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Was resettlement really a choice? An intersectional analysis of the choices made and agency mobilized by the Bhutanese refugees

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(第三国再定住は本当に自らが選択したものであったのか？ブータン難民の諸選択と自由選択能力に関する交差性分析）

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Summary of the Dissertation

Throughout history, refugees have been a product of geopolitics, and since their rights, obligations, freedoms, and identities are territorially affixed, durable solutions to statelessness are also geopolitical. Attempts to provide refugees durable solutions to redefine their relationship with a state either through repatriation, local integration, or resettlement have become exceedingly difficult. States and the International Refugee Regime (IRR) deal with the predicament of refugees on a case-by-case basis, often by weighing the costs and benefits of durable solutions against their own national interests. States provide sanctuary to refugees who incur low social, political, security, and economic cost, as well as enhance friendly relations and reputations internationally. This holds true in the context of the Bhutanese refugees in South Asia who are the focus of this dissertation. The Bhutanese refugees, most of whom were Lhotshampas from Southern Bhutan, remained in Nepal in a state of limbo for over 20 years. During this time, the general belief among the Bhutanese refugees, the Government of Nepal (GoN), the UNHCR, and other agencies was that they would return to Bhutan. Unfortunately, their presumed temporary displacement turned into protracted statelessness when fifteen bilateral talks between the GoN and the Royal Government of Bhutan (RGoB), along with the Bhutanese refugees' advocacy, activism, peace marches, and 'insurgency,' failed to ensure their safe return to Bhutan. Their situation changed in 2006.

In 2006 the United States, Australia, Canada, Denmark, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, and Sweden (which was later replaced by the United Kingdom) through the UNHCR, proposed to the GoN their intention to resettle more than 60,000 Bhutanese refugees from Nepal (see Siwakoti, 2008). The GoN approved the proposal as an 'interim solution' (see NUCRA, 2010), abandoning its previous 'repatriation only' stance (see Dixit, 2007). The Bhutanese refugees were offered resettlement because, as a 'strategically unimportant' and 'non-Muslim' refugee group, they filled the refugee resettlement quota of the above-mentioned countries without posing any diplomatic or domestic threat to their politics or populace, respectively (Banki, 2008b:48 & K.M. Dixit, personal communication, December 26, 2011).

When third country resettlement as a 'voluntary choice' was first introduced to the Bhutanese refugees in 2006, the refugees were divided in their opinions. Some saw it as a way out of the confinement and poverty of the refugee camps in Nepal and

an opportunity to move to a new country with the potential for a better life and future. Others saw it as an end to any hope in returning to Bhutan to regain their home, their ancestral land, and community. This gave rise to conflict, violence, and clashes between the pro- and anti-resettlement refugees groups. The initial environment of opposition, conflict, violence, and intimidation sharply declined as more refugees started resettling and relaying first-hand information about the resettlement process and their new countries or residence. By 2015 (at the time of my last fieldwork in Nepal), most Bhutanese refugees favored and saw the resettlement process as a positive solution. It had become the main, if not only, source of hope for many, and a source of suffering for few. However, the voluntary resettlement choice offered to the Bhutanese refugee, like most things in life, was not simple. This dissertation will show that for many Bhutanese refugees, resettlement was not a binary opposition choice between relocating to the West or to staying in Nepal. This dissertation, based on the refugees encountered, narratives gathered, and choices expressed during field research in the United States and the refugee camps in Nepal, divides the Bhutanese refugees into five groups. The first group consists of Bhutanese refugees who were unsure about resettlement. This group comprised of elderly and illiterate refugees who either did not know what to choose or who kept changing their mind. The second group consists of elderly men, uneducated youths, refugee leaders, and/or affluent landlords, especially from *Matwali* ethnicities, who chose not to resettle. They chose to stay in Nepal to: a) prevent detachment from their Bhutanese identity, b) avoid separation from their families and communities, and c) prevent downward social mobility. The third group consists of young and educated Bhutanese refugees. They chose to resettle to: a) reintegrate into society and b) have better lives and opportunities, especially for their children and future generations. The fourth group consists of Bhutanese refugee women, (underage) children, 'unregistered' refugees, and refugees with criminal records and/or 'fraud' accusations in Bhutan and/or Nepal who chose to resettle but their choices were irrelevant. Women and underage children especially were often unable to exercise their 'voluntary resettlement choice' because of their subjugated positioning within their patriarchal families. 'Unregistered' refugees and refugees with criminal records and/or 'fraud' accusations, on the other hand, were ineligible for the process. Lastly, the fifth group consists of Bhutanese refugees with health issues and/or disabilities, as well as refugees in mixed (refugees married to local nationals), polygamous, and underage marriages who chose to

resettle but experienced (multiple) obstacles in their resettlement, which they did not envision when they made their resettlement choice. This dissertation will also show that many Bhutanese refugees resettled without a clear understanding of what resettlement offered. Additionally, since options were limited and suspicions ran high that future possibility to stay in Nepal would cease, many refugees unwillingly chose to resettle. In fact, even the ones who felt that they made their choice willingly, did so guided by desperate mindsets of loss, impermanence, and instability.

This dissertation, by looking at the above-mentioned groups of refugees and analyzing their discourses and narratives, will show that Bhutanese refugees' affiliation with different intersecting social categories of gender and sexuality, age, ethnicity and caste, class, 'ableness,' etc. aided or hindered their freedom, autonomy, and resettlement choices. Most adult Lhotshampa men, due to their superior and privileged positioning within their families and communities, were able to exercise their agency and make their choices freely. Women, underage children, unhealthy and disabled refugees, and other disadvantaged groups of refugees, due to the inferior positioning within their families and experiencing sexism, heteronormativity, ageism, classism, ableism, ethnic and caste discriminations, among other systems of oppressions, were either unable to exercise their agency or had it diminished. In most cases, these groups of refugees had no choice, but to conform to the choices of their family members, especially the patriarch. There were, however, some refugees in situations of multiple simultaneous oppressions who could change (or resist) the choices made by their families by negotiating their social, cultural, political roles and expectations; rearranging their relationships with one another and with various institutions and structures; and reshape their multiple, often contradictory, and somewhat malleable, identities.

This dissertation also highlights how the asymmetrical power relations between the refugees, and the resettlement organizations, and countries affected the resettlement choices made and agencies exercised by the Bhutanese refugees. The resettlement organizations and countries exerted and maintained power in their relationships with the Bhutanese refugees. In the name of protecting the refugees and maintaining the integrity of the resettlement process, they exercised discretion in handling Bhutanese refugee resettlement cases, barring some refugees, relationships, and families. Additionally, they imposed domestic (GoN) and Western (CWG) ideologies, norms, and laws on the refugees and their families, which reproduced and

naturalized sexism, ageism, ableism, pro-natalism, classism, ethnic and caste hierarchies, among other systems of oppressions, and discriminated against the refugees and aggravated, if not maintained, inequalities and hierarchies of power among the refugees.

The third country resettlement of Bhutanese refugees favored refugee men, even ones in polygamous and mixed marriages. Refugee men in polygamous marriages could choose to resettle with their 'legal' wives or divorce them to resettle with their 'favorite' wives and children. Meanwhile, their second, third, and consecutive wives and subsequent children lacked legitimacy and were denied refugee status and the choice to resettle. Similarly, refugee men in mixed marriages could resettle with their local wives and children, provided their wives could obtain Nepali/Indian citizenship or passports. Meanwhile, refugee women in mixed marriages had their refugee identity revoked and were also denied the choice to resettle. Unlike polygamous and mixed marriages, 'underage' marriages affected the resettlement choices and impeded the resettlement processes of all family members. As such, women in underage marriages were pressured by families to annul their marriage. This did not mean that all women in polygamous, mixed, and underage relationships had the same fate or experience. In fact, many Bhutanese refugee women took it upon themselves to control their own destiny. Some women, especially young and educated women from high-class and high-caste *Parbatiya* families with the help of their maternal family or on their own, divorced their husbands, (re)gained their refugee status, and qualified for resettlement. These 'empowered' women, especially ones in situations of domestic violence, resisted patriarchy, exercised their agencies, and changed future possibilities for themselves and their children. Similarly, other women stayed back with their husbands, albeit unwillingly, and resisted pressures to divorce and sever family bonds. These women resisted the Westerns norms pertaining to 'ideal' marriages and 'ideal' family compositions. For other refugee women with sedimented intersected identities, divorce or any form of resistance to hegemonic norms was a high bar. They had no choice but to conform to the rules, norms, and expectations presented to them. Like women in 'complicated' marital relationships, Bhutanese refugees who were eager to resettle, broke ties with their sick, disabled, 'criminal' family members and chose to resettle with their nuclear families or alone. They did this to enhance their choice, chance, and speed of resettlement. In doing so, they exercised their suboptimal agency and resisted the

norms and expectations associated with their culture and society. They did, however, accept the Western ideologies of individualism, independence, and 'ideal' family and/or relationships imposed on them by the resettlement organizations and countries. Other refugees in similar situations chose to stay back in Nepal with family members who impeded their choice and chance for resettlement. They exercised their limited agency and picked between the two undesirable options available to them. In doing so, they held on to their families and value systems while resisting Western impositions on their relationships and culture.

Certain groups of Bhutanese refugees, in spite of their differences, shared commonalities in their experiences of privilege and oppression. Unregistered refugees, underage children, refugee women in 'complicated' marital relationships and their children, refugees with 'criminal' accusations, etc. shared similar experiences of disadvantage, which marginalized them from resettlement. In many instances, these groups of refugees shared the connection of being 'unregistered,' which barred them from even having a choice to resettle. Therefore, numerous Bhutanese refugees built (provisional) coalitions and collectively participated in hunger strikes to pressure the GoN and the UNHCR to register them as Bhutanese refugees in Nepal. By doing so, they qualified for resettlement and showed their "ability to craft solutions that deviate from the rules imposed upon them" (Griek, 2012:27). They also reshaped our understanding (and construction) of 'who the Bhutanese refugees are.'

This dissertation, by showcasing the varied perspectives and (multiple) choices made by the Bhutanese refugees, especially how they experienced and responded to resettlement, provides a complex and nuanced understanding about the Bhutanese refugees as well as the third country resettlement process. It also exposes how the concerns of many refugees could be disregarded and left unaddressed when the differences between the refugees, their experiences, and their perceptions are generalized. Additionally, it shows what happens when refugees' intersectional identities and positionings are ignored when formulating programs, policies, and (durable) solutions for them.

This dissertation reveals how Bhutanese refugees navigated the multiple overlapping identities along the axes of gender and sexuality, age, ethnicity and caste, class, 'ableness,' etc., which they experienced simultaneously, to qualify for or reject resettlement. It argues that although the Bhutanese refugees were not powerless, their

agency and freedom of choice were greatly influenced by the hierarchies of power and inequalities amongst them when the resettlement offer was made available.

Keywords: *Bhutanese refugees, resettlement, power, inequality, hierarchy, intersectionality, gender, class, ethnicity and caste, age, education, citizenship, 'ableness,' choice, and agency.*

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LIST OF ABBREVIATION

AHURA	Association for Human Rights Activist
AI	Amnesty International
AMDA	Association of Medical Doctors of Asia
APF	Armed Police Force
AUDIT	Alcohol Use Disorder Identification Test
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BCAP	Bhutanese Community Association of Pittsburgh
BCP	Bhutan Congress Party
BLTF	Boro Liberation Tiger Forces
BMSC	Bhutanese Movement Steering Committee
BNDP	Bhutan National Democratic Party
BPP	Bhutan Peoples Party
BRAVVE	Bhutanese Refugees Aiding Victims of Violence
BRDSCC	Bhutanese Refugees Durable Solutions Coordination Committee
BRRCC	Bhutanese Refugee Resettlement Coordinating Committee
BRRRC	Bhutanese Refugee Representative Repatriation
BRWF	Bhutanese Refugee Women Forum
BSC	Bhutanese State Congress
CBC	Canadian Broadcasting Corporation
CDA	Community Development Approach
CEDW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CID	Citizenship Identity Card
CLT	Critical Legal Theory
CMC	Camp Management Committee
CO	Certificate of Origin
COR Center	Cultural Orientation Resource Center

CRC	Convention of the Rights of the Child
CRT	Critical Race Theory
CVICT	Center for Victims of Torture
CWG	Core Working Group
DAFI	Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative
DFHR	Drukyul Forum for Human Rights
DoI	Declaration of Interest
DSC	Distribution Sub Committee
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNH	Gross National Happiness
GNI	Gross National Income
GNLF	Gorkha National Liberation Front
GoI	Government of India
GoN	Government of Nepal
HRW	Human Rights Watch
HUROB	Human Rights Organization of Bhutan
ICIDH	International Classification of Impairments, Disabilities, and Handicaps
ICLD	International Centre for Law in Development
ICT	International Campaign for Tibet
IHA	International Hydropower Association
IMR	International Migration Review
INA	Immigration and Nationality Act
INSEC	Informal Sector Service Centre
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IRR	International Refugee Regime
ISC	Infrastructure Sub-Committee
JFCS	Jewish Family and Children's Services
JVT	Joint Verification Team
KRM	Kentucky Refugee Ministries

LGBTQ+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, +
LWF-Nepal	Lutheran World Foundation Nepal
MJC	Ministry Level Joint Commission
MoFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MoHA	Ministry of Home Affairs
NDFB	National Democratic Front of Boroland
NFD	National Front for Democracy in Bhutan
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NHRC	National Human Rights Commission
NOC	No Objection Certificates
NSB	National Statistics Bureau
NUCRA	National Unit for Coordination of Refugee Affairs
OAU	Organization of African Unity
OCC	Office of the Census Commissioner
PDP	People's Democratic Party
PFHRB	Peoples Forum for Human Rights Bhutan
RCU	Refugee Coordination Unit
RGoB	Royal Government of Bhutan
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SATP	South Asia Terrorism Portal
SGBV	Sexual and Gender Based Violence
SSSC	Social Service Sub Committee
SUB	Students Union of Bhutan
TPO Nepal	Transcultural Psychosocial Organization Nepal
TRTC	Tibetan Refugee Transit Centre
ULFA	United Liberations Front for Assam
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
VMFs	Voluntary Migration Forms
VOA	Voice of America

WHO	World Health Organization
YOB	Youth Organization of Bhutan

Chapter I: Introduction

Throughout history, forced migration has influenced international relations. Banishment, exile, expulsion, and displacement of populations have occurred across multiple landscapes throughout the ages and been downplayed as part of human existence. In more recent times, the plight of refugees and the internally displaced are more visible and evident. This is especially true of the Global South because of its secure borders, soaring numbers of refugees, and their prolonged confinement in poor countries. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) statistics, 22.5 million refugees existed across the globe at the end of 2016, most of whom were trapped in circumstances of protracted encampment in developing countries (UNHCR, 2017:13). Attempts to provide these refugees durable solutions to redefine their relationship with a state either through repatriation, local integration, or resettlement have become exceedingly difficult. States and the International Refugee Regime (IRR) respond to the predicament of refugees on a case-by-case basis, often by weighing the costs and benefits of providing durable solutions against their national interests. States routinely provide sanctuary only to refugees who incur low social, political, security, and economic cost, as well as enhance friendly relations and reputations internationally. This holds true in the context of Bhutanese refugees in South Asia, people who are the focus of this dissertation.

This chapter presents a general background of the Bhutanese refugee problem. It will highlight themes and define key concepts necessary for better understanding Bhutanese resettlement. The literature review will provide theoretical perspectives on refugee resettlement and discuss the contribution of various scholars to understanding resettlement and resettlement choices. This includes resettlement of, and resettlement choices by Bhutanese refugees. It will also show how existing scholarship does not fully explain why refugees choose to leave or stay behind when the option to resettle is provided. In addition, the chapter will highlight objectives, questions, and the significance of conducting this research. Finally, this chapter will offer preliminary findings from the fieldwork with Bhutanese refugees in Nepal and the United States.

1.1 Problem Statement

Following the well-administered yet arbitrary expulsion from Bhutan in the early 1990s, the Bhutanese refugees, most of whom were Lhotshampas from Southern Bhutan were

warehoused in temporary camps in Nepal, stuck 'mid-way-to-nowhere,'[1] in a state of 'permanent temporariness,'[2] for over 20 years. During this time, the general opinion among the refugees, the Government of Nepal (GoN), the UNHCR, and other organizations was that the Bhutanese refugees would return to Bhutan. Eventually, however, their presumed temporary displacement and statelessness turned protracted when all attempts towards repatriation failed.

This situation for most refugees changed in 2006, when the UNHCR and the GoN shifted their focus, goals, and energies from repatriation towards resettlement and accepted the third country resettlement offered by eight countries. These countries included the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Demark, Norway, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom.[3] This third country resettlement opportunity provided refugees who were registered with the GoN a 'voluntary' choice, on a nuclear family basis, to relocate and become permanent residents in one of the countries that accepted their 'Declaration of Interest' (UNHCR, 2007:2). However, not all Bhutanese refugees in Nepal were offered the resettlement opportunity, or shared the same choice or fate.

The resettlement offer raised underlying issues and concerns existent in the camps, resulting in division and conflict among the camp residents. From the beginning the refugees differed in their perceptions, attitudes, and choices towards resettlement. Some accepted and anticipated societal (re)integration in the West, while others remained adamant about returning to their homeland (Bhutan). The choice to resettle elsewhere or stay behind in Nepal often led to disagreements, clashes, and/or acts of violence among the refugees. The third country resettlement offer was intended to provide a solution to the refugee issue, but it did not match the needs and wants of numerous refugees. Several assumptions and conditions accompanied the resettlement offer that rendered many refugees ineligible to make a 'voluntary' choice and/or to resettle. The third country resettlement offer for the Bhutanese refugees brought on general assumptions that refugees, especially ones in protracted refugee situations, would jump at the opportunity for societal integration and resettlement, but this did not hold true.

[1] A term used by Egon F. Kunz to describe 'placelessness' of refugees in a transit situation. A situation where the refugees cannot return home, resettle to a new state or integrate locally. See Kunz (1973:133).

[2] Phrase used by Nira Yuval-Davis (1997:110) to describe the life and identity of the refugees from before the displacement that gains validity and permanence, which cannot be replaced by the new life and identity, no matter how (long and well) it is constructed. The feeling of permanent temporariness can be passed from one generation to another. This is how children born in refugee camps identify with countries of their parent's origin and maintain hopes to return there.

[3] Towards the beginning of the Third Country Resettlement Program, Sweden was one of the eight countries offering resettlement to Bhutanese refugees from Nepal. However, Sweden dropped out of the process and the United Kingdom took its place.

Since 2006, when resettlement became a viable option for the Bhutanese refugees, scholars have questioned the anticipated and/or 'real' impact of the resettlement. What has remained unquestioned, however, is why different groups of refugees opted to resettle or stay behind in Nepal, which at the time was a topic of everyday conversation, negotiation, and choice for these same Bhutanese refugee families. The desire of the refugees regarding resettlement was taken for granted and their choices were ignored and virtually unquestioned. This research, drawing on field research with Bhutanese refugees in and outside of Nepal, hopes to bring to light some of the complexities these refugees faced and change prior perceptions and opinions regarding the Bhutanese refugee resettlement process and impacts.

1.2 Key Concepts and Themes

This research is about refugees in general and Bhutanese refugees in particular. According to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, a refugee is a person who left her/his country and is unable or unwilling to return to her/his country of origin "owing to a well- founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion" (UNHCR, 1951:3). Over the years, numerous conventions[4] and scholars[5] have attempted to expand the scope and definition of refugee(s). Nevertheless, the IRR and most researchers still see a refugee status and/or claim as an individual status and/or claim. I find this problematic and believe a refugee's claim should be a family's claim. In many situations around the world, refugees flee with their families. In the context of the Bhutanese refugees in particular, Chapters III, IV, V, and VI will illustrate how some Bhutanese refugees were persecuted and forced to leave Bhutan because of family members who had previously fled. Unlike their fleeing relatives, however, they were not able to establish a 'well- founded fear of being persecuted' and were not able to **register** as **refugees** in Nepal (see Ibid). The same criteria applied to children born in the refugee camps to parents,

[4] Two regional expansions to the scope and definition of refugee(s) were done by the 1969 Organization of African Unity (OAU) Convention and the 1984 Cartagena Convention. According to the OAU Convention, a refugee is an individual who, "owing to external aggression, occupation, foreign domination or events seriously disturbing public order in either part or the whole of his country of origin or nationality, is compelled to leave his place of habitual residence in order to seek refuge in another place outside his country of origin or nationality" (OAU, 1969:2). Similarly, according to the Cartagena Convention, refugees are "persons who have fled their country because their lives, safety or freedom have been threatened by generalized violence, foreign aggression, internal conflicts, massive violations of human rights or other circumstances which have seriously disturbed public order" (UNHCR, 2006:36).

[5] According to Shacknove (1985: 284), refugees are individuals, "whose government fails to protect their basic needs, who have no remaining resource other than to seek international restitution of these needs, and who are so situated that international assistance is possible." Similarly, according to Haddad (2008:42), a refugee is an individual who "has been forced, in significant degree, outside the domestic political community indefinitely."

one of whom, especially the father, was not a refugee. This affected their resettlement process and choices. Therefore, while realizing that a refugee label is an extremely complex label,[6] for the purpose of this dissertation, I slightly modify Emma Haddad's definition of **refugees** to include individuals and their families who have "been forced, in significant degree, outside the domestic political community indefinitely" (Haddad, 2008:42). I then define the **Bhutanese refugees** as more than 107,000 people who fled Bhutan during the late 1980s and early 1990s because of a series of ethno-nationalist policies that Bhutan adopted for cultural protection and 'regularization' of its 'illegal' migration problem (Duncan, 2009:1). The majority of the Bhutanese refugees were **Lhotshampas**, who are the third major ethnic group that resides in the Southern part of Bhutan. They have a patriarchal social system and multi-ethnic Nepali roots, practice Hinduism and Buddhism, and primarily speak Nepali, among other ethnic languages (Saul, 2000:325).

In this research, I focus on the resettlement choices by the Bhutanese refugee families. I view **resettlement** as the "selection and transfer of refugees from a state in which they have sought protection to a third state, which has agreed to admit them, as refugees, with permanent residence status" (UNHCR, 2011:3). Additionally, I define **family choice** as the act and/or process of contemplations, considerations, and/or negotiations by a family to arrive at a determination about resettlement. In regards to the resettlement of Bhutanese refugee families, the choice or determination is either to resettle to one of the eight countries offering resettlement, namely, Australia, Canada, Denmark, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, the United Kingdom, and the United States, or to remain living in Nepal. I take an **intersectional approach**, which is a "multidisciplinary approach for analyzing subjects' experiences of identity, oppression, and privilege" (Nash, 2008:2). I look at several categories of social hierarchies and differences among the Bhutanese refugees to explain their choice. These differences primarily include gender and sexuality, age, ethnicity and caste, class, education, citizenship, and ableness, all of which I recognize as cultural phenomenon that are socially constructed rather than material differences.

I understand **gender** as "a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes, and gender is a primary way of signifying relationships of power" (Scott, 1988:34). Similarly, I perceive **sexuality** as "the socially

[6] According to Zetter (1988:1), a 'refugee' is an extremely complex label because it suggests humanitarianism – yet establishes dependency, it assigns identity – yet is a stereotype, its charitable – yet highly politicized, it possesses threat to sovereignty of states and freedom of individuals – yet protects state sovereignty and grants individual rights.

constructed expression of erotic desire and/or practice" (Cameron & Kulick, 2003:4). The behaviors, relations, and roles of groups of Bhutanese refugees are defined by their sexual and/or biological differences. In this research, I show how "everyday sexism" (Enloe, 2017:16), "institutionalized sexism" (hooks, 2015:xiii), and "hierarchical gender relations of power and domination" (Walby, 1990 cited in Mace, 2018:318), i.e., **patriarchy**, favors Bhutanese refugee men, masculinity, and heteronormativity, which are considered desirable by resettlement governments, and disfavors Bhutanese refugee women, femininity, and queerness in the family resettlement choices.

Next, I define **age** as a span of time a person has lived. Age, as a category of oppression, is important because it affects access to choices. This research considers the privileged middle-aged Bhutanese refugee experiences in comparison to the underprivileged old and young refugees, who have either lost their choice or never had it in the first place.

I adopt T.H. Marshall's definition (1950) of **citizenship**, i.e., "full membership" in a particular state for this research. According to Yuval-Davis (1997:24), this membership is multi-layered and "encompasses civil, political, and social rights and responsibilities." This dissertation shows how this 'membership' for Bhutanese refugee women, Nepali women, and their dependent children is connected to their male relatives. As one may assume, women and children did not have equal standing and were disadvantaged in their families and communities.

Like Yuval-Davis (1997:44), I perceive **ethnicity** as a "political process which constructs the collectivity and 'its interest,' not only as a result of the general positioning of the collectivity in relation to others in the society, but also as a result of specific relations of those engaged in 'ethnic politics' with others within that collectivity." This research, influenced by Michael Hutt (2003:95-99) and Ilse Griek (2014:100-107), divides the Lhotshampas into two broad ethnic categories: the *Parbatiyas* of Indo-Aryan race and the *Matwalis* of Tibeto-Burman race. Moreover, I understand **caste** as a system of social stratification in India and its adjacent Hindu nations that is applicable to both Nepal and the Lhotshampas of Bhutan. It is organized, at least traditionally, on a hereditary division of labor and endogamy (see Subedi, 2010:134-135). This research, again using classifications by Hutt (2003:95-99) and Griek (2014:100-107), traces the ancestral lineage of the *Parbatiyas* to the Western hills in Nepal, and divides them into high-caste Brahmins and Chettris (who are considered *Tagadharis,* the ones who wear the sacred thread), and the low-caste and untouchable Kamis, Damai, and Sarkis. Likewise, it traces the ancestral lineage of the *Matwalis* (who habitually consume alcohol) to the hill and mountain areas of Nepal. It divides the *Matwalis* into the middle-caste and non-enslavable: Gurungs, Magars, Rais, Limbus, Sunwars, etc. and the low-caste and

enslavable: Bhotes, Tamangs, Sherpas, and others.[7] My research argues that membership of Bhutanese refugees in certain ethnic collectivity and caste systems, as identified by Bennett, Dahal, & Govindasamy (2008:1), determines their identity, social status, and life chances.

Next, I understand (**social**) **class** as "the grouping of individuals in a stratified hierarchy based on wealth, income, education, occupation, and social network" (Lumen Learning, n.d.). I show how the inter-generational transfer of class, especially skilled trade(s), wealth and inheritance, social capital, and cultural values, are the source of economic and social status between families which either privileges or disadvantages them. In this dissertation, I divide the Bhutanese refugees into upper-class (especially affluent landowners), middle-class (especially refugee leaders and repatriation activists), and working-class refugees. Based on **education**, I divide the Bhutanese refugees as post-university graduates, university graduates, school graduates, and illiterates.

Finally, I use **'ableness,'** a term used by Stephanie Shields (2008), to define physical and mental health, well-being, and (dis)ability.[8] I use 'ableness' instead of 'ability' because the latter is also connected with skill, talent, competence, capability, and proficiency of doing things. I believe many Bhutanese refugees with physical or mental health issues and disabilities could make choices for themselves and/or their families. In fact, one of the arguments I make about the refugees in general and the Bhutanese refugees specifically, is that many refugees do not lack the capacity for agency. My understanding of **agency** is highly informed by the book *Choices Women Make: Agency in Domestic Violence, Assisted Reproduction, and Sex Work* written by Carisa R. Showden (2011). In this book, Showden (2011) explains agency as a deeply intersubjective, collective, and temporal process which is highly contextual. By which, she means that agency requires the understanding of the autonomy, freedom, and situated positioning of individual(s) and the intent of their choice and/or action. Agency formed in this way is informed by an individual's past (history and experiences), influenced by the consciousness of her/his present social locations (gender and sexuality, age, race, ethnicity and caste, education, class, citizenship, 'ableness,' etc.) and motivated by the imagination and the

[7] For more on race, ethnicity, castes in Nepal, which to a great extent applies to the Lhotshampas refugees from Bhutan see appendix – I (a table on Nepal Social Hierarchy, 1854) and appendix – II (Major Castes and Ethnic groups of Nepal with Regional Divisions & Social groups, which are based on the 2001 Census of Nepal). The latter table divides the population of Nepal into seven major caste/ethnic groups, 11 caste/ethnic groups with regional divisions, and 103 social groups.

[8] According to the World Health Organization's International Classification of Impairments, Disabilities, and Handicaps (ICIDH) (WHO, 1980:28), "in the context of health experience, a disability is any restriction or lack (resulting from an impairment) of ability to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being."

possibilities of the 'desired' future (see Bandura, 2006:164). Agency depends on the individual (or collective) capacity to evaluate, imagine, and execute choices and actions within the specific constraints of power in the present context. The hegemonic structures of power and ideologies that create people's intersecting identities and experiences of inequality and/or privilege influence the possibility and extent of their agency (Showden, 2011:9). Since our intersectional identities and socio-cultural expectations influence individual and collective agency, we can examine the presence (or absence) of agency by looking at the specific context within an action taken and/or a choice that is made (Ibid:35). As such, this dissertation will show how some Bhutanese refugees, due to their situated positioning within their families and communities, were marginalized, especially when choosing to resettle or stay back in Nepal. The intersecting identities and experiences of oppression experienced by several refugees limited their agency in making a choice on resettlement or exercising resistance.

1.3 Literature Review

According to Skran and Daughtry (2007:16), scholars in refugee studies have often inquired about the same things despite coming from diverse fields of research: the scope, definition, causality, nature, and solutions to refugee problem(s) and asked similar questions such as 'Who are refugees?'[9] 'What causes refugee movement and production?'[10] 'How do states and the international society respond to them?'[11] etc.

Along with many other scholarly works, arguments by Kibreab (1999:385) and Haddad (2008:73) suggest that identities, lives and/or lifestyles, freedoms, and rights of an individual are territorially affixed, and generally believed that people are happier if they live in, and have primary relationships with, a state in which they can claim affiliation. Therefore, solutions provided to refugees usually involve (re)establishing such a relationship with a state willing to take responsibility for the refugees. Among one of the three possible strategies of the IRR to

[9] While scholars of international law, such as J.C. Hathaway (1991) have focused on interpreting the 1951 Refugee Convention definition of refugees, scholars such as Shacknove (1985:277), Loescher (1992:6), and Haddad (2008:42) have attempted to expand the scope and definition of 'refugee.'

[10] Scholars such as Keely (1996:1052) think that nationalism and nation-state formation are responsible for refugee production. While Gibney (1999:169) sees its origin to include other factors such as civil wars and ethnic conflict, and failed states, Haddad (2008:2) argues refugee production as the result of exclusiveness of nation-states in the international states system that do not protect all populations equally. In regards to refugee movements, Kunz (1973:131) defines refugee movement and settlement on the basis of kinetics, while Hansen (1981:175) defines it as part of refugee's choices.

[11] Many researchers such as Stein (1986a:264) write about difficulties and possibilities of durable solutions in developing countries, while Gibney (1999:169) writes about how liberal democratic states should respond to refugee claims, and Kibreab (2006:24) ties the effectiveness of resettlement with full membership in a community through access to citizenship rights. Others such as Loescher (2001:33) write about the influence of international organizations such as the UNHCR in international refugee regimes and refugee politics.

'reterritoralize' or to reinsert the refugee back into the 'citizen-state-territory trinity'[12] is resettlement. The other two strategies are repatriation and local integration. Resettlement, according to the *UNHCR Resettlement Handbook*, involves:

> the selection and transfer of refugees from a State in which they have sought protection to a third state, which has agreed to admit them, as refugees, with permanent residence status. The status provided ensures protection against *refoulement* and provides a resettled refugee and his/her family or dependents with access to rights similar to those enjoyed by nationals. Resettlement also carries with it the opportunity to eventually become a naturalized citizen of the resettlement country (UNHCR, 2011:3).

Most scholars agree the resettlement process is a complex and long-term adjustment of refugees to culturally dissimilar places that ends with their acceptance and/or belonging, and results in alteration of their identities as well as the composition of the resettlement state (see Galbally, 1978:29 cited in Hiruy, 2009:24). This has led scholars to research topics such as: a) capacity of refugees for cultural integration,[13] b) what happens to refugees once they are resettled, especially with the focus on their psychological well-being,[14] c) the role of NGOs and federal organizations in resettling refugees,[15] and d) policy recommendations for better resettlement practices.[16]

Over the years, scholars have inquired about what happens to refugees if they are not resettled[17] and what happens if they are. There are studies regarding the resettlement of Bhutanese refugees which: identify problems associated with the resettlement program (See Nath, 2016); predict possible impacts of resettlement (See Banki, 2008a); report on the challenges faced by the refugees (See Rai, 2015); other impacts and effects on Bhutanese

[12] Terminologies used by Emma Haddad. See, Haddad (2002).
[13] Lanphier (1983:5) in his *Refugee Resettlement: model in action* proposed that the volume of intake and the type of refugee adaptation encouraged during the initial period of arrival, affected service delivery, absorption of refugees and produced social organizational fabric in France, Canada and the United States. Similarly, Pressé & Thomson (2008) in *The Resettlement Challenge: Integration of Refugees from Protracted Refugee Situation* examined the case of refugees in Canada and pointed out that refugees have limited opportunities to return to their home countries and in most of the cases struggle for self- reliance and potential of local integration.
[14] Beiser (2009) in his decade long research *Resettling Refugees and Safegaurding their Mental Health: Lessons Learned from the Canadian Refugee Resettlement Project* focused on the resettlement experience, social costs of resettling refugees, hindrance in integration, refugee's mental health. He derived 18 lessons learnt to suggest policy and implementation methods to make resettlement effective and just.
[15] Simich, L. (2003) in "Negotiating Boundries of Refugee Resettlement: A Study of Settlement Patterns and Social Support", analyzed the role of negotiations between the resettlement bureaucracy and refugees that affected their well-being during resettlement in Canada.
[16] Forbes (1984) in "Residency Patterns and Secondary Migration of Refugees: A State of the Information Paper" analyzed a case of residence patterns of refugees in the United States and suggests conclusions and recommendations for future refugee resettlement policy and practices.
[17] Scholars such Loescher (1993:129), Stein (1986a:267), (Kagen, 2011:5) and the UNHCR (2006:105) have conducted studies indicating warehousing of refugees, especially contemporary refugees from the global South are characterized by long periods in semi-permanent camps, waiting for connection with the society since achieving a durable solution is subject to the political will, diplomacy, and statesmanship of governments.

refugees (See Shrestha, 2011 and Ott, 2011); and the integration of resettled refugees (See Basnet, 2016). Nath, for example, examines the implications of South Asia's geopolitics on the creation and management of the Bhutanese refugees. She argues that the Bhutanese refugee crisis, without the involvement of the international community, could easily have been resolved and would have incurred minor damages if actions had been taken in a timely and cost-effective manner. She also identifies some of the problems associated with the resettlement of the Bhutanese refugees, which are separation of refugee families; culture shock and difficulty of adjustment, especially among the elderly population; loss of homeland; and lack of durable solutions for the refugees remaining in Nepal.

Banki's briefing paper was one of the first papers that highlighted disputes and conflict that arose in the refugee camps in Nepal due to the resettlement offer. In her paper, she predicted the impact resettlement could have on the goods and services, income, and security environment for the remaining refugees in camps. In the article, she anticipated the impact of resettlement on the surrounding local Nepali community and the political mobilization of Bhutanese refugees (Banki, 2008a). In a later article entitled, *The Transformation of Homeland Politics in the Era of Resettlement: Bhutanese refugees in Nepal and the diaspora*, she looks at the political activism of Bhutanese refugees, especially in terms of Homeland politics, in Nepal (country of refuge) and in Australia (resettled country). She found that during the early years of the resettlement, the Bhutanese refugees' homeland politics continued, even after their resettlement, although in changed form and from different locations (Banki, 2013:138).

Shrestha and Ott explore the resettlement difficulties faced by Bhutanese refugees in the United States. Shrestha (2011:9) looks at the resettlement complexities they faced and the disparities in expectations between the refugees and the federal refugee resettlement organizations in Kentucky, United States. On the other hand, Ott (2011:1) depicts the secondary/onward migration of Bhutanese refugees from the initial state of resettlement to Pittsburgh, PA, showing the perception gap between the United States refugee resettlement policy and the Bhutanese refugees.

Basnet (2016) explores the meaning of home and homemaking practices and examines how and in what ways former Bhutanese refugees, especially women and girls in New Zealand, experience 'home' and sense of belonging. Her research identifies that home is not a place but a sense of belonging the Bhutanese refugees find within their families and their tight-knit communities.

While the above literature review shows what happened to refugees who resettled and who did not resettle, it does not address why refugees chose to resettle, especially from the

standpoint of a familial choice. The following paragraphs charts some developments in that regard.

In 1973, Egon. F. Kunz, building on the 'Push-and-Pull migration theory' of Everett S. Lee and 'general typology of migration' of Peterson, explained refugee movement and motivations with an analytical framework called the 'kinetic model of refugee movements' (Kunz, 1973:131). With the publication of 'Exile and Resettlement: Refugee Theory,' in 1981, he theorized that the resettlement choices and motivations of refugees were based on kinetics. He concluded that the administrative, economic, and psychological pressures in the host country, along with the push factors at home, made refugees in prolonged exile 'plunge' at the chance of resettlement (Kunz, 1973:133). He also stressed that resettlement movements of refugees were based on their assumptions about social factors, such as cultural compatibility, population policies, and social receptiveness of the countries offering resettlement (Kunz, 1981:46).

Stein (1981:321) and Hansen (1981:190) criticized Kunz's work as being partial, abstract, and limited to categorizations. Stein, however, agreed with Kunz that a holistic refugee theory could ensure appropriate refugee policies and programs (Stein, 1981:320) and used Kunz's ideas and classification in his 1979 research on ethnic Chinese refugees from Vietnam in the United States.[18] Contrary to Kunz and Stein, Hansen (1981:190) came up with refugee dynamics based on the choices made by the refugees. In his 1981 article, 'Refugee Dynamic: Angolans in Zambia 1966 to 1972,' Hansen identified that a huge number of Angolan refugees had chosen to self-integrate locally rather than reside in the UNHCR and the Zambian government administered camps.[19] According to his analysis the choices made by Angolan refugees to settle in or outside the camps depended on the interaction (or intersection) of three major variables, namely, time of arrival and location of entry into Zambia (the host country), the social identity of the refugees in Angola (their home country), and kinships with locals in Zambia (Hansen, 1981:184-185). Through his research, he found that Angolan refugees had chosen to locally self-integrate (self-settle) to compensate losses incurred due to

[18] Barry Stein in 1979 completed research on occupational adjustment of Vietnamese refugees using the stages of refugee experiences and published an article in *International Migration Review (IMR) entitled,* 'Occupational Adjustment of Refugees: the Vietnamese in the United States (see Stein, 1981:321).

[19] While in 1966 the number of refugees residing in camps (3,800 people) was the total number of refugees in Zambia, by 1972 the total number of Angolan refugees in camps was 7,300 although the total number of Angolan refugees in the country was 17,000 (see Hansen, 1981:184). This meant 9,700 Angolan refugees had chosen to self-integrate (self-settle) locally in Zambia despite the existence of material and non-material advantages of living in the UNHCR and Government of Zambia administered camps.

flight and to retain power and control over their lives. He concluded that refugees are not powerless and, in most cases, do not lack control over their movements and settlements.

Hansen agreed with Kunz and Stein that refugees, unlike voluntary migrants, were motivated to migrate due to life threatening situations at home, but he also stressed that refugees fled when they perceived a threat to, or inadequacy in, protecting their personal power and control over their lives. According to his analysis, they refrained from going to the refugee camps for the same reasons. Moreover, he emphasized that flight represented their attempt to retain mobility, power, and control over their lives (Hansen, 1981:190). Analyses and counternarratives such as these show thoughtful choices and agency on the part of the refugees who were often 'overlooked or unduly minimized' in academic scholarship (see Skran & Daughtry, 2007:16). There is research that looks closely into choices different groups of women make and the agency they exercise. Carisa R. Showden's book, *Choices Women Make: Agency in Domestic Violence, Assisted Reproduction, and Sex Work*, is one such work. Not only does her research answer general questions such as: What is agency? Where is it present? How is it feasible? How is it developed, mobilized, influenced, and enhanced, but it also shows how and why agency looks different for different groups of women in the areas of domestic violence, assisted reproduction, and sex work. Showden (2011), using poststructuralism, phenomenology, and coalition politics, defines agency as both a matter of individual capacity and social conditions that facilitate or hinder freedom to choose and/or act. According to her, agency lies in the "interplay of structure, ambiguity, and resistance," showing need for consideration of both, the personal and contextual (Showden, 2011:xiv).[20] Multiple identities lead to multiple simultaneous oppressions, which stunt agency, but since there are multiple and often contradictory identities and forms of power that shape our views of ourselves and the world, at a given time and situation, there are opportunities to rearrange material realities, resist power, and reshape possibilities (see Showden, 2011:11). Agency can be enhanced by rearranging certain configurations of power that produce social inequalities and injustice, especially by negotiating power relations (intersubjective or with institutions and structures), meaning, and boundaries of our identities individually or through contingent collective action (see Showden, 2011:26). Moreover, agency develops over time and according to Showden (2011:2), "is used in specific context and can manifest to varying degrees in specific choices and actions." Finally, to understand why people exert different agencies when they face

[20] Showden (2011:11) understands ambiguities as multiplicity and contradictions. Ambiguity lies in the lack of definitive meaning in our collective understanding and/or meaning-making that we engage with others, especially through language (speech, text, images, etc.).

inequalities and injustices and/or why agency looks different for different groups of people, Showden (2011:33) suggests focusing on the interlocking effects of people's situated position, sources of power, and how people relate to them. To quote her, "inequality means that the content of the action one takes will look very different depending on where one is inserted in the world. Inequality also means that the kind of resistance one wants to enact and can enact will be different for different groups of even similarly situated people. Furthermore, the same action can be undertaken to launch different kinds of ethical protest" (Showden, 2011:7).[21] Showden's book is enlightening, and immensely influenced my understanding of agency for the analysis of choices the Bhutanese refugees made.

Circling back to Hansen's research, 'Refugee Dynamic: Angolans in Zambia 1966 to 1972,' his analysis is not without limitation. Hansen looks at self-settling refugees as a single group of 'powerful' subjects, rather than identifying different groups of refugees based on their identity, status, and positionings, and/or access to power and resources within the Angolan refugees. He does not explore who among the Angolan refugees possessed the ability to, and in fact chose where to settle, and why. Towards the beginning of his research, he identifies women, children, and elderly Angolan refugees in Zambia as settling in the refugee camps and young men as being 'somewhere else' (either fighting or earning a living), but he does not explain why the situation was so (Hansen, 1981:177). Women, children, and the elderly remain largely invisible in Hansen's analysis. The lack of consideration of intra-group differentiation within the Angolan refugees limits the analytical effectiveness of Hansen's research and produces gender biases.

In more recent years, there has been a growing focus on the role of family in voluntary migration choices.[22] Unfortunately, the same cannot be said about refugee resettlement. In reference to the resettlement choices by Bhutanese refugees, Marzo and Chapagain (2012:97) in *Why is the resettlement in a third-country the chosen solution by the Bhutanese refugees? A*

[21] For more information on women's choices, agency, and feminism read: Attwood, F. (2007). Sluts and riot grrrls: Female Identity and Sexual Agency. *Journal of Gender Studies, 16*(3), 233-247; Gill, R.C. (2007). Critical Respect: The Difficulties and Dilemmas of Agency and 'Choice' for Feminism. *European Journal of Women's Studies, 14*(1), 69-80; and Murphy, M. (2015, March 11). *Feminist opposition to the sex industry has little to do with women's 'choices.'* Retrieved from: https://www.feministcurrent.com/2015/03/11/feminist-opposition-to-the-sex-industry-has-little-to-do-with-womens-choices/

[22] Ryan & Sales (2011) look at women as 'lead' migrants, rather than 'tied' dependents and make their active agency visible in migration processes. Cooke (2007) argues that family migration choices are influenced by complex family dynamics, socio-cultural expectation, and power relations and emphasizes the need to investigate the factors that inform, enable, and hinder these choices. Halfacree (1995) emphasizes the importance of acknowledging constraints and not just the agency of the migrant in family choices. One such constraint, recognized by Ackers (2004) relates to the gendered roles and expectations surrounding caring responsibilities within the family.

personal answer to a political problem, look at a micro-case of 41 Bhutanese refugees resettled to Haslev, Denmark and their experiences to understand the Bhutanese resettlement process. They focus on individual refugee choices and find that the Bhutanese refugees who resettled to Denmark 'actively decided to resettle' because: they were aware of the difficulties associated with repatriation, they were willing to end a life as a refugee, they hoped for a better future (chances and/or socio-economic-political opportunities), and they desired citizenship (permanence or identity needs).

In their analysis of why Bhutanese refugees chose to resettle, Marzo and Chapagain (2012:107) assert "the experiences of the Bhutanese refugees show that although denied of their basic human rights, they still make use of their right of choice. The power of the refugees to choose their future counters their general victimization and gives them back their humanity." As optimistic as their analysis appears, they too look at Bhutanese refugees as a homogeneous group and their choices as an individual choice. They succeed in explaining why the refugees resettled but do not investigate who among the refugees had the power to choose to resettle and who were hindered by the policies and criteria set by the resettlement states and administered by the UNHCR and the IOM. Pulla (2016) addresses this deficiency to an extent. He looks at Bhutanese refugees from different age groups and suggests a theory of 'chance' and 'choice' to explain the disparity in resettlement perspectives between generations of refugees. According to his findings and analysis, resettlement for younger generations of Bhutanese refugees was a 'chance' to resettle in developed countries and leave behind a life and people they knew in both Bhutan and Nepal. For the elderly, it was a 'choice' to stay back in the refugee camps in Nepal with the hope of returning to their home in Bhutan (see Pulla, 2016:83). Pulla does look at individuals and families and shows how difference in ages influenced their perspectives and choices towards resettlement. This reveals a partial picture of the resettlement process and the complexities and nuances associated with the resettlement. Other complexities and nuances are depicted by Ilse Griek in her book *Human Rights in Translation: Dispute resolution in the Bhutanese refugee camps in Nepal*.

The research by Griek (2014), which is backed by fourteen months of fieldwork in Nepal between 2011-2012, focuses on "dispute resolution, legal pluralism, and human rights implementation in the humanitarian setting of the Bhutanese refugee camps". Her book takes a grassroots level as its basis and analyzes the extent to which Bhutanese refugees' lives were influenced by foreign legal norms, to include the resettlement policies and immigration laws of resettlement states (Griek, 2014). Although her research is not directly about resettlement choices made by Bhutanese refugees, it shows both the constraints the refugees faced due to

the eligibility criteria set by the third country resettlement process and their agency, i.e., their ability to craft solutions to establish eligibility to resettle (Griek, 2014:27). She uses two case studies, one of polygamy[23] and the other of modern 'minor' (underage) marriage,[24] to showcase how family disputes in the Bhutanese refugee camps were created, reframed, and transformed

[23] On pages 245-248 of her book, under the title 'A third wife from the *bange*,' Griek illustrates the polygamy dispute mediation in *Beldangi – II Extension* refugee camp, a case brought forward to the Community Watch Team by two sisters: Sita (who was disabled) and Chandra Chhetri against their husband Durga. The sisters filed a case against their husband who they were married to for 20 years because he had taken a third wife, a local Nepali citizen from *bange* bazaar who he impregnated despite his advanced age. The sisters were interested in resettlement, which their husband had refused to consider. The sisters brought Durga to the Community Watch Team because when a woman's husband took another wife, her resettlement process was not only delayed, but her husband could possibly leave her to be resettled with his new wife. The following decisions were made to resolve this dispute. Durga was asked to stay with his third wife while they lived in the refugee camps in Nepal. Durga and his sons were to take care of his new wife. He was to construct a separate hut for his third wife in the camp so his first two wives would not have to cohabit with her. He was not to register his third wife with the Refugee Coordination Unit (RCU) or add her on his ration card so it would not create problems for their (Durga, Sita, Chandra, and their children's) resettlement process. Durga was asked not to divorce his first or second wife. Regarding their resettlement, it was decided that Durga's first wife, Sita, would resettle separately with their daughter and Durga's second wife, Chandra, would resettle with Durga and their youngest son. They decided that Durga's third wife would stay back in Nepal after Durga's resettlement. Durga would remit money to support her. Durga's oldest son, who had no intention to resettle, would take care of Durga's third wife after Durga's resettlement. According to Griek (2014), this was Durga and his family's attempt to maneuver the system of resettlement regulations, to become eligible for resettlement without getting divorced. Using Griek's case of a polygamous marriage, an intersectional approach would show that the third wife's gender, age, citizenship, and 'mixed' marriage to Durga intersected and marginalized her from the resettlement choices and the process. Choices and decisions were made for her and her unborn child as a part of the dispute resolution, which she had no control over. Despite being newly married with a child on the way, her husband and his first and second wives, who were all refugees, decided that adding her formally into their family structure complicated their resettlement case and chances to leave Nepal. What this dispute settlement meant for the third wife was that while her husband may be able to resettle, and even live in close proximity with both his wives and their children, as a cross-referenced/linked case, she would have to raise her child in Nepal in absence of her/his father and probably even citizenship. She would have to wait for Durga's remittance in the form of childcare, but that assurance would not be guaranteed or backed by law. Similarly, like Durga's third wife, Durga's first wife, whom he would have to divorce to resettle with his second wife, would also lack spousal status, benefits, and rights in the resettled country.

