How Do Refugees Experience a “Sense Of Place” in a Community Garden? Exploring an Intervention to Mitigate the Consequences of Displacement

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Abstract

As a consequence of displacement, refugees grapple with significant resettlement challenges, such as social isolation, language barriers and depression, anxiety, and trauma. A growing body of literature focuses on place-making, or emplacement, to promote health and well-being for resettlement challenges. This qualitative study helps social service providers understand the necessity for community-based interventions to improve the resettlement process for refugees, using a place attachment model. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with Karen and Chin Burmese (Myanmar) adult refugees who participated in a community garden program in Philadelphia (ages 28 to 82). Data analysis revealed that community gardens offer an opportunity for social interactions, improved well-being, a sense of belonging, maintenance of cultural traditions, and cultivation of native crops to sustain a connection to one's country of origin for refugees. These findings also operationalize and conceptualize the meaning of place and home, especially the mechanisms of place-making within the context of a community-based program. Findings also contributed to the formation of a new conceptual model, “Uprooted-Re-Rooted-Planted,” for refugee resettlement. Community programs for refugees build social connectedness, belonging, and unity, as well as trust and rapport, and decrease psychological distress, all critical tasks during resettlement. Integrating both community and the natural environment, community gardening programs offer refugees the opportunity to maintain agrarian and cultural traditions practiced in their countries-of-origin, especially the cultivation of native food.

Keywords: refugees, community gardens, sense of place, displacement, refugee trauma, ecological social work
Dedication

To my mother, Patricia Killion Stein, 04/02/1945 - 02/18/2022
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It takes a village to build a dissertation. I had no idea what Dr. Cindy Sousa meant when she said that a dissertation committee comprised of individuals with such knowledge and wisdom of this topic of place and home could be advantageous, but also challenging. I fully understand this now. My committee challenged me to think, reflect and write extensively about this topic, far surpassing limitations I thought I had. Writing this dissertation has been the most arduous scholarly challenge of my life, yet it was fascinating because of the contributions of my committee’s research, experience, wisdom and knowledge of this topic. I am especially and eternally grateful to Dr. Cindy Sousa, the best advisor in the world. I am also eternally grateful for the exceptional education I received at the Graduate School of Social Work and Social Research (GSSWSR) at Bryn Mawr College in Pennsylvania. Eternal gratitude to the following people for their wisdom, support, and encouragement:

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In this chapter, I provide an overview of the problem and consequences of displacement experienced by refugees. I then provide a brief discussion of the necessity to analyze the significance of the concept of place attachment for Burmese refugees, utilizing a theoretical framework of a four-dimensional, three pole model of place attachment proposed by Raymond, Brown, and Weber (2010) (see Figure 1). Next, I discuss how community gardening programs help refugees cultivate a sense of place in the community to facilitate emplacement. Finally, I discuss the challenges of resettlement and how place-making evolves within the context of community gardening programs. One of the outcomes of this research is to understand how community gardening programs are a particularly salutogenic, community-based intervention that assists refugees with the challenges of resettlement.

A Phenomenological, Family History of Forced Displacement from Ukraine

After teaching environmental education on nature preserves, working as a wilderness therapist in northern Maine, gardening with at-risk youth in community gardens in alternative schools, and having my own organic farming business, healing within the context of the natural environment engendered this lifelong inquiry about a sense of place. My interest in one’s relationship with the natural environment, an integral element of a sense of place, evolved over many years, perhaps related to my family history, as well as my experience working with immigrants and refugees for five years at an inner-city community health center.

As a second-generation American and young adult, I attended Trenton State College (now The College of New Jersey), a small public state college. Professor Kim Pearson assigned the task of interviewing elders in our families. I did not have to think too long about whom I would
interview. I was curious about my paternal grandmother’s experience growing up in Ukraine as a Jew in the early 1900s. My grandmother enthusiastically agreed and we sat at the round, farmhouse kitchen table in my parents’ kitchen.

During this interview, I listened intently while she recollected stories of significant oppression against the Jews in Tsarist Russia in the early 1900s. During this time, Ukrainian Jews were forbidden to own land or go to school under Tsarist Russian autocracy. However, my grandmother’s father worked as a tailor for the “prince” of their village (similar to a mayor) in Mostovoye, Ukraine. Because of this relationship, the prince sent a message one day and granted a small plot of land to her family. Her parents enthusiastically built a small, one-story, two-bedroom home for their family of ten. The youngest children slept on pallets in the kitchen or on a flat part over the massive oven in the kitchen. Her oldest brother was permitted to attend school because her father worked for the prince, although my grandmother and her siblings were not. They attended school “in secrecy” at a neighbor’s home. My grandmother described this incident during the interview:

When I was nine, I secretly attended private classes in a young woman’s home with other children. I learned the alphabet and the Russian language. I guess that was similar to a first grade level. While I went to classes, I became friendly with a girl about my age named Lily. We became best friends and spent a lot of time giggling and telling stories. One day when we were in ‘class,’ the door burst open. Several soldiers barged in with guns and gathered us all into a corner, yelling in Russian. We all began to cry because we were very frightened. The soldiers arrested my teacher and took her away. It was very scary.
My grandmother stated she never knew what happened to her teacher. She described the oppression of Jews by the Russian government:

The Russian government was very harsh on Jews. We were forbidden to go to school without a sponsor, so I imagine my teacher was in a lot of trouble. I was very upset because I didn’t know what happened to Lily, my best friend. The next day, I walked to her house, but no one was there; her whole family was gone. I was afraid the soldiers did something to her family. That night, my parents stayed in their room behind a closed door. All of us children strained to listen to their hushed voices, but we really couldn’t hear anything. I heard a couple of words like ‘leave’ and ‘America,’ but I had no idea what they were talking about. America? I said to myself. What’s America? Little did I know, I was soon to find out. The next day, my parents gathered us all together and told us each to choose a favorite belonging. ‘Why?’ we all cried in bewilderment. ‘We’re going to America, the land of the free,’ my parents chorused. ‘What?’ we all shrieked back. ‘Tonight,’ my parents said and it was settled. We were off to America. My father explained to us that his brother, our uncle, Murray, in America, had written letters bragging about America: jobs, public schools, and houses for everyone. My parents said that Russia was not a nice place right now, especially for Jewish people. That night, my father loaded up our few possessions and we silently stole into the night like thieves. My father had us dress in dark clothing so no one would see us. I remember it was very late. My parents seemed jumpy, somewhat nervous, but I was excited. This was an adventure. My family had visas, a card that allowed us to leave the country, but military guards stationed at the border could forbid anyone to leave the country, especially if they thought
you weren’t going to return. All of us children hid under blankets in the back of the wagon. I could feel the wheels bumping along the road below me and hear the clopping of the horse’s hooves. Other than that, there was a cold, still silence. My parents thought it best if all of us stayed hidden under the blankets in case the guards said anything. Suddenly, I felt the wheels grind to a halt and I heard some muffled voices. It was stifling under the blanket and I was dying to get out, but we stayed hidden. The wagon began to roll again and I heard my parents sigh. ‘Goodbye, Russia,’ we whispered. ‘Goodbye, friends.’ Soon we arrived at a train station and boarded a huge, locomotive train; we were so excited. I’d never even seen a train before. The train took us to the German port, Hamburg [and then the Netherlands]. There, we boarded the boat with hundreds of others eager to taste the freedom of America, ‘the promised land.’ Most of us traveled steerage, the cheapest rate on the boat. We slept in cramped quarters below deck level in bunk beds, just like a dormitory. My grandparents traveled second class, a great luxury. They slept in cabins and ate in a big dining room where they feasted on herring and potatoes. The best thing was that a few of us stowed away in their cabin and my grandparents smuggled food from the dining room to us. It was a long trip, almost two weeks.

In 1914, World War I broke out, and Ukrainian lands were split between the Austro-Hungarian and Russian Empires. Ukrainian soldiers fought on both sides of the conflict; 4,500,000 Ukrainians fought in the Russian armies and 250,000-300,000 in the Austro-Hungarian armies. My grandmother and her family left extended family behind. Her family escaped inevitable persecution and death, essentially over a dispute related to power and control over land ownership.
They eventually settled in East New York in Brooklyn, and later, Forest Hills and Kew Gardens in Queens, New York, where my father grew up. Once they were re-settled, my grandmother stated:

I missed my family and friends in Russia, but I met a lot of nice people. America opened the door to many adventures and new opportunities, but I missed the fields I ran through and my aunts and uncles who still lived there. But I was eager to learn about America, the language and everything. The United States was ‘brand new.’ In Brooklyn, I got to attend public school every day and I learned to write and speak English.

As a ten-year old, my grandmother’s perception of her odyssey was one of an “adventure.” I really wish that I had the opportunity to talk to her parents, my great-grandparents about their perspective. I wanted to ask them questions, such as what it felt like to live with the threat of persecution or death every minute in your own home, your own country. What did it feel like to make such a decision to flee to another country, leave your home in the middle of the night, select one belonging at a moment’s notice and embark on a very treacherous journey of such incredible uncertainty? What was the actual journey like on the boat to Ellis Island? What did it feel like to leave the familiarity of a rural countryside, living in very rustic conditions without electricity, for the burgeoning and more contemporary metropolitan region of Brooklyn, New York City, and travel over 5,000 miles to such a foreign landscape and language without a home or job?

History repeats itself. As of the time of this writing, more than 10 million Ukrainians have fled their homes, including 3.7 million refugees that have fled Ukraine to neighboring countries, ranking this refugee crisis as among the “world’s worst in recent history” (www.pewre-
search.org) and war rages between Ukraine and Russia. Yet again, Ukraine is besieged and
bombed, by the tyrannical rule of a Russian autocrat, President Vladimir Putin. One night, the
news media profiled refugee camps set up for Ukrainians, a sea of cobalt blue tents arranged in
grids. A news reporter interviewed a Ukrainian woman and asked her how a seven-year old child
was coping with staying in the newly constructed refugee camp. The woman shook her head and
replied, “She said it’s not her home. She wants to go back, she wants to go home” (www.nbc-
news.com).

**Displacement**

The world hosts an unprecedented number of displaced individuals. As of 2020, the UN-
HCR reported that there are over 82.4 million individuals have been forcibly displaced
(www.unhcr.org). The United States ranks first in the world among countries receiving refugees
for permanent resettlement (Al-obaidi, West, Fox, & Savin, 2015). The term, *refugee*, originated
at the end of the seventeenth century and referred to Protestants who were coerced into leaving
France (Creswell, 2015). By the eighteenth century, any individual leaving his or her country in
times of distress was referred to as a *refugee* (Creswell, 2015). As defined by The United Na-
tions, *refugees* are people fleeing armed conflict or persecution (involuntary displacement) and
*migrants* are people who relocate to improve their lives (voluntary displacement) (Abbott, 2016).

defined a *refugee* as any person with “a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of
race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion” (UN-
HCR, 2014a). The definition of a refugee is also legally defined by Article 1 of the Geneva Con-
vention Relating to the Status of Refugees, 1951 and the 1967 New York Protocol to the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees as follows:

Owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable, or owing to such fear is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events is unable, or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it (Creswell, 2015, p. 183).

Akhtar (1999) distinguished between the definition of immigrants and refugees. Immigrants may have had more time to prepare for departure, whereas those individuals who were exiled do not have time to prepare. Historically, refugees have been met with resistance and perceived as people who were not entitled to the rights of citizenship as they did not belong to the host national society (Creswell, 2015). Moreover, refugees became mired in a larger political context as borders were established and policed and a construction of state sovereignty and national identities emerged (Creswell, 2015; Malkki, 1995). Individuals who have been exiled have often fled their country because of catastrophic sociopolitical reasons, whereas immigrants generally leave under less traumatic circumstances. An individual who is exiled typically does not have the chance to return to the home country, while immigrants maintain the possibility to return to visit the home country (Akhtar, 1999).

Resettlement Challenges

Refugees encounter a multitude of barriers once resettled in the host country, including a lack of language proficiency, higher unemployment rates, lack of social support, lack of knowl-
edge regarding local community programs and organizations, poor understanding of new cultural
expectations, discrimination, mistrust, low socioeconomic status, social exclusivity, racism, and
white privilege within receiving communities (Thomas, Chiarelli-Helminiak, Ferraj, & Barrette,
2016; Saechao, Sharrock, Reichert, Livingston, Aylward, Whisnant, Koopman, & Kohli, 2012;
Richards, 2016). Hartwig and Mason (2016) acknowledged the consequences of displacement
that refugees experience, including trauma, learning a new language, adopting to new cultural
norms, finding housing, and seeking employment.

Refugees experience higher levels of social isolation after immigration that can be at-
tributed to the loss of former social networks, language and cultural barriers (Eggert, Blood-
Siegfried, Champagne, & Biederman, 2015; Walton & Cohen, 2010). Social isolation is further
compounded by loneliness and low social status that consequently can harm subjective well-be-
ing, intellectual achievement, immune function and health, all challenges during resettlement
(Walton & Cohen, 2010).

Refugees describe the resettlement process as “extraordinarily stressful,” significantly
impacting their mental and physical health (Agbényiga, Barrie, Djelaj, & Nawyn, 2014). In a
quantitative study of 495 Karenni refugees living in Thai-Burmese border camps, study partici-
pants reported the most common traumatic events in the ten years prior to migration to be hiding
in the jungle, forced relocation, lost property and destruction of houses and crops (Cardozo, Tal-
ley, Burton, & Crawford, 2004). In comparison to the general U.S. population, Karenni refugees
experienced higher rates of depression and anxiety (Cardozo, Talley, Burton, & Crawford, 2004).

In their quantitative study of the mental health of 70 adults across five Burmese ethnic
groups re-settled in Australia (including Karen and Chin ethnic minority groups), Schweitzer,
Brough, Romans, and Asic-Kobe (2011) found that although exposure to traumatic events impacted the well-being of Burmese refugees, “Post-migration living difficulties had greater salience in predicting mental health outcomes of people from Burmese refugee backgrounds” (p. 299). In their study, Schweitzer et al. (2011) found that significant proportions of Burmese participants reported symptoms of trauma (26 percent), anxiety (20 percent), depression (36 percent), and somatization (37 percent). Of these findings, almost nine percent reported symptoms consistent with a diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Schweitzer et al. (2011) also found that resettled Burmese individuals reported multiple and severe pre-migration traumas, such as a lack of food and water.

One of the central traumas within the refugee experience is a loss of group identity. Psychologist Erik Erikson referred group identity as an individual’s sense of belonging, the sense of being part of a larger social entity (Erikson, 1968). This dimension of loss of belonging is linked to the dynamics of place, which I will explore in this research. For example, in one major study of displaced working-class residents in the West End of Boston who were forced from their homes due to dilapidated conditions (N=566), Fried (1966) found that among 250 women, 46 percent reported sadness or depression six months to two years after relocation. Among 316 men, 38 percent experienced grief reactions. Fried (1966) surmised that relocation compromised interpersonal relationships, culminating in the destruction of a sense of “group identity.”

**Loss of Place as a Central Wound for Refugees**

Fried (2000) described displacement as “one of the most serious forms of externally-imposed psychosocial disruptions and discontinuities” (p. 194). Fullilove (2016) referred to displacement as *root shock*, “the traumatic stress reaction to the destruction of all or part of one’s
emotional ecosystem” (p. 11). Perez Murcia (2019) described how participants in a qualitative study who had been displaced for two or three decades, expressed feelings of being “emotionally and existential homeless” (p. 1529). For refugees, the consequences of displacement include mental health problems, language barriers, inconsistency in children’s education, conflicts with the norms of American health and mental health care, a loss of cultural and community identity, as well as a loss of social\(^1\), cultural\(^2\), and economic capital (Chung, Bemak, Ortiz, & Sandoval-Perez, 2008; Fullilove, 1996; Greene, Tehranifar, Hernandez-Cordero, & Fullilove, 2011; Harris, Minnis, & Somerset, 2014).

As place is lost, relationships are severed with both one’s past and one’s community, refugees often experience psychological trauma from physical and social displacement that may be accompanied by feelings of loss, separation and helplessness (Mazumdar, Mazumdar, Docuyanan, & McLaughlin, 2000). Refugees are at a substantially higher risk than the general population for a variety of specific psychiatric disorders, with up to ten times the rate of post-traumatic stress disorder, as well as higher rates of depression, chronic pain, and other somatic complaints (Kirmayer, Narasiah, Munoz, Rashid, Ryder, Guzder, Hassan, Rousseau, & Pottie, 2011). In particular, depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder are high among Burmese refugees (Cardozo, Talley, Burton, & Crawford, 2004).

In evocative narratives of displacement, Fullilove (2016) recounted the stories of grief expressed by residents displaced from the Hill District in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Porteous and

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\(^1\)Social capital refers to the features of social relationships such as reciprocal expectations, trustworthiness and effective norms and sanctions (Greene et al., 2011).

\(^2\)Cultural capital refers to shared language, traditions and systems of beliefs and economic capital is defined as financial means and opportunities (Greene et al., 2011).
Smith (2001) described the near complete destruction of Saunders, a small town in West Virginia, from dam failure. Residents exhibited chronic symptoms of psychopathology, and only those individuals who could rehabilitate their homes exhibited less anxiety (Porteous & Smith, 2001). These displaced individuals continued to lament and mourn for their original homes, never feeling like the place of resettlement was home or had ambivalent feelings about calling it home (Porteous & Smith, 2001; Fullilove, 2016; Rosbrook & Schweitzer, 2010).

Porteous and Smith (2001) refer to this deliberate destruction of home as domicide, “against the will of the home dweller” (p. 3). Moreover, domicide “may result in the destruction of a place of attachment and refuge; loss of security and ownership; restrictions on freedom; partial loss of identity; and a radical de-centering from place, family, and community” (p. 63). Albrecht, Sartore, Connor, Higginbotham, Freeman, Kelly, Stain, Tonna, and Pollard (2007) proposed the concept of psychoterratic illness, “earth-related mental illness where people’s mental well-being (psyche) is threatened by the severing of ‘healthy’ links between themselves and their home/territory” (S95).

Re-Creation of Place as a Central Task for Refugee Well-Being

These numerous challenges impact one’s ability to establish a sense of place and social belonging in American society (Kim, Conway-Turner, Sherif-Trask, & Woolfolk, 2006; Thomas, Chiarelli-Helminiak, Ferraj, & Barrette, 2016). As cited in Coughlan and Hermes (2016), much of the literature implies that when refugees are forced from their place of origin, they lose their identity and culture. However, a contradictory perspective suggests that when people are forced from their homes, they do not lose their identity or their capacity to re-establish a sense of place of their own accord (as cited in Coughlan & Hermes, 2016). Instead, immigrants and refugees
strive to alleviate the trauma and stress they have endured, in part through nurturing a sense of place (Coughlan & Hermes, 2016).

As defined by Coughlan and Hermes (2016), “Place incorporates the local perspectives of both host and newcomers and is conceived as the product of social interaction in the specific location in which refugees find themselves following displacement” (p. 142). Sampson and Gifford (2010) emphasized the relevance of place-making to resolve issues related to displacement. Easthope (2004) underscored the desire of refugees to ingrain meaning in places of resettlement. Turton (2005) offered the perspective of the concept of emplacement, which refers to how refugees create meaning in the site of resettlement through recounting stories of their place of origin and the re-creation of familiar features from the former place including familiar objects and mementos.

Migration is challenging and involves adapting to a new culture, as well as grieving the loss of previous life roles (Bishop & Purcell, 2013). Whether one is voluntarily or forcibly displaced from a place or a home, displacement disrupts one’s relationship to these past settings and relocation is often characterized by attempting to recover a meaningful pattern of relationships, as evident in the establishment of ethnic enclaves in various cities nationwide. This process of relocation is often characterized by attempting to recover a meaningful pattern of relationships with both place and people (Mazumdar et al., 2000). For instance, immigrants and refugees have historically created their own communities to re-create a sense of place, where cultural identity may be preserved, specifically in the form of ethnic enclaves (Mazumdar et al., 2000).

Ethnic enclaves, such as Chinatown and Little Italy in New York City, embody the practices and relationships from one’s country of origin within the resettlement country (Ralph &
Staeheli, 2011). When the federal government dispersed Vietnamese refugees around the country, the Vietnamese experienced loss of their nation, home, family, culture and identity (Mazumdar et al., 2000). Struggling to reclaim their heritage and establish new roots in the United States, refugees collaborated and built their community of Little Saigon in Westminster, California, an enclave with signs, language, food and artifacts that represent the Vietnamese culture. Mazumdar et al. (2000) stated, “This is an important symbolic expression for a community in exile which has lost its homeland and is now seeking to create a new home in a new place” (p. 323). The sense of community, identity and social interactions evident in ethnic enclaves refutes Fried’s (1966) assertion that relocation compromised interpersonal relationships, culminating in the destruction of a sense of “group identity.”

Place-Making Within the Context of Community Gardens

Current research underscores the notion that place-making occurs within the context of community. Community programs for immigrants and refugees build connectedness, belonging, and unity (Im & Rosenberg, 2016), as well as trust and rapport, and decreases psychological distress (George, 2012; Segal & Mayadas, 2005; Mitschke, Aguirre, & Sharma, 2013). Community programs also build social capital and empowerment (Yun, Subedi, & Nguyen, 2016; Thomas, Chiarelli-Helminiak, Ferraj, & Barrette, 2016), tasks that are necessary during resettlement. Moreover, refugee families generally prefer to address mental health needs within the context of the family or the community (Pumariega, Rothe, & Pumariega, 2005). Borwick, Schweitzer, Brough, Vromans, and Shakespeare-Finch (2013) suggest that social workers engaged with this population focus on resiliency, strengths, and informal social supports, as well as empowering community-based organizations.
In a mixed methods study, Sampson and Gifford (2010) studied the relationship between place-making, well-being, and resettlement among 120 refugee youth in Australia aged 11 to 19 years old within the first year of their arrival. Sampson and Gifford (2010) concluded, “Little is known about the potential for place-making to promote health and well-being within the context of resettlement. During the early period of resettlement, these youth seek out and value places that promote healing and recovery…identity and community is disrupted or deterritorialized.” (p. 117). Study participants expressed strong affiliations with gardens at home or school, outdoor public green spaces, trees and flowers. Brun (2001) defined reterritorialization as the way in which displaced people re-establish social networks and cultural practices in newly defined spaces.

Community gardens are plots of land used for growing food by different families or individuals, generally low-income urban residents who have limited access to their own land (Okvat & Zautra, 2011). Many immigrants and refugees hail from agrarian backgrounds and introduce their own influences into community gardens (Ghazali, 2013, Saldivar-Tanaka & Krasny, 2004, Hartwig & Mason, 2016, Henderson, Epp-Koop & Slater, 2017). Growing food in home or community gardens ensures access and availability to familiar food (Gichunge & Kidwaro, 2014). Food has important psychological associations with place, family, community, and other forms of identity, and food habits are often hard to change (Williams-Forson, 2014). Eating food native to one’s country is a way of maintaining traditions and cultural identity within the family and community (Henderson, Epp-Koop, & Slater, 2017). Williams-Forson (2014) studied the experience of Ghanaian immigrants and concluded that while fleeing might represent a chance for a
better life, it is also “sometimes fraught with unimaginable longing,” including a desire for native food (Williams-Forson, 2014, p. 83).

However, due to limited finances, many immigrants often reside in low-income communities once settled in their new homes. Low-income communities often lack access to healthy, fresh food within a one-mile radius of their residence, referred to as a “food desert” in the literature (Smith, Miles-Richardson, Dill, & Archie-Booker, 2013). Accessing recognizable foods is often challenging for migrants to the United States because of lack of availability and cost, among other factors (Williams-Forson, 2014; Gichunge & Kidwaro, 2014). Consequently, many migrants begin to eat readily available processed food in their new countries (Gichunge & Kidwaro, 2014). In response to these challenges, refugee resettlement agencies host community gardening programs nationwide to “promote psychological healing, self-sufficiency, community engagement, and a return of human dignity” (Gerber, Callahan, Moyer, Connally, Holtz, & Janis, 2017, p. 17).

There are an increasing number of burgeoning community gardening programs for immigrants and refugees, as well as studies focused on the role of gardening in migration and “people’s attempts to create continuity in their identities and lives across countries” (Li, Hodgetts, & Ho, 2010, p. 787). For example, Bishop and Purcell’s (2013) study revealed that “horticulture was reminiscent of home” (p. 266). Deaux (2000) asserted that it is an objective of migrants to rebuild a sense of place and home.

In a qualitative study, Li, Hodgetts, and Ho (2010) interviewed 30 older Chinese immigrants, ranging in age from 62 to 77 years old, who had re-settled in New Zealand. They explored the role of gardening in study participants’ lives, including “the cultivation of a sense of
rootedness in a new country” (p. 788). They also succinctly summarized the few studies that exist on migration and place and concluded that “gardening facilitates successful migration and the ability of people to make a new life in a new environment, while also reinforcing cultural ties” (p. 787). Furthermore, they stated, “Through the physical act of gardening, people reshape a physical space, turning it into a place that reflects the efforts, desires, history and biography of gardeners” (p. 787). In their study, gardening participants “connected China and New Zealand through transplantation,” bringing seeds from China to plant in New Zealand (p. 789). One of their gardening participants emphasized the re-creation of the place and activities in his home country of China in the community garden in New Zealand. Furthermore, this gardening participant continued the tradition from China of gardening tasks, such as sowing, tending and harvesting.

These tasks may also be perceived as an “embodied experience” within the natural environment. David Seamon (1979), a phenomenological geographer, emphasized “bodily mobility” in place, such as movements that individuals perform daily in a place where they reside, such as walking to a store. Cresswell (2015) observed that Seamon explored the “experiential character of place through movement” (p. 63). The mobility of tasks in a community garden may be considered an “experiential character of place through movement,” perhaps facilitating the “rootedness” one experiences in a place, as well as fostering place attachment.

Li, Hodgetts, and Ho (2010) concluded that, “Reflecting on life back in China is also a process of reassembling fragments from one’s past to make sense of the present and to create some continuity between one’s old life and new life” (p. 791). Moreover, they stated, “Gardening is a means of putting down roots, of rethinking the self and making a place of one’s own” (p.
794), as well as developing and maintaining a sense of self and belonging. Gardening evokes feelings of familiarity and continuity for older Chinese adults, reproducing place and affiliated tasks of gardening that provided nurturing in China (Li et al., 2010). Also, growing Chinese vegetables maintained their cultural identity as Chinese, as well as maintained a sense of self and belonging.

In their qualitative study, Spivey and Lewis (2015) found that study participants maintained their Karen identity, in their third resettlement place in Georgia, through traditional food practices and growing native Burmese vegetables in community gardens. In this study, Spivey and Lewis (2015) described the significance of the concept of foodways, which includes gardening practices, food preparation, and mealtimes. Spivey and Lewis (2015) noted a gap in the research literature about the relationship between foodways and refugees. They stated, “Few researchers have addressed how refugees use foodways to maintain and transmit cultural identity within a family unit as well as purposefully delineate their family identity using foodways” (p. 63).

As cited in Hartwig and Mason (2016), “The California Healthy Cities project specifically noted how gardening often creates a positive experience for immigrants who can partially re-create gardening experiences from their past and not have to worry about language or other stressors of adapting to a new culture” (p. 1158). Coughlan and Hermes (2016) explored the palliative role of green space, specifically community gardens, for Somali Bantu female refugees in displacement and resettlement. Although refugees had positive and negative memories of their country of origin, the study revealed that one of the most common reasons for maintaining a garden in New York State was that it stimulated memories of their home in Somalia, maintained
their agrarian lifestyle, and “served as a bridge to the past,” helping them connect their children
to their histories and traditions (Coughlan & Hermes, 2016). Furthermore, gardening and green
vegetative landscapes “were seen as therapy, as a way to forget the past, as a vehicle for promot-
ing ‘restoration and recovery’ and as a means to recover from trauma” (pp. 146-147).

A study of Latino community gardeners in New York City found that many Puerto Rican
immigrants brought agricultural knowledge from various parts of Puerto Rico (Saldivar-Tanaka & Krasny, 2004). Using this agricultural knowledge, immigrants created a community garden
that permitted social interaction of community members and offered educational programs to
community youth about farming. Culture, secular, and religious celebrations in the garden served
as reminders of ancestral Indigenous tradition, as well as growing crops that were native to their
country (Saldivar-Tanaka & Krasny, 2004). Therefore, these Puerto Rican gardeners were able to
maintain community and cultural traditions in the community garden.

