacity building and in the achievement of the organisation objectives. 2. It has produced a lot of educated Tibetan people and this would have bearing on the evolution of Tibetan democracy.

This is the only legit way to give equal opportunity to deserving students. Eradicate one year scholarship. That was a total waste of fund.

We Tibetans have a few sources of scholarship to study abroad especially for the bright young Tibetans. Through TSP, many Tibetans get exposed to the American Universities. Had there been no TSP for the Tibetans, there won’t be many Tibetans studying in the USA.

Many young aspiring Tibetans has no other avenues than TSP program to accomplish their dream of studying in the US insitutions. This program is the only medium.

TSP program gave us a great opportunity to study and broaden our knowledge in the field of our profession. The education system at the American Universities are quite different from Indian Universities education system. It give us more skill and leadership and many....................

I would say that TSP is the only major opportunity for young Tibetan graduates and professionals to gain the much needed exposure and avenue for exploring further studies and research. Of course, TSP has greatly helped the professionals serving in the Tibetan community, especially teachers and administrators, gain new ideas and skills in improving their performance as well as introducing better practices in their professions.

I genuinely feel whatever knowledge, confidence, experience and skills I have achieved from the TSP I want our Tibetan community to have the same opportunity so that we can have abundant human resources to make our exile community a better and successful one.

It is indeed a great opportunity for exposure and to experience America first hand.

This scholarship is worthwhile because this acts as an outlet for the Tibetan youths to realize their potentials and worth in the international industry.

It is a great program to connect the small Tibetan community’s remote talents to the larger world.

- new learnings, especially best practices in chosen fields
- expansion of one’s own horizons through new experiences
- time and opportunities to reflect back on your own work, community and identity
- opportunities to share your stories and your country with others etc

It is no doubt a worthwhile program. Through this program, lots of young Tibetans are getting to study in prestigious academic institution in US, which otherwise is a distant dream. The most important thing about this TSP program is, it is aimed at capacity-building of exile tibetan community and creating future leadership.

...TSP has given the Tibetans an opportunity to pursue quality education in a developed country. Contributions made and now being made by TSP alumni is sufficient testimony to prove the value of this program which must be continued for as long as possible...

Our community being one of the displaced communities, the TSP Program is rendering a yeomen service in empowering our people, which in turn will go a long way in rebuilding our nation, should an opportunity does come our way in near future.
There is no doubt that TSP is a worthwhile program to our community. It is and has been the primary source of educational, academic and career mobility for many Tibetans who grew up in exile. The people who have returned after TSP have returned "wiser" and have become leaders in their field within the Tibetan exile communities and have contributed enormously in the continued progress of our exile institutions.

TSP gives opportunities to intelligent Tibetan students to study in reputed universities in US, the most developed country in the world. TSP students can serve back to Tibetan community after successful completion the course with all the academic and cultural experience they gained in US and lead the our community to in the direction of today world.

I think Tibetans need more leaders and the TSP program helps in the personality growth and skills development of individual Tibetans and make them a better resource for the community.

Tibetan exiles have very little opportunity to study abroad due to our refugee status and lack of fund, this is the only way we have to get opportunity to study abroad.

I definitely believe that TSP is a worthwhile program to the Tibetan community as the Tibetans will get more exposure and more knowledge from the western Universities. Through this program, our community is getting filled with so many intellectuals who can serve the Tibetan community better.

It definitely helped us comprehend things through different perspective, and the academic system here make you think things in a different ways. It provides more exposure and helps us immerse and understand different cultures of the world through interaction. Tibetan community needs ample amounts of quality human resources and TSP is definitely contributing to it. Without TSP, it is not possible for the Tibetan diaspora to experience education of this kind.

It's give awareness, confident and exposor.

This is the only worthwhile program that gives our youngster opportunity to excel their careers and further study.

It is definitely a worthwhile program as many of the Tibetan students are getting higher education opportunity and many of them come back to Tibetan community with lots of experience, knowledge and exposure.

TSP is an eye opening and looking into wider horizons for Tibetan graduates here in India. This has brought better education system and efficient staffs for the central Tibetan administration. This program is like dream come true for Tibetans, without this program, it is very very impossible for Tibetan refugees, thanks to such programs Tibetans can think about going into universities in the US. Currently most of the CTA Secretaries, decision making people are all TSP alums. TCV school’s principals, administrators and teachers are also alums. Teachers are the nation builder, their guidance, advise means alot to the students and current students are future leaders. So this program is like a caterpillar growing into butterfly for the Tibetan refugee community. To TSP’s proud the newly elected Chief of Kashag is TSP’s alum (Chief kalon)

TSP is one of the premium program, which over the years not only helps CTA, but also educational and other institutions. I believe that such programs need to continue for the sake of benefitting the Tibetan communities.