[24] On pages 253-256, under the title 'A modern 'minor' marriage,' Griek illustrates another example of dispute resolution in the camps in Nepal. Sixteen-year-old Pabitra (hence underage according to the GoN and most resettlement states' law) and 20-year-old Man Kumar eloped to avoid being separated because of the resettlement process. Pabitra's father filed a case against Man Kumar to annul their marriage to prevent his own family's resettlement case from being delayed. Pabitra's father did not have an issue with Man Kumar per se. He was willing to let Pabitra and Man Kumar marry after his family resettled and Pabitra came of age. The following decisions were made to resolve the dispute. Pabitra was asked to return to her parents' house to prevent impending delays to both her and Man Kumar's family's resettlement process. Pabitra's wish to stay with Man Kumar was overruled. The mediators decided that Pabitra and her parents should come to a private compromise at home. In addition, Pabitra's parents were advised to allow her to see Man Kumar and have her on suicide watch. Underage marriage affected the resettlement process of all family members, not just the underage individual and the person married to her/him. Pabitra's father did not have a problem with his daughter's choice of husband, but he could not wait another two years in the refugee camps until Pabitra came of (marriageable) age. Their resettlement process was in its advanced stages and he needed to join and support his disabled first wife who had already resettled. His case was linked to his first wife's case and the UNHCR had promised to resettle him and his family (including second wife) to the same location of his first wife, so he could support both of them. Adopting an intersectional approach to this case would show how Pabitra's underage marriage intersected with her father's polygamous marriage and her stepmother's disability, which marginalized all of them in their resettlement process. The issue was not simply Pabitra's underage marriage, but also other dynamics among members of the two families that further complicated their resettlement process.

in consideration of the requirements for resettlement. She uses the above examples to show "how resettlement has transformed the nature of disputes, as refugees began to understand marriage as having potential consequences both to the speed of resettlement procedures, and family constellations after resettlement" (Griek, 2014:234). She argues the rules that determined who was qualified for the resettlement process impacted refugee institutions such as marriage and family, especially family composition. The immigration laws and policies of the resettlement states and hence the UNHCR and the IOM resettlement norms determined which marriage was permissible or valid, which members (and hence which relationships) were part of a family and/or a household, which members (and hence which relationships) could be separated from a family and/or a household. In doing so, she shows how the institution of marriage among the patriarchal and patrilocal Bhutanese refugees is gendered and promoted ageism. She shows how the resettlement policies and the process privileged men in a polygamous marriage since it gave them the power to decide which spouse and/or children they wanted to resettle or stay back in the refugee camps with. Meanwhile, it discriminated against young 'underage' refugees (most often women), denying them their choice of who they wanted to resettle with by privileging the choices of their adult (most often men) family members. Moreover, Griek shows Bhutanese refugees' agency in their decision to get divorced or not get divorced, both as forms of their resistance, as it shows their "ability to craft solutions that deviate from the rules imposed upon them" (Griek, 2014:27). I share the above research findings with Griek. In fact, this dissertation complements Griek's analyses by expanding the scope of its research and incorporating resettlement complexities surrounding 'mixed' marriages (between refugees and local nationals from either India or Nepal). In doing so, this research analyzes the difference in citizenship of the refugees and the person to whom s/he is married. Moreover, it acknowledges the complexities surrounding the resettlement process of 'unregistered' refugees, refugees with poor health conditions and/or disabilities, and refugees with criminal or fraud accusations in Bhutan or Nepal. It shows how although many refugees from the above-mentioned groups wanted to resettle, they were either ineligible or faced obstacles, which were not anticipated when they decided to resettle. Like Griek (2014), this research shows how some Bhutanese refugees were able to use their agency and come up with creative and innovative strategies to comply with resettlement policies and negotiate their resettlement decisions. Interestingly, it depicts how they changed the constellation of their family, marrying, and/or divorcing to qualify for resettlement. It additionally shows how certain Bhutanese refugees, as a form of resistance towards resettlement, consciously chose to stay in Nepal to avoid separation from their 'unregistered,' local, sick, disabled, or 'criminal'

family members. This research uses an intersectional approach to highlight the experiences of the marginalized Bhutanese refugees and make them more visible.

1.4 Research Objectives and Question(s)

Research Objectives

The objective of this research is to analyze which Bhutanese refugees chose to resettle, and the ways in which they did so and the reasons for their choice. It specifically looks at the Bhutanese refugee families and marriages and identifies the diversity within them to show how they not only reconstruct and reproduce patriarchy, but also reinforces social inequalities of gender and sexuality, age, education, class, ethnicity and caste, citizenship, and 'ableness.' It also criticizes resettlement norms and policies administered by the UNHCR, the IOM, and the immigration laws of resettlement countries. It shows how the UNHCR, the IOM, and the resettlement countries valued traditional family ideals and ignored the hierarchy of power among members within the Bhutanese refugee families by assuming unity and solidarity of interest and choices among them. Furthermore, it argues that the resettlement process favored some groups of Bhutanese refugees while it marginalized others. It will show that despite the above complexities, the resettlement choices made by the Bhutanese refugees were fluid, changing, and dynamic, which at times resisted the overlapping axes of privilege and oppression. Analyzing the differences and dynamics amongst the refugees as well as the resettlement policies and immigration laws matter because when we know how refugees experience and react to oppression differently, we can help eliminate discrimination (or oppression) for all groups of refugees.

Research Question

This research looks at the resettlement choices made by the Bhutanese refugee families and analyzes primary and secondary resources, both online and printed, to answer the following: Whose choices were considered for third country resettlement? Whose choices were disregarded? Why? What factors influenced Bhutanese refugees' choices on third country resettlement? What role did power and inequality play in the choices Bhutanese refugees made and the agency they exercised? Where were the similarities of experiences?

1.5 Significance of Research

In the reviewed literature, little importance is given to the idea that refugees are involved in choices concerning their life and solutions available to them. Such inquiries

routinely are ignored or overlooked. In fact, the idea that refugees want to resettle when provided the opportunity typically is accepted without question. This research is important because it challenges these generalized understandings about refugees, especially regarding their resettlement choices. It retracts scholarly advancements in the resettlement of Bhutanese refugees and shows there is a disconnect between theory and realities on the ground. It investigates what the Bhutanese refugees themselves thought about resettlement, how they perceived their situation and why they chose to resettle or stay back. In addition, I agree with Enloe (2017:119) that inquiring about choices and choice makers is a crucial feminist commitment because "it reveals the racism, class inequality, and of course, sexism that commonly pass as 'tradition,' 'nature,' and 'culture' that can be traced back to deliberate actions by specific individuals who are seeking to protect their own interests or the interests of the institutions they serve."

Moreover, research about the ways refugees think about resettlement is important because it can reflect the differences in the ways refugees and the refugee regime perceive their situations. It is important to analyze and understand the voices, perspectives, and positionalities of refugees at the grassroots level as they are the defining factors for the success of resettlement policies and processes. This research also showcases that all refugees are not on equal footing when it comes to access to power and/or material and other resources. As such, some lack control over their lives and the ability to make choices, particularly, the choice to resettle.

This dissertation adopts an intersectional approach and looks at the hierarchical identities of gender and sexuality, age, education, class, ethnicity and caste, citizenship, and ableness among the Bhutanese refugees and shows how these overlapping and co-constructive inequalities privilege or oppress the refugees in their resettlement choices. This research also incorporates lived experiences of these refugees and shows how they draw on the multiple identities to develop strategies of resistance to comply with or reject the resettlement process. It also shows the real-life circumstances that arise when refugees exercise such resistance. In doing so, it complicates and unpacks discussions around the resettlement of Bhutanese refugees in Nepal. This research, I believe, is an innovative contribution insofar as such an investigation to analyze the resettlement choices made by refugee families using an intersectional approach has not yet been undertaken. Since there is limited existing scholarly work to rely on, by looking at a system that favors some and disadvantages others, this research argues that resettlement must be provided in a just and humane manner that acknowledges the intersectional identities of the refugees.

This research tells a different story about the resettlement of Bhutanese refugees, one that contradicts the dominant narrative that portrays the resettlement process as a success story for all Bhutanese refugees. It challenges the homogenization of the Bhutanese refugees as a fortunate group of refugees who can 'all' resettle when most Western countries are growing increasingly reluctant to resettle refugees from the Global South. This research hopes to change the idea that refugees are passive recipients of international protection and services who readily accept a life that is characterized by limited fulfillment of their needs, rights, and choices. Additionally, this research contributes to the production of counter-discourses corrective to the above dominant discourse. It shows the need to formulate theories that incorporate refugee perspectives and change the misconception that refugees and their experiences are homogeneous. Such theories and research could create future inclusive durable solutions to the plight of refugees as well as inclusive societies, where perceptions and voices of diverse groups are heard and included.

This research hopes to spark further inquiry into the dynamics of intersectionality to analyze family choices, resettlement (in general), and other aspects of the Bhutanese refugee families and their communities (in particular). This research wants to ignite interest among policy makers to formulate better-informed and inclusive resettlement policies that can, in the future, create conditions that are morally just for the refugees. Similarly, this research also hopes to ignite some political action and policy development that would help the remaining Bhutanese refugees in Nepal.

1.6 Methodological Approach

This research adopts a postmodern deconstructionist approach to analyze resettlement choices and the agencies exercised by Bhutanese refugees. Postmodernism, as identified by Lykke, (2010:148) is an approach that looks at differences between and within subjects and the effects of those differences. Postmodernism is skeptical of modernist theorists and their enlightenment projects (Erickson, 2018:122). It is especially suspicious of modernism's scientific, reasoning, and evidence-based methods that produce grand/master/meta narratives that make universal claims of 'neutral' and 'objective' truths as well as their "one-path-to-liberation-fits-all" paradigm (Lykke, 2010:133; also see Erickson, 2018:114-115).[25] Postmodern feminists, especially ones adopting a deconstructionist approach, problematize

[25] The "one-path-to-liberation-fits-all" paradigm, according to Lykke (2010:133), is a theory of societal transformation that is based on one theoretically determined path to enlightenment and/or liberation for all.

'truth,' 'identity,' 'methods,' and 'language.' They see truths as being partial and situated, identity as fluid, methods as contextual, and language as open to interpretation since they are socially constructed, contextual, and contingent (see Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2018:238). Postmodern feminists do not see social categories as given, fixed, or essentialized concepts. Instead, they understand social categories as "unstable, multi-layered, incalculable" concepts that permeate. In other words, "their meanings spill over into each other and cannot be unambiguously defined" (Lykke, 2010:157). Postmodern feminists look at experiences as discursively mediated "encounters between the individual subject and the world" (Ibid:132). They also problematize boundaries that are based on binaries and binary thinking. One might be of the opinion that binary thinking privileges the value and experiences of the 'hegemon' over the 'subjugated,' but binary thinking can also lead to simplified, linear, and generalized understandings and theorizations the erase complexities and ambiguities (see Ibid:105). In addition to social categories, postmodern feminists do not see subjects and subjectivities as being fixed either. They see subjectivities, agency, choices, and knowledge as being situated and locally and temporally shaped (see Lykke, 2010:114 and Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2018:238). Moreover, they focus on small, heterogeneous, and situated narratives in particular contexts (see Lykke, 2010:133). Postmodern feminists attend to discourse and performance (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018:18). They, guided by Michel Foucault, "look for the ways in which power is being performed as a decentralized, localized, discursively, and institutionally normalized process, and which also productively generates various and multiple local forms of resistance" (Lykke, 2010:149). They hope to destabilize social institution, structures, and systems, such as patriarchy, that create inequalities and injustices.

This dissertation, guided by the suggestions of Lykke (2010), looks at differences between and within various groups of Bhutanese refugees in Nepal. It multiplies Bhutanese refugee's gender in its intersections with social categories of age, class, education, ethnicity and caste, citizenship, and ableness to identify refugees that fall out of fixed binary opposition schemes (like refugee/citizen and official refugees/'unregistered' refugees) and their experiences. Additionally, using Jacques Derrida's deconstructive method, this dissertation looks at the Bhutanese refugee families and marriages with the intent to disrupt hierarchies and displace binary oppositions that make subjugated refugees and their experiences invisible (see Lykke, 2010:100).

This dissertation additionally takes an intracategorial approach and uses the three questions suggested by Elizabeth R. Cole (2009) as a guideline in utilizing intersectionality to

focus on the groups of Bhutanese refugees disadvantaged by the resettlement process.[26] The slightly modified questions this dissertation uses, as a guideline for 'doing' intersectionality are: 1) Whose choices were considered and whose were left out? 2) What role did power and inequality play? 3) Where were the similarities? This research acknowledges refugees who were unable to resettle, unable to choose to resettle, and/or hindered in their resettlement process and shows the heterogeneity of their resettlement experiences. By looking at groups of refugees marginalized and/or disadvantaged by the resettlement process, this research shows the limitation of boundaries and/or boundary making processes, especially the process of categorizing who is (and is not) an 'official' Bhutanese refugee. This dissertation will then explore how the Bhutanese refugees drew on their multiple and converging identities to gain control over their family resettlement choices. It will showcase their ability to come up with strategies to qualify for, or resist resettlement.

1.7 Preliminary Findings

This research is based on a total of six months of fieldwork in the United States and Nepal.[27] Between October 21 and November 11, 2014, I conducted 29 semi-structured interviews stimulated by narratives with the Bhutanese refugees and their families in the United States. Similarly, between December 22, 2014 – February 8, 2015, I interviewed 28 Bhutanese refugees and their families in *Beldangi – I and Beldangi – II Extension camps* and 12 refugees from *Sanischari camp* in Nepal. I began my interviews by asking them if they were refugees and if so, why. I wanted to know how the refugees identified themselves before making my own determination, especially when it came to identifying refugees, unregistered refugees, and locals (Nepali and Indian citizens) married to refugees. I began my interviews with the humanitarian agents working with the UNHCR, the IOM, and resettlement agencies in the

[26] The three questions used/suggested by Cole (2009:170) are: "1) Who is included within this category? 2) What role does inequality play? 3) Where are the similarities?"

[27] Parts of this fieldwork were informed by my previous fieldwork for my Master's thesis, which was conducted during December 2011 and January 2012. Between December 2011 and January 2012, I conducted 9 semi-structured interviews with governmental officials, non-governmental officials, refugee leaders, prominent scholars, historians and journalists in Nepal. These interviews ranged between 50 mins to 3 hours. I worked with two NGOs: Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Nepal and Caritas Nepal, who were responsible for infrastructural development and management and education within the refugee camps respectively. They helped me identify my respondents since as an outsider it was impossible for me to identify who wanted to resettle and who did not (or could not). I also conduced 32 semi-structured interviews with Bhutanese refugees (21 men & 11 women) ranging between 30 mins to 2 hours in three refugee camps namely *Beldangi – I, Beldangi – II Extension* and *Sanischari* camps. The interviews were conducted in Nepali without an interpreter. I recorded, transcribed and translated the interviews to English. Initially, I had not intended to examine the resettlement choices of Bhutanese refugees who did not want to (or could not) resettle. However, the lived experiences of women, children, unregistered refugees, refugees in polygamous, underage and/or mixed marriages, refugees rejected due to poor health or criminal records challenged me to shift my focus towards them.

United States by asking them who they thought were refugees. I wanted to understand who they perceived to be refugees and how they decided who was eligible for the 'refugee' status and hence, international protection.

Through fieldwork in the United States and Nepal, I found that the third country resettlement for many of the Bhutanese refugees, which was supposed to be fair, equal and a 'voluntary choice,' was not. Although some refugees were eager to leave, others only resettled because they felt there was no better choice. Some refugees expressed they were resettling so their children and grandchildren could have a better life and future, while others felt obligated to resettle because they were not allowed to return to Bhutan. There were also various groups within the refugees who were unable to choose to resettle or stay back because they were ineligible for resettlement. 'Unregistered' refugees, and refugees with criminal history, disability, and/or poor health, were among some those who were not entitled to resettlement.

Throughout my fieldwork, I observed that resettlement choices were a 'registered' refugee prerogative and approvals of resettlement cases depended on the states offering resettlement. In addition, I found Bhutanese refugees' family structures were subject to immigration policies of resettling states, particularly to whom a refugee was married, as this was important in relation to their resettlement eligibility. Resettlement rewarded women refugees in monogamous marriages, but penalized women in polygamous, mixed, and/or underage marriages. Refugee men in polygamous marriages, on the other hand, could decide which wife and family they wanted to resettle with. Resettlement policies also penalized local men married to refugee women. These complexities surrounding refugee marriages led to an increased rate of divorces among the Bhutanese refugees in the camps in Nepal.

The ideology surrounding family size was also different between the Bhutanese refugees and the states accepting them for resettlement. Although extended Bhutanese families lived together in the refugee camps in Nepal (in the same hut or close by), they were resettled as a nuclear family, with a married (assumed heterosexual) couple at its center. Many refugees who were eager to resettle had separated from their extended families to increase their chances and speed up their resettlement process. Resettlement was often the cause of dispersion and separation of many Bhutanese refugee family networks and support systems.

Viewing the resettlement process from a wider lens, I realized the process assumed unity and solidarity of interest among the refugee families and unanimous choices among their members. Resettlement norms and the process additionally generalized refugees and their experiences, reinforced patriarchy, and marginalized many by denying them the opportunity to choose resettlement.

1.8 Layout of Research

This dissertation has two main goals. First, it aims to find the diversity (of identities and experiences) between and within the Bhutanese refugees. Secondly, it aims to identify and analyze the choices made and agency mobilized by the Bhutanese refugees in regards to the third country resettlement offered to them. With these goals in mind, this dissertation is divided into five broad sections: a) theory and methods, b) background and context, c) refugee experiences and durable solutions, d) refugee opinions towards resettlement, and e) resettlement choices made and agency exercised by Bhutanese refugees.

The second chapter provides an in-depth understanding of intersectionality, the theory that is the basis for analysis of this dissertation. It answers questions such as, what is intersectionality, what does it do, why is it necessary, how did it come about, how it can be used, and what are its pitfalls, drawbacks, and/or challenges. The chapter also explains how intersectionality will be adopted in this dissertation.

The third chapter offers a brief historical, political, and economic background of Bhutan and its people. Among its people, the chapter focuses on Lhotshampas, many of whom eventually became Bhutanese refugees in Nepal. The chapter answers questions such as, where is Bhutan, what kind of country is it, who are its people, and who are the Lhotshampas. It describes and analyzes the experiences of the Lhotshampas in Bhutan as well as the causality and origin of the Bhutanese refugee. It will also answer two crucial questions: why were the Lhotshampas ousted from Bhutan and what measures were put in place to marginalize and eventually expel them from Bhutan?

The fourth chapter examines the displacement experiences of the Bhutanese refugees in Nepal. It shows their experiences in the refugee camps and illustrates what life as refugees was like for them in Nepal. The chapter then analyzes the initiatives taken towards their societal integration by the GoN, the GoN and the Royal Government of Bhutan (RGoB), Government of India (GoI), the Western countries, and the refugees themselves to resolve their situation. This chapter answers some underlying questions such as why was the Government of Nepal reluctant to locally integrate Bhutanese refugees? Additionally, why did the multi-level initiatives towards repatriation of the Bhutanese refugees fail? Finally, the chapter focuses on the durable solution that was offered to the Bhutanese refugees, i.e., third country resettlement. It answers why this durable solution was offered to the Bhutanese refugees.

The fifth chapter describes the (initial) reactions the refugees had towards resettlement and the differences in how they and the facilitators at the resettlement organizations understood the process. Several illustrations from my fieldwork will demonstrates the various resettlement

choices by the Bhutanese refugees. It will show who among the refugees were unsure, who chose to stay back, who chose to resettle, who chose to resettle but were unable to do so, and who chose to resettle only to encounter obstacles they did not envision when they made their choice. The chapter will also show why these situations played out the way they did through the various illustrations and narratives.

Finally, the sixth chapter of this dissertation uses the three-question approach to doing intersectionality suggested by Elizabeth R. Cole (2009) as a guideline to analyze the ways in which, and the reasons why, the Bhutanese refugees chose to resettle or stay in Nepal.[28] The chapter looks at whose choices were considered and whose were left out to identify the intra-group and inter-group diversity between and within the various groups of Bhutanese refugees based on their gender and sexuality, age, ethnicity and caste, class, education, citizenship, and 'ableness.' It then looks at what role inequality and power played in their choices. It considers the asymmetrical social, cultural, economic relationships between the refugees, especially within their families, and analyzes how they influenced their autonomy and freedom to choose. It also explains how the eligibility criteria and the immigration laws created inequalities between the refugees by reproducing patriarchy and ageism, and imposing Western ideologies of ideal nuclear families (assume heterosexual couple with biological children) and individualism. In doing so, these policies complicated how refugees understood various norms and expectations associated with their families, marriages, and family choices. The chapter will expose the various ways refugees resisted or conformed to the eligibility criteria, as well as consider the similarities (or commonalities) among the refugees that cross across social categories. Finally, it will highlight how the refugees used those commonalities to mobilize their agency and/or form a coalition for collective action to change the boundary of who was considered a Bhutanese refugee.

This research, with the support of the chapters that follow, argues that the international refugee regime and the scholars of refugee studies should not ignore the differences between and within groups of refugees. Ignoring differences among refugees silences the experiences of the marginalized and essentializes and naturalizes the views, perceptions, and experiences of 'all' refugees. In addition, only by acknowledging and incorporating the differences among

[28] In addition to Elizabeth R. Cole's 2009 article Intersectionality and Research in see Cole, E.R. & N.J. Sabik. (2009). Repairing a Broken Mirror: Intersectional Approaches to Diverse Women's Perceptions of Beauty and Bodies. In M.T. Berger, & K. Guidroz. (Eds.), *The Intersectional Approach: Transforming the Academy through Race, Class, and Gender* (pp.173-192). University of North Carolina Press.

the refugees can the refugee resettlement regime come up with solutions for refugee situations that are suitable and just for most, if not all, refugees.

Chapter II: Intersectionality: Theory and Methods

This research takes an intersectional approach as the basis for analysis. The objective of this chapter is to provide a detailed explanation of the theory of intersectionality and explore its use in this research. The chapter begins with a brief discussion about what intersectionality is *not*. For example, what intersectionality as a theoretical framework and/or analytical approach stands in contrast to or rejects, such as a single-axis or single-lens analysis. It does so by taking gender only analysis as the specific example. Although a single-lens gender analysis may appear as a suitable theory for this research, the chapter will demonstrate the inadequacy to analyze the full spectrum of resettlement choices by the Bhutanese refugees in Nepal, especially at the individual, the interpersonal, and the systemic level.

After briefly discussing the deficiencies of single-axis analysis, especially gender only analysis, the chapter will then focus on intersectionality, define it, and answer the following questions: What is intersectionality? What does it do? Why is it necessary? How did it come about? How can we incorporate intersectionality? What are the concerns and discussions surrounding the theory? How will intersectionality be utilized in this research? What are the problems and challenges associated with adopting this approach? Finally, the chapter concludes by addressing intersectionality's possibilities and potentials.

2.1 Single-axis Analysis

In regard to the traditions in the study of categories of differences and/or identity, a single-axis analysis is a unitary approach that presumes one category as the most relevant and/or important for political explanation and/or analysis of research (see Hancock, 2007: 67-68). Here, the category is viewed as an independent construct, which is not influenced or affected by other categories. The category is pre-constituted, ahistorical, and static with rigid boundaries. This approach that has a long tradition of "exclusion and essentialism" (Nash, 2008:3), according to Mohanty (1984), Hancock (2007), Cole (2009), and Grzanka (2018), creates numerous problems. For instance, it privileges one dimension of inequality, be it gender, race, class, or something else, to formulate ideas, knowledge, and solutions. It provides a simple and linear explanation of the situation, which often is reductionist and far from reality. It obliterates in-group differences and hierarchies of power and assumes group cohesion, when in reality these differences do exist. It focuses on the experiences of the most privileged members, who only partially represent the entire group, erasing the experiences and subjectivities of the less privileged. It develops a binary understanding of the groups within a

particular category with other groups who are viewed as oppressor-oppressed, powerful-powerless, fortunate-pitiful, aggressor-victim, etc. It silences subordinate groups by not focusing on their political struggles and resistance. It facilitates an "Oppression Olympics" (Hancock, 2007:68), where groups within the particular category compete for the position of the "most oppressed" to gain material, political, and policy backing from authorities such as state and non-profit institutions. Lastly, it is ineffective in addressing oppression and injustice because political initiatives and policy remedies do not change the systems of power.

At first glance, gender seems like the most relevant and/or obvious category for analysis of this dissertation. However, I would argue that although gender analysis is useful, it is, as Launius & Hassel (2018:145) say, incomplete to understand people's lives and experiences. An analysis that only considers gender would miss pertinent information that influence people's choices and affect their abilities (Ibid:143), more specifically, Bhutanese refugees' resettlement choices and agency. Gender analysis would only address one of three major questions that Yuval-Davis (1997) thinks feminists researchers analyzing women and gender relations are preoccupied with, namely, "why/how are women oppressed?" (Yuval-Davis, 1997:5).[29] As a result, gender analysis (i.e., a single-axis analysis) of the resettlement choices by the Bhutanese refugees in Nepal at the individual and interpersonal level would provide partial and misleading information about the Bhutanese refugees, their power relations, and their resettlement process. It would support a universal and binary perception of the Bhutanese refugees that all refugee men are privileged, and all refugee women are oppressed, obliterating the differences between and within the two sexes. Gender analysis would homogenize the category of Bhutanese refugee men and direct all the blame towards them as the perpetrators of violence, abuse, discrimination, and silencing. It would depict them as powerful (strong), estimable, fortunate, decisive, and having agency. Similarly, it would homogenize the category of Bhutanese refugee women and portray a very obscure image of these women as powerless, pathetic, pitiful, unfortunate, abused, passive victims, silenced by their suffering and lacking agency. The search for the universal explanation of women's oppression based on the differences of their social location to that of men, whether it is the private/public dichotomy, or the nature/culture argument, would show that Bhutanese refugee women lack agency and power to make life altering choices in their patriarchal familial setting, including the choice to

[29] The second and the third questions feminist researchers analyzing women and gender relations are preoccupied with are: "are the differences between men and women determined biologically, socially, or a combination of the two? And, what are the differences among women and among men and their effects upon generalized notions of gender relations?" (Yuval-Davis, 1997:5).

resettle and take up immigrant status. The private/public dichotomy or the nature/culture argument would show that men, on the other hand, as decision-makers in the family, would be able to choose to remain in Nepal or resettle West. However, as I will show with illustrations in Chapter VI, the reality is not as simple, clear-cut, or linear and why gender only analysis is not feasible. The grassroots realities and lived experiences of the Bhutanese refugees in Nepal are much more complex and nuanced. They do not match the dominant narratives in which the men want to stay, and the women want to leave, or that of the decisive men and the compliant women, or the oppressive men and the oppressed women. Such analysis would blame the refugees and their individual agency rather than focusing on institutional or systemic power discrepancies. Gender only analysis would not look at the differences within and between refugee men and women and not answer questions such as: Which men? Which women? What difference do other social categories of difference make? The reality is that individuals do not experience gender differences in isolation (Cole, 2009:171). In fact, they experience it simultaneously with other social categories, such as race, ethnicity and caste, class, citizenship, age, and ableness.

Similarly, a gender analysis of the resettlement choices made by the Bhutanese refugees in Nepal at the systemic level would identify 'patriarchy' as the root cause of all the oppressions among the Bhutanese refugees. Patriarchy would be signaled out to be the culprit responsible for the discrimination and oppression Bhutanese refugee women endure, which although not inaccurate, would be partial and misleading to explain the conditions and dynamics of all Bhutanese refugee women and men. The realities on the grounds are much more complex and nuanced. Patriarchy is different from racism, which is different from class oppression (and other systems of oppression), but it feeds off them (Enloe, 2017:49). These systemic oppressions rely on each other for creating and sustaining themselves. They interact with one another to create a "compounded burden of disempowerment" (Grzanka, 2018:18-20), which often impacts those already disadvantaged. Looking at patriarchy alone does not expose and challenge the persistence of patriarchy. To dismantle the working of patriarchy, we need to explore the inter-relationships of gender and sexuality, ethnicity and caste, education, class, citizenship, age, and ableness, in the lives of women and women as refugees.

In conclusion, focusing on gender alone can hinder research, theory development, and associated praxis. In other words, a gender analysis just by itself is not enough for interpretation and analysis. A single-axis analysis, including a gender analysis may lead to easy generalizations about the resettlement of the Bhutanese refugees, but it would not show a complete account of the following: Who chose to leave/stay back? How? and Why? Who was

not able to choose at all? Or, whose choices did not even matter? And why? An intersectional analysis will attempt to answer the above-mentioned questions. The construct of intersectional analysis has "assumed a significant position in thinking about gender" (Shields, 2008:303). In principle, according to Shields (2008:303), it provides two solutions to gender only analysis: it considers other social categories that influence the workings and meanings of gender; and it incorporates the multiplying effect of social categories beyond the gender-race-class trilogy.

The following sections dive deeper into the nuances of intersectionality. The sections will answer questions such as, what is it? What can it do? What does it stand in contrast to? Why is it important? According to Jennifer Nash (2017:118), "nearly everything about intersectionality is disputed: its histories and origins, its methodologies, its efficacy, its politics, its relationship with identity and identity politics, its central metaphor, its judicial orientation, and its relationship to black women and black feminism." Additionally, some of Nash's contestations will be briefly addressed under different sub-headings in this chapter.

2.2 Intersectionality

Intersectionality, as Hancock (2016:94) suggests, is more than just shifting from single-category analysis to multi-category analysis. It implies that gender, race, class, and other categories of differences are not just included/added in the analysis but are rather simultaneously, interactively, and mutually constructed with one another (see Simien & Hancock, 2011:185). Over the years, scholars have debated on the conceptualization of intersectionality and framed it as an idea (Alexander-Floyd, 2012; Phoenix & Pattynama, 2006; & Hancock, 2016), a buzzword (Davis, 2008), a tool (Nash, 2008; Collins & Bilge, 2016; & Grzanka, 2018), an approach (Hancock, 2007), an analysis (Collins, 2000), a method and/or heuristic device (Lutz, 2010), a study (McCall, 2005; & Cho, Crenshaw, McCall, 2013), a political project (Hankivsky & Cormier, 2008), a paradigm (Kuhn, 1996; Walgenbach, 2010; Hancock, 2016; & Dhamoon, 2011), a 'grand' theory (Klinger & Knapp, 2006), and a 'provisional' concept (Carastathis, 2016).

According to Alexander-Floyd (2012), intersectionality is an **ideograph** and an **idea** (see Hancock, 2016:192). Phoenix & Pattynama (2006:187) think it is an **idea** "in the process of burgeoning" while Hancock (2016:193) thinks it is an **idea** "whose time has come." Kathy Davis (2008:68) believes intersectionality has the appearance of a **'buzzword**.' It has generated debates throughout the Western world and gained popularity in academia, especially feminist and women's studies programs. Lately, more researchers (undergraduate to post-graduate) will focus on intersectionality because neglecting difference and the interplay of power leads to

findings that are irrelevant, misguided or dismissed (Ibid). If Davis (2008) sees intersectionality as a buzzword, Nash (2008) sees it as a theoretical and an analytical **tool**. According to Nash (2008:1-2), intersectionality is an **analytical tool** for "theorizing identity and oppression" and it is a **theoretical tool** made to deal with "feminist hierarchy, hegemony, and exclusivity." Like Nash (2008), Collins & Bilge (2016:25) see intersectionality as a **tool** for 'critical inquiry' (theory) & 'critical praxis' (politics and practice) that relationally investigates power and social inequality to develop our understanding of social justice and complexity (see Nash, 2017:121-122). To add to this, Grzanka (2018:xiii) believes that intersectionality is an **indispensable tool** that shows us how systems of oppression (such as sexism, racism, and class privilege) among groups band together to produce inequality. Hancock (2007:63-64) thinks intersectionality is an **interdisciplinary approach** for conducting empirical research where the interacting social categories form the basis of the structure of society and affect political access, equality, and justice. Similarly, Patricia Hill Collins (2012:450) believes intersectionality is a holistic theory engaged in the **analysis** of the interconnectedness of categories as systems of power, which are linked with social movement and social justice projects. They, according to her, influence black women's experiences and are also influenced by black women (Collins, 2000:299). Hankivsky & Cormier (2008) also recognize the social and political movement that intersectionality invites and sees its role in justice. They think intersectionality is a **political project** that furthers social justice. According to Helma Lutz (2016:39), intersectionality is a **method and heuristic device** that detects overlapping and co-constructive (in)visible inequalities. Whereas, according to McCall (2005:1772), intersectionality is "the **study** of multiple, intersecting, and complex social relations." Cho, Crenshaw, McCall (2013:785), further see intersectionality as not just a study but a **field of study**. There are also many scholars who think intersectionality is a paradigm: whether a new paradigm or a research paradigm. According to Thomas Kuhn (1996:43), intersectionality is a **research paradigm** that answers questions unaddressed by race-only or gender-only approaches, i.e., single-lens approaches (see Hancock, 2013:261). Similarly, Kathrine Walgenbach (2010) (cited Lutz, 2016:39) considers intersectionality a **new paradigm** because "it offers a set of terms, theoretical interventions, premises, problem definition, and suggested solutions." Similarly, Hancock (2007 & 2016) and Dhamoon (2011) consider intersectionality an **emerging research paradigm**. Dhamoon (2011:230), specifically provides a holistic understanding of intersectionality where she says it is:

> a research paradigm that offers a framework within which worldviews and theories are built and which has ontological, epistemological, and methodological dimensions. In examining the form and character of political life (ontology), investigating what can be known (epistemology), and developing and deploying tools of analysis (methods), intersectionality specifically

> operationalizes interpretivism and critical theory rather than positivism, whereby realities and knowledge are treated as complex, fluid, subjective, discursive, socially constructed, products of and productive of power, and subject to individual and social action. While positivist methods such as statistical data analysis can provide some insights about intersectionality, these are less consistent with intersectionality because they are based on studying static, categorical, error-free variables rather than fluid and changeable forms and degrees of differences.

Given intersectionality's holistic overview, Klinger & Knapp (2006) (cited in Lutz, 2016:39) see the potential of intersectionality becoming a **grand theory**. They nevertheless have reservations. They believe that intersectionality is unable to link how gender, race, and class as distinct categories form social categories at the structural level. In addition, they are critical of intersectionality because it regards all categories equally instead of considering 'gender' a primary category, resulting in gender becoming "superfluous." (see Lutz, 2016:39). Of a completely opposite view, Anna Carastathis (2016) thinks of intersectionality as a **provisional concept** rather than as an analysis, a theory, or a method. She refers to Black feminist and legal scholar Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw's footnote in her article *Mapping the Margins* where Crenshaw mentions how she sees/uses intersectionality as a provisional concept to map structural inequality (see Nash, 2017:125). For Carastathis (2016), intersectionality is a work in progress, an early attempt in addressing complex issues of inequality and discrimination, and a desire and a commitment towards a better and just world. In that sense, intersectionality is important because of the potential of what it can do rather than what it has achieved (see Nash, 2017:125). While most scholars differ in their conception of intersectionality as demonstrated above, many believe that intersectionality is a "central tenet of feminist thinking" (Shields, 2008:301) at the core of its analysis (Launius & Hassel, 2018:146), and the "most significant contribution made by women's studies" (McCall, 2005:1771).

Lately, scholars agree that intersectionality is not just about identities but also about institutions, structures, and systems. For instance, Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw (2015, September 24) in an article for the Washington Post said that intersectionality along with identities is about how institutions manipulate identities to privilege and/or exclude groups. After all, it is the institutions, social structures, and systems that create and maintain differences and impact individuals differently. Therefore, Patrick Grzanka (2018, xv) and Launius & Hassel (2018:151) emphasize the need to direct the focus to the macro level of structures and systems, along with categories, to analyze how these multiple dimensions and systems intersect to produce and maintain complex and nuanced subjectivities and experiences.

To sum up what scholars think based on their understandings and definitions, the following can be said about intersectionality:

a. It stands in contrast to single-axis analysis, meaning more than one category is analyzed throughout an intersectional analysis.
b. All categories have equal importance and they "**mutually constitute**, **reinforce**, and **naturalize** one another" (Shields, 2008:302) rather than simply being added to the analysis.
c. The dynamic interactions among categories, social institutions, structures, and systems produce and maintain differences of privilege and oppression among people.
d. The members between and within categories are diverse and their identities and experiences are complex and nuanced.
e. Intersectionality helps make empirical and theoretical claims, which according to Dhamoon (2011:231), are doable and a requirement.

For the purpose of this dissertation, I use the definition of intersectionality by Jennifer Nash (2008:1), which is, "intersectionality has become an analytical tool for theorizing identity and oppression." I use this simple and to the point definition of intersectionality because it matches how I intend to use this theory, i.e., to theorize Bhutanese refugees' identities and their experiences of inequality and oppression.

Moving forward, by utilizing the above definition of intersectionality, the next question is: What does intersectionality as an idea/concept/theory/analysis/paradigm/praxis do and why is it necessary? According to Angie Marie Hancock (2016:38), intersectionality has two intellectual projects: a visibility and inclusionary project, and an analytical and ontological project. Unlike a single-axis analysis, intersectional research is more inclusive. It sheds light on previously invisible, marginalized, or subordinated categories and groups, which have been underrepresented or under researched. By including these categories and groups, and making their differences and experiences visible, intersectionality also focuses on dominant groups (Launius & Hassel, 2018:161). As such, intersectionality makes multiple positionings visible (Phoenix & Pattynama, 2006:187) and exposes everyday power relations (Wibben & Donahoe, 2020:9). In addition, intersectionality reconceptualizes relationships among social categories. It shows how these simultaneously overlapping categories shape our experiences by privileging some and oppressing others (see Launius & Hassel, 2018:144-145). It helps us understand how multiple categories co-construct with one another, i.e., give each other meaning and help

sustain and/or reinforce each other at a given time and space. In doing so, it provides "a more textured and layered analysis of intersecting group identities" (Simien & Hancock, 2011:186). This helps us see how the world works more "fully, deeply, and complexly" (Launius & Hassel, 2018:161).

Intersectionality changes the way we think about differences and power. Instead of being reductionist in its analysis, i.e., reducing people to one category at a time, intersectionality treats social categories as something that cannot be disaggregated (see Hancock, 2013:266). Intersectionality treats identities and social positions as relational (see Phoenix & Pattynama, 2006:187). It also changes our view of power dynamics, i.e., how power is conceptualized and distributed. The shift to simultaneously overlapping, intersecting, interacting, and interlocking effects of identities and differences from unidirectional margin-center analogy shows how people can experience privilege on one axis and oppression on another (see Hancock, 2013:266).

Intersectionality also questions and examines normative, naturalized, universal, and taken-for-granted understandings, knowledge, and 'truth' about power and political life (see Grzanka, 2018:xxii). In that sense, it is an epistemological practice (May, 2015:48), one that aims to stop hegemonic knowledge production (Grzanka, 2018:xxii), which cannot explain political life and social order aptly and/or fairly (Dhamoon, 2011:231). As such, intersectionality's political orientation is towards developing theory, methods, and social actions that promote positive change, equality, and justice.

Intersectionality answers questions not addressed by a single-axis or lens analysis. According to Hancock (2007:74), intersectionality is holistic research that serves as a corrective to generalizing theories and their ineffective policy design and success. It does so by examining the dynamic relationships between categories, individuals, and institutions. Unlike conventional feminism that breeds essentialism and claims to speak for 'all' women (Nash, 2008:3), intersectionality is a "respectful theory" (Lugones & Spelman, 1983:578 cited in Wibben & Donahoe, 2020:2) that "destabilizes the binary of structure/identity" (Grzanka, 2018:70). It is a respectful theory because it does not homogenize the experiences of all groups of people and/or prescribe solutions that are applicable to 'all' groups of individuals (Lugones & Spelman, 1983:578 cited in Wibben & Donahoe, 2020:2), as is often the case with identity politics, where group solidarity or unity is often understood as being equal to group uniformity (Hancock, 2007:65). Identity politics essentializes intragroup differences, privileging the elite, especially their experiences via representation while silencing the experiences of the marginalized in the name of unity. Identity politics is "politically fragmented and has

essentializing tendencies" (Phoenix & Pattynama, 2006:187). Intersectionality is distinct from identity politics. By looking at the differences of privilege and subordination within and between populations within their kinship (familial and other), religious, legal, and other structures at a given time and space (Mohanty, 1984), intersectional research helps develop awareness about oppression and resistance and build coalition among groups (see Cho, Crenshaw, and McCall, 2013:801). An analysis that is intersectional, which does not ignore categorical and intragroup differences or does not favor some over other differences, can fully explain how people are marginalized (Crenshaw, 1989:140). It can lead to an analysis that produces relevant and sound policy and/or other solutions to address marginalization (Phoenix & Pattynama, 2006:189). More importantly, it can dismantle the very hegemonic power structures and dynamics that supports marginalization and oppression (Lykke, 2010:54).

Intersectionality also is not just about diversity of categories, groups, and experiences. Instead, it is about the interplay of power relations. As such, intersectionality also differs from liberal and relativist notions like multiculturalism (Lykke, 2010:55). Intersectionality does not allow space to place greater importance on one identity, group, and/or experience over others like multiculturalism does.

I adopt a feminist postmodern deconstructionist approach to intersectionality in analyzing my dissertation. Without intersectionality, I could show how certain groups were privileged while others oppressed by the third country resettlement process, but this would not address the ways some Bhutanese refugees, especially Nepali men married to Bhutanese refugee women, were excluded from their participation in the resettlement process. This also applies to Bhutanese refugees under the age of 18 and the refugees with poor health and/or disabilities I encountered during my research.

Today intersectionality has gained currency in social science and other fields of research, especially research taking a feminist stance. According to Knapp (2005:253 cited in Shields, 2008:303), this is because intersectionality is politically and morally inclusive and it meets feminism foundational purpose, i.e., challenging systemic inequalities and institutionalized oppressions. But how did it come about? The next section investigates this question and traces some of intersectionality's history.

2.2.1 Intersectionality: a Brief History

The history and the origin of intersectionality is one of many areas where scholars disagree. Some scholars trace intersectionality's origin to its institutionalization as a theory/discipline and see its root in law, especially Critical Legal Theory (CLT) and/or Critical

Race Theory (CRT). Black feminist and legal scholar Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw institutionalized intersectionality when she coined the term in 1989. She developed the concept of intersectionality due to the limitation of gender only and race only analysis, which were pre-occupied with white women and black men, respectively, to fully address the marginalization of black women. According to Crenshaw (1989:385), black women's experience of subordination was occasionally similar to that of white women, often times similar to that of black men, other times similar to that of both white women and black men, and yet most times dissimilar to that of both white women or black men. Essentially, it was unique to them. Therefore, she produced the term intersectionality to describe black women's unique experiences at the intersecting social location of their gender and race.

Other scholars such as Collins (2000), Nash (2008/2017), Shields (2008), Cole (2009), Lykke (2010), May (2015), Hancock (2016), Collins & Bilge (2016), and Grzanka (2018) trace the origin of intersectionality (or intersectionality like thinking) to the intellectual labor and political activism of black feminists and post-colonial women of color feminists. For Collins (2000), May (2015), Hancock (2016), and Collins & Bilge (2016), it is of utmost importance to present the history of intersectionality as an effort to correct its origin story. Collins (2000) and Collins & Bilge (2016) do so by tracing intersectionality like thinking's long history outside of academia (see Nash, 2017:122). They go as far as to include oral history, speeches, poetry, music, creative nonfiction, and social activism, among other things to redefine 'knowledge' and 'truth' in intersectional analysis and recover the silenced, if not marginalized, voices of women of color (See Grzanka, 2018:xvi). Two such work that have immensely influenced intersectionality and its development are: civil rights figure and travelling preacher Sojourner Truth's 'Ain't I a Woman' speech, and the black lesbian feminist movement, the Combahee River Collective's manifesto. In 1851 at the Women's Rights Convention in Akron, Ohio, Sojourner Truth gave a speech where she compared herself relatively to white women and all men and asked whether she was any less a woman because she was enslaved and stronger than most men, challenging essentialist thinking about race and gender (see Brah & Phoenix 2004 cited in Grzanka (2018:309-310). With sharp arguments and poetic versus, she did what researchers today consider an intersectional deconstruction or analysis. Similarly, in 1977 the Combahee River Collective wrote a manifesto, where this group of black lesbian feminists cited their difficulty in separating their race from their class from their sex oppression, which they often experienced 'simultaneously' (Combahee River Collective, 1977: 234 cited in Cole, 2009). This, according to Beale (1970 cited in Cole, 2009), is often "cited as one of the earliest expressions of intersectionality." The Combahee River Collective in 'A Black

Feminist Statement' also refers to the metaphor 'interlocking' in reference to racial, sexual, class, and other major systems of oppressions, which depicts the entangled nature of oppressions (Combahee River Collective, 1977: 13 cited in Lykke, 2010:83).

Like Collins, Angie Marie Hancock (2016) exerts strenuous effort to tracing intersectionality's political and intellectual history in and outside of academia in her book, *Intersectionality: An Intellectual History*. She shows how the language, as well as logic of intersectionality like thinking, whether it is Frances Beale's 'double bind' or Deborah K. King's 'multiple jeopardies,' were initially thought to be unique to Black women and the purview of black feminists (Hancock, 2016:30). She then shows how bell hooks and other scholars in culture studies, used standpoint theory and the visual metaphor of center and margins to theorize black women's subordinated experiences (see Hancock, 2016:31) presenting how intersectionality is a development of feminist standpoint theory (also see Yuval-Davis, 2011a:158) with deep roots in black feminism. Nevertheless, Hancock (2016:148) makes clear that the origin story of intersectionality is more complicated than that. Simultaneously with the black feminists, women of color feminists inside and outside the United States, working with post-colonial studies, gender studies, ethnic studies, queer studies, international development, and other disciplines, were dissatisfied with single-axis analysis and looking for alternative theorization that demonstrated how gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, and other differences influenced women's lives (see Davis, 2008:70-71). To cite an example, in the early 1980s, Israeli British scholar Nira Yuval-Davis began working in the field of intersectionality under the name 'social divisions' with her colleague Floya Anthias (Yuval-Davis, 2011a:156-157). Together they published extensively on 'triple oppression' of gender, race, and class for three decades, in addition to arguing for the inclusion of categories 'ethnicity' and 'nationality' (see Lykke, 2010:78-79). Other women of color feminists such as Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Avtar Brah, Ann Phoenix, Chela Sandoval, Gloria Anzaldua, and Cherrie Moraga made similar efforts to develop the field of intersectionality to bring in the unique perspective and experiences of 'colonized,' 'indigenous,' and/or 'non-Western' women (see Grzanka, 2018:xvi).