In a qualitative study of 12 African refugees with agrarian backgrounds, Harris, Minnis, and
Somerset (2014) found that community gardens were a culturally and socially relevant
place-based intervention for African refugees who struggled with social displacement and psy-
chological and physical health problems. For these African refugees, a community garden where
they could grow native African crops facilitated a sense of connection to the new country, pro-
vided the opportunity to grow familiar crops, and promoted a sense of community belonging,
especially with the allocation of land. Karen gardening refugees from Burma described their pas-
sion for horticulture and its role in their culture and lives (Henderson, Epp-Koop, & Slater,
2017). Gichunge and Kidwaro (2014) found that gardening enabled immigrants and refugees to
grow crops that reminded them of positive memories of their past agrarian lives in Africa, as well
as maintain traditions and culture and promote physical and mental health. Gardening participants also reported mutual cooperation, reciprocity and social interaction (Gichunge & Kidwaro, 2014).

Montes (2021) described how twin brothers initiated an urban garden in 2017, Edible Forest Urban Farm, in Norristown, a former industrial town situated in the Philadelphia metropolitan area, home to more than 10,000 Mexican immigrants. From her participant observation, Montes observed how the garden offered opportunities for social interactions, sharing memories of their homeland, building community cohesion, sharing meals together, and healthy parent-child interactions.

When I began this dissertation work, at the suggestion of Dr. Veronica Montes, I visited with Carmen Guerrero, a woman hailing from the southern Mexican state of Chiapas, in early June of 2019 at the Edible Forest Urban Farm community garden. Guerrero, a very affable, energetic, petite and dark-haired woman in her early 50s, is a well-known and respected community organizer in Norristown. Under the hot afternoon sun, we chatted together while weeding and harvesting vegetables and herbs. She identified some plants used in Mexican cooking, such as tomatillos and papalos, a Mexican herb. Guerrero explained that papalos is good in salads and for flavoring beans. She described it as “somewhere between arugula, cilantro, and rice” and it is used to make salsa. Papalos also has medicinal properties and is taken to reduce blood pressure (C. Guerrero, personal communication, June 2, 2019). I asked for her perspective about the garden. She stated that the garden helped her address feelings of loneliness when she first moved to Norristown, maintained social interactions with family and friends, provided her with the oppor-
tunity to grow native foods and learn about plants (C. Guerrero, personal communication, June 2, 2019).

After gardening for a couple of hours, we harvested some greens to cook lunch with. Guerrero motioned for me to follow her into the kitchen of an older home next to the garden that served as an office. In the large kitchen, she rummaged through the cabinets for a frying pan. She added the harvested greens to a pan to make “quelites.” She sautéed the greens with onion, garlic, carrots, cumin, chili powder, salt, pepper, chickpeas, and lentils. We chatted while she cooked, then she asked me to get some plates for the cabinet. She served us each a healthy portion of the quelites and we carried the plates out to a small, rickety table on the patio. The quelites was delicious, even more so after harvesting and cooking with the vegetables from the garden. Meeting Guerrero motivated me to inquire and reflect more about the re-creation of a place in a community garden and how that creation of place evolved.

**Place-Making and Well-Being**

*Well-being* is a multi-dimensional construct that is increasingly accepted as a measure by health promoters, government agencies and academics as deeply entwined with societal contentedness (Egli, Oliver, & Tautolo, 2016). Well-being may also be defined as optimal physical and mental functioning with resilience (Huppert & So, 2013). The World Health Organization (2018) constitution states: "Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity." Mental health does not imply merely the absence of mental health disorders. The WHO constitution defines mental health “as a state of well-being in which an individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community.”
A growing body of literature focuses on the potential for place-making to promote health and well-being during resettlement (Sampson & Gifford, 2010). In their study of refugee youth, they found that youth seek out and value places that promote healing and recovery. Rosbrook and Schweitzer (2010) studied Karen and Chin refugees and identified patterns of meanings related to home and the implications for well-being. Other recent studies increasingly undergird the premise that participation in community gardens or other natural settings enhances well-being, including improvements in physical health, social interactions, and mental health (Bishop & Purcell, 2013; Egli, Oliver, & Tautolo, 2016; Shanahan, Thomas, Barber, Brymer, Cox, Dean, Depledge, Fuller, Hartig, Irvine, Jones, Kikillus, Lovell, Mitchell, Niemelä, Nieuwenhuijsen, Pretty, Townsend, Heezik, Warber, & Gaston, 2019; Lampert, Costa, Santos, Sousa, Ribeiro, & Freire, 2021).

For instance, Bishop and Purcell (2013) studied refugees working in community gardens and found that gardening had positive benefits for the physical and mental health and overall well-being of refugees. Eggert et al. (2015) studied a refugee community garden in Virginia and reported improvements in well-being, such as an increased consumption of vegetables and a level of community engagement. Hartwig and Mason (2016) documented mental and emotional benefits of community gardening in a mixed methods study on Karen and Bhutanese refugees in Minnesota, including social benefits. Kweon, Sullivan, and Wiley (1998) found that green space provided an opportunity for social contact. Finally, Whiteford (2004) suggested that horticulture could minimize the negative consequences of displacement, such as social isolation.

Sampson and Gifford (2010) emphasized that it is essential to recognize one’s connection to place of origin, as well as any associated traumas, while simultaneously acknowledging the
possibility of connections to a new place. Furthermore, Sampson and Gifford concluded that “especially relevant for resettlement are investigations into the qualities of places considered to be actively health-enhancing or beneficial in processes of healing and restoration…it is both the physicality of place & the sociality of place that are important for promoting recovery and settlement” (p. 117). Sampson and Gifford (2010) defined these places as *therapeutic landscapes* or *restorative experiences* that help to facilitate positive connections to place and promote well-being, especially relevant for addressing refugees with trauma and distress.

Natural settings increase psychological and well-being, as well as help regulate emotion. Coughlan and Hermes (2016) proposed the concept of *nature-based place attachment* and recounted the literature providing evidence for a positive correlation between nature and an increase in psychological and mental well-being. In a systematic review of eight quantitative studies on the impact of gardening on well-being for adult non-institutionalized individuals, Lampert, Costa, Santos, Sousa, Ribeiro, and Freire (2021) concluded that regardless of age, “community gardeners had significantly better health outcomes than their neighbors not engaged in gardening activities in terms of life satisfaction, happiness, general health, mental health and social cohesion” (p. 2). Lampert et al. (2021) also found a positive association in all eight studies between engaging in community gardening and physical (general health) and mental health (life satisfaction, happiness, mental health, and social cohesion).

While there is a relatively robust body of literature on immigrants and refugees, we need more information about community-based interventions for immigrants and refugees, especially those that center place – such as community gardening programs. Given the findings in the literature about the relevance of place-making during resettlement and the benefits of community gar-
dens, we must seriously consider the significant role of place in the lives of immigrants and how this sense of place may be re-created in community gardens. As the literature speculates, displacement impacts identity and separates one from a physical and natural environment that may have previously held substantial meaning for that individual. This results in a loss of community and social interactions that can subsequently impact one’s well-being.

Current studies of immigrant and refugees in community gardening programs provide evidence of improved physical and mental well-being. My work extends this body of research because I specifically use a place-based framework (Raymond, Brown, and Weber’s place attachment model, 2010) to examine how place is re-created and home is thereby reconstituted. Considering all the consequences of displacement, and the potential health benefits of re-creating place, this study will help social service providers understand and potentially implement community-based interventions that help to improve the resettlement process for immigrants and refugees through a place-based framework. To address the need for more information on this topic, this study supplements the current literature about how salutogenic community-based approaches contribute to the concept of “place-making” to help mitigate the consequences of displacement among refugees.

**Objective of this Study**

In this qualitative study, I utilized semi-structured interviews and participant observation to explore community gardening programs as an intervention to help Burmese immigrants and refugees re-create a sense of place to mitigate the consequences of displacement, such as trauma, depression, and anxiety. My qualitative study focuses on the experiences of displacement of the Karen and Chin immigrant and refugee populations, two ethnic minority groups displaced from
Burma, who participated in the community gardening program at the Southeast Asian Mutual Assistance Association Coalition (SEAMAAC) in south Philadelphia (www.SEAMAAC.org).

Community-based interventions for immigrants and refugees are ideal. Moreover, these interventions need to be culturally-appropriate and provide opportunities to build community cohesion, social interactions, and maintain cultural practices and traditions, including agrarian practices for this population. Accordingly, through this research, I aim to help social service providers understand and potentially implement community-based interventions that help to mitigate these consequences and therefore, improve the resettlement process for immigrants and refugees. If displacement is as traumatic as research reveals for immigrants and refugees, then emphasizing the notion of emplacement (Turton, 2005), as defined earlier in this paper, is critical to helping immigrants and refugees during resettlement. In order for emplacement to occur, a setting is required.

When considering the multiple stressors that immigrants and refugees endure, community gardens may serve as a powerful context for immigrants and refugees for place-making, and thus healing and connecting. In this research, I explore how and why place-making occurs, based on the four-dimensional model of place attachment that includes place identity, place dependence, nature bonding, and social bonding (Raymond, Brown, & Weber, 2010). I will focus on the following research questions: How do community gardening programs help participants recreate a sense of place as viewed within a place-attachment framework consisting of place identity, place dependence, nature and social bonding? How does participation in a community gardening program help with the consequences of displacement? How do community gardens improve the well-being of immigrants and refugees?
Chapter 2: Theoretical Overview

In this paper, I discuss the history of the evolution of the concept of a sense of place. I also examine the application of a four-dimensional, three-pole conceptual model of place attachment, proposed by Raymond, Brown, and Weber (2010), that guides this project. Raymond et al.’s conceptual model provides a theoretical framework to understand how gardening participants experienced place attachment in their home country of Burma, as well as how they utilized those dimensions of place attachment during resettlement in Philadelphia in the community garden. This comprehensive model integrates the multidisciplinary perspectives that have contributed to meaningful attempts at operationalizing the concept of place, such as social psychology, environmental psychology, and community sociology (Raymond, Brown, & Weber, 2010).

Concept of Place: A Brief Historical Overview

Historically, the concept of "place" is a very complex, multi-layered, and broad concept subject to a variety of interpretations. A sense of place refers to the meanings and attachment to a physical setting held by an individual or group (Stedman, 2002). In the 1970s, humanistic geographers and sociologists explored the affective bonds between an individual and place (Tuan, 1974; Lewicka, 2011; Scannell & Gifford, 2010; Fried, 2000; Morgan, 2010) as a consequence of “the alienation produced by ‘placeless’ modern environments” (Easthope, 2004, p. 130). Tuan also emphasized the length or depth of experience with the setting (Tuan, 1974). Relph (1976) utilized a phenomenological approach that emphasized the individual, subjective experience of place and the affective relationship between individuals and place. Relph also hypothesized that social relationships within the physical setting was the foundation for attachment, rather than the physical landscape (Relph, 1976). Understanding place attachment as an emotional bond has in-
increased awareness about the distress and grief expressed by those who are forced to relocate (Scannell & Gifford, 2010), otherwise known as displacement.

Elaborating on Tuan’s concept of place (1974), Gieryn (2000) posited that place is essentially not space. In contrast, place is something that is given value and meaning by people, objects and representations. Zapf (2010) posited the idea of substituting the term environment with place and proposed that place integrates location and physical environment with character, meaning, and emotional significance for people. It is a multifaceted construct that unites the natural world with human history, activities, and aspirations.

In the mid-1900s, behavioral scientists added to the exploration of the relationship between individuals and places. Fullilove (1996) defined the psychology of place as an emerging body of research that emphasizes the relationship between individuals and their environments. The psychology of place is based on the supposition that individuals desire to feel a sense of belonging to a place, concomitant to the evolutionary and physiological needs of familiarity of the land for survival, safety, and security in one’s environment, as well as identity (as cited in Fullilove, 1996). Indeed, it seems that we have an innate and perennial desire for a home, a place or a space to call one’s own, a desire to belong to a place, to be connected to a place. Fullilove (1996) stated, “At the heart of the experience of displacement is the sense that one is without a place to be” (p. 1521).

Through various place interactions, the individual begins to develop a deep psychological association, with a particular geographic region, a specific locale, or a particular place that holds significant meaning, known as place attachment (Fredrickson & Anderson, 1999; Scannell & Gifford, 2010). There is a significant body of evidence in the literature that suggests that the ma-
ajority of people worldwide feel attached to their places of residence and hence is a fairly universal phenomenon (Lewicka, 2013). The French philosopher, Simone Weil, stated that rootedness in a place is the most relevant and least recognized need of the human soul. Understanding place attachment as an emotional bond has increased awareness about the distress and grief expressed by those who are forced to relocate (Scannell & Gifford, 2010). Fried (2000) stated, “Attachment is a primordial sentiment” (p. 194).

Scannell & Gifford (2010) contend that the majority of the literature asserts that “people are attached to places that facilitate social relationships and group identity” (p. 4). Urban sociologists assert that place attachment is “necessarily social…or conflated with “sense of community” (Scannell & Gifford, 2010, p. 4). If this were the case and attachment to place was defined solely based on social interactions, then no one would miss the physical or natural component of place. Yet, Burley (2010) emphasized that it is the built and natural physical context of place that makes attachment possible and wrote, “Consequently, when we become attached to places, the physical elements become imbued with special meanings derived from experiences. Because of the special meaning that a place comes to have from our attachment to it, place becomes a part of identity” (p. 40). Stedman (2002) noted that the physical features of a landscape do not produce a sense of place directly, but influence the symbolic meanings of the landscape, which correlates with the strength of place attachment.

The fields of geography and urban planning concern themselves with spatial science, whereas psychology and ecology focus more on the interconnectedness of relationships within a place. In the literature, this notion of a sense of place refers to the meanings and attachment to a physical setting - whether it is a neighborhood, a mountain, or a city - held by an individual or
group (Stedman, 2002). Tuan (1974) proposed the concept of topophilia and defined it as the affective bond between people and place or setting. The Hopis refer to a sense of place as túwanasaapi, or the place where you belong. The Spanish call it querencia, the allegiance one feels for a place. Mountains, winds, earth, water, and fire all have spiritual significance in the world’s religious traditions. Jesus preached from the top of a mountain and the Ganges is considered to be a sacred river. Carl Jung described “sacred space” as a place of power, awe, and mystery not suitable for everyday living because it lacked the necessary resources and access to the everyday world.

**The Relevance of Place: A Review of the Literature**

For the Maori, indigenous people of New Zealand, daily activities revolve around the land, lakes, and rivers used for recreation and sustenance. Jahnke (2002) interviewed six Maori female educators in a qualitative study, and concluded that a sense of place is created during childhood through a physical relationship to the land, while living in close proximity to extended family. This creation of a sense of place in childhood also reinforces cultural identity, as one’s traditions and values are expressed within the context of this physical environment (Jahnke, 2002).

In a qualitative and phenomenological study, Adams (2013) studied the children of Caribbean parents who resettled in New York City. Adams (2013) found that language, rituals, symbols and traditions practiced by a common group of people comprise a collective identity, often in the context of a particular geographic space. Adams (2013) also concluded that re-created places can have an emotional significance because they may evoke a similar emotion, perhaps happiness, as well as familiarity, safety, and security, as experienced in one’s country of origin.
Children of immigrant parents interact in the resettled places and build a Caribbean identity, even though they are far from that geographic region.

Ujang and Zakariya (2015) interviewed 24 small business owners in the city of Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia to explore the concept of place attachment. Ujang and Zakariya (2015) deduced that an attachment to place consisted of emotion and the cultural characteristics of people within a setting. When asked about emotions related to place, participants identified feelings of happiness, positivity, protection, and territorialization of place (e.g., resistance to illegal vendors, intruders, etc). More specifically, recalling experiences in a place evoked emotion (e.g., the physical and social experience of being in a place, such as interactions with shoppers, celebration of events in the streets, etc).

The Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw tribe in Louisiana are considered the “First American Climate Refugees” (Davenport & Robertson, 2016). Members of this Louisiana tribe have lived on Isle de Jean Charles for generations, but due to rising sea levels, the federal government allocated $48 million to relocate these residents. Albert Naquin, chief of the tribe, bemoaned the loss of heritage and culture in relationship to the land in response to the relocation.

Some researchers have asserted that interpersonal attachment theory is an appropriate theoretical framework to understand the relationships between people and place (Scannell & Gifford, 2013; Fried, 2000; Morgan, 2010). Major tenets of interpersonal attachment theory evolved from the work of Bowlby and Ainsworth (1989), who postulated that the bond between children and caregivers fulfills the psychological needs for safety and comfort and that separation from caregivers produces long-lasting psychological problems. Aligned with one of the concepts of attachment theory, Scannell and Gifford (2013) proposed that Bowlby’s notion of separation dis-
tress occurs when person-place bonds are disrupted. Disruptions can include changes to a place that are perceived to be threatening and those displaced individuals experience grief, as in the concept of separation distress in attachment theory.

Certainly, just like separation from a loving caretaker, separation from place might produce long-lasting psychological problems. Similar to separation from caregivers, separation from significant places might produce long-lasting psychological problems. Likewise, interpersonal attachment theory emphasizes the ways that attachment bonds can be reformed with new, nurturing caregivers. This parallels the case of displacement: just as there is often the desire to form close bonds with others, people also establish new bonds with places (e.g., ethnic enclaves), where community and social interactions are maintained, albeit in a different environment.

In the case of displacement, there is often the desire to form close bonds with others, as evident in the establishment of ethnic enclaves, where community and social interactions are maintained, albeit in a different environment. As concluded by Scannell and Gifford (2013), “more research is needed to investigate the substitutability of people for places” (p. 26). Furthermore, relationships with human caregivers are explored in interpersonal attachment theory and the physical environment is not considered (Morgan, 2009).

Fullilove (1996) contended that individuals are connected to an environment through three key psychological processes: attachment, familiarity, and place identity. Fullilove (1996) clarified the “attachment” she referred to and discerned between interpersonal attachment theory and place attachment, as evident in the following statement: “Place attachment, which parallels, but is distinct from, attachment to person [interpersonal attachment theory], is a mutual caretaking bond between a person and a beloved place” (p. 1516). Indeed, researchers are still working
on the conceptualization of, for example, the ways that place attachment styles might differ from interpersonal attachment styles (Stancu et al., 2020), though major thinkers in the field are, of late, exploring the ways that understanding each concept will further our conceptualization of the importance and healing dimensions of place attachment (Scannell et al., 2020).

According to Fullilove (1996), intimate knowledge of the environment was once essential for survival, facilitating avoidance of predators and finding food. In other words, familiarity was a primordial need and it still is, but in a different way. Tribal societies still hunt and gather and individuals hunt for recreation and food supply, but much of our present population is reliant upon farmers and industrialization to transport food to grocery stores. For suburban and urban populations “intimate knowledge of the environment” may include familiar landmarks such as grocery stores, post offices, banks, community and religious centers. Rural populations often rely on the natural environment for familiar landmarks, such as lakes, rivers, streams and mountains.

Regardless of the environment one lives in, familiarity offers a sense of security, even for those who are incarcerated in institutions. Ultimately, familiarity and security in an environment likely contributes to well-being, therefore, improving mental health. To infer from the findings in my study, these Burmese gardening participants experienced familiarity (becoming familiar with the surrounding neighborhood as a result of the community garden), security, cultural preservation and physical, psychological and social well-being.

Fullilove (1996) asserted that displacement threatens each of these psychological processes and subsequently may result in nostalgia, disorientation and alienation. Furthermore, she contended that these consequences may undermine a sense of belonging and affect one’s mental health. Moreover, Fullilove (1996) posited that “empowered collaboration” (p. 1521) is required
to attain these goals. **Empowered collaboration** of displaced populations requires “rebuilding activities of all kinds. While the rebuilding is going forward, people must also attend to emotional needs to mourn the lost place and to bond to the new place. Rituals from the old place, as well as rituals from the new place, are essential in this process” (Fullilove, 1996, p. 1521).

**The Centrality of Place in Social Work**

In 1866, Ernst Haeckel formulated the concept of “ecology” and brought attention to the study of organisms in the environment, rather than in the context of studying organisms in the laboratory (Rotabi, 2007). Haeckel also emphasized the concepts of reciprocity and mutuality between organism and environment. Phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty defined perception to be an ongoing interchange between the body and surrounding entities (Abram, 1996). Thomas Hobbes, the English political philosopher, believed that the primary task of every organism in nature is, in fact, to regulate itself in response to its environment (Cacioppo & Patrick, 2008).

Pardek (2015) explored the ecological perspective through the concept of transaction, which suggests that the issues of clients cannot be attributed to individual problems, but rather as a result of a “malfunctioning” ecosystem. Furthermore, disturbances result from negative interactions or transactions between the organism and the environment as a *reciprocal* and *interactive* process.

This reciprocity and mutuality between organism and environment is similar to the concept of “proximal processes,” as defined by Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006). A tenet of the bioecological model posited by Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006), human development occurs through progressively more complex and reciprocal interactions between a bio-psychological
human organism and the people, objects and symbols in the immediate surrounding environment,
such as feeding a baby or playing with a child. Freire (1970) stated, “World and human beings do
not exist apart from each other, they exist in constant interaction” (p. 50). If one lives in a place
for a long time, develops a reciprocal relationship with the land (for instance, consider Native
American tribes who rely on the land for primary sustenance) simultaneously combined with the
development of community, then Bronfenbrenner and Morris’s model (2006) provides a cogent
explanation for place attachment. However, this model excludes the natural environment.

Scannell and Gifford (2013) alluded to this idea of reciprocity and mutuality between or-
ganism and environment. They asserted that a physical environment with fascinating stimuli ac-
tivates the exploratory system. Consequently, similar to attachment theory, children move from
their caregivers to explore and play in the environment which can elicit a positive or negative
affect. Scannell and Gifford posited that both interpersonal and childhood-based place attach-
ments may develop through repeated processes of arousal, interaction and pleasure, but conclud-
ed that more evidence was needed to support this theory.

Social sciences have been directly influenced by the development of natural science ecol-
ogy, as evident in the work of sociologist Howard Odum (1884-1954). Odum approached social
problems as an integration of natural and social environments. His work is one of the earliest ex-
amples of the application of ecological theory to social problems (Rotabi, 2007). His youngest
son, H.T Odum, explored the relationship with ecology and general systems theory, relating it to
the social sciences.
In 1973, Carel Germain, a professor of social work at Columbia University, was the first social worker formally to apply ecological concepts to social work, and she is credited with the development of social work ecological theory (Rotabi, 2007). Germain wrote:

Ecology is the science concerned with the adaptive fit of organisms and their environments and with the means by which they achieve a dynamic equilibrium and mutuality. It seems to furnish an appropriate metaphor for a helping profession concerned with the relationships between human beings and their interpersonal and organizational environments, with helping to modify or to enhance the quality of transactions between people and their environments, and with seeking to promote environments that support human well-being (as cited in Rotabi, 2007, pp. 119-120).

Social work theorists, including Germain, “have built a substantial body of theory that is typically called the ‘ecological perspective’ or ‘person-in-environment’” (Rotabi, 2007, p. 114). A central strength of the ecological perspective is its treatment of the individual and the problem, both within and as part of the environment, not just focusing solely on the person and illness (Rotabi, 2007).

Historically, the field of social sciences has predominantly focused on the social aspects of our surrounding environment, overlooking the relationship between the natural environment and human functioning (Rotabi, 2007). A few notable exceptions exist wherein social work scholars have promoted the notion of applying ecological concepts to social work, including the natural environment (Besthorn, 2014; Germain, 1973; Weick, 1981; Zapf, 2010). In more recent years, social work scholars have promoted the need for centering place in social work (Akesson, Burns, & Hordyk, 2017; Kemp, 2009; Sousa, Kemp, & El-Zuhairi, 2019).
Currently, governing organizations in the social work field have emphasized the centrality of place and the natural environment, notably the impact of environmental destruction on underserved and marginalized populations, especially with climate change. The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) noted, “The most vulnerable populations are indeed those that suffer the greatest consequences when rapid or unexpected environmental changes occur” (Clark, 2013, p. 3). The NASW policy statement indicates “no populations should be forced to bear a disproportionate burden of the negative human health or environmental consequences of policies and programs.”

In 2009, the NASW acknowledged that the natural environment is an integral component of the person-in-environment perspective (Lucas-Darby, 2011). One of the twelve Grand Challenges of Social Work focuses on “creating social responses to a changing environment” (www.grandchallengesforsocialwork.org). In the ten *Standards and Indicators for Cultural Competence in Social Work Practice* (NASW, 2015), developed by the 2015 NASW National Committee on Racial and Ethnic Diversity, the third standard stipulates:

> Social workers shall possess and continue to develop specialized knowledge and understanding that is inclusive of, but not limited to, the history, traditions, values, family systems, and artistic expressions such as race and ethnicity; immigration and refugee status; tribal groups; religion and spirituality; sexual orientation; gender identity or expression; social class; and mental or physical abilities of various cultural groups (p. 5).
As social work’s attention has shifted to include the natural environment, the concepts of human rights, sustainability and environmental justice are increasingly incorporated into the core knowledge and foundational values of social work education and practice (Hawkins et al., 2011).

### Application of the Conceptual Model

Given that social work now recognizes the natural environment as an integral component of the person-in-environment perspective and ecological social work theory, it is critical to recognize place-making within the constellation of environmental factors that determine well-being. As stated in chapter one, immigrants and refugees strive to alleviate the trauma and stress they have endured, in part through nurturing a sense of place (Coughlan & Hermes, 2016). Given that many immigrants and refugees hail from agrarian backgrounds, my study explores how re-creation of place occurs in the context of the natural environment; in this case, a community gardening program. Considering the consequences of displacement, the evidence from studies presented in this paper promote the psychological and social benefits of community gardens.

In chapter one, I posed the following research questions: How do community gardening programs help participants re-create a sense of place as viewed within a place-attachment framework consisting of place identity, place dependence, nature and social bonding? How does participation in a community gardening program help with the consequences of displacement? How do community gardens improve the well-being of immigrants and refugees? The application of Raymond, Brown, and Weber’s (2010) conceptual model provides an ideal framework to understand how immigrants and refugees re-create place in the context of a community gardening program. For my study, this four-dimensional place attachment model provides an explanation of how gardening participants experienced place attachment in their home country of Burma.
and subsequently, how place attachment developed during resettlement in Philadelphia in the community garden. Rodriguez (2018) utilized a simplified model of place attachment, place dependence and place identity to understand a sense of place in community gardening participants representing marginalized populations. This simplified model of place attachment was initially proposed by Stokols and Shumaker (1981). However, this model does not include anything about social interactions that occur within the context of a place or a home.

Mindful of both the social and the natural environment, in their model, Raymond, Brown, and Weber (2010) categorized previous empirical research on place attachment into three contexts or “three poles” (see Figure 1): Personal Context, Natural Environment Context, and Community Context. Interpreting the model clockwise, Raymond, Brown, and Weber (2010) identified constructs of place identity, place dependence and rootedness as highly individualized attachments in the first pole, Personal Context. In the second pole, Natural Environment Context, Raymond, Brown, and Weber (2010) relate the concepts of connectedness to nature, environmental identity theory and affinity to nature to understand the connection to nature. In the third pole, Community Context, Raymond, Brown, and Weber (2010) affiliate the concepts of neighborhood attachment, belongingness, and familiarity.

Each of these “poles” or “contexts” relates to one or more of four hypothesized dimensions of Place Attachment: Place Identity, Place Dependence, Nature Bonding, and Social Bonding. Figure 1 depicts the relationship of these three contexts as related to each of the four dimensions. Place Identity and Dependence are categorized as Personal Context (consisting of the concepts of place identity, place dependence, and rootedness). Nature Bonding relates to the constructs of Natural Environment Context (connectedness to nature, environmental identity, and
affinity to nature). *Social Bonding* is defined by the concepts of *Community Context* (neighborhood attachment, belongingness, and familiarity).

Before presenting the four dimensions of this place attachment model, it is necessary to define the construct of *place attachment*. Through various place interactions, an individual begins to develop a deep psychological association or a bond, with a particular geographic region (urban or rural), a specific locale, or a particular place that holds significant meaning, referred to as *place attachment* (Fredrickson & Anderson, 1999; Scannell & Gifford, 2010; Manzo, 2003; Altman & Low, 1992; Fullilove, 1996). Place attachment may provide a sense of ongoing security and foster group, community and cultural identity (Altman & Low, 1992). Moreover, place attachment visualizations improved self-esteem, meaning and belonging (Scannell & Gifford, 2016).