Without TSP, I wouldn’t get to rub shoulders with others in American premier education centers. I think TSP is great benefactor for the Tibetan youth who do not have any resources of their own. I think some TSP alumni do get a chance to provide real benefits to their community and of course for many others TSP produce less than favorable outcomes.

You can help Tibetan communities in many ways with your experience in the United States. As I said before, your confidence level goes up as you broaden your horizon when you get exposed to many important things. Moreover, when you dealing with local authorities their attitude towards you is far more positive if they know that you have been to the US. with this you can get your communities work done more easily and better.

TSP is a worthwhile program because at this time of globalization, Tibetans cannot survive without getting a first hand experience of being in touch with people from different countries and different fields of work. And since the American universities are well known for its high quality education and diverse students, what program could be better than TSP program.

Total Responses

| Total Responses | 31 |
18. What could be done to improve the TSP experience for future grantees?

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Text Response</th>
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<tr>
<td>Perhaps, little bit more flexibility in certain things.</td>
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<tr>
<td>There are lots of fears surrounding TSP scholarship and visa issue is a major obstacle which needs to be addressed by US. Otherwise I think it is a great program.</td>
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<tr>
<td>-TSP also needs to have a clearer objective for themselves and come up with a planned strategy. The most important is to look into the short term and long term need to Tibetan community in terms of human resource and target scholarship based on such needs.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Better coordination between The Tibet Fund and Tibetan government in exile and NGO’s in India is required to create the job placement and opportunities which would augment the grantee returnee. Non degree candidates should be encouraged to pursue degree if the student can show the proof of higher academic performance and scholarship funding. The present policy of dissuading the non degree student with commendable first year degree course is insensible. afterall one year course doesnot make any sense.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definitely more financial and emotional supports.</td>
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<tr>
<td>No specific suggestion at the moment..........</td>
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<tr>
<td>My suggestion would be that TSP would greatly help the Tibetan community in the long run if they focus also on the young and aspiring Tibetan graduates to gain exposure and entry points into higher and further studies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am little confused with the objective of the TSP because I have heard from my senior alumni that initially the program was started exclusively for the Tibetan Government in exile staffs to enhanced their knowledge so that they can serve better for our community. But lately its more focused on the younger generations irrespective of whether the students are working or not working in our community because the students can directly apply after finishing their undergraduate. The present eligibility criteria is such that it doesnt provide the students to have moral obligation to come back and serve our community which is the main condition of the USA State Department who fund the program. Moreover with the recent surge in the number of non returnees, we need to reassess and change the criteria so that our community can have the maximum benefits from the TSP returnee student for atleast 2 years.</td>
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<tr>
<td>It would be a great help for The Tibet Fund to try its best in locating students according to individual’s wishes, if possible.</td>
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<tr>
<td>to include some research funds would be great for aspiring students to continue their studies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a little looking beyond what is needed in the community in the longer term when the TGIE sets the themes/topics of study. Eg., biotechnology could be a subject of choice even though we do not have an immediate need in the community. A certain quota (10%) of the program can be devoted to topics like that.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think there should be a mechanism to check ‘candidate’ whose aim is just to get here, settled in US, without much concern about putting effort in studying... And I think a weight should be given on ‘subject’ choice when selecting...by this I mean, a candidate who is studying ‘aeronautics’ or ‘molecular biology’ should be given priority over candidate who has applied for ‘Office Administration’ or eventually end up studying ‘ESL.’</td>
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<tr>
<td>... interaction with the Tibetan communities within the United States to enhance their understanding of Tibetan life there, challenges and measures to make their experience worthwhile...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upgrading the selection procedure of candidates, giving special coaching to the shortlisted candidates before they get to their study place and ensuring proper feedbacks from them on their progress.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A proper orientation to the grantees about American education system. There is a time lag of one year between the TSP grantee announcement and the actual school joining, i.e., announcement for TSP scholarships are made some time in April/May and this cohort will start their TSP experience next fall. In the hindsight, I feel that I should have used this 12-15 months in making better preparation. I feel that a good orientation around intercultural nuances, academic system, academic expectations, academic writing, critical thinking, soft skills etc. could have better prepared me to make the most of the academic resources and get the best out of my potential.</td>
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</table>
TSP office should give proper guidance & counseling to students to select a right course and get the student admitted in the university where the course is offered. Married students should be permitted to invite their spouse to US for a vacation to stay with them else it causes big personal family problem.

ensure that the students get to the best schools instead of where we get more funding continued relationship with the coordinators or the central fulbright program would be good

The selection process should be handled by Tibetan government in exile, so that exile government knows what is needed for the Tibetan community in exile in terms of preserving our national identity and culture and through our non-violent culture we can contribute for world peace.