We can hence conclude that when Crenshaw institutionalized intersectionality in the 1980s, she was not the first person to talk about the multiple subjugation of black women. As identified by Davis (2008:72-73), feminists of color in and outside the United States had explicitly or implicitly theorized about intersectionality, either focusing on intersections or using other concepts, with the difference that gender and race were major issues of negotiation in the United States while gender and class in the continental Europe (see Lykke, 2010:78).

Therefore, when Crenshaw institutionalized intersectionality in 1989, she "provided a name to a pre-existing theoretical and political commitment" (Nash, 2008:3) that had been simultaneously developed across various fields as collective creations of multiple feminist tradition (Nash, 2017:126).

2.2.2 Intersectionality: Conceptualization and Central Metaphor

"Intersectionality is a metaphorical term" (Yuval-Davis, 2011a:157) and one that suggests the image of a road intersection (or crossroads). This is a shift from the margin-center metaphor of standpoint theory. The margin-center metaphor, like one of intersectionality's intellectual projects, hopes to make the invisible visible and/or mainstream the marginalized. This metaphor, according to Hancock (2016:88), is problematic for two reasons: a) its singular form usage and b) its binary conceptualization of the margin (oppressed) and the center (oppressor). The dissatisfaction surrounding the conceptual arrangement of the margin-center metaphor led to separation between feminist standpoint theorists and intersectional feminists (Hancock, 2016:81-82) when Crenshaw produced the metaphor of intersecting roads to describe black women's positionality in the US legal system, especially anti-discrimination doctrine. According to the intersection (or crossroad) metaphor, which is understood as the root metaphor for intersectionality, discrimination is analogous to the flow of traffic in an intersection, moving in all four directions. For Crenshaw (1989:149),

> discrimination, like traffic through an intersection, may flow in one direction, and it may flow in another. If an accident happens in an intersection, it can be caused by cars traveling from any numbers of directions and, sometimes, from all of them. Similarly, if a Black woman is harmed because she is in the intersections, her injury could result from sex discrimination or race discrimination.

With the above visual image, Crenshaw (1989) wanted to show how identity politics and anti-discrimination policies that took single-axis analysis (gender-only or race-only analysis in this case) misrepresented the situation and marginalized women of color (Lykke, 2010:71). This is not to say that the crossroads metaphor is without problems. Post-structural feminists have criticized the crossroads metaphor for being a crude and static tool for analyzing subjectivities (Staunaes & Sondergaard, 2010 cited in Lykke, 2010:73) and for running the "risk of overlooking agency" (Bhavnani, 2007 cited in Olesen, 2018:273). They believe the intersection analogy of intersectionality is inadequate to conceptualize "the depth of the degree to which various aspects of our identity and situation shape all others" (Hirschmaan, 2012 cited in Grzanka, 2018:297). In their view, categories of differences are interwoven, interacting, and

reinforcing and cannot be separated, not even for the purpose of analysis. In addition, the categories are contingent on specific geopolitical context (space) and time and cannot be assumed or prioritized before commencing an analysis (see Lykke, 2010:73). As the above shows, several scholars are dissatisfied with the central metaphor of intersection (crossroads) and even the term 'intersectionality' and offer alternatives. Some of these alternatives are discussed below.

Some scholars prefer the visual imagery of a Venn diagram (Hirchmann, 2012), a double helix, i.e., the image of DNA and RNA (Hirchmann 2012), a web (Gilligan, 1982), or the 'basement' (Crenshaw, 1989) over the crossroads. Nancy J. Hirschmaan (2012) thinks that a Venn diagram, an imagery also used by Angie Marie Hancock, with its overlapping properties is more inclusive than the intersection. However, since a Venn diagram "presumes a combination of two separate and distinct identities that happen to overlap" (cited in Grzanka, 2018:297), she believes a 'double helix' or a 'web' (Gilligan's conception) better represent categorical relationships, with the 'web' doing the best job of them all. According to Hirchmann (2012), the visual imaginary of a web is a conception used by Gilligan (1982) in disability studies. It shows multiple intersections, linkages, and interrelations among categories and subjectivities, which focus on complex 'connections' in addition to 'differences' (see Grzanka, 2018:299). Anna Carastathis (2016) also believes the Crenshaw's crossroads metaphor is inadequate to conceptualize intersectionality. She advocates for Crenshaw's other metaphor, the 'basement,' which is often ignored. In Crenshaw's basement metaphor, the basement contains people disadvantaged on the basis on their identities (gender, race, class, etc.), who are stacked hierarchically with people who have multiple disadvantages, in the bottom while the room above the basement contains people, who are not disadvantaged. In this analogy, the people in the basement look at the ceiling of the basement (which is the floor of the room above) as the reason for their disadvantage. They believe if it was not for the ceiling of the basement, they would be with the others in the room above where people are treated fairly (in this case by law). Using the same logic, 'had it not been for their race, they would not be discriminated against' or 'had it not been for their gender, they would not be discriminated against' fall under this 'basement' metaphor (see Crenshaw, 1989:151-152). The basement metaphor evokes permeability. A person from the basement can move into the room above once s/he is no longer disadvantaged and vice versa. In addition, Carastathis (2016:91) argues that the basement metaphor, unlike the crossroads metaphor, depicts social hierarchy. She says that paying attention to the basement metaphor has the potential to change intersectionality's focus and aim, from including differences and marginalization to ending discrimination

(Carastathis, 2016:95). Like Carastathis (2016), I think Crenshaw's basement metaphor does a better job of depicting social hierarchy and permeability, both concepts which are of importance to intersectionality. As complex as it is to decide which metaphor best describes intersectionality, it is equally difficult to determine which terminology explains the concept.

There are a handful of terminologies and concepts scholars offer as an alternative to intersectionality. One among them is the notion of '**inappropriate/d others**,' suggested by Haraway (1992), which she derived from feminist Trinh Minh-ha (see Lykke, 2010:84). According to this concept, people are inappropriate/d, i.e., socially excluded, and marginalized, when differences in gender, race, class, etc. intersect (Ibid). This concept addresses subjects and experiences without privileging one category, intersection, or analysis over another (Ibid). Another such concept is '**differential power, politics, & consciousness'** suggested by Chela Sandoval (2000), where rather than the categorial grid, the boundary work and the consciousness derived from the permeability of categories are more important (Lykke, 2010:84). The term '**interlocking**' used in the 1970s by the Combahee River Collective, according to Lykke (2010:83) is also a suitable candidate as it suggests inseparability. Staunaes (2003) '**dynamic process**' and Yuval-Davis (2006) '**axes of differences**' are two more considerations (see Grzanka, 2018:2). So is '**social dynamics**' suggested by Davina Cooper (2004:12), which traces "the shifting ways relations of inequality become attached to various aspects of social life" (Yuval-Davis, 2011a:157) and '**configurations**' according to Kumkum Bhavnani (2008), which portray flowing and interweaving relations that results in intersectionality (Ibid). Similarly, '**interactions,**' according to Rita K. Dhamoon (2011), describes the dynamic forces and relations of power, which mutually constitute, reinforce, and naturalize differences. Dhamoon (2011:232), however, does not think a single and/or universally agreed upon concept of intersectionality is necessary as that would lead to unquestioned Western-centric conception of intersectionality rather than something that is conceptualized at a certain time based on specific geopolitical context. I could not agree more.

For this dissertation, I, like Yuval-Davis (2011a), use the term intersectionality despite its limitations. I use the term intersectionality because of its wide usage and the "intuitive understanding of the subject matter" the use of the term calls forth (Yuval-Davis, 2011a:157).

2.2.3 Intersectionality: Methodology

Intersectionality does not have a defined or specific set of methodologies. An analysis, according to Cho, Crenshaw, and McCall (2013:795), is intersectional if it adopts "an intersectional way of thinking about the problem of sameness and difference and its relations

to power." They add having intersectional or intersectionality in its title and citing other intersectional research along with including various forms of diversities and identities in research questions, study samples, and data analysis and interpretation does not make a research intersectional (also see Grzanka, 2018:xix). Instead, an analysis, despite its choice of methods, is intersectional if it does intersectional analysis, i.e., looks at the multiplicative, dynamic, and co-constructive nature of categories and their link with hierarchies of power (see Grzanka, 2018:304). Researchers like Nash (2008:5) think this lack of clearly defined methodology is intersectionality's biggest intellectual weakness, while others like Davis (2008:69) believe intersectionality's conceptual and methodological vagueness and/or open-endedness is the secret to its success. As a result, today there are many feminist scholars who are confused by intersectionality; yet there are others who are equally seduced by it. Intersectionality, as noted by Phoenix & Pattynama (2006:187), has enough methodological (even conceptual) attraction and repulsion to have feminists debating for years to come. This section addresses some of those debates.

a. Categories

When it comes to how to do intersectionality, especially based on the stance towards categories and their interrelationships, Leslie McCall's article *The Complexity of Intersectionality* is one of the most cited articles on intersectional methodologies (see Lykke, 2010 and Grzanka, 2018). In this article, McCall (2005) demonstrates three approaches to study complexities of power differential and identity formations, namely anticategorical complexity, intracategorical complexity, and intercategorical (or just categorical) complexity. They categories are presented below:

Table 1: McCall's Analytical Categories that Explore Intersectional Complexities

	Anticategorical complexity	**Intracategorical complexity**	**Intercategorical complexity**
Understanding and use of categories	This approach deconstructs categories of analysis because social life and human experiences are too complex and fluid to reduce subjects and structures into categories.	In this approach, categories have conflicting status. They are not denied as in the case with anticategorical complexities. In fact, focuses on how categories/boundaries are experienced, (re)produced, and resisted.	This approach sees categories as inevitable and uses them strategically to analyze unequal relationships among social groups.

Adoption of this approach	Mostly feminist scholars in the social sciences and humanities fields who question boundary making/defining process adopt this approach.	This approach inaugurated the study of intersectionality. Most feminists of color use this approach.	This approach is lesser known/adopted of the three complexities.
	Used in theoretical and empirical researches. Examples include: genealogy in history, deconstruction in literature, and ethnography in anthropology.	Used in theoretical and empirical researches. Example includes case study method	Used in empirical researches to chart changing relationships among multiple social groups. Leslie McCall's preferred approach.
Management of complexities	This approach believes categories impose stable and homogenous order and fully rejects them. Philosophically – this approach believes categories do not have any basis in reality. Methodologically – suspicious of language and process of categorization: language creates categorical reality, categorization creates demarcation, demarcation creates exclusion, and exclusion creates inequality.	This approach looks within categories (hence the name intracategorical) and focuses on underexplored complexities of neglected social groups.	This approach exposes the relationships between privileged and subjugated social groups. Therefore, is a relatively more holistic analysis/undertaking.
	This approach believes that removing boundaries could free subjects from social hierarchies. It also could result in inclusive and complex practices and politics that are socially just.	This single case intensive approach shows the failure of standard categories to reflect the diversity and heterogeneity of experiences within it.	This multigroup and systematically comparative approach focuses on the changing nature of relationships between social categories of differences

Limitation and/or drawbacks	This approach believes disregarding categories remove social hierarchies and injustice but in reality, social hierarchies and injustice exist whether one uses categories or disregards them	In this approach standard groups are generalized/homogenized in order to compare them with marginalized (underexplored) group(s)	Researches adopting such approach are difficult undertakings given the number of categories and complexities that need to be analyzed
		It only focuses on multiply marginalized (underexplored) categories and not the full range of categories.	There are very few published works, especially peer-reviewed articles using this approach.

Source: Compiled from McCall (2005:1773-1789)

According to McCall (2005:1773), the objective of anticategorical complexity is to deconstruct analytical categories based on the explanation that life, especially identities and associated experiences are too complex, fluid, changing, and dynamic to be expressed in the form of rigid and/or fixed categories. Doing so would simplify what otherwise is 'irreducible' and lessen the importance of complex experiences and identities. The objective of intracategorical complexity is to focus on previously invisible, marginalized, and/or unexplored (or underexplored) social groups located "at neglected points of intersections" (McCall, 2005:1774). This approach "problematizes the meaning and boundaries of the categories themselves" (Yuval-Davis, 2011a:158) and reflects the diversity and heterogeneity of experiences within categories in each time and space. Finally, the objective of intercategorical (or categorical) complexity is to chart and analyze the changing unequal relationships between categories of difference (see McCall, 2005:1773). This approach, favored by McCall, systematically compares complexities of relationships and show how they "affect particular social behavior or distribution of resources" (Yuval-Davis, 2011a:158). McCall (2005:1773) envisions these complexities along a continuum with anticategorical complexity on one end, intracategorical complexity in the middle, and intercategorical complexity on the other end. Additionally, she does not think that all intersectional research can be divided into one of her three approaches (see McCall, 2005:1774). In fact, she believes that intersectional research has the tendency to belong to more than one approach. Of a slightly different opinion and position, Yuval-Davis (2011a:158) thinks intercategorical complexity needs to be combined with intracategorical complexity so that "the sensitivity and dynamism of the intracategorical approach could be combined with the social-economic perspective of the intercategorical approach." Unless intercategorical approach is complemented by intracategorical approach, Yuval-Davis (2011a) claims that the relationships between categories in intercategorical approach will be additive instead of being mutually constitutive

(see Carastathis, 2014:311). This could be a problem because an additive model has essentializing tendencies. An additive approach "conceptualizes people's experiences as being separate, independent, and summative" (see Bowleg, 2008:314) rather than seeing them as being 'irreducible,' 'interdependent,' and 'mutually constitutive.' Simply including distinct social categories, according to Yuval-Davis (2006:195), leads to identity politics and not intersectionality. In addition, just being inclusive or adding diversity, "reproduces invisibility of the oppressed rather than empowering them" (Hancock, 2016:85). Lisa Bowleg (2008:312), for instance, in her research with black lesbians found it difficult to escape the additive assumption, especially implicit intersections, while conducting intersectional research. She, therefore, concluded that to avoid additive analysis, researchers should make the implicit intersections between categories and social inequalities associated with those identities explicit (Bowleg, 2008:322).

In this dissertation, I adopt an intracategorical approach to intersectionality. I focus on groups of Bhutanese refugees who are unable to resettle, unable to choose to resettle, and/or delayed in their resettlement process. By looking at these groups of refugees and their resettlement processes, I hope to show the diversity and heterogeneity of resettlement experiences among the Bhutanese refugees in Nepal. Moreover, by looking at the third country resettlement from the perspective of women and children, among other disadvantaged groups of refugees, I hope to problematize the meaning and the boundary of who is considered a Bhutanese refugee. I will show the limitations of categories, among other categories, the limitations of the category 'refugee' and interrogate 'who' and 'in what ways' decides 'who is a refugee.' I will also focus on refugees who cross the boundaries of constructed categories (in this case 'eligible refugee' category) to explain how complexities and intersectionality unfold.

McCall's table above is one of the several debates surrounding analytical categories. There are many others that especially pertain to the scope and usage of categories, such as how many categories should be considered for analysis? Is the list finite or infinite? Are too many categories a problem? Which categories should we incorporate for analysis? Are some categories more important than others? Or do they vary by context? These debates and/or questions are addressed here. For the question of: how many categories should be considered for analysis, a short answer according to Yuval-Davis (2011a:157) suggests: as few as two and as many as infinite. Others, such as Philomena Essed (1991), analyzes two categories: gender and race and Thronton Dill (1983) and Bryan et. al. (1985) analyzes three: gender, race, and class (Ibid). Other scholars analyze specific categories. For instance, Bradley (1996) analyzes age, Bowleg (2008) sexuality, and Hirschmann (2012) disability. There are yet others who

analyze many categories. For instance, Helma Lutz (2002) analyzes 14 categories and Charlotte Bunch (2001) a total of 16 (see Yuval-Davis, 2011a:159). There are also scholars like Skeggs (1997) and Knapp (1999), who believe the most important categories, namely gender, race, class (the trilogy), are undertheorized in intersectionality (see Davis, 2008:75). Lykke (2010:83), on the other hand, is of the belief that while structuralists and feminist Marxists agree with a finite list, post-structuralists favor open-ended list of categories for analysis. The problem here is that "the complexity of the analysis increases the more categories are involved" (Ibid). Many feminists, therefore, name a few categories with 'etc.' at the end of the list. One post-structuralist, Judith Butler (1990:143) in 'Gender Trouble' argues for such open-endedness in intersectional analysis but criticizes the 'etc.' at the end of the list of categories as a "sign of exhaustion as well as of the illimitable process of signification itself." Lykke (2010:83) assumes this is Butler's way of implying that intersectionality is caught between the desire of being complete and the need for recognizing the impossibility of incorporating all categories and/or differences. Fraser (1997) and Knapp (1999), on the other hand, clarify that Butler's criticism although applicable to identity politics' discourse is not applicable to intersectionality and in fact can suppress differences and be reductionist (Knapp, 1999:130). Knapp's criticism of Bulter, according to Yuval-Davis (2006:202), stresses the need for distinguishing the various levels of analysis for examining categories in specific time and context. Various levels of analysis in intersectionality are addressed in the next section.

While the above, as problematized by Alice Ludvig (2006:247) shows the impossibility of intersectionality to consider all categories for analysis, it does not answer pertinent questions she raises, namely, who defines when, where, and which categories are included for analysis, while others categories are not included, and why (see Phoenix & Pattynama, 2006:190). Nira Yuval-Davis (2006:203 & 2011:160) has two responses to Ludvig's questions. Firstly, when, where, and which categories are included for analysis depends on the context along with the particularities of the groups whose subjectivities and experiences are being considered. Some categories, such as gender, race, class, ethnicity, and age influence most people in most social locations, while other categories such as caste, disability, and statelessness affect fewer people around the world. The latter categories (and others not listed here), nevertheless, are more important than others to make these specific groups, their subjectivities, and experiences visible at specific times (also see Dill & Zambrana, 2009 in Olesen, 2018:274). Secondly, the question regarding who decides which categories depends on the "creative freedom and autonomy of the analyst" (Yuval-Davis, 2006:203). In conclusion, which categories and how many of them are included in certain historical context are not fixed and are "the product of political struggle

as well as an analytical process" (Yuval-Davis, 2011a:160). Nevertheless, the researchers must be specific regarding their choice of categories and the reasoning behind selecting them (see Warner, 2008 cited in Olesen, 2018:274). Which categories to include for analysis and their interrelatedness can also be explored, as suggested by Davis (2014), by asking Mari Matsuda's famous 'the other question:'

> The way I try to understand the interconnection of all forms of subordination is through a method I call 'ask the other question.' When I see something that looks racist, I ask, 'Where is the patriarchy in this?' When I see something that looks sexist, I ask, 'Where is the heterosexism in this?' When I see something that looks homophobic, I ask, 'Where are the class interests in this?' (Matsuda, 1991:1189 cited in Davis, 2014:70).

For Lutz (2016:40-42), the other question works as a directive for analysis. It helps her to: reflect on her positionality, identify the significance of categories, and show how people negotiate with their multiple identities, daily, to gain control over their lives. For Nash (2008:12), on the other hand, it ignores "the intimate connections between privilege and oppression." The other question shows how systems of oppressions, such as patriarchy, racism, classism, heterosexism, etc. reinforce each other, but it does not show how the subjects might be oppressed at certain intersections and privileged at others in social, cultural, historical, and political moments (Ibid), blurring the demarcation between the oppressed and the privileged. In this dissertation, I analyze the co-constructive relationships among gender and sexuality, age, ethnicity and caste, class, education, citizenship, and 'ableness,' in order to show how sexism, heteronormativity, ageism, classism, ableism, along with discriminations related with ethnicity and caste, and citizenship affect Bhutanese refugees' resettlement choices and/or influence their actual resettlement experiences. By doing so, I will demonstrate that Bhutanese refugees are not monolithic. Some refugees are more privileged than others based on their memberships along the axes of age, gender and sexuality, education, class, citizenship, ethnicity and caste, and ableness. However, by saying they are privileged, I am not implying that their life is easy to navigate. With no national identity or state to take responsibility for them, their employment, income, livelihoods, and rights are disadvantaged and uncertain. But like every society in the world, the Bhutanese refugees live in a system of power, in a state of flux between privilege, power, and oppression. With illustrations from my fieldwork in Chapter VI, I will show how the third country resettlement process is a discriminatory process that privileges men, especially affluent landlords and highly educated adult men, and discriminates against women and children, especially women in underage, polygamous, and/or mixed marriages and their underage children. I will demonstrate the different ways in which the

Bhutanese refugees use their privileges to navigate through the third country resettlement process. In addition, I will draw parallels between social categories and agency. Agency is embedded in social categories, especially identities of the subject. Social categories are central to agency because they are the source of and/or mechanisms through which (individual or collective) agency is developed (see Showden, 2011:13). Depending on the Bhutanese refugees' affiliation with different social categories of privilege or oppression that intersected and/or combined, their agency either emerged or was stifled. More intersections of privilege meant more agency, which facilitated the Bhutanese refugees' abilities to choose and act 'freely.' On the other hand, more intersections of oppression meant less agency, which hindered their abilities to do the same.

b. Level of Analysis

In recent years, scholars have moved away from debating about categories and/or their relationships, to debating about levels of analysis at which intersectionality is at work (see Phoenix & Pattynama, 2006:190; Carastathis, 2014:310; & Lutz, 2016:40). This, according to Jennifer Jihye Chun, George Lipsitz, and Young Shin (2013:923) cited in Cho, Crenshaw and McCall (2013:797), is because intersectionality is more concerned about how things, especially how power, inequality, and oppression work rather than who people are. Scholars, such as Staunaes (2003), Buitelaar (2006), Prins (2006), and Yuval-Davis (2006) claim that intersectionality has been too focused with categories and theorizing identity (see Davis, 2008:75) rather than looking at how power works at different levels and thus, as Launius & Hassel (2018:153) point out "complicating our thinking and understanding" about privilege and oppression as well as how the world works. Various scholars identify different levels at which intersectionality functions. Crenshaw (1991), for instance, differentiates structural, political, and representational intersectionality. Structural intersectionality refers to "the ways in which the location of women of color at the intersections of race and gender makes our actual experience of domestic violence, rape, and remedial reform qualitatively different than that of white women" (Crenshaw, 1991:1245). Political intersectionality relates to how "both feminist and antiracist politics have, paradoxically, often helped marginalize the issue of violence against women of color" (Ibid). Representational intersectionality pertains to "the cultural construction of women of color…how controversies over the representation of women of color in popular culture can also elide the particular location of women of color, and thus become yet another source of intersectional disempowerment" (Ibid). Political philosopher Baukje Prins (2006) is critical of 'systemic' intersectionality, which is adopted by scholars like

Crenshaw and others in the United States and says it is limiting in analysis, especially its understanding of power and human subjectivities (see Phoenix & Pattynama, 2006:188). She compares it with 'constructionist' intersectionality, which is adopted by scholars in the UK (and other parts of Europe) and claims that it is more suitable for dealing with the nuances of complexities and identities, especially human agency (see Lykke, 2010:74 also see Nash, 2008:11). Constructionist intersectionality, more specifically life-history narratives approach suggested by Prins (2006:280), instead of assuming human subjectivities as being constituted by systems of discrimination see it as the workings of active human agency (see Lykke, 2010:75). She believes this allows for a dynamic and relational analysis of agency and subject formation, which captures "the subtleties of intersectionality experienced by individuals" (Ibid).

Other examples of different levels of intersectional analysis include: micro-, meso-, macro-levels according to Collins (2000) and Launius & Hassel (2018:150) (see Carastathis, 2014:307); individual, interpersonal, and social structural levels according to Shields (2008:302); hegemonic, structural, disciplinary, and interpersonal levels according to Hancock (2007:74); and institutional and organizational, intersubjective, experiential, and representational levels according to Anthias & Yuval-Davis (1983 & 1992) (see Yuval-Davis, 2006:198 & Lutz, 2016:40). Using Anthias & Yuval-Davis' level of analysis, which Yuval-Davis (2011a:158) now refers to as facets of social analysis to avoid the implied hierarchy attached to the term 'levels,' social institutions and organizations such as state laws and policies, voluntary organizations, family, marriage, etc. inflict power and, given people's positionings of where they belong within these institutions, affect their experiences and identities. These experiences of inclusion and exclusion, and/or advantage and discrimination influence not only how people think about themselves but also others. It shapes their normative value systems and world views, which affects their interpersonal relationships with others. Finally, when those experiences and perspectives are expressed in the forms of ideologies, images, symbols, texts, and even law, those understandings and disadvantages become reinforced (see Yuval-Davis, 2006:198). These facets, as suggested by Yuval-Davis (2011a:159), are related and irreducible to each other. Therefore, while it appears daunting, these facets and their interrelationships should be included during analysis. In this dissertation, I slightly modify and use the three-question strategy suggested by Elizabeth R. Cole (2009:171) to analyze the layers of intersectionality. The three questions I use in this dissertation are: a) Whose choices were considered and whose were left out? b) What role did power and inequality play? And, c) Where were the similarities? I analyze Bhutanese refugees' social

institutions of family and marriage and show how the refugees' positionings within these institutions shape their identities and experiences. I use the article, *It's all in the family: Intersections of Gender, Race, and Nation,* written by Patricia Hill Collin (1998) and her claim "It's all in the family" to support my argument that Bhutanese refugee families are power laden. Members within a family have different power and access to material and social resources, depending on their position in the family. Similarly, I show how marriage among the Bhutanese refugees serves "as a useful instrument for controlling women's relationships to men, children, property, other women, and the state" (Enloe, 2017:87). As such, marriage too, influences Bhutanese refugees' power and positioning within their families and communities and privilege some and disadvantage other family members. The privileges and oppressions Bhutanese refugees experience on a daily basis within their marriages and families, when intersected with the UNHCR and the IOM's resettlement policies, as well as the resettlement country's immigration policies, leads to their inclusion or exclusion from the third country resettlement process. With illustrations in Chapter VI, I deconstruct normalized assumptions about Bhutanese refugees and their families, especially the ideas surrounding who is a Bhutanese refugee. What does a Bhutanese refugee family look like, and who are its members? I also question the assumptions regarding the unity and solidarity of interest among Bhutanese family members, especially their presumed unanimous choices on the third country resettlement process. Finally, I draw links between institutional and organizational, intersubjective, experiential, representational facets, and agency. Interactions among systems and structures of culture, economics, law, and politics and associated norms, ideologies, and discourses, with the help of which people build their sense of self, sense of others, and understand and experience 'life,' produce subjects that exert power and exercise agency (Showden, 2011:9). With narratives, I show how the Bhutanese refugees perform their identities and their (intersubjective) roles and expectations associated with their identities within the constraints of power placed on them by institutions such as their families and resettlement law, policies, and norms (see Showden, 2011:16). I show how the Bhutanese refugees' exercise their agency by restructuring their family compositions and marital situation, as ways of resistance, to develop strategies to qualify for refugee status and the third country resettlement process.

c. Application and Usage

The next debate on intersectional methodologies pertains to its application and usage. To whom does intersectionality apply? Is it a theory meant to analyze only marginalized

populations? For instance, black women and/or women of color in particular countries and settings. Or is it applicable to all people? According to Jennifer C. Nash (2008:1), one of her criticisms of intersectionality is its "use of black women as quintessential intersectional subjects." Nash (2008:8-9) believes that while black women are used as prototypical subjects in intersectionality, they are often used as a 'monolithic' and 'unitary' group obscuring the differences within black women based on class, sexuality, age, ableness, etc. This shortcoming of intersectionality to capture the diverse experiences of black women makes her question the differences between black feminism and intersectionality. She asks what is the point in having intersectionality is if it is unable to do what it was set out to do, i.e., identify and theorize differences, and by doing so, depart, advance, and/or add theoretically to black feminism (see Nash, 2008:9). If Nash (2008 & 2017) is critical of intersectionality's use of black women as subjects, Cho, Crenshaw, & McCall (2013:788) think intersectionality can be used to analyze/address marginalized communities. Essed and Harding agree with them and emphasize its applicability to women of color (see Yuval-Davis, 2006:201). Zack (2005:7) believes intersectionality applies to all women because of their subjugated positioning (see Nash, 2008:10). Contrary to all of them, Brah, Maynard, Anthias, and Yuval-Davis believe that intersectionality is applicable to any groupings of people and not just the (multiply) marginalized (see Yuval-Davis, 2006:201). With this view they expand the discipline of intersectionality to the study of not just vulnerabilities, exclusions, and/or oppressions but also privileges and empowerments. As such, according to Yuval-Davis (2006:201 & 2011a:159), intersectionality is a field of study that challenges hegemonic approaches and analyzes social stratification. Although this dissertation focuses on the Bhutanese refugees located "at neglected points of intersections" (McCall, 2005:1774), by which I mean refugees excluded from the resettlement choices and/or the resettlement process, it applies to most Bhutanese refugees in Nepal, both excluded and included in the resettlement process. This is because identities which are socially constructed are not static. Experiences of privilege and disadvantage and associated subjectivities are permeable. In other words, individuals and groups can rearrange their identities and configurations of power that produce social inequalities and injustice by negotiating relationships (intersubjective as well as with institutions, structures, and systems), meaning and interpretations, and boundaries. An individual or a group's situation and/or experiences can change over time and given their location. To understand the working of power, how it produces inequalities, and how it can be resisted, we need to pay attention to both groups who were excluded, who were included, and the reason(s) why. The illustrations in Chapter V and VI will demonstrate the experiences of

Bhutanese refugees who were both unable and able to resettle and/or choose to do so by looking at whose choices were considered and whose were ignored, what role power and inequality played, and where similarities between the refugees existed. Since agency depends on the ability to reflect on past situations, evaluate the constraints of the present, and envision the possibilities of the future, most refugees could not exert agency and make their choice, especially given their situated social location within their families and communities and the multiple (often contradictory) rules and norms imposed on them. This does not imply that they did not have the potential for it. It only illustrates the extent and the degree of agency exercised were not the same for different groups of refugees, even in similar situated positionings. Additionally, refugees often undertook the same action (such as divorce or staying married) to set different kinds of protests in motion. Furthermore, illustrations in Chapter V and VI will show various groups of Bhutanese refugees that although different, also shared similarities and commonalities in experiences of oppression. It will demonstrate how they used these experiences to form coalition and orchestrated collective action (or agency) to resist discrimination against them. Their efforts rearranged their identities from 'unregistered' to 'official' Bhutanese refugees, changing their social conditions that previously hindered them from making their choice to resettle.

d. Intersectional Epistemology

Along with ontological potential, which Staunaes (2003:5) refers to as the 'relations between categories,' intersectionality also has epistemological potential. Strong intersectional analysis, as asserted by Grzanka (2018:xix), has the potential to produce subaltern knowledge about people (especially subordinated people) and the workings of power, privilege, and/or position. According to Wibben & Donahoe (2020:6), whose understanding of knowledge is based on their readings and analyses of Spivak, Chowdry, Nair, Tuhiwai-Smith, Lugones, and Spelman, knowledge is political and power-laden. It can be dominating as it can silence, exclude, and/or oppress; or it can be emancipatory as helps build awareness, unite, resist, and/or liberate. Therefore, according to Lugones and Spelman (1983), the following questions that interrogate power structures are crucial to knowledge formation and conducting research: "How is research conducted? What counts as knowledge? Who is allowed to participate in the conversation and establish its frame?" (see Wibben & Donahoe, 2020:6).

In traditional science, especially positivist research and/or epistemology, knowledge is regarded as being 'objective' and/or 'neutral.' Such knowledge, according to Donna Haraway (1991), is produced by a knower who is detached from 'reality' and her/his research 'object(s),'

which s/he is unaccountable for (see Lykke, 2010:4-6). In contrast to this, intersectionality, like standpoint theory, assumes that knowledge is 'situated,' and 'partial.' Situated knowledge, according to Haraway (1991), is the part of specific 'truth' and/or 'reality' that a researcher is co-responsible for producing with her/his research 'subjects' by engaging in the research methods and processes that are participatory and by consciously reflecting on her/his situated positioning (see Ibid). By asking to reflect on positionality, Haraway (1991:201) wants researchers to be mindful of their viewpoint and "location in time, space, body, and historical power relations" (Lykke, 2010:5), and to be ethically responsible towards their research subjects and politically accountable for the research/knowledge produced. Yuval Davis (2011:158), however, argues that "there is no direct causal relationship between situatedness of people's gaze and their cognitive, emotional, and moral perspective on life." She claims that people from the same social, economic, and geographic backgrounds, even members of the same family, can have different political views and ethical perspectives. People from different social, economic, and geographic backgrounds, on the other hand, can have the same political and value systems. In essence, Yuval-Davis, does not think social locations, especially situated positionality are the underlying factors that shape different knowledge projects. Rather, she credits it to shared 'political values' (see Yuval-Davis, 2006:199). I agree with Wibben & Donahoe (2020:9), who believe that acknowledgement of a scholar's position and their relationships with research subjects and others involved in the research process, especially one that is self-reflexive, self-conscious, and self-critical, makes for a more 'accurate,' or at least, more 'inclusive' research.

For this dissertation, I conducted a total of six months of fieldwork in the United States and Nepal.[30] In the United States, I conducted fieldwork in two cities, namely, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and Madison, Wisconsin.[31] In Nepal, I conducted my fieldwork in *Beldangi – I,*

[30] Parts of this fieldwork were informed by my previous fieldwork for my Master's thesis, which was conducted during December 2011 and January 2012. Initially, I had not intended to examine the resettlement choices of Bhutanese refugees who did not want to (or could not) resettle. However, the lived experiences of women, children, unregistered refugees, refugees in polygamous, underage and/or mixed marriages, refugees rejected due to poor health or criminal records challenged me to shift my focus towards them.

[31] I collected primary data in Pittsburgh between October 21 and November 11, 2014, where I interviewed three refugee resettlement organization directors (in English) who worked with Bhutanese refugees in the greater Pittsburgh area, to gather information about the refugees and the third country resettlement process. These interviews ranged between 51 to 66 minutes. The names of the directors, their positions, and their organizations are: 1) Cathy Niebel, Director of Program Effectiveness, Catholic Charities; 2) Leslie Aizenman, Director, Refugees and Immigrant Services, Jewish Family and Children's Services (JFCS); and 3) Nick Jaramillo, Director of the YMCA of Greater Pittsburgh. In Pittsburgh, I also conducted in-depth key informant interviews with the members of the Bhutanese Community Association of Pittsburgh (BCAP), a not-for-profit organization formed by the Bhutanese refugees to help members of their community integrate in Pittsburgh through culturally available services and activities. At the BCAP, I interviewed: 1) Bishnu Timsina, Vice President; 2) Khara Timsina, Executive Director; and 3) Upendra Dahal, Project Director in Nepali. In addition, I also conducted 29 in-depth,

Beldangi – II Extension and *Sanischari* refugee camps.[32] I conducted a total of 71 semi-structured interviews enriched by narratives with the Bhutanese refugees. The narrative interviews with the Bhutanese refugees gave me a better understanding of their lived experiences and views of third country resettlement. The narrative interviews were particularly useful in the case of the third country resettlement of Bhutanese refugees for several reasons. The issues surrounding the resettlement of Bhutanese refugees had ignited stark contrast of opinions and desires among the refugees: some wanting to leave, some wanting to stay, and some uncertain of their choice. Different voices needed to be heard, understood, and incorporated to understand the dynamics of the resettlement process. In addition, the biographies of political exile, political persecution, and experiences of statelessness make good cases for adopting a narratives approach (for detailed information on narrative interviewing see Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000). Narratives are also important because "they are a primary way by which we make sense of the world around us, produce meanings, articulate intentions, and legitimate actions" (Wibben, 2011:2).

My interviews with the refugees were conducted in Nepali and I translated and transcribed them to English. The refugees chose where they wanted to be interviewed, which typically involved their homes, their yards, and their shops. I was grateful for their time and information, so I accepted the location of their preference. The interviews with staff of the humanitarian agencies in Nepal and resettlement organizations in the United States were

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semi-structured interviews enriched by narratives with Bhutanese refugees and their families. In Madison, WI, I interviewed two refugees and their extended families. Bethel Lutheran Church in downtown Madison helped me identify Mr. Tara Rai and his family. I approached Ms. Ganga Chuwan personally, at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, while we were both employed there. I requested to interview her and her extended family when I found out that she was a Bhutanese refugee from Nepal. These interviews lasted approximately 40 minutes.

[32] These camps were the only camps administered by the UNHCR during the time of the fieldwork. Other refugee camps, namely *Goldhap, Timai,* and *Khudunabari* were closed and the refugees from those camps had been relocated to *Beldangi – I, Beldangi – II Extension,* and *Sanischari* camps. I began my fieldwork in Kathmandu, where I obtained an official permission letter to conduct research in the refugee camps. I reached out to the National Unit for the Coordination of Refugee Affairs (NUCRA), a department under the Ministry of Home Affairs, GoN to obtain this letter. After submitting the official permission letter to the Refugee Coordination Unit (RCU) office located in *Beldangi – II Extension* camp, I began seven weeks of research in the refugee camps from December 2014 through January 2015. In Nepal, between December 22, 2014 – February 8, 2015, I conducted 28 semi-structured interviews that stimulated narratives with the Bhutanese refugees and their families in *Beldangi – I and Beldangi – II Extension camps* and 12 refugees from *Sanischari camp* in Nepali. These refugees were identified with the help of staff and refugees I befriended at the refugee camp cafeteria and the offices of the organizations I visited inside the refugee camps, such as, the Refugee Coordination Unit (RCU), Camp Management Committee (CMC), Association of Medical Doctors of Asia (AMDA), Bhutanese Refugees Aiding Victims of Violence (BRAVVE), Bhutanese Refugee Women's Forum (BRWF), Center for Victims of Torture (CVICT), Transcultural Psychosocial Organization, Nepal (TPO Nepal), and Happy Nepal. These interviews ranged between 8 to 44 minutes. In Nepal, I also held in-depth interviews with the Head of the UNHCR Field Office, Mr. Shinju Kubo and the Resettlement Support Center Deputy Manager with the International Office of Migration (IOM), Ms. Kendra Raines in English. The interviews with Mr. Kubo and Ms. Raines lasted 75 minutes and 46 minutes, respectively and helped gather additional information, material, and literature about resettlement.

conducted in English in their respective offices. I requested and encouraged entire families to participate in the interviews. I wanted to observe who in the family was more vocal in voicing their opinions. However, as most interviews in Nepal as well as in the United States were conducted during the daytime, the voices or perspectives of women and elderly, who were home rather than at work or at school, are overrepresented in this research. The refugees were often accompanied by their friends and neighbors (other Bhutanese refugees) during the interviews. Occasionally, friends and neighbors also participated in the interviews and discussions providing a more layered and textured storytelling while others just listened and watched. Before the interview, as an introductory explanation, I gave a brief synopsis of the purpose of my visit and questions. I told my respondents that the interviews were for my dissertation and ensured everyone knew participation was voluntary. I especially assured the refugees in the refugee camps in Nepal that had no consequences on their resettlement process.[33] I asked for permission to record the interviews and acquired verbal consent to use parts of the interview and the interviewee's names and photos in my dissertation.[34] I offered to use pseudonyms instead of refugees' real names to protect their identity. Most refugees were comfortable with me using their real names, but some requested pseudonyms. Many refugees objected to being photographed. This seemed to be a sore subject among the refugees.[35] The refugees occasionally had questions pertaining to my identity. Most were content to know my ethnicity, religion, citizenship, and marital status, while others needed to know my level of education and country of residency. Knowing *how* the refugees would perceive me would undeniably influence their narrative, I felt it was important to answer their questions to gain their trust and prove I did not have an ulterior motive. After all, I was asking similar questions of them and formulating my own perceptions as well. I identified myself as a Chettri woman from a Hindu family in Nepal involved in a mixed marriage with an American man with a Catholic upbringing (neither of whom were practicing Hinduism or Catholicism). I told the refugees I was working towards my PhD and living in Japan, which was the case at the time. I sensed the refugees identified with some of my attributes that were like theirs, such as our use of the same language (Nepali-speaking), similar culture (Nepali culture), and religious

[33] The Bhutanese refugees were used to having visitors approach them at home and work to talk about the benefits of resettlement. These visitors, according to some respondents, were in the camps to convince the refugees, especially the ones who wanted to stay back in the refugee camps in Nepal, to resettle.

[34] I know it is always better to get written consent while conducting research of this nature, but the Bhutanese refugees have, on numerous occasions, been tricked into signing documents they could not read. I chose to earn their trust so they could share their lived experiences rather than having proof of informed consent.

[35] Many refugees had been photographed by UNHCR as part of their process for resettlement after which they had not received clear information about what was happening with their case or why it was delayed.

practices (Hinduism). At the same time, they viewed me as having a different standing in society when it came to my citizenship (Nepal), residency (Japan), and lived experiences (a young woman with research skills and some expertise with enough financial backing to live abroad). Nevertheless, what connected us was the following: their desire to share their 'reality' and 'truth;' my curiosity and desire to purposefully listen and honor their story; and collectively our common goal to promote their plight internationally.

I further expressed my positionality as a 'curious' feminist. I have often come across terms such as reformist, revolutionary, and radical feminists. I currently consider myself a 'curious' feminist, one who is still learning about the subtle workings of power and how it influences people's lives. I would like to believe that my scholarship sparks interest among its readers to think about power, how it works, and how it can be changed to build an inclusive and just world for everyone, especially women of color like myself. I believe knowing and understanding differences is important. Not because it adds to or diversifies our understanding but because acknowledging differences among people makes 'true' coalition and unity a possibility. It also has potential for positive social change, one that promotes equality and justice. Therefore, I adopted an intersectional approach for this dissertation. My political belief, in regard to the third country resettlement of Bhutanese refugees, is that important and life altering choices such as resettlement should be based on refugees' choices and not the preference of resettling organizations and resettlement countries. Everyone should have a say in where they want to live, regardless of if they are protected by their country or are stateless. In addition, I am for third country resettlement, which is provided in an anti-oppressive framework that acknowledges the intersectional identities and differences of refugees.

As will be shown with illustrations in Chapter VI, this research, which use voices, perspectives, narratives, and 'knowledge' from the Bhutanese refugees interviewed during fieldwork in Nepal and the United States, will tell a different story about the resettlement of Bhutanese refugees. A story that contradicts the dominant and/or 'official' narrative, which portrays the resettlement process as a success story. It challenges the homogenization of the Bhutanese refugees as a fortunate group of refugees who could resettle during a time when most Western countries were growing increasingly reluctant to resettle refugees from the Global South. It challenges the idea that refugees are passive recipients of international protection and services, therefore accepting a life that is characterized by limited needs, limited rights, and limited choices. This research therefore contributes to the production of counter-narrative corrective to the above-mentioned dominant and/or 'official' discourse. Although the Bhutanese refugees found themselves thrown into a durable solution not of their choosing, "the

conflicts among the various cultural meanings and institutional embeddings" provided them leeway to create opportunities for themselves out of their identities, intersubjective relationships, and configurations of power given their social location at a particular time (Showden, 2011:21). As such, this dissertation gives 'power to the people,'[36] the Bhutanese refugee to be exact. It showcases the need to formulate theories and policies that are anti-oppressive and incorporate the perspectives and experiences of the refugees, in order to create inclusive societies where perceptions and voices of diverse groups are heard, honored, and included.

2.2.4 Intersectionality: Potential, Efficacy, and the Way Forward

There are some scholars such as Brah & Phoenix (2004), Zack (2005), Puar (2007), Nash (2008), Shields (2008), Hirschmann (2012), Carbado (2013), and Hancock (2016 & 2018), who think the following features of intersectionality hinder it from becoming a good feminist theory: its "theoretical, political, and methodological murkiness" (Nash, 2008:1); its preoccupation with methodological challenges (Shields, 2008:301) and epistemological assumption (Puar, 2007 cited in Grzanka, 2018:305) instead of focus in its transformative potential; its preoccupation with differences and proclamation of its importance rather than its focus on 'connections,' 'commonalities,' and 'sameness' (Hirschmann, 2012 see Grzanka, 2018:297), which make the category 'women' impossible (Zach, 2005:8 see Hancock, 2016:133); its exclusion of some categories such as 'nation' (Brah & Phoenix, 2004 see Grzanka, 2018:308) and 'religion' (Nancy Wadsworth, 2011 see Hancock, 2016:197); the imbalance between theoretical studies and empirical work on intersectionality (Hancock, 2007:66); its commitment to naming and charting identities and subjectivities rather than structures of inequalities (Cho, Crenshaw, & McCall, 2013:797) or commitment to people, especially changing their situation of the marginalized (Carbado, 2013:815 in Grzanaka, 2018:67); and its lack of focus on how subjects use (or choose not to use) their agency in certain contexts (Nash, 2008:11). Jasbir Puar (2007:211-215), finds the concept of intersectionality, especially the presumed 'separability' and 'disassembly' of categories for analysis, so problematic that she suggests 'assemblage' as an alternative to the concept. Assemblage as series of mutually linked networks of multiplicities, according to her, are "more attuned to interwoven forces that merge and dissipate time, space, and body…and allow us to attune to

[36] 'Power to the people' is the title of a song written by John Lennon in 1971. It was the theme song used by US Senator Bernie Sanders in his presidential campaign in 2016 and 2020.

movements, intensities, emotions, energies, affectivities, and textures as they inhabit events, spatiality, and corporeality" (Puar, 2007 cited in Grzanka, 2018:336-339). According to Nash (2017:128), Puar's assemblage does not concentrate on identity because of its presumed fixed and static nature, and instead focuses on affect, movement, dynamism, and emotion in its understanding of relationality and subjectivity. Nash (2017:118) finds Puar's analysis of intersectionality problematic, "either where the invocation of intersectionality is performed instead of actual intersectional labor or where intersectionality is called on to do precisely the kind of diversity work it critiques." Like assemblage, there are also other concepts such as hybridity, creolization, and metissage that some scholars want to replace intersectionality with (see Olesen, 2018:275).