Positive and strong place attachment is established through the process of routinization within the context of a secure base (Helly, Efrat, & Yosef, 2021). Pejic, Alvarado, Hess, and Groark (2017) recommend the development and consistency of routines to support family cohesion, as many refugee families have experienced disruption to the family unit. Consequently, it might be surmised that embodied experiences within the context of a place facilitates place attachment, such as riding a bicycle, gardening (literally planting roots) and hiking in the woods, as well as the length of time one has spent in a place subsequently forming place-related memories (Lewicka, 2013). Li, Hodgetts, and Ho (2010) referred to routine gardening tasks, such as watering, as “emplaced identities” (p. 787).

Historically, some scholars have operationalized the concept of place attachment, comprised of *place identity* and *place dependence*. Understanding place attachment as an emotional
*bond* has increased awareness about the distress and grief expressed by those who are forced to relocate (Scannell & Gifford, 2010), such as the forced migration of tribes along the Trail of Tears during President Andrew Jackson’s administration, under The Indian Removal Act of 1930. Place attachment is also deeply social and related to community and collective identity (Scannell & Gifford, 2010). The four dimensions of the place attachment model are defined as follows:

**Place dependence** refers to the extent to which a physical setting provides conditions to support an intended use (Raymond, Brown, & Weber, 2010). For instance, Native American tribes rely on the land and water to hunt moose and deer, fish and gather plants. Place dependence develops when one farms. Raymond (2010) surveyed landholders and found that hobby farmers have stronger nature bonds than commercial farmers. Immigrants and refugees often come from agrarian areas where they relied on the land as part of their livelihood. The natural and built components of place help people meet their biological, psychological, social and cultural needs, make attachment possible, hold meaning and create opportunities for people to develop attachment to place and derive identity from it (Burley, 2010; Mazumdar, Mazumdar, Docuyanan, & McLaughlin, 2000; Proshansky, Fabian, & Kaminoff, 1983).

**Place identity.** Proshansky, Fabian, and Kaminoff (1983) defined *place identity* as one’s cognitive thoughts about the physical world in which an individual lives. Fullilove (1996) defined place identity as concerned with the formation of a self based on places where one has lived in life, analogous to how social work’s person-in-environment construct influences one’s development. Cognitions include memories, ideas, feelings, attitudes, values, and preferences about an individual’s physical environment. Environment-related cognitions include places, spaces, and their properties which contribute toward the satisfaction of an individual’s biological,
psychological, social, and cultural needs (Proshansky, Fabian, & Kaminoff, 1983). Moreover, Chawla (1985) posited that places of origin shape who we are. Physical settings, including home and neighborhood, reflect and shape people’s understanding of who they are as individuals and as members of groups (Mazumdar et al., 2000). Of particular note, place identity increases with farming experience (Raymond, Brown, & Weber, 2010).

Expanding on this concept of a relationship between place and identity, Mazumdar et. al (2000) stated that physical settings, including home and neighborhood, reflect and shape people’s understanding of who they are as individuals and as members of groups. Burley (2010) writes, “Consequently, when we become attached to places, the physical elements become imbued with special meanings derived from experiences. Because of the special meaning that a place comes to have from our attachment to it, place becomes a part of identity” (p. 40). Curtis (2012) postulated that the significance of place may be related to one's sense of security, identity, and self-worth. Deaux (2000) posited that immigration involves restating and redefining identity in the new host country. Relph (1976) writes:

To have roots in a place is to have a secure point from which to look out on the world, a firm grasp of one’s own position in the order of things, and a significant spiritual and psychological attachment to somewhere in particular…there is, also a real responsibility and respect for that place both for itself and for what it is to yourself and to others. There is, in fact, a complete commitment to that place, a commitment that is as profound as any that a person can make, for caretaking is indeed the basis of man’s relation to the world (p. 38).
Nature bonding. Raymond, Brown, and Weber (2010) operationalized nature bonding as related to experience or time spent in the natural environment. Various theories such as environmental identity theory, emotional affinity towards nature, and connectedness to nature have defined nature bonding (Raymond, Brown, & Weber, 2010). Environmental identity theory defines people’s experiences with nature as an inherent part of one’s self, closely related to the biophilia hypothesis, which asserts that an individual’s connection to nature and well-being is significantly influenced by a relationship with the surrounding natural world (as cited in Raymond, Brown, & Weber, 2010). Emotional affinity towards nature emphasizes an individual emotional connection to nature, similar to Tuan’s concept of topophilia (as cited in Raymond, Brown, & Weber, 2010). The extent to which an individual considers nature as an integral part of the cognitive representation of self is referred to as a connectedness to nature scale (as cited in Raymond, Brown, & Weber, 2010).

Similar to these aforementioned theories, Jahnke (2002) interviewed six Maori female educators in a qualitative study and concluded that a sense of place is created during childhood through a physical relationship to the land, while living in close proximity to extended family. This creation of a sense of place in childhood also reinforces cultural identity, as one’s traditions and values are expressed within the context of this physical environment (Jahnke, 2002).

Social bonding. Tuan (1974) emphasized that individuals are dependent on one another for “biological survival and for psychological comfort” (p. 30). We are dependent on one another for social and psychological needs, however, this socialization always occurs in the context of a place. Scannell and Gifford (2010) contend that the majority of the literature asserts that “people are attached to places that facilitate social relationships and group identity” (p. 4). Within the
context of a place, communities emerge along with the development of networks and interpersonal connections (Scannell & Gifford, 2014; Stedman, 2003; Raymond, Brown, & Weber, 2010).

**Place and Home**

Initially, I designed this study to consider a *sense of place*. I intended, therefore, to write about *place* and emphasize the healing benefits of the natural environment, such as the context of a community gardening program, with a theoretical framework based on Raymond, Brown, and Weber’s (2010) place attachment model. Two of my research questions focused on healing (“How does participation in a community gardening program help with the consequences of displacement?”) and well-being (“How do community gardens improve the well-being of immigrants and refugees?”) – and therefore, I inquired about the benefits of place-making (specifically in the natural environment), such as peace, comfort, rootedness, a sense of belonging, and acceptance, all themes that emerged in the findings of my study. Yet, these constructs are also commonly described as related to the concept of home, not only place.

Mallett (2004), for example, explores the concept of home as place, but also concludes that home is “a space inhabited by family, people, things and belongings - a familiar, if not comfortable space where particular activities and relationships are lived” (p. 63). And moreover, Mallett (2004) states, “It [home] can also provide a sense of place and belonging in an increasingly alienated world” (p. 66). In recent years, researchers have started to bring attention and awareness to the relationships among homemaking, attachment to place and belonging (Montes, 2021). Montes (2021) underscored studies and affective definitions of home that included feel-
ings of familiarity, comfort, security, and emotional attachment. Moreover, as Montes noted, these descriptions contribute to an individual’s sense of belonging within a place.

Cresswell (2015) reflected on these dichotomous concepts of home and place and even entitled a heading in his book, *Place: an introduction*, as “Place as Home?” This heading implies a discernment between place and home. Cresswell (2015) noted that home is where people experience a sense of attachment and rootedness, as opposed to visiting a *place*. Porteous and Smith (2001) also allude to a distinction between a place and a home:

The moral of these stories is that place is meaningful to people, and that the place called home is the most meaningful of all. When it is threatened, we are roused to defend it. We also learn that home is not simply one’s dwelling, but can also be one’s homeland or native region. It is one of the obvious facts of life, so often overlooked, that people are not merely attached to other people, but also to familiar objects, structures and environments that nurture the self, support the continuity of life, and act as props to memory and identity. The theme of attachment is a common one in psychiatry; we have little trouble understanding the human need to be connected to others. But the theme of attachment to place has received much less consideration (p. 6).

There is, therefore, a subtle distinction between *home* and *place*: *Home can be a place, but place is not necessarily a home*. One might have attachment to a place, but not necessarily make that place a home. Perez Murcia (2019) asserted, “Even after two or three decades in a condition of displacement, however, many participants expressed a feeling of being emotionally and existentially homeless” (pp. 1528-1529).
Based on their place attachment model, Raymond, Brown, and Weber (2010) acknowledged the overlap of the constructs of place and home, citing Tuan’s work (1980), that *place rootedness* “refers to a very strong bond to home” (p. 424). Geographer Yi-Fu Tuan (1991) defined *home* as a “unit of space organized mentally and materially to satisfy a people’s real and perceived biosocial needs and, beyond that, their higher aesthetic-political aspirations” (p. 102). Interestingly, Tuan did not define home with any reference to emotion or within the context of family. Rather, his perception of home seems to be more individualistic, philosophical, and scientific in nature. Seamon (1979) defined home as a place of security and rest, but interestingly his definition also lacks a reference to relationships or social interactions within the home, as well as culture. Perez Murcia (2019) described home as comprised of family and cultural ties. Mallett (2004) characterized home as constituting family and safety.

Yet, we must not overly romanticize home; home does not always provide comfort, rest, family, security, and/or love, as is the case with domestic violence. Home may be a place of disappointment, unease, oppression, and alienation (Perez Murcia, 2019). Instead of conceptualizing home as an idyllic space, home can be “a particularly significant kind of place with which, and within which, we experience strong social, psychological, and emotive attachments” (Easthope, 2004, p. 135). Rosbrook and Schweitzer (2013) asserted that “Home is a complex concept with many different meanings, encapsulating several dichotomous elements” (p. 160). Perez Murcia (2019) stated that this construct of home can become a contested site and needs to be “renegotiated over time and space” (p. 1516). As I specifically asked gardening participants about their concept of home because I was concerned that the concept of *place* would be lost in translation, gardening participants’ responses reflected the concept of home. Their responses
provoked me to think about the overlapping meanings of home and place, yet as distinct concepts.

I therefore turned to consider through my work: How does Raymond, Brown, and Weber’s place attachment model (2010) help us better to understand the healing principles of home, particularly among those who must re-make home through re-attaching to place? Although I asked about “home” in the interview questions, this study ultimately examines how immigrants and refugees re-create place (place-making) in the context of the community garden through the lens of the place attachment model. The narratives provided by these gardening participants provided evidence of the re-creation of not only place, but also home, in Philadelphia through the lens of Raymond, Brown, and Weber’s (2010) place attachment model. My research findings also consider how place within the context of community and social interactions can become a home, characterized by rootedness, a sense of belonging, and place attachment.

Current studies of immigrant and refugees in community gardening programs provide evidence of improved physical and mental well-being, but my work is unique because I specifically use a place-based framework (Raymond, Brown, and Weber’s place attachment model, 2010) to examine how place is re-created and home is thereby reconstituted. Considering all the consequences of displacement, and the potential health benefits of re-creating place, this study will help social service providers understand and potentially implement community-based interventions that help to improve the resettlement process for immigrants and refugees through a place-based framework. Moreover, this dissertation concludes with recommendations for a new conceptual model for immigrant and refugee resettlement that builds on Raymond, Brown, and Weber’s (2010) model (see Figure 1).
Chapter 3: Methodology

The objective of this qualitative study utilizing semi-structured interviews and participant observation was to explore community gardening programs as an intervention to help immigrants and refugees re-create a sense of place to mitigate the consequences of displacement. Moreover, I wanted to capture the phenomenological “lived” experience of community gardening participants and "create meaning" from it, as stated in Padgett (2017, p. 16). This study is analyzed with an epistemological perspective, a way of seeing and knowing the world, as opposed to an ontological perspective or defining what exists. While there is a relatively robust body of literature on immigrants and refugees, the literature is scant as related to community-based interventions for immigrants and refugees, especially community gardening programs. This study will contribute to the growing body of research for social service providers about how macro-level, community-based approaches contribute to the notion of “place-making” that helps alleviate the consequences of displacement.

Sample

Prior to data collection, I obtained study approval through the Bryn Mawr College Institutional Review Board (IRB). I selected purposive sampling to yield the most information about this particular phenomenon (Bickman & Rog, 2009). This purposive and snowball sample was comprised of 17 gardening participants: 1 male and 16 female immigrants and refugees between the ages of 28 and 82 years old of Karen and Chin ethnicity (mean age of 42 years old), who participated in the Southeast Asian Mutual Assistance Association Coalition (SEAMAAC; www.SEAMAAC.org).
Southeast Asian resettlement programs were initiated in south Philadelphia in the early 1970s. SEAMAAC, a non-profit organization, was established in 1984 by refugees after a large population of Vietnamese, Laotian, Cambodian, ethnic Hmong and ethnic Chinese refugees and immigrants had already settled in South Philadelphia. Presently, SEAMAAC is a thriving organization, supporting and serving immigrants and refugees of any race or national origin, with a wide variety of direct services to build community leadership through education, organizing and advocacy. SEAMAAC offers free English classes, free job training skills, job placement and advocacy for youth in the public school system to ensure youth have access to English as a Second Language (ESL) classes.

In 2010, SEAMAAC established the Growing Home Gardens program in south Philadelphia on the 700 block of Emily Street and the 500 block of Mercy Street in south Philadelphia. SEAMAAC partnered with the Neighborhood Gardens Trust and the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society. According to the SEAMAAC website, “The goal of the gardens is to address nutritional deficiencies seen in newly arriving refugees, afford newcomers with the opportunity to grow culturally relevant crops, and to root people in their new neighborhoods” (www.seamaac.org). The gardening program consists of three separate gardens totaling 100 plots (raised beds), tended by approximately 200 gardening participants representing the Burmese population (see Figure 4).

Of these 17 gardening participants, there were nine Karen participants and eight Chin participants, all whom had resided in the United States between four to 18 years. All of these gardening participants had gardened in Burma. None of these participants spoke English, except Naw Moo, who translated for all the Karen participants, and Lian, who interpreted for the Chin
participants. All participants had a high school education (10th grade is the highest grade in Burma for high school) or less, and one participant had never attended school. Although I did not ask about immigration status for confidentiality reasons, some of the study participants mentioned during the interviews that they had lived in refugee camps. The program director confirmed that the majority of these gardening participants, if not all of them, had lived in refugee camps. In the Growing Home Gardens program, the Karen group worked in the 6th Street garden and the Chin group worked in the 8th & Emily Street garden. Given that these two ethnic minority groups spoke different languages, the program director stated they separated the gardens by ethnicity for the ease of communication. Gardeners pay an annual fee of $25 a year for each plot (raised bed); this fee covers the water and composting charges.

As part of the recruitment process, I contacted the program director at SEAMAAC and provided him with an introductory letter, flyer and a screening tool about this study. I used simple and participant observation and detailed field notes. I recruited immigrants and refugees from Burma, of any age over 18 years old and any gender. My screening tool identified participants who met two criteria: they needed to be at least 18 years of age (with no maximum age), and presently participating in the gardening program.

Before the commencement of interviews, I visited with participants on an early spring afternoon in April for a community gardening meeting when the host organization gave away

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3 Simple observation is defined as “observing behavior in a naturalistic situation in which the assessor does not intervene or intrude” (Kazdin, 2003, p. 391).

4 Participant observation involves simultaneously studying community activities and participating in the activity (Wakefield et al., 2007).
vegetable seedlings to the gardeners to plant in their garden plots. Gardening participants enthusiastically lined up to receive plants (see Figure 6).

During this community gardening meeting, the program director introduced me to the gardeners and a Burmese translator explained the study. Interested gardeners provided their contact information on a sign-up sheet. The program director also provided me with a tour of three community gardens (see Figures 3 and 4). Unfortunately, participant observation was limited after this initial visit, as imposed pandemic restrictions curtailed any future visits to the community garden. The program director and the translators contacted those participants who expressed interest and scheduled Zoom interviews.

**Interviews**

SEAMAAC provided two translators for the interviews, one who spoke Karen and the other who spoke Chin. I paid translators $25 cash for each interview, and as an incentive, every study participant received $25 cash after completion of the interview. To ensure participation and attempt to reduce the potential of attrition, I contacted the translators with reminder calls, texts or emails prior to the interview. Due to pandemic restrictions that did not permit interviews to be conducted in person, I conducted all interviews via Zoom over a period of six months, from June, 2020 through December, 2020. I met with individuals and the translators on Zoom, and the interviews lasted between 23 and 69 minutes ($n=17$).

All interviewees provided verbal consent for interviews as per the IRB agreement. Translators explained the consent in the Karen or Chin language. All participants agreed to allow the interviews to be recorded on Zoom. This consent also provided study participants with information on confidentiality, their rights and how I utilized the data that was collected. I made every
effort to protect confidentiality during transcription and study participants provided pseudonyms to minimize the slightest chance of any breach in confidentiality. During the interviews, I also took detailed field notes and reviewed the field notes upon completion of the interviews. After the interview, participants participated in a short debriefing to address any questions or concerns.

The semi-structured interview guide (see Table 1) was comprised of questions to explore how immigrants and refugees perceive the concept of place and how a concept of place is re-created in the context of the community gardening program. As explained in Appendix D, I collected demographic information on age, country of origin, length of time in the United States, gender and level of education. I asked study participants specific questions about the elements of place, including culture, community, identity, and the physical elements of place, as well as their community gardening experiences. All interviews were transcribed in English (verbatim) by two transcriptionists hired through Upwork (www.upwork.com). Other than some minimal editing, interviewee excerpts in this study will have phrase and grammar mistakes to preserve authenticity.

Table 1

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I primarily asked open-ended questions to encourage participants to describe their experiences working in the community gardens to explore their concept of place. The lettered sub-questions in my semi-structured interview guide acted as specific probing questions. When necessary, I added more probing questions during the interview. For instance, I asked follow-up questions such as, “Can you tell me more about…?” If I needed to redirect the conversation to a previous topic, I stated, “That’s very interesting, but can we return to…?”

**Data Analysis**

This study yielded qualitative data from semi-structured interviews, participant observations, detailed field notes and a demographic survey. I initially coded the data line-by-line and then thematically analyzed and coded the data using two cycles of coding: descriptive and axial coding (Saldaña, 2013). Descriptive coding is considered a foundation for qualitative inquiry. Questions are considered such as, “What is going on here? What is this study about?” (Saldaña, 2013). Epistemological questions address theories of knowing and understanding the phenomenon of interest. Descriptive coding is one method utilized to address epistemological questions such as, “How does…?” “What does it mean to be…?” and “What factors influence…?” (Saldaña, 2013). I used conventional content analysis, where coding categories are created directly from reviewing the data (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).
During this analysis, I also related the data to the place attachment model. I used Dedoose® Version 8.3.47 (Web Application for Managing, Analyzing and Presenting Qualitative and Mixed Method Research Data, 2013, Los Angeles, CA, SocioCultural Research Consultants, LLC, www.dedoose.com), an online qualitative data analysis program, to organize the codes and apply relevant excerpts to each code. Previously in pilot interviews, I organized codes and themes into a Mindmap (XMind, 2010).

**Trustworthiness**

Lincoln and Guba (1985) proposed credibility, transferability, auditability, and confirmability for evaluation of a qualitative study in lieu of internal and external validity, reliability, and objectivity.\(^5\) I applied these concepts to my study as described in the following paragraph to ensure the rigor of my findings and conclusions.

To ensure rigor, I used memo writing throughout the transcript, took detailed field notes and recorded observations immediately following the interviews. I used academic advising, mentoring and peer debriefing, and support (PDS) to provide feedback on coding and assist with maintaining integrity, as well as to minimize bias. Field notes, memo writing, and recorded observations can serve as an audit trail to document each step taken in data collection, including “raw data” components such as memos, coding and analysis. An audit trail enhances reproducibility and another researcher can use it to verify the findings. I asked a secondary coder with extensive qualitative research experience and coding knowledge to review the codes at different stages to ensure coding consistency.

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\(^5\)Credibility refers to the degree of fit between respondents’ views and the researcher’s description and interpretations. Transferability refers to generalizability of the study’s findings (not of the sample). Auditability (or dependability) means that the study’s procedures are documented and should appear as logical to others. Confirmability is achieved by demonstrating that the study’s findings are clearly related to the data (Padgett, 2008).
Ethical Concerns

I also took care to ensure there was no coercion of consent as I was the only one administering the consent forms. It is important to consider any potential distress or emotional harm that can arise from qualitative research, such as discussion of any sensitive topics (Padgett, 2008). In the event there could be potential for any emotional distress during an interview, I planned to make an appropriate referral upon conclusion of the interview. Otherwise, there are no known physical, legal, psychological, or social risks to this study.

I was also aware of ethnic discrimination and group stigmatization, cultural sensitivity and knowledge of the group’s cultural values and traditions during research, examining my own biases. I also considered that ethnic groups that may lack familiarity with the research process and ensuring that the informed consent form was clear and understood (Fisher, 2002). Qualitative researchers must also address moral ambiguity, which can potentially happen in any study. As cited in Padgett (2008), the concept of bracketing refers to a “conscientious effort to suspend assumptions, beliefs, and feelings in order to better understand the experience of respondents” (p. 75).

Conclusion

In summary, as there are few studies about how community gardens may offer a context for immigrants and refugees to create a sense of place, especially in the field of social work, this study enhances understanding of the consequences of displacement for immigrants and refugees. The study findings operationalize and conceptualize the meaning of place and home, as well as place-making within the context of a community-based program.
As explored through participant observation, detailed field notes, and semi-structured interviews, the opportunity to create a sense of place for immigrants and refugees may be provided in community gardens and subsequently used specifically as an intervention to mitigate the consequences of displacement. In the concluding chapter that follows these narratives by gardening-participants, I will discuss how the four-dimensional model of place attachment relates to how study participants experienced and understood the concept of place in Burma, as well as how they experienced a sense of place working in the community gardening program in Philadelphia.

It is imperative that social workers are aware of the Burmese historical, political and cultural context to provide culturally competent services to this refugee population (Fike & Androff, 2016). Consequently, the findings of this study may provide support for immigrant and refugee organizations, especially social workers, to help obtain funding for community gardening programs, as well as help promote community gardening programs as culturally-sensitive interventions to mitigate the consequences of displacement. Furthermore, the findings of this study may be of interest to community organizers, community residents, social service providers, and non-profit community organizations who work with immigrants and refugees.
Chapter 4: Uprooted - Concept of Home in Burma

During the initial content analysis of 17 semi-structured interviews, I identified 63 codes, and categorized these codes into three superordinate themes: the concept of home in Burma, resettlement challenges in Philadelphia, and the benefits of the community gardening program in Philadelphia. This chapter begins with the meaning of home, first exploring how participants describe home as family, drawing on their descriptions of their relationships to and practices surrounding family, community, and the land. Using this as a foundation, I then transition to the theme of displacement from Burma (Myanmar), providing a historical context and include how study participants described displacement as insecurity, involuntary relocation, loss of home and land, transient living conditions, and prejudice against the Karen and Chin ethnic minority groups.

Home As Family

Traditional Burmese culture values family and emphasizes respect for parents and elders (Fike & Androff, 2016; Perez Murcia, 2019). With regards to place (and specifically, home), Rosbrook and Schweitzer (2010) identified three superordinate themes of home using a psychological and social perspective, as well as inclusion of the natural environment. Psychologically, study participants expressed home as a place of safety and retreat. Socially, participants described home as the relationships among family members. Finally, participants described the physical infrastructure of home as the “geographical-emotional” landscape (Rosbrook & Schweitzer, 2010, p. 159). This reference emphasizes a psychosocial paradigm of home situated within the natural environment that aforementioned studies do not focus on.
In a 2014 qualitative study, Sousa, Kemp and El-Zuhairi interviewed 32 Palestinian women, who described how political violence impacted their homes, and they identified emotions such as fear, anxiety, grief, and helplessness about the loss of home. Gurney (1997) identified different gender perspectives about home. In his qualitative study, Gurney (1997) noted that women were more likely to initially offer descriptions of home as “emotional and positive,” followed by negative accounts later. In contrast, men initially offered more “negative and instrumental” meanings of home.

Interestingly, all the gardening participants who volunteered for my study were female, except for one male. In my study, gardening participants described home with emotion and emphasized the relevance of culture and social interactions among family members. In contrast to Gurney’s (1997) assessment about how men initially offered more “negative” meanings of home, Soe Wah⁶, a 57-year old male gardening participant in my study, emphasized the positive social interactions of home, specifically commenting about how home offered the opportunity for family to live and eat together. He observed, “Home means the family lives together and eats together – it is a space to live.”

Reflecting this sentiment, Naw Gay, a 36 year-old mother of two young children, a son and a daughter, finished high school in a Thailand refugee camp after fleeing Burma. She grew up as one of eight family members in a small home, constructed of bamboo and leaves. She talked about how a home is constructed through living together, saying: “When the family lives together, the place [becomes] a home for me.” Further elaborating on this perspective, Rebecca, a 34 year-old mother, succinctly said, “Burma is . . . family . . . Home means to me is like, without

⁶All study participants created a pseudonym to maintain confidentiality.
home, you know, family, we cannot live. We cannot be together.” Zai Ta, a 40-year old female participant, also described home as a congenial place where family “stay together.” She stated, “Home means to me where family can stay together, meet together, talk together, stay together… a happy place.”

**Home as Safety, Happiness, Peace, and Freedom**

Multiple studies, including mixed methods, qualitative and a systematic review, provided evidence that gardening facilitated positive emotions, such as life satisfaction and happiness. Themes of security, happiness, and peacefulness emerged from the data, as described in the subsequent excerpts.

All elements of Raymond, Brown, and Weber’s place attachment model (2010), including place identity, place dependence, nature bonding, and social bonding, also describe the construct of home, rather than place. Home, as opposed to place, may be represented by a different set of emotions, that includes freedom, rootedness, a sense of belonging, a sense of acceptance, love, familiar landmarks, relationships with family and friends, daily social interactions, embodied experiences in daily routines, community activities, and attachment to the physical and natural environment.

**Home As Safety And Freedom**

As Albrecht, Sartore, Connor, Higginbotham, Freeman, Kelly, Stain, Tona, and Pollard (2007) suggested, a person or a landscape can offer solace. Gardening participants in my study frequently described their concept of home as including security, comfort, and rest, consistent with Sousa et al.’s (2014) findings. Intuitively, these Burmese gardening participants sought to re-create this sense of security and comfort in Philadelphia. Other refugee populations have iden-
tified safety as an integral component when re-defining home during resettlement (Rosbrook & Schweitzer, 2010; Kargin & Trix, 2021). Interestingly, many gardening participants described not feeling safe at home in Burma due to the need to flee their homes from the invasion and destruction of the military junta. Precariously built homes from natural resources in Burma led to many of the gardening participants feeling unsafe in Burma, as they were subjected to routine home invasions by the Burmese military. Although they missed their home in Burma, the gardening participants in this study expressed feelings of safety in Philadelphia, as well as a sense of belonging to the community.

Positive and strong place attachment is established through the process of routinization within the context of a secure base (Helly, Efrat, & Yosef, 2021). However, that sense of safety is threatened when there is no opportunity for the process of routinization due to political violence. Sousa et al. (2014) emphasized that "political violence threatens conventional notions of home as a safe, autonomous refuge” (p. 206). The devastating loss and destruction of Burmese homes and villages was a direct consequence of the political violence in Burma. This also explains why safety was at the forefront of the minds of study participants when asked to describe the concept of home, as reflected in the questions in the interview guide. For example, Hawi, a 28 year-old Chin female gardening participant, ascribed ideals of rest and safety to the concept of home: “Home - to me - means everything…[there] we can take a rest and we are feeling safe at that place. [There] we are not concerned about our future.”

As evident in the following interview excerpts, several other study participants also emphasized the idea of feeling safe when asked to describe their concept of home.
For instance, Say Paw, a 39-year old female participant with six children ranging in age from two to 19 years old, described the physical space of her home in Burma, family congregating within this space and experiencing peace and safety. Say Paw grew up in Burma in close proximity to the mountains with eight siblings and two parents in a small two-room home built with bamboo. She stated:

House means like a space to live, and without house, we cannot live. Yeah, so we need the house to rest, to be together with the family member, and we can come together, like peace, peaceful and safety.

Likewise, Pawla, a 33 year-old female participant emphasized shared activities within a safe space: “Like a family member live together, a safety place, gathering, eat together, stay together, yeah, safety place.”

