Bhutan, Refugees, and the Benefits of Diversity

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Conflicts of Interest

None.
Objectives

Discuss the history of Bhutan, the concept of Gross National Happiness, and the enforced restrictions on cultural diversity in that country.

Explore the health consequences in this particular refugee population.

Provide a comment on historical and recent developments affecting immigrants and refugees in the US and worldwide.

Consider the many benefits of various types of diversity in different settings.
IPP

Created in late 1970s.
Now with 14 counselors and 6 psychiatrists serving refugees, immigrants, and those seeking or have been granted asylum.
Currently with about 1,100 active patients.
Vietnamese, Cambodian, Mien, Lao, Russian/Ukrainian, Bosnian, Somali, Ethiopian, Arabic-speaking, Farsi-speaking, Bhutanese, Burmese, Spanish-speaking.
Includes Torture Treatment Center of Oregon.
News Headlines of Bhutan


“What can we learn about happiness from Bhutan?” – CNN, 9/6/2016.

“In Bhutan, happiness is policy and tiger numbers are on the rise” – IUCN, 3/17/2016.
His Majesty the Fourth King of Bhutan, Jigme Singye Wangchuck in the 1970s.

“Gross National Happiness is more important than Gross National Product.”

Initially formulated with 4 pillars:

- Good governance
- Sustainable socio-economic development
- Cultural preservation
- Environmental conservation
Gross National Happiness

- Now expanded into 9 domains:
  - Psychological wellbeing
  - Health
  - Education
  - Time use
  - Cultural diversity and resilience
  - Good governance
  - Community vitality
  - Ecological diversity and resilience
  - Living standards

GNH has Nine Domains:
- These appear in the 10th plan and are Measured in the GNH Index.
Gross National Happiness

Cultural preservation → Cultural Diversity and Resilience.

Four Indicators within this category:
- Speak Native Language
- Cultural Participation
- Artistic Skills
- Driglam Namzha (Code of Etiquette and Conduct).
Were invited to Bhutan in late 1800s and early 1900s to clear jungle in southern part of the country.

Were granted citizenship initially for owning land and being a resident for 10 years.

Many became farmers in the area, growing in number and maintaining cultural and religious practices.
Forced Displacement, Trauma, and Torture in Bhutan


- Government demanded conformity.
- Reclassified citizenship requirements
- Language
- Religion
- Dress code
- Cultural beliefs and practices

More than 100,000 people were expelled from the country.

- Harassment, beatings, arrests, torture, burning of homes, school closures.
- Many were forced to sign forms renouncing claims to their homeland.
- Ethnic cleansing.
Eventually, about 108,000 people lived in seven refugee camps in Nepal for more than 20 years.

Bhutan has refused to allow anyone to return.

Most have been resettled - about 91,000 have come to the US.
Health Consequences

- Suicide rate of around 20 / 100,000 people (about twice the US national average).
- “Nepali-Bhutanese syndrome.”
  - “Left their soul in Bhutan.”
    - Characterized by body aches/pains, headaches, depression, lethargy, sitting for long periods of time, etc.
- Lots of HTN, Diabetes, Pain syndromes.
- They long to return to Bhutan.
Refugee Program in the United States
International Law


- UN Conventions Against Torture – 1984/1987
The shifting origins of refugees to the U.S. over time

Number of refugees admitted to the U.S., by region of origin of principal applicant and fiscal year

1975 Indochina Migration and Refugee Assistance Act results in increased refugees from Vietnam


1989 U.S. raises quotas on Soviet refugees

2004 50% of overall admitted refugees in 2004 were from Somalia, Cuba and Laos

2008 Burmese and Bhutanese were granted refugee status

1999 U.S. accepts refugees from Kosovo

Source: Refugee Processing Center, 1975-2016.
Note: Data do not include special immigrant visas and certain humanitarian parole entrants. Europe includes Russia. Asia includes Middle Eastern and North African countries. Africa includes sub-Saharan Africa, but also Sudan and South Sudan. Latin America includes Caribbean. Data for fiscal 2016 are through June 10, 2016; fiscal year ends Sept. 30.
Refugee Admissions to Oregon
Cato Institute released an article in Sept. 2016 –

Since 1975 to the end of 2015, there have been 700,000 asylum-seekers and 3.25 million refugees who have entered the United States.