On the other hand, there are other scholars, such as Vivian May (2015), Collins & Bilge (2016), and Carastathis (2016) who do not see intersectionality's challenges as a need to abandon it. In fact, they believe we have yet to implement intersectionality's full potential. Collins & Bilge (2016:204) see potential in intersectionality's "politics of the not-yet" and diversity in its analytics (see Nash, 2017:123). Similarly, Carastathis (2016) believes intersectionality's potential lies in its 'provisionality,' which suggests heterogeneous analytics along with undiscovered possibilities, utilities, and coalitions towards a more just world (see Nash, 2017:123). Carastathis (2014:307) also pinpoints 'simultaneity,' 'complexity,' 'irreducibility,' and 'inclusivity' as the four analytical benefits to adopting an intersectional approach. Intersectionality, according to Carastathis (2014:307-309), shows how multiple oppressions are simultaneously experienced. It depicts how social structures, identities, and subjectivities are experienced in complex and nuanced ways. In addition, it shows how systems of oppression are interwoven and co-constitutive, problematizing separation and/or hegemony of one category even for the purpose of explanation. Finally, intersectionality includes the experiences of not just the elite and/or multiply marginalized people. Nor does it only include the perspectives of middle-class, White, Western, and heterosexual feminists. Meaning, it is more inclusive. Davis (2008), in a similar vein, argues that the strength of intersectionality lies in the fact that it can be used for and by anybody using any methods. According to Davis (2008:70-71), intersectionality can be applicable to understand and analyze any groups or individuals, in any social structure, in any cultural context. It can be used by any feminist as long as s/he is self-reflexive, self-critical, ethical, and accountable. It can be adopted using any method provided that it challenges power and its workings, questions taken-for-granted, 'knowledge' and 'truth,' and addresses social inequality and injustice. In fact, Davis (2008) is so enamored by intersectionality that she, bases her argument on the thesis by Murry S. Davis

(1986) and claims that intersectionality has the making of a successful theory. Intersectionality, according to Kathy Davis (2008:70-77), is a successful social theory because it addresses two issues that are of **fundamental concern** to most feminists, namely the recognition of differences of women (both of subjectivities and experiences) and an alternative theory and methodology to dealing with identities in a more dynamic, fluid, and complex way. By doing so, intersectionality provides postmodern feminists, single-axis theorists (such as gender only, race only, class only feminists), and post-structural feminists with a **novel twist,** i.e., a new platform to deal with the simultaneous effects of oppressive systems, such as sexism, racism, classism, etc. (Ibid:74). As such, intersectionality is an appealing theory/approach for both **general feminists** and **specialist feminists**. Intersectionality is catchy enough to attract general feminists and engage them in theory (Ibid:76). At the same time, it is complex enough to engage specialist feminists in its countless debates about its conception and definition, scope and parameters, and methodology and usage, while making them care about people's lives (Ibid). Lastly, the **ambiguity, vagueness,** and **open-endedness** surrounding intersectionality's conception, parameter, and usage, are the biggest contributors in making it a 'successful' theory (Ibid:77). This is because, successful theories, according to Davis (2008:77), are successful "because they do not settle matters once and for all; they open them up for further discussion and inquiry." Davis (2008) does not just think intersectionality is a successful theory but considers it a 'good feminist theory' as well. For Davis (2008:79), intersectionality starts with the worldview that life is complicated and contradictory and shows this complexity in research. It also encourages researchers to use new and unorthodox feminist research methodologies that foster critical, reflexive, ethical, and liable analysis (Ibid). There are some scholars, such as Dhamoon (2011) and Yuval-Davis (1997, 2006, 2011) who agree with Davis and suggest advancements to intersectionality. For instance, political scientist Rita K. Dhamoon (2011:230), says intersectionality's contestations are its strengths and adds, "contestability reflects the diversity and flexibility of intersectionality frameworks and indicates openness to further reflection, clarification, and inquiry." She suggests mainstreaming intersectionality into social science. Yuval-Davis (1997, 2006, 2012), on the other hand, lobbies for transversal politics, which, according to her, is the answer to the postmodern deconstructionists' conundrums, 'if everybody is different, is collective action/coalition building, as provisional as it might be, possible? If so, who can we, as feminists, work with?' (see Yuval-Davis, 1997:125-126) and "how can we organize across and beyond differences" (Nash, 2008:4)? Transversal Politics, a concept developed by Italian feminists from Bologna, is a form of grassroots approach, coalition politics, and/or feminist praxis, where advocates (not just representatives)

from groups with differential positionings and perspectives come together for dialogue and cooperation (Yuval-Davis, 2006:205-206). They do so by holding on to their own experiences and perspectives, which is referred to as 'rooting,' while being considerate towards the experiences, challenges, and thought processes of the 'partner' in dialogue, which is called 'shifting,' in order to reach common perspectives, values, aspirations, and/or goals (Yuval-Davis, 1997:88). As such, transversal politics builds on the work of feminist standpoint epistemologist Patricia Hill Collins (Yuval-Davis, 2012:51). According to Collins (1990:236 cited in Yuval-Davis, 2012:51), everybody's worldview looks different because of their differential positions so any knowledge generated from only one position is 'partial' (incomplete, not invalid). Therefore, dialogue between/among people from differential social locations is how we should engage with knowledge and 'truth' (Ibid).

Transversal politics, however, is not without limitations. Transversal politics is not boundary free. The boundaries of the dialogue, in transversal politics, are set by what the participants of the dialogue want to achieve rather than who the participants are (Yuval-Davis, 1997:88). Moreover, transversal politics is not always possible; inequalities and injustice are not always reconcilable and as such solidarity is not possible in every situation (Yuval-Davis, 2012:52). Nevertheless, as Yuval-Davis (1997:132) aptly points out, "the transversal pathway might be full of thorns, but at least it leads in the right direction."

Like Davis (2008) and Yuval-Davis (1997, 2006, 2011, 2012), I believe in the potential of both intersectionality and transversal politics. In addition, I also think as feminist researchers, we have the power to engage in and advance these theories and praxis and explore further possibilities with them. This dissertation is a small attempt to do just that.

Chapter III: Bhutan and the Bhutanese Refugees

The objective of this chapter is to offer a brief introduction to Bhutan: its history, polity, and economy.[37] The chapter also offers a brief introduction to its people. Among its people, the chapter focuses on the Lhotshampas, the Nepali-speaking people from the Southern foothills of the country, many of whom became Bhutanese refugees in Nepal. It looks at their settlement into Bhutan and provides some information about the sub-groups that exist within the Lhotshampas based on their ethnicity and caste, language, religion, customs, and culture. It also looks at their family structure, gender roles, and marriages, which are all relevant to this research. Some of the questions that this research answers through the above investigation are: Where is Bhutan? What kind of country is it? Who are the Bhutanese people? d) More especially, who are the Lhotshampas?

Next, this chapter examines the experiences of the Lhotshampas at home (Bhutan) and reveals a shift in their treatment by the government: from indifference, acceptance, and assimilation, to alienation via well-orchestrated policies and other initiatives. In the process of portraying the experiences of the Lhotshampas in Bhutan, this chapter answers the following crucial questions about them and their home country: Why were they marginalized and/or discriminated against in Bhutan? Why were they ousted from Bhutan? and what measures were put in place to marginalize and eventually expel them from Bhutan?

3.1 Bhutan: the Land of Contradictions

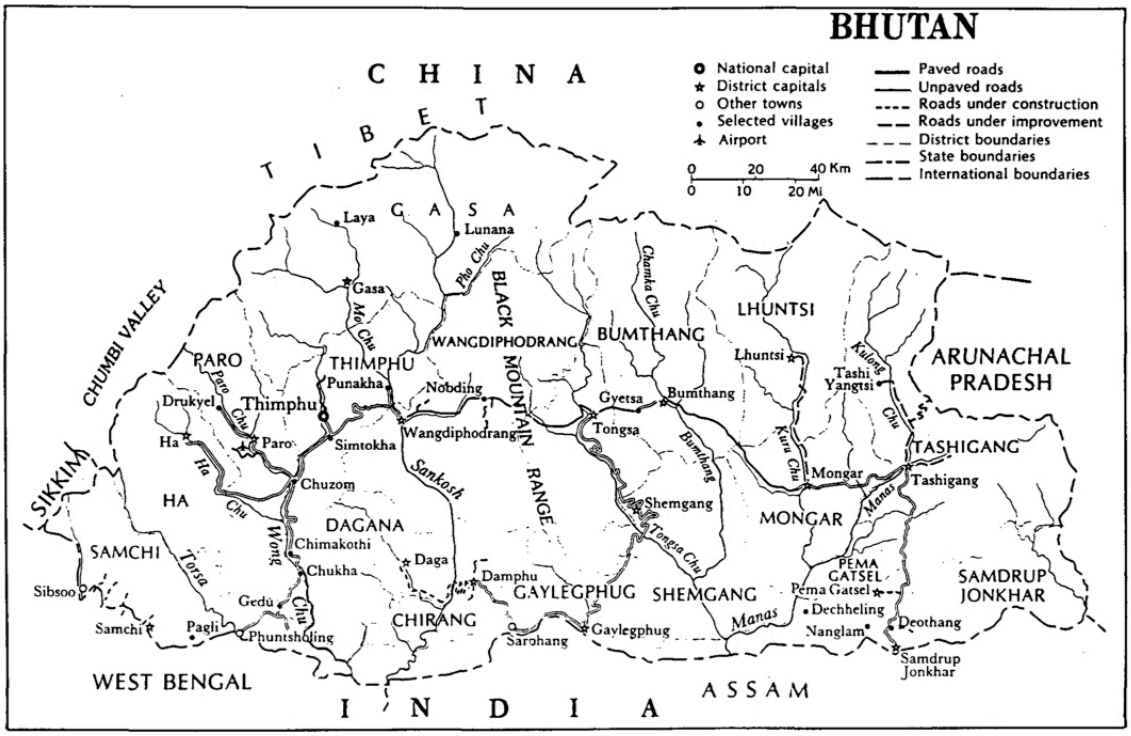
Bhutan, known as Druk Yul (the land of the thunder dragon) in its national language, Dzongkha, is often referred to as the 'last remaining Shangri-La'[38] (Dixit, 1992:7) and the 'land of happiness' (Gallenkamp, 2011:2). In a materialistic and capitalistic world ravaged with inequality, Bhutan is known for its holistic ideas and successful sustainable development. Those who are familiar with the country know about its Gross National Happiness (GNH) index. The GNH index measures the spiritual, physical, social, and environmental well-being of the country and its people based on the principles of: a) equitable social development, b) cultural preservation, c) conservation of the environment, and d) promotion of good governance, which have been set in the country's public policy (Kelly, 2012). Bhutan's pursuits

[37] This chapter is an updated and modified version of Chapter I, entitled Bhutanese Refugees: Origin and Experience, of my unpublished Master's thesis, *To go or not to go: Decisions about resettlement by Bhutanese refugees in Nepal*.

[38] An idyllic imaginary place. Often words like Utopia, paradise, and nirvana are used to refer to the word Shangri-La.

in this type of public policy are so unique that it feels like it is stuck in time or another dimension. How such a country can exist in today's modern world is a mystery. It is no surprise that Griek (2014:61) uses the adjective 'mysterious' to describe the Himalayan Kingdom with ancient monasteries and pristine natural scenic beauty. Saul (2000:322), on the other hand, uses the adjectives 'troubled' and 'invisible' to describe Bhutan. Bhutan is 'troubled' because it is "the biggest creator of refugees per capita in the world" (Morch, 2016). In the 1990s, Bhutan forcefully evicted a sixth of its population (Bird, 2012). Bhutan is 'invisible' because many people around the world, especially in the West, have either never heard of the country, or if they have, have never heard of the mass expulsion of its citizens (Saul, 2000:322).

Figure 1: Bhutan



Source: Hutt (1993: 9)

I agree that Bhutan is unique in its mysterious and troubled ways. I admire it for all its environmental conservation and managed tourism. Today, when most of the developed countries in the West are consuming excessive amounts of fossil fuel instead of switching to cleaner and renewable energy, here is a country, in the distant Eastern Himalayas, that has been doing its part since the beginning of the 21st century. Bhutan has: a) environmental protection enshrined in its constitution, b) pledged to remain carbon neutral, c) ensured 60% of its

landmass will perpetually remain covered by forest, d) banned export logging, and e) initiated monthly pedestrian day (Kelly, 2012).

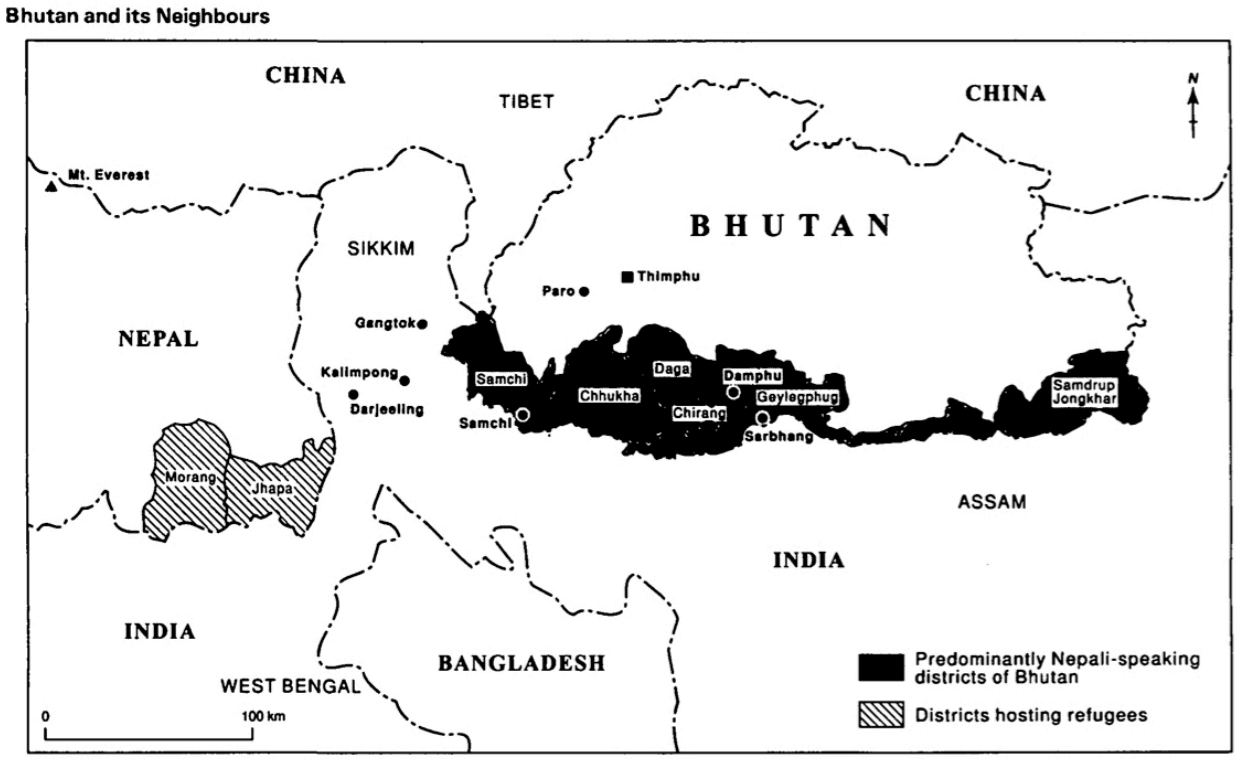
Ironically, for all of it efforts in promoting the principles of the GNH index, deep contestations surround the country of Bhutan and its laws, policies, belief systems, and practices. The country advocates for social and spiritual well-being of its people, but in the 1990s, it intentionally ousted thousands of its *bone fide* citizens to manage, what it called, its immigration problem, and more importantly, to preserve its 'distinct' Tibetan Buddhist culture and heritage. This lies at the heart of the refugee problem. As you will read in the following chapter, as of this date, Bhutan has not agreed to return a single refugee home. Many Bhutanese refugees remain, adamant about returning to Bhutan. Other refugees who have resorted to resettling to third countries in the West are doing so, but unwillingly. Now, how does this correlate with GNH? Whose happiness is visible and/or important to Bhutan? Other contestations surrounding Bhutan, especially the refugees and the state, are in regards to its: a) population, b) ethnic composition, c) migration and settlement of the Lhotshampas into Bhutan, d) causes of their exile, and e) precedence of rights: what and whose rights are more important. These will be discussed, in the sections below, following the understanding of Bhutan geo-political location and its brief political history.

3.1.1 Bhutan and its Neighbors

Bhutan is a small, remote, thinly populated, and landlocked Buddhist Kingdom, some 47,000 square kilometers long (Lee, 1998:120) in the Eastern Himalayas. It is an independent nation-state situated in South Asia and is surrounded by two emerging global superpowers: India and China (Pulla, 2016:1). It is bordered to the South, East, and West by India and to the North by Tibet (China). The next immediate neighboring countries to Bhutan are: a) Nepal to the West, set apart by Sikkim (Indian state with ethnic Nepali majority) and Darjeeling, Kalimpong, and Siliguri (states in West Bengal with ethnic Nepali population), and b) Bangladesh to the South, separated by Assam (with a small population of ethnic Nepali minority) and the West Bengal. For all the differences cited between Bhutan and Nepal, a popular undertaking among scholars researching the Bhutanese refugee crisis (See Dixit, 1992; Hutt, 2003; and Mathou, 2008), there are many commonalties between the two states. They are both landlocked countries in the Himalayas bordered by Tibet (China) towards the North and India on its East, West and South. They are both influenced by socio-political-economic developments in India and rely on Indo-Sino relations for their existence (Morch, 2016). Nevertheless, they have both maintained their sovereignty and independence vis-à-vis their

neighbors and the British. Like Bhutan, the Mahayana branch of Buddhism is followed by the Tibeto-Burman ethnicities in Nepal. Moreover, Hinduism, followed by majority of the population in Nepal, has absorbed Buddhist principles and beliefs since Nepal is the birthplace of Prince Siddhartha Gautama, who is commonly known as Gautam Buddha.

Figure 2: Bhutan and its Neighbors



Source: Hutt, 1996:399

Now, Bhutan has become one of the world's fastest growing economies. A shift from dominantly agricultural to a more industrial economy has resulted in economic growth and development in Bhutan. According to the National Accounts Statistics 2018 published by the National Statistics Bureau of Bhutan, due to the advancement in secondary (hydro-power) and tertiary (high-end restricted tourism)[39] sectors, Bhutan experienced a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth of 4.63 percent and a Gross National Income (GNI) growth of 4.56 percent in 2017 (NSB, 2018a:9). This might seem low in comparison to its double-digit GDP growth of 11.77 percent and GNI growth of 32.61 percent in 2010 (NSB, 2011:1-2). However, Bhutan's GDP increased by USD 943.63 million and GNI by USD 818.70 million between these two

[39] In 2017, in comparison to the previous year, Bhutan experienced a 7.92 percent increase in tourist arriving from what it calls 'dollar paying countries.'

years (Ibid). The same report suggests that, in 2017, its per capita income was USD 3,148.71 dollars (Ibid), which is much higher than its neighbors in the region. Moreover, by 2012, Bhutan had doubled its life expectancy and ensured 100 percent enrolment in primary schools (Kelly, 2012).

Since 2008, Bhutan has become a democratic state ending the age-old absolute rule of the Wangchuck dynasty. According to Mathou (2008:2), the democracy and modernization processes in Bhutan is that the processes have not been fatal to the monarchy or had disruptive consequences as experienced by its neighboring countries. This claim might sound true given that modernization and democracy in Bhutan have been the undertaking of the monarch. It is important to note, however, that Bhutan began democratizing and modernizing only after it removed its citizens that it perceived to be 'disruptive' and a 'threat.' Therefore, to assume Bhutan's democratization experience was without disruption or negative consequences, is misleading. Comparing Bhutan's democratic experience to its Himalayan neighbors is like comparing apples to oranges.

To understand this, it is important to know the history and political developments in Bhutan over the years. While details of the history of Bhutan are beyond the scope of this paper, a brief description is included here to better understand this research.

3.1.2 Brief History of Bhutan

a. Establishment of Buddhist Theocracy (17th century -1907)

It was not until 1616 A.D. when Bhutan was unified as a sovereign territory from being independent petty kingdoms. Ngawang Namgyel, unified Bhutan as a nation and utilized the core principles of Buddhism and interwove them with Bhutanese politics. He also unified several other Drukpa monasteries bringing their clergy and influential clans and families under his control (Gallenkamp, 2011:3). He also established himself as the *Shabdrung* (theocratic head of state) until early 20th century through six successive reincarnations. (Hutt, 2003:19). During his reign, he established a dual administrative system consisting of a *Je Khenpo* (Religious King) and *Druk Desi* (Administrative King,) who were supported by appointed *Penlops* (Provisional Governors) and were responsible for administrative functioning and revenue generation (Gallenkamp, 2011:5).[40] The country was centralized even when it faced

[40] According to Hutt (2003:20) at the time the country was divided into three regions centered on Dzongs (massive fortresses, which housed the religious and administrative bodies in each region) at Paro, Tongsa, and Daga. In the early 19th century two *Penlops* were dominant in Bhutan. *Penlop* of Tonga in the East who watched over the Black Mountain Range and *Penlop* of Paro on the West who controlled trade route to Tibet. The Wangchucks (the royal family of Bhutan) are the descendants of *Penlop* of Tonga.

numerous invasions form Tibet (Ibid). Unfortunately, Namgyel's death in 1651 led to internal fractions and power rivalries among the *Je Khenpo,* the *Druk Desi*, and the *Penlops* when his succeeding reincarnations appeared to do nothing more than perform a symbolic political role (Gallenkamp, 2011:5; Hutt, 2003:19).

During the chaos within the country, the British recognized the tactical importance of the Southern Duars in Bhutan. This is when the country lost this Southern foothill territory in a war against the British Colony in India in 1865. On November 11, 1865, the Shinchhula Treaty ended the conflict over the Duars and enabled Bhutan to remain a sovereign state, but not without forcing Bhutan to lease its Southern territory for an annual compensation of INR 50,000 to the Indian Colony (Hutt, 2003:36 & Gallenkamp, 2011:6).

Later, in 1903-05, the British mission to Tibet received the support and assistance of one of the regional leaders, *Tongsa Penlop* (i.e., Tongsa Governor), Ugyen Wangchuck. The British, impressed by Wangchuck and realizing that a centralized reign in Bhutan would stop the internal strife and benefit the British Colony, helped the governor in the establishment of a hereditary monarchy in Bhutan in 1907 (Dixit, 1992:7).

b. Hereditary Monarchy and Gradual Modernization (1907-1990s)

In 1907, when Ugyen Wangchuck became the first *Druk Gyalpo* (King) of Bhutan, the dual system of administration and governance ended and brought the authority into the hands of the Royals. This marked the beginning of measures adopted by this dynasty to modernize the country in order to uphold power, resources, and control. This dynasty maintained good relationships with the British through *Dorjes* (their agents) in Kalingpong. The Treaty of Punakha, reinforced these ties, allowing the British to guide Bhutan's military and external policies while granting Bhutan sovereignty and political independence, its military and external policy was guided by the British, a role that India eventually took over (Hutt, 2003:21). As a result of this 1910 treaty, the annual sum for compensation of the Southern Duars was doubled (Gallenkamp, 2011:8).

The second King Jigme Wangchuck (1926–1952), noting the partition in India and annexation of Tibet by China, looked towards India for protection. Bhutan signed the 1949 Treaty of Peace and Friendship with India after its independence from the British in 1947 (Hutt, 2003:21). Securing power and legitimacy of the dynasty, he took cautious steps at modernization (Gallenkamp, 2011:9).

In 1952, the Lhotshampas formulated the Bhutanese State Congress (BSC), the first political party in Bhutan, which pursued land reform, political liberalization, and closer

bilateral relations with India (AHURA Bhutan, 2000:4; Hutt, 2003:47). The third King of Bhutan Jigme Dorji Wangchuck (1952-1972) suppressed this attempt. Affected by the annexation of Tibet, the formation of the People's Republic of China, and the decolonization initiatives in South Asia, he decentralized governmental powers and began modernizing Bhutan. According to Dixit (1992:8), the king created the *Tshongdu,* the National Assembly in 1953.[41] He made the monarch accountable to the *Tshongdu*, surrendering his rights to veto bills in 1968, and giving the *Tshongdu* members the right to impeach the king by two-thirds of the Assembly in 1969. Other substantial reforms and political developments during his reign were: a) reformation of the tax system (abolished payment of taxes in kind in 1954), b) abolishment of slavery and serfdom in 1956, c) land reformation and land allocation, as a source of livelihood, to the newly freed slaves, d) creation of the position of a Prime Minister[42] in 1958, e) creation of *Thrimshung Chonmo* (Supreme Law), a new set of laws that codified all other laws in Bhutan in 1959, f) formalization of development programs with the introduction of five-year-plans in 1960, g) creation of the high courts, h) creation of the *Lodoi Tshogde*, the Royal Advisory Council,[43] a governmental body between the political institutions and people, in 1965, i) introduction of *Kuensel*, state-owned, and the only national bi-weekly newspaper in 1965, j) introduction of the Council of Ministers in 1968, and k) joining of the Colombo Plan in 1963[44] and the United Nations in 1971 (Gallenkamp, 2011:10-11). This is when Bhutan also enacted its first citizenship act in 1958. This act and its amendments lie at the center of the refugee crisis and will be discussed in detail under the sub-heading 'Discriminatory laws and policies.'

In 1972, Jigme Singye Wangchuck, after his father's death, became the fourth king of Bhutan and the youngest monarch in the world at the age of 17 (Mathou, 2008:1). During the reign (1972-2008), he began the process of administrative decentralization and 'Bhutanization,' a cultural and political integration process directed towards nation building. As parts of this effort, the following political endeavors were undertaken: a) revision of the 1958 Nationality Act in 1977 and again in 1985, b) introduction and implementation of Marriage Act in 1980, c) implementation of the census in Southern Bhutan in 1988, and d)

[41] In 1953 the National Assembly consisted 110 delegates, which was enlarged to 150 in 1960. The National Assembly has a tripartite design: clergy (10 members chosen by monastic bodies), bureaucracy (the king nominated 35 bureaucrats), and people (105 representatives were elected at the village-level, on the basis of consensus by village heads and head of each household).
[42] This position was held by Jigmie Palden Dorji, a progressive man and a close relative of the king. However, he was assassinated in April 5, 1964, while the king was in Switzerland seeking medical treatment.
[43] The Royal Advisory Council is tripartite, like the National Assembly. It consists of 8 members: 5 elected by the National Assembly, 2 chosen by the monastic bodies, and 1 elected by the King.
[44] Before the 1960s, except for its open border with India, Bhutan was closed to the rest of the world.

implementation of 'one nation, one people' policy and *Driglam Namza*, Bhutanese social code of etiquette. Implementation of these initiatives made life extremely difficult for the Lhotshampas in Bhutan, which eventually led to their flight out of the country. They will be discussed in detail under the sub-heading 'Discriminatory laws and policies.' Other substantial reforms and political developments took place during this period, most of which served to make the country more democratic and transparent.

c. Constitutional Monarchy and Transition into Democracy (2008-present)

In 2008, three monumental changes occurred in Bhutan: a) it passed its first written constitution, b) conducted its first parliamentary (National Assembly) elections, and c) Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck became the fifth (current) king of Bhutan (Gallenkamp, 2011:19). Along with these changes, Bhutan joined the list of democratic constitutional monarchies in the world. It is interesting to note that Bhutan's road to democracy has been rather unusual: a top-down versus a bottom-up approach, since it was the fourth and fifth monarchies pursuing democracy and not the citizens.[45]

In comparison to its neighboring countries, Bhutan has a unique political history. Since the seventeenth century, Bhutan has gone through several political and legal changes directed towards state building and preserving its 'Tibetan national identity and heritage.' Small in land mass and population, today Bhutan stands tall as an independent and unique nation-state that is developing at an astoundingly accelerated rate.

The following section will focus to the Bhutanese people. Specifically, this research will attempt to describe the Lhotshampa people in more detail.

3.2 Bhutanese People

"Bhutan is, and always has been, a diverse and pluralistic society." (Saul, 2000:353)

[45] According to March 24, 2008 news article entitled, "Bhutan becomes Newest Democracy" of *CBC News,* the democratic process in Bhutan was started by former King Jigme Singhye Wangchuck although the people expressed resistance and anxiety towards it in the beginning. See http://www.cbc.ca/news/world/story/2008/03/24/bhutan-election.html. In addition, Mathou (2008:15) states that the government had to engage in teaching the people how to vote. In fact, two mock elections were conducted in April and May of 2007. Mathou argues that this is because the political consciousness of the Bhutanese people, unlike some Lhotshampas, is very low. The low consciousness in his view is the result of socio-economic isolation of Bhutan, low level of education among the average people, a fondness for the ruling elite, which remains unchallenged, and because consensus politics (which as the core traditional feather of the society) has little room for popular participation in decision-making.

Bhutan's population and ethnic composition, especially during the 1980s and 1990s are a matter of contestation between the Bhutanese government and the refugees. This problem is briefly discussed in the section below. This section hopes to build an understanding about Bhutanese people, especially the Lhotshampas, the majority of whom were/are Bhutanese refugees.

3.2.1 Population of Bhutan

It is difficult to say what the exact population of Bhutan was before the mass expulsion of the Lhotshampas. Since Nari Rustomji, in his book 'The Dragon Kingdom in Crisis,' exposed the 'non-existence'[46] and therefore mere guessing of statistical data in Bhutan (Rustomji, 2007:32), demographic discussion about Bhutan have been debated and criticized. Hutt (2003:3), citing Rose (1977:41), says that the population of Bhutan in 1969 was estimated between 300,000 and 800,000, but the national census revealed it was over one million, which was later revised to 930,614. Lee (1998:120) and Saul (2000:325) citing Basu (1996), argue that the Royal Government of Bhutan reported a total population of 1.2 million[47] when it joined the United Nations in 1971 and a population of 1.46 million in its 1990 Statistical Yearbook. However, in 1990 King Jigme Singye Wangchuck announced that the actual population was only 600,000 (Hutt, 2003:3). His figure did not include the Bhutanese refugees seeking sanctuary in Nepal and India. The refugee leaders therefore disputed the above figure and place the population somewhere between 700,000 and 800,000 (See: 'Population Politics,' 1992:17; Lee, 1998:120; and Saul, 2000:324).

According to the 2005 Population and Housing Census of Bhutan,[48] the total population of Bhutan was 672,425 (OCC, 2006:18). This data did not include the 106,200 Bhutanese refugees, 1,000 Bhutanese asylum seekers and 10,000 other UNHCR people of concern from Bhutan residing in Nepal in 2005 (UNHCR, 2005:326). These were the figures of Bhutanese refugees in Nepal two years before the initiation of the third country resettlement program.[49]

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[46] This fact has also been iterated by American scholar Leo E. Rose, who says that at least until 1977, data in Bhutan was unavailable. See: http://himalaya.socanth.cam.ac.uk/collections/journals/himal/pdf/Himal_5_4.pdf

[47] It is believed that this was done to gain more per capita foreign aid from the United Nations. See: http://himalaya.socanth.cam.ac.uk/collections/journals/himal/pdf/Himal_5_4.pdf

[48] 2005 Population and Housing Census of Bhutan was the first countrywide formal and systematic census of the Kingdom of Bhutan.

[49] In 2006, the numbers in the refugee camps in Nepal changed to107,800 Bhutanese refugees, 1,300 Bhutanese asylum seekers and 10,000 other UNHCR people of concern from Bhutan. See: https://www.unhcr.org/4666d24711.html. The following year, before the implementation of the Bhutanese refugee's resettlement program, the number of Bhutanese in Nepal in refugee-like-situation and seeking asylum changed to 2,500 and 1,600 respectively. See: https://www.unhcr.org/publ/PUBL/48490e842.pdf. This is because

According to the 2017 Population and Housing Census of Bhutan, the total population of Bhutan was 735,553 (NSB, 2018b:15). This figure does not include the 111,000 -112,000 Bhutanese refugees resettled by the UNHCR and the International Office of Migration (IOM) by the end of 2017 and the 7,400-7,500 refugees who remain in Nepal as of January 1, 2018 (UNHCR, 2018:4).[50]

3.2.2 Ethnic Groups

Although Bhutan identifies and promotes a single 'Drukpa' identity, based on the ruling ethnic group's cultural attributes, the country is multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, multi-religious, and multi-cultural (see Dixit, 1992; Saul, 2000; Hutt, 2005; Pulla, 2016). Scholars, however, differ with regard to the main ethnic categories. Hutt (2005:44) and Pulla (2016:2) recognize the Ngalongs, the 'Central Bhutanese,' the Sharchops, and the Lhotshampas as the four main ethnic groups of Bhutan. Saul (2000:325), Rizal (2004:153), and (Dixit, 1992:17) on the other hand, recognize the Ngalong, the Sharchop, the Lhotshampas as the primary groups, with several other smaller groups making up the rest. Within the smaller groups, scholars also differ on specific grouping categories.

Fig. 3: Ethnic Composition of Bhutan

Source: Human Rights Watch, 2007: 12 & Dixit, 1992:17.

many Bhutanese refugees remained in the refugee camps or elsewhere in Nepal or India without being registered as refugees. This situation will be discussed in greater detail in chapter V.

[50] The citing of the range of Bhutanese refugees who have been resettled and who remain in Nepal is intentional. According to the 2017 Year-End Report, published by UNHCR on July 25, 2018, when the resettlement program concluded, 112,000 Bhutanese refugees were resettled and 7,400 remain in the camps at the end of 2017. (see: http://reporting.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/pdfsummaries/GR2017-Nepal-eng.pdf). However, when you look at the Key Priorities' section on the 2018 UNHCR Global Focus page, you can read that 111,000 Bhutanese refugees were resettled and 7,500 remain in the camps in Nepal as of January 1, 2018. (see: http://reporting.unhcr.org/node/10316?y=2018#year). So, there is a disparity of 1,000 Bhutanese refugees. I do not know which of the above claims are accurate.

a. Smaller Ethnic Groups of Bhutan

Saul (2000:325) lists Zobs, Brokpas, Doyas, Santhals, Tibetans, Indians and Adivasis; Rizal (2004:153) lists Khengs, Brokpas, Lepchas, Tibetan, Adhivasis, and Toktops; whereas (Dixit, 1992:17) lists Brokpas (indigenous), Totas, Santhals, Doyas, and Rajbanshis as smaller ethnic groups of Bhutan. Rizal (2004) considers all of them indigenous people of Bhutan, while Dixit (1992) identifies Brokpas as indigenous and others as smaller groups. According to Rizal (2004:153), some of these smaller ethnic groups follow Tibetan or India Buddhism, while the others, influenced by Assam and West Bengal, follow Hindu social systems.

Nonetheless, the scholars who have researched Bhutan and the Bhutanese refugees, all agree that the Ngalongs, the Sharchops, and the Lhotshampas are the three major ethnic groups of Bhutan.

b. Ngalongs

The Ngalongs that reside in the Western part of Bhutan have Tibeto-Burmese origin, practice Tantric Mahayana Buddhism (the Drukpa Kagyu school of Tibetan Buddhism, to be exact), and speak Dzongkha. The ruling elite in Bhutan (including the monarchy), the majority of National Assembly members (legislators), and bureaucrats (executives) are Ngalongs. Evans (2010:27) citing Phuntsho (2006) disputes this claim saying that the Wangchucks dynasty of Bhutan are from the Kurtoe and Bumthang districts of central Bhutan and therefore are not Ngalongs. This might be true, but Hutt (2003:4 & 2005:44) argues that the Ngalongs and the central Bhutanese, with who they extensively intermarry, together are the elite and the politically dominant groups within the society.

c. Sharchops

The Sharchops who reside in the Eastern part of Bhutan have Indo-Burmese origin, practice the Nyingma school of Tibetan Buddhism and speak Tsangla (similar to Dzongkha). Some scholars consider them the first inhabitants or the first immigrants in Bhutan (See: Ringhofer (2002:43) and Rizal (2004:153)). Although the Ngalongs and the Sharchops practice different schools of Tibetan Buddhism, they are both derived from Mahayana Buddhism, one of the two branches of Buddhism remaining in the world (Hutt, 2003:5).

d. Lhotshampas

The third major ethnic group in Bhutan consists of the patriarchal, patrilineal, and patrilocal Lhotshampas. Their name means ‘Southerners’ in Dzongkha, and they primarily

reside in the Southern borderlands of Bhutan. This group is diverse and has multi-ethnic Nepali roots. As Hutt (2003:96) points out, however, very little research has been done on Southern Bhutan, including the ethnic diversity within the Lhotshampas. The Lhotshampas in Bhutan, as identified in the introduction of this dissertation, are divided in to two broad ethnic categories: the *Parbatiyas* of Indo-Aryan race and the *Matwalis* of Tibeto-Burman race. The majority of them spoke Nepali, the native language of the *Parbatiyas*. Tibeto-Burman Lhotshampas speak their respective ethnic languages within their groups. The *Parbatiyas* practice Hinduism and the *Matwalis* groups practice Buddhism, Kiratism, animism, and Christianity. These groups maintain horizontal and vertical reciprocal relationships within and among each other through marriage, family, kinship, friendship, and other communal relationships (see Hutt, 2003:95-99 and Griek, 2014:100-107).

3.2.3 Ethnic Composition and Ethnic Identity

The second point of contestation among the scholars, the RGoB, and the refugee population is the relative size of the ethnic groups, especially the size of the Lhotshampa population in Bhutan before their eviction. Griek (2014:65) is right to say that the size of the Lhotshampa population "vary from 15 to 65 percent, depending on who makes the claim." Between the numbers provided by the Bhutanese officials and refugee leaders: the Ngalongs account for 16-20 percent of the population, the Scharchops 30-37 percent, and the Lhotshampas 30-53 percent (See Lee, 1998:120).

In Bhutan, the Lhotshampas had/have relatively lower socio-economic and political status in relation to the Ngalongs and the Scharchops, who the Lhotshampa refer to as 'Drukpas.' This reference is contested by Thinley (1992:4-5), who claims that the term 'Drukpa' refers to people of Druk Yul and has no ethnic connotation attached. Similarly, Gallenkamp (2011:15), in one of her footnotes, states that 'Lhotshampa' is a Dzongkha nomenclature for Nepali immigrants based on where they reside in the country and has no ethnic connotation attached. In this research, I will use the terms 'Drukpa' to identify the Ngalongs and Scharchops, and the term 'Lhotshampas' to identify the refugees because of the perspectives of the Bhutanese refugees I interviewed. Many of my respondents either: a) referred to the Northerners as 'Drukpa' (sometimes 'Bhote') in their narratives, and b) identified themselves as Lhotshampas (not to say that they did not switch among: 'Lhotshampas,' 'Bhutanese,' and 'Nepali') when referring to themselves.

In comparison to the Drukpas, the Lhotshampas identified themselves as having: a) a progressive attitude towards education,[51] b) a stricter sexual morality,[52] and c) a higher expertise in agriculture (Hutt, 2003:100). On the other hand, when the Drukpas and Drukpa sympathizing scholars looked at the Lhotshampas, they observed inter-ethnic tensions and exploitations among them. The identified the non-Brahmin and Chettri groups, the initial settlers, to be hardworking, simple-minded, physically strong, and easy to assimilate. In comparison, the Brahmins and Chettris, were perceived as thrifty, cunning and exploitative (See Thinley (1994) and Shaw (1994) cited in Hutt (2003:99).

Similarly, when the Lhotshampas compared themselves with other Nepali-speaking communities in the adjoining states of India and in Nepal, they self-proclaim they have: a) less hierarchical stratification within and among castes, b) less oppression by the high-caste, especially the Brahmins, c) greater social mobility, especially among the *Matwalis*, d) greater spiritual (also meaning less materialistic) outlook in life, e) higher tolerance for inter-caste marriages, and f) less exposure to modernity (because of the isolation they experienced in Bhutan) (Hutt, 2003:99). When the 'outsiders' (Nepalis or others) considered the Lhotshampas, they were perceived as: a) conservative and old-fashioned (they had retained customs and traditions that had evolved in Nepal), b) submissive, especially to authority figures, and c) not as scholarly (because the Lhotshampas did not produce many literatures prior to their exile) (Ibid).

3.3 Early Lhotshampa Settlement in Bhutan

The early migration and settlement of ethnic Nepalis into the Southern foothills of Bhutan is as contested as the population and the ethnic composition of the country. Baral (1993:198), Hutt (2003:30-31), Rizal (2004:5), and Morch (2016) refer to bilateral religious, strategic, and socio-economic ties as early as 1620 AD between what is now the two states. They claim that a number of skilled workers (carpenters, masons, and smiths) and a number of families were settled in Bhutan, to help build monasteries and to guard the *Shabdrung* and kingdom. These claims are disputed by the RGoB on the grounds that they lack documentary evidence. Publications of the MoHA of the RGoB assert that Nepalis speaking people were only allowed entry into Bhutan after the 19th century (MoHA, 1993:3).

[51] The Lhotshampas, through community initiative, built school(s) in Southern Bhutan even before the government formalized education (outside of the monastaries) and built schools throughout the kingdom.
[52] Especially, among the Hindus, who based on their religion believe that 'mutual fidelity between the husband and wife' is the biggest *dharma.* For additional information, read (Sharma et. al, 2013).

While their initial date of entry into Bhutan is disputed, most scholars agree that the Nepali speaking people were the last of the ethnic groups to migrate in to Bhutan with their early settlement pre-dating the Wangchuck Dynasty. The majority of them, decedents of peasant farmers from Nepal, migrated at the end of 19th and 20th centuries after the British-Bhutan War of 1985 (Hutt:2005:45). Encouraged by the British and with the aid of licensed contractors, the *Dorji* family[53] of the Bhutan House in Kalimpong settled these people into dense and malaria infested forests in Southern Bhutan until about 1930 (Hutt, 2005:45). They were sent to Samchi, Chuka, Chirang, Sharbang, Samdruk, and Jonkhar districts of Bhutan to clear forests and extract timber as contractual laborers (Sinha, 2001:170). As tenant farmers, the Lhotshampas turned Southern Bhutan into a fertile area that produced crops that included cardamom, oranges, apples, ginger, and pineapple. They additionally contributed to the Bhutanese economy by paying taxes in cash even when the Drukpas paid taxes in kind until the 1950s (Hutt, 2005:45).

The RGoB claims that most of the Nepali speaking people who eventually became refugees were recruited in the 1960s (and later) as skilled labor for infrastructure development as a part of Bhutan's five-year development plans (Saul, 2000:325). The government adds, the remaining refugees were laborers who overstayed their welcome or others who entered Bhutan illegally or through marital ties, and stayed because they were attracted by Bhutan's under-population, full-time employment, free education and health care, and higher agricultural productivity and wages (Piper, 1995). Dixit (1992:) argues that the RGoB had always been strict about importing and repatriating 'temporary' migrants. In 1986, for example, approximately 15,000 Nepali laborers (brought to build roads in Bhutan) managed to stay behind illegally, and were later identified and driven out of the country. The Lhotshampas support this claim.[54]

Nevertheless, until the 1950s, the Lhotshampas were self-administered and paid taxes to the Bhutan House for the land allotted to them (Hutt, 1996:401). A notional East-West boundary by the Himalayan foothills divided the North and the South of Bhutan (Sinha, 1992:35). It was in this region where the Lhotshampas practiced their culture and way of life known to them. Due to decades of segregation from the North, they managed to preserve a way

[53] According to Nari Rustomji (2007:9) 'Dorji family of Bhutan,' were what would today be considered consul and 'Bhutan House' a Consulate.
[54] I confirmed this with Mr. Tek Nath Rizal, Former Royal Advisor to the King Jigme Singye Wangchuck and AI prisoner of conscience, during a personal interview conducted in his residence in Kathmandu on December 28, 2011.

of life that originated, but was lost, in Nepal. This changed during the reign of King Jigme Dorji Wangchuck, the third king of Bhutan.

In 1954, motivated by the formation of Nepali Congress in Nepal and the Indian democratic movement, the Lhotshampas formulated the Bhutanese State Congress (BSC), the first political party in Bhutan. As a group of approximately 100 demonstrators, they protested and demanded land reform, political liberalization, representation in government service, and the military and closer bilateral relations with India (AHURA Bhutan, 2000:4). Although King Jigme Dorji Wangchuck suppressed the revolt, he embarked on a program of political institution-building under which the North and the South was integrated and brought under one administration, with its capital in Thimpu (Hutt, 2005:45). In 1958, he enacted the first nationality law of Bhutan, which some scholars claim was a direct result of the BSC upheaval (see Joseph, 1999:135). Others contest it given the scope and the impact of the organization (see Gallenkamp, 2011:14). Whether the law was the result of BSC agitation, changing political climate in South Asia, personality of the third king of Bhutan, or Bhutan's newly-formed relationship with India (Hutt, 2003:128), the law provided many Lhotshampas, who arrived before or after 1958, Bhutanese citizenship.

The Nationality act allowed the Lhotshampas representation in the National Assembly and the Royal Advisory Council, enlistment in the army and the police, and appointments in senior governmental positions (Piper, 1995). These integration efforts brought the geographically peripheral and socio-politically marginalized Lhoshampas into the mainstream polity and society in Bhutan, extending into the rule of the fourth king. Five Sanskrit Pathshalas were constructed in Southern Bhutan and major Hindu festivals, such as Dashain, were declared national holidays (Gallenkamp, 2011:14). Prominent signboards were in Dzongkha, English, and Nepali and all three languages were taught in schools in Southern Bhutan (Dixit, 1992). Moreover, Nepali was used in the National Assembly, courts, governmental offices, the national newspaper (Kuensel), and the national radio (Hutt, 2003). These factors enhanced the sense of acceptance amongst the Lhotshampas.

As part of national integration policies, many Drukpa school and college students traveled South and Lhotshampa school and college students travelled North for their education (Hutt, 2003:145). This effort was to enhance interactions between the North and the South. Through a similar integration policy, the government tried to promote intermarriage between the Lhotshampas and Northern Bhutanese citizens through cash incentives, offering as much as USD 285 (Saul, 2000:333). The policy provided Lhotshampas who married Northern Bhutanese citizens in their move North with free transport, farm implements and seeds, and

financial assistance to build a house (Thomas, 1994). These cash incentives did not discourage patrilocal Lhotshampa men from marrying women from the neighboring countries since the customary Hindu laws prohibit marriage outside the caste system and within certain degrees of kin (Hutt, 2003:). Over time, the population of Lhotshampas in Southern Bhutan began to grow due to the increased marital ties between the Lhotshampas and the Nepali-speaking people outside Bhutan. As a result, there was a general shift in the integration policies of the Bhutanese government: from mellow-to-harsh. The government, in an attempt to protect its Buddhist Drukpa Culture, which it claimed was at risk of 'extinction' (Thinley, 1994:72), began its radical culturally assimilating process of 'Bhutanization.' Aspects of this policy and other factors, which led to mass eviction of thousands of Lhotshampas from Bhutan, are discussed in the following section.

3.4 Causes of Exile

Contesting arguments and several questions exist regarding the RGoB's changing attitude and treatment towards the Lhotshampas in the 1980s and 1990s. What made the RGoB change their treatment of Lhotshampas after attempts to bring them into the mainstream by granting them citizenship and opportunities within the country? Why did the RGoB adopt laws and policies that identified with language, culture, and etiquette of one ethnic group within its society, only to suppress (or even attempted to erase) the diversity of other cultures within the country? What led to the mass exodus of the Lhotshampas from Bhutan, turning them into refugees? The Bhutanese refugees claim that they were victims of discriminations by an autocratic regime on the grounds of their ethnicity and religion. The RGoB, on the other hand, claims that the refugees are primarily 'illegal migrants' who were expelled to protest the country's distinct national cultural identity, which, according to Thinley (1994:72),[55] was at the brink of 'extinction.' The section below addresses the causes of exile of the Bhutanese refugees.

3.4.1 Geo-political

Many scholars see the germination of the refugee crisis occur within geo-political developments. Dixit (1992:9-11), Baral (1993:197), Hutt (1996:402), Sinha (1992:36), Saul (2000:334), and Evans (2010, 30) identify four political developments in and around Bhutan that led the government to fear the Lhotshampas and their growing numbers in the country.

[55] Thinley was the Deputy Home Affairs Minister of the Royal Government of Bhutan in 1994.

They include: a) the 1952 formation of the Bhutan State Congress (BSC) and their 1954 demonstration in Sarbhang, b) amalgamation of administratively autonomous Sikkim into the 22nd state of India in 1975, c) The 1980s Gorkhaland Movement in Darjeeling and the suspicion of 'Pan-Nepali' or 'Greater Nepal' initiative underway, and d) the 1990s people's movement in Nepal. These occurrences are briefly discussed below.

In November 1952, inspired by the Indian Congress, a small group of relatively well educated Lhotshampas fled to Assam and formed the Bhutan States Congress (BSC). Disappointed with the local contractors and the differential treatment between the Drukpas and the Lhotshampas by the state, especially in regards to land holdings, taxation, and eligibility of government services, the BSC staged a demonstration in Sarbhang district in Southern Bhutan (Hutt, 2003:122). Their major demands were land reform, liberalization of the political system and closer ties with India. This demonstration did not generate support from their community and was quickly repressed, with their members going to prison or being exiled. By the 1960s, the BSC demands were partly met and their leaders granted amnesty. This event, however, made the Royals and the bureaucrats view the Lhotshampas with anxiety. Lhotshampas began to be perceived as a politically contentious group.