Feeling safe inherently includes maintaining a sense of freedom from persecution. Gardening participants associated their concept of home with the notion of freedom from persecution, as illustrated in how Burmese immigrants and refugees prioritize freedom related to experiencing significant oppression and discrimination within their complex history of consistent threats to their safety. Borwick et al. (2013) noted that Karen and Chin refugees stressed that their values of independence and freedom motivated them to escape the Burmese military junta. As described in chapter one, when I interviewed my Ukrainian Jewish grandmother, she emphasized the notion of freedom in America, as one of the compelling reasons her family fled their long-established home in Ukraine in the middle of the night. Moreover, it is a universal human right to have a safe and stable home (Equality & Human Rights Commission, 2014, n.d.; Akesson & Basso, 2022).
The translator described Elna’s perspective, a 51-year old mother and female participant: Because she come home every day after work and felt *free*, and she could take a nap and she usually does the cooking and like - she’s really good at cooking - and when she cooks, she is really expressing her feelings into the meal. Like when she’s mad she really doesn’t like to do that much cooking but like she does a lot of cooking every day and it really shows that like it’s a home, you can feel free, and be with your family, feed your family, like she does.

**Happiness And Peacefulness At Home**

Study participants frequently mentioned positive emotions when asked about the concept of home, such as happiness within the context of family. Nunu, a 41-year old female participant expressed feelings of happiness, but also encouragement:

Home is like family and then what makes me happy is we work together. We share our idea and encourage each other. At bedtime we can encourage each other. When [there are] happy times, we enjoy together. That makes us a family, and this makes me happy.

Other study participants described home as a peaceful place. Elna smiled often during the interview and emphasized a lot of feeling and relationships within the family: “It’s peaceful, it’s just like a place where you can express your feelings.”

Brie, a 32-year old female participant, also described home as peaceful. While living in Burma, she stated that her father had passed away and she lived with her mother: “Home is like a peaceful place and family live together.” She also stated, “Talking during the interview made her feel happy and reminds her of home.”
Community

Given the history of close living quarters that Karen and Chin refugee populations have shared in Burma, as well as in refugee camps, the physicality of community is an integral part of daily life for this population. Evidence of these strong community bonds in the form of shared emplaced activities was reflected in the responses of study participants. The concept of community integration refers to physical, social, and psychological integration in a community (Lee, Choi, Proulx, & Cornwell, 2015). Studies show that successful integration into the community enhances the quality of life among refugees, especially the ethnically diverse groups of Burma (Fike & Androff, 2016; Lee, Choi, Proulx, & Cornwell, 2015). Evidence of these strong community bonds in the form of shared activities – rooted in place - was reflected in the responses of study participants, as consistent with the dimension of social bonding in Raymond, Brown, and Weber’s (2010) place attachment model.

Burmese immigrant and refugee populations maintain their cultural identity vis-a-vis community, family support and food within the context of gardening. Community, family support and the significance of native foods are all aligned with Raymond, Brown, and Weber’s (2010) place attachment model and its four dimensions: place identity, place dependence, nature bonding, and social bonding.

Foodways: Gardening with Family and Friends

The concept of foodways is comprised of gardening practices that are both communal and cultural, cooking, and eating together (Spivey & Lewis, 2015). As consistent with the definition

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7Physical integration refers to participation in community activities; social integration alludes to engagement and interaction with other community members; psychological integration is the evolution of a sense of belonging (as cited in Lee, Choi, Proulx, & Cornwell, 2015).
of foodways, many of the study participants, young and old alike, described shared activities at home in Burma, such as gardening, eating, and social interactions, all elements of a community. Gay, a petite, energetic and amicable 82 year-old female gardening participant stated, “We eat together and we talk together.” In particular, participants recalled sharing gardening tasks together.

Gardening participants’ narratives illustrated how not just gardening – but gardening together in a shared place with family in Burma remained a priority, even (or especially) with the challenges of frequently moving and rebuilding homes in Burma – illustrating the point that the comfort we derive from place is often dependent on the relationships that occur within that place. Say Moo, a 41-year old female participant, reminisced about how she followed her mother around when she was seven years old and helped her mother pick vegetables in their garden in Burma: “You can pick many, many [things] with your friends, your family. Actually, we don’t have – like - a market, you just go to your farm and find out whatever you want to eat, it’s uh, fresh.”

In the same way, Priscilla, a 33 year-old female Chin gardening participant, reminisced about enjoyable times gardening with her family in Burma:

We love doing a garden. Dad makes us do a garden and also the vegetables are organic and then we get organic vegetables and also no need to buy in the market and save money, and we are enjoying doing the garden.

All study participants recollected positive memories of gardening with family and friends in Burma, often with parents. Soe Wah stated:

Yeah, I really miss when I was young, I was with my parents and my parents would go
to the farm, and I’m also interest to plant, so I’m interest to plant many things, and like I remember, I enjoy things, and we can go to the jungle because it’s very close to our farm, yeah, so, I remember.”

Reflecting a similar sentiment, Nunu recalled gardening with her grandmother and aunt: “Grandma and I did a lot of watering the garden. We planted onion, basil lily, and Burmese spinach, a [special kind of] spinach. My aunt helped us to grow, too.”

Hawi described gardening with her parents, saying she would garden “with my mom and dad. My dad would prepare the ground and the soil. Then my mom and I, we did the planting.”

Nutha, a 39-year old mother with young children, also talked about gardening in the company of others, and stated, “We went to the garden with friends, and this made me happy - to be together, laughing together.”

Cultural Gardening Practices: Growing Native Foods in the Garden around Home

Gardening participants vividly recalled planting native Burmese vegetables in proximity to their homes in Burma, often close to rivers or streams and mountains. Brie recalled planting many vegetables with her mother, near the river:

More than one acre we planted around the river. My mom planted many things, rice, it depended [on] the weather, the season, and cucumber, onion, like a tomato, and green leaf, and beans, many kinds of bean, and cilantro, and eggplant… yeah, many things, because my mom loved to grow.

Say Moo also recalled planting native vegetables around her home in Burma:

I planted like a pumpkin, squash, yeah, like a little vegetable, and you know like coconut, coconut tree around our house and they had like a little, uh, farm, they had to
grow a little farm.

Nutha recalled growing rice and sugar cane in Burma, both crops that require tropical and subtropical climates. Sugar cane is a tall, “clump-forming perennial grass” native to the South-east Asian tropics used to make sugar and molasses (www.thespruce.com). It is also used for medicinal purposes to treat sore throats, snake bites, wounds, and eye discomfort. In the Karen diet, rice is eaten at every meal (Spivey & Lewis, 2015). Myanmar (Burma) is ranked as the sixth-largest rice-producing country in the world, growing rice on more than half of Myanmar’s arable land (https://rove.me). The translation of the Burmese term for eating—thamin sa—means "to eat rice" (www.vice.com). Nutha stated they harvested and cultivated rice: “Rice, a lot of rice.” The translator explained how Nutha used the sugar cane: “Okay, she explained [to] me that they make a kind of candy… they grind it and drink the juice and then they plant that, too.”

Naw Moo, a married, affable and very enthusiastic 61-year old gardening participant, referred to the peanut groves cultivated and harvested in Myanmar, the second grown crop after rice in Burma. In addition to interviewing as a gardening participant, Naw Moo tirelessly provided all the translation for the Karen study participants. She described the peanut groves: “We call it peanut grove and inside, we grow like a cucumber, so when you walk in the field, if you [are] hungry, or maybe you are thirsty, you just pick a cucumber.”

Say Paw described the mountainous landscape that surrounded her family’s home in Burma and cultivating fruit-bearing trees:

My house is near like a mountain, like a hill, so I had like a neighbor, my friend’s house is close to me, and we cannot grow vegetable around my house, but we had like a big tree, like a coconut, a coconut tree, and coffee tree, and a coconut tree and mango,
and we call like a jackfruit tree, like a big tree, a big tree, and papaya, papaya tree, and bitternut tree, bamboo, a big bamboo tree.

She also described growing “cucumber, flower, flower also, they’ve got a mix, and chili pepper and tomato and green leaf, bean, many kind of beans, many kinds.” Hawi recalled growing vegetables such as “cabbage, spinach, like Burma spinach, cilantro, garlic,” while Soe Wah grew “chili pepper and like pumpkin, cucumber, greens, and like a Karen vegetable.”

Tial, a 34 year-old mother, had limited time during the interview because her energetic young son scampered about through the house. She described growing vegetables in Burma, such as corn and beans, along with cucumber and pumpkin.

“Feeling” in the Cooking: Traditional Meals with Garden Vegetables

Elna described how cooking with vegetables from her home garden in Burma is an essential part of her life. She emphasized how much she loved cooking and expressed there is “feeling” in the cooking. During the interview, she enthusiastically shared pictures of the fruit and vegetables that she grew in Burma, including banana fruit, starfruit, corn, beets, and mint leaf. She also described the medicinal health benefits of one of the fruits as “good for medicine and cancer.”

Home as Land

In the following section, I transition from a discussion about the personal, family home to themes related to the larger geography of the land. Land - as a space close to, and indeed part of the home, is an integral part of the creation of an identity of home, and the power of home to provide solace, freedom, and cultural continuity. Gardening participants consistently ascribed meaning and value to the land in Burma during interviews. From their responses, it is clear that
study participants highly valued and considered land to be an integral component of the concept of home. Given the history of the destruction of crops and food insecurity resulting from the burning of fields by the Burmese military (Fike & Androff, 2016), it is blatantly clear that the Burmese military understood the devastating consequences of destruction of land and home for these Burmese ethnic minority groups. Studies of the destruction of homeland within political violence demonstrate the deleterious emotional consequences (Akesson & Sousa, 2019; Porteous & Smith, 2001).

**Reliance on the Land**

Multiple study participants described gardening participants’ homes in Burma as hand-built, rudimentary dwellings constructed from abundant natural resources, especially bamboo and leaves. Bamboo forests grow prolifically in Burma yielding approximately 100 species and bamboo is used in paper production (www.bioversityinternational.org).

Gardening participants provided testimonies of place dependence, as aligned with one of the dimensions in Raymond, Brown, and Weber’s (2010) place attachment model. Participants described how their very homes were built with natural resources from the surrounding land in Burma, right down to the granular detail. Naw Gay, Gay, Soe Wah, and Elna all described growing up in homes in Burma constructed of bamboo and leaves. Elna described her home in Burma built with all natural resources as compared to the construction and maintenance of her new home in Philadelphia:

The house was much bigger back then, we had a lot of space, but it wasn’t like sealed up. It was made of up of bamboo and leaves, unlike the houses here that are made out of wood [in Philadelphia], paint them over and over.
In addition to the construction of these precarious homes, Naw Gay also described her large family living in small housing quarters: “Yeah, we have eight family members in a small house. They are built of like bamboo, the roof is like a leaf.”

Naw Gay, Soe Wah, and Nunu all described how their families in Burma relied on natural resources from the land, emphasizing the centrality of siphoning water from the nearby river to irrigate the garden. Soe Wah, for instance, described how the families “farmed near the stream,” making it a highly efficient system so they could easily obtain water to use for their crops. Nunu also emphasized the accessibility of natural spring water and recounted how “they dig the ground and then the water comes out.” Naw Gay’s testimony further elaborated on this practice:

They [Burmese families] grow vegetables near the hill, when the rainy season, they go other place, in the other season, they go to the stream, the small river. In the summer time, near the small river, they plant, and they get the water from the stream.

Abundance of Land

When I asked specific questions about the gardening participants’ homes in Burma and the surrounding land, participants enthusiastically described the abundance of land around their homes, in addition to the reliance on natural resources derived from the land for building homes and gardening. On behalf of her mother, Elna’s daughter described the abundance of land in Burma, as well as at the refugee camp in Thailand:

Back in Burma, Thailand, they would have a big farm and plant anything they want and here you don’t really have that much space to plant things because you have to own your own land.
Hawi also described an abundance of land. Very interestingly, I observed that she spoke in the present tense, as if she were imagining herself there during the interview. She stated, “Behind our house we have a small garden and we plant all kind of vegetables. In the front of our home we have a lot of ground.”

**Maintaining an Agrarian Tradition in Burmese Culture**

While interviewing study participants, it was apparent that farming and gardening were long-standing generational traditions in Burma, again indicative of place dependence. Naw Moo, the translator for Elna, stated that Elna “still carries around the farming tradition from Burma and Thailand.” Naw Moo also described her mother’s similar passion for farming and gardening, as well as the vegetation growing around her home, especially the fruit grown in the tropical climate of Burma:

Oh, my home in Burma, yeah, around my house, we had mango, mango tree, and because my mom loved to grow everything, I mean, flower, many flower, my mother loved flower, in the yard, we have vegetable depend on the season, and I can remember some kind of a bean, I cannot find it here, in Burma, we can get fruit every season, really big, you can climb also, and my mother liked to grow, like I’m like a farmer, all my life, I do like a farmer thing, so I interest to grow things.

For Naw Moo, memories of farming dated back to childhood. Farming was not a choice or a hobby - it was a means of survival:

Yeah, we got fresh vegetable, and yeah, and simply, we have to go to the field, because we need to survive and we need to get money for that, so even though the weather hard and after school, we had to go to the field, not farmer, I don’t know how to say, because
we had to rent the space, like a bike, we ride the bike maybe around a half hour, around like yeah, I will say one hour, we ride there, and yeah we have to work, and after we come home, like that, yeah, from the farm to the house.

**Displacement, Domicide, and Grief**

Having described the positive aspects of home and place, I turn to my analyses of the experience and emotional consequences of displacement, as described by the participants in my study. As defined in chapter one, domicide refers to the “deliberate destruction of home against the will of the home dweller” (Porteous & Smith, 2001, p. 3) and can be “one of the deepest wounds to one’s identity and self-esteem” (Porteous & Smith, 2001, p. 5). My data revealed the anguish and longing that other studies of displacement have found, especially for older adults (Li, Hodgetts, & Ho, 2010). For older adults, the transition to a new country can be an especially disrupting experience, evoking a sense of loss (Li et al., 2010).

The country of Burma is a Southeast Asian nation, populated by 54.5 million individuals, bordering the countries of India, Bangladesh, China, Laos, and Thailand. It is a multi-ethnic country with over 100 distinctive ethnic group identities. The majority ethnic group is Burman or Bamar, which comprises 68 percent of the country’s 55 million people. The largest ethnic minority groups are Shan (9 percent), Karen (7 percent), Arakanese (Rakhine; 4 percent), and Mon (2 percent) (CIA, 2013). Smaller (minority) indigenous ethnic groups including the Shan, Rohingya, Arakanese, (Rakhine), Kachin, Chin, and Mon, comprise approximately 30 percent of the population (Borwick, Schweitzer, Brough, Vromans, & Shakespeare-Finch, 2013).

As consistent with the United States and other Western governments, this study refers to the participants’ home country as Burma instead of Myanmar (officially changed to the Republic
of Myanmar in 1989) (Spivey & Lewis, 2015; Fike & Androff, 2016). Many refugees continue to refer to their home country as Burma, as an act of resistance against the military junta. Approximately 90,000 Burmese refugees comprise the largest group of refugees resettling in the United States in the last decade or 19% of the total refugee population (Fike & Androff, 2016). One of every three refugees admitted to the United States in 2011 migrated from Burma (United States Census Bureau, 2012). Between 2009-2019, 2,827 Burmese refugees settled in Pennsylvania (www.dhs.pa.gov).

The roots of this displacement crisis can be partially attributed to the British colonization of Burma (1824-1948), when Burma was conquered and dominated by the British Empire in Asia, resulting in ethnic and political conflict among the ethnically diverse Burmese population (Fike & Androff, 2016). Since Burma was granted independence from Britain in 1948, ethnic minority groups have fought for increased autonomy or secession of their regions (Borwick, Schweitzer, Brough, Vromans, & Shakespeare-Finch, 2013). In 1988, a pro-democracy uprising against the military junta provoked bloodshed and turmoil in Burma and ethnic minority groups, such as the Karen and Chin, fled to camps on the Thai-Burmese borders (Cardozo, Talley, Burton, & Crawford, 2004). In response to the fighting with ethnic minority groups, Burmese rulers forcibly relocated entire villages to destroy the support network of the resistance groups in 1995 and 1996 (Cardozo, Talley, Burton, & Crawford, 2004). Consequently, over one million people have been displaced within and from Burma, including almost 400,000 internally displaced people within the country (Fike & Androff, 2016).

As of the time of this writing, approximately 15,000 people, including many terrified farmers and their families, have fled Myanmar into the jungles to hide or to neighboring India to
escape the Tatmadaw, the Myanmar military, who ousted Myanmar’s elected government this past February. The Tatmadaw are bombing and destroying the villages and homes of the People’s Defense Force, a coalition of armed civilian ethnic minorities, who resisted the Tatmadaw’s coup against the elected government. In Chin State, in northwest Myanmar, approximately 12,000 people have fled their homes. Activists believe that the Tatmadaw targeted Chin State, home of the Chin National Front, the first ethnic armed group to support the National Unity Government, the organization founded by Myanmar’s expelled elected leaders (Lee Wee, 2021).

**Displacement as a Tool of Violence**

Fullilove (1996) emphasized the relevance of social reintegration and stated that “marginalization and intergroup hatred can derail the orderly stabilization of displaced people; in many instances it is such hatred that caused the displacement” (p. 1522). The prejudice against the Karen and Chin began in 1948 when the Burmese achieved independence from the British. The Burmese, the ethnic majority, fought for control and domination over the ethnic minority groups, such as Karen and Chin. Gay did not elaborate in detail, but asserted that the “Burmese attacked Karen people.” Gay also described the involuntary transition of Karen to the status of refugees and a forced displacement to Thailand border camps: “So many Karen become refugees, they flee and they move into the camp, the Thailand border camp.”

Forced displacement, whether to refugee camps or other places, includes substantial trauma and persecution. From refugee camps, many refugees transition again as they are resettled to a third host country (Spivey & Lewis, 2015). Many of the gardening participants I interviewed lived-in refugee camps along the Thailand border and eventually resettled in Philadelphia, and their narratives revealed multiple layers of complexity. In particular, as participants
described living in peril, with constant threats to their safety and well-being from the military junta, and fleeing their homes without notice, it was not surprising that participants often cited safety when asked to describe their concept of home. Gay described fleeing from home and living in the jungle when the military attacked her village:

Yeah, only a few day, you can go back to your village, and the army attacked the village you have to flee, you had to flee, so stay in jungle, so they travel in the jungle, even they give birth in the jungle.

Gay also described living under a tree in the jungle, followed by a forced relocation to a Thailand refugee camp:

Often, we had to move, so we don’t have time to stay at home, yeah, in the jungle, more of the time in the jungle, so actually, I live under the tree, not home. So many Karen become refugees, they flee and they move into the camp, the Thailand border camp.

Soe Wah age 57, expressed deep sorrow when describing the loss of his land in (and the impossibility of return to) Burma: “I really miss my land. I cannot go back.” Reflecting the same sentiment, Naw Moo, age 61, lamented, “Oh my God, I miss my home, oh my God.”

Say Moo, a 41 year-old female Karen participant, appeared tired, often rubbing her eyes. This interview began on a more somber note, when Say Moo mentioned her family had to flee their home because of a civil war. Say Moo frequently interacted with her grandmother, increasing the challenge of listening to the translator, who spoke English with a heavy Karen accent. Although it was difficult to understand her at times, the Karen translator was proficient, professional, and competent.
Despite having to often rebuild homes in Burma, gardening remained a priority for this gardening participant and her grandmother. The participant’s grandmother also participated in the community garden and she appeared much younger than her stated years. She listened intently to the interview and chimed in, enthusiastically talking about their home in Burma and shared pictures of their home and garden in Burma. Say Moo described a persistent lack of safety at home in Burma because of the civil war, recalling constant movement and flight, as well as the embodied experience: “Yeah, most of the time we have to move, we have to flee because of civil war; so, no safety.”

With such a transient nature of home, Say Moo’s narrative revealed the necessity of protection sought from other resources, such as from animals. This participant asserted that there was “…like ah, no safety, so they had to like protect, like with an animal or something.”

Pawla described feeling unsafe within the physical infrastructure of their home constructed from natural resources:

We had like a house – not big, made with bamboo, and it’s like a leaf, like not strong enough, I mean not safety, we had to build each year, one year, every one year, we had to rebuild. So, right now, when I’m thinking, I’m scared.

Forced displacement from home, rudimentary construction of natural resources such as bamboo and leaves and an agrarian lifestyle, provoked nomadic living situations for these gardening participants in Burma. Gardening participants described precarious housing conditions as homes were typically constructed with bamboo and leaves. Other gardening participants fled their homes to live in the jungle when the Burmese military destroyed their villages. As Tuan (1974) stated, “To be forcibly evicted from one’s home and neighborhood is to be stripped of a
sheathing, which in its familiarity protects the human being from the bewilderments of the outside world” (p. 99).

Due to forced displacement by the Burmese military, gardening participants experienced transient living conditions due to frequent re-location and re-building of their homes. Say Moo described frustrating and transient living conditions and stated, "Every two years we have to build a house.” Tial described rudimentary dwellings, “They didn’t spend a lot of money for home, but it’s like home but it’s like – how we call? – it’s like a tent.” Such transient living conditions impacted education for gardening participants. Naw Gay was not able to finish high school in Burma. She completed high school in the Thailand border camp. The translator stated, “She [Naw Gay] finished [high school] in the refugee camp.”

**Conclusion**

In this first superordinate theme of the concept of home, gardening participants provided narratives of their perception of home as related to their home country of Burma. Application of Raymond, Brown, and Weber’s four-dimensional, three-pole place attachment model (2010) to the notion of the concept of home as a special kind of place, facilitates the understanding of the complexity and meaning of place attachment. Understanding home, as a particularly significant type of place allows us to use the place attachment model to better conceptualize the particular kinds of distress and grief expressed by those who are forced to relocate, as their emotional bonds to the holding space of the home are severed (Scannell & Gifford, 2010).

To reiterate the definition of *place attachment*, it is a deep psychological association or a bond, with a particular geographic region (urban or rural), a specific locale, or a particular place that holds significant meaning (Fredrickson & Anderson, 1999; Scannell & Gifford, 2010; Man-
zo, 2003; Altman & Low, 1992; Fullilove, 1996). In my interviews, the narratives of gardening participants illustrated the depths of their place attachment to Burma, and their expressions of grief and loss underscored statements about missing home and the land, including vivid descriptions of the landscape. Altman and Low (1992) asserted that place attachment may provide a sense of ongoing security and foster group, community and cultural identity. Therefore, as discussed in chapter one, there is perhaps an instinctual desire for re-creation of place (in this case, home) or place-making (Sampson & Gifford, 2010; Easthope, 2004; Turton, 2005) to maintain community and cultural identity, as well as provide security.

Considering the description of place dependence, one of the four dimensions illustrated in the conceptual model developed by Raymond et al. (2010) (see Figure 1), these gardening participants portrayed their reliance on the land for natural resources to build their homes, as well as for water and soil to farm and garden. Many of the gardening participants described place identity, exemplified by their memories of gardening with family and nostalgia for Burma. Examples of nature bonding are illustrated in study participants’ responses about their connections to and with the land they describe as home, evident in their vivid descriptions of intimate landscapes. Finally, social bonding is evident in their description of communal activities in their homeland, such as eating, cooking, and gardening together.

In the following findings presented in chapters five and six, I discuss resettlement challenges in Philadelphia for these Burmese gardening participants, viewing re-settlement vis-à-vis the framework of Raymond, Brown, and Weber’s (2010) place attachment model.
Chapter 5: Re-Rooted - Resettlement Challenges in Philadelphia

Turton (2005) stated that “displacement is not just about the loss of place, but also about the struggle to make a place in the world, where meaningful action and shared understanding is possible” (p. 258). Malkki (1995) observed that displacement is the flip side of emplacement. The community garden in Philadelphia represents not only resettlement for these gardening participants, but also reflects the process of emplacement (Turton, 2005). Emplacement refers to how refugees create meaning in the site of resettlement through recounting stories of their place of origin and the re-creation of familiar features from the former place including familiar objects and mementos (Turton, 2005). In this case, familiar objects and mementos are the Burmese vegetables and herbs that gardening participants planted in the community garden in Philadelphia. This process of relocation is also often characterized by attempting to re-establish a meaningful pattern of relationships with both place and people (Mazumdar et al., 2000). Moreover, place attachment "emerges through personal experience with the environment” (Clarke, Murphy, & Lorenzoni, 2018, p. 81), as aligned with the dimension of nature bonding in Raymond, Brown, and Weber’s (2010) place attachment model.

As I will demonstrate in the presentation of my analysis, these Karen and Chin gardening participants desired to recover a meaningful pattern of relationships with both the natural environment in Philadelphia and its community residents, through personal experience. Not only were these Karen and Chin gardeners displaced from their homes in Burma, they encountered resistance from hostile community residents while gardening in Philadelphia, just as they did in Burma. Through my analysis, it gradually became evident that the gardening participants I inter-
viewed fought against not only their histories of trauma, but also present day adversity and oppression as they established a new place - and new homes.

The findings in this chapter illustrate the struggle of the gardening participants to re-create a place (and for some participants, a home) in the community garden program in Philadelphia. With great fortitude, they sought to do this in a way using meaningful action and collaboration. As stated in the first chapter of this paper, the French philosopher, Simone Weil, stated that *rootedness* in a place is the most relevant and least recognized need of the human soul.

In this chapter, I provide a description of my analysis of how these 17 study participants perceived resettlement challenges in Philadelphia. Chapter five begins with how the Burmese initially experienced prejudice in Philadelphia (similar to what they experienced in Burma), conflicts with hostile community residents, language barriers, and nostalgia. The chapter concludes with how the gardening participants adapted to a different way of gardening in Philadelphia.

I also provide a brief description of the legal process to preserve land for the community garden in Philadelphia, which serves as an overall example of place attachment, especially the dimension of nature bonding in Raymond, Brown, and Weber’s (2010) place attachment model. As described in the findings from chapter four, the topic of land once again resurfaces and becomes increasingly significant for these gardening participants. The desire for emplacement inspired these gardening participants to re-create place in Philadelphia, despite the resettlement challenges. Furthermore, study participants provided examples of the components of the place attachment model.
Determination to Re-Root in Philadelphia

The narrative of gardening participants in these interviews reflect ardent desires literally to plant roots in Philadelphia, their new place or home, as evident in their persistent attempts to advocate for land preservation for the garden and stewardship of the garden (watering, weeding, harvesting, etc). Initially in the community garden in Philadelphia, gardening participants did not always experience security, comfort, and rest, and they were met by some hostile behaviors of some community residents, who vandalized and stole vegetables from their garden. Not only did the Karen and Chin experience prejudice, racism, and oppression in Burma, but a couple of gardening participants described examples of racism from the community residents in Philadelphia.

In their re-creation of place, gardening participants described examples of racism from the community residents in Philadelphia and the ways they mobilized place to counter these experiences – similar to the place-based assaults of the Karen and Chin populations that collided with experiences of prejudice, racism, and oppression in Burma. For example, Naw Moo noted bullying behavior from the community residents and stated, “People don’t respect like, they bully, they try to bully us.” As with Naw Moo, Elna’s daughter described Elna’s experience of prejudice directed toward the Karen and Chin groups from community residents. Yet, she also explained how she felt welcome in the gardening program hosted by SEAMAAC. Elna’s daughter stated:

You guys bought the land, created the land for the gardening, and to her, she just felt welcome because not a lot of people are like that to us because of our race and stuff. We don’t really feel welcome by a lot of people and like to have you guys like welcome her into the gardening community, she just felt like it was peaceful, that she had people that
liked um, us for us.

This hospitality on behalf of the refugee organization likely facilitated attachment to place, as well as a sense of belonging and acceptance. With the assistance of the refugee organization, these gardening participants re-created place and transformed mundane spaces that provided solace, forging as Fanon asserted, power in the local, or what he termed “the extraordinary productiveness” of local organizing efforts (Fanon, 1963, p. 11). Indeed, gardening participants utilized the creative place of the gardens, which existed within and alongside the organizations, to build power and resistance against oppression. They organized and communicated their concerns to the program director. In turn, the program director provided them with emotional support and worked to build a positive community, by inviting community residents to join the community gardening program. Although this invitation did not entice many of the community residents to join the garden, the hostile behavior gradually ceased, especially when one of the most antagonistic community residents died.