When I was in States, we used to discuss the importance of providing more scholarships for the under graduate especially those young ones who really have the ability to shine more in western Universities.

It would be very helpful if provided more sight in to academic system. Providing information about the ways to get the loads of assignments done systematically, would be very helpful as we are never use to it. First semester was tough.

Proper selection and college admission.

More networking and communication forum between students and ex students to help. TSP should provide resourceful guidances to future students in India as they have zero knowledge about American educations system and careers.

All student must return back after completing the grant if possible/

TSPs program is going on well and we request US government to continue supporting Tibetan refugees in granting this scholarship. Education is the foundation of a nation.

TSP selection should be consistent and thus more transparency is needed. I heard about this year’s TSP program, where some of the pupils selected for this year’s program were shifted to next year at the last moment. I even heard about the last minute changes in the selection of candidate for the TSP, which will utterly create problems for the candidates applying for the TSP.

I think TSP alumni should get a chance to stay in USA for atleast a year gaining Corporate Americas experience. TSP should also allow students to stay behind in USA if they choose to because nobody can stop anybody who wills otherwise. And for many what choice do they have in India. Many go back with renewed energy to serve their community only to be cold shouldered by their leaders.

Though iam satisfied with my experience, there is always room for further improvements. In my case, I would appreciate if Tibet Fund help TSP students with applying visa back to India because some people faced problem in this regard. we are also not told that we have to get even visa to go back to india. sometimes our mail to Tibet Fund is not acknowledged or get late reply. these are the few things upon which they can make improvement.

In order to improve the TSP experience, Tibetan students should be involved in more and more interactive activities with other students in order to build their confidence level.

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<td>Total Responses</td>
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19. Please list two of the greatest challenges you experienced during your TSP study experience in the United States.

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<th>Text Response</th>
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<tr>
<td>Adjusting to new social and culture differences and being so away from our own Tibetan community.</td>
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<tr>
<td>My TSP experience was exceptionally smooth and experiential and I don’t have any major challenges to share. I have been working for [redacted] program since 2001 and that helped me in so many ways. I am sure there are other challenges faced by other TSP participants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Better orientation - Not allowing further study opportunities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Following and understanding american english, culture and specially its educational system were big challenge because it was new to us.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Communication with The Tibet Fund officials excluding interns was very unfriendly, not helpful, and very uncomfortable to communicate.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nothing special. However, one problem definitely i would like to mention here is missing of family members and Tibetan food which i am used to.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Different learning environments. 2. The demand of an individualistic human.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Language skill and culture</td>
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<tr>
<td>One great challenge for me personally was &quot;culture shock&quot; that I experienced after around six months into the program, even after going through four orientation programs, two in India and two in the US. I guess the best orientation from my experience is learning it the hard way through personal interaction and goof ups.</td>
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<tr>
<td>American accent and the American classroom culture.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I was the only candidate placed in the University of Northern Iowa from my batch and trying to get over the home sickness and loneliness in the first month was the greatest challenge that I personally experienced.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Culture adjustment. Class room culture.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Food and Culture.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- cultural - education system (in the first semester)</td>
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<tr>
<td>I didn’t face any grave challenges... but if I were to list two instances, it would be: 1. Food. I have grown on Indian food all my life. Sudden change in food was difficult. To make it worse, I am vegetarian (No eggs). Not much food choice. 2. Slang. Some student in my class use lot of slang and speaks very fast. I had little difficulty at first.. but it was okay.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>..too many papers to read and too many assignments to complete within specific time frames and also being totally independent and responsible to your needs, rights and your duties as a student...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of sound knowledge with regard to operation of computer programs and the difficulty in understanding the typical American accents during the initial two months or so, as Iowa happens to be in the midwest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. An orientation right after announcing the TSP selection. 2. Food allowance and stipend were meagre...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Since we don’t have much reading and writing habit, I faced great difficult in adjusting and following the university’s teaching pattern and method. Lot of assignments, reading and writing. Difficult to follow the classmates. Food. I don’t have habit of tasting different food. So, I faced difficult to get the taste of my food.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Frankly I did not face any challenges</td>
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<tr>
<td>I didn’t face any major problems</td>
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<tr>
<td>Home sickness Cultural shock Later I was able to cope well with these two challenges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The two greatest challenges as a TSP recipient was adjusting to a new academic environment and staying away from family.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homesick and budget</td>
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</table>
Challenge in selecting correct courses, and finding traditional foods.