Secondly, the influx of Nepali speaking migrants in to Sikkim (an area in India bordering Tibet, Nepal and Bhutan) in the 1970s changed the population composition and the political status of the place. These migrants outnumbered the native *Lepcha* and *Bhutias* and pressed for a merger of an administratively autonomous Sikkim into the 22nd state in India in 1975. This ended the age-old rule of the royal (Choygals) family of Sikkim who had familial ties with the royal family (Wangchucks) of Bhutan. This made the Bhutanese royals and bureaucrats weary about the population size of the Lhotshampas. They believed that if this group were allowed to grow, they could become the majority and exercise their right to self-determination and potentially overthrow the monarchy, just like in Sikkim.

Thirdly, between 1986-1988, the RGoB's concerns were exacerbated, when the militancy of the Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF), a Nepali-speaking militant group that insisted on a self-governing Nepali state in the Darjeeling Hills of North Bengal in India. Since Subash Ghising, the leader of the GNLF, spoke of a 'Greater Nepal' in his political propaganda in the 1980s fueling the Bhutanese government suspicions of a 'Pan-Nepali' or 'Greater Nepal' initiative that was underway.

Lastly, the 1990s people's movement in Nepal against the *Panchayat* regime that established multi-party democracy in Nepal, devolving the power from the Nepal's king to the people, made the Bhutanese bureaucrats and the royals fearful of the Lhotshampas. They

believed the Lhotshampas could shift the concentration of power in Bhutan with the support of Nepal and other Nepali speaking communities beyond their borders.

The RGoB, therefore, despite granting the Lhotshampas citizenship, seemed to have perpetually identified them as 'Nepali,' 'migrants' or 'the others' that obscured the country's national image. The Bhutanese government grew anxious with every political upheaval by other Nepali speaking communities beyond its borders and reacted with counteractive measures domestically. Convinced they would risk their cultural history and national identity by doing nothing; they attempted including the ethnic Lhotshampa identity within the confines of the Drukpa identity. This had the side effect, pushing the Lhotshampas from the mainstream back to the periphery. When these measures seemed inadequate, the government orchestrated an exclusionist process of alienation; a thoroughly planned depopulation policy that pushed most of the Lhotshampas not just back towards the periphery, but beyond its borders.

Whether these geo-political developments in and around Bhutan were sufficient to validate the RGoB's actions towards the Lhotshampas are questionable. There is some speculation as to whether there was sufficient validity to the RGoB's concerns. Baral (1993:211) and Dixit (1992:11-13), for example, argue that Bhutan's analysis of the threat posed by Lhotshampas was exaggerated for the following reasons:

Firstly, for the same reasons as often cited by the Bhutanese authorities, (i.e., the lucrative factors that attracted the Nepali-speaking migrants into Bhutan), the Lhotshampas were content to be Bhutanese citizens and own land and property; utilizing free education, health services, and other governmental services otherwise inaccessible to them. Speaking their native language and preserving their culture did not mean that they were disloyal to Bhutan. It is likely the Lhotshampas would have assimilated into the dominant Drukpa culture and heritage had the process been gradual and benevolent.

Second, there were no signs or documented cases of conspiracy, power struggle, or 'anti-national' movement in Southern Bhutan prior to the 'depopulation' policies adopted by the government. The royal government just overreacted based on its geo-political suspicions and took preemptive measures.

Finally, even at the height of the crisis, the Lhotshampas wanted democratic reforms and respect for human rights, versus an autonomous state. It is unlikely that conflict in Southern Bhutan would have escalated to the point feared by the RGoB. Assuming it would have, however, the Lhotshampas would not have been successful in creating an autonomous state in Bhutan for two reasons. One, the majority of Lhotshampas during those days (maybe even now) were as apolitical as the Northern Drukpas and two, India, being responsible for Bhutan's

defense according to the Friendship Treaty of 1949, would have taken military action to prevent it from happening.

3.4.2 Economic

With the annexation of Tibet by the China in 1959, Bhutan's economic dependence and relations were re-oriented towards India. From the 1960s, the Southern districts served as the gateway into India and housed the major industries in the country (Dixit, 1992). The Northern districts boasted raw materials such as conifer trees and amber and eventually tourism, which until the 1990s, was extremely restricted. The Southern hills had abundance of cash crops such as cardamom, oranges, and ginger (Ibid). The Southern districts also sourced minerals, hardwood forests, and hydro-electricity, which is Bhutan's biggest GDP contributor. According to the International Hydropower Association (IHA), there are five major hydropower plants in Bhutan (IHA, 2016 May). The biggest three namely a) Tala (the biggest powerplant in Bhutan), b) Chhukha (the oldest hydro-power plant in Bhutan built between 1986-88), and c) Dagacchu are located in Southern Bhutan. The RGoB who until the end of 1950s wanted little to do with the Southern districts, realized the economic value of the area and took actions to instill more governmental control. Tighter measures over Southern Bhutan became necessary for the RGoB's state-building efforts and asserting governmental controls (Evans, 2010:30).

The geo-political upheavals in the neighboring states and Bhutan's growing economic interest in its Southern foothills led to its soft integration policies of the 1960s and early 1970s of token representation and cash enticements to law and policy amendments and aggressive homogenization initiatives in the 1980s and 1990s. The following section discusses this argument in detail.

3.4.3 Discriminatory Laws and Policies

a. 1980 Marriage Act of Bhutan

When cash and other incentive to reduce marriages between the Lhotshampa and Nepali-speaking people (from the surrounding regions) seemed futile, the RGoB passed a discriminatory marriage act in 1980. According to 1980 Marriage Act of Bhutan, Chapter Two: 'Marriages with Non-Bhutanese,' sections Kha 2-1 to Kha 2-10, citizens married to a foreign spouse were denied job promotions, education and job trainings abroad, and employment opportunities in the ministries of foreign affairs and defense (National Council, 1980: 8-10). In addition, these citizens lost privileges to government assistances in the form of land, cash loans,

agricultural inputs (i.e., seeds, cattle, and livestock), capital for business, and opportunities for medical treatment abroad. Students with government-funded scholarships had their scholarships terminated upon marriage with a non-Bhutanese. Students also were required to reimburse to the government the expenses they incurred up until the point of the marriage. On the other hand, the non-Bhutanese spouse of the citizen, upon residing in Bhutan, was required to adopt the customs, traditions, and religion of the country. S/he was prohibited from propagating or introducing their own, or other religions into Bhutan (Ibid).

The Marriage Act of the 1980, similar to the cash incentives to promote intermarriage between the Northerners and the Southerners, made little difference. Lhotshampas (especially men), sought spouses from Nepali-speaking communities, such as India and Nepal. As a result, the government began arbitrary amendments of its citizenship acts, which made burden of proof of citizenship especially difficult for the Lhotshampas. This is discussed in detail in the section below.

b. The Nationality Laws of Bhutan

According to the 1958 Citizenship Act of Bhutan, an individual with a Bhutanese father qualified for citizenship by birth. Regarding citizenship by registration, an individual over the legal age who had resided in Bhutan for over 10 years and owned agricultural land in the kingdom or served satisfactorily in government service for five years, qualified for citizenship. Foreign women married to Bhutanese citizens on submission of petition and oath of loyalty to the country qualified for naturalization. An individual's citizenship was subject to termination by forfeiting their Bhutanese nationality, abandoning of agricultural land, not residing in Bhutan or recognizing Bhutanese law, or using false information to attain citizenship (see Table 1).

In the years following the enactment of this first citizenship act of Bhutan, Lhotshampa men who settled in Bhutan before 1948 and owned agricultural land automatically qualified for citizenship. Since there were no commencement or cut-off dates, for either residency or ownership of land, future migrants who arrived after 1958 could qualify for citizenship under this act (Saul, 2000:326). Since land ownership was necessary for those attaining citizenship by registration, this act was discriminatory towards the landless, sharecroppers, and women (Lee, 1998:129&143). Most women, who in patriarchal Lhotshampa society do not own land or other forms of property, had to rely on their fathers or husbands for their citizenship. They, including foreign women married to Lhotshampa men, could, however, become citizens on

submission of petition and oath of loyalty to the country under section 4(2).[56] Non-Bhutanese men (for instance, Nepali-speaking men from across the border) who married Bhutanese women did not qualify for citizenship under the same section due to the patrilineal orientation of the Bhutanese society (Lee, 1998:143).

Table 2: Changes in the Citizenship Acts of Bhutan

Citizenship Acts	***1958***	***Changes in 1977***	***Changes in 1985***
Citizenship by Birth	Individual whose father is a Bhutanese citizen	Individual whose father is a Bhutanese citizen	Individual whose parents are both Bhutanese citizens
Citizenship by registration	Individual over legal age who has resided in Bhutan for over 10 years and owns land in the country	- Individual over legal age with permanent domicile in Bhutan for over 20 years - Some knowledge in spoken and written Dzongkha - Some knowledge of Bhutanese history	Individual with permanent domicile in Bhutan prior to December 31, 1958 and registered by the Ministry of Home Affairs
Citizenship by naturalization	'Mature' foreigner who has: - lived in Bhutan for 10 years, and - worked in the Government sector for five years - married a Bhutanese citizen (applicable mostly to foreign women)	Foreigner who is of age of maturity and has: - lived in Bhutan for 20 years (including foreign women married to Bhutanese citizens) and/or - served satisfactorily in the Government service for 15 years - some knowledge in spoken and written Dzongkha - some knowledge of Bhutanese history	Foreigner over the age of 21, or 15 if either parent is Bhutanese, who has: - sound mental health - worked in the Government sector for 15 years (also applicable to a child with either parent Bhutanese citizen) - proficiency in Dzongkha (speaking, reading, and writing) - sound knowledge of Bhutanese traditions, customs, culture, and history - good character - no criminal charges - no records of disloyalty king, country and people by any act or speech

[56] This could have motivated many Nepali-speaking families of the surrounding regions (Assam, Sikkim, and even Nepal) to marry their daughters to Lhotshampa men from Bhutan.

Termination and disqualification clause	- Renouncement /forfeiture of nationality - Acquisition of foreign citizenship - Abandonment agricultural land - Failure to reside in or recognize laws of the Kingdom - Acquisition of citizenship with false information	- Acquisition of foreign citizenship and/or criminal records abroad - Disloyalty towards king, country and people by any act or speech - Related to people who are disloyalty towards king, country and people by any act or speech - Emigration from Bhutan with the permission from the Royal government (once emigrated disqualify citizenship reapplication)	- Acquisition of foreign citizenship and/or criminal records abroad - Disloyalty towards (or related to individuals disloyal to) king, country and people by any act or speech - Emigration from Bhutan with or without the permission from the Royal government - Record of imprisonment

Source: Compiled by Author based on information from the Office of Attorney General's website

The events in Sikkim in the 1970s and in West Bengal in the 1980s by other Nepali-speaking communities led the government of Bhutan to revise its Citizenship Act first in 1977, and again in 1985. Both acts restricted eligibility for nationality. The 1977 Citizenship Act of Bhutan,[57] doubled the years required for residency and tripled the years for government service (MoHA, 1977:1). Two other major changes enacted were: a) land ownership was no longer required, and b) knowledge of Dzongkha (both spoken and written) and Bhutanese history was added (Ibid). Although the first change was advantageous, widespread illiteracy and lack of knowledge of Dzongkha and the history of Bhutan, made meeting the eligibility for citizenship difficult for the Lhotshampas (Lee, 1998:129; Saul, 2000:326 & Griek, 2014:68). The 1985 Citizenship Act that followed was even more restrictive.

The Citizenship Act of 1985,[58] annulled all prior citizenship acts so every individual was required to prove their citizenship status. This act intentionally made citizenship by

[57] According to the Bhutan Citizen Act, 1977, individuals were required to have: a) resided in Bhutan with permanent domicile for over 20 years and b) knowledge of Dzongkha and Bhutanese history and culture for citizenship by registration. Foreign women married to Bhutanese men were also required to have resided in Bhutan for 20 years and be knowledgeable in Bhutanese history, language, and culture to qualify for citizenship. Government officials were required to serve satisfactorily in their posts for 15 years before being naturalized. According to the revised Act, disloyalty towards or being related to individuals disloyal to king, country, and people in act or speech terminated citizenship. Moreover, for foreigners who had acquired Bhutanese citizenship, emigration from Bhutan terminated their citizen status and disqualified them from re-application for citizenship. See: https://www.nationalcouncil.bt/assets/uploads/docs/acts/2017/Bhutan-Citizenship-Act-1977_Eng.pdf

[58] According to the 1985 Act only individuals whose parents are both Bhutanese citizens are eligible for citizenship by birth. Individuals (15 or older) with either parent that is a Bhutanese citizen and with 'sound mind,' like government employees applying for naturalization, need to reside in Bhutan for 15 years before naturalization. Foreign women married to Bhutanese men and other foreigners can, on the other hand, apply for citizenship by naturalization after 20 years of residence in Bhutan. Everybody nevertheless needs to be proficient in speaking,

registration difficult by setting December 31, 1958 as a cutoff day, in which an individual had to be registered in the census under the Ministry of Home Affairs as having a permanent address in Bhutan (MoHA, 1985:2). However, the administrative offices for registration of domicile did not exist in Bhutan in1958. According to INHURED International (1993:6), the Home Ministry (that enacted the 1985 Citizenship Act with a 1958 cut-off date), came into existence in 1968, the Immigration Department in the 1970s, and land registration office in 1977. Therefore, the Lhotshampas had to produce a land tax receipt from 1958 to qualify as Bhutanese citizens (Baral, 1993:199). Only the Lhotshampas who provided their land tax receipts from 30 years ago, or whose village headmen could vouch for them via some form of census records, could prove they were Bhutanese citizens (Griek, 2014:69). Moreover, they had to know Dzongkha and the Bhutanese culture, customs, traditions, and history to qualify. Individuals without tax receipts for 1958 with valid proof prior to this year were still disqualified (Amnesty International, 1994:9). Similarly, Nepali-speaking women from neighboring states married to Lhotshampa men (and their children) received alien status, making citizenship by naturalization difficult (see Table 1). This is why Lee (1998:141) argues that the 1985 Citizenship Act of Bhutan is a 'denationalization decree,' based on gender, racial, and ethnic grounds, that was used to disqualify and uproot the Lhotshampas from Bhutan.

Finally, according to the 1985 enactment, only children born to parents who were both Bhutanese qualified for citizenship by birth (MoHA, 1985:2). This meant that children born to Lhotshampa men, who were married to Nepali-speaking women from neighboring India and Nepal did not qualify for citizenship by birth. This policy, by retroactive application of 1958 as the cut-off date, stripped them of their nationality, which they qualified for under the earlier Nationality Acts, (Lee, 1998:144). Therefore, Lee (1998:144) asserts that by making these women and children stateless, the act violated Bhutan's commitment to the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The refugee leaders were critical towards Dzongkha and Bhutanese customs, culture, traditions, and history requirements for citizenship. For example, Rizal (personal communications, December 28, 2011) asserted the irony of expecting Lhotshampas to understand Dzongka given that the mode of teaching in schools and colleges in Bhutan was Hindi until 1963 and English after 1964. Moreover, Dzongkha was standardized as a written

reading, and writing Dzongkha and have a good knowledge of Bhutanese culture, customs, traditions, and history. Finally, only individuals with permanent domicile in Bhutan prior December 31, 1958 and registered in the census records under the Ministry of Home Affairs are eligible for citizenship by registration. The termination and disqualification clauses remain the same as the 1977 Act, with the addition of 'record of imprisonment.' See: http://www.nab.gov.bt/assets/uploads/docs/acts/2014/Bhutan_Citizen_Act_1985Eng.pdf

script only in 1988 (Saul, 2000:331). Similarly, it was also ambitious to expect the Lhotshampas to be knowledgeable of Bhutanese history. Prior to 1964, Bhutanese schools adhered to the Indian educational system, with curriculum and books focused on Indian history (B. Poudyel, (personal communications, December 30, 2011).[59]

c. The 1988 Census

In 1988 and the years that followed, the RGoB, in accordance with the 1985 Citizenship Act of Bhutan, carried out 'targeted census' in Southern Bhutan. The census divided the Lhotshampa population into seven distinct categories (F1-F7). Refer to the table below for their definitions:

Table 3: Categories of People in Bhutan (1988 Census Definitions)

F1	Genuine Bhutanese
F2	Returned migrants (people who had left Bhutan and then returned)
F3	Drop-out cases (people who were not around at the time of the census)
F4	A nonnational woman married to a Bhutanese man
F5	A non-national man married to a Bhutanese woman
F6	Adoption cases (those who had been legally adopted as children). This clause was massively misused by the government to include Indian citizens of Ngalong ethnicity. Many Ngalongs having Indian nationality were enlisted as adoption cases by the government.
F7	Nonnationals (migrants and illegal immigrants)

Source: Pulla, 2016:5

According to the RGoB, the purpose of the census was to identify 'illegal immigrants' who had illegally obtained Bhutanese citizenship through the following: a) bribery, b) fraudulently duplicating identity documents and land receipts, c) matrimony, d) 'reverse adoption', e) acquisition of property, f) resale of rural life insurance certificates by 'resurrection' of the deceased, g) temporary labor contracts, h) school enrollment, and i) intimidation or use of force on local officials (Saul, 2000:328). The refugees, on the other hand, viewed the census as a means to: a) justify their expulsion, b) reduce their numbers, c) reinforce

[59] Interview with Mr. Balaram Poudyel, Former Block Manager, Samchi district, Sipchu subdivision, Bhutan in C. J. Himali's residence in Kathmandu on December 30, 2011.

the hegemonic Drukpa culture, and d) deter the Lhotshampas from gaining political power within Bhutan (Pulla, 2016:6).

During the census, the Lhotshampas had to produce the land receipt of 1958, as a valid document, to prove their nationality. The land receipt and poof of registration in the local village head's census record placed a person in F1 category. Other members of the same family were often placed in different categories. The census team did not accept Lhotshampa citizenship documents (Hutt, 2005:46), land registration numbers, house registration numbers, or the *goongdawoola* (voluntary) labor contribution receipts, which were accepted in earlier censuses (Dixit, 1992:). They also refused to consider land tax receipts from the years prior to 1958 (Piper, 1995:). People who moved residences after 1958, especially married women, had to produce a Certificate of Origin (CO) obtained from the authorities from their place of birth along with the other documents (Hutt, 2005: 46). Failing to produce a CO declared them as a 'non-national' or 'illegal,' placing them in either the F4 or the F7 category. Children from these parents were listed under F7. There was no information provided by the census officials about the implications of being categorized in categories other than F1 (Thornson, 1993:16). Moreover, as cited in the First Report of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)[60] Jurist Mission on Bhutan, the census team confiscated identity documents, coerced illiterate Lhotshampas to sign documents, and threatened and intimidated them, creating chaos and confusion. Therefore, the census carried out in Bhutan in 1988 (and onwards) was conducted randomly, arbitrarily, and applied with rigorous standards for documentary evidence, making it extremely hard for many Lhotshampas to meet. This census-cum-identification exercise, as pointed out by Dixit (1992:), made thousands of Lhotshampas 'non-national' or 'illegal' at the stroke of a pen.

d. One Nation, One People Policy (for cultural protection)

With its sixth Five Year Plan (1987-1992), Bhutan's fourth king promulgated the 'One nation, one people' (or 'Bhutanization') policy to preserve and promote its national (hegemonic Drukpa) identity. According to Dawa Tsering, the then Foreign Minister of Bhutan, this was the Royal government's attempt to encourage a feeling of oneness and enhance a sense of national pride among its citizens (Dixit, 1994:22). It was also, according to the government, a way to bring the Lhotshampas into the national mainstream and safeguard the nation's 'unique'

[60] South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) is the regional international organization and geo-political union of states in South Asia. Its members countries include Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka.

cultural identity, which was/is connected with its well-being and national sovereignty and security (MoHA, 1993:39). The government's justification was that because of Bhutan's size, having too many divided identities could only lead to chaos and disruption (Dhungana, 2010). The policy enforced national standards on language (Dzongkha), dress (*Gho* and *Kira)*, and a social code (*Drig Lam Namza*) attempting to erase diversity within and among its nation. These elements are briefly discussed below:

i. Costume

According to this policy, residents were required to wear the traditional clothing of the Drukpas as the national costume. *Gho*, a heavy woven one-piece tunic, for men and *Kira*, an ankle length woven dress, for women, were required to be worn in *Dzongs*, monasteries, government offices, schools, and in other public places for official functions (Piper, 1995). Poudyel (personal communications, December 30, 2011) recalled taking pride in wearing *Gho*, as a government official for the *Shipchu* subdivision of *Samchi,* but added, "when the rule was implemented to a greater extent and became an almost everyday attire for everyone throughout the nation, even the humid and subtropical Southern plains, it felt coerced." Its compulsion, even during Hindu wedding ceremonies (which require traditional Hindu attire to be worn) and its overall implementation with punitive measures, such as a fine equivalent to three days wage or a month's imprisonment for not wearing the national attire (Saul, 2000:331), made the dress code even more imposing among the Lhotshampas.

ii. Language

'Bhutanization' affected many aspects of daily life, but enforcing Dzongkha as the national language was the most dramatic change. Emphasis on Dzongkha for national identity started with the enactment of the 1977 and 1985 Nationality Acts and the publication of college-level text books, a national dictionary in Dzongkha (1986), and the standardization of its script in 1988 (Saul, 2000:331).

The Bhutanization policy enforced dropping Nepali from schools in Southern Bhutan. The RGoB cites three reasons for this measure: a) studying Nepali at school was an added pressure to students in the South, b) Nepali was only one of many languages spoken in Bhutan and the national language of another country so not mandatory to be taught in schools, and c) publishing textbooks in Nepali for Southern schools was a costly affair for the government (Thinley, 1994:60-61). Simultaneously, signboards that were earlier printed in Dzongkha, English and Nepali, had the Nepali words painted over (Dixit, 1992:). This extensive emphasis

on Dzongkha, and the simultaneous demotion of Nepali sent a clear, discriminatory message to the Lhotshampas that they were being attacked for their ethnic identity.[61]

iii. Drig Lam Namza

The Lhotshampas were also required to follow the *Drig Lam Namza,* a social code of etiquette based on the traditional Drukpa Kagyugpa (Buddhist) faith. The code required the following: a) respect for authority and hierarchy that promotes social and national interest, b) respect to elders, c) respect to each other as fellow citizens, d) sense of discipline, and e) sense of responsibility (Hutt, 2003:166). Out of all the cultural conformities, the refugees were least critical of *Drig Lam Namza*, which to a great extent is similar to customary Nepali social norms. However, according to Saul (2000:332) and Pulla (2016:20), some refugee leaders claim that the code prescribed restrictions on length of women's hair, removal of *sindoor, tika, and potey,*[62] etiquette of eating food, restrictions on religious (Hindu) clothing, and forcible serving and eating of beef, all of which have been denied by the government.

Dixit (1992:) asserts that had the cultural assimilation process been gradual, the majority of the Lhotshampas who were apolitical and happy to be in Bhutan would have gradually assimilated into the Drukpa way of life. However, due to the speed, coverage and extent of the process the government's assimilation efforts were met with rebellion and opposition. The following sections look into Lhotshampa's reactions to the arbitrary laws and policies adopted by Bhutan to assimilate and eventually alienate the refugees.

3.4.4 Repression of Democratic Movement

Due to the above-mentioned arbitrary laws and policies, especially the 1985 Act and the 1988 census, there was an environment of chaos and confusion in Southern Bhutan in the late 1980s. On April 9, 1988, Tek Nath Rizal and Bidhya Prasad Bhandari, Royal Advisors to the king of Bhutan, petitioned to the king about the arbitrary and haphazardness of the census. The petition requested the following amendments to the 1985 Citizenship Act: a) alteration of the cut-off date from December 31, 1958 to June 10, 1985 (the date of introduction of the 1985 Citizenship Act), b) modification of the citizenship by birth from 'both parents Bhutanese citizens' to 'either parent Bhutanese citizen' so that Lhotshampa children would not be denied

[61] Most refugees during interviews cited dropping of Nepali from schools in Southern Bhutan as being one of the factors that triggered the demonstrations of September 1990.
[62] Cutting hair, removing tika and potey, and wiping off sindur are traditional rituals that a Hindu woman observes as a result of the death of her husband. See Pulla (2016:20) for additional information.

citizenship, and c) amendment of provisions for foreign spouses of Bhutanese citizens to acquire citizenship (ICLD & INSEC, 1992:19-22). The petition did not sit well with the king, and Rizal was charged with insurrection and jailed for three days, subsequently he fled to Nepal. [63] While in exile, he formed the People's Forum for Human Rights, Bhutan (PFHRB) and began advocating for human rights violations against the Lhotshampas in Bhutan (Pulla, 2016:8). Other Lhotshampa political groups the formed during that time were the Student Union of Bhutan (SUB) and the Bhutan People's Party (BPP).

Mass demonstrations and protests for democracy and human rights began in Southern Bhutan in 1990. The demonstrations of September and October 1990 with the initiative of the PFHR, the BPP, and the SUB demanded: a) unconditional release of political prisoners, b) a governmental change into constitutional monarchy, c) independence of judiciary, d) amendment of the 1985 Citizenship Act, e) freedom of culture and religion, f) freedom of speech, expression and media, g) freedom of association, h) freedom of choice in occupation, i) right to equitable distribution of wealth, j) right to equal opportunities in employment, k) right to education, and l) right against exploitation (ICLD & INSEC, 1992:24-28). Although the objectives of the demonstrations were to submit the above-mentioned demands to the district offices, the government of Bhutan claims that the demonstrators arrived armed in camouflage uniforms, burnt national dress, and confiscated census records from the district offices (Evans, 2010:33). The refugee leaders, on the other hand, claim that the demonstrations were peaceful but were repressed violently by the Royal Bhutan Police and the Royal Bhutan Army (ICLD & INSEC, 1992:24-28). Two questions arise concerning the demonstrations in Southern Bhutan. One, what was the size of the marches and two, what was the motivation of the marchers.[64] Hutt (2003:207) and Evans (2010:33) maintain that while some demonstrators participated willingly, others, especially largely conservative agrarian populations were coerced by the BPP to support their cause. Regardless, the demonstrations were quickly crushed and made little impact to changing governmental policies.

[63] In a personnel interview (December 28, 2011), Rizal told me that following his flight to Nepal, he was abducted by Nepali police and handed over to Bhutanese authorities. When he was returned to Bhutan, he was charged with treason and was sentenced to life imprisonment for establishing the People's Forum for Human Rights and publishing a brochure entitled "Bhutan: We want Justice", in Nepal. But 10 years later he received a Royal amnesty.

[64] According to Prof. A.C. Shina (1992:35), North-Eastern Hill University, Shillong, India only a handful of Lhotshampas who had migrated to India for economic and educational purposes had been politicized in colleges and trade unions. The majority of Lhotshampas who were illiterate and did not participate in any activities other than farming were non-supportive of the democratic movement.

3.4.5 Branding them Anti-nationals

After the demonstrations of the 1990s, the allegations towards the Lhotshampas shifted from 'illegal migrants' to 'anti-nationals' and 'terrorists.' Criticism, in words and actions, towards the *Tsa, Wa,* and/or *Sum*, (i.e., King, country, or people) in Bhutan is considered treason according to the *Thrimsung Chhenpo* (general law of the land). Since 1990, persons committing such treacheries are branded 'anti-nationals' or 'terrorists' and face possible punishment by death (Dixit, 1992:13; Saul, 2000:336). A closer look at the Articles 9 and 10 of the *Thrimsung Chhenpo* indicates that an individual who conceals, aids, and/or does not report an anti-national, is deemed an anti-national as well.[65] On the basis of this law, and by implementing military rule in Southern Bhutan, the RGoB began identifying demonstrators and accusing bystanders of participating in demonstrations, charging these individuals with terrorism, and arbitrarily arresting and detaining them without trial. This led to the first wave of the refugee movement in the late 1980s (HRW, 2007: 12-16).

The RGoB was not the only one responsible for violence. Political activists, in particular, the BPP, began their protests with peaceful demonstrations, but later became violent. They committed acts of arson, vandalism, civil disobedience (burning national dress and census and immigration records) and aggressive attacks on public facilities and personnel (Amnesty International, 1994:3) to emphasize their demands to the government. The BPP's violent measures extended to the Lhotshampas; forcing donations in the forms of cash and kind, demanding a member from each Lhotshampa family to join their case, kidnapping, attacking, and murdering people who did not support them, looting food and animals and bombing public infrastructure in South Bhutan (Evans, 2010:32). Criminal activities from inhabitants of Assam and adjoining Indian states, particularly *Boro* tribe[66] occurred simultaneously, adding to the region's instability. As a result, most Lhotshampas, faced three kinds of overlapping persecution, enduring overlapping mistreatment by 'anti-nationals,' *Boro* militants, and the Bhutanese military. For example, 68-year-old Dal Bahadur Bista of *Beldangi – II Extension*

[65] Information based on articles TSA 1-9 and TSA 1-10 of Thrimshung Chhenpo Tsa Wa Sum Law of Bhutan retrieved from Institute for Conflict Management, South Asia Terrorism Portal (SATP), a resource to find information on conflict and terrorism in South Asia. See: http://old.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/bhutan/document/actandordinances/law_of_bhutan.htm.

[66] Terrorist groups such as the National Democratic Front of Boroland (NDFB) and Boro Liberation Tiger Forces (BLTF) are armed groups who with the objective of obtaining a sovereign Boroland for the Boro people of Assam have been carrying out insurgency in Assam. Due to the porous border between India and Bhutan, they have been seeking safe haven and also carrying out terrorist activities in Southern Bhutan since the launch of Indian Army's operation Bajrang in November 1990 to tackle their militancy. Another such separatist group, but with the object of establishing sovereignty of Assam from India is the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA). See Mazumdar (2005:568).

camp, *Jhapa,* Nepal, was robbed at gunpoint by a group of 14 BPP activists. Following this incident, he was arrested by the Bhutanese military, charged for aiding the 'anti-nationals' (although he was robbed and did not willingly aid them), and jailed for a year and seven days. Similarly, in 1990, 50-year-old Bhanu Singh Gurung of *Sanischari* camp was jailed for seven years for not reporting robberies and crime carried out by 'anti-nationals' in his village.

3.4.6 Human Rights Abuses

As mentioned earlier, in the aftermath of the demonstrations, the Bhutanese army and police identified and detained suspects who participated in the demonstrations and their supporters, often for months without trial. Detainees often had to endure many of the following assaults: a) beating, b) kicking, c) rape, d) deprivation of food, sleep, hygiene, and/or health care, e) verbal or sexual humiliation, f) hard labor or torture using of water, cold temperature, light, and disturbing music, and g) consumption of beef, which is considered a sin in Hinduism (Griek, 2014:71). Studies conducted in the refugee camps in Nepal by the Center for Victims of Torture, Nepal (CVICT) and Center for Victims of Violence Nepal showed that by the end of 1994, 2,331 persons were tortured (Ibid) and 235 raped (Saul, 2000:335), mostly by Bhutanese authorities. In the late 1990s, Lhotshampas were victims of nighttime raids, intimidation and harassment, confiscation of identity documents (mostly citizenship cards and land tax receipts), and burning or demolitions of their homes. In some instances, the authorities targeted prominent figures in the community to intimidate others into leaving the country (Piper, 1995).

Additionally, new rules and restrictions were implemented in Southern Bhutan. Schools, hospitals, and development initiatives were halted. Restrictions were placed on transportation of essentials such as salt. 'No Objection Certificates' (NOCs) were introduced (Hutt, 2005:47). NOCs were documents acquired from the Royal Bhutan Police that certified that the holder had not, or was not, related to someone who had participated in oppositional activity against the government. These certificates, which were systematically denied to Lhotshampas (Pulla, 2016:9) were required for seeking: a) employment, especially in the civil service, b) enrollment in schools, c) trade licenses, and/or d) permission to travel (Dixit, 1992). Cash crops that belonged to the Lhotshampas were also confiscated without remuneration (Hutt, 2005:47). The protest, human rights violations, denial of public services, and the NOCs severely affected the socio-economic lives of the Lhotshampas.

In addition, the BPP and their violent tactics also affected the Lhotshampa livelihood. The BPP pressured the Lhotshampas to join their social-movement through coercion and

violence. They asked the Lhotshampas to support them in-person and/or financially, and used violent tactics such as threats and intimidations, kidnapping, and vandalizing and bombing of public properties, especially local schools that had been turned into military facilities or detention centers (Evans, 2009:126-7 and Griek, 2014:72). This was one more overriding factor leading to their mass flight out of the country.

3.4.7 (In)voluntary Migration Forms

The Lhotshampas were also forced to apply for and sign the 'Voluntary Migration Forms (VMFs).' The forms stated that the owner was selling their land, accepting the compensation provided, and leaving the country willingly (Hutt, 1992). The Lhotshampas were coerced to sign the forms because they: a) were related to 'anti-nationals' or refugees in Nepal, b) wanted to release family member(s) from jail, or c) wanted to avoid being jailed themselves. For instance, 36-year-old Narayan Bhattarai's family signed the form because Narayan had already left for Nepal. Similarly, 57-year-old Tej Bahadur Adhikari's family signed the form to release him from jail, after which they fled Bhutan. Likewise, 52-year-old Lal Bahadur Adhikari of *Sanischari* camp agreed to sign a VMF to avoid a jail sentence of thirteen years and six months. Several Lhotshampas also signed voluntary migration forms, believing they were gate passes. A gate pass in Bhutan is/was a document used to exit and enter Bhutan and often used to travel to and from India. For instance, 53-year-old Arjun Kumar Chettri of *Beldangi – II Extension* camp signed a VMF after the authorities told him he was signing a gate pass. You can imagine his surprise at the border when he could not return due to the trickery of the authorities.

In terms of compensation for their property, while some Lhotshampas received compensation, most did not. For the ones who did, the amount of money received was below market value (Piper, 1995). Some, however, managed to leave their homes and property without signing the forms or receiving compensation. They carried as many identification and property documents with them out of the country. They hoped that someday, when they returned, they could prove what was, and always had been, rightfully theirs. For instance, 38-year-old Amrita Shankar remembered the following account of her flight:

> When it was time to flee. We turned on all the lights and the radio at home. We left our home unlocked so it looked like we were still living there. We left our house at 2:00AM in the morning. We fled in the dark, without a flashlight or anything. We took some clothes, pots and pans, a bag of rice, and our identification documents. We left heading for *Jhapa* but had no idea where we would end up. That is how we left that night. We kept walking crossing rivers and woods. On the third day, we reached the border

between Bhutan and India. I will never forget those days (A. Shankar, personal communication, January 14, 2015).

The government of Bhutan, eager to characterize the Lhotshampas as voluntary migrants and terminate their national ties with Bhutan, photographed them smiling or recorded them on tape or video stating they were leaving on their own will (Dixit, 1992) before expelling them. The government claimed that the Lhotshampas in the refugee camps in Bhutan were not 'Bhutanese refugees' since they left their homes willingly, despite the Royal decree asking them to stay behind (MoHA, 1993:). Lee (1998:141), on the other hand, has a different stance on the 'voluntary migration' argument. She argues that the VMFs that the RGoB imposed under duress were 'indirect denationalization decrees' because many Lhotshampas lost their citizenships by signing those documents.

Conclusion

In the early 1990s, Bhutan formed a strategic and well-administered campaign to the outside world, it marketed its exclusive and endangered social and cultural identity. The government problematized the Lhotshampas it perceived as a 'threat' and enacted domestic policies that excluded the Lhotshampas, labeling them 'anti-nationals' and 'terrorists.' Eventually, this forced the targeted group out of the country, but not without fabricating evidence that it was their (the Lhotshampas') choice to leave. In a sophisticated fashion, the RGoB expelled thousands of Lhotshampas who could not prove themselves as residents (Ranard, 2007: 1-2), while others fled to end their grievous experiences and arbitrariness of the RGoB, the BPP, and the Boro militants. The Association of Human Rights Activists Bhutan (AHURA Bhutan),[67] surveyed 49,909 Bhutanese refugees and found the following reasons behind why they 'chose' to leave Bhutan: a) harassment by Bhutanese authorities for participation in the 1990 demonstrations and/or financial support to the movement, b) coerced signing of VMFs to release arrested family members and relatives, c) threats of re-arrest if the detainees did not agree to leave the country immediately after release, d) orders by the village heads to leave based on the instructions of governmental authorities, e) eviction of those deemed 'non-national' or 'illegal' after the 1988 census, and f) eviction of those deemed 'anti-national' following the demonstrations and democratic movements of 1990 (AHURA, 2000:76-83 cited in Ringofer, 2002:50-51 & Evans, 2010:35). The year 1990 saw the beginning

[67] An NGO founded in 1992 by former Amnesty International (AI) prisoners of conscience.

of a small number of Lhotshampas leaving Bhutan, with a huge outpour arriving to the refugee camps in Nepal by 1991-1992.

The Bhutanese authorities blame the BPP and free services provided at the refugee camps as the reasons why the Lhotshampas fled Bhutan. According to the MoHA, the Lhotshampas who migrated into Bhutan due to the prospect of agriculture, abundance of jobs, and developmental benefits were pushed out of country by the 'anti-nationals,' namely, the BPP, who aimed to increase the population of the refugee camps in Nepal to exert international pressure on Bhutan to take the refugees back (MoHA, 1993:9). The government of Bhutan also claims that the Lhotshampas were enticed into the refugee camps in Nepal due to the availability of free rations, health care, education, and other services provided by the UNHCR and other donor countries and organization (Thoronson, 1993:33). According to Minister Tsering, "involvement of UNHCR and establishment of refugee camps is the real cause behind the creation of the Bhutanese refugee problem."[68] With respect to such claims by government officials, one can only ponder what Bhutan thought would happen to the thousands of refugees it drove out, if it did not expect the international community to intervene. That being the case, scholars even today debate whether Bhutan's tactical move to drive the Lhotshampas out of the country was valid or even necessary.

Few argue that the Nepali-speaking people from surrounding South Asia states were driven to migrate (at times even illegally) into Bhutan. The questions, debates and emotionally charged arguments, however, are focused on Bhutan's governmental policies and its influences on the refugee crisis. Bhutan was well within its jurisdiction to fix the loopholes in its citizenship acts to prevent illegal migrants from acquiring citizenship. However, arbitrary denationalization of thousands of its *bona fide* citizens through: a) enactment of gender, racially, and ethnically discriminatory national legislations, b) human right abuses and maltreatment, and c) forced expulsions; remains unjustifiable. Similarly, it is unacceptable that Bhutan, after committing acts of violence and discrimination against its Lhotshampa citizens and subjecting them to gruesome and atrocious experiences, continues to flaunt its cultural uniqueness and claim that its political practices are interwoven with of ideologies happiness, well-being and Buddhism.

Moreover, in May and July of 2013, Bhutan conducted its second parliamentary elections since the country transitioned into a constitutional monarchy. During their campaign

[68] Interview of Former Foreign Minister of Bhutan, Dawa Tsering in House of Cards: Fearing for Bhutan. *Himal 7*(4). 1994.

in Southern Bhutan, the candidates of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) pledged to prioritize solving the 'census issue' so the 80,000 Lhotshampas in Bhutan without their Citizenship Identity Card (CID) could be granted citizenship and participate in all aspects of society (Andre, 2013). However, the then appointed Home Minister, Damcho Dorji, from the PDP, retracted his party's campaign promises and claimed that the citizenship issues could only be resolved after the illegal immigration problem in the country was solved (Bhutan News Service, 2013). This proves the crisis that began in the early 1990s is still problematic. Some Lhotshampas in Bhutan are still considered illegal immigrants and discriminated against by the RGoB in the name of preserving the country's national identity and heritage. The next chapter looks at the experiences of the Bhutanese refugees in Nepal and efforts made at various levels to provide them with a permanent solution.

Chapter IV: Refugee Life and Durable Solutions

This chapter examines the experiences of the Bhutanese refugees during their protracted displacement in Nepal. It also describes and analyzes the state, refugee, and international level attempts, made over the years, towards durable solution(s).[69] While addressing the above, this chapter answers the following questions: a) What life was like for the Bhutanese refugees who experienced their protracted 'temporary' life in Nepal? b) Why was the GoN reluctant to integrate the Bhutanese refugees locally? c) What initiatives were taken by the states, the refugees, and the international community to solve the refugee crisis? d) Why were they ineffective to ensure the Bhutanese refugees' right to return? Another other objective of this chapter is also to build an understanding about the third country resettlement of the Bhutanese refugees. As such the chapter also answers questions such as, what is resettlement? Why was resettlement, as a durable solution, offered to the Bhutanese refugees?

4.1 Becoming Refugees

According to the National Unit for the Coordination of Refugee Affairs (NUCRA), Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA), Nepal, 60 Bhutanese asylum seekers entered Nepal towards the end of the 1990, making them the first among the thousands to seek refuge and protection in the country (NUCRA, 2010). The initial groups of people settled on the banks of the *Kanaki Mai* and *Timai* rivers in the *Jhapa* district of Southeast Nepal. Others who had initially sought refuge in Assam and West Bengal in India later joined this group after the Indian government refused to host them (HUROB, 1993:2). During those early days, the refugees survived on water from the river and assistance from locals in the community. For example, 64-year-old Harka Jung Subba from *Beldangi – II Extension* camp, who came to Nepal in 1991 and lived on the banks of the *Kanaki Mai* river, remembered receiving 80 sacks of rice and 10 cans of mustard oil from a lady who lived in the *Illam* district (H. J. Subba, personal communication, January 5, 2012). Soon after the GoN requested the UNHCR to intervene due to the rising number of refugees, and the UNHCR began its Emergency Assistance Program in early 1992 (NUCRA, 2010).

[69] This chapter is an updated and modified version of Chapter II, entitled Refugee experiences and attempts at solutions, of my unpublished Master's thesis, *To go or not to go: Decisions about resettlement by Bhutanese refugees in Nepal*.

4.1.1 Refugee Registration

Up until June 1993, the Bhutanese Lhotshampas who sought asylum in Nepal were automatically accepted as refugees and qualified for UNHCR protection and assistance. According to Tahir Ali (UNHCR representative in Kathmandu until 1995), as cited in Thornson (1993:35) and Hutt (1996:412), most refugees had some documentation proving they had come from Bhutan so the GoN recognized them as *prima facie* refugees on a humanitarian basis. Starting in July 1993, the GoN established a screening post in *Kakarvitta* near the Indian border and along with a UNHCR protection officer, jointly screened new applicants (Thronson, 1993:39-40). The GoN and the UNHCR recognized the Lhotshampas who fled Bhutan 'unwillingly due to fear of persecution' as refugees who qualified for international protection. Those who did not qualify under those conditions were left with their concerns unaddressed. This screening post was closed in January 2001 and reopened in September 2003 (HRW, 2003:29) so depending on when an individual arrived into Nepal, members of the same family often were categorized differently. Some were officially recognized as 'registered' refugees, while others were categorized as asylum seekers or unregistered refugees. Sanctions adopted by the GoN and the UNHCR towards refugees residing outside the refugee camps further complicated the matter, especially during census and verification exercises. In November 2006, in preparation of the resettlement program, the UNHCR and the GoN conducted a joint census to verify the whereabouts of the Bhutanese refugees and provided them with identity cards (Griek, 2014:223). In the following years (2007, 2009, and 2012), the GoN resorted to (re)registering refugees who had either lost their registrations or were previously unregistered.[70]

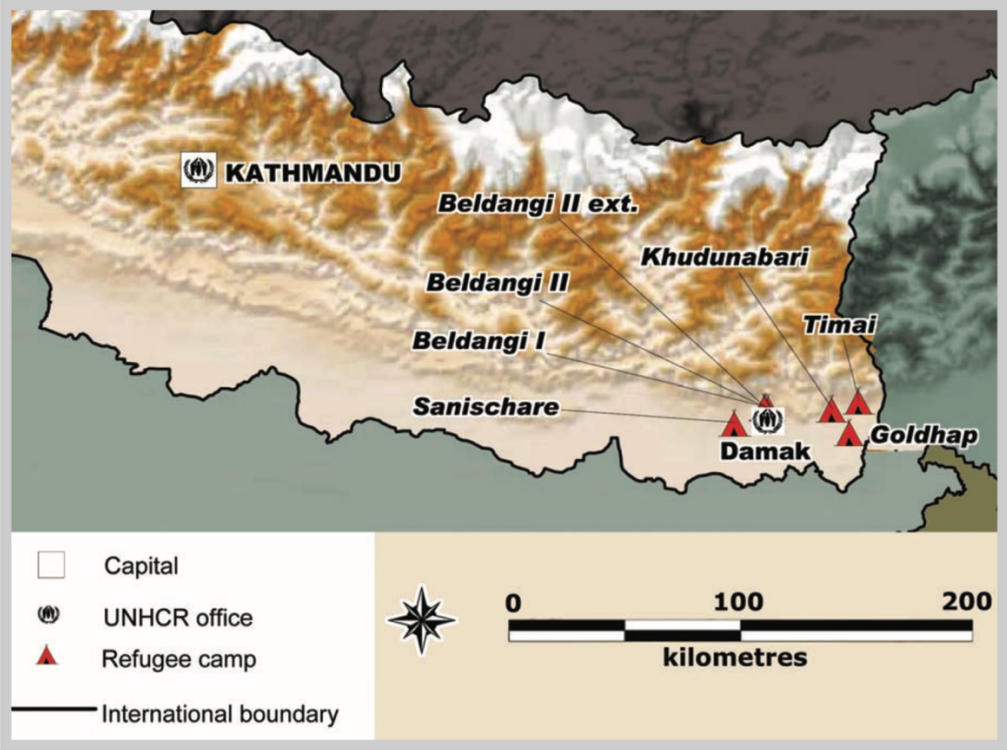
4.1.2 Refugee Experiences

From early 1990s to mid-2000s, more than 100,000 Bhutanese refugees lived in seven overcrowded camps in Eastern Nepal, namely *Beldangi – I, Beldangi – II, Beldangi – II Extension, Goldhap, Khudunabari, Sanischari*, and *Timai*. Due to the mass resettlement process that began in 2008, only four camps were operational by the end of July 2011 (LWF-Nepal, 2011:6). During the course of the two field visits, only three camps were operational.[71]

[70] Information gathered during fieldwork through interviews with Bhutanese refugees, especially unregistered refugees and their families between December 2011 and January 2012 and December 2014 and February 2015.
[71] During the field visit the operational camps in Nepal were: *Beldangi - I*, *Beldangi - II Extension* (*Beldangi II and Beldangi II-Extension* had been merged to form one), and *Sanischari*. Refugees from other camps, who had not resettled, were relocated into these camps. This, according to the LWF-Nepal field director, Mr. Dhurbaraj Pandit, was done to ease distribution of refugee assistance, camp management, and refugee protection.

These Bhutanese refugee camps were a community of closely packed bamboo huts with plastic roofs that the refugees built themselves. Each hut accommodated large extended families with multiple generations living together (Banki, 2008a:13). In certain situations, two or more families lived within the same hut. During the time of the fieldworks, even with the abundance of vacant huts, most refugees still lived cramped together. The only exceptions were families with some members who had already resettled, while they stayed behind and waited their turn.

Figure 4: Bhutanese Refugee Camps in Nepal



Source: Banki (2008a:29)

From the early 1990s, the UNHCR acted as a 'surrogate state'[72] for the Bhutanese refugees in Nepal. The UNHCR's Project Monitoring Offices managed refugee status determination, registered newly arrived refugees, provided refugee identification cards, and assisted in the delivery of humanitarian assistance to the refugees through their implementing partners, (i.e., NGOs). Primary NGOs included: a) the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Nepal for infrastructural development and distribution of food and other items,[73] b) Caritas

[72] Terminology used by Kagan (2011:1) to describe transfer of responsibility of refugee management and protection from a state to UN agencies, in most cases the UNHCR.
[73] Camp residents received bamboo and plastic to build their own huts and were supplied rations of rice, lentils, cooking oil, coal briquettes, soap and kerosene.