Interestingly, however, these gardening participants did not tolerate rejection. They endured exclusion and forced displacement from their homes in Burma. During resettlement in Philadelphia while trying to re-create place, they once again met with resistance and exclusion. Exclusion is another typical stressor that migrant populations experience, potentially affecting their self-esteem (Kargin & Trix, 2021), and therefore, overall well-being. These gardening participants exhibited such fortitude, despite the opposition they experienced from some Philadelphia community residents, to re-create a place - or a home - by literally planting roots in the Philadelphia community garden. Such fortitude, or resilience, helped to overcome this exclusionary behavior exhibited by some Philadelphia community residents.
Place and Conflict

Joel Arnold, the program director of SEAMAAC, described how gardening participants experienced hostility from some of the neighborhood residents, including denial of access to water, consequently provoking fear in the gardening participants (J. Arnold, personal communication, July 5, 2021). Community gardening participants described how some of the community residents in the neighborhood intimidated and prevented them from getting water. Pawla, a 33-year-old female Karen gardening participant stated, “…like some problems of water, you cannot get no water, and before we had to scare and we had to afraid people out, so our garden not safety.” Brie described feeling fearful around some of the community residents and afraid to access the water: “Only by the neighbor, sometimes, the guy around the garden, so we scared to go, and the water, we don’t get enough water, and sometimes the people throw trash to our garden.” Elna described how community residents contaminated the water with dirt: “Last year there were problems with the water, like people just put like dirt or anything in the water.”

Arnold acknowledged that it had been challenging to mediate the conflictual relationships with community residents, who often were intoxicated and vandalized the garden, such as throwing bottles and other trash into the plants. The intoxicated Philadelphia community residents who restricted access to water elicited fear and insecurity in the gardening participants, analogous to the fear and insecurity that the Karen and Chin experienced by the military junta. Naw Moo described feeling confused about how intoxicated community residents communicated with the gardening participants:

Yeah, and because when they drunk, they don’t know, so that’s why sometimes they say nice people, and the next time they look at you like who you are, I don’t know you. Their
mind changed, so not normal people. So, only like we try to ask for me, it’s like a challenge to continue to do or not, so I really think about, it really made me scared, the thing.

Along the same lines, Soe Wah also observed the intoxicated behavior of community residents loitering around the garden and noted:

The one thing I notice about the people is they drunk, so maybe they don’t know they are doing things, so maybe they throw things, not in their minds, because not good people, only like a drunken people and they hang out there and throw the stuff in our garden.

Just as these gardening participants feared the Burmese military junta, they now feared some of their new Philadelphia neighbors. Naw Moo described a “leader” of the community residents whom the gardening residents feared:

Yeah, but I feel better when he pass away because he’s like the leader and he brought many people drunk, and they hang out there, they shout, they yell, the curse word they’re using, but he not there, but this year, we don’t know, because like his friend is still, so we have to be careful about that one.

Brie mentioned that she only felt safe going to the community gardening site with several other gardeners: “To this day, I cannot go alone because I have to go with a group, I’m scared, like two, three people, yeah, we call each other and we go together.” Soe Wah also stated that he felt fearful: “Yeah, in the past, I’m really scared to go because I have many problems, and we see many problems, and no safety, but now, okay.”
In another example of how the refugee organization helped these gardening participants re-create place attachment, Naw Moo described how the program director helped them alleviate some fears of community residents. Arnold attempted to facilitate cohesion in the community by knocking on doors, introducing the organization and offering gardening space. He also hosted a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the gardening program and invited all community residents to build community cohesion and social interactions. Pejic, Alvarado, Hess, and Groark (2017) recommended that community leaders (e.g., director of a refugee organization) engage with refugee families, because of their frequent interactions and knowledge from working directly with refugee populations. Naw Moo stated:

Yeah, I mean, many of us right now get better when SEAMACC helped us, it got better, a little, but we still like scared because we have the experience before right, so we scared to go to the garden. Every summer, so let’s see this year, I don’t know.

Gardening participants expressed visceral reactions when some community residents vandalized the garden and stole vegetables. Say Paw stated, “I’m so sad when some people and neighbor throw trash to my garden so my vegetable and my plant are broken, so I’m so sad.”

Soe Wah recollected in bewilderment how some community residents littered the garden with trash and ripped vegetables from the ground:

They broken like our gate, our vegetable, and they throw a tomato, and they pull out our plant, like the vegetable plant, and they pull out the flower we grow there, also. I don’t know exactly why they did like that, but I can see like cat poop, they throw, they had other things they throw to our garden, they throw yucky things, like things that smell, they throw to our garden. I don’t know exactly why they did like that.
Of note, Nunu had a different perspective. Although the vandalism bothered her, she also expressed feeling that some community residents could benefit from eating their vegetables:

People who do not belong in the garden just can come in and out. They take that does not belong to them. I look at the other way, you know people who come, I said they do not belong, but it’s good, it’s still good for them because they don’t have. They eat our vegetables without asking. That is a benefit of doing, so it’s still good, you know.

Language barriers were yet another barrier to overcome during resettlement in the Philadelphia region, as demonstrated in other studies, where participants who immigrated to an English-speaking country experienced a disruption of daily activities, social networks and social isolation due to language barriers (Li, Hodgetts, and Ho, 2010). Language barriers can preclude adaptation and impact transition to the new host country (Keyes & Kane, 2004). Experiencing language barriers can also impact well-being (Kargin & Trix, 2021). Moreover, preservation of one’s native language helps maintain ties to a homeland (Hua & Wei, 2019). For example, Soe Wah described a negative encounter with a community resident:

Yeah, one time, I had a bad experience, I don’t know the language, but he show me, I can show you, and he pointed to my chest with a finger, he pointed a finger, so I don’t understand what happened, I don’t know.

Pawla recalled another negative encounter with community residents: “You cannot speak English, there are too many big problem.”

Language barriers also existed between the Karen and Chin groups as these are two different dialects. These were not described as negative encounters, but rather as miscommunication
that occurred in the garden when Karen and Chin groups gardened together. Naw Moo succinctly explained it:

We have many good dialects in there, because people are from different country, so we pick out and weed, the other group say vegetable, so we pick out and weed. So funny. And, the language problem, and they don’t know how to communicate each other, and the other vegetable grow in the space, the other people thought were weeds and pull out. Oh, problems, we had problems. So, actually, only like they want to help each other, not that way, like totally misunderstand, something like that. So, Adam (program director at another organization) had to divide, okay, this one Karen group, okay, this one Burmese group.

Nostalgia

Nostalgia is likely to be experienced by Indigenous and refugee populations who have been forcibly displaced from their native lands (Albrecht, Sartore, Connor, Higginbotham, Freeman, Kelly, Stain, Tonna, & Pollard, 2007). The aforementioned prejudice, conflicts with community residents and language barriers experienced by these gardeners likely contributed to feeling ostracized and socially isolated, perhaps invoking nostalgia. Albrecht, Sartore, Connor, Higginbotham, Freeman, Kelly, Stain, Tonna, and Pollard (2007) stated that nostalgia was previously conceptualized as a “diagnosable illness associated with melancholia and experienced by people who were distant from their home and wanted to return” (p. S96). However, I contend that nostalgia is not necessarily a negative consequence. Nostalgia is inevitable for most human beings. Perhaps we should consider how positive memories of a place or home, or longing for that place or home, might serve to motivate one to re-create a similar place or home during resettlement.
Gardening participants often expressed that participating in the community garden in Philadelphia triggered feelings of nostalgia for their home in Burma, as well as gardening in Burma. Sometimes their responses were prompted by specific interview questions (see Appendix D), such as “If you previously gardened or farmed at home, how does the garden remind you of practices related to your country of origin?” Another question that might have solicited a nostalgic response was, “Did you farm or garden in your homeland? What did you grow in your homeland?” Other times, such responses were completely unsolicited. Participants also expressed missing the landscape in Burma.

**Nostalgia for the Land in Burma**

Gardening participants expressed feelings of nostalgia for the land. Naw Gay observed a Philadelphia landscape that elicited memories of home in Burma:

-One day I went to the airport, near the airport, they had land and they plant similar to our country, so it made me remember home, also. They had there a field, so like a big space. Yeah, she remember, and that’s why I miss my home town, my home place, so that’s why my family and me we have to go to other town, we have similar there, you can see mountain, hill, and tree, and stream there.

Nutha commented favorably about the Philadelphia community garden, but lamented about missing the land in Burma: “It’s really good for us, we can plant a lot of vegetables…and then I wish we have a big land with a big land in our home.”

Brie further elaborated on Nutha’s nostalgia for the land. She described how visiting other community gardens evoked feelings of nostalgia for home in Burma, especially the topography:
We visit other locations so we can see other people growing things, and like at the one location we went, really made me miss home because they had like a small stream and a hill and the big tree and the garden, so yeah. Yeah, similar, like my hometown, so I’m really happy there also.

Kargin and Trix (2021) contend that most refugees maintain a desire ultimately to return to their homeland. Post-migration, they try to cope with the negative and positive memories of their homes of origin. In my perspective, while wistfully remembering one’s homeland, refugees might be able to use positive memories to facilitate place attachment to the area of resettlement. Hence, this nostalgia, a repository of memories, can serve as a coping skill for the feelings of longing and grief for the loss of the homeland left behind. Moreover, the overall feelings of increased safety, security, and stability in Philadelphia (e.g., solid construction of homes, staying “rooted” - literally, with the garden, not living in constant fear of the military junta) might transcend nostalgia. Bosnian refugees experienced loneliness, grief, and nostalgia, but they did not feel any regret leaving their homes as they left behind the fear of death for a safer life in a resettlement region (Keyes & Kane, 2004).

Say Moo also described missing the topography in Burma including natural resources, such as spring water:

So, like many things, memory of our country, because um, we can pick many vegetable and everything like natural, like a lot, like the space, like very large, so, you can pick many, many with your friend, your family. Actually, we don’t have like a market, so just go to your farm and find out whatever you want to eat, it’s uh, fresh. Better than U.S. U.S. water not taste. Less taste. Maybe (all laugh and grandmother talks more). Spring
natural water tastes different.

Although the topography in Philadelphia, natural resources and climate are different in Philadelphia, these gardening participants can still maintain the embodied ritual of gardening practices in Philadelphia. Although the landscape has changed, the opportunity for spatial routinization, an integral part of place attachment and home-making, and maintenance of these agrarian practices, can help facilitate a positive transition and adaptation to the new area of resettlement. Therefore, it is the maintenance of cultural traditions that is essential during and after resettlement that contributes to the concept of continuity maintenance.

Elna’s daughter also explained that Elna missed planting native fruit in Burma, such as bananas, that cannot be planted in Philadelphia because of the climate. Smiling broadly, Elna enthusiastically shared pictures of their rudimentary home in Burma constructed from bamboo and leaves, surrounded by mountains, fruit trees, and plants. Elna’s daughter stated, “She really misses planting with her friends, gardening a lot of stuff that we don’t really garden here, like planting a banana tree right in front of your house.”

In similar fashion, Soe Wah’s narrative wove together the act of planting and place attachment. He remarked that the Philadelphia community garden evoked memories for him of gardening in Burma:

Yeah, it’s like when I went there, it made me remember family, and when I was young, yeah, I go with my parents, I plant many things, and the vegetables are similar, so that’s why it remind me to my old land.
Gardening in Philadelphia Evokes Memories of Gardening at Home in Burma

According to my analysis of the narratives of these gardening participants, gardening in Philadelphia evoked positive memories of home in Burma, as well as elicited some negative memories related to forced displacement. However, our minds hold a repository of memories, both positive and negative, that comprise, influence, and shape who we are. These memories are etched indelibly in our minds and cannot be eradicated. When understood within critical theories of place, nostalgia is a concept that is at once inevitable and also highly dependent on our response to it. As an example of the positive benefits of nostalgia, nostalgia aids self-continuity (the perceived connection between one’s past and present) and increases perceptions of life as meaningful (Wildschut, Sedikides, & Alowidy, 2019). Furthermore, researchers have found that nostalgia increases self-esteem and social connectedness for resilient individuals (Wildschut, Sedikides, & Alowidy, 2019), subsequently contributing to enhanced well-being. Conversely, they found that individuals with low resilience experience nostalgia differently, whereas nostalgia can decrease inspiration and optimism.

Pawla exhibited resilience and reminisced positively about home in Burma while working in the Philadelphia community garden:

Yeah, when we’re gathering, we’re talking about our garden things and we plan, because small space, so we try to organize and we share, and the one thing, the garden is very helpful, support our family, it save money for grocery thing, and it’s good for we get fresh and is different also, and the gardener thing make us remember our home.

Furthermore, she underscored that planting and eating native Burmese vegetables in the Philadelphia community garden elicited memories of their home in Burma:
So, the thing, like we plant, is not American plant, American vegetable, we plant like our country, and we feel like we’re thinking about that country and the taste also and we can see the plant also, everything like similar.

The Karen translator also elaborated on Pawla’s thoughts, further affirming how the Philadelphia community garden feels like home because they are maintaining their agrarian tradition from Burma:

So they love to go to the garden every day, every morning. In the past, they used to do the garden, so that’s why here the garden is like helpful for them, the feeling. It feel like home.

Brie described missing Burma, but her response also clearly reflected the concepts of social bonding, place dependence, place identity, and nature bonding as identified in Raymond, Brown, and Weber’s conceptual model of place attachment (2010) (see Figure 1). Regarding social bonding, Brie emphasized the community garden is also “a community place,” and “we love to be there because we see each other.” The Karen translator elaborated, and the elaboration highlighted the importance of self-efficacy, as people re-created their attachment to place. For instance, in this interview, Brie emphasized that the gardening is important because in that way, “I get the vegetables I want, the color I want – from my country.” This statement provides evidence that gardening provides not only emotional solace and comfort in the constancy of home, but also a sense of power as people can choose to grow food they want – ones that specifically re-orient themselves to their home.

With regards to place attachment, Brie stated: “When I’m in the garden – walking, planting, weeding, harvesting… those moments make me remember home…it’s like my hometown –
right?” In this narrative, she expressed the emotional relief and joy in re-creating place or home again – native foods – those that remind them of home, saying that they thought at first that when they went to the United States they would not be able to grow their traditional crops, but that she is “so happy” they have this chance, even in a small space, because, as she put it, “it reminds us [of] our hometown.”

Despite the small space of the community garden program, Naw Gay also recalled memories of gardening at home in Burma while planting in the Philadelphia community garden:

I get many benefit from that, because even though like a small space, when I see the flower and I see the vegetable, it is similar to when I was young, the plant is similar, so I remember when I was young, we enjoy, so I want to be there, because even though small, small space, little, I like to be there.

Furthermore, she stated, “In my garden, I have vegetables, something like that, so I can pick them fresh, and I can cook fresh, make them like when I was young like in my village, so I feel like I miss home.”

Say Moo also provided testimony that gardening in Philadelphia reminded her of gardening at home and missing her country of Burma: “Yes, at the same time, like when I watch, like, uh, my plants growing, I miss my country, also, all the plants I plant here are similar in the Burma, so Amy, I’m like in the past.”

When asked about the topics of conversation in the garden, Say Moo stated that she and her friends and family talked about gardening, but also discussed how they missed their
home country of Burma and harbored a desire to visit their home country again: “Yes, most talk-
ing about the gardener things and like, I miss home, and say if we can stay in our home town, it’s
gonna be good. And they want to go visit. Something like, ‘I want to go back to my home town.’”

Elna’s daughter stated that gardening in the community garden in Philadelphia evoked memories
of nostalgia for her home country of Burma. Elna’s daughter stated, "Like when she’s gardening
with people, too, like our neighbors. It just gives her like the feeling that she like really misses
her country.”

Gay also shared similar feelings of nostalgia for Burma while gardening in Philadelphia:
“Yeah, it’s like everything I do, I plant, I clean, every activity I do at the garden make me
remember my hometown in my country because it is similar to do, so that’s why.”

Naw Moo reminisced about gardening at home in Burma and how appreciative she was
of the accessibility to natural resources in Burma. She concluded her comment noting that plant-
ing native Burmese vegetables in the Philadelphia community garden reminded her of home:
Yeah, happy, so maybe we feel like home, and we feel like back country, we remember,
oh, when we go to the garden and thing, and we talking, and we have like a natural,
everything natural, we don’t need to gather water, to put the pipe, we don’t need to worry
about that, because you have the fresh, we have to take water from the stream, or maybe
water from the well, yeah, so you get fresh, and from the rain, yeah. Yeah, so, and when
we start like a vegetable from our country, you feel like at home.

Say Paw also observed that planting native Burmese vegetables in the Philadelphia com-
munity garden reminded her of home in Burma: “Yeah, everything I do and my gardening thing,
yeah, make me remember like my hometown, and when I saw the seed and similar vegetable I
Adaptation to New Ways of Gardening in Philadelphia

When displaced in Burma, these gardening participants had no choice but to flee the country, without any possibility of a likely return. Once in Philadelphia, gardening participants persistently and creatively adapted to unfamiliar terrain, learning new ways of adapting to the land provided for them, consistent with the objective of *emplacement*. Turton (2005) eloquently described emplacement as “not harking back to an imagined place of origin, but forward to an imagined and *ideal* place of arrival” (p. 267). Emplacement can serve as a mechanism for place attachment. Three ways of adaptation emerged from the data: adapting to a different climate, adjusting to fewer natural resources, and transitioning to a smaller gardening space.

“We Have to Save for Winter:” Adapting to a Different Climate

Gardening participants described how they adapted to the colder climate of Philadelphia, as they were accustomed to gardening in year-round tropical weather in Burma. Several gardening participants described adapting to the colder climate by freezing vegetables and eating them over the winter, as well as learning from other gardeners about how to adjust to the colder climate. Priscilla, a 33-year old female gardening Chin participant stated, “Here we cannot do a
winter garden, so that’s why we have to save for winter.” Naw Moo, a 61-year old Karen female gardening participant stated:

In Burma, you don’t care to, I don’t know, to save the seed, to transfer something here, it’s difficult, the weather. You don’t know the weather, so how to save, you don’t know so you have to learn and visit the other, like a farm, and we learn something, and we ask the other state how they do. Yeah, but, you know, Florida, they don’t care, because stay the weather good, but here, okay, how we going to do? So, winter time, we had to carry thing [vegetables and plants] inside the house.

Furthermore, she described how gardening participants had to “clean up the garden” in the fall, an unnecessary task in Burma, as vegetables are grown year-round in the tropical climate:

Like November [in Philadelphia], you had to clean, you had to have it everything, and not only you, the whole community, the whole garden had to clean, right, no choice for that, we cannot save, so that’s why, if you have like in your backyard, maybe you can do different thing, but the weather, you cannot control the weather, too cold.

Zai Ta, a 40-year old female Chin gardening participant emphasized the relevance of freezing vegetables for the winter:

Very, very important to me because like we are growing, doing this garden about four months. In that period, whatever we garden, we grow, we put back in Ziplock and put in the freezer, and the whole winter, we don’t need to buy. We are eating from that. It’s so very, very helpful and so important to me.
Fewer natural resources

In Burma, these gardening participants benefited from the proximity of rivers and streams to access water to irrigate their gardens. In Philadelphia, gardeners described challenges of obtaining natural resources in the Philadelphia region for the garden, such as adequate soil and water. Brie, a 32-year old female Karen gardening participant, described some of these challenges:

So, yeah, I learn many things because we grow and we plant, it’s a different thing, no, it’s a different situation in my home town, we don’t need to worry, we don’t need to wait for someone turn on the water and because just go to that stream, get water, get a lot of water to make plants. Right now, I feel like I have to limit water to my plants.

Naw Gay, a 36-year old female Karen gardening participant with two young children, described a lack of access to water while gardening in the community garden in Philadelphia:

A little difficult, because in country – in my country, just go to the stream and get the water and get watering, but right now, we have to wait for someone to put out the water in the temp, so we have to wait for water, and sometimes there is no water so I cannot get watering – I cannot do watering.

Say Moo described feeling unsafe while trying to access water:

Right now, like totally different, like, and better. Like in the past, you know, in the past, we really scared to go there, not safety. And even though we want to connect water, to get water, uh, the people look and sometimes they yell and shout and say scary things. And this got, uh, like more. Uh, SEAMAAC the person, Joel, they come where we are, so there [is] more safety than before.
Smaller Gardening Space

Participants described vast swaths of land surrounded by rivers, natural spring water, and mountains in their homeland of Burma. During the interviews, gardening participants frequently mentioned they missed the “larger space” (land) in Burma. When asked about the satisfaction of gardening space provided to them in Philadelphia, study participants expressed disappointment with the smaller gardening space. Some gardening participants simply stated that the gardening beds were “small,” “it’s like a bed, not very big” and “I just wish we have a bigger and better place.” Naw Moo stated:

Because in Burma, we have like a huge – I want to say a very large space, right now, only like a small table, so oh my God, not enough to do, I want to do more, but it there, so, we can do only a few things, and very tiny, and I feel like very tight and no comfortable. I’m disappointed, a little bit, for the family, we have two kids, I have to translate for them, so we walk there, so totally different, but better than nothing, whatever we have, we grow, and like the first year, we put everything in a small square, it’s a small box, right.

Applying Raymond, Brown, and Weber’s (2010) model, adaptation to less land for gardening might make it more challenging to develop place dependence, one of the four dimensions of the model. However, these gardeners clearly adapted by planting vegetables that took up less space.

Naw Moo also described how they planted vegetables that needed less space, such as pennywort:

Pumpkin, there’s not enough space, so we share because our spot is too small, too small,
so that’s why the corner, we do like a bean and a pumpkin things come out, and our spot, usually we do onion, and like I say pennywort, pennywort is like a small thing, it go to the ground, so yeah, you can grow that like, and especially like chili, hot chili, not pepper chili, hot chili, and watercress, yeah, right now we try to do…just we try and we do, and sometimes we have to share each other, we say, ‘Okay, this year, you do this one, I do the other one,’ because small space, so we share each other like that.

Naw Gay expressed disappointment about the smaller space:

Yeah, just like me and my friend we talking about our garden…only we wish, and we want like more space also, because it’s really tight and small so you have to wait, one goes in and goes out, you have to wait your turn, yeah, because too narrow.

Naw Gay also expressed gratitude:

I get many benefit from that, because even though like a small space, when I see the flower and I see the vegetable, it is similar to when I was young, the plant is similar, so I remember when I was young, we enjoy, so I want to be there, because even though small, small space, little, I like to be there.

Other gardening participants adapted problem-solving approaches, creatively finding ways to adapt to the smaller space, aligned with the objective of emplacement. Soe Wah, a 57-year old male Karen gardening participant, discovered that he needed to plan and carefully organize his raised bed, meticulously covering it with recycled materials to protect it from the elements and pests (see Figure 5).

This determination to maintain their agrarian tradition of gardening is emblematic of re-establishing continuity with one’s place of origin, consistent with the notion of *continuity main-
in their new environment by imposing familiar imprints of old neighborhood names. Albers, Ariccio, Weiss, Dessi, and Bonaiuto (2021) posited that continuity is often achieved through place making, such as the possibility of migrants transforming private and public spaces to familiarize them and make them similar to places from their country of origin. Moreover, Albers et al. (2021) also assert that public green areas can be a setting for place making and cultural practices among migrants. Albers et al. (2021) also proposed the possibility that refugees are able to develop an affective bond with places for psychological benefit, including enhanced well-being. Similarly, in my data, continuity maintenance is demonstrated by the gardeners maintaining agrarian traditions from Burma, including the growth of native Burmese crops, in the context of the community garden in Philadelphia.

In these interviews, Soe Wah, exemplifies these constructs of emplacement and continuity maintenance of gardening in the Philadelphia community garden. For gardening participants in this study, gardening offered them an opportunity to continue with Burmese agrarian traditions in Philadelphia, therefore there was not an obvious “rupture of continuity with the place from which they had moved” (Turton, 2005, p. 275). Soe Wah stated:

Yeah, I learn from something and like the experience is a new thing for me. Before, in my country, we don’t worry and we don’t take care, we don’t need to control, we did like a farm on the ground, and we plant, and that’s it. Here, we have to control, we have to check the space and plant the seed, we had to organize things, because small space, I had to grow many things, so I had to think before I plant.
Say Paw, a 39-year old female Karen gardening participant, also described how she carefully planned her raised bed and planted vegetables that could grow vertically and be trellised, such as a pumpkin or cucumber vine:

Yeah, most of the time, we’re talking about how we’re going to create, how we’re going to do for our garden thing, because it’s a small space, so we have to organize, and we have to plant a vine, kind of like a pumpkin or a cucumber, a vine, so how to climb and how to go around, so we need like a branch, like a tree branch, and we’re talking about the gardening thing. We invite each other, we’re going to plant this day, and we’re going to weed this day, we’re going to watering, what time, so like a schedule, talking to them.

Other gardening participants described a desire for more gardening space, but adopted another problem-solving approach, such as purchasing several raised beds to plant vegetables. Nunu, a 41-year old female Chin gardening participant stated:

I understand the situation because we have to share. Everyone needs to garden a little, so understand, but you know if possible, I want a big garden. I found another location. I pay for a fee and then I did another location, but I understand the situation because we have to share, all the families. It’s not enough space, but it’s okay.

**Land Preservation for Community Gardens**

Joel Arnold (J. Arnold, personal communication, July 5, 2021) described the majority of the gardening participants as refugees. In particular, he stated that one gardener had lived in a refugee camp for 20 years. He emphasized how the Karen and Chin populations had been subjected to mistreatment by the Burmese military, including forced displacement from their homes and land. Listening to the gardening participants during the interviews, it became evident that
this population had to almost fight to re-establish their place, including a legal process to preserve the land. Ralph and Staeheli (2011) described such sociopolitical encounters as “power relations” that influence the re-creation of home for immigrants and refugees.

Arnold described the legal process to preserve the city lots for their community gardening program. Some of the city lots used for the gardening program were private and some were city-owned. In the summer of 2019, Joel Arnold attended a hearing held by the Vacant Property Review Committee about land preservation for the community gardening program. The Neighborhood Gardens Trust owned 60 percent of the city lots used for the community gardens, while Philadelphia Parks and Recreation owned the other 40 percent. The Neighborhood Gardens Trust worked with the city council to preserve the land in perpetuity for the community gardening program. The land disposition was approved, an area of land comprised of approximately three or four city lots, equivalent to about a third to a half of an acre.

Arnold emphasized the relevance of the land preservation process of the Philadelphia community gardening program for the Karen and Chin gardeners. “Land had always been taken away [from the gardeners]. We want to say to them, ‘Here’s a space for you in Philadelphia and it’s not going anywhere.’ This population is sensitive to having land taken away” (J. Arnold, personal communication, July 5, 2021). Given this statement, place attachment in the community garden becomes all the more of an intrinsic aspect of these gardeners’ well-being. The significance and value of land to these gardening participants, as well as the establishment of an emotional bond to the community garden in Philadelphia, is apparent in Rebecca’s statement:

I was so happy and then I share to another, my friend, and then that is like, without that land I cannot plant. In our house, apartment, we don’t have land, so this is
Frantz Omar Fanon (1925-1961), a French West Indian psychiatrist and political philosopher, defined decolonization as “quite simply the substitution of one ‘species’ of mankind by another” (p. 1). According to Fanon, social relationships, between the colonist and the colonized, evolve and become identified with the “physical properties of things” (Fanon, 1963), such as land. In his book, Ron J. Smith (2020), an associate professor of international relations at Bucknell University in Pennsylvania, succinctly summarized how the 1967 Israeli occupation of previously Palestinian-owned land abetted the dispossession of Palestinians to boost the Israeli economy. This acquisition of land represents wealth, an integral objective of early capitalism according to Marxist theory (Smith, 2020). Fanon emphasized the role of capitalism as related to land acquisition, but asserted that ultimately, the “colonized intellectual, pulverized by colonialist culture, will also discover the strength of the village assemblies, the power of the people’s commissions and the extraordinary productiveness of neighborhood and section committee meetings” (Fanon, p. 11).

Naw Moo, a 61-year old female Karen gardening participant fluent in English, attended the court hearing with the program director. Interestingly, individuals with stronger place attachment are likely to engage in public participatory processes (Mesch & Talmud, 2010; Bernardo, 2013). This care for the land is also indicative of the development of place dependence in Raymond et al.’s place attachment model. It might be surmised that a strong place attachment to Burma and then Philadelphia, especially the land, impelled Naw Moo to accompany the program director to court. Moreover, Mesch and Talmud (2010) concluded from their study that “place attachment sentiments were strongest among individuals who perceived governance processes as
weak” (p. 87). Given the history of the conflict between Burmese civilians and the military junta, it can be inferred that Burmese civilians likely perceived the military junta as weak. For Naw Moo, participating in such a process as advocating for the land preservation of the garden in Philadelphia, correlated with the strength of her place attachment. Naw Moo described feeling anxious during the experience. Naw Moo said:

> I really scared to communicate with the people, and we had to go to like the court at the City Hall for our garden, we had to show up, yeah, because they fighting for our land, so that’s why we had to go, we had to show up there.