to go to university alone and attended all the classes

Reading and writing of assignments. To be frank here in India, we learn from Teachers notes and do not write much but learn from notes. So this was different and was challenging. Now this system of reading your own textbook and writing your own notes has been adopted in the Tibetan schools here in India. During my time we learn only the questions and answers that we have at the end of the chapter. Now system has change. Thanks to the program.

My suggestion is TSP should give Monthly Subway ticket to those who are studying in New York City, if one is not given a hostel in the University. When I was in NYU, I have to spare my pocket money for the Subway ticket, which is comparatively large as compared to our pocket money. This will encourage the students to attend class regularly and also to visit and use the facilities provided by the university. Just a sheer concern.

Lack of proper communications from TSP and financial constraints.

1. registering for classes in university- thing which is completely new to us. 2. finding part time job.

The difference in the style of education system between India and US was the biggest challenge for me in the beginning. The other challenge was cultural difference but this was not as big as the difference in the educational system.

Total Responses | 31

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</table>

20. Section D - Demographic Information: Gender:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Answer</th>
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<th>%</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
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Min Value | 1
Max Value | 2
Mean | 1.78
Variance | 0.18
Standard Deviation | 0.42
Total Responses | 32
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lhasa</td>
<td>Tibet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tingri</td>
<td>Tibet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyidon (Western Tibet)</td>
<td>Tibet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dharamsala</td>
<td>India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>manali</td>
<td>India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thimpu</td>
<td>Bhutan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tawang</td>
<td>India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ralung (Tibet)</td>
<td>Tibet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mysore</td>
<td>India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dehradun</td>
<td>India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delhi</td>
<td>India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dalhousie</td>
<td>India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Varanasi</td>
<td>India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mundgod</td>
<td>India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bylakuppe</td>
<td>India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chushur</td>
<td>Tibet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mungod</td>
<td>India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Namla Bava</td>
<td>Tibet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Tibet</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mundgod</td>
<td>India</td>
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<td>Leh</td>
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<td>India</td>
<td>India</td>
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<tr>
<td>chauntra</td>
<td>India</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bylakuppe, Mysore</td>
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<tr>
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<td>India</td>
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<tr>
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<td>India</td>
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<tr>
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<td>India</td>
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<tr>
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**Statistics:**

| Total Responses | 32 |
## 22. Current Residence:

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<tr>
<th>City</th>
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<td>Boston</td>
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<td>India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Dharamsala</td>
<td>India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>geneva</td>
<td>swiss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nyc</td>
<td>us</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palampur</td>
<td>India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York</td>
<td>USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Louis</td>
<td>USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dharamsala</td>
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<tr>
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<td>US</td>
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<td>Canberra</td>
<td>Australia</td>
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<td>Shimla</td>
<td>India</td>
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<tr>
<td>Toronto</td>
<td>Canada</td>
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<td>Dharamsala</td>
<td>India</td>
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<tr>
<td>TCV School Suja</td>
<td>India</td>
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<tr>
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<td>dharamsala</td>
<td>india</td>
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<td>Dharamsala</td>
<td>INdia</td>
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<td>New Delhi</td>
<td>India</td>
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<tr>
<td>NYC</td>
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<tr>
<td>sirmour</td>
<td>India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berkeley</td>
<td>USA</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistic</th>
<th>Value</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Responses</td>
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</tr>
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</table>
# 23. Age Range

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>22-29</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>30-37</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>38-45</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>46-53</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>54-60</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Over 61</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>100%</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Min Value: 1  
Max Value: 5  
Mean: 2.72  
Variance: 0.98  
Standard Deviation: 0.99  
Total Responses: 32

# 24. Highest Degree Completed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Bachelor’s Degree</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Master’s Degree</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Doctoral Degree</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>32</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Min Value: 1  
Max Value: 3  
Mean: 1.75  
Variance: 0.39  
Standard Deviation: 0.62  
Total Responses: 32
25. Are you interested in participating in a follow-up interview to share in-depth information on your experience with the TSP?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>%</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>55%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>100%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistic</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<tr>
<td>Max Value</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>1.45</td>
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<tr>
<td>Variance</td>
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REFERENCES