Nepal for education, c) the Association of Medical Doctors of Asia (AMDA) Nepal for primary health, d) Transcultural Psychosocial Organization Nepal (TPO Nepal) for psychosocial cases, e) Happy Nepal for Drug rehabilitation, f) the Nepal Bar Association for legal support, and the Vajra Foundation for solar cookers. The GoN created the Refugee Coordination Unit (RCU), which aided in camp administration by providing camp supervisors who registered births, marriages, divorces, and deaths in the refugee camps. The Armed Police Force (APF) provided camp security (Y. R. Niraula, personal communication, January 4, 2012).[74] Although the UNHCR Project Monitoring Officers, their implementing partners, the RCU camp supervisors, and the Armed Police Force managed and secured camps, the refugees self-regulated the majority of the everyday camp activities themselves. The following sections detail the experiences the Bhutanese refugees underwent in the refugee camps in Nepal.

a. Self-management

The Bhutanese refugees, under the direction of the Community Development Approach (CDA), managed their refugee camps through semi-elected Camp Management Committees (CMCs).[75] Every two years, camp residents held elections for the positions in the CMC. Headed by a Camp Secretary, the CMC consisted of infrastructure, distribution, and social service sub-committees and sub-committee heads, along with numerous sector and sub-sector heads. The camp secretary oversaw the overall camp operations and record keeping. The Infrastructure Sub-Committee (ISC) carried out construction work for shelters, sanitation, health, education, and roads. The Distribution Sub-Committee (DSC) distributed food and other household items. The Social Service Sub-Committee (SSSC) conducted project, health, counselling, and other administrative services within the camp through sector and sub-sector heads. The refugees who volunteered or were elected to these positions carried out these responsibilities without pay or other forms of compensation (J. S. Rai, personal communication, January 4, 2012).[76]

[74] In 2012, Mr. Yagya Raj Niraula was RCU Camp Supervisor of *Sanischari* refugee camp.

[75] See Banki (2008b:47-48) and Muggah (2005:151-164), the UNHCR and its implementing partners provided the Bhutanese refugees skills in administrative management of the camps and also trained them in the field of education and health care to operate those services within the camps. This approach, where individuals of a community are empowered to make changes in the community they live in, is called Community Development Approach. According to UNHCR (cited in Muggah (2005:)), this approach ensures and improves refugee: a) ownership in implemented programs, b) dignity and self-esteem, and c) self-reliance. In addition, it reduces cost and improves program sustainability.

[76] In 2012, Mr. Jhampa Singh Rai was the Camp Secretary of *Sanischari* refugee camp. Also see Muggah (2005:157-158).

b. Relative Mobility

Theoretically, the Bhutanese refugees were denied freedom of movement and the right to engage in income-generating activities (HWR, 2007:56). Most refugees, however, moved freely in and out of the camps, to study and/or work. According to the Kathmandu Post (March 6, 2000), a national daily in Nepal, approximately 10,000 Bhutanese refugees left the camp each day to look for seasonal unskilled work. Some refugees even traveled to other cities in Nepal and India for work to supplement the needs of their families. Migrating outside the camps occasionally had negative consequences. Some refugees had their registrations revoked or their ration cards cancelled when found outside camp for a prolonged period. Enforcement was especially prevalent during the time of the census (Thronson, 1993:43). Other than those times, the authorities were mostly tolerant towards refugee mobility. Such tolerance had made it possible for refugees to travel to the Indian border of *Jaigon* to meet family members residing in Bhutan (See Duncan (2009) and Banki (2008a)). Many refugees confessed to hosting family and friends (especially from India and Bhutan), in their huts, even though it was against regulations for outsiders to enter or stay inside the camps without NUCRA's authorization.[77]

c. Employment Opportunities

Income generation and skill development activities within the camps were provided and a number of refugees participated. Some options available to them were educators (teachers and school administrators), midwives and preventive health care workers, incentive staff for NGOs working inside the camp, and clergy, along with an array of income generating activities offered by LWF-Nepal and the Bhutanese Refugee Women's Forum (BRWF).[78] However, these options were few in number, and only offered meager pay. The majority of the refugees therefore worked outside the camps on a daily or seasonal basis since wages and benefits outside were more lucrative. Most refugees worked as wage laborers in the nearby agricultural fields and construction sites in *Damak* earning between NPR. 50-120 (USD 0.77-1.85) per day (Banki, 2008a:5). Some refugees also owned small shops in or outside of camps and sold fresh fruits and vegetables, housing materials, clothes, etc. that catered to refugees' needs. Thousands of refugees seasonally migrated to India for work, while hundreds of others migrated to relatively advanced cities in Nepal for higher-paying jobs in the private sector,

[77] Approximately 33 respondents informed me they often had families from Bhutan and India visit and stay with them in their huts in the camps.

[78] LWF-Nepal offered integrated income generation activities such as pig, poultry, and fish farming between refugees and local communities, and BRWF offered self-reliance and self-sufficiency activities such as chalk, soap, sanitary napkins, baby blankets, and jute mat production.

primarily private schools and the non-governmental sectors. For example, Mr. Kishore Bhandari, the coordinator of unregistered Bhutanese refugees in Nepal, claimed many teachers in private schools in Kathmandu and/or other big cities in Nepal were Bhutanese refugees (K. Bhandari, personal communication, January 4, 2012). Mr. Bhandari, who was a teacher at a private school himself, added that the Bhutanese refugees were relatively more qualified than the locals and therefore the preferred choice in the job market. Father Paramasivam Amalraj, Field Director, Caritas-Nepal, mentioned that one of the challenges he faced over the years was not being able to retain the teachers he trained in the camps (P. Amalraj, personal communication, January 2, 2012). The three to four-fold increase in salary in private schools in comparison to Caritas-Nepal's education program (Ringhofer, 2002:57) had led to a massive brain drain from the camps. This is not to assume that private school teachers could meet their families' needs. For example, 25-year-old Yanu Tamang (Gurung) from Pittsburgh remembered the difficulties she and her family faced in Nepal. As a teenager, she reported selling her clothes on many occasions to manage money for other essential needs like food, as her family could not sustain on her mother's teacher salary (Y. Tamang (Gurung), personal communication, October 27, 2014).

d. Cultural and Religious Practices

Due to the socio-cultural similarities between the refugees and the host community, the refugees were able to continue practicing their cultural and religious functions undisturbed. Common language(s), customs, and rituals provided the refugees a way to identify themselves closely with the host community. Refugees and the locals participated in each other's cultural functions, religious ceremonies, and festivals. Due to the cultural and religious similarities, there were numerous mixed marriages between the refugees and the locals from the host community and/or neighboring countries (Y. R. Niraula, personal communication, January 4, 2012).

e. Free Education

Free education was one of the more beneficial services offered inside the camps. Initially, members of the Students Union of Bhutan (SUB) voluntarily taught in the camps, but since the early 1990s, Caritas-Nepal took over the responsibility of managing the camp schools (K.M. Dixit, personal communication, December 28, 2011). Up until 2010, schools offered classes until the 12th grade, but since 2011 grades 11 and 12 were discontinued due to Caritas-Nepal's budgetary constraints (P. Amalraj, personal communication, January 2, 2012).

Between 1993 and 2000, hundreds of students with excellent academic performance received scholarships for university education or vocational training in various institutions in Nepal and India from the Albert Einstein German Academic Refugees Initiative (DAFI) (HUROB, 1993: 28) and AHURA Japan (Ringhofer, 2002:59) fellowship programs.[79]

The education system inside the camps was oriented towards repatriation since the general opinion among the refugees, the GoN, and the UNHCR (until recently) was focused on returning to Bhutan. English was the medium of teaching, and Dzongkha was also taught between grades 3 to 8 (P. Amalraj, personal communication, January 2, 2012). Additionally, the curriculum up to 8th grade mirrored the Bhutanese education system. In regards to adult education, however, changes in the orientation of education, training(s), and services began with the commencement of the resettlement program. For instance, Caritas Nepal and the BRWF provided English language courses for elderly refugees (especially women), along with driving, computing, housekeeping, beautician, and seamstress courses to help refugees cope with work and life after resettlement (see Griek, 2014:230).

f. Non-violent Political Activism

Due to fear of politicization of the refugee camps, the GoN did not allow (un)registered refugee leaders to live inside the camps (B. Poudyel, personal communication, December 30, 2011). This did not mean that the government was antagonistic towards the 'mushrooming' human rights groups and political parties that developed while the refugees remained in exile. An array of political and human rights organizations such as the Human Rights Organization of Bhutan (HUROB), Youth Organization of Bhutan (YOB), Bhutan National Democratic Party (BNDP), Association of Human Rights Activists (AHURA), and Bhutan Congress Party (BCP), were organized. The GoN, who was eager to solve the Bhutanese refugee crisis, allowed these organizations to conduct peaceful political activism and campaigns such as peace rallies and marches, hunger strikes, seminars, workshops, and lobbies in and outside Nepal (AHURA Bhutan, 2000:66-71).

g. Reduction in Assistance and Services

Although refugees were initially provided minimum basic needs, their situation gradually worsened. In 2002, the biannual clothes distribution and provision of supplementary

[79] Until 2012, DAFI had provided scholarships to 75 students to further their studies in Nepal and India and AHURA Japan had provided scholarships to 75 students to study in universities in India.

seasonal vegetables and spices ceased. In 2006, there were additional cuts in food, fuel, medical care, and other essential items (D. R. Pandit, personal communication, January 3, 2012). Refugees were also hard hit by the food ration cuts, reduction in allocation of tarps for roofing, and the switch from clean-burning kerosene to smoky coal briquettes for cooking (Cochrane, 2007:1). Most refugees interviewed complained that the rations they received did not last two weeks.[80] This was especially the case when one or more members of a refugee family: a) were unregistered, or b) lost their refugee status, or c) became an adult, but still received rations as a child. The refugees had no control or involvement in what was provided and how much was allocated. Many collected and sold their rations to buy what they wanted to eat. For instance, 40-year-old Narad Phuyal's family saved and sold a portion of the rice and lentils they received to buy fresh vegetables (N. Phuyal, personal communication, October 29, 2014). He added that they had to save their ration for 2-3 months to be able to purchase meat. Similarly, the tarps that were provided once every two years were only available to the vulnerable families after the commencement of the resettlement program. As a result, leaking roofs were common occurrences during the monsoon seasons (HRW, 2007:19).[81] Finally, the coal briquettes that replaced the supply of kerosene for cooking had serious drawbacks. Cooking with coal-briquettes was time consuming and led to skin, eye, and respiratory discomfort and diseases among the camp residents. For example: 34-year-old, Lisa Chettri's resettlement process to Australia was delayed for over a year because her mother-in-law's chest report during the medical screening showed acute respiratory tract infection (L. Chettri, personal communication, January 9, 2012). According to an informant (name concealed, personal communication, January 15, 2012) from UNHCR, Lisa's family was one among many families who were delayed in their resettlement process because of detection of acute respiratory tract infection during their health screening. The switch from kerosene to coal briquette also led to a growing reliance on firewood collected from local forests (HRW, 2007:22) and conflict with the local community due to depletion of local firewood (Banki, 2008a:19).[82]

[80] Each refugee on a fortnightly basis received 5600 gm of rice, 840 gm of lentils, 350 gm of cooking oil, 280 gm of sugar, 105 gm of salt, 490 gm of Wheat Soya Bean powder (children and pregnant women), and 500 gm of seasonal vegetables (only occasionally). Each hut received one liter of kerosene per month to light their home, 25-35 kgs. of bio-briquette (depending on the number of people in the hut) per month to cook their food, 2-5 pieces of soap (depending on the number of people in the hut) for bathing and doing their laundry. This data was provided by LWF-Nepal, who was responsible for food and non-food distribution in the camps.

[81] As a result, members of the family were forced to huddle in one corner of the house or seek refuge in neighbor's house while school kids were compelled to attend their classes standing up.

[82] According to the online news agency *Relief Web,* in February 2007, locals and forest officials of Pashupati Community Forestry got in a physical altercation with refugees from *Sanischari* camp. The locals accused the refugees of deforestation. The incident eventually got violent and resulted in the death of Gopal Khadka, resident

h. Temporary Refuge Turned Prolonged Encampment

The year 2015 marked the 24th year in the refugee camps for many Bhutanese refugees. Initially received as temporary guests, they lived in their makeshift huts for over two decades in Nepal. The GoN did not allow construction of permanent structures within the camps, resulting in refugees living in frail huts that were vulnerable to fire, monsoon rain, and snakes.[83] Moreover, because of their presumed temporary status, INGOs and NGOs often transferred refugees from one camp to another for easier assistance distribution and camp management. This occurred without the consideration of refugees' livelihood, attachments, social contacts, and communal linkages, which were essential and important to their identity. During the course of interviews, refugees often introduced themselves by saying their names followed by the names of their block, village, and district in Bhutan. Many refugees also appended their camp name, sector number, and hut number in Nepal, showing that the place where one lives, even a temporary location, was not only shelter or means of protection, but also a source of identity. Of course, the refugees could have been expected to use the above-mentioned manner of introduction when they interacted with authorities (from the RCU, the UNHCR, the IOM, etc.) and thought they had to do the same with me. Refugees' attachments to their hut (home), to their neighbors, and to local community and resources outside the camps, seemed to be ignored by the aid agencies.[84] On a fortnightly basis, refugees routinely had to undergo a screening exercise to prove their refugee status to qualify for assistance.[85] They fled conditions in Bhutan that classified them as 'citizens' and 'illegal immigrants,' only to arrive in Nepal and endure circumstances that categorized them as 'official' refugees and 'others' in refugee-like situations. In an unfortunate series of events, their lives drifted from one discriminatory condition to another, where only their perceived temporary residence mattered despite their prolonged stay.

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of the camp, and five others critically injured. Events of clashes between the locals and the refugees and curfew in the area followed this incident. See, http://reliefweb.int/node/418415.

[83] There had been various incidences of fire in the camp: on March 23, 2011 a fire in *Goldhap* camp destroyed 1,285 huts; on March 23, 2011 a fire in *Sanischari* camp destroyed 1200 homes; and on December 22, 2011 a fire in *Beldangi – I* camp destroyed 17 huts. The Bhutanese refugees endured extreme heat and harsh monsoon rains in Eastern Nepal, which they were not accustomed to in Bhutan. In addition, many refugees in Nepal also died due to snake bites. This made refugees like 25-year-old Yanu Tamang (Gurung) nervous to go to bed some night because she thought she would, like many refugees, die in her sleep from snake bite(s).

[84] Observation made during the course of field visit.

[85] Registered and unregistered members of the family live together inside the camps, but only the registered ones qualify for assistance provided. Therefore, during every fortnightly assistance distribution the refugees were required to prove their refugee identity.

i. Lack of Citizenship and Rights to Own Property

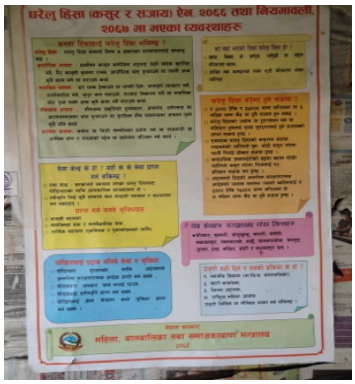
Lack of citizenship, land ownership, and property (as will be discussed further in the next chapters) were central factors in Bhutanese refugees' resettlement choices. When the refugees fled Bhutan, they lost their nationality as well as acres of cultivated land, fruit orchards, spice plantations, livestock, and other possessions. Most refugees, who were adamant about repatriation, did not want to resettle because they wanted to return to the fields they had once owned and cultivated. Elderly males especially wanted to be able to pass their livelihoods on to future generations. Meanwhile, refugees throughout the course of their displacement, worked the fields of local citizens by providing the ploughing, planting, and harvesting of land that did not belong to them. The majority of the respondents who wanted to resettle said that the biggest drawback as a refugee was the inability to be eligible to attain citizenship, own land, and purchase other forms of property.

j. Social Concerns

In July 2001, the UNHCR implemented a consultative meeting with refugee representatives. This meeting identified human trafficking (especially girls), rape, suicide, polygamy, child marriages, alcoholism, and gender-based violence as concerns (HRW, 2003:42). The 2002 report of the UNHCR's Inspector General's Office brought to light the hidden miseries of sexual exploitation existing in the camps. Bhutanese refugee girls and women were harassed and raped by aid workers, government officials, camp school teachers, and refugee men (Ibid:39). The report also exposed the GoN and the UNHCR's negligence in the handling of those cases. In addition, the 2007 HRW report highlighted other social concerns that included Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV), higher incidences of school drop-outs, alcoholism, drug and substance abuse, and depression (especially amongst women) existing among the refugees (HRW, 2007:3). These issues were the result of deteriorating camp conditions and anxiety among the refugees about their future prospects. The same report also revealed that in 2006, the UNHCR recorded 174 cases of SGBV and 88 cases of domestic violence. In 2010, Alcohol Use Disorder Identification Test (AUDIT) was conducted among over 8, 500 refugees of age 15 years and over in *Goldhap* and *Timai* camps. The AUDIT found that among the alcohol users, 19% were alcohol abusers, 41% hazardous drinkers, and 34.8% were harmful drinkers (Luitel et al., 2013). Lastly, from 2004 to 2011, IOM (2011:7) reported 67 certified suicides, 64 certified attempted suicides, and 53 uncertified suicides and attempted suicides in the camps. According to this report, 38 Bhutanese refugee men and 29 Bhutanese refugee women committed suicide, while 25 men and 37 women attempted to commit suicide

(Ibid:9).[86] During the field study, the refugees, aid workers, and NGOs interviewed did not expand or provide additional insights when answering questions regarding the above-mentioned social concerns. Their responses were short and discrete in nature. Billboards and signs inside the camps, however, proved that these social concerns ran deep within the Bhutanese refugee community. Images below are of: a) posters informing the refugees about the GoN's 2009 Domestic Violence Act (offence and punishment) and 2010 Rules (see: Figure 4), b) huge billboards that read 'STOP HUMAN TRAFFICKING, YOU AND I CAN…. Caritas Nepal' (see: Figure 5), and c) 'Measures to prevent Depression and Suicidal thoughts – TPO Nepal' (see: Figure 6).[87] Support organizations such as TPO Nepal and Happy Nepal inside the camps also were evidence of these negative social concerns in the refugee community.

Fig. 5: Nepal's DV Act & Rules **Fig. 6: Stop Human Trafficking** **Fig. 7: Prevent Depression & Suicidal Thoughts**



Source: Photos taken by the author

k. Lack of Physical Safety

After the emergence of the resettlement offer, *Beldangi – I, II,* and *II Extension,* and *Sanischari* camps started experiencing hostilities (Duncan, 2009:5). Closely packed huts were unsafe for refugee women and girls, especially ones whose fathers, husbands, and/or brothers migrated seasonally for work (HRW, 2007:26). Refugees who actively opposed to resettlement began publishing statements, issuing death threats, vandalizing camp properties, and attacking other refugees who were in favor of resettlement. In one instance, a refugee who had expressed

[86] Similarly, according to the IOM (2011:9) report, 36 Bhutanese refugees over the age of 40 and 31 refugees under the age of 40 committed suicide. Whereas, 46 refugees over the age of 40 and 16 refugees under the age of 40 attempted to commit suicide.

[87] I came across another billboard that read 'DRUG ABUSE IS HUMAN ABUSE-LWF-Nepal' but I did not have a picture of it to include in this dissertation.

interest to resettle was murdered (Banki, 2008a:7).[88] The situation worsened to the point that 63 refugees from *Beldangi – I* camp, fearing for their lives, requested police protection (The Himalayan Times, 2007, November 12).

Resettlement, therefore, awakened contrasting opinions and objectives among the refugee population resulting in camp security changing from Nepal Police to the Armed Police Force (Reliefweb, 2007, October 17). Although the politicized atmosphere of the camp did not last long, the protests had significant implications for all camp residents. Temporary restrictions and curfews were put in place, particularly after 7 pm, which hindered residents' movements in the camps. Almost everyone who left the camps during the day for education or work and returned at night were adversely affected.

In summary, refugees living in the camps in Nepal had mixed experiences. Refugees had the ability to move about for work and school, but due to resettlement and for security reasons, the mobility in to and among the camps was restricted after 7 p.m. Refugees also had employment opportunities in the camps, but they were mostly voluntary jobs or jobs with meager pay. These jobs kept the refugees engaged, but did not give them opportunities to make a living wage. Free education and a handful of scholarships were available to refugee children; however, higher education, especially after Grade 10 was not accessible to all. Cultural and religious similarities between the refugees and the host population meant that the refugees were free to practice their culture, tradition, and religion. That, along with tolerance towards non-violent political activism, led some refugees to identify positively with their host during their displacement in Nepal. Nevertheless, the experiences such as reduced assistance and services, lack of citizenship and property rights, lack of physical safety, and social concerns like harassment and substance abuse, all outweighed the positive experiences of other refugees living in the camps. These experiences of the refugees in the camps, as discussed in the next chapter, influenced their resettlement choices.

4.2 Attempts Towards Durable Solutions

For more than 20 years the Bhutanese refugees went through a silent process of suffering. Although the GoN, the UNHCR, and the refugees themselves tried to make their plight known internationally, their efforts were ineffective to help them return to Bhutan.

[88] On December 13, 2007, the Bhutanese Communist Party (BCP) shot Arjun Subba in broad daylight at Sangam Chowk, Damak for supporting and advocating for third country resettlement. When the party took responsibility for the shooting, they said that others opting to resettle would share the same fate. *The Rising Nepal,* December 22, 2007.

Needless to say, the refugees were overwhelmed when third country resettlement as a durable solution was offered. Many refugees wanted to end their uncomfortable lives as refugees in Nepal but not necessarily by going to distant and unfamiliar countries. How and why the refugees chose to resettle or stay in Nepal and their abilities to do so were socially determined. They were influenced by the world they lived in which included their identities, social, cultural, and political expectations (see Showden, 2011:1).

This section shows that when attempts towards solutions (including resettlement) happens within a complicated environment it does not necessarily focus on the needs and wants of the refugees themselves. It will show how the multi-level (namely the governmental and international levels) initiatives regionalized the concerns and suffering of the Bhutanese refugees.[89] Multi-level attempts were also ineffective to repatriate the Bhutanese refugees. Additionally, it will show the limit to what the refugees themselves can do. In doing so, it will highlight the need for the international refugee regime to work with future refugees and consider their needs, wants, and choices, especially when formulating durable solutions for them.

4.2.1 Governmental-level Initiatives

a. Unilateral Initiatives by the GoN

Nepal is not a party to the United Nation's 1951 Refugee Convention and the UNHCR 1967 protocol relating to the status of refugees. Moreover, there are no domestic laws in Nepal that recognize refugees, grant asylum, or protect the stateless. In absence of a legal system protecting the rights of refugees, the government (in practice) provided the Bhutanese refugees some of the non-degradable rights available to Nepali citizens and guaranteed by the Constitution of Nepal. Namely, right to equality, freedom to form unions and associations, rights regarding criminal justice, cultural and educational rights, rights to religion, rights against exploitation and rights against exile (National Human Rights Commission, 2003).[90] The government also restrained from harassment, detention, and refoulement of the Bhutanese refugees, with the exception of Tek Nath Rizal's refoulement in 1989.[91] The GoN, however,

[89] Many people, especially from the developed countries in the West, even to this day, do not know about the refugees from Bhutan or why they were ousted.
[90] These are some unsuspended rights guaranteed by the Constitution of Nepal to every citizen, even during a state of emergency.
[91] However, in the case of Tibetan refugees in Nepal, there are numerous cases of police harassment, arbitrary detentions and refoulement by the Nepali authorities. Moreover, during interview with the author, the NUCRA Coordinator and Deputy Coordinator denied existence of a Gentlemen's agreement with UNHCR that allows Tibetan refugees a safe passage through Nepal into India.

did not locally integrate the refugees despite its leniency and the Bhutanese refugees' socio-cultural-religious similarities with the host community. The GoN, according to Mr. Shankar Prasad Koirala, the then Coordinator, and Shambhu Prasad Ghimire, the then Deputy Coordinator, NUCRA, MoHA, Nepal, did not locally integrate the Bhutanese refugees because of four reasons. First, the Bhutanese refugees were the responsibility of the RGoB; the GoN did not instigate any political activism in Bhutan and therefore was not culpable for the uprooting of the refugees. Second, the GoN believed that integrating the refugees indirectly justified RGoB's actions; the GoN, therefore, was of the view that it was not Nepal's responsibility to right the wrong. Third, the GoN was unwilling to bear the economic and legal cost of integrating the Bhutanese refugees when it was unable to address the concerns of thousands of its citizens internally displaced by the ten-year Maoist insurgency in the country. Lastly, the GoN seemed wary of the future implications of integrating the Bhutanese refugees; it was fearful of other groups of refugees looking for a safe haven because of such an endeavor (S. P. Koirala & S. P. Ghimire, personal communications, January 6, 2012). The GoN was, therefore, firm in its position at precluding the Bhutanese refugees from integrating in Nepal, because it had no legal obligation or provision for local integration. Based on the reasons mentioned above, the GoN embraced the third country resettlement of Bhutanese refugees and assisted the refugees' resettlement by providing travel documents and exit permits.

b. Bilateral Initiatives between the GoN and the RGoB

The minimal bilateral ties between the GoN and the RGoB did little to solve the Bhutanese refugee issue. In an attempt to reduce refugee arrivals, the GoN, in the early 1990s, enforced sanctions against the RGoB, revoking the landing permit of Druk Air and refusing entry to Drukpas for holy pilgrimage into Nepal (Dixit, 1992:27). When this proved inadequate to deter the RGoB from further expulsion or influence it to return the refugees, the GoN initiated quiet diplomacy with the RGoB. Until 2004, since the formation of the Ministerial Level Joint Committee (MJC)[92] in 1993, there were fifteen sessions of bilateral talks between the GoN and the RGoB. These talks were futile since not a single refugee was permitted to return to Bhutan. The Bhutanese officials asserted that not all people living in the camps in Nepal were Bhutanese citizens. They were insistent on the verification of refugees before approaching dialogue on repatriation. As a result, on October 7, 1993, the MJC decided on a

[92] On July 17, 1993 a six member (three from Bhutan and three from Nepal) Ministerial Level Joint Committee (MJC) was established in Thimpu during the official visit of Mr. Sher Bahadur Deuba, the then Home Minister of Nepal.

joint verification and categorization exercise, placing the refugees into four categories: 1) forcibly evicted *bona fide* Bhutanese citizens, 2) Bhutanese who emigrated, 3) Non-Bhutanese people, and 4) Bhutanese who committed criminal acts.[93] Refugee leaders, refugee organizations, scholars, and even the Nepali media were extremely critical of this decision. Bhutanese laws were applied for the verification, resulting in many refugees falling into one of the following: a) Category 2 since they signed the 'voluntary migration forms' before leaving Bhutan, b) Category 3 because they fled Bhutan and, therefore, forfeited their nationality, or c) Category 4 because they demonstrated against the RGoB (Thronson, 1993:8; Hutt, 2003:259). Since the Bhutanese laws were extremely exclusionary and the reason behind the flight of the refugees, the GoN wanted to use international principles for the verification and include a neutral third party, but the RGoB denied the proposal (Hutt, 1996:414).[94] The refugee organizations in exile, on the other hand, were of the opinion that a team incorporating officials from the UNHCR and the refugee camps ought to conduct the verification (AHURA Bhutan, 2000:95), which was not favored either. Finally, after years of trying to reach a mutual agreement on each of the categories, the 10th MJC meeting decided on the formation of a ten-member Joint Verification Team (JVT) with each government nominating five members (NUCRA, 2010). The JVT did not include representatives from India, the UNHCR, or the refugee camps. It began screening refugees in the *Khudunabari* camp in March 2001. The verification process that had sparked hope of return for 12,183 *Khudunabari* camp residents turned to despair when the JVT in May 21, 2003 publicized its verification results (see Table 2). The RGoB announced that it would guarantee return to the 2.5% of *bona fide* Bhutanese refugees, while the 70.5% emigrants had to reapply for citizenship based on the Bhutanese Citizenship and Immigration Laws, and 2.8% deemed as criminals needed to prove their innocence before the Bhutanese courts within 15 days (Hutt, 2005:49).[95] The refugees' expectations were shattered and their identities re-questioned. They became infuriated and retaliated by attacking the Bhutanese officials visiting the camp on December 22, 2003 (Banki, 2008a:3). At this point, the ten-year bilateral repatriation attempts came to a complete standstill and the desire of most of the Lhotshampas wanting to return to Bhutan began to wane.

[93] Cited in October 7, 1993, joint press release issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kathmandu, Nepal.
[94] Nepal wanted the involvement of either UNHCR (and its principles for repatriation) or India, since India until 2007 was responsible for Bhutan's foreign affairs. But, neither was acceptable to the RGoB.
[95] Hutt (2005:51) adds that the Bhutanese government had made the refugees a very difficult offer, the emigrant category would be allowed to return to Bhutan to reapply for citizenship, during the probation period of two years, they would be given an identification card that would allow them to work in the country. However, issues of return of land and property or even where the refugees would live were not addressed. Bhutan was also adamant about forbidding UNHCR from entering Bhutan to monitor safe repatriation of refugees.

Table 4: Result of JVT's categorization of Khudunabari Refugee Camp

	Families	Individuals	%
(1) Bonafide Bhutanese	74	293	2.5
(2) Emigrants	2182	8595	70.5
(3) Non-Bhutanese	817	2948	24.2
(4) Criminals	85	347	2.8
Total	**3158**	**12,183**	**100**

Source: Hutt, 2005:49

Human Rights Organization of Bhutan (HUROB, 1993:19) was critical of the intention of the RGoB from the very beginning. It claimed that the categorization process was the RGoB's attempt to waste time. Ringhofer (2002:63), on the other hand, reasoned that despite Bhutan's involvement in the bilateral talks, implementing repatriation was difficult and impractical for two reasons. Firstly, the RGoB had resettled the members of the Royal Bhutanese Army and Police, their relatives, and landless citizens in the vacated lands and homes of the Bhutanese refugees.[96] Secondly, three guerilla groups (the United Liberation Front for Assam (ULFA), the National Democratic Front of Borolad (NDFB), and the Boro Liberation Tiger Forces (BLTF)) fighting for Assam's independence from India used Southern Bhutan to retreat and to carry out robberies and other atrocities. Therefore, Ringhofer (2002) believed that the RGoB could not ensure safe return of the Bhutanese refugees.

Koirala & Ghimire (personal communications, January 6, 2012) claimed that (when conducive) the GoN had every intention to continue bilateral talks with the RGoB to ensure safe return of the remaining Bhutanese refugees living in Nepal to Bhutan. Nevertheless, starting in 2006, the focus of the GoN shifted from repatriation to resettlement. In fact, as of February 2018, even with the end of the resettlement program, the GoN had not resumed bilateral negotiations with the RGoB for the safe repatriation of the remaining Bhutanese refugees in Nepal.

4.2.2 Refugee-level Initiatives

With the help of international humanitarian organizations, the refugees tried to highlight and publicize their plight. The refugees sought various avenues, from advocacy and international lobbying, to peace marches, and even militant insurgency. However, their

[96] This was the conclusion of Hague based Habitat International Coalition's fact-finding mission carried out during September 23- October 1, 2001 in Southern Bhutan.

attempts at recognition of their plight failed to reach a level that made any difference to ensure their return to Bhutan.

a. Advocacy and Activism

Among the refugee groups in exile, human rights activist groups such as HUROB, BNDP, and AHURA Bhutan, headed by former Bhutanese civil servants, teachers, and other professionals, made various attempts to internationalize the predicament of the Bhutanese refugees through activities such as mass rallies and demonstrations in Nepal and India (See HUROB (1993); AHURA Bhutan (2000:65); and Ringhofer (2002:62)).[97] They also sent appeals to the King of Bhutan, the Prime Minister of India, and International organizations such as the United Nations (UN) and the Habitat International Coalition. The most significant among these attempts was the 1995 appeal to the King of Bhutan.[98]

The refugees also organized several signature and other international campaigns. For example, in April 1999, they sent a 10,000-signature petition to Ms. Mary Robinson, the UN High Commissioner on Human Rights (Ringhofer, 2002:62), seeking UN or international support to return Bhutanese refugees to Bhutan.[99] Additionally, between 1990 and early 2000s, the refugee representatives organized and attended numerous seminars and workshops in South Asia and the West. These resulted in numerous published documents containing refugee testimonies, which received media coverage in India and Nepal, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), Voice of America (VOA), Deutsche Welle, and the Euro Channel, etc.

b. Peace Marches

On January 14, 1996, sixteen groups of Bhutanese refugees-initiated peace marches in to Bhutan. Over 4,000 Bhutanese refugees participated in these marches, which were implemented in four waves: the first wave began from the refugee camps in East Nepal, the second from the *Mechi* bridge at the Indo-Nepal border, and the third and the fourth waves came from North Bengal in India (AHURA Bhutan, 2000:65). The Indian government initially intercepted, arrested, and imprisoned the first two waves of peace marchers and sent them to

[97] These groups organized more than 25 occasions of mass rallies and sit-in demonstrations marking days like the day Bhutan joined the UN and the World Human Rights Day.

[98] The appeal requested for release of Tek Nath Rizal and initiation of national reconciliation; review of the 1985 citizenship act; cancellation of 'one nation, one people' policy; protection of human rights under the law; establishment of a new electoral system; and the return of Bhutanese refugees (See: Hutt, 1996: 415).

[99] The Bhutanese Refugees Representative Repatriation Committee gathered petitions signed by the heads of Bhutanese refugee families and sent it to the UN High Commission for HR (See: Ringhofer (2002:62)). A few refugee representatives also went to the meetings of the United Nations Commission on HR and the Sub-commission on HR in Geneva during the mid 1990s.

the Indian jails of *Siliguri, Jalpaiguri* and *Berhampur* in West Bengal (See Hutt, 1996:415).[100] After their release the following month, the third and fourth waves of marchers were allowed to conduct sit-down demonstrations. On August 15, 1996, the fourth wave of peace marchers entered Bhutan, but the Bhutanese security forces deported them back to India, impeding their efforts. The Indian authorities then herded the refugees in truckloads back to Nepal (AHURA Bhutan, 2000:66). As such, the efforts of peace marches were ineffective in reversing the plight of the Bhutanese refugees.

c. Refugee Insurgency

Don Duncan, in his three successive articles entitled "Bhutan's Radicalized Refugees" for the *World Political Review* said that refugee political parties in exile (namely the Communist Party of Bhutan, the Tiger Forces, the United Revolutionary Front of Bhutan, and the United Refugee Liberation Army), joined the militant groups such as the NDFB and the ULFA to 'incite a revolution' against Bhutan to reclaim their right to return (Duncan, 2009:4). Through interviews with an insurgent leader[101] and an Indian Intelligence Officer, he summarized that the occasional bombing by the insurgent groups could turn into a full-scale people's movement against Bhutan; reasoning the radical refugees remained behind in Nepal, while the majority of the apolitical refugees resettled abroad (Ibid). This analysis, however, might be overstated. The insurgents were only a small group of people who lacked political and economic backing both in the camps and in Bhutan. Interviews with refugee leaders, such as Tek Nath Rizal, Bhutanese Movement Steering Committee Chairperson, Balaram Poudel, BPP Chairperson, and Dr. Bhampha Rai, HUROB, as well as Field Directors from LWF-Nepal and Caritas-Nepal indicate that the radical insurgent groups were too small in numbers to generate an impactful terror campaign in Bhutan. Moreover, Bhutanese refugees who still had family in Bhutan mentioned their family members were content with the current political developments in Bhutan,[102] suggesting that the remaining Lhotshampas were unlikely to support any revolutionary movement. Finally, the Indian government, who (even after the amendment of the Indo-Bhutanese Friendship Treaty of 1949 in 2007) was responsible for

[100] The central government of India imposing Indian Penal Code 144 arrested of the peace marchers. However, their detention was overruled being judged illegal by the Magistrates' court of Siliguri, West Bengal, India, and the detainees were later released (See Hutt, 1996:415).

[101] Duncan (2009) quotes Comrade Umesh of the Communist Party of Bhutan as saying; "We are laying the groundwork in Bhutan both ideologically and militarily" in his article.

[102] Among others questions asked during interviews, I asked my respondents about their friends and relatives in Bhutan: their situations and their perception of the current situations in Southern Bhutan. The above claim is made on the basis of the responses provided to those inquiries.

Bhutan's defense, would deter any revolutionary militancy before it could escalate into a full-scale people's movement.

d. Refugee-led Local Integration

Lastly, some refugees (although difficult to estimate exact numbers) attempted to integrate into Nepal at the local level. They gained Nepali or Indian citizenship either legally or illegally through: a) false documents, b) authentic documents, but by inappropriate means, and c) intermarriage with the locals (Banki, 2008a:5). This, as discussed in the next chapters, complicated their resettlement choices and resettlement process.

In summary, this section has shown that the Bhutanese refugees were unsuccessful in obtaining international support to return home to Bhutan.

4.2.3 International-level Initiatives

This section shifts its focus to the international community. It analyzes the efforts made by the international community, especially the IRR towards repatriation of the Bhutanese refugees. It also shows the international community's role and involvement in the third country resettlement of the Bhutanese refugees.

a. Towards Repatriation

Most analyses of the (non)involvement of the international community towards repatriation of the Bhutanese refugees have over-emphasized the indifference shown by India, the regional superpower in South Asia (see Baral (1996), Banki (2008b), Dixit (1992)). Refugee leaders, media, and scholars all refer to Article II of the 1949 Friendship Treaty between India and Bhutan and concede that India was wrong to remain neutral and announce that the refugee problem was a bilateral issue between Bhutan and Nepal.[103] However, as Hutt (2005:54) pointed out, India was not neutral regarding the Bhutanese refugee issue. This was clear when India drove the Bhutanese refugees towards Nepal, instead of either sending them back to Bhutan or providing them asylum within its territory during their initial flight of early 1990s as well as the peace marches of mid 1990s. India, additionally, committed USD 300 million at the Aid Bhutan Roundtable in Geneva in 1992, instead of sanctioning aid to discourage the RGoB from expelling its citizens (Dixit, 1992:28). In fact, since the early 1990s,

[103] Based on arguments put forward during personal communication by Rizal, Poudyel, and Rai, along with Dixit (1992:28), Baral (1993:207), Banki (2008b:45), and numerous Nepali dailies.

the government of India (GoI) has become one of Bhutan's biggest development partners. Why did the GoI choose to be indifferent towards the Bhutanese refugees' distress? It is because India benefits by ensuring that Bhutan remains a stable buffer, even at the cost of nursing the state, to maintain the North-South order and stability in the Himalayas. In addition, based on the limited bilateral ties between Bhutan and Nepal and the ethnic similarities between the refugees and their host, India predicted that the refugee crisis would not escalate beyond the extent observed and took advantage of this fact (Himali, personal communication, January 13, 2012). India, therefore, strategically supported the RGoB because of its economic interest in Bhutan's growing hydropower and its political interest in maintaining the North-South security in the sensitive Himalayan frontier, while it publicly claimed the refugee issue was a bilateral issue between the two states (Dixit, 2007).

India was not the only country who chose to ignore the plight of the Bhutanese refugees. Western countries did not help the refugees repatriate by pressuring Bhutan to take back its citizens, even though it was clear that the refugees wanted to return.[104] Why did the Western countries, especially donor countries and donor organizations, choose not to intervene? Dixit (personal communication, December 26, 2011) suggested five reasons. First, Bhutan dazzled the Western donor states with the romanticism of it being the last Shangri-La. When these states and organizations compared Bhutan to Nepal, with its political and cultural complexities, and history of conflict,[105] Bhutan looked organized, well-administered and simple. Nepal, on the other hand, appeared disruptive, poorly administered, complicated, and conflict ridden. This automatically put Bhutan on a higher pedestal. Instead of pressuring the Bhutanese government to take responsibility for the refugees, Western countries (like Denmark and Germany) and aid organizations (like the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank) gave Bhutan large aid packages for its seventh development plan in 1992 (Dixit, 1992:26). Second, since the Lhotshampas were usually referred to as 'Nepali' despite being Bhutanese citizens, the idea that Lhotshampas 'belonged' or were 'better suited' in Nepal became an accepted idea among most Westerners.[106] Third, Bhutan mesmerized the world with its idea of Gross National

[104] In the 1990s people's movement of Nepal, the West through threat of aid embargo and diplomatic pressure and warning persuaded King Birendra, then King of Nepal to respect human rights of people (Dixit, 1992:27).
[105] When the West think of Nepal, they often associate it with its history of conflict and revolutions, such as the peoples' movement of 1950s against the autocratic *Rana* dynasty, the people's movement of 1990s against the *panchayat shasan* for democracy and the 10-year Maoist insurgency that ended in 2008.
[106] This discourse, however, does not acknowledge two facts. One, the entire region of South Asia is extremely diverse and multi-cultural. Next, population transfer is not possible or justifiable in the contemporary world. Arguing that 'the Lhotshampas have Nepali ethnic origin so they are better suited to live in Nepal' would be as illogical as saying the 'Muslims from India, Bangladesh, Nepal, and other South Asian countries are better suited to like in Pakistan, the holy land of the Muslims.'

Happiness (GNH) and sustainable development. Bhutan's development model was attractive to the West, becoming a prototype to manage modernization, control population and pollution, and create balanced well-being. Bhutan was the existing proof that the concept of Gross National Happiness worked and the West did not want to erode that 'myth.' Fourth, Bhutanese bureaucrats and elites were highly educated and diplomatic and understood the power of public opinion. They conducted press conferences, held diplomatic meetings, and published documents justifying their actions and stance internationally. For every article written by the refugee groups in Nepal to internationalize their cause, the Bhutanese government published the same, if not more. Even within the country, *Kuensel*, the state-owned, and the only operating media in Bhutan until the late 1990s, worked as a mouthpiece for the state and its leaders to politicize the situations of the South and rationalize state attempts to counter the so-called 'anti-national' and 'terrorist' problem. Finally, the West also preferred to 'look the other way' because the crisis did not affect them politically or diplomatically. In addition to Dixit's arguments, Bhutan persuaded the world that it was changing by democratizing and modernizing itself. It convinced the West that it was gradually shifting from the 'discriminatory regime' it used to be, to 'a new democracy, where ethnic discrimination no longer existed' (Prime Minister Jigme Y. Thinley cited in Duncan (2009).

b. Towards Resettlement

In November 2005, as a long-term solution for the Bhutanese refugee problem, the United States, Australia, Canada, Denmark, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, and Sweden formed the Core Working Group (CWG) [107] for the Bhutanese refugee resettlement, with the European Commission as an observer (Siwakoti, 2008). At the end of 2006, the CWG, through the UNHCR, proposed to the GoN its intention to resettle more than 60,000 Bhutanese refugees from Nepal. The GoN, under the leadership of the then Foreign Minister K.P. Oli from the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist), approved the proposal as an 'interim solution' (NUCRA, 2010), abandoning its previous 'repatriation only' stance (Dixit, 2007).

The resettlement of the Bhutanese refugees contradicts the claims made by most scholars who research protracted refugee situations in the Global South. They maintain that the Western countries, especially after September 11, 2001, are reluctant to resettle refugees from the Global South since they are perceived as economic burdens, socio-cultural threats, and

[107] Initially the Core Working group consisted of Australia, Canada, Denmark, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, and the United States. But later Sweden dropped out of the process and the United Kingdom stepped in.

precursor of insecurity.[108] With such preconceptions, it is important to consider the responsibility of the international community, especially the IRR, in the prolonged containment of refugees, including those from Bhutan. The other pertinent inquiry is why the CWG suddenly became interested in resettling the Bhutanese refugees, especially after two decades of inactivity and non-involvement.

Cochrane (2007:2) and Koirala & Ghimire (personal communication, January 6, 2012) claimed that resettlement was the only viable long-term solution for the Bhutanese refugees when the options for voluntary repatriation were exhausted and local integration was ruled out. In addition, Graeme Lade, the Australian ambassador to Nepal and the chair of the CWG for resettlement in 2007, cited in Dixit (2007), stated that resettlement was offered to the Bhutanese refugees in 2006 on humanitarian grounds for two reasons: a) to end their long 'temporary' encampment, which had given rise to numerous social concerns, and b) to mitigate donor fatigue.[109] Dixit (2007) identified that the major donors supporting the Bhutanese refugee camps (with the exception of Japan), were members of the CWG and, therefore, the same countries offering resettlement. Dhungana (2010:23-32), on the other hand, believed that the resettlement of the Bhutanese refugees was not guided by humanitarian concerns. Instead, he believed, the CWG's political, economic, and strategic interests guided its action. He also felt the international community rewarded the RGoB by offering resettlement to the Bhutanese refugees, as the RGoB were not held liable for the atrocities committed towards the refugees. While many Bhutanese refugee leaders share Dhungana's opinion, the donor fatigue interpretation by Dixit (2007) is inadequate to clarify why the CWG was so accommodating of the Bhutanese refugees while there were (are) other refugee groups in South Asia (such as the Rohingyas, the Afghans, and the Tibetans) and the world (such as the Syrians) in more dire need for resettlement. One plausible argument is the Bhutanese refugees were a preferred choice for resettlement in the West because they, although a small number of refugees, lobbied for the Western system of democracy and human rights in Bhutan. This analysis, however, does not explain why resettlement was offered, especially at that particular point in time.

Banki (2008b:48) and Dixit (personal communication, December 26, 2011) provide a more plausible justification. The Bhutanese refugees were the preferred choice for resettlement because they were a 'strategically unimportant' and 'non-Muslim' refugee group that filled the

[108] See Stein (1986:268), Loescher (1993:129), (Kagen, 2011:5), and the UNHCR (2006:5) report on 'The State of the World's Refugees.'
[109] According to Ambassador Lade, the international community spent USD 15-18 million annually to maintain the seven Bhutanese refugee camps in Nepal, which was not very sustainable. See Dixit (2007).

Western countries' refugee resettlement quota, without posing any domestic threat to their populace. This is also the reason why the initial offer to resettle 60,000 refugees in 2006 by the United States was modified to 'more than 60,000 with no limit' during the US Assistant Secretary for Population, Refugee and Migration, Ellen Sauerbrey's visit to Nepal in November 2007 (BBC, 2007, November 7). While immigration was still a heated topic in the United States, in the early 21st century, the domestic political parties and NGOs agreed on fair treatment of refugees and to end 'warehousing' of refugees throughout the world.[110] Moreover, responding to the predicament of the Bhutanese refugees did not come with a diplomatic cost, as most resettlement countries are Bhutan's development partners (donors) but do not maintain other economic or political ties that would be affected by the resettlement of the Bhutanese refugees. The Western countries, therefore, weighing the costs and benefits of resettling the Bhutanese refugees against their foreign policy and security interests, opted to resettle them.

Contrary to the above, according to Himali (personal communication, January 13, 2012), the United States government resettled the Bhutanese refugees in order to seek permission from the GoN to resettle Tibetan refugees.[111] It is difficult to comprehend why the United States would resettle approximately 100,000 Bhutanese refugees in order to do the same with a much smaller number of Tibetan refugees.[112] Sauerbrey, however, during her 2007 visit to Nepal, was quoted saying that the United States would continue to try to negotiate with the GoN to resettle 5,000 Tibetan refugees from Nepal (Kantipuronline, November 3, 2007).

Whether the resettlement countries' political, economic or strategic justifications are valid or plausible, ultimately, the Bhutanese refugees' resettlement dynamics were the result of the GoN's unwillingness to integrate the Bhutanese refugees locally and the RGoB's unwillingness to repatriate them. Simultaneously, it was also because the resettling countries wanted to resettle 'diplomatically less costly' and 'Non-Muslim' Bhutanese refugees to meet their refugee quota, which shifted the focus of the UNHCR from repatriation towards resettlement.

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[110] See Banki (2008b:48) where she cites the example of the campaign of the US committee for Refugees and Immigration to end warehousing of refugees globally.

[111] Nepal officially supports the mainland China's 'One China' policy although the United States embassy funded Tibetan Refugee Transit Centre (TRTC) in Kathmandu provides a safe passage to Tibetan refugees into India. In the recent years, the GoN acts with indifference towards the Tibetan refugees; with many cases of *refoulements* (ICT, 2011).