Naw Moo further described her experience at the hearing:

> I just listened, we had a lawyer. Yeah, and we had to show a jury also, so oh my God, it was the first time to go to court. I never have an experience like that, so okay, anyway, I just show up, and they say don’t worry, don’t be scared, so Joel can come with me, so okay, I going to go with you, no worries.

Through the narratives of these gardening participants, it became apparent that they had a place attachment to this community garden, because they fought and advocated for support to maintain their community gardening program, therefore establishing and defending a place, and for some, a home, in Philadelphia. In so doing, they not only re-created, but also nurtured place attachment as evidenced by their fervent devotion to maintaining the garden, concomitant with their cultural traditions and values.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, gardening participants described resettlement challenges in the community gardening program in Philadelphia, including adapting to new ways of gardening in Phil-
adelphia with regard to a different climate and a small gardening space, advocacy efforts for land preservation for the community gardening program, conflicts with hostile community residents, language barriers, and prejudice against the Karen and Chin in Philadelphia. These resettlement challenges did not deter the gardeners and they adapted in a variety of ways as evidenced by their narratives with persistence and resilience in the face of adversity and nostalgia, using creative approaches, and collaborating with one another. Gardening participants continued to garden, despite confrontations with hostile community residents who also vandalized the garden. With assistance from a supportive program director, they overcame language barriers, conflicts with hostile community residents, and prejudice from community residents.

Concomitant with the four dimensions of place identity, place dependence, nature bonding, and social bonding, as proposed in the place attachment model by Raymond et al. (2010), participants’ narratives highlighted how they created place attachment in the context of the community garden, Revisiting the overall notion of *place attachment*, these gardening participants developed a bond with the garden in Philadelphia, as evident in their collaboration to resist the destructive attempts of the garden by hostile community residents. One of the gardening participants clearly exhibited place attachment by attending court with the program director to preserve the land for the community garden. Consequently, place attachment may provide a sense of ongoing security and foster group, community and cultural identity (Altman & Low, 1992), aligned with the concept of *place identity* in the model conceived by Raymond et al. (2010).

As previously highlighted in the narratives of the gardening participants, having a sense of safety prevailed as a priority in their responses about fleeing from their homes in Burma. Gardening participants also exhibited *place dependence*, the extent to which a physical setting pro-
vides conditions to support an intended use, another dimension of the model conceptualized by Raymond et al. (2010). The community gardening program in Philadelphia offered gardening participants natural resources, such as soil, water and land, all of the essential elements required to maintain cultural and agrarian traditions long established in Burma. Gardening participants also exhibited *nature bonding* as experience and time spent in the community garden in Philadelphia. The community garden in Philadelphia also offered participants the setting for social interactions or *social bonding*, further described in chapter six.

As discussed at the beginning of this chapter, the notion of *emplacement* refers to how refugees create meaning in the site of resettlement through the recollection of stories of their place of origin and the re-creation of familiar features from the former place including familiar objects and mementos (Turton, 2005). In the context of the community gardening program in Philadelphia, the familiar objects and mementos are the planted Burmese vegetables and herbs.

This process of relocation is also often characterized by attempting to re-establish a meaningful pattern of relationships with both place and people (Mazumdar et al., 2000). These meaningful patterns of relationships with both place and people are exhibited by social interactions within the context of the Philadelphia community program, as described in the following chapter. The setting of the garden, as a natural environment or a therapeutic landscape such as a community gardening program that enhances well-being, will also be further described in the findings in the subsequent chapter.
Chapter 6: Planted - Benefits of the Community Gardening Program in Philadelphia

In each of my previous chapters, I applied the concepts from Raymond, Brown, and Weber’s place attachment model (2010) to analyze the benefits of the community gardening program in Philadelphia that emerged from the interviews. Here, I do the same, with a particular focus on the dominant themes of cultural preservation and well-being. Findings from this study highlight the importance of how gardeners exhibited the notion of continuity maintenance and emplacement that includes cultural preservation and experiencing a sense of belonging to place or home. The process of migration and resettlement requires that individuals preserve beliefs, cultures, and traditions (Pasura, 2019). Home is also not a fixed and static construct; rather it can be dynamic and changing, as is the situation with the displaced population (Perez Murcia, 2019; Ralph & Staeheli, 2011). Perez Murcia (2019) asserted that “people can produce new roots and remake home elsewhere; the option of returning to their communities of origin is not the only one” (p. 1518).

Consequently, these dimensions of the place attachment model, including place identity, place dependence, nature bonding, and social bonding, pave the way for cultural preservation and psychological, social, and physical well-being. Other themes that emerged from the data included saving money, receiving transitional support from SEAMAAC, developing a sense of place and stewardship for the garden.

Cultural Preservation

The aforementioned concept of emplacement (Turton, 2005) relates to how these Burmese refugees created meaning in the site of resettlement through recounting stories of their place of origin and the re-creation of familiar features from Burma, including familiar objects
and mementos (in this case, planting native Burmese food), to preserve their cultural traditions. Harris et al. (2014) stated, “The freedom to express one’s cultural identity is integral to adapting to new surroundings” (p. 9209).

During the interviews and while working in the community gardens in Philadelphia, these gardeners recounted fond memories of gardening in their place of origin, Burma. Based on inferences from the data, the gardening participants attempted to re-create familiar features in the garden that reminded them of agrarian traditions, such as planting native Burmese vegetables, cooking traditional Burmese meals with garden vegetables, and socializing together within the context of the community gardens, all aspects of their daily life in Burma.

The community garden in Philadelphia provided the opportunity to maintain Burmese cultural traditions. Also, these responses from the gardening participants provided examples of place dependence, one of the dimensions of the place attachment model. In the past in Burma, these gardening participants relied on their land in Burma for their sustenance. In Philadelphia, these gardening participants relied on the community garden to cultivate and harvest enough food, especially their native Burmese foods for ingredients to cook meals, as well as a food supply to store for the winter.

“Keeping Our Culture Alive:” Maintaining Agrarian Traditions

For the Karen, planting and harvesting their own food was an integral part of their daily routine in Burma (Spivey & Lewis, 2015). However, their gardening practices were often thwarted while living in refugee camps when guards refused to allow them to leave the camp to garden. The community garden in Philadelphia provided a context for emplacement and continu-
ity of agrarian traditions from Burma, thus using place to reconnect one’s identity across locations.

Rebecca, a 34-year old female Chin gardening participant, commented how the community garden in Philadelphia allowed her to maintain the agrarian tradition from Burma. She stated, “Bring us a memory because we are agriculture in our country too. We plant and we eat from our own garden, so that is like a culture thing to do, you know.”

Say Moo expressed gratitude to continue to maintain her agrarian roots: “Yeah, actually like I had an opportunity here to plant at the community garden, so I’m really happy to participate, and because I’m like a farmer, I love to plant.”

Many gardening participants described examples of place identity during these resettlement challenges, one of the four dimensions of Raymond, Brown, and Weber’s (2010) model. For instance, Say Moo emphasized that planting invoked feelings of home:

Yeah, uh, I tried to do like in the past, some plants, some seeds I cannot get here, I order from back in Burma, and so, I plant, I feel like a home. What we used to eat in the past.

Gichunge and Kidwaro (2014) found that gardening enabled immigrants and refugees to grow crops that reminded them of positive memories of their past agrarian lives in Africa, as well as maintain cultural and agrarian traditions. In my study, gardening participants planted native Burmese vegetables that they planted and ate in Burma. Planting native Burmese vegetables in the Philadelphia community garden bridged the connection to their past home in Burma.

Hawi observed that participating in the community garden in Philadelphia maintained their culture, aligned with the findings from Spivey and Lewis (2015):

It does remind me of the culture of our people from Burma that this community garden
keeps alive our culture. When we do gardening, then we can image that we are showing that we are keeping our culture alive.

Soe Wah elaborated about the relevance of maintaining agrarian traditions. He emphasized that farming was an inherent part of his life in Burma. Hence, he maintained this tradition in the community garden in Philadelphia: “I’m like a farmer, all my life, I do like a farmer thing, so I interest to grow things, so I participate at the community garden.”

As soon as she re-settled in Philadelphia, Zai Ta expressed a desire to continue gardening, just as she did in Burma:

In 2015 I wished like that time we arrived in the United States and I saw people have like, you know, like a garden and making, planting vegetable. I wish. I wanted to have that kind of, you know, like plant, like a garden. I asked them and then I’m able to join in. Yea. We used to do in Burma, so I want to continue that here too.

Naw Moo elaborated on the significance of maintaining Burmese agrarian traditions in Philadelphia. While she was living in Burma, she acknowledged the ample and readily accessible natural resources and native seeds, almost taking them for granted. In Philadelphia, it required very mindful and deliberate attempts to ensure continuity of these gardening traditions. Naw Moo emphasized the deliberate thought and time that it often took to find these resources in Philadelphia, but she persisted:

Yeah, you have to thinking, you have to create things, I feel like that. You have to look for the good way, and where we’re going to do, how we’re going to get. In Burma, we don’t care, right, every house, every village, you have it, you don’t care. Here, you have to find where you get the seed…I have to find a friend where we can get and where we
can save, we can make it, yeah. Yeah, last year, my mom visit me, so my mom, like was
crying, how do you do this? How do you do that? It’s like an experience, I think, we find
a way.

**Planting Native Burmese Vegetables**

Gardening participants in this study unanimously emphasized the relevance of growing
native Burmese vegetables in the Philadelphia community garden. These native vegetables in-
cluded roselle leaf, ginger, basil, beans, tomatoes, eggplant, cucumber, pumpkin, sour leaf,
cilantro, Chile peppers, and Chinese spinach. Gardening participants stated that they often could
not find Burmese vegetables in grocery stores and therefore grew Burmese vegetables in the gar-
den in Philadelphia. Pawla elaborated:

That’s why I’m glad I had the opportunity to get a spot, so I really love there, and I have
small space but I can grow whatever I want and also I can eat from there because when I
try to buy, like a supermarket, at the grocery store, I cannot find the vegetable from my
country, so that’s why.

Pawla’s observation about “growing whatever she wants” in the Philadelphia community
garden also offers substantiation for a sense of place, belonging, and stewardship of the garden.
Brie also grew native Burmese vegetables when she discovered she could not find Burmese veg-
etables in United States grocery stores. She grew native Burmese vegetables in the community
garden in Philadelphia and stated:

So when I heard like NSC [Nationalities Service Center, a non-profit refugee
organization in Philadelphia] going to give the space for the refugee, so yeah, I’m so
happy to get that. Before, I never thought, when you asked, I went to the U.S. I had
chance to grow, I thought like that, no space, I thought like that, but when I got a small place, yeah, I grow whatever I want from Burma and Thailand because my vegetable, I cannot find at the grocery store, so that’s why I can grow my own food.

Some of the gardening participants adamantly expressed that the taste of Burma vegetables surpassed the taste of vegetables in the United States. Hawi asserted that Burmese vegetables were more flavorful when grown in Burma. Hawi stated, “The taste is different from our country, all the countries, the taste is different, the smell, and when I eat, it’s totally different.” Naw Moo also emphasized the difference in flavor and affirmed, “We want to eat the taste, Karen thing, so that’s why.”

Say Moo’s grandmother expressed her perspective that Burmese vegetables also tasted better than vegetables grown in the Philadelphia community garden:

Yeah, grandmother describes how the taste, like, uh, you don’t need to add like a, uh, chicken broth powder, everything like a delicious, very sweet and tasty, and talking about the country-cooking style, tastes different. In here, you have to add something to make it taste.

Because the gardening participants wanted to maintain the Burmese flavor, they traveled to other states to buy seeds to grow native Burmese vegetables or even ordered seeds from Burma. Say Moo ordered seeds from Burma: “What we used to eat in the past. Especially, cucumber. It tastes different, not like a U.S. cucumber.”

However, Naw Gay alluded to restrictions on bringing seeds from Burma:

Like one thing I want to add is the plant I grow in my garden is from my country. We are not allowed to like bring the seed back, we got the other brand from another state, so we
can see and grow it here, so not American chili, not American tomato, it’s from my country…Yeah, illegal, you bring the seed, illegal. I got from the other state, the seed from the other.

Naw Moo traveled as far as North Carolina to find seeds so she could plant Burmese vegetables in the Philadelphia community garden: “I went to the North Carolina, North Carolina, I went there, I need pennywort, you know, pennywort, the leaf, pennywort.”

Naw Moo also described smuggling a flower from Burma and how she mindfully tended to it until she could plant it in the ground:

I had to put in the vase because it’s like summer time, too hot to carry, so I had to save for that,…so the whole year I had to take care in the vase, so oh my God, I had to change the water, I take care, until time to put in the ground.

**Cooking Traditional Meals with Burmese Garden Vegetables**

Gardeners discussed various traditional Burmese meals they made with fresh vegetables and herbs from the garden, such as vegetable stir-fries, salads and soups. Wahlbeck (1999) emphasized the feelings of grief and loss of exile for migrant population and asserted that nothing in the new environment could restore the social or familial connections. However, based on the findings in my study, community gardens, as part of the new (and natural) environment, can restore these social and familial connections.

Colson (1971) emphasizes the relevance of familial ties for *continuity maintenance* during displacement. Moreover, growing native crops and cooking traditional meals from their homeland in Burma facilitates sharing meals together. When Syrian refugees were asked most about what they missed about Syria, the majority of them missed the “feasts during which they
would enjoy time with their extended families” (Kargin & Trix, 2021, p. 8). Traditional meals allow refugees the opportunity for cultural preservation, concomitantly maintaining identity and heritage (Kargin & Trix, 2021).

Nilna, a 36-year old affable female Chin gardening participant, described how she wanted to grow more chili peppers in the garden to make Chin Baung Kyaw, a popular Burmese dish made with fresh roselle leaves and chili:

I want more like chili and chin baung because every day we cook in a soup and rice, sometimes chicken, sometimes beef. We eat everyday rice and soup. I like the sour soup. Sour soup, every day I like it, and my husband too.

Naw Moo also emphasized cooking traditional meals with Burmese vegetables. She described making a soup with chin buang (roselle leaf):

So, yeah, right now, we make like a soup, we can make a soup, we can fry, most of the time we make soup with the pumpkin leaf. All refugee, most, like chin baung, like a sour leaf, mostly, but pumpkin leaf is the favorite right now.

Zai Ta, a 40-year old female Chin gardening participant also made soup with vegetables from the garden:

I make all kind of the food from Burma. So mostly I can create a lot of dish from our garden, like soup and like salad, and sometimes just eat raw and then. Yea, we can create all kinds.

Sense of Place

Gardening participants frequently used the terms “home,” “place,” and “space” to describe the community garden in Philadelphia. Rodriguez (2018) defined a sense of place as the
meaning that one attaches to a spatial setting. Deaux (2000) posited that immigration involves restating and redefining identity in the new host country. In a review of the literature, Deaux (2000) stated that the physical environment offers identity support. For example, migrants settled in metropolitan areas and found comfort that the region reminded them of their home country. Li et al. (2010) concluded that “being able to resettle somewhere new and cultivate a sense of place is crucial to the continued well-being of older Chinese immigrants” (p. 794).

Furthermore, creating a home or a place in a new resettlement region requires nature bonding, another dimension of the place attachment model. Evidence of nature bonding is illustrated in these study participants’ responses, a dimension of the place attachment model critical to developing a sense of place. As defined earlier, nature bonding refers to an affinity for the surrounding natural world, as well as experience and time spent in the natural world. In Burma, these study participants spent time in the natural world, gardening in Burma, and they wanted to re-create this experience, an integral part of creating a home or a place for this refugee population, with the natural environment in Philadelphia.

Naw Gay offered testimony about how the community garden provided the opportunity for her to consider Philadelphia as her home, because of the identification of similar elements found in Burma. This is also evidence that is indicative of continuity maintenance, a conscious striving to bridge connections between Philadelphia and Burma. This example also provides evidence that continuity maintenance plays a role in well-being. Naw Gay stated:

Yeah, Philadelphia, I feel like my home, and the garden, I think, and the community, I feel like a home, because everything has similar – a little bit different, but similar like other countries, and since I came to the United States, here is my home.
In this next comment, Naw Gay referred to her garden plot in Philadelphia as a “very important” place:

Yeah, it’s important, very important for me, yeah, my little garden place, very important for me. Even though I’m busy, I try to go there, I want to see, I check if my garden plot has changed or grow up or improved or is happy or not happy, yeah, I have to check it, so I have to go, I love to go.

Of note, Tial referred to her gardening plot as place and home, specifically that the community garden in Philadelphia contributed to a concept of home for her: “That makes me feel at home and then I don’t want to move to another state. This made it like home.”

This next comment implies that gardening participants identified the community garden in Philadelphia as home, as well as place. Brie described the community garden in Philadelphia as her “favorite place:”

Yeah, it’s like my favorite place, so I’m really enjoy and I’m really happy to be there, actually, like I want to watch each plant grow, and I want to see, like sometimes, even though I already have – at home I want to pick vegetable and take home.

In addition to an emphasis on place, Say Moo alluded to some ownership over this place in the garden and referred to the garden as “her spot.” This claim to “her spot” also implies ownership and therefore, empowerment. Her statement is aligned with how Joel Arnold, the program director, emphasized how these gardening participants historically had land forcibly seized from them. Say Moo stated:

Well like a farmer thing, I like to take care of my spot, so I prepare to ready for plant and I weed and I watering a plant, I check the water also, because we need to connect
water together to the pipe each day.

Given their turbulent history of forced displacement and loss of home, including land, these gardening plots offer the gardeners the opportunity to peacefully re-connect to land again, after so much personal loss. These gardening plots offer the opportunity to create place attachment, critical for a successful transition to a new place - and potentially, a new home for some. Say Paw’s statement also provides an example of her desire to have a sense of ownership of land, a sense of place:

Yeah, to get this spot, this plot, I had to wait on like a waiting list, so before I saw my friend go and plant and growing things, so I really want to do, but I had to wait, yeah, when I got it, I’m so happy, even though so small space, but this, I feel like my own spot, so whatever I want I can plant and I can eat.

Historically, Rodriguez (2018) noted that marginalized communities do not have the privilege of occupying spaces because of ethnicity, purchasing power, and mental and/or physical ability. Therefore, we can infer that having one’s own place or space to garden, is significant for marginalized populations. There is security in having one’s own space, place, or home. This is reflected in this next comment, when Gay alluded to the garden as her “own space:” “Like here we have opportunity to get like our own space, and so we got from like an organization, and I’m like a farmer so I love to join and participate.”

Zai Ta’s testimony also provided evidence of a sense of ownership of the community garden, connecting it to the concept of place, as well as home:

That made me more like my – our land. It feel like it’s home. The morning, afternoon, evening, anytime we can go to our garden and take our vegetables, that’s made
me more like home. That’s just a special place for us or like anytime we can go and pick up our vegetables.

Furthermore, Say Paw also stated that the community garden helped her to feel part of the larger city community in Philadelphia:

Yeah, we involve, and we work with, even though in a small space, at the Sixth Street, and we involve with the other group, and the leader from the city help us, so we feel like we a part of the city community in Philadelphia.

**Stewardship for the Garden**

When individuals become attached to a place or a home, they take care of it and often defend it. In the context of social interactions, understanding and knowing one’s place fosters a care and commitment to place, also referred to as stewardship. As Relph (1976) stated:

> There is, also a real responsibility and respect for that place both for itself and for what it is to yourself and to others. There is, in fact, a complete commitment to that place, a commitment that is as profound as any that a person can make, for caretaking is indeed the basis of man’s relation to the world (p. 38).

Gardening participants clearly demonstrated stewardship for the community garden in Philadelphia, as evident by the wide gamut of tasks they described, such as weeding and watering. Naw Gay’s statement provides testimony of her stewardship for the garden. She prioritized watering the plants and allocated the time to ensure her plants had adequate water. Because of her care for the garden, Naw Gay expressed frustration about an inadequate water supply. Naw Gay stated:

> Like a frustrator, because when we are there, no water, so I have to come back
another time even though my house is a little far, but because I love my garden, I come back, I make time I have to do watering.

Reflecting the same concerns, Say Moo expressed care for her plants and also wanted to ensure that they had sufficient water: “I have to take care of my vegetables. If I’m not there, my plants are going to die without water.” Gay also emphasized care for her plants and stated,“Yeah, I miss my plant, I get water, or maybe too – like sunny, are they too hot?” Tial expressed the provocation of positive emotional feelings derived from gardening tasks: “Watering the plants makes me the most happy.”

Other gardeners described examples of stewardship of the garden, such as tidying the garden space. Nutha described tidying the garden:

Watering and clean the area, like they have bed for one family, so the area, like so people can walk and you know, that area, she clean it, and inside the plot, she clean, and then, you know, take out all the grass.

Nilna also maintained her gardening space and stated, “I like gardening and then I clean up the weeds between one bed to another bed.” Hawi recounted a variety of tasks, as well: “When I was at the garden, I take care all of the plants, digging and then give them better soil and then watering until we are ready to pick up.”

Transitional Support from the Refugee Organization

Support from refugee organizations play a critical role in the successful resettlement of migrants. And in this case, the support revolves around place, within the context of the community garden. With procurement of funding, SEAMAAC, initiated the community gardening program, making it possible for these gardening participants to maintain their agrarian traditions and
therefore, experience place attachment. This would not be possible without the support and funding from a refugee organization.

In their qualitative study of Burmese refugees (Karen and Chin ethnic minority groups), Agbényiga, Barrie, Djelaj, and Nawyn (2014) found that refugees depended on resettlement agencies as their primary support. In my study, gardening participants’ responses reflected a similar reliance on SEAMAAC, especially expressing gratitude for Joel Arnold, the director of the community gardening program. Pawla stated that she really appreciated the leader, “who organize for us; we have space to grow our own food.” Brie observed, “Yeah, the garden, there are many thing, very meaningful for me and very useful, and I really appreciate the leader who organized or let us to plant and grow here.” Gay also expressed appreciation for Arnold and stated, “Yeah, I appreciate the leader and organization help us how to plant in a small space.”

Naw Moo emphasized how much the program director cared for the community:

Yeah, he is a very nice person, whenever I text things he responds, so yeah, better than [another organization]. I love him, he love our community and he care about our community, yeah, any time we have problem, I chat with – I send a picture, I always show many, in front of our garden, I take a picture and next day, he show up, so okay, we miss each other and volunteer and go together and clean up, he bring many thing like a glove, like a bag also, yeah.

In addition to appreciation for the program director, Say Paw also noted that the program director facilitated feeling a connection to the community:

Yeah, we involve, and we work with, even though in a small space, at the Sixth Street, and we involve with the other group, and the leader from the city and they
help us, so we feel like we a part of the city community in Philadelphia.

Rebecca emphasized the training that the refugee organization provided for the gardening participants. She stated, “Because of the community garden project, they give us a lot of training that we never know before. That’s how a lot of our knowledge, and then I see a lot of benefit.”

**Economic Benefits**

Although economic benefits were not as dominant a theme as cultural preservation and well-being, there was adequate data to identify it as a theme. The majority of the gardening participants (71%) expressed that the garden provided them with the opportunity to save money as it was less expensive to plant and grow vegetables than buy them in the grocery store. This reliance on the land to save money is evident of place dependence, one of the dimensions of Raymond, Brown, and Weber’s (2010) place attachment model. As many of these gardening participants migrated from refugee camps on the border of Thailand, they brought minimal possessions. Starting over in a new country is fraught with financial concerns. Many of these participants emphasized the economic advantage of saving money by growing their own vegetables.

Rebecca expressed that saving money by planting and growing her own vegetables made life “easier and better.” Likewise, Brie emphasized how accessible vegetables were in the community garden, sharing that she did not need to buy them from the grocery story because she grew them in her garden. Multiple others expressed how important it was not only for saving money, but for feeling self-sufficient and having access to goods that they could not buy at the store, as Say Paw, who commented about ginger, “I cook and I eat a lot of that, and it is some kind I cannot buy in the grocery store, so yeah, I grow [it] myself … in my garden.” This ability to harvest native vegetables from the garden therefore represents not only financial relief and the
joy of reuniting with familiar foods that are difficult to obtain here, but also the satisfaction of sharing. Indeed, Gay noted that they are pleased not only that they get to save money, but that sharing brought her joy: “I’m really happy to share the food I have.”

**Well-Being**

In this final section of the findings, I will present the benefits related to well-being that gardening participants experienced in the community gardening program. These findings are categorized as physical, psychological, and social. Well-being is a multidimensional construct comprised of societal contentedness, optimal physical and mental functioning (Egli et al., 2016; Huppert & So, 2013). Fullilove (1996) asserted that “psychological well-being depends on strong, well-developed relationships with nurturing places” (p. 1517) and protecting and restoring the mental health of displaced populations poses “urgent problems for the mental health community” (p. 1516). In particular, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) diagnoses are high among Burmese refugees (Cardozo, Talley, Burton, & Crawford, 2004). Salutogenic community-based interventions are critical for this population, given that “post-migration living difficulties had greater salience in predicting mental health outcomes of people from Burmese refugee backgrounds” (Schweitzer, Brough, Romans, & Asic-Kobe, 2011, p. 299). Moreover, “local roots, community ties and strong emotional bonds with one’s home place have been described as important sources of well-being” (Gustafson, p. 38, 2013).

Sampson and Gifford (2010) emphasized that it is essential to recognize one’s connection to place of origin, as well as any associated traumas, while simultaneously acknowledging the possibility of connections to a new place. Furthermore, Sampson and Gifford concluded:

Especially relevant for resettlement are investigations into the qualities of places
considered to be actively health-enhancing or beneficial in processes of healing and restoration…it is both the physicality of place & the sociality of place that are important for promoting recovery and settlement (p. 117).

This emphasis on well-being is a salutogenic approach. In their qualitative study of the well-being of 18 Karen and Chin refugees relocated to Australia, Borwick, Schweitzer, Brough, Vromans, and Shakespeare-Finch (2013) emphasized a salutogenic, strengths-based approach for refugees dealing with adversity. The word ‘salutogenesis’ is derived from Latin ‘salus’ which translates into health and the Greek ‘genesis’ means origin (Borwick, Schweitzer, Brough, Vromans and Shakespeare-Finch, 2013). The salutogenic approach, theorized by Antonovksy (1987), examines health-promoting factors and well-being, as opposed to focusing on illness and pathogenesis. In the case of refugees, this means focusing on the strengths of refugees, such as maintaining and strengthening their social support system (e.g., in a community-based intervention, such as community gardening programs), rather than the negative consequences of displacement, such as social isolation. In social work systems theory, focusing on health-promoting factors and well-being leads to negative entropy “that may facilitate active adaptation of the organism to the environment” (Antonovsky, p. 13).

**Physical Benefits of Community Gardening**

Gardening participants emphasized the benefits of harvesting fresh organic food from the garden, underscoring the relevance of eating a healthy diet. Nutha observed, “It’s good for eyes and it has a lot of vitamins, in the soup, it’s very good.” Pawla and Nunu also noted the health benefits. Pawla stated, “Yeah, like I’m happy, I enjoy, and it is a benefit to my health, also.”
Nunu stated, “Vegetables give us a healthy life, so from the garden, the benefit was we can eat healthy, fresh vegetable.” Zai Ta expressed happiness, but also alluded to the mind-body connection of eating healthy and fresh food from the garden. She stated, “The community garden make us very happy. I hope for everyone too. It make us very happy and give us like a healthy mind, heart.”

For these gardening participants, medicinal use of plants is an integral part of a healthy diet and are considered preventive medicine for cancer. Several gardeners described the benefits of Burmese native plants. Naw Moo described how pennywort is beneficial for the kidneys:

Yeah, pennywort. They grow to the ground, it’s good for the kidney, so when I went there, I saw so many things, so I had to bring, so actually, it’s the summertime also, so I had to take care, and yeah, some thing we got from the market, like a Chinese market and Indian market, we saw the seed, we saw the fruit, and we can do like a ginger, we can bring like a turmeric, yeah, we plant in here. Oh my gosh, makes so happy. You know, it’s a four leaf, it’s one dollar, one dollar for four leaf, because we eat like a leaf, ginger also, yeah, different kind, not American.

Another gardening participant, Soe Wah, reiterated that pennywort is beneficial for the kidneys:

Yeah, it’s a plant, the kind that grow to the plant, kind of like I show you, it’s good for kidney. Kidney…you know…good for the kidney, you know, you have a urine problem, you pee, you have a urine problem, you have to eat pennywort.

Other plants also provide medicinal antidotes, such as turmeric leaf. Naw Moo stated that turmeric leaf aids in digestion and ginger is good for skin:
Like turmeric leaf is good for digest and good for health and good for many thing, so yeah, right now, people love to eat, a little crazy, and mostly we grow, it relate to the health, you know, like I saw pennywort is good for kidney, ginger is good for your skin, digest, and or something, yeah, many, many thing. I don’t know how to call, lemongrass?