4 of the asylum seekers and 20 of the refugees allegedly became terrorists and 7 total people were killed in the US as a result.

Refugees are already typically scrutinized and vetted for anywhere from 1.5 – 2 years prior to resettlement.

The risk of admitting a refugee who eventually becomes a terrorist can never be zero but can be reduced with screening and processing.
Economic burden or benefit of hosting refugees?

❖ Not as clear as you may think.
❖ Denmark data
❖ Immigrants and refugees are different.
❖ Taxes paid (although delayed) and demands for more products/services are gains to the country and may make up for benefits they receive as a whole.

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**A long, expensive slog**

- **Employment, percentage point difference relative to native workers**: 25 20 15 10 5 0
- **Years in country**: Less than 6, 6 to 10, 11 to 20, More than 20

- **Main source of income derived from social benefits, percentage point difference relative to natives**: 0 5 10 15 20 25
- **Years in country**: Less than 6, 6 to 10, 11 to 20, More than 20

*Immigrants born in Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Somalia, Eritrea, and the former Yugoslavia

Source: IMF

†Based on survey data, 2002-12

Economist.com
“In the interest of cultural diversity, we’ve hired Jason, here, who owns a number of hip-hop CDs.”
Types of Diversity

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Structural diversity –
The proportion of diverse individuals in a given setting.

Curricular diversity –
Classes, workshops, trainings, and other programmatic efforts that expose people to diversity-related content.

Interactional diversity –
Interpersonal contact with diverse individuals, both horizontal and vertical in orientation.
Health benefits gained from diversity?

Does exposure to and engagement with people different than you bring measurable psychological or other health benefits in some way? What are those benefits?

What types of diversity are most effective in providing those benefits?

Is the presence of different types of people enough on its own? What are the secondary effects of this?

Is exposure to diversity earlier in life more impactful?
Diversity and Learning

Both whites and minority groups benefit academically and socially from racial/ethnic diversity in university settings.

Racial diversity and even informal interacts with others leads to more complex thinking and improves academic outcomes and social growth among college students.

Critical thinking skills found to be predicted by the number of diversity courses students take and engagement with diversity of all kinds (interactions with people from different political, religious, and national backgrounds).
Diversity and Learning

- The mere presence of minority groups appears to indirectly improve cognitive outcomes among majority group members.
  - Higher integrative complexity on essays.
  - Consider wider range of information and taking different perspectives and viewpoints.
  - Improved reading comprehension for whites on race-relevant passages.
Diversity and Learning

- It is very clear for minority groups that contact with people from their group is beneficial in multiple ways.
  - Need for higher numbers of minorities in multiple settings.
  - Overcoming negative stereotypes.
  - Increases self-esteem and beliefs in ability to succeed.
  - Particular importance in having a mentor from within their group.
Diversity and Innovation

- Informational diversity –
  - People from different groups often bring different perspectives, opinions, and beliefs.
- Gender and racial diversity in corporate leadership has been found to improve innovation and financial performance in companies.
- Adding social diversity to a group makes people believe that differences of perspective might exist – and people change their behavior as a result.
“That was a fine report, Barbara. But since the sexes speak different languages, I probably didn’t understand a word of it.”
Intergroup interactions can improve attitudes toward other groups.

Contact can improve attitudes by:
- Enhancing knowledge of the other group.
- Reducing anxiety about interacting with out-group members.
- Increasing empathy and perspective-taking.

Interactions with people outside their main group network are more likely to involve conversations regarding diversity, politics, and women’s rights.
Diversity and Social and Civic Engagement

- Exposure to diversity leads to more actions taken to change and improve society.
  - Civic engagement involving addressing group-based inequalities, promoting intergroup understanding, and exhibiting a desire to create a more egalitarian society.
- Effects in college have been found to extend past college as well.
Conclusion

- Remember the story of Bhutan and its people and the concept of Gross National Happiness.
- Refugees and asylum seekers present a miniscule risk of terrorism to the United States.
- Promoting and increasing diversity is helpful to all involved.
- Resilience - bouncing back and adapting.
  - Foster hope.
  - Act with purpose.
  - Connect with others.
  - Take care of yourself.
References


Human Rights Watch regarding Bhutan


http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/06/17/where-refugees-to-the-u-s-come-from/

http://www.grossnationalhappiness.com/


https://www.theguardian.com/theguardian/2003/jun/14/weekend7.weekend2