[112] According to UNHCR official statistics, there are approximately 20,000 Tibetan refugees residing in Nepal. See http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/page?page=49e487856&submit=GO. It is, however, difficult to determine exact number of Tibetan refugees residing in Nepal since the government does not recognize Tibetans arriving in Nepal after 1990s as refugees and does not segregated them in camps from the rest of population (Tibet Justice Centre, 2002).

Conclusion

The Bhutanese refugees were offered third country resettlement despite the fact that they wanted and attempted to return to Bhutan. The governmental, the international, and the refugee-level efforts towards repatriation proved inadequate to ensure their return home. The RGoB's unwillingness to return the refugees and the GoN's unwilling to integrate them locally led to the third country resettlement of the Bhutanese refugees. Admittedly, it helped that the CWG wanted to resettle a 'diplomatically less costly' and 'non-Muslim' refugee group that met their refugee resettlement quotas. As a result, the UNHCR and the GoN's completely shifted their focus from repatriation towards resettlement. However, no one bothered to ask the Bhutanese refugees what they wanted rather, they made the choice for them, i.e., offering them resettlement.

According to Mr. Kubo (personal communication, January 15, 2015), Bhutanese refugees were fortunate because only one out of 100 refugees in the world manage to receive resettlement as a solution for their plight. According to him, the CWG accepted 99% of the applications/cases submitted by the UNHCR on behalf of the Bhutanese refugees. Other refugee groups in South Asia and the world are not as fortunate and are without permanent solutions. Although Mr. Kubo is not incorrect, his generalized assumptions about the Bhutanese refugees are not without problems. Not all Bhutanese refugees shared the same choice and/or experience when it came to resettlement. The resettlement process was not without difficulties and hardship on the refugees. The following chapters, therefore, shift the focus on the choices made and the agencies exerted by the refugees.

When resettlement, as a durable solution, was offered to the Bhutanese refugees, opinions in the refugee camps were split. Some refugees welcomed the idea and others expressed despair. Resettlement, therefore, became a source of hope for many refugees, but it was also the cause of frustration, stress, and disputes amongst others, changing the overall dynamics of the refugee camps in Nepal. The next chapter(s) will detail how most refugees did not fall neatly into the pro- or anti-resettlement groups, in addition to addressing how refugee groups were privileged or marginalized by the process and how the choices made and agencies mobilized were different for different families.

Chapter V: Resettlement Choices by Bhutanese Refugees in Nepal

Third country resettlement was the program of choice to relocate the Bhutanese refugees and their families from Nepal to one of the countries in the CWG. The program provided 'refugees' who were registered with the GoN a 'voluntary choice' to relocate and become legal permanent residents in a country that accepted their resettlement cases (UNHCR, 2007:2). According to the UNHCR (2007:2-10), resettled refugees would receive the services and rights available to citizens in the chosen country, except for the right to vote or hold certain positions.[113] Depending on the country of resettlement, refugees had an opportunity to apply for citizenship. Additionally, the process would not hinder refugees' right to return to Bhutan if the conditions for a safe and dignified return to Bhutan ever became feasible. The resettlement program that began in 2007 and concluded in February 2018 resulted in the resettlement of approximately 112,500 Bhutanese refugees (IOM, 2018). Among those refugees, the majority of them (approximately 95,758 refugees) were resettled to the United States (Ibid).

One of the goals of this dissertation is to debunk the general assumption that Bhutanese refugees had two simple choices: to either choose to resettle to a third country or to choose to remain in Nepal. Such binary oppositions attempt to simplify what in reality are complicated choices and/or processes. Although perhaps counter-intuitive, the choice to resettle is not necessarily simple or easy. This chapter will highlight the various resettlement choices made by the Bhutanese refugees by showcasing who among them were unsure about resettlement, who chose not to resettle, who chose to resettle, who wanted to resettle but did not have the option available to them, and who chose to resettle only to encounter obstacles they did not envision prior to resettlement. Before highlighting the above groups of refugees and the reasonings for their choices, the chapter begins by looking at initial reactions of the refugees towards third country resettlement. Additionally, this chapter addresses the disparities in how the Bhutanese refugees and the organizations resettling them understood the third country resettlement process. The refugees' reactions and their understandings of resettlement played a crucial role in making their choices.

[113] As cited in UNHCR (2007:10) "Third Country Refugee Resettlement Information: Refugees from Bhutan living in Nepal". This document does not specify the certain positions that resettled refugees could not hold are. COR Centre (2004:18) adds that in the country of resettlement, the refugees would be provided financial assistance for a certain period of time and support to access appropriate housing, education (public school enrollment for children and vocational trainings and university studies for adults), employment, and health care among other services. In return the refugees were expected to be self-reliant, study the language of the resettled country, comply with the law and regulations of the resettled state, repay their travel loan to IOM and avail themselves to the cultural and other orientations organized by resettling agencies/organizations.

5.1 Initial reactions to the offer

When the resettlement offer was first introduced in 2006, the Bhutanese refugees in and outside the camps were divided in their opinions towards third country resettlement. Some saw it as a way out of the confinement and poverty of the refugee camps in Nepal and an opportunity to move to countries with the potential for a better life and future. Others saw it as an end to any hope in returning to Bhutan and regaining their home, their ancestral land, and community. Many Bhutanese refugees, however, did not clearly fall into the pro- or anti-resettlement groups.

5.1.1 Anti-resettlement opinions

On July 28, 2006, the Bhutanese refugee leaders who had been advocating for their right to return to Bhutan rejected resettlement as a durable solution (Griek, 2014:222). They joined forces with other refugee social and human rights groups to oppose resettlement.[114] A small group of pro-repatriation activists, which mostly consisted of the elderly, uneducated (or less educated) youth, and revolutionary groups such as the Communist Party of Bhutan (Dixit, 2007), backed their efforts. These anti-resettlement groups, especially the Communist Party of Bhutan, intimidated refugees interested in applying for resettlement by publishing statements, issuing threats, and engaging in violence targeted against pro-resettlement refugees (Siwakoti, 2008:32).[115] At the beginning of the resettlement process, these same activists used rumors in the refugee camps to discourage Bhutanese refugees from resettling. Exaggerated stories and anecdotes largely influenced some refugees in their opinions and choices towards resettlement. Examples of the rumors circulating in the refugee camps during that time are listed below:

[114] According to Griek (2014:222), the National Front for Democracy in Bhutan (NFD), the People's Forum for Human Rights Bhutan (PFHRB), Drukyul Forum for Human Rights (DFHR), Bhutanese Refugee Representative Repatriation Committee (BRRRC), National Assembly members, the Students' Union of Bhutan, and the Women's Union of Bhutan joined forces to form the Bhutanese Movement Steering Committee (BMSC) to oppose the resettlement process.

[115] As recorded by to the Himalayan Times (November 12, 2007), sixty-two Bhutanese refugees appealed to the police for protection after receiving death threats. Refugees interested in resettlement were also subjected to physical attacks and violence. On May 27, 2007, the pro-resettlement secretary of *Beldangi – II* was attacked for supporting resettlement. In the ensuing clash that started when the police arrived, the police shot and killed a 17-year-old refugee boy. The next day another refugee was killed by the police when the refugees gathered outside the police post to protest the 17-year-old's death. In December 2007, a refugee interested in resettlement was shot in the town of *Damak*. On May 5, 2008, nine masked men attacked and vandalized an IOM bus that was returning refugees to *Khudunabari* camp after their IOM resettlement processing. The bus driver and some of the refugees were injured. Similar attacks also occurred near *Sanischari* camp. On June 30, 2008, a bomb explosion (third bomb attack) at the IOM office in *Damak* destroyed part of the building near its main gate. In 2009, former Camp Secretary Santi Ram Nepal was murdered by the Druk Leopard, an underground enterprise (see Siwakoti (2008:33) and Griek (2014:226-228)).

Table 5: Resettlement Rumors
• Refugees must pay back the USD 20,000 loan provided for resettlement
• Once resettled, a refugee would be unable to return to Bhutan or Nepal
• Refugees were being 'sold' as cheap labor to resettlement countries where they would be housed in worse conditions
• Refugees would be forced to consume beef, pork, and drink alcohol if they resettle
• Refugees would be banned from practicing their religion, culture, and tradition in the West
• Resettlement countries would not resettle elderly and unhealthy refugees
• Refugees would be scattered and resettled in the remotest parts of the resettlement countries
• Refugees would be forced to fight in the Iraq war on behalf of the United States government
• Refugees would be dumped into the middle of the ocean on their way to the resettlement countries
• Pro-resettlement refugees received money from the UNHCR for promoting resettlement
• In Canada, due to its cold weather, refugees would become infertile
• In Australia, refugees would have to work outdoors in the deserts
• Resettlement was offered because India wanted to send the refugees far away
• Refugees would have to resettle again after living in the resettlement countries for a few years
• Refugees would be permanently put to sleep in America if they became sick and they would be turned into fish feed once they die

Source: Compiled by author from Siwakoti (2008:34), Griek (2014:224), Dhungana (2010:24), & Dixit (2007)

The anti-resettlement groups were against resettlement for three primary reasons. Resettlement would: a) reward Bhutan despite the atrocities it committed towards the refugees, b) dilute their repatriation movement, and c) hinder refugees from returning to Bhutan (Griek, 2014:223). According to Thinley Penjore, head of the Druk National Congress (a Bhutanese refugee party in exile), since the refugee issue was a political problem and not merely a humanitarian concern, the solution offered should be political in nature as well (see Dixit,

2007). For Penjore, this meant political changes in Bhutan for a safe and dignified return of the Bhutanese refugees to their homeland. In May 2007, highly influential High Commissioner Antonio Guterres visited the *Goldhap* refugee camp and urged the Bhutanese refugees to respect each other's resettlement choices (Griek, 2014:228). Although the refugee leaders were still against resettlement, they stopped opposing resettlement publicly after this visit.

5.1.2 Pro-resettlement opinions

Many Bhutanese refugees in Nepal desired to reintegrate back to Bhutan, but failed attempts at repatriation gave them little hope of returning. Resettlement for this group of refugees became a welcomed opportunity. According to Dhungana (2010:18), this group usually consisted of young couples who were educated and employed in private and non-governmental organizations outside the refugee camps. Most of these refugees emotionally detached themselves from Bhutan and hoped for better livelihoods, opportunities, and education, especially for their children. These pro-resettlement refugees preferred to discuss and apply for resettlement openly (Siwakoti, 2008:32), but due to a fear of threat and violence, they kept their resettlement desires a guarded secret. For example, while his family contemplated the resettlement offer, 39-year-old Bhagat Rai from Pittsburgh, PA hid his Declaration of Interest (DoI) form under his pillow for a year because of his fear that someone (neighbors or anti-resettlement activists) might find it (B. Rai, personal communication, October 28, 2014). In response to those against resettlement, some refugees established pro-resettlement organizations.[116] These organizations and committees advocated in favor of resettlement, appealed to various embassies, and staged demonstrations and signature campaigns (Griek, 2014:223). The pro-resettlement groups accused the anti-resettlement groups of only considering their self-interest and power (Siwakoti, 2008:32), rather than considering the interest of the entire refugee population.

The resettlement offer, therefore, led to mixed reactions with conflicting perspectives. As a greater number of refugees started resettling and relaying first-hand information about resettlement, the initial environment of opposition, conflict, violence, and intimidation sharply declined. At the time of my last fieldwork in Nepal, most Bhutanese refugees favored and saw the resettlement process as a positive solution. It had become the main, if not only, source of hope for many and a source of suffering for a few.

[116] Some examples include the Bhutanese Refugees Durable Solutions Coordination Committee (BRDSCC), a woman's group called Voice for Change, and the Bhutanese Refugee Resettlement Coordinating Committee (BRRCC) (See Griek (2014:223)).

5.2 Disparities in understanding resettlement

Resettlement, as mentioned in the literature review of this dissertation, is one of the systems developed by the international community to provide a long-term solution for the refugees in protracted situations. Third country resettlement was offered so the refugees could rebuild their lives away from their country of origin and refuge. During my research and as part of my interviews, I asked the Bhutanese refugees and the representatives from the various organizations resettling them what they thought resettlement meant. I wanted to understand how the refugees themselves and the people who resettled them understood the process. After all, what these groups thought about resettlement and how they interpreted it influenced the resettlement choices of the Bhutanese refugees as well as the outcome of the overall process.

5.2.1 How the resettlement organizations understood resettlement

According to Shinju Kubo from the UNHCR, resettlement was a solution for refugees stuck in a refugee situation without an exit opportunity who no longer needed immediate lifesaving support. In the case of the Bhutanese refugees, he added it was a relaxed process for the refugees to make an 'informed' choice for their future. He also provided facts and figures to show how resettlement had become a rare and privileged opportunity since out of the 50 million refugees around the world, only around 100,000 are provided this solution each year (S. Kubo, personal communication, January 15, 2015). Mr. Kubo emphasized that the Bhutanese refugees were a fortunate group of refugees because a huge portion of their population were accepted for resettlement.

As stated by Kendra Raines from the IOM, resettlement was a beneficial process for the Bhutanese refugees to move to one of the CWG countries to establish new lives, since the efforts to return to Bhutan or locally integrate in Nepal had failed (K. Raines, personal communication, January 15, 2015). For Cathy Niebel, the then Program Effectiveness Director of Catholic Charities in Pittsburgh, PA, resettlement was a process for the Bhutanese refugees to maintain their native culture within the rules and limits of the society and culture where they had been placed (C. Niebel, personal communication, October 22, 2014). The above explanations show that Mr. Kubo, Ms. Raines, and Ms. Niebel's understanding of resettlement were linked with their organization's involvement and contribution in the resettlement process. For instance, Mr. Kubo of the UNHCR, the organization that was responsible for refugees' protection needs, saw resettlement as handing over the obligation to protect the needs and rights of the Bhutanese refugees to a nation-state that was willing to accept them. Similarly, Ms. Raines who worked for the IOM, the organization responsible for movement of the refugees

from the country of refuge to the country of resettlement, viewed the process as transferring the refugees to a place that would eventually become their new 'home.' Lastly, Ms. Niebel of Catholic Charities in Pittsburgh, PA, one of the organizations responsible for resettling the Bhutanese refugees in the United States, saw resettlement as a way to integrate the Bhutanese refugees to the United States where they were expected to navigate their culture and traditions within the parameters of their new society and culture.

5.2.2 How the refugees understood resettlement

When I asked the Bhutanese refugees in Nepal, what resettlement was, I received a range of responses. Many refugees saw resettlement as a way to establish a new national identity by acquiring citizenship to the country where they would eventually reside. They also saw it as a basis to establish attachment and security via land ownership, property acquisition, and permanent housing. This is evident in 38-year-old Bishnu Adhikari's (from *Sanischari* camp) response, who understood resettlement was a process in which the organizations were taking the Bhutanese refugees who did not have land, property, and citizenship to developed countries in the West (B. Adhikari, personal communication, January 14, 2015). Similarly, 36-year-old Khila Bastola from *Beldangi – II Extension* camp also thought resettlement was the international community's way to give identity back to the Bhutanese refugees in the form of citizenship (K. Bastola, personal communication, January 16, 2015). Lastly, 40-year-old Kina Maya Rai from *Sanischari* camp, who had opted to resettle, iterated that since the GoN could not offer citizenship, other countries were giving them an opportunity for citizenship and protection of their rights (K.M. Rai, personal communication, January 14, 2015). As a general rule, refugees whose national identity and bond with Bhutan had been severed usually understood resettlement as a way to re-establish identity and linkage with a nation-state. Many Bhutanese refugees saw resettlement as an opportunity to regain what they had lost when they fled Bhutan: their land, property, home, and especially citizenship.

A few refugees, as identified by Shrestha (2011) and Nath (2016), understood that self-sufficiency was the primary goal of the resettlement process. In other words, they understood the process in terms of what was expected from them. They understood resettlement as a way to establish a source of livelihood and independence. For instance, 40-year-old Ritu Narayan Kafle from *Beldangi – II Extension* camp said that resettlement was a way to take the Bhutanese refugees to a 'comfortable place' (understand Western countries), a place where they could rebuild a 'normal' life, make a living, and fend for themselves instead of the UNHCR taking continued responsibility and liability for them (R. N. Kafle, personal communication, January

16, 2015,). Mr. Kafle was a well-educated man who understood the self-sufficiency and the burden sharing aspects of resettlement that the UNHCR was promoting in the refugee camps.

Other refugees in Nepal, however, were extremely confused about the process. Some saw resettlement as a quality control method adopted by the United States and other CWG countries. For instance, 29-year-old Parbat Bhattarai from *Sanischari* camp believed that the United States, which had provided the refugees with food and other services over the years via third parties, was dissatisfied with the quality of third-party products and services in recent years. He thought the United States, therefore, opted to resettle the refugees rather than outsourcing relief and services (P. Bhattarai, personal communication, January 17, 2015). Similarly, 29-year-old Assistant School Principal Rudra Subedi (personal communication, January 14, 2015), from *Sanischari* camp, said resettlement was "the way for the UNHCR and the GoN to dismantle the refugee camps in Nepal." He implied it was their way of getting rid of the Bhutanese refugees.

Among those refugees lacking an education (i.e., the ability to read), several confessed they did not understand what resettlement meant. For example, 81-year-old Padma Bahadur Bhattarai from *Beldangi – II* camp, 71-year-old Bhim Bahadur Poudel from *Beldangi – I* camp, and 53-year-old Bhanu Maya Gurung from *Sanischari* camp were among those that were confused and wary of the resettlement process.[117] Mr. Bhattrai and Mr. Poudel did not want to resettle because they were unsure of what resettlement entailed. Mrs. Gurung claimed that I (the author) would have a better idea of what resettlement was, given that I could read the pamphlets and posters about resettlement in the camps, and she could not. Even without understanding the resettlement process, some chose to resettle anyway. For instance, 61-year-old Dil Kumari Rai from *Sanischari* camp said,

> I have no idea what resettlement means. As I have told you, I am uneducated so I have understood nothing. **My family and I, we just do as they say, eat whatever they give us and go wherever they tell us. So, we will go…** (D. K. Rai, personal communication, January 17, 2015).

Refugees who lost their nationality and source of living often perceived resettlement as a way of regaining their 'citizen' identity and securing their livelihoods. However, as indicated above, there was a huge disparity among the refugees in regard to how they understood resettlement. The UNHCR distributed pamphlets in English and Nepali in May 2007 to inform

[117] Interview with Mr. Bhattarai was conducted in his hut in *Beldangi – II Extension* camp on January 13, 2015. Interview with Mr. Poudel's was conducted in his hut in *Beldangi – I* camp on January 16, 2015. Interview with Mrs. Gurung was conducted in her hut in *Sanischari* camp on January 17, 2015.

the refugees about the resettlement process (Dixit, 2007). Other methods adopted by the UNHCR and the IOM included: radio bulletins, poster campaigns, mobile counseling teams, participatory information sessions, targeted information sessions (towards women, elderly, disabled, etc.), setting up a 'blue box' system, and a UNHCR-IOM joint information center inside *Beldangi – I* refugee camp (see IOM (2011) and Griek (2014)). CMC members played the most significant role in dissemination of information about resettlement. The UNHCR, in collaboration with the GoN and the CWG embassies, held meetings with CMC members and provided documentaries and promotional videos educating them about the resettlement process (A. Shankar, personal communication, January 14, 2015). The CMC members then disseminated that information to other refugees in their respective refugee camps.

In 2007, CMC elections shifted the power dynamics within the refugee camps (Siwakoti, 2008:33), influencing the positive resettlement messaging. The leaders elected in 2007 were mostly against resettlement, which affected information flow for the first wave of refugees resettling in 2008-2009. The refugees faced difficulties making choices due to limited access to information (S. Kubo, personal communication, January 15, 2015). Comparatively, in 2015, refugees not only received information through resettling organizations and CMC members, but also directly from resettled families and friends through phones calls and internet communications. There was, however, a huge disparity in access to such information among the refugees. The young and educated had an advantage because they could read the posters and other print resources circulated in the camps. They could also visit the joint information center to utilize resources such as computers and internet provided for the refugees. Similarly, those with direct contact with personnel from resettling organizations, such as incentive staff working with the UNHCR, the IOM, and other NGOs, had their questions and concerns addressed. The uneducated, the elderly, and the disabled, however, had difficulty accessing such information.

Even among the refugees who had access to information, there was a lot of confusion about the process because of the mixed information they received from multiple sources: the organizations, the CMC members, resettled refugees, friends, and neighbors. From the fieldwork in Pittsburgh, it was evident that the information the refugees in Nepal received from resettled refugees, was influenced by their (resettled refugees') resettlement experiences and the stage of integration. For instance, the refugees in Pittsburgh, PA who were in their initial stage of resettlement recommended friends and family in Nepal to resettle. On the other hand, the refugees who were experiencing socio-cultural and/or economic adjustments, especially discrimination at work, recommended friends and family to stay back in Nepal. Therefore, the

refugees in Nepal had to navigate the mixed information they received from multiple sources to make their resettlement choice. Nevertheless, the differences among various groups of Bhutanese refugees, especially how they understood resettlement highlights how they reacted to the resettlement offer and why they made the choices they did. The next sections attempt to make those connections.

5.3 Resettlement choices by Bhutanese refugees in Nepal

In 2014, the resettlement countries decided to implement a last call exercise for the refugees. Facilitated by the UNHCR, the exercise served as a final chance for the Bhutanese refugees in Nepal to express and submit their DoI forms (S. Kubo, personal communication, January 15, 2015).[118] This implemented a cut-off period for the Bhutanese refugees to express their intention to resettle and forced or facilitated their resettlement choices. According to the profiling survey conducted by the UNHCR in 2015 (around the time of my last fieldwork in Nepal), 54% of the survey respondents had expressed interest to resettle, 30% wished to return to Bhutan, 14% wanted to remain in Nepal, and 2% were undecided (Fujibayashi, 2017:154). Resettlement, as one can imagine, was the recurring topic of conversation among the refugees in Nepal throughout the duration of the program (primarily from 2007 to 2018). Among others, 35-year-old Dilli Ram Biswakarma from *Sanischari* camp stated,

> Resettlement is all people think and talk about here. When I ask someone where s/he is headed, it is almost always somewhere in regards to their process… If someone is headed to look at the notice board to see if her/his name is listed there, others quickly ask her/him to look for their names as well. **People are constantly talking or thinking about their process or their departure from Nepal. This sentiment is widespread in the camps** (D.R. Biswakarma, personal communication, January 17, 2015).

As identified by the profiling survey conducted by the UNHCR in 2015 (mentioned above), the Bhutanese refugees could not just be divided into two groups of refugees: those who wanted to resettle, and those who wanted to stay back. Many refugees were unsure of what to choose. There were also groups of refugees who wanted to resettle, but the choice was not available to them. Similarly, there were groups of refugees who had chosen to resettle, but they encountered difficulties and obstacles. These complications either disqualified them from resettlement or delayed their processes. All these groups of refugees, their resettlement choices, and their reasonings are discussed below.

[118] According to Mr. Kubo, during this three-month period, information campaigns, sharing and counseling was heightened in all the refugee camps.

5.3.1 Bhutanese refugees who were unsure about resettlement

In 2015, during my fieldwork in Nepal, I found refugees were still struggling with their resettlement choice even though the call to express and submit their interest was over. Many refugees, especially the elderly, were constantly changing their minds, some even during their interviews. For instance, Punyamata (who did not remember her last name or age and reported her age a few years short of 100) from *Beldangi – I* camp, stated that she wanted to resettle because her entire family wanted to do so. However, towards the end of the interview she changed her story. She said she wanted to stay back in Nepal because she was extremely old, which she expressed as "being close to her death" (Punyamata, personal communication, January 16, 2015).

Similarly, 88-year-old Tek Nath Adhikari from *Beldangi – I* camp, at the beginning of his interview, was firm on his stance not to resettle because he hoped to return to Bhutan someday. However, in the middle of the interview, he said he would reconsider his choice and resettle if his family believed it was a good option for him. He added he would resettle if someone from his family came to Nepal, two or four years after their resettlement, to accompany him on his journey to the United States (their 'new home') (T. N. Adhikari, personal communication, January 16, 2015). The above illustrates shows the complexity, fluidity, and changing nature of Bhutanese refugees' resettlement choices as well as demonstrates how refugees were overwhelmed by the resettlement offer and the available choices. Families were in constant state of weighing their options, negotiating with one another, and contemplating and (re)questioning their choices. The choice was especially daunting for the elderly and illiterate refugees who either lacked access to information or received misinformation about resettlement.

5.3.2 Bhutanese refugees who chose not to resettle

The varying experiences at home (in Bhutan) and during refuge (in Nepal), led to disparities in how the refugees identified themselves. Most refugees whose flight was anticipatory or were of higher status in Bhutan identified enthusiastically with their homeland and evolved into refugee leaders and repatriation activists in Nepal. They held leadership roles in various refugee political groups to represent their fellow refugees and those remaining in Bhutan. They did not want to resettle and continued lobbying for safe return home. For example, Mr. Tek Nath Rizal, Mr. Balaram Poudyel, and Dr. Jhampa Rai believed accepting resettlement would undeniably result in detachment from their 'home.' It would also essentially excuse the RGoB of its wrong doings, remove international spotlight from the plight of the

Bhutanese refugees, and render moot their (refugee leader and repatriation activist's) activism and efforts to return home. Similarly, they believed the democratic transition in Bhutan made repatriation more plausible now than ever before. A victorious return to Bhutan, according to them, was the only 'just' way to end the prevailing marginalization and discrimination against the Lhotshampas living in Bhutan. Mr. Rizal, who had devoted his life to fighting for human rights and democracy in Bhutan, said he had faith in the international human rights principles and the international community and was waiting to go home. He was not against resettlement in its entirety but was skeptical. He argued that attempts to return Bhutanese refugees home had not been fully exhausted. He also asserted that resettlement could lead to further problems for the Bhutanese refugees, as families were being separated due to the GoN and the UNHCR's unwillingness to address the issues of asylum seekers, unregistered refugees, and other Bhutanese refugees who were ineligible for resettlement (T. N. Rizal, personal communication, December 28, 2011).

Mr. Rizal's faith in the international community was shared by 49-year-old Bhagirath Chettri of *Beldangi – II Extension* camp, who insisted that the conflict in Bhutan could not be solved until and unless some refugees from the camps were returned home. Although the government of Bhutan proffered his land and property in Bhutan to a Drukpa family, he believed that some existent UN policy could fix the situation. He said,

> Over the years, the UNHCR has taken care of us and I am hopeful that it will not give up on us easily. Unlike the Burmese refugees, we have raised our voice to return to Bhutan, and unlike the Tibetan refugees, we still have a state to return to. Moreover, the Bhutanese government does recognize some of us as its citizens; they have participated in bilateral talks and the verification processes. They might be willing to come to the negotiating table again, now that Bhutan is a democratic country (B. Chettri, personal communication, January 4, 2012).

On the other hand, Mr. Rizal's skepticism was joined by 52-year-old Lal Bahadur Adhikari of *Sanischari* camp, who was skeptical about the intention of the resettlement countries. He stated that if Bhutan, the country that took their forefathers willingly, could easily expel them, the resettlement countries that had no historical connections with the Lhotshampas could do the same, once they were of no use to them (L. B. Adhikari, personal communication, January 8, 2012).

Further banding together with the restoration activists in their anti-resettlement choices were the handful of 'Passive Hurt'[119] who fled unwillingly and lost their identity and prior

[119] One of Kunz's categorizations based on ideological-national orientation abroad.

Bhutan status. They retained their orientation towards Bhutan, feeling guilty about abandoning their 'homeland,' the place of their birth, identity, and their people. Although the events in Bhutan alienated them from their homeland, they identified with their state and nation and were trapped in the memory of the past. For example, 71-year-old *Parbatiya* landlord Bhim Bahadur Poudel of *Beldangi - I* camp said,

> I want to live in Bhutan. Bhutan is my country. My land, fields, home, property, and citizenship are in Bhutan. I have left them behind. I keep daydreaming about being back there. My heart is in Bhutan. I want to return to Bhutan to look at my home and land before I die, even if it is just for two days (B.B. Poudel, personal communication, January 16, 2015).

Similarly, 68-year-old *Parbatiya* landlord Dal Bahadur Bista of *Beldangi – II Extension* also did not want to resettle. He said that his labor and sweat were mixed with his land in Bhutan, and everything he was and everything he owned was in Bhutan. If the GoN was unable to return him to his place of birth, he believed it ought to resettle him in the Eastern hills of Nepal, the area from which his ancestors migrated to Bhutan (D. B. Bista, personal communication, January 6, 2012). Another refugee, 81-year-old *Parbatiya* Padma Bahadur Bhattarai of *Beldangi – II Extension* camp, did not want resettlement because he did not want to follow the law, religion, and *karma* of a country where he did not belong. He wanted to return to his home, fields, and orchards in Bhutan, which two of his brothers were managing on his behalf. He wanted to bestow those properties to his sons, two of whom had already resettled. If unable to return, he preferred to live and die in Nepal, the country of Nepali-speaking people and the country of shared understanding and *karma* (P. B. Bhattarai, personal communication, January 13, 2015). Similarly, 50-year-old *Matwali* landlord Kalu Magar of *Beldangi – II Extension* camp was also against resettlement because he did not want to go to a country where he did not belong. He wanted to return to his land and if unable, he preferred to live and die in Nepal (K. Magar, personal communication, January 7, 2012). Like them, 80-year-old *Matwali* refugee Birkha Bahadur Tamang from *Beldangi – I* camp also wanted to remain in Nepal. His ancestors migrated to Bhutan from the hills (region) in Nepal, and it was important for him to stay back. Since he spoke Nepali, he felt people in Nepal would understand him and his feelings. He insisted he did not want to resettle to another country and if forced, he was certain his mind and heart would be forever restless (B. B. Tamang, personal communication, January 14, 2015).

Of a similar homeward perspective, was *Matwali* Camp Secretary Jhampa Singh Rai of *Beldangi – II Extension* camp, who based his opinion on the information and experiences shared by Bhutanese refugees who resettled in the United States. Secretary Rai compared

Bhutan to the resettlement countries and said that Bhutan, in comparison to most CWG countries, was unpolluted and had a higher living standard. In addition, he said it was not difficult to maintain a household or make a living in Bhutan (unlike the resettlement countries). Bhutanese nationals did not have to work fourteen to fifteen hours a day for mere survival. In America, he heard that people had to live on the streets if they could not find a job, buy food, and/or rent an apartment. He therefore decided that the West was a good place for young and educated people, but not an old and uneducated person(s) like himself (J.S. Rai, personal communication, January 4, 2012). Likewise, 80-year-old *Parbatiya* refugee Tek Nath Adhikari of *Beldangi – I* camp said old people like himself could not work in any of the countries accepting them. Neither could they speak their language. He surmised that life would be harder for him if he resettled. He also indicated fear of change in family and community dynamics due to resettlement and said,

> I am in my 80s. If I resettle, are my children supposed to take care of me or their children? Apparently, you become a burden to your family when you get old. **It is better to be a burden here where I can at least take care of myself and have friends, neighbors, and community that supports me, rather than going abroad where I do not understand the people, culture, and their systems** (T. N. Adhikari, personal communication, January 16, 2015).

Based on the above opinions expressed by the respondents, one may surmise that some of the Bhutanese refugees' choices not to resettle were hopeful efforts to keep and hold onto what was known and familiar to them. It was an attempt to incur less anxiety and socio-cultural adjustment than what they had undergone in previous years. It was also to avoid de-socialization and 'downward social mobility' in the resettlement countries. These groups of refugees leaned towards Bhutan due to their home identification and Bhutan's familiar political and economic developments. The cultural incompatibility and unclear resettlement policies (push factors) of the resettlement organizations and resettlement countries further encouraged them to stay close to Bhutan. Therefore, like Pulla (2016), I found that some Bhutanese refugees, especially affluent landlords, (high status) refugee leaders, (less educated) repatriation activists, and elderly male refugees, especially of *Matwali* ethnicities, chose to stay back in Nepal because they had: a) hoped to return to Bhutan (their home), b) ethno-cultural ties with Nepal (the 'host'), and c) skepticism and anxieties towards resettlement.

5.3.3 Bhutanese refugees who chose to resettle

During my fieldwork in Nepal, I found that younger generations born in the camps or who fled Bhutan as children, had no association, memory, and/or emotional ties to Bhutan, thus

self-alienating themselves from Bhutan and 'their' Bhutanese identity. For example, 20-year-old Roshan Regmi who identified himself as a Nepali speaking Bhutanese instead of a Bhutanese refugee (since he was born in the refugee camps in Nepal), chose to resettle to the United States because his future was uncertain in Nepal (R. Regmi, personal communication, October 29, 2014). Similarly, 29-year-old Uttam Tamang from Pittsburgh said, "Everybody loves their country, but patriotism is not enough for survival. People (referring to the elderly Bhutanese refugees in Nepal) should not ruin their lives because of the love they feel for their country, especially the country that ousted them" (U. Tamang, personal communication, October 29, 2014). Nineteen-year-old Yamuna Wagley of *Sanischari* camp, when asked if she would go to Bhutan if the Bhutanese government were willing to return its citizens, replied she would never go back to Bhutan. She identified herself with Nepal and Nepali society. She said she would keep revisiting Nepal after her resettlement, but never visit Bhutan (Y. Wagley, personal communication, January 4, 2012).

Like the youths, I found that highly educated refugees understood a lot about the resettlement program, process, and life in the resettlement countries before they made their choice. For example, 39-year-old Sancha Man Rai, a middle-caste *Matwali* and highly educated refugee knew about the offer in 2005, before it was officially announced to the refugees by reading an article in *The Kathmandu Post* (an English national daily in Nepal) that indicated the United States' interest in resettling the Bhutanese refugees. In 2007, Sancha Man started educating his family about resettlement, suggesting his family to adopt a 'step-resettlement' plan. As the educated son of the family, he opted to resettle first in 2008 and make way for the rest of his uneducated (or less educated) family members. He realized some of his family, especially elderly parents, were concerned about family separation and loss of their Lhotshampa/Bhutanese identity and culture due to resettlement. Sancha Man and his nuclear family (wife and daughter) first resettled to Scranton, PA but later relocated to Pittsburgh based on his friends' advice. According to Sancha Man, Pittsburgh topographically looked like Southern Bhutan. Moreover, since Pittsburgh's Mayor Bill Peduto was pro-multiculturalism and approved of immigrants, the Bhutanese refugees felt welcomed and found ample job opportunities in the city. As a result, many educated Bhutanese refugees relocated to Pittsburgh and persuaded their friends and family to do the same. When I visited Pittsburgh in 2014, Sancha Man had convinced his entire family in Nepal to resettle to Pittsburgh. His promotion to the position of Service Coordinator at the Jewish Family & Children's Services, one of the major organizations resettling Bhutanese refugees in Pittsburgh, aided in their enthusiasm for resettlement (S. M. Rai, personal communication, October 29, 2014).

Similarly, 36-year-old Balaram Gurung, a middle-caste *Matwali* refugee and a CMC member, decided to resettle to North Carolina, United States because of his knowledge of the following: First, the United States had committed to receive the largest quota of Bhutanese refugees. Second, the United States had not capped the quota of the Bhutanese refugees it was willing to receive. Lastly, the United States was a world power that could influence global affairs and politics. During the initial resettlement period, when the anti-resettlement groups were spreading rumors about resettlement and issuing threats against pro-resettlement refugees, Balaram and his friends formed a volunteer group and mobilized young and educated refugees to conduct information campaigns about the process. Upon arriving in the United States, Balaram moved to Pittsburgh from North Carolina because his friends from the volunteer group had migrated there from their initial cities or states of resettlement (B. Gurung, personal communication, October 29, 2014).

Another example of highly educated refugees who chose to resettle based on their educational backgrounds, ethnic and caste privileges, and social class advantage, as well as the associated work experiences, cultural exposures, and travel opportunities they had because of it were 43-year-old Khara Timsina and his 39-year-old wife, Bishnu Timsina. Upper-class and Brahmin refugees Khara and Bishnu, who acquired university education in Bhutan, Nepal, and India, respectively,[120] were both school administrators at Shuvatara School, one of the most prestigious private schools in Kathmandu, Nepal. Initially, the couple wanted to resettle either to New Zealand or Canada due to their research on the social security system, universal healthcare, and high standard of living in the two counties. However, their applications to both countries were rejected.[121] They then opted to resettle to New York City, one of the most fast-paced cities in the world. To familiarize their sons with life outside of Nepal, Khara and Bishnu went on a two-week family vacation to Kolkata, India three months before their arrival in New York. Their intention was to expose their children to life in a big city, especially the train system. Both Khara and Bishnu confessed that the hardest part about choosing to resettle was leaving behind close friends and co-workers, along with the assets and belongings they had

[120] Khara Timsina had completed high-school in India, had a two-year Diploma in Agriculture from Bhutan, and his Bachelor in Education from Nepal. Bishnu Timsina had a BA in Public Administration from Indira Gandhi National Open University in India. Khara worked as a supervisor at BNY Mellon. He also was the co-founder and the Executive Director of Bhutanese Community Association of Pittsburgh (BCAP), a not for profit association formed by the Bhutanese refugee to ensure high quality of life and support for their integration in Pittsburgh. Bishnu, on the other hand, was the Youth Career Counselor at Jewish Family and Children's Services and an Assistant Preschool Teacher at the South Hills Interfaith Movement (SHIM).

[121] Khara and Bishnu believed that New Zealand and Canada prioritized applications of Bhutanese refugees who were disabled or who had been jailed and/or subjected to torture before they left Bhutan (K. Timsina & B. Timsina, personal communication, November 2, 2014).

accumulated in Kathmandu. They constantly worried about having to start over in Nepal if their application to the United States was rejected as well (K. Timsina & B. Timsina, personal communication, November 2, 2014).

Although some refugees were very eager to leave, others only resettled because they felt they did not have a better choice. Within the groups expressing initial unwillingness to resettle, the education and prospects for children in their families influenced choices. These refugees, discouraged that the prospect of returning home to Bhutan was nowhere close to materializing, had transferred their hopes and desires to the following generations. For example, 57-year-old Tej Bahadur Adhikari of *Beldangi – II Extension* camp had unwillingly accepted resettlement to South Dakota and only did so because most of his family members, especially his children and grandchildren, wanted to resettle. He believed that resettlement could not become a permanent solution, since his ancestors were not citizens of any of the countries in the CWG. He felt the RGoB ought to repatriate some of its people (the Bhutanese refugees), even if it were just a few thousand (T. B. Adhikari, personal communication, January 6, 2012). When asked if he would return to Bhutan after resettlement, provided the RGoB was willing to repatriate its citizens, he replied,

> **If the RGoB took us back, I would pay off the money I am expected to pay the IOM for my travel to the United States and return to my country.** I have land there; the land that my father earned with his life's savings. **I have the citizenship of Bhutan; I am a Bhutanese!** (Ibid)

Of a similar outlook was Jeet Bahadur Bhattarai of *Beldangi – II Extension* camp, who felt obliged to resettle due to the limited services available in the refugee camps and the lack of choice to return to Bhutan. He said,

> **Resettlement is not what we desire, it is more of an obligation!** Our children can only study up to the 10th grade in the refugee camps, after which they do not have any prospects for further education or development. Their lives should not go to waste as ours… Of course, I would like to go to Bhutan. I was born there. I along with the others contributed in the development of the country. **But that choice has not been provided to me** (J.B. Bhattarai, personal communication, January 3, 2012).

Moreover, budget cuts and the deteriorating quality and quantity of assistance in the camps made camp residents suspicious that the assistance programs and the mandates of the UNHCR and the other NGOs were phasing out. The refugees who, over the years, had witnessed donor organizations intervene and withdraw assistance, were of the notion that resettlement was offered because the international aid organizations planned to suspend their assistance activities in the refugee camps soon. Many respondents implied this during personal

communications. One among them was 65-year-old Chandra Maya Khadka, who indicated she doubted the UNHCR, the WFP, and other NGOs would support her throughout her entire life, even if she wanted to stay back in the refugee camps (C. M. Khadka, personal communication, January 5, 2012). Other refugees were under the impression that eventually everybody would be compelled to leave, so they were preparing for it. For example, 49-year-old Om Nath Baral from *Beldangi – II Extension* camp had started his process to resettle to Colorado (even though he did not want to resettle), just in case 'all' Bhutanese refugees would eventually be required to resettle (O. N. Baral, personal communication, January 13, 2015). He said it was a difficult choice to resettle somewhere he had never been and envisioned he would have to be 'reborn' (start over) there. Nonetheless, he opted for resettlement just in case everyone would be forced to leave because no other options were available to the Bhutanese refugees.

As identified in the introduction of this dissertation, Marzo and Chapagain (2012:97) found Bhutanese refugees who had resettled to Denmark 'actively decided to resettle' because they: a) were aware of the difficulties associated with repatriation, b) wanted to end their 'idle' life as refugees in Nepal, c) hoped for a better future (opportunities or socio-economic-political needs), and d) desired citizenship (permanence or identity needs). In doing so, the Bhutanese refugees exercised their power to choose their future and counter their victimization (Ibid:107). Similarly, Pulla (2016:83) explains the resettlement perspectives by the Bhutanese refugees in terms of the theory of 'choice' and 'chance' between the different generations. According to him, resettlement for some Bhutanese refugees, especially the elderly, was a 'choice' to stay back in the refugee camps in Nepal with the hope of returning to Bhutan, their 'homeland.' For others, especially the younger generations, it was a 'chance' to resettle in developed countries leaving behind the life and the people they knew in Bhutan and Nepal (Ibid). Like Marzo and Chapagain (2012) and Pulla (2016), I too found that most Bhutanese refugees, especially the young, educated, and/or families with children, had chosen to resettle for various reasons. These reasons included: a) reintegration into society, b) better lives and opportunities, especially for their children and future generations, c) lost hope in returning to Bhutan or integrating in Nepal, d) alienation with Bhutan and Bhutanese identity (especially among the young who were either born in Nepal or fled Bhutan as children), and e) presumption that the UNHCR and other aid agencies would eventually withdraw their assistance and close all the refugee camps. In addition, since options were limited and suspicions ran high that future possibility to stay in Nepal would cease, many refugees unwillingly chose to resettle. In fact, even the ones who felt that they made their choice willingly, did so guided by desperate mindsets of loss, impermanence, and instability.

5.3.4 Bhutanese refugees who chose to resettle, but the option was not available to them

Resettlement in the Bhutanese refugee camps was a choice reserved for 'official' refugees (refugees registered as Bhutanese refugees by the GoN and the UNHCR) and was not available to asylum seekers, unregistered refugees, and/or people in refugee-like situations. For example, 40-year-old Tulasha Dhakal who lived in *Beldangi – II Extension* camp, had her family scattered throughout the United States, while she remained unregistered in Nepal. Tulasha's mother-in-law and sister-in-law lived in Ohio and her brothers-in-law lived in Vermont and Atlanta in the United States. Tulasha and her husband wanted to resettle, however, as 'unregistered' refugees that option was not available to them. Tulasha and her husband left Bhutan in 1994, after her husband was forced to resign from his governmental job in Thimpu because his parents had left Southern Bhutan and sought refuge in Nepal. Unfortunately, the GoN and UNHCR did not grant them (Tulasha and her husband) refugee status in Nepal. As such, they had no choice but to stay behind in Nepal (T. Dhakal, personal communication, January 9, 2012).

Similarly, Kishore Kumar Bhandari, had most of his family living in Virginia, but he remained an unregistered refugee in Nepal. Kishore did not qualify for a refugee status in Nepal because, in 1992, instead of moving to the refugee camps in Nepal with his parents, Kishore stayed behind in India for a year. Although Kishore was an unregistered refugee in Nepal, he lived with his parents in Hut No. 44, Sector A (4), *Sanischari* camps. Later in life, he married a local woman from *Illam* district, Nepal, which further complicated his resettlement possibility. Like Kishore, his Nepali wife and children wanted to resettle, but as unregistered refugees, they too were ineligible for resettlement (Mr. Bhandari, personal communication, January 4, 2012).

Bhutanese refugees in Nepal had their refugee status revoked for staying outside the refugee camps for long periods of time, especially missing the refugee census. For instance, 25-year-old Luna Bhattarai of *Beldangi – II Extension* camp lost her refugee identification because she missed the UNHCR refugee census conducted in 2009 and 2012. During that period, Luna was in Sikkim, India completing her higher education (Bachelor's in commerce), while her entire family (father, mother, step-mother, brother, and sister-in-law, an Indian citizen) resettled to the United States. Luna was forced to stay behind while she waited to hear from the authorities about her requested change in her official status. Refugee women could also have their refugee status revoked by marrying local men from India or Nepal. Refugee

women in a mixed marriage, their spouses, and their children, therefore, were ineligible for resettlement and did not have a choice in the matter.

However, lacking official/legal refugee status was not the only obstacle in resettlement. There were numerous refugees who despite their refugee status and their intention to resettle were unable to choose to resettle or had their applications rejected. Women and children, due to their inferior positioning within their patriarchal family structure, were unable to exercise their 'voluntary resettlement choice.' For example, 40-year-old Purnima Rai of *Beldangi – II Extension* camp wanted to resettle, but could not because of the divided opinions towards resettlement among her family members. She said,

> Resettlement sounds good, but my husband and in-laws do not want to resettle. My children are in school and extremely young. My husband is uneducated like me, he worries that we will not be able to find a job, make a living, and take care of our children in America (P. Rai, personal communication, January 7, 2012)

Similarly, 60-year-old Radhika Rai (originally from *Shipchu* district in Bhutan) remarked that she did not know whether she wanted to resettle or stay in Nepal. She said that she needed to ask her oldest son when he returned to the camp from his periodic visit to India, implying that the choice was not hers and she had no opinion about it (R. Rai, personal communication, January 8, 2012).

Like most women, underage children's choice to resettle was tied to the choices of their parents or guardians. As such, refugee children (under the age of 18) whose parents and/or guardians, especially the patriarch, did not want to resettle had their choices overshadowed. For instance, 16-year-old Karuna Rai from *Sanischari* camp wanted to resettle, but her father (45-year-old Harka Bahadur Rai) did not. Therefore, Karuna remained in Nepal even though she wanted to resettle because of her father's choice not to resettle (K. Rai, personal communication, January 17, 2015).

There were also refugees who were not able to resettle or had their resettlement case withheld because of the crimes they committed or were accused of in Bhutan and Nepal. For example, 29-year-old Dil Kumari Darji of *Timai* camp was imprisoned in *Chandragadhi* jail in 2010. She and her Nepali husband from *Dhulabari* were accused of trafficking young Nepali girls and were imprisoned with a jail sentence of seven years. Dil Kumari had five underage children: four daughters and a son, all of whom were unregistered because of her marriage to a local Nepali man. Without a 'registered' refugee parent, the children could not live with their maternal grandparents or attend school inside the refugee camps. Moreover, because of their

parents' crime, they too could not resettle (R. M. Darji, personal communication, January 2015).

Dil Kumari's underage children could not resettle because of their mother's crime. They were not the only ones who paid a huge price for someone else's actions. Thirty-eight-year-old Run Maya Darji of *Sanischari* camp was unable to resettle because of the fraud committed by her employers (Indian citizens).[122] Run Maya's underage son and sick husband were dependent on her for their survival. Deep in poverty and debt, she felt compelled to migrate to India for work. In India, Run Maya washed dirty dishes for a couple on a monthly salary of INR. 1,200. Her employers were a school principal (the wife) and a banker (the husband). During the school winter break, the family decided to go on a vacation to Saudi Arabia and took Run Maya (as the help) along. Run Maya, who was illiterate, did not know how they worked out the details of her travel. She did not have citizenship, a travel document, or a passport. In fact, she did not even know she needed one of those documents to travel. All she knew was that she had a free ticket arranged by her employer. When the UNHCR and IOM found out about her travel, they questioned Run Maya and asked her to produce the document she used to travel. She was asked to submit that document to the UNHCR if she wanted to resettle. With no documentation, the UNHCR and IOM officials accused Run Maya of lying and committing fraud and withheld her family from resettlement (R. M. Darji, personal communication, January 14, 2015).