In addition to a healthy diet and medicinal use of plants, several gardening participants, such as Nunu, mentioned the garden provided an opportunity for exercise. Nunu stated, ”I got exercise. It’s very good for my health.” Hawi affirmed that the community garden “keeps them [gardeners] healthy and strong.” Elna’s daughter described the physical benefits of exercise her mother derived from walking and gardening:

Um, it’s really important to her and she um, she just really likes the feeling of gardening because she has a lot of stuff in the backyard and she said she also do like exercise in the morning from walks and stuff.

**Psychological Benefits of Gardening**

In this study, themes related to psychological benefits of gardening emerged, including gratitude, happiness, reduction of stress, and a sense of belonging.

**Gratitude, Happiness, and Reduction of Stress**

Many gardening participants expressed gratitude for the land, the plants and the opportunity to garden. Rebecca shared her gratitude for the land and the plants:

I was so happy and then I share to another, my friend, and then that is like, without that land I cannot plant. In our house, apartment, we don’t have land, so this is so important and it is very helpful for us to have land. I am very happy and then, you know, they give
us all the plant, what we need to plant. It’s very, very good project, kind of land we got.

As in Burma, Nutha continued to cook traditional Burmese meals with the vegetables from the community garden in Philadelphia:

Make me very peaceful when we look our garden, and then we saw that whatever we saw, it is time to reap, and we take everything and then we bring the food in the kitchen and then we cook and eat, it tastes so delicious, it tastes so special, it makes us so special, and very fresh, organic.

Gay expressed gratitude for the program director. She recognized that with his support, gardeners could also share food with other people: “I really appreciate the leader who organized and help us and support our garden so we can get opportunity to plant our own food and I can share to the people.” Pawla shared similar sentiments:

Before I thought like I never get a chance to get a vegetable and to get the space to grow my own vegetable to my garden, I never thought I’m going to get like that, but I’m so happy. Yeah, even though small, but I have chance.

In the semi-structured interview questions, I asked specific questions related to well-being about gardening in Philadelphia, but I did not ask specific questions about well-being in Burma. However, in their responses to these semi-structured interview questions, gardening participants alluded to feeling happy and peaceful at home in Burma with lives that revolved around growing food from the land. This dependence on the land to grow food reflects the dimension of place dependence in the place attachment model, as well as the other dimensions of the place attachment model.
Along with this reliance on the land, personal identities emerged (place identity in the place attachment model), such as memories, values, and attitudes, about the surrounding natural environment. Within the context of gardening in the beautiful and bountiful land of Burma, rich with natural resources, gardening participants interacted with one another (social bonding) and formed attachments to nature (nature bonding).

When this Burmese population was violently and forcibly evicted from their homes, this bond, this place attachment, was traumatically disrupted. This Burmese population needed to re-create elements of their home in Burma during resettlement in Philadelphia, to repair this disruption. The community garden in Philadelphia offered the opportunity for the context to repair this disruption.

The premise of continuity maintenance is necessary for place-making and it offers an antidote to repairing this disruption. As previously mentioned in the first chapter of this paper, Li, Hodgetts, and Ho (2010) concluded that, “Reflecting on life back in China is also a process of reassembling fragments from one’s past to make sense of the present and to create some continuity between one’s old life and new life” (p. 791). In their study, facilitating a connection from one’s past in a home country to one’s present in a resettlement country was accomplished through the context of a community gardening program, as in the findings of my study. Although Li, Hodgetts, and Ho (2010) acknowledge that gardening is enjoyable for study participants in the resettlement country of New Zealand, it could also serve as an emotional reminder for the life left in China.

Sampson and Gifford (2010) described places as therapeutic landscapes or restorative experiences that help to facilitate positive connections to place and promote well-being, especial-
ly relevant for addressing refugees with trauma and distress. Community gardens offer a therapeutic landscape and restorative experience for immigrants and refugees, allowing them to develop place attachment in Philadelphia.

Nutha, Tial, Say Paw, and Priscilla all expressed sentiments related to happiness about watching their garden grow. Nunu alluded to the garden as “medicine,” which could be construed as beneficial for physical and/or mental health: “I’m very happy. I’m so happy when I’m doing garden. That’s a thing that is for me, like a help, like medicine.”

Some gardening participants derived happiness from watching their plants flourish and harvesting vegetables. Nilna’s comment embodied this:

When we saw our plants are growing beautifully, that makes us happy, yea, the most.

For the last part, I said, whatever we sow, when the times comes we can reap, yea, that makes me happy.

Zai Ta’s observation offered a similar reflection related to satisfaction derived from watching the plants grow and harvesting them:

It’s the most happy moment when I went to the garden, whatever we saw, it’s time to reap, time to pick up, and we take out the tea and the leaf and then we eat, so satisfied that we can see what we saw and then, yea, that’s the most, the happiest moment. Yea, that’s very, very happy and that gives me a lot of encouragement.

Naw Gay’s comment reflected happiness related to socialization with friends. She stated, “Yeah, I’m so happy to be there. I have a small space, so I cannot eat a lot, but, yeah, I feel more like gathering with the friend, so I’m so happy.”
Rebecca’s nostalgic testimony expressed general happiness about maintaining their agrarian tradition, receiving plants for the garden and harvesting vegetables:

We are coming from our country. It is, you know, surrounded with the land. That makes like the greenhouse our memory, old memory, and then makes us healthy, happy. You know, time to pick up all whatever they planted in the garden, that makes me happy. I am very happy and then, you know, they give us all the plant, what we need to plant. It’s very, very good project, kind of land we got.

Naw Moo described the happiness of the gardeners, especially the senior gardeners:

Happy, they happy. They love to go. So, and they want to see more, every day they check it, especially senior, the young age, they go work, right, they cannot go every day, but senior I can see twice a day, oh my god, too much, they like to gathering also, yeah, like okay, so they miss each other, even though they live different house, right, but you can see there at the same time, or something like that, in the early morning, yeah, like that.

During the interview, Brie stated that “even talking during the interview makes her feel happy and reminds her of home.” In an email to me, Naw Moo emphasized the emotional aspect of gardening, “When I heard the gardeners’ feeling it makes me so happy. I work with them but we never talking about our feeling.”

These findings about happiness are consistent with the conclusion of a systematic review of eight quantitative, cross-sectional studies cited earlier in this paper by Lampert et al. (2021). In this systematic review, Lampert et al. (2021) found that non-institutionalized adult gardeners
had better life satisfaction, general health, mental health and social cohesion. Of note, gardeners reported significantly greater social support compared to non-gardeners.

Gardening participants alluded to how the garden reduced stressors in their lives. Nutha and Gay described how they experienced peace while working in the community garden in Philadelphia. Nutha stated:

Make me very peaceful when we look our garden, and then we saw that whatever we saw, it is time to reap, and we take everything and then we bring the food in the kitchen and then we cook and eat, it tastes so delicious, it tastes so special, it makes us so special, and very fresh, organic.

Gay experienced peace, as well: “Yeah, it is like very peaceful, and I wish I have many and I want to share other people, so yeah, I look at, I wish to get, anyway.” Nilna recounted how the garden helped her to forget problems: “We go in the garden. I forget I have problems.”

Sense of Belonging

Walton and Cohen (2011) stated that social belonging is a fundamental need, defined as “a sense of having positive relationships with others” (p. 1447) and it is one’s subjective interpretation of the quality of his or her relationships that impacts well-being. This sense of belonging is related to place attachment. Physical places provide the opportunity for social interactions and community, where individuals can experience a sense of belonging and acceptance (Curtis, 2012). Studies have documented that uncertainty about belonging, especially chronic uncertainty, can negatively impact minorities’ performance and health (Walton & Cohen, 2011). Social isolation, loneliness and low social status can harm subjective well-being, intellectual achievement, immune function and health (Walton & Cohen, 2011). Fullilove (1996) asserted, “At the heart of
the experience of displacement is the sense that one is without a place to be. The reconstitution of order depends on the reestablishment of a health-promoting habitat and affirmation of each person’s sense of belonging to that place” (p. 1521).

In this study, gardeners described a sense of belonging to the community, while participating in the community garden in Philadelphia. Nutha declared that the community garden in Philadelphia “makes me feel good, like a Philadelphia resident.” Pawla felt involved in the community and asserted, “I feel involved and I work with my other community and other friend and I feel like I am part of the community, and I feel like free.” Gay emphasized feeling as if she were part of a “team,” “group,” and “family”: “Yeah, it’s like a community garden, so yeah, I went there and I participate there, so I feel like oh yeah, a team, a group, like a family at the Philadelphia.” Nunu expressed feeling a connection to the land or a sense of ownership: “It’s made me, like this is my land, this is my birthplace, that kind of feeling I feel when I do the community garden.”

**Social Benefits of Gardening**

Gardening participants exhibited a variety of social benefits from participation in the community garden, including encouragement and support of one another, learning, sharing food and social interactions. The relevance of these social interactions became increasingly apparent when the pandemic limited older adults and mandated smaller groups of gardeners.

As one of the four dimensions of the place attachment model referenced throughout this paper, *social bonding* is evident in the descriptions of study participants gardening together in the community garden in Philadelphia. Gardening participants conversed about planting in a smaller
gardening space, planning for the smaller gardening space, collectively advocating for safety and having the opportunity to learn how to speak English.

Interpersonal relationships and community serve as sources of support during challenging times, such as displacement, migration and resettlement (Borwick et al., 2013). Borwick et al. (2013) also stated that “Relationships contributed to the participants’ capacity to comprehend experiences. Opportunities for participants to relate to others, share, and validate their experiences with others gave them the feeling that they were not isolated in their adverse environments. Family and community support emerged as a key resource for participants in order to meet the emotional demands of their stressful environments” (p. 100).

Sharing Food

Just as these gardening participants shared food in the context of community in Burma, they emphasized sharing harvested vegetables, plants, and seeds with other families and community residents in Philadelphia. Clearly, these testimonies reflect the communal aspect of these Karen and Chin gardeners, as well as their generosity, despite the significant hardships of displacement and the loss and grief they experienced. Pawla shared vegetables with other gardeners: “Yeah, we sharing, we go together and we sharing, the seed also we share, and the vegetable also we share with each other.” Say Moo shared vegetables with her family and friends: “Uh, yeah, the thing that make me happy, when I pick up my vegetable, and I share to my friend, to uh, the, my family, like two three sister, different house. Yeah. Different house. We share with each other.”

Soe Wah demonstrated generosity by sharing vegetables with families who were on the waiting list for a gardening space:
Yeah, usually, we share the plants and we share the vegetables also, because many other family members, like a waiting list, so they don’t have a chance to grow, to plant, so yeah, I share my vegetables.

He also shared vegetables with friends who did not have gardens:

Yeah, because right now, only like a small space, right now I want a little large, a little bit, so I can grow many things and because I have friends, they do not have a garden, they do not have space, and maybe they’re busy, so I want to give to them, I want to share like a vegetable from myself, I enjoy to do that one.

Gay described the abundance of pumpkins they harvested and how they shared the pumpkins with the community:

We have so many pumpkins, so last year they share to many people. Yeah, we talking about the plant and like we get the seed because they don’t have the seed, so I give to them and plant and grow, yeah, I show them. Because each year, I love to save the seed, so different kind of seed, so that’s how I have many so I can share to the other people.

These gardeners were clearly committed to cultivating not just the garden, but cultivating relationships with their new neighbors, indicative of social bonding, one of the four dimensions of Raymond, Brown, and Weber’s (2010) place attachment model. Naw Moo stated:

Before, we do like a block party, we do a party, we give free food to our neighbor, we try to be nice to them and do delivery, like fruit, vegetable, a few time we do that, like something changed.

Not only did these gardeners share the fruits of their labor, Naw Moo described sharing-plants:
We get to the city and plant also, and after that, we can see the city, other group also they want, because Africa, and I think India also, so we shared, and like chili also, because we eat like spicy thing, right, and before, like we go to greenhouse, city greenhouse, yeah, so we go there and we volunteer and we share the plants. So, yeah, we get our plants to them, and they get their plant to us, so yeah, we sharing things like that.

**Encouragement and Support of One Another**

Gardeners provided statements about how they supported and encouraged one another. *Empowerment* has been defined as a multi-level process whereby individuals gain control over their lives, participate democratically in the life of the community and critically understand their environment (Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995). *Empowerment theory* explores the environmental influences of social problems and emphasizes the well-being and collaboration of participants, seeking to improve the quality of life in a community (Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995). As an example of empowerment, Rebecca noted that gardeners complimented each other. She stated, “We are talking about, like we planted our, like nice growing, better, fast, something like that. We encourage each other.” Nunu discussed the benefits of working together as a community: “We can share with other people that we can help, like community, you know, like communication, we work together, a lot of benefit we can get.”

Soe Wah observed that gardeners supported one another by teaching each other to adapt to a smaller gardening space in Philadelphia:

We do like teach each other because the situation is not the same like Burma, it’s small space, so how we have to grow and what kinds of plants we have to grow, so yeah, we teach each other like that. Yeah, for now, I feel very happy to see my plants grow up and
improve every day so I can see my friends also, so we can meet each other there, so it makes me encouraged to go every day.

**Learning**

The persistence to maintain agrarian traditions manifested in these gardeners’ various ways of adaptation. Gardening participants learned how to adapt to a smaller gardening space, as well as a different climate. Naw Moo succinctly stated, “We had to learn many, many things, oh my God.” Furthermore, she discussed how they saved seeds from Burma and learned to plant in a smaller gardening space:

> Most of the time, I only had to get information from the other garden, and most of the time, I bring the seed, and some family, like they visit the other state, so they bring pumpkin seed and like squash from the Burma, seed, so we share each other, and we work with like a greenhouse, so yeah, we got from there. So, yeah, some we can save the seed and continue to do that, and we learn from, like it depend, how you do that, how you do that? Because tiny space.

Soe Wah noted how gardeners learned from one another: “Okay, when we plant and we participate with the garden thing, and we have chance to meet each other also, and not only our community, we can meet with other community also and we learn other gardeners growing stuff also.”

The gardeners were accustomed to gardening year-round in Burma, a tropical climate. It was a challenging adjustment to transition to gardening in Philadelphia with a much shorter gardening season. Naw Gay provided an illustration of how gardeners taught one another to adapt to a different climate:
Actually, we teach each other, because it’s a different plant in different seasons, so we have to teach each other, and we share the plant also, and we’re sharing the vegetables also, we don’t cook for them, but we sharing each other.

In Burma, gardeners had the luxury of planting all year-round with an abundance of land. In Philadelphia, they had to learn how to carefully select what they planted and organize the plants in small gardening plots. Gay stated, “In the past, in my country, we don’t have knowledge like that, only time to plant and time to grow. We don’t have to organize and we don’t thinking about the season also, but here we learn many thing.” Pawla described the adaptation to a different planting style: “Yeah, like different in Burma, so that’s why I say you have to make a line and how far each plant, you have to measure, and you have to make a nice thing, yeah, it’s different.”

The gardeners also had the opportunity to learn and practice speaking English with community residents who stopped to talk to them in the garden: Naw Moo described these interactions:

So that’s why right now, we had like a ESL (English as a Second Language) class, right, so we had to translate the English word, the gardener thing, and the tool also, and if like an American person came to the garden to talk to you, so maybe you could understand a little bit, yeah, we practice like that. Each year, we have like an internship, the English speaker, right, so when they come to the garden, they’re going to say hi, or they’re asking to ask, you don’t know, you run away, so it doesn’t work that way, so learn something.
Social Interactions

As aligned with the dimension of social bonding in Raymond, Brown, and Weber’s (2010) place attachment model, gardening participants described multiple types of social interactions, including gathering and gardening together with family and friends. Naw Gay described social interactions such as walking together, planting and weeding: “Usually, we walk together, and we plant, and we weed and we do watering, so gathering there also.” Naw Moo and Nutha shared similar observations. Naw Moo commented: “Yeah, and chat, and they talk and they share, yeah, I can see like some family, actually, only they want to share, they want to see how the vegetable growing.” Nutha stated that the garden provided her with an opportunity to meet with other people outside of her family: “Yes, we talk each other, with other people besides my family.”

For some gardening participants, the garden offered the opportunity to spend more time together as a family. Say Paw expressed that she had the opportunity to spend more time with her family:

To involve with the other family member and we want to grow together and we want to gathering through the growing thing. Most of the time, we work together, we plant, we weed, and we work together and we watering together. Yeah, most of the time, we’re talking about how we’re going to create, how we’re going to do for our garden thing, because it’s a small space, so we have to organize, and we have to plant a vine, kind of like a pumpkin or a cucumber, a vine, so how to climb and how to go around, so we need like a branch, like a tree branch, and we’re talking about the gardening thing. We invite each other, we’re going to plant this day, and we’re going to weed this day, we’re
going to watering, what time, so like a schedule, talking to them.

Zai Ta shared observations of the garden with other gardeners: “We are talking about our garden. It looks so beautiful, growing so beautiful. They are growing now. We are talking about all our garden.”

Other gardeners used the time in the garden to plan. Soe Wah met with friends and discussed how to organize their plants into a smaller gardening space:

So, like when I went to the garden, maybe my friend is going to be there, and we’re going to talk together, walk together, like chat to each other. Yeah, only talking about, we got the space to plant, a little narrow, small, if we can get big, it’s going to be good, that’s what we talking about, the space, also. Yeah, it’s important for me to get fresh vegetables and I can share to other people, and meet each other there and work together.

Priscilla conversed with other gardeners about the progress of their plants’ growth: “We are talking about garden, you know, is my plant grow or not, talking back and forth with each other.” Nutha and Tial talked to other gardeners about harvesting vegetables. Nutha commented, “Yeah, they talk about the garden, oh, we wish it is time to reap and we can’t wait to eat, talking about garden, yeah.” Tial also debated with other gardeners about the timing of harvesting vegetables: “We are talking about if the garden is good or not. Like, is it ready to pick? We talk about the garden.”

Nilna spoke about how the garden provided her with an opportunity to interact with others outside of her home as she stayed home to take care of her children:

I take care of my kids, I cannot work, I cannot outside, you know. Some people can work all the time. Every day they outside, but I am taking care of three kids, so the
garden more makes me outside and I see my garden and they grow and the leaf is, it’s happy…I saw friend. We talking and we funning.

Brie observed that the garden provided her with the opportunity to socialize with others, as well as discuss the progress of the plants’ growth:

Usually we greet each other and we ask family how they are, and are they okay or not, yeah, and we ask, and we talking about the plant we grow, and we have different kind of thing, and sometimes we discover how we’re going to grow, because some plant not good grow up, so we ask each other and we sharing, and just most of the time talking about the gardening thing.

**Impact of Covid-19 Pandemic on Social Interactions in the Garden**

The COVID-19 pandemic restrictions socially isolated some gardeners, especially older gardeners who stayed home. Some gardeners continued to go to the garden, but only in small groups as Naw Moo stated: “Right now, COVID-19, so you cannot go more than five people, so I remind them be careful of that, so maybe two, three, people.”

Olszewska-Guizzo, Fogel, Escoffier, and Ho (2021) found evidence that the Stay-at-Home Order (SHO) in Singapore, implemented in January 2020, increased depressive symptoms for study participants, in their quantitative study of 25 healthy adult males and females, ages 21-74, to assess for the effects of social isolation on mental health during COVID-19. In my study, the data analysis revealed similar results. Burmese refugee gardeners who stayed home reported fatigue and loneliness. Nilna expressed her discontentment: “Yes, a feeling type. The feeling is all the time is tired. We no happy. We cannot [be] outside, cannot see friends, just only talking on the phone, and me not working, just only my husband.”
Brie shared similar feelings:

We had to stay home so we could not see each other. We had chance to see when we went to the garden, so, yeah, watering and gathering there. Yeah, something like twice a day or maybe something like only one time, but have to do like a small group, not more than five people. We are allowed to go. Yeah, usually we gathering at the garden, we have like a big group because many people growing there, so right now, we have to follow directions, so we have like five people, yeah, okay, I’m okay for that. And also my mom want to go all the time, so I have to say, don’t go too much, COVID-19, so don’t go out, I have to say my mom.

Gay communicated her frustration related to the pandemic restrictions and noted her happiness while gardening prior to COVID-19:

Yeah, before COVID-19 I went and I enjoyed to do that, I love, I clean, I weed, and I watering, I plant, but after COVID, but daughter not allow me to go, so only my daughter go. Yeah, only like I want to take care of my vegetable and my plant, so right now, I wish, I crave no more COVID-19. I want COVID-19 done. Yeah, I enjoy, I’m happy. Yeah, we want to spend time with our friend also in there. No COVID. Before COVID.

Concluding

As a content analysis of the data presented in this chapter revealed, the benefits for these Burmese refugees gardening in a community gardening program included cultural preservation of agrarian traditions, economic benefits, transitional support from the refugee organization, a sense of place, stewardship for the garden, and physical, psychological, and social well-being. There are innumerable psychological and social benefits of the natural environment (Stein,
Psychological benefits include improved self-esteem and self-efficacy (Stein, 2003). Social benefits include building group cohesion, improving communication skills, generating practical solutions to problems, and encouraging an exchange of ideas among peers (Stein, 2003).

My findings in this study on physical, psychological and social well-being are also consistent with Rodriguez’s qualitative study in 2018, who observed that marginalized populations participating in community gardening programs experienced psychological, social, and physical health benefits, all related to well-being.

Based on the findings in my study and application of this four-dimensional place attachment model, developing place attachment to the new host country during resettlement for immigrants and refugees requires a continuity of the identity previously held in one’s home country, reliance (dependence) on the land to maintain of native foods from their home country, social interactions, and bonding with nature (cultivation of plants, soil, air, and water).
Chapter 7: Conclusion

Discussion

Through my multi-phased analyses, upon coding the findings using content analysis and line-by-line coding, three superordinate themes emerged: a concept of home, resettlement challenges in Philadelphia, and the benefits of community gardens. Inferences drawn from the data provide evidence for how refugees re-created a place, and perhaps a home for some, in the context of the community gardening program in Philadelphia. For these Burmese gardening participants, replanting roots in the Philadelphia community garden metaphorically and literally, allowed them to maintain the practices from their agrarian life in Burma in the Philadelphia community garden, facilitating a new place attachment and perhaps for some, a new home.

Application of Raymond, Brown, and Weber’s (2010) four-dimensional, three-pole conceptual model of place attachment (Figure 1) provided a good framework to understand the relationship to place and/or home that these gardeners had in Burma, as all four dimensions of this model were described by participants. Yet, I also sought to understand the process and creation of a new place attachment. Accordingly, my work uncovered the mechanisms of emplacement, reterritorialization, spatial routinization, and continuity maintenance in Philadelphia that will be explored later in this chapter. This next section describes how the place attachment model applies to participants’ perspectives of place and/or home in Burma, and then in Philadelphia.

Application of the Place Attachment Model in Burma

Place attachment, as we know, refers to the deep bond an individual has with a particular geographic region (urban or rural) or a particular place that has significant meaning (Fredrickson & Anderson, 1999; Scannell & Gifford, 2010; Manzo, 2003; Altman & Low, 1992; Fullilove,
1996). In these narratives summarized in the findings chapters, participants discussed place attachment as interpreted by the four dimensions of the place attachment model (Raymond, Brown, and Weber, 2010). Their narratives included testimonies of place dependence, place identity, nature bonding, and social bonding in Philadelphia.

Gardening participants described *place dependence* when they relied on Burma’s natural resources, such as bamboo and leaves, to construct their homes. Gardening participants also relied on the soil in Burma to plant vegetables and water from the rivers to irrigate their gardens. Considering the next dimension of the place attachment model, *place identity*, or one’s cognitive thoughts - including memories, ideas, feelings, attitudes, values, and preferences - refers to the physical world in which an individual lives (Proshansky, Fabian, & Kaminoff, 1983; Fullilove, 1996). Specifically, environment-related cognitions include places, spaces and their properties which contribute toward the satisfaction of an individual’s biological, psychological, social and cultural needs (Proshansky, Fabian, & Kaminoff, 1983).

In the narratives of these gardening participants, place identity is evident. Participants clearly expressed memories, ideas, feelings, attitudes, values, and preferences for the natural environment of Burma, such as gardening with friends and family, value and preference for the sublime beauty of the landscape and its natural resources and contentment while living in Burma, other than safety concerns related to the civil war. As indicated in the narratives in chapter four, gardening participants described positive emotions, such as happiness, freedom, and peace.

In the third dimension of the place attachment model, Raymond, Brown, and Weber (2010) operationalized *nature bonding*, as related to experience or time spent in the natural environment. The *biophilia hypothesis* asserts that an individual’s connection to nature and well-be-
ing is significantly influenced by a relationship with the surrounding natural world (as cited in Raymond, Brown, & Weber, 2010). The gardening participants in my study fondly described the topographical beauty of their home in Burma, as well as the abundance of fruit trees, rivers, and mountains. Most of the gardening participants in my study yearned for their land in Burma. All of them described positive memories of gardening in Burma, connected to the land all around them. During interviews, through the use of photographs and recollections of living and gardening in Burma, gardening participants enthusiastically described the trees, mountains, and rivers surrounding their gardens. While talking about the landscape, gardening participants reminisced about missing home, occasionally with notes of wistfulness, grief, and loss, clearly illustrating examples of nature bonding.

Finally, as described in chapter four, gardening participants in my study provided examples of social bonding, the fourth dimension of the place attachment model (Raymond, Brown, & Weber, 2010). As described by the participants, social bonding is evident in the context of community, family, and shared activities, such as cooking, gardening, and eating meals together in Burma.

**Application of the Place Attachment Model in Philadelphia**

Regarding overall place attachment, place interactions occur within the garden on a routine basis, in the form of such tasks as cultivating, planting, and harvesting. These routine place interactions provide gardening participants with the opportunity to form a bond to place (or place attachment), within the community garden. In the community garden in Philadelphia, garden participants maintained agricultural practices just as they did in Burma, despite the differences in topography, climate and an urban environment. For example, strong place attachment, as well as
place dependence, to Burma and then Philadelphia, especially the land, impelled Naw Moo to accompany the program director to court.

Place dependence is evident as gardening participants relied on the land provided by the city, as well as irrigation from the city, to plant native Burmese vegetables. Each year, these gardening participants grow native foods in the community garden, as well as work together to harvest and cook their traditional meals from the garden, evident of the dimension of social bonding. Many examples of social bonding in the community garden were described in chapter six, including frequent conversations about planning and organizing the garden, as well as observations about the growth of their plants. Considering place identity, these gardening participants formed values, memories, and feelings about the community garden in Philadelphia, as evident by examples of stewardship for the garden, described in chapter six. These gardening participants spent hours in the community garden, often daily, checking on the growth of their plants, cultivating, harvesting, and planting vegetables, all tasks that provide evidence of nature bonding.

Theoretical Refinement with Regards to Place Attachment

Raymond et al. (2010) acknowledged that their model does not account for an affective or well-being component of place attachment, although they note that place identity and nature bonding include emotional connections about physical settings. In this study, I very much sought information about the influence of place attachment on well-being. This may, perhaps, account for a shift to the idea of home within my study. All of the gardening participants expressed positive feelings of attachment toward Philadelphia. The community garden in Philadelphia elicited memories of gardening in Burma. However, they continued to miss their home country of Burma and all the personal memories of relationships within the context of the natural environment.
Gardening participants described emotions about their homeland in Burma, as well as emotions about gardening in Philadelphia. The emotional salience of place - as well as home - needs to be a priority for researchers (Gurney, 1997).

**Understanding Home as a Special Type of Place**

Specifically, with regards to home, my research deepens our understandings of home as a core place of belonging, healing, and ease. Using my study to consider the application of Raymond, Brown, and Weber’s place attachment model (2010) within a conversation about home - as a special type of place – points to how these four dimensions of place identity, place dependence, social bonding, and nature bonding might apply well to our understandings of making a place into a home. In other words, for a place to be called home, one must feel socially connected, bonded to the natural environment, dependent on the land, and have an identity shaped by this environment. In an ideal world, home can be a special type of place.

Findings in my study are comparable to recent studies of refugee community gardens that have found similar benefits related to gardening and well-being, including improvements in physical health, social interactions, and mental health. In particular, as related to gardening and immigrants, recent studies increasingly undergird the premise that participation in community gardens or other natural settings enhances well-being, including improvements in *physical health, social interactions, and mental health* (Egli, Oliver, & Tautolo, 2016; Shanahan, Thomas, Barber, Brymer, Cox, Dean, Depledge, Fuller, Hartig, Irvine, Jones, Kikillus, Lovell, Mitchell, Niemelä, Nieuwenhuijsen, Pretty, Townsend, Heezik, Warber, & Gaston, 2019; Lampert, Costa, Santos, Sousa, Ribeiro, & Freire, 2021).
Mechanisms of Application of the Place Attachment Model

Raymond, Brown, and Weber’s (2010) place attachment model is exemplary and provides a framework to understand and deepen the concept of place attachment, including its dimensions of place identity, place dependence, nature bonding and social bonding. However, beyond understanding the place attachment model, I sought to explore this critical question: What are the actual mechanisms of how this re-creation of place, or place-making, actually occurs? I posit that the actual re-creation of place in the context of a community garden occurs through these four concepts, previously described in this paper, or what might be referred to as the mechanisms for place attachment during resettlement: emplacement, rererritorialization, spatial routinization, and continuity maintenance. Building on Raymond et al.’s (2010) place attachment model, I propose a new conceptual model for immigrant and refugee resettlement: “Uprooted-Re-Rooted-Planted” (see Figure 2). This new conceptual model underscores the need to consider the emotional bonds that people have with places, as well as the outcomes of culturally-competent place-making, such as enhanced well-being.

This process of place-making has been proposed as a way individuals can resolve the psychological issues related to displacement, as it helps refugees to, among other processes, ingrain meaning in places of resettlement (Sampson & Gifford, 2010; Easthope, 2004). Turton (2005) referred to the concept of emplacement, or how refugees create meaning in the site of resettlement through recounting stories of their place of origin and the re-creation of familiar features from the former place, including familiar objects and mementos. The gardening plots in the Philadelphia community garden represent emplacement, as previously described in this paper. In this case, the familiar objects and mementos were Burmese seeds, plants and vegetables to main-
tain one of their cultural traditions and rituals of cooking, eating and socializing together. During re-settlement for the Mursi tribe in Africa, Turton (2005) stated:

Most Mursi were then able to see themselves as occupying a place that was physically and morally central in relation to the outside world, a place which they could still see as the source of the norms and values which gave purpose and meaning to their lives (p. 275).

In a mixed methods study, Sampson and Gifford (2010) studied the relationship between place-making, well-being, and resettlement among 120 refugee youth in Australia aged 11 to 19 years old within the first year of their arrival. Sampson and Gifford (2010) concluded, “Identity and community is disrupted or deterritorialized” (p. 117). Study participants expressed strong affiliations with gardens at home or school, outdoor public green spaces, trees, and flowers. Brun (2001) defined reterritorialization as the way in which displaced people re-establish social networks and cultural practices in newly defined spaces. In my study findings, these gardening participants re-established their social networks, cultural practices, and agrarian traditions in the Philadelphia community gardening program through reterritorialization.

An example of reterritorialization is evident when Naw Moo and the program director attended a court hearing about the land preservation for the community gardening program and the land was permanently designated for the community garden plots. Another example of reterritorialization occurred when gardening participants sparred over a water hydrant to irrigate the garden. These gardeners resisted the efforts of some Philadelphia community residents who rebelled against their efforts to maintain a garden in their neighborhood. These gardeners had to
establish clear boundaries and limits with their opponents and stake their claim over the community garden.

As previously mentioned in this study, positive and strong place attachment is established through the process of *spatial routinization*, within the context of a secure base (Helly, Efrat, & Yosef, 2021). Although the Philadelphia community garden was not initially a “secure base” because of the opposition these gardeners first experienced, the garden gradually became a secure base with the assistance of the refugee organization, especially Joel Arnold, the program director.

For the gardeners, embodied and routine tasks in the community garden included planting, cultivating, and harvesting. Li, Hodgetts, and Ho (2010) referred to routine gardening tasks, such as watering, as “emplaced identities” (p. 787). Consistency of routine is important to support family cohesion, especially as many refugee families have experienced significant (and sometimes permanent) disruption to the family unit (Pejic, Alvarado, Hess, and Groark, 2017). Embodied experiences within the context of a place facilitates place attachment, such as riding a bicycle, gardening (literally planting roots), and hiking in the woods, as well as the length of time one has spent in a place subsequently forming place-related memories (Lewicka, 2013).

The fortitude exhibited by these gardening participants to maintain their agrarian tradition of gardening, is consistent with the notion of *continuity maintenance*, described by Elizabeth Colson (1971). In her account of the Gwembe who were forcibly displaced by Zambia’s Kariba dam, villagers adapted to their new environment by imposing familiar imprints of old neighborhood names. The Gwembe were also dependent on the land for agriculture. The Miyaka villagers, a Gwembe community, likely fared the best during resettlement, receiving alluvial land that allowed them to continue farming tobacco as a cash crop and plant winter gardens. On the
other hand, the Chezia villagers were re-located to land that was not conducive to growing crops and did not fare as well. For gardening participants in this study, gardening provided them an opportunity to continue with Burmese agrarian traditions in Philadelphia. Therefore, *continuity maintenance* prevented a “rupture of continuity with the place from which they had moved” (Turton, 2005, p. 275). While working in the garden in Philadelphia elicits positive memories of gardening in Burma, these past memories of gardening in Burma can help facilitate the transition that immigrants and refugees must make to Philadelphia.

Li, Hodgetts, & Ho (2010) also defined continuity maintenance as “people’s attempts to create continuity in their identities and lives across countries” (p. 787). Specifically, these scholars provided an example of continuity maintenance with this observation: “Reflecting on life back in China is also a process of reassembling fragments from one’s past to make sense of the present and to create some continuity between one’s old life and new life” (p. 791). Moreover, they stated, “Gardening is a means of putting down roots, of rethinking the self and making a place of one’s own” (p. 794), as well as developing and maintaining a sense of self and belonging. For participants in my study, gardening provided them with the opportunity to maintain Burmese agrarian traditions in Philadelphia. Specifically, my findings illustrate how these gardeners maintained planting native Burmese vegetables, cooking traditional meals with garden vegetables, and sharing meals together - all examples of continuity maintenance.

**New Conceptual Model for Immigrant and Refugee Resettlement**

I began this research with the objective to write about how immigrants and refugees can re-create place in a community gardening program and how place-making can mitigate the negative consequences of displacement, supported by a theoretical framework based on Raymond,
Brown, and Weber’s (2010) place attachment model. Though many of my findings are well-supported by Raymond, Brown, and Weber’s place attachment model (2010), my analyses undergird the necessity to create a new conceptual model for immigrant and refugee resettlement.

Based on this place attachment model (Raymond, Brown, & Weber, 2010) and these mechanisms of place attachment, I propose a new conceptual model for refugee resettlement (see Figure 2). This new model, “Uprooted-Re-Rooted-Planted,” emphasizes the following: empowerment, salutogenesis, cultural competence, and community support to help mitigate the traumatic experiences of forced displacement endured by many immigrants and refugees.

Empowerment has been defined as a multi-level process whereby individuals gain control over their lives, participate democratically in the life of the community and critically understand their environment (Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995). Empowerment theory explores the environmental influences of social problems and emphasizes the well-being and collaboration of participants, seeking to improve the quality of life in a community (Perkins & Zimmerman, 1995). Pejic, Alvarado, Hess, and Groark (2017) emphasized strengths-based interventions for the ultimate goal of well-being to empower refugee families.

Social workers can empower displaced immigrant and refugee populations, by becoming knowledgeable about place-making and the benefits of place-making as a salutogenic and culturally-competent intervention. Displacement is often emphasized and it is the re-creation of place or home, or place-making, that needs to be emphasized (Turton, 2005) for the objective of well-being. Community-based programs, including community gardens, provide social workers with the opportunity to mobilize and advocate for the right to place (or home), prioritizing the value of human lives – individually and collectively – within the natural environment.
As a profession, it is imperative that social workers become increasingly culturally competent. The NASW requires that social workers develop cultural competency, defined in the *Standards and Indicators for Cultural Competence in Social Work Practice* (NASW, 2015) as the following:

Cultural competence requires social workers to examine their own cultural backgrounds and identities while seeking out the necessary knowledge, skills, and values that can enhance the delivery of services to people with varying cultural experiences associated with their race, ethnicity, gender, class, sexual orientation, religion, age, or disability [or other cultural factors] (NASW, 2015, p. 65).

Many scholars emphasize that interventions for refugee populations should be within the context of community support (as indicated earlier in this paper), such as community centers, for social interactions (Cardozo, Talley, Burton, & Crawford, 2004; Kargin & Trix, 2021), as well as to enhance well-being (Pejic, Alvarado, Hess, & Groark, 2017). Community-based interventions serve as “a pedagogy which must be forged with, not for, the oppressed (whether individuals or peoples) in the incessant struggle to regain their humanity” (p. 48). Freire posed the question of how the oppressed can develop the pedagogy of their liberation. In this case, the Karen and Chin gardening participants, formerly oppressed in their home countries, can develop the pedagogy of their liberation within the context of a community-based program, such as community gardening programs hosted by refugee organizations.

This proposed model may help facilitate immigrants and refugees acclimate to their new host regions. Borwick et al. (2013) found that refugees were able to move forward from past traumatic experiences when they focused on new possibilities to shape their future. Their find-
ings are based on the concept of post-traumatic growth, or how cognitive processes can help individuals cope with traumatic events (such as forced displacement), that leads to thriving, personal growth, new insights, a new sense of meaning and purpose in life, changes in perception, relationships, and life priorities (Li & Francis, 2014; Woodward & Joseph, 2003). Furthermore, personal characteristics of individuals, such as self-confidence, locus of control, and dispositional optimism might facilitate the relationship between traumatic experience and post-traumatic growth (Woodward & Joseph, 2003).

According to Woodward and Joseph (2003), there are three possible outcomes of traumatic experiences: survival, recovery, or thriving. Those individuals who survive do not resume their baseline level of psychological functioning. Individuals who recover return to their baseline level of functioning. Finally, those individuals who thrive, progress beyond their baseline level of functioning and experience personal growth (Woodward & Joseph, 2003). This concept of post-traumatic growth is similar to the construct of resilience (Li & Francis, 2014). However, resilience emphasizes the resumption of pre-trauma levels of psychological functioning (Li & Francis, 2014). Post-traumatic growth facilitates positive changes and enhanced functioning after trauma. Umer and Elliott (2019) postulated that ‘protective factors’ are an integral part of recovery for refugees who have experienced traumatic migrations. The four concepts of empowerment, salutogenesis, cultural competence, and community support might be considered ‘protective factors.’

This new proposed conceptual model for immigration and refugee resettlement, integrates Raymond, Brown, and Weber's 2010 place attachment model (see Figure 2) and the mechanisms of how this model can be applied. It culminates with the idea that re-creation of place in
the context of a community-gardening program is an empowering, culturally-competent, and salutogenic intervention that emphasizes community support. These are all essential factors necessary to help improve the experiences of immigrant and refugee resettlement. Essentially, this model exemplifies Woodward and Joseph’s (2003) notion of thriving after a traumatic experience, such as forced displacement.

Limitations of This Study

This was a cross-sectional research design and more longitudinal studies are necessary "to explore well-being, psychological health and adaptation to life in a new country over time,” as well as mixed methods research (Rosbrook & Schweitzer, 2010, p. 170). There is limited generalizability of this study, as it is specifically about Karen and Chin populations.

Biases can impact the responses of study participants. One such bias is respondent bias. I am a Caucasian, Ukrainian-Jewish female, and it is possible that gardening participants might have interacted differently with me if I were Karen or Chin. American concepts might have been misunderstood during the translation of bilingual interpreters, who were fluent in Karen and Chin. Karen and Chin are also different ethnic minority groups with different languages, history and cultural traditions (Rosbrook & Schweitzer, 2010).

Social desirability bias might have been an issue if participants provided answers to questions they thought I might have wanted to hear. Reactivity was also a concern. Reactivity refers to the “potentially distorting effects of the researcher’s presence on participants’ beliefs and behavior” (Padgett, 2008, p. 184). Distance and controlled conditions can protect against reactive effects in quantitative research, but not in qualitative research relationships because of the closeness.
Establishing rapport and trust might have been a challenge in this study, but my clinical and relational skills as a therapist, as well as experience working with immigrants and refugees at an inner-city community health center for five years, were beneficial. Despite differences between myself and my participants related to race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and language barriers, subjectivity was managed through reflexivity or “bracketing,” which refers to a “conscientious effort to suspend assumptions, beliefs, and feelings in order to better understand the experience of respondents” (Padgett, 2008, p. 75). Also, because of language barriers, some questions were misinterpreted by the study participants, even with the facilitation of translators.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, I interviewed all participants on Zoom with translators. I worked closely with the interpreters to achieve consistency of the meaning of the interview questions. Children often interrupted and many study participants closeted themselves in a bedroom for privacy. Initially, I planned to interview participants in the community garden. Consequently, the altered setting may have affected the overall tone of the interview and perhaps participants might have interacted differently in the context of the community gardens. At times, technological glitches interrupted the flow of conversation (e.g., the Internet connection was unstable or completely disconnected). Also, social isolation because of the pandemic may have impacted the moods of the participants. Some of the participants described feeling disappointed about not going to the garden and the lack of socialization because of the pandemic. Also, only one male gardening participant volunteered for an interview, so these interviews primarily reflected a feminine perspective. Interestingly, the United Nations’ Food and Agriculture Organization estimates that “women grow half of the food in Asia” (www.vice.com).
Implications for Social Work Practice

Despite the limitations of this study, my findings suggest several important implications for social work practice, research, and teaching. Between 1992 and 1995, the journal Social Work published four articles emphasizing the significance of the inclusion of the physical environment within the domain of social work (Zapf, 2010). In 2009, the NASW acknowledged that the natural environment is a “critical component of the person-in-environment perspective” (Lucas-Darby, 2011, p. 114). Besthorn (2014) referred to this as ecosocial work, integrating the natural world and the theory and practice of social work. Coates and Gray (2012) acknowledged the inclusion of the natural environment as an integral component of social work theory, discourse and practice.

Coates and Gray (2012) also summarized the extent of contemporary social work involvement with the natural environment, addressing issues such as food security (e.g., community gardening programs, urban agriculture, and community-supported agriculture), crisis intervention related to natural disasters, responses to toxic waste exposure (e.g., lead levels in water), and environmental justice (e.g., addressing issues of racism and poverty in polluted areas). Siporin (1981) also expanded the definition of one’s environment to include the land, energy, and technology. Furthermore, Siporin (1981) described the reciprocal and interactive relationship within the natural environment as necessary to be a “goodness of fit,” similar to the concept of proximal processes. As the social work profession now recognizes the natural environment as part of the person-in-environment perspective, “Uprooted-Re-Rooted-Planted” offers a salutogenic approach in the context of the natural environment, such as community gardens.
Social workers need to recognize that the effects of colonization, neoliberalism, and capitalism on displaced populations have resulted not only in the loss of ancestral lands, the right to self-governance, and self-determination, but also extreme violation of the basic human right to health in mind, body, and spirit. In the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted in 1948, stated under Article 14.1, “Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution” (www.un.org). Understanding how relevant community gardening programs are for the well-being of immigrants and refugees potentially integrates all six of the core social work values delineated by the NASW: service, social justice, dignity and worth of the person, importance of human relationships, integrity, and competence (www.socialworkers.org).

“Uprooted-Re-Rooted-Planted” aligns with the third competency of the 2015 Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS), to advance human rights and social, economic, and environmental justice. These EPAS competencies are established by the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) for the rigorous accreditation of undergraduate and graduate social work programs in colleges and universities nationwide.

This model also meets one of the twelve Grand Challenges of Social Work, specifically “creating social responses to a changing environment” (www.grandchallengesforsocialwork.org). It meets the NASW standards for social workers to acquire cultural competency. This model also supports Article 14.1 in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted in 1948, “Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution” (www.un.org).

Implementation of this new conceptual model requires the skills of micro, mezzo, and macro-based social workers in clinical or community practice to advocate and develop new policies to ensure the health and well-being of immigrants and refugees. Strong community partner-
ships between social workers and communities, especially resettlement agencies and different Burmese refugee ethnic groups, are imperative to meet the short- and long-term social services needs of this population, as well as to facilitate successful culturally appropriate interventions and community integration (Fike & Androff, 2016; Cardozo, Talley, Burton, & Crawford, 2004). Schweitzer, Brough, Romans, and Asic-Kobe (2011) concluded that “successful resettlement of refugees requires that government bodies and service providers respond effectively to the mental health needs of newly arrived people” (p. 300).

In the 1950s and 1960s, Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire, initiated a national literacy program for peasants and slum-dwellers. The foundation of his program was based on his methodology that emphasized awareness and acknowledgement of the problem or situation, an analysis of the factors that contributed to the problem and acting to change the problem or situation (Freire, 1970). In response to the trauma, depression, anxiety and social isolation often experienced as consequences of displacement by refugees, social workers can apply Freire’s framework to address the consequences of such displacement. Social workers can acknowledge the problem of displacement, analyze the factors that contribute to the consequences of displacement, and act to change the problems related to displacement through advocating, promoting, and supporting sustained community interventions for immigrants and refugees, such as place-making in community gardening programs.

Place-based pedagogies in social work education or “place-based social work,” can promote place-making for refugees as a salutogenic approach for resettlement. For instance, Professor Emerita Dr. Susan Kemp teaches a course on “People, Place, and Equity” at the University of Washington School of Social Work. Styres, Haig-Brown, and Blimkie (2013) promote the idea of
a “pedagogy of land” for educational curriculum. David Sobel, a pioneer and advocate of place-based education, promotes place-based education as experiential learning that emphasizes students’ appreciation of the natural world, creating awareness of positive contributions to society and increases community relationships (as cited in Styres, Haig-Brown, & Blimkie, 2013).

Conclusion

Presently, the mental health profession has few evaluated refugee mental health interventions (Albers, Ariccio, Weiss, Dessi, & Bonaiuto, 2021). Albers et al. (2021) reviewed the literature and similar to my first research question in this paper, these scholars explored the importance of place attachment to enhance refugees’ well-being during the resettlement process. They concluded that more research is necessary about the role of people-place bonds in the promotion of refugees’ well-being (Albers et al., 2021).

My qualitative study supplements the current literature on place-making for refugees to promote well-being and integration into the new host society. In particular, my study provides evidence that Karen and Chin gardening participants can re-create a place and/or a home, literally by planting roots in the community gardening program in Philadelphia. Similarly, Abdelhady (2008), stated that Lebanese refugees felt that they could rebuild home (and therefore, place), by maintaining their Lebanese culture and traditions in their host countries.

These findings help to operationalize and conceptualize the meaning of place and home, as well as provide evidence for the relevance of place-making, within the context of a community-based program. I want to conclude with immense gratitude to all the gardening participants who contributed to this study, as it would not be possible without them. In honor of them, I con-
clude with this quote from Priscilla, one of the gardening participants: “Thank you. I just want you to…remember us through this garden.”
Fig. 1. Three-pole and four-dimensional conceptual model of place attachment. “Note: Place identity and place dependence are included in the same pole (personal context) because they are related to highly personalized connections to place which are either symbolic (identity) or functional (dependence) in nature. They may form through memories, experiences or events which are unrelated to the wider community or to the natural environment” (Raymond, Brown, & Weber, 2010, p. 425). Reprinted with permission.
Fig. 2. “Uprooted-Re-Rooted-Planted” - Conceptual model for immigrant and refugee resettlement
Fig. 3. Murals at the SEAMAAC community garden
Fig. 4. Photos of the three SEAMAAC community gardens
Fig. 5. One gardener’s example of protecting his vegetables constructed with scraps of material
Fig. 6. Distributing vegetable seedlings to community gardeners in spring
Appendix A
Recruitment Script for Organization

To Whom It May Concern:

I am a Ph.D. Candidate at the Graduate School of Social Work and Social Research at Bryn Mawr College conducting research about how immigrants and refugees experience a sense of place in community gardening programs. I am seeking to interview immigrants and refugees who participate in your community gardening program for one interview that will last approximately 45-60 minutes.

I plan to recruit and interview 20 community gardening participants for this study. Participants will receive $25 cash upon completion of a full interview. I will provide all study participants with an introductory letter and a brief screening tool if they are interested in my study. I will leave this material with staff, as well as ask for approval to post a flyer about my study. I am seeking to interview immigrants and refugees from any country, of any age and any gender. My screening tool will identify participants who are required to meet three criteria: they must be at least 18 years of age (with no maximum age), English-speaking (although I will interview non-English speakers with a translator), and participate in the gardening program. I am seeking to interview gardening participants in the spring through the fall of 2020. I would like to participate in the gardening program while I interview study participants with your approval.

I will maintain confidentiality of all study participants and I will use pseudonyms. I will not identify the name of the organization. At the time of the interview, I will give all study participants an informed consent to sign that clearly outlines the parameters of the study. I will audio record all interviews and all information will be deleted after transcription of the interviews. If study participants refuse to be audio recorded, I will take notes and destroy those notes after transcription.

Thank you very much for your assistance and I look forward to hearing from you. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns at 484-380-5590 or astein@brynmawr.edu.

Regards,
Amy

Amy E. Stein, MSW, LCSW, Ph.D. Candidate
Bryn Mawr College
Graduate School of Social Work and Social Research
astein@brynmawr.edu
Appendix B
Introductory Letter and Screening Tool

Dear Study Participant:

I am a doctoral student at the Graduate School of Social Work and Social Research at Bryn Mawr College. I am conducting a study about the concept of place in community gardens.

Any information you provide will be confidential. If you are interested, please complete the screening tool below. If you qualify for the study, I will contact you to give you more information. If you agree to participate, I will arrange a 60-minute interview with you in the community garden and you will receive $25 cash upon completion of the interview. If you have any questions about this study, please contact me at 484-380-5590.

Are you over the age of 18? YES NO

Do you speak English? YES NO

Have you signed up to work in the garden? YES NO

What is the best way to contact you? Please provide contact information.

Telephone numbers
_______________________________________
_______________________________________

Email addresses
_______________________________________
_______________________________________
Appendix C
Interview Consent Form

How Do Immigrants and Refugees Experience
A 'Sense of Place' in a Community Garden?

Introduction and Invitation to Participate
I am a Ph.D candidate at the Graduate School of Social Work and Social Research at Bryn Mawr College. I am inviting you to participate in an interview for my dissertation research.

Purpose of Study
I am researching how immigrants and refugees understand the concept of place, the consequences of displacement and how a community garden may offer elements of a “sense of place?” I will analyze this data and look for emergent themes.

What is involved?
The interview will last between 45 to 60 minutes. I will make an audio recording of the interview and transcribe it and may take written notes.

Specifically, questions will address what the concept of place means to someone who is an immigrant or refugee.

Confidentiality
The information you share will be kept strictly confidential. I will not share information about whether or not you have participated in this project with anyone. I will never use your name, personal identifying information, or other identifying information about the community gardening program, where you live, or where you work. There are benches in each community garden where we may have a private conversation for this interview. If there is not enough privacy in the garden, we will meet in the program organization’s office.

I will blot out your name on this consent form. I am the only person who will be able to listen to the audio recording. I will turn off the iCloud storage files and transfer all audio recordings to a Bryn Mawr One Drive folder (not shared with others) within 24 hours and then delete the recordings from my cell phone. Upon conclusion of all interviews, I will analyze the transcript from the interview and remove anything that might serve to identify you, including geographic locations and names of particular individuals you might mention in the transcript.

Risks of participating
The risks of participating are minimal. The ways that confidentiality will be protected have already been described. In the unlikely event that you find what you discussed in the interview is upsetting to you, please inform me. I will provide you with names and numbers of individuals or agencies that can provide further assistance.
**Benefits of participating**
Although being interviewed will not help you directly, it is also possible that having a chance to share your story will be an interesting and possibly a rewarding experience for you. In addition, your participation will assist me in the pursuit of engaging in strong qualitative interview research in the future.

**Payment**
If you decide to participate in this study, I will give you $25 cash upon completion of the interview.

If you have questions about the project after the interview is over, please feel free to contact me:
Amy E. Stein, MSW, LCSW, Ph.D. Candidate
astein@brynmawr.edu
484-380-5590

If after talking with me you still have concerns, you may contact the chair of my dissertation committee (please see below) or the Bryn Mawr College Institutional Review Board (IRB) director, Gary McDonogh, Ph.D at 610-526-5051 or gmcdonog@brynmawr.edu.

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**Your participation is completely voluntary**
You do not have to participate in this project. There will be no negative consequences if you decide not to participate. No one, other than me, will know if you have participated in this educational project.

If you decide to be interviewed, you can stop the interview at any time. You can also refuse to answer any questions that you do not want to answer.

By signing this consent form, you are indicating that you have had all of your questions about the interview answered to your satisfaction and that you have been given a copy of this consent form.

Participant printed name: ________________________
Participant signature: ________________________ Date: __________________
Interviewer to complete for EACH interview

Interviewer: Ask participant question and mark for each person interviewed

Are you 18 or older? Yes _____ No______
Have you read this consent form or had it read to you? Yes_____ No______
Were all of your questions about the study answered to your satisfaction? Yes___ No___
Have you been given a copy of this consent form? Yes_____ No________
Do you agree to participate in this research? Yes_____ No_______
Do you give permission to record the interview? Yes___ No___

Interviewer mark:

Date of interview: ______
Interviewer name (printed): ______________________________________________
Interviewer signature: ___________________________________________________
Appendix D
Interview Protocol and Interview Guide
(Translation will be provided if needed)

Research Questions:

How do community gardening programs help participants re-create a sense of place as viewed within a place-attachment framework consisting of place identity, place dependence, nature and social bonding? How does participation in a community gardening program help with the consequences of displacement? How do community gardens improve the well-being of immigrants and refugees?

Length of interview: 45-60 minutes

Focus of interview: Synchronic

1. **Orientation to the Interview**

   A. Review the interview process and informed consent.
   B. Review guidelines for audio recording.
   C. Review guidelines for compensation.
   D. Ask study participant if he/she/they has (have) any questions.

2. **Semi-Structured Interview**

   A. **Concept of Place**

      1. Conceptual meaning

         a. What does the word “home” mean to you?
         b. How would you describe your home and the land?

         *Probe for specific examples*

   B. **Community Gardening Program for Immigrants and Refugees**

      1. Community garden - general questions:

         a. What made you decide to get involved with the community garden?
         b. Can you describe what a day is like for you in the garden? *Probe for activities in the garden during and after gardening*
         c. Who gardens in it? *Probe for ages, genders, races/ethnicity*
         d. Is the community garden important for you? If so, why?
         e. What do you look forward to doing when you come to the garden?
2. Affective/emotional components of gardening

   a. How do you feel when you are at the community garden?
   b. How do you feel about having this land to use to garden?

3. Culture

   a. If you previously gardened or farmed at home, how does the garden remind you of practices related to your country of origin?
   b. Did you farm or garden in your homeland? What did you grow in your homeland?
   c. What do you grow in this garden? What do you do with the food you grow? *Probe for growing food native to one’s country of origin*
   b. Are there any celebrations or customs/rituals practiced in the garden?

4. Community and identity

   a. Are there any social gatherings in this community garden? If so, can you please describe them? *Probe for social interactions such as talking and eating together*
   b. Do you talk to other gardeners? If so, what do you talk about?
   c. How might a community garden contribute to how you think about yourself in the community? *Probe for a sense of belonging, identity*

5. Physical elements of place

   a. How would you describe the layout of the community garden?
   b. Does the garden remind you of home? If so, how does the garden remind you of home? *Probe for physical home, neighborhood, land*

3. Debriefing

   A. Is there anything else I should ask you about these topics? *Probe for questions about home and the garden*

   B. Do you have any suggestions as to how I can improve this interview?
Appendix E:
Demographic Survey of Community Gardening Participants

Country of origin: ____________________________________________

Length of time in the U.S.: ______________________________________

What is your gender? □ Male
□ Female
□ OTHER __________

Age: □ 18-29
□ 30-39
□ 40-49
□ 50-59
□ 60-69
□ 70+

Highest Educational Level: □ Less than high school
□ Some high school
□ High school/GED
□ Some college
□ Associate's degree
□ Bachelor's degree
□ Master's degree or higher
Appendix F

Interested in being a part of a study on community gardening?

Bryn Mawr College doctoral student seeking participants to interview about community gardening experiences

$25 cash offered

Please contact Amy E. Stein, MSW, LCSW, PhD Candidate at 484-380-5590
astein@brynmawr.edu
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