As illustrated above, various groups were ineligible for the resettlement process. These groups were primarily comprised of 'unregistered' refugees and those with criminal records and/or crime/fraud accusations in Bhutan and/or Nepal. Resettlement was also unavailable for refugee women married to local men and their families. In addition, most refugee women and their dependent children, due to their subordinate positioning within their families that organized around the principle of patriarchal hierarchy, lacked the choice to resettle.

5.3.5 Bhutanese refugees who chose to resettle, only to encounter obstacles later in the process

There were many Bhutanese refugees in Nepal who chose to resettle, but faced multiple hurdles during their resettlement process that they did not foresee when they made their

[122] Examples of fraud cited in the *Third Country Resettlement Refugee Information: Refugees from Bhutan living in Nepal* include: "supplying false information about your background; claiming a false identity or attempting to substitute yourself for another person; attempting to add a person to your household or family who is not a dependent member of your family; attempting to bribe or threaten UNHCR or agency staff to gain access to resettlement; or taking money or demanding other services from other refugees for resettlement-related services" (UNHCR, 2007:5). False claims, fraud, and criminal offenses led to permanent disqualification and denial of the resettlement process (Ibid).

choices. For instance, 49-year-old Surya Bahadur Chettri's family (wife, 12-year-old daughter, and 7-year-old son) resettled to Cincinnati, OH in January 2010. But on January 16, 2015, he was still living in hut #70X in sector A4 of *Beldangi – II Extension* camp in Nepal. Surya arrived in Nepal in January of 1991 after he fled Bhutan, but he soon moved to India to stay with his maternal uncle and his family. Surya's parents had died in Bhutan, and he did not have close family in the refugee camps he could live with. In India, Surya first pursued his education and later his career. In 1997, Surya moved back to Nepal, but he did not receive refugee identity. He lived in the refugee camps with relatives and friends and eventually married a refugee woman from *Beldangi – II Extension* camp. He seasonally traveled to India for work to provide for his family. When resettlement was offered to the Bhutanese refugees, Surya's wife, pressured by her family, divorced him, and resettled with their children to the United States. Surya claimed that his wife's parents and relatives made her divorce him because he was an unregistered refugee and not making enough money to support them. Surya, convinced his wife and children would help him with his resettlement process, agreed to the divorce. He felt he made the right choice regarding the divorce because his wife (a nurse at a state hospital in Ohio) and their children were doing well and living a better life in America. Finally, Surya received his refugee identification in 2012 and began his process to resettle to Cincinnati, OH. His plan was to initially live with his friends. Eventually, he wanted to ask his ex-wife if they could live together as a family. If she agreed to the idea, he hoped to remarry her at a courthouse in Ohio. In my last communication with Surya, he had completed his Department of Homeland Security (DHS) screening and processed his Travel Document. Surya was, however, still stuck in Nepal because he was suspected of having Tuberculosis. He had completed his fourth month course of medication and treatment and had two more months to go. In the incurring months, he needed regular screening to pass his health exams to be able to move on to the next steps in his resettlement (S. B. Chettri, personal Communication, January 16, 2015).

While Surya was stuck in Nepal because of his health concerns, 33-year-old Rupa Rai and her family were also delayed in their resettlement process because of illness. Rupa and her family started discussing resettlement in 2007 but did not resettle until 2012. Rupa's husband, who was diagnosed with epilepsy and varicose, was worried he could not provide for his family after resettlement. He often thwarted their resettlement process during interviews with the UNHCR and IOM. Finally, Rupa offered to work to provide for the family, which convinced him to resettle (R. Rai, personal communication, November 2, 2014). When I visited Rupa in 2014, she was working as a tailor and making USD 14.08 an hour in Pittsburgh, PA. Her husband did not work but received an allowance from the state of Pennsylvania. Rupa

encouraged other Bhutanese refugees to resettle even if they were sick or disabled. According to her, sick people and their families could survive in the United States provided they had information about health insurance, other benefits, and allowances (Ibid). However, this information was not widely available, resulting in many refugees with disabled family members remaining in Nepal.

Other family dynamic such as mixed, polygamous, and underage marriages complicated resettlement choices for the refugees. Refugee men married to local women and their families were initially ineligible for resettlement, but later they became eligible for the process when the CWG countries, especially the United States, increased their quota for refugees. For instance, 40-year-old Ritu Narayan Kafle (from *Beldangi – I* camp) and his nuclear family, who submitted their DoI in 2009, were still in Nepal in January 2015 waiting for their health screening. Ritu and his wife (a Nepali citizen) had to follow additional steps and file extra documents because of their mixed marriage. They traveled to Kathmandu for her passport, submitted it to the UNHCR, and then registered their marriage to get a marriage certificate at the local Village Development Committee (VDC) office. This allowed them to register their marriage at the RCU office in the camp by submitting their marriage certificate. From there, they waited for a marriage registration certificate from the RCU head office in *Chandragadi.* Ritu and his family had to pay for all the above-mentioned documents and the travel expenses to and from the respective offices without any financial or other assistance from the UNHCR and the IOM (R. N. Kafle, personal communication, January 16, 2015).

Unlike refugee men married to local women, refugee women married to local men were ineligible for the resettlement offer. Many of them, therefore, divorce their spouse in order to qualify for resettlement. This led to lengthy divorce proceedings and lengthy resettlement processes. For example, 28-year-old Rinku Thapa of Hut No. 81, Sector A (2), *Beldangi – II Extension* Camp had difficulty resettling because of her mixed and polygamous marriage. She filed for divorce from her local husband to resettle with her two children in Pennsylvania. Rinku believed it was not worth living in the camps in Nepal with the 'refugee label.' She chose to resettle and take her children to the United States, the country that, according to her, had promised to make them citizens (R. Thapa, personal communication, January 5, 2012).

Like Rinku, 28-year-old Dhana Maya Rai of *Sanischari* camp also had difficulty resettling because of her polygamous family structure. Unlike Rinku, who divorced her husband to resettle with her children, Dhana Maya hoped she could resettle with her three dependent sons without divorcing her husband. As her husband's first and legally recognized wife, Dhana Maya expected her husband would choose her over his 'local wife' and join her

family for resettlement. She had resettlement insecurities, especially anxieties about her English language inability, and believed she could not resettle by herself. Unfortunately, her husband had moved outside the camp, showing no willingness to either resettle or divorce and leaving Dhana Maya and her sons in a state of limbo (D. M. Rai, personal communication, January 8, 2012).

Like mixed and polygamous marriages, underage marriages caused hurdles and obstacles in resettlement.[123] Such was the situation of 29-year-old Rudra Subedhi, Assistant Principal of a refugee school, who lived with his parents, wife, son, and his niece and nephew in *Sanischari* camp in Nepal. Rudra's niece and nephew lived with him instead of their father (Rudra's older brother) or mother because of their parents' remarriages. Rudra raised his (nuclear) family and his brother's children as his own and chose to resettle everyone to Iowa (where his other older brother had resettled). Although they began their process in 2008, the required adoption of extended family members (Rudra's niece and nephew) made their case unusual and lengthy. Just as their resettlement case had reached an advanced stage, their case was put on hold and the case file returned (to the UNHCR by the IOM) because Rudra's 16-year-old (underage) niece married her boyfriend. When I last visited Rudra's house on January 14, 2015, he was waiting for his niece to turn 18 (in January of 2016) so she could be included as a member of her husband's family and resettle with him. Only then would the hold on Rudra's resettlement case be lifted, allowing him to move to Iowa with his wife, son, and his nephew (R. Subedhi, personal communication, January 14, 2015).

As illustrated above, various groups, although eligible for the resettlement, experienced obstacles and delays in their processes. These groups were primarily comprised of refugees with health issues and disabilities, as well as refugees in mixed, polygamous, and underage marriages.

Conclusion

In summary, certain Bhutanese refugee groups, such as the officially registered refugees, adult male refugees, affluent landlords, high class refugee leaders and repatriation activists, young and educated refugees, and elderly male refugees, especially of *Matwali* ethnicity, were in a privileged position to be able to choose to resettle or stay back in Nepal.

[123] Underage marriage is an International Human Rights issue, but it is also a common practice among the Bhutanese refugees and in Nepal. Some of the women who are part of underage marriage are small children, but most on the other hand, are almost adults. During the course of my fieldwork, I came across respondents who were almost adults, i.e., late teens who were married to men in their early twenties. I refer to these marriages as underage marriage.

Other groups, like unregistered refugees, women, children, and refugees with poor health, disabilities, and/or criminal or fraud accusations in Nepal and/or Bhutan, were marginalized in their resettlement choice. In particular, the resettlement choices of refugee women in polygamous, underage, and/or mixed marriages and their children were disregarded, as were the resettlement choices of local men married to refugee women. These groups either did not qualify for resettlement or experienced delays in the process. Various factors such as official status, age, gender and sexuality, citizenship, ethnicity and caste, class, 'ableness,' crime and fraud accusations, etc. influenced the Bhutanese refugees in their choices to resettle or stay back (see table: 6).

Table 6: Resettlement Choices by Bhutanese Refugees

Resettlement Choices	**Names of Bhutanese refugees**	**Social Categories that most influenced resettlement choice made by Bhutanese refugees**								
		Official /legal status	***Age***	***Gender & Sexuality***	***Citizenship***	***Ethnicity & Caste***	***Education***	***Class***	***Ableness***	***Crimes & fraud***
Unsure refugees	Punyamata	MP	EO	EO		MP	EO	MO	MO	
	T. N. Adhikari	EP	EO	EP		EP	EO	EP	MO	
Refugees who chose not to resettle	T. N. Rizal	EP	EP	EP		EP	EP	EP	EP	EP
	B. Poudyel	EP	EP	EP		EP	EP	MP	EP	EP
	J. Rai	EP	EP	MP		SO	EP	EP	EP	EP
	B. Chetti	EP	EP	EP		EP	EP	EP	EP	
	L. B. Adhikari	EP	EP	EP		EP	MO	MP	EP	
	B. B. Poudel	EP	MO	EP		EP	MO	MP	MP	
	D. B. Bista	EP	MP	EP		EP	MO	MP	MP	
	K. Magar	EP	EP	MP		MO	EO	MP	EP	
	J. S. Rai	EP	EP	EP		MO	MO	MP	EP	
	P. B. Bhattarai	EP	MO	MP		EP	MO	EP	MO	
	B. B. Tamang	EP	SO	MP		MO	EO	SP	SO	
	T. N. Adhikari	EP	MO	MP		EP	EO	MP	MO	
Refugees who chose to resettle	U. Tamang	EP	EP	EP		SO	EP	SO	EP	
	Y. Wagley	EP	EP	SO		MP	EP	MP	EP	
	S. M. Rai	EP	EP	EP		MO	EP	MP	EP	
	T. B. Adhikari	EP	MP	EP		EP	MO	MP	EP	
	J. B. Bhattarai	EP	EP	EP		EP	MO	MP	EP	
	C. M. Khadka	EP	MO	MO		MP	EO	SP	EP	
	O. N. Baral	EP	EP	EP		EP	MO	MO	EP	
	R. Regmi	EP	EP	EP		EP	EP	MP	EP	
	B. Gurung	EP	EP	EP		MO	EP	MP	EP	
	K. Timsina	EP	EP	EP		EP	EP	EP	EP	
	B. Timsina	EP	EP	SO		MP	EP	EP	EP	
Refugees who chose to resettle but the option was not available to them	T. Dhakal	EO	EP	SO		MP	MP	SP	EP	
	K. K. Bhattarai	EO	EP	EP	MO	EP	EP	MP	EP	
	P. Rai	EP	EP	EO		EO	EO	MO	EP	
	R. Rai	EP	MO	EO		EO	EO	MO	SO	
	K. Rai	MO	EO	MO		SO	MP	MO	EP	
	D. K. Darji	MO	EP	MO	MO	SP	SP	EO	EP	EO
	R. M. Darji	EP	MP	MO		SP	EO	EOO	SP	EO
	L. Bhattarai	EO	EP	SO		MP	EP	MP	EP	
Refugees who chose to resettle only to encounter obstacles	S. B. Chettri	SP	EP	SP		EP	EP	SP	EO	
	R. Rai	EP	EP	SO		MO	MO	MO	EO	
	R. Kafle	MP	EP	EP	MO	EP	EP	MP	EP	
	R. Thapa	SO	EP	SO	MO	MP	MP	MP	EP	
	D. M. Rai	EP	EP	EO		MO	EO	EO	EP	
	R. Subedhi	EP	SO	EP		EP	EP	MP	EP	

NOTE*: In the table above refugees' oppression and privileges are assessed in relations to their resettlement choices, especially their ability and freedom to choose to resettle or stay back in Nepal freely.* ***O*** *stands for oppression, which can be defined as "prejudice and discrimination directed towards a group and perpetuated by the ideologies and practices of multiple social institutions" (Launius & Hassel, 2018:91).* ***P*** *stands for privilege, which can be defined as "benefits, advantages, and power that accrue to members of a dominant group as a result of the oppression of the marginalized group" (Ibid:95). Additionally,* ***EO*** *= Extremely Oppressed,* ***MO*** *= Moderately Oppressed,* ***SO*** *= Slightly Oppressed,* ***EP*** *= Extremely Privileged,* ***MP*** *= Moderately Privileged, and* ***SP*** *= Slightly Privileged.*

The above table does not suggest adding and/or subtracting privilege/oppressions. Instead it shows different combinations of relative privilege/oppressions the Bhutanese refugees experienced in making their resettlement choice.

Source: Compiled by author

As shown in the table above, the Bhutanese refugees' choices to resettle or stay back in Nepal were highly influenced by their official/legal refugee status, gender and sexuality, age, ethnicity and caste, class, education, etc. While some of groups of refugees were privileged in making resettlement choices due to their memberships in simultaneously overlapping social categories, other groups were disadvantaged in making resettlement choices for the same reasons. The next chapter takes an intersectional approach to analyze the choices made and the agency exercised by the Bhutanese refugees in their resettlement process.

Chapter VI: Analyzing Choices Made and Agency Exercised by Bhutanese Refugees in the Third Country Resettlement Process

This chapter adopts a three-question approach to using intersectionality suggested by Elizabeth R. Cole (2009) as guidelines to analyze the choices made and agency exercised by the Bhutanese refugees regarding their third country resettlement.[124] The first question looks at whose choices were considered and whose were left out in the resettlement process. The second question considers the role power and inequality played in the choices refugees made and the agency they exercised to qualify for resettlement and/or resist its norms and expectations. Finally, the third question will look at what the similarities between various groups of refugees in their experiences of exclusion and marginalization were in the resettlement process. This chapter will highlight how gender and sexuality, age, ethnicity and caste, education, class, 'ableness,' etc. simultaneously affected the perceptions, experiences, and choices of the Bhutanese refugees "living in a society stratified along these dimensions" (Cole, 2009:178). Using the three-question model to intersectionality, according to Cole (2009:178), will showcase the social, political, and cultural history of the group in context and expose how socially constructed and simultaneously occurring social categories rely on each other for meaning and outcomes.

6.1 Whose Choices were Considered and Whose were Left Out?

As the previous chapter mentioned, not all refugees had the same choices when it came to third country resettlement. Similarly, not all refugees were disadvantaged in the same way regarding their resettlement choices. Asking the above questions will help find differences among the refugees, including the choices of not just the privileged sub-group(s), but the neglected groups as well. It will also highlight the discrepancies that may have otherwise been missed with a single-axis (for instance, gender only) analysis (Cole and Sabik, 2009:177). By looking at and/or including whose choices were considered and whose were left out, as pointed by Cole and Sabik (2009:179), we can provide a more nuanced understanding of how social categories influence refugees' choices on resettlement and show how these categories depend on one another for meaning.

[124] See footnote 26.

6.1.1 Considering Unregistered Refugees

According to the UNHCR (2007:2), "only individuals that are registered with the GoN and recognized as a refugee from Bhutan are eligible to apply for resettlement." This was the basis for resettlement choices and favored the 'registered' refugees. Those not officially registered by the GoN were ineligible for resettlement. Depending on when an individual arrived in Nepal, members of the same family were often placed into different categories, such as: 'registered' refugees, asylum seekers, temporary absentees, or unregistered refugees (sometimes considered people in refugee-like situations by the UNHCR). A refugee could also lose her/his official/legal refugee status for being away from the camp for long durations of time. This typically occurred during censuses, when a refugee might be acquiring host (or other) country citizenship, or (in the case of refugee women) by marrying a local.

Numerous 'registered' refugee family members resettled and were forced to leave 'unregisted' family members in the camps in a state of limbo to await registration or another solution. Kishore Kumar Bhandari, coordinator for 3,749 unregistered refugees in Nepal, believed that the unregistered refugees were "marginalized within the marginalized" when he poignantly stated,

> In the hope of return, our grandparents passed away in these camps. And now that a permanent solution (resettlement) is available, our families are being torn apart. **We have a right not to be separated from our family. We should not be denied that right based on categorizations!** (K. K. Bhandari, personal communication, January 4, 2012).

Similarly, 33-year-old Tsering Rendup, a Drukpa and an unregistered refugee (non-entry refugee as the refugees referred to it), fled Bhutan at the age of eleven because he participated in the 1990 demonstrations with his Lhotshampa friends. This resulted in the loss of his Bhutanese citizenship. As a Drukpa in the early 1990s, he did not qualify for refugee registration in Nepal, and fear kept him from returning home to his family in Bhutan. He remained in Nepal, stateless, living outside the refugee camps. He eventually married a Bhutanese refugee woman and started a family. He and his family of four wanted to resettle, but did not qualify due to his unregistered status. Tsering reported that he personally knew 12 other Drukpa families who had fled Bhutan and believed that approximately 45,000 Drukpas fled Bhutan during the 1990s (T. Rendup and family, personal communication, January 14, 2015). The number of other Drukpas who were disenfranchised by not having registered status during this time is unknown.

The above examples highlight how the third country resettlement process privileged the choices of official/registered refugees and marginalized the choices of 'unregistered' refugees, asylum seekers, temporary absentees, and other groups in refugee-like situations. Not all Bhutanese refugees who fled Bhutan were Lhotshampas. Durkpas and Sharchops also fled the political upheavals in Bhutan but were not recognized as refugees in Nepal by the GoN and the UNHCR. As a result, the resettlement process clearly privileged the Lhotshampas over other ethnic groups who fled Bhutan.

6.1.2 Considering Gender and Sexuality

The UNHCR and the GoN that provided recognition and refugee status to the Bhutanese refugees on an individual basis requested refugees to make their resettlement choice and accepted resettlement declarations on a household basis. Although well intentioned, the resettlement process overlooked the "different social positionings, powers, and interests within the family" (Yuval-Davis, 1997:80). It disregarded the hierarchies of power structured around patriarchal ideals that assume, normalize, and privilege male authority, leadership, and control within Lhotshampa families. Patriarchy politically, socially, culturally, and materially favors particular masculinity (gendered roles and behaviors associated with men). As a result, most refugee men (especially the oldest adult male), as head of the household, possessed the power and authority to choose whether their family would resettle. For example, 45-year-old Harka Bahadur Rai from *Sanischari* camp did not want to resettle, even though his family did. He was concerned his lack of education and language abilities would prevent him from providing for his dependent children, especially at his age and given his health conditions.[125] A carpenter by trade, Harka was under the impression he would have to study carpentry in the United States to qualify for carpentry work there. At 45 years of age, learning a new language seemed an overwhelming task. He was especially nervous for his daughters. He said, "**If someone were to do something to my daughters, I would not be able to argue, get into an altercation, or defend them simply because I do not know the language**" (H. B. Rai & family, personal communication, January 17, 2015). For Harka, his choice not to resettle was motivated by his age, health, and the gender expectation of providing for his family and protecting the sexuality of his underage daughters. Another male refugee whose gender and sexuality, especially his sexual orientation, influenced his resettlement choice was 30-year-old Krishna. Krishna felt he

[125] When Harka Bahadur Rai was 23 years old, he migrated to India to work at a coal mine. While working there he caught Malaria and almost died. The disease, according to him, had affected his immune system and mental abilities (H.B. Rai, personal communication, January 2015).

could not disclose his sexual identity and tell his family and friends he was gay, because of the social stigma associated with homosexuality in his culture. In the United States, however, he hoped to disclose his sexual orientation and not be ostracized for it. He chose to resettle to Pittsburgh, PA in 2008 and arrived with some of his family members as a linked case in 2011. Krishna's case was delayed due to several reasons, which included his father's illness (see sub-section 6.2.2), his sister-in-law's Nepali nationality, and disagreement among his family members on the choice regarding where to resettle (Krishna, personal communication, October 27, 2014).[126]

Unlike refugee men, refugee women were predominantly in subordinate social, cultural, ideological, and economic positioning and restricted to exercise their 'voluntary resettlement choice.' For example, 60-year-old Nar Bahadur's wife and her immediate family (son, daughter, and their spouses) from *Beldangi – I* camp wanted to resettle, but Nar Bahadur would not let them. He was willing to let his daughter and son-in-law resettle, but did not want his son (and his nuclear family) to leave, as he wanted his son to perform his funeral and fulfill other religious obligations after his death. In the hope of receiving help, Nar Bahadur's wife took her complaint to the UNHCR. Contrary to her expectation, instead of receiving assistance, the UNHCR stopped sending them information about resettlement (N. Bahadur & family, personal communication, January 13, 2015).

Third country resettlement of the Bhutanese refugees not only favored male refugees, but also heterosexual males. In Lhotshampa families, like most traditional societies, a strong social stigma was associated with homosexuality. Everyone is assumed to be heterosexual. This assumption, therefore, obscured the sexualities of the LGBTQ+ groups within the Lhotshampa community and rendered them, their needs, and their rights invisible. As a result, the probability of (heterosexual) refugee families coming to a unanimous choice almost always favored refugee men and reinforced patriarchal and heteronormative norms, marginalizing the choices of women and LGBTQ+ groups. One reason for this is that masculinity relies on the subordination of women and LGBTQ+ groups to define itself (see Angel, NA:23).

[126] Everyone in Krishna's family wanted to resettle to the United States, except his middle brother. His middle brother wanted to resettle to Australia. Krishna and his family left him behind and resettled to Pittsburgh. Sadly, after they resettled, his brother committed suicide in the refugee camps in Nepal in 2014

6.1.3 Considering Age

According to the UNHCR (2007:5), Bhutanese refugees 18 years and older were eligible to apply for resettlement, independent of their families. As resettlement favored 'adults' over the age of 18, many young adults were eager and chose to resettle.

Resettlement for most young adults, as cited by Stein (1981:327), had sparked expectation of a new life and an opportunity for 'citizen' status. For instance, 25-year-old Luna Bhattarai wanted to resettle to Harrisburgh, PA because she believed she would receive support for education, housing, and citizenship in the US (L. Bhattarai, personal communication, January 16, 2015). She viewed the US as the 'land of opportunities,' and believed she could succeed. Luna was like many of her fellow young refugees who were optimistically expectant. They anticipated educational and employment opportunities, permanence of residency, and citizenship in the resettlement countries. Stories of remittances and positive experiences from young, resettled refugees poured into the camps, motivating other young refugees to opt for resettlement. For instance, 27-year-old Nilu Baraini of *Sanischari* camp was motivated to resettle after receiving first-hand information and pictures of beautiful houses and locations in New Zealand from her brother (N. Baraini, personal communication, January 14, 2015).

Encouraging resettlement stories and experiences influenced other refugees to such an extent that they considered themselves fortunate to be refugees. For instance, 35-year-old Dilli Ram Biswakarma said, "if we were not refugees, we would not be able to resettle abroad. So, even though we are refugees, we are lucky because we are headed to a wonderful and a powerful country such as the US" (D. R. Biswakarma, personal communication, January 17, 2015). The opinions expressed above by the young respondents reflect that when it came to choosing, younger refugees usually chose resettlement over staying behind in Nepal. The younger generations chose other countries for the 'chance' at a better life, a future 'home,' and a new identity, even at the cost of separating from family (Pulla, 2016:88-90). These young Bhutanese refugees were more open to change and oriented towards the future.

Although resettlement favored young adults, the ideology that adults are mature, developed, cultured, and independent while children are immature, underdeveloped (or developing), uncultured, and dependent meant that resettlement choices of children under the age of 18 were tied to the choices of their parents or grandparents, often the patriarch in the family. Furthermore, in the case of aging parent(s) who did not want to resettle, one family member (despite their age), had to stay back to care for them. Culturally, the oldest son is responsible for caring for his parents in their old age. Due to resettlement, however, young, unmarried, mostly underage children remained back with their parents, despite their own desire

to resettle. For instance, 11-year-old Asha Limbu of *Sanischari* camp received her refugee identification in 2015 but remained in the refugee camps in Nepal because her father did not want to resettle. Her adult sisters and brother had already resettled, but she had no choice other than to wait for her father to change his mind. Resettling to Boston, MA meant Asha could reunite with her sister and attain her dreams and goals in the US, but her age made her ineligible to independently choose for herself (A. Limbu, personal communication, January 17, 2015). Asha's situation proves that "parental control over dependent children reproduces age and seniority as fundamental principle of social organization" (Collins, 1998:65). Moreover, when intersected with gender, they mutually co-construct one another. Within the Lhotshampa family, the unmarried Bhutanese refugee women submit to the authority of their parents (especially father) and brother(s) until marriage. After marriage, they submit to the authority of their husbands and in-laws. Bhutanese refugee men, on the other hand, as boys submit to the authority of their mother until they become men (also see Collins, 1998:65).

According to Mr. Kubo (personal communication, January 15, 2015), among the Bhutanese refugees, families with elderly members typically took more time with their choice. For example, Sixty-year-old Nar Bahadur from *Beldangi – II Extension* camp emphasized he would lose his freedom of movement and control over his life if he resettled. He said,

> If I were younger, I would resettle. But, what can I say? I am an old man… **If I resettle, I will have to stay locked inside an apartment building with my head down all day.** Since I am old, I will not be able to go around, not even for a walk. But here, in Nepal, India, or Bhutan, I will be able to do that. I will be able to go around and travel since these are our countries. However, **if I resettle, I will have to live a life of captivity**. **They might give us a monthly allowance or some sort of compensation, but what will I do with that allowance? Older people have more issues when they resettle, so I do not want to resettle** (N. Bahadur, personal communication, January 13, 2015).

Most elderly refugees who were told they would not be forced to resettle understood that to mean they could stay in Nepal indefinitely. For instance, Bhim Bahadur stated, "because they have said they will not force us to resettle, the GoN might let us stay in the country permanently" (B.B. Poudel, personal communication, January 16, 2015). Other refugees like Tek Nath and Nar Bahadur from *Beldangi – I* camp heard rumors the GoN would build permanent homes for the elderly, the orphans, and the disabled Bhutanese refugees who did not want to resettle (T. N. Adhikari & N. B. Thapa, personal communications, January 16 & January 13, 2015 respectively).

Based on statements expressed by most elderly refugee men, it may be fair to assume that their choices to stay were based on maintaining what was known and familiar to them. It was their attempt to incur less anxiety and socio-cultural adjustments than what they already

endured. It was also a way to avoid de-socialization in the resettlement countries. Their settlement choices were influenced by dynamics that correlated with refugees' personal power and control over their lives. Elderly Bhutanese refugee men often preferred to remain in close proximity to Bhutan due to their home identification. Further, they were discouraged to resettle due to their (presumed) inability to adjust in the resettlement countries because of their educational, socio-cultural, and language incompatibilities, which often resulted in hardship for everyone in their families.

Elderly refugee women, on the other hand, expressed mixed reactions towards resettlement. For instance, 61-year-old Hari Maya Khadka of *Sanischari* camp, chose to conform to her husband's choice to stay based on the opinions, information, and experiences shared by Bhutanese refugees who had been resettled in the United States. Hari Maya, expressed anxieties based on age, educational level, language, and employment abilities and said,

> Apparently, there is not much abroad; everything is about work. You can have a happy life only if you are able to work; nobody really helps you in America… **They tell me, an uneducated person like me needs to learn their language. I am too old for that. I think it is better for me to stay in the camps** (H. M. Khadka, personal communication, January 4, 2012).

Age, especially aging, often affects men and women differently. While men gain power and authority in their families and societies as they step into adulthood and get older, women typically lose value and are further disadvantaged socially and economically in their societies as they age, especially as their children grow up and/or leave home (see Cole & Sabik, 2009:183).

There were, however, many elderly refugee women who agreed to resettle with their children, despite their age, education, and language inabilities. Most of these refugees were resettling unwillingly but did so for the education and prospects of the children in their families. Unable to return home to Bhutan, they had shifted their focus to the desires and the betterment of other family members. For example, 54-year-old Mati Maya Subba from *Sanischari* camp agreed to resettle to Australia with her children and grandchildren for the sake of the family's future. Contemplating her choice about resettlement, she decided she could not let her family break apart and hinder their chances at a better life (M. M. Subba, personal communication, January 17, 2015). Resettlement choices of elderly refugee women were often influenced by two gendered roles and expectations. First, women were expected to place the needs, desires, and choices of the family before their own, often advocating for their children and

grandchildren. Secondly, the gendered expectation of keeping their family together at all costs played another influential role on their resettlement choices.

To reiterate, while younger refugees were typically influenced by the opportunities resettlement provided, older refugees were typically influenced by anxieties associated with their age, abilities, or gendered roles and expectations. The choices of dependent children were tied to their parents and grandparents. Unless a relative took responsibility (in writing) for the elderly family member(s) staying back in Nepal, someone within the immediate family was obligated to care for the elderly parent(s) and grandparent(s). In essence, the resettlement choices of the elderly (or other vulnerable) family members and dependent refugees were overruled by the resettlement choices (or desires) of their caretaker(s). As such, the resettlement process was not just gendered and did not only normalize heteronormativity, it also reinforced seniority and ageism. These situations often played a part in leading to the high rates of family disputes, domestic violence, school dropouts, alcohol and substance abuse, and suicide or threats of suicide, especially among refugee youths.[127]

6.1.4 Considering Ethnicity and Caste

The UNHCR and the IOM did not prioritize the resettlement of young *Parbatiyas*, especially the high caste Brahmins and Chettris, but they were among the first ethnic and caste groups to resettle (S. Kubo, personal communication, January 15, 2015). According to 40-year-old male Brahmin refugee Upendra Dahal, who resettled to Pittsburgh, PA, Brahmin and Chettris were the first to resettle because:

> The Brahmins and Chettris were the main targets of the RGoB's persecution. The RGoB believed the Brahmins and Chettris to be the main culprits behind the political agitations in Bhutan. It also believed that they (Brahmins and Chettris), unlike the *Matwali* ethnic groups, were harder to integrate into the mainstream Bhutanese society because of their physical appearance (racialized features), cultural and religious beliefs, and political consciousness. Therefore, when the UNHCR offered third country resettlement as a durable solution, Brahmins and Chettris who were relatively educated, politically conscious, and exposed to life outside the refugee camps chose resettlement (U. Dahal, personal communication, October 29, 2014).

[127] According to the 2011 IOM report, most Bhutanese refugees that committed or attempted to commit suicide did so by hanging. The same report analyzed suicided between 2004 and 2010 and found that between 2004 and 2007, the rate of suicide among the refugees was declining, but since 2007 (start of the resettlement program) the suicide trend increased drastically. The report does not claim resettlement as the reason for the suicides but sites reasons like increased alcoholism (due to increased remittances), family conflict, and family separation (examples being married women separated from maternal families, divorces, or broken familial ties) as stressors or reasons. The report identified that more women attempted suicides and more men were successful. In addition, it found that refugee families with Sexual & Gender Based Violence (SGBV) or mentally impaired family members were more prone to commit suicides.

Thirty-five-year-old Dilli Ram Biswakarma of *Sanischari* camp, a low-caste and untouchable *Parbatiya* refugee, based his opinion on the ideological differences between the Indo-Aryan *Parbatiyas* and the Tibeto-Burmese *Matwalis.* According to him, Brahmins and Chettris were the first to choose to resettle because they were clever, advanced, confident, and experienced. Since the *Parbatiyas* were also relatively more educated, they were courageous about taking chances and smart about getting things done, especially getting legal paperwork ready. They generally had better communication and persuasive skills in comparison to the *Matwalis*, and they used those skills while negotiating with the UNHCR, the IOM, and/or the GoN. The *Matwalis*, such as Rais, Limbus, Tamangs, Magar, Subbas, and others, on the other hand, lacked experience and confidence and feared change. They often gave up when a situation (like the resettlement process) did not work in their favor (D. R. Biswakarma, personal communication, January 17, 2015).

The racialized biological features and the ideological traits associated with different ethnic and caste groups that Mr. Dahal and Mr. Biswakarma expressed, respectively, are linked with the hierarchy of ethnic and caste divisions in Nepal. The history of ethnic divisions and caste system in Nepal can be traced to the Malla dynasty (1380-1394), where the then ruler King Jayasthiti Malla divided his population in hierarchy of labor and status associated with it (see Bennett, Dahal, & Govindasamy, 2008:1). Later, the Rana rulers inscribed the caste system into law and set out rules about inter-caste behavior and sanctions to maintain caste hierarchy (Ibid:2).[128] This led to differences in the hereditary division of labor, slavery, and access to economic and material resources, especially education, land ownership, and citizenship among the ethnic and caste groups. According to this system of hierarchy (see Bennett, Dahal, & Govindasamy (2008) and Subedi (2010)), the Indo Aryan *Parbatiya* Brahmins as priests and spiritual teachers had the highest status and position, followed by Chettris as the warrior and ruler caste. The Tibeto-Burman *Matwali* refugees ranked below the high-caste *Parbatiyas* and were further divided into middle-caste and non-enslavable Gurungs, Magars, Rais, Limbus, Sunwars, etc. and the low-caste and enslavable Bhotes, Tamangs, Sherpas, and others. The Tibeto-Burman *Matwalis* as indigenous people lived in close harmony with nature, engaged in agriculture on tribal land, and practiced Shamanism and Buddhism. The enslavable Bhotes, Tamangs, Sherpas, and others were used as bonded laborers by other ethnic and caste groups.

[128] In 1854, the Rana rulers of Nepal from Indo Aryan race, *Parbatiya* ethnicity, and Chettri caste made the caste system a part of *Muluki Ain,* i.e., National Legal Code, and enforced it with law, sanction, and punishment to maintain hierarchy between ethnic and caste groups. For more information, read Bennett, Dahal, and Govindasamy (2008) and Subedi (2010). Also, view appendix-I (table on Nepal Social Hierarchy, 1854) and appendix-II (Major castes and ethnic groups of Nepal with regional divisions and social groups)

Slavery and bonded labor were abolished in 2002 (Labour Exploitation Accountability Hub, 2021). At the bottom of the totem pole was low-caste and untouchable *Parbatiyas*, especially the *Kamis* (blacksmiths)*, Damais* (tailors)*, Sarkis* (cobblers), and *Badis* (entertainers). Similar to the ideology that adults are more mature, developed, cultured, and independent, which entitles parents control over underage children and normalizes age hierarchy, the caste system and the associated ideology that portrayed the *Parbatiyas* as intellectually superior and culturally sophisticated and the *Matwalis* as intellectually and culturally underdeveloped entitled the *Parbatiyas* greater power, authority, and access to resources and legitimized ethnic and caste hierarchies.

Over the years, although these ethnicities and caste groups were not restricted to associated occupations, the caste system enforced socio-cultural norms that controlled women's sexualities (social taboos associated with pre-marital sex) and mixing between the ethnic and caste groups (through inter-caste marriages). The caste system also maintained unequal material and social relationships between the groups and with the state. One such resource that has led to inequality between the ethnic and caste groups was land. Land holding among Nepali-speaking people is historically correlated with ethnic and caste hierarchy. In other words, land has remained a source of identity, power, prestige, and the root cause of conflict among and within the ethnic groups. The introduction of the 1964 and 1968 Land Reform Acts in Nepal exacerbated the situation. The middle and low caste *Matwali* ethnic groups lost their tribal and shared community land, which resulted in their step migration to India and later to Bhutan (Cox, 1990:1319). Those who migrated to Bhutan gained land (a life-sustaining and wealth-creating resource), status, power, and eventually Bhutanese citizenship. They, as old-comers, remained equal in land holding, citizenship, and socio-economic-political status to Brahmins, Chettris, and other high caste ethnic groups who later immigrated into Bhutan from Nepal.

Simultaneously combining hierarchies of ethnicity and caste with hierarchies of gender and age adds to the complexity. The elderly refugee men from middle and low caste *Matwali* ethnicities were nostalgic for the status, privilege, and sense of belonging they experienced in Bhutan. Their love for land came from the importance placed on land ownership in agrarian communities and the correlation of its value to their sense of self, socio-economic status, and citizenship. The elderly *Matwalis* refugees*,* especially the middle-caste Gurungs, Rais, Magars, Limbus, and Sunwars, as well as low-caste Tamangs and Sherpas, therefore strongly identified with their homeland and chose to stay back in Nepal.

Matwali men, who had a history and heritage of shared communal land, also maintained greater sense of solidarity and community among its members. Some were motivated in their choice to stay back based on positive information from *Matwali* relatives and community members still residing in Southern Bhutan. For example, 64-year-old Harka Jung Subba of *Chirang* District, *Tsholingkhar Gewog*, Bhutan, was unwilling to resettle and claimed he personally knew 35,000 *Matwalis* who did not want to resettle. He believed that the situation in Southern Bhutan was peaceful and the King had frequently visited the Lhotshampa families, inquiring of their needs and providing them money, cattle, and land. Apparently, the RGoB were also renovating Lhotshampa homes to look like Drukpa homes which, according to Harka Jung, were beautiful, sturdy, and equipped with modern infrastructures such as electricity, drinking water, and sanitation (H. J. Subba, personal communication, January 5, 2012). Other elderly *Matwali* men wanted to stay back in Nepal because of the kinship bond between the Lhotshampas and the Nepali people. For instance, 80-year-old Birkha Bahadur Tamang of *Beldangi – I* camp, who owned acres of orange orchard in Bhutan, said,

> I will not leave Nepal. That is it! I left Bhutan, so how can I go back there. We (he and his family) have come to our ancestral country. We speak Nepali. People here understand what we say. At least we are in a country we share historical and cultural ties with, so we should be quiet and grateful to stay here. We should maintain our lives with the food and services the humanitarian organizations provide, until whenever they provide them. They day they stop aiding, my wife and I will rely on my sons. They are able-bodied and skilled, they will take care of us (B. B. Tamang, personal communication, January 14, 2015).

Generally, most elderly *Matwali* men wanted to stay back in Nepal with the hope to return to Bhutan to regain their socio-economic status and the Bhutanese citizen privileges. They also wanted to either be reunited with other *Matwali* people residing in Southern Bhutan or stay back to maintain the kinship bonds with the *Matwalis* in Nepal. These men were driven by the fear of loss of power, status, and control over their lives and their authority in their families. Unlike the *Matwali* men, most women in the camps did not talk enthusiastically or nostalgically about 'their' land, ancestral property, and/or return to Bhutan. This was because women's access to property and inheritance as well as citizenship rights were tied to their husbands.' *Parbatiya* women enjoyed the ethnic and caste privilege of their group but were subordinate to the men in their group. As a result, many young *Parbatiya* women with spouses who wanted to resettle conformed with the resettlement choices of their husband. *Matwali* women, similarly, suffered the ethnic and caste disadvantage of their group and were subordinate to the men in their group. Many *Matwali* women, especially old *Matwali* women

with spouses who did not want to resettle, were hindered in their choice to resettle. Thus, the resettlement process not only was gendered and reinforced heteronormativity and ageism, it also reproduced ethnic and caste hierarchies.

However, not all elderly *Matwali* women conformed to their husband's choice. For example, Birkha Bahadur's wife did not share his passion for their ancestral 'home' of Nepal or share his opinion on resettlement. She warned him they might end up in two different corners of the world if their children chose to resettle (hinting she would choose to leave with them over remaining with him). When I met Birkha Bahadur's wife in Nepal, she was attending the adult English conversation classes offered in the refugee camps in preparation for a potential resettlement (B. B. Tamang & family, personal communication, January 14, 2015).

The initial departure of the high caste Brahmins and Chettris and the choice made by many *Matwali* refugees to stay in Nepal led to changes in the ethnic constellation in the camps (Griek, 2014). Griek (2014:233-234) found that due to resettlement, the Brahmins and Chettris became the new minorities, and the *Matwali* ethnicities received greater power and representation in the CMC and other key camp administrative positions. This motivated many elderly *Matwali* men to stay back in Nepal.[129]

6.1.5 Considering Social Class

Bhutanese refugees were not classless. They were positioned based on physical and social assets and/or wealth (or wealth earning opportunities). In the refugee camps in Nepal, many upper-class and middle-class Bhutanese refugee men, especially affluent landowner, chose to stay back. These men were guided by the gender expectation to accumulate wealth and pass their wealth on to their sons. This ideology, which often was voiced by upper-class Brahmin and Chettri elderly men, was also mimicked by affluent *Matwali* landlords, even though they did not have a historical or traditional inheritance in Nepal.[130] This indicates that they were aspiring to the ideals of power and prestige of the dominant ethnic and caste group. For example, 64-year-old *Matwali* landlord Santa Bir Ghaley of *Beldangi – II Extension* camp

[129] In addition to a short-term change in ethnic and caste hierarchies within the refugee camps, the shift in ethnic composition was also visible in classroom demographics. According to Rama Kafle, a schoolteacher at *Beldangi – II Extension* camp, 30 out of 40 students in her classroom belonged to *Matwali* ethnicities in 2015 (R. N. Kafle & family, personal communication, January 16, 2015).

[130] Historically the high-caste *Parbatiyas* had higher class privilege in Nepal, especially in terms of land holding. After migrating to Bhutan, the middle and lower-caste *Matwali* men had similar opportunities for land holding in Bhutan. This to an extend altered the class differences between the high-caste *Parbatiyas* and the middle and lower-caste *Matwali* men. The middle and lower-caste *Matwali* affluent landlords permeated into upper social class.

often visited *Jaigaun*, India and looked across the Bhutanese border for a glimpse of his land. He owned 13-14 acres of land in Bhutan and said,

> Nobody has been settled on my property, and I still have my land tax of 1958 to prove that I qualify as a Bhutanese citizen. If the government of Nepal and the UNHCR would put their energies into repatriation as much as resettlement, we could return home and live our life without the refugee label…. The younger generations in the camps have been enticed by the idea of resettlement. They have never owned property, so they do not understand what love for one's property and land means. **Our children and grandchildren should get to know their home, their culture, and their land!** (S. B. Ghaley, personal communication, January 4, 2012).

Like these refugees, others with higher status in Bhutan identified enthusiastically with their homeland and became refugee leaders and repatriation activists in Nepal. Refugees like Mr. Tek Nath Rizal, Mr. Balaram Poudyel, and Dr. Jhampa Rai took leadership roles in various refugee political groups and lobbied for repatriation of Bhutanese refugees. According to them, repatriation to Bhutan was the only just choice. Of course, Mr. Rizal, Mr. Poudyel, and Mr. Rai, who once served as the Royal Advisor, Governmental Administrator, and the Royal Doctor, respectively in Bhutan, probably did not wish to undergo downward social mobility, carry out entry level jobs, and start their lives anew in resettlement countries. Their status, and therefore their needs and motivations, were dissimilar to most of the working-class refugees living in the camps. Unlike many working-class Bhutanese refugees, who through resettlement wanted to fulfill their physiological, security, and belonging needs, the affluent landowners, refugee leaders, and repatriation activists were influenced by their status and the injustice to which they had been subjected in Bhutan. These upper and middle-class refugee men's choices to not resettle was influenced by their past and what they had lost. The affluent landlords, refugee leaders, and repatriation activists chose to remain in Nepal to avoid downward social mobility after resettlement. Their class identities, along with their identification with status, memory, and experiences in Bhutan influenced their choice on resettlement.

In the refugee camps in Nepal, women and children either benefitted from or suffered the class status of their husbands and/or fathers. Both women and children, as indicated by Collins (2000:48), "gained access to wealth via their relationship with men." As such, they had subordinate positioning to men. Marriage and family relationships among the Bhutanese refugees reproduced social class relations of wealth and advantages among upper and middle-class refugees as well as debt and lack of opportunities among working class refugees over generations (see Collins, 2000:49). For instance, refugee women, especially Brahmin and Chettri women with affluent fathers, received more dowry in marriage, which helped maintain

better relationships with their husbands and in-laws. These women from high- or middle-class families were, however, expected to stay home and care for the children and family, lacking wage-earning opportunities and access to income. In comparison, most refugee women from working class *Parbatiya* and *Matwali* families had to work both in and outside their home to support their families. Income generated from their paid labor was much lower than that of men, even for doing the same types of jobs. Moreover, their unpaid labor in their family meant they had less time to work for money. Women from working class *Parbatiya* and *Matwali* families were therefore typically destitute. This got worse with age, as it affected these women's capacity and ability to work. Working class and aging *Parbatiya* and *Matwali* women were extremely hindered in making their resettlement choice (or exercising agency for that matter) and often were compelled to conform to the resettlement choices of their husbands. As such, the resettlement process simultaneously reinforced sexism, heteronormativity, ageism, and ethnic and caste hierarchies, while also reproducing classism.

6.1.6 Considering Education

According to Mr. Kubo and Ms. Raines (personal communication, January 15, 2015), one of the first groups that chose to resettle and leave Nepal were the highly educated refugees, such as CMC members and the professors and teachers who worked at universities and schools in Bhutan, India, or Nepal. These post-university, university, and school graduates had more information about resettlement and a better idea of how life would be in the resettlement countries. For instance, Prem Dulal, a high-caste *Parbatiya* refugee from Pittsburgh, PA was well informed about the process before convincing his family to resettle. He learned that the resettling agencies in Australia were extremely helpful, but the process (from the expression of interest to departure) to resettle to Australia took a long time. He therefore opted to resettle to Erie, PA and secondarily migrate to Pittsburgh, PA. Prem anticipated not getting a job equivalent to his education, but he reported he would not have resettled if he were uneducated. According to him, uneducated Bhutanese refugees would not find a job or meet their needs and expenses in the US (P. Dulal, personal communication, October 27, 2014).

Unlike the highly educated refugees, illiterate refugees typically took much longer to make a choice. They could not read the information circulated or utilize the resources provided in the camps. Furthermore, they had anxieties about the resettlement process and the destination based on their education, language (in)abilities, employment opportunities, and integration capabilities. As illustrated in previous sections, refugees like Camp Secretary Jhampa Singh Rai from *Beldangi – II Extension* camp, 61-year-old Hari Maya Khadka, 45-year-old Harka

Bahadur Rai, and 26-year-old Dhana Maya Rai from *Sanischari* camp had (un)willingly chosen to stay back in Nepal. Some among them had chosen to let the UNHCR and/or the GoN choose their future on their behalf. This was clear when Bhim Bahadur said,

> The humanitarian organizations and the GoN have taken care of us for the last 22-23 years. They might not leave us to fend for ourselves just like that. They might have some plans and provisions for us. I am not going to panic thinking about the 'what ifs.' Whatever ought to happen, will happen. The GoN can choose what it wants to do with us (B. B. Poudel, personal communication, January 16, 2015).

In summary, the highly educated refugees, especially the young Bhutanese refugee men, were the most informed about the resettlement process and resettlement countries. Hence, they along with their nuclear families were among the first groups of refugees who chose to resettle. Considering the intersection of education with gender, ethnicity and caste, age, and social class adds complexity. Historically, access to education correlated with ethnic and caste and gender hierarchies. Education was accessible to high-caste Brahmin and Chettri men and not available to other ethnic and caste groups. Women of all ethnic and caste groups did not have access to education because they were expected to marry and leave their family to join their husband's family. This changed in Bhutan and later in the refugee camps in Nepal. Young Lhotshampa children had access to free education in Bhutan and the refugee camps in Nepal. Girls, however, were often kept home from school to help with household chores. Bhutanese refugee women's education opportunities correlated with their class and ethnic and caste membership. While most young women had access to free schooling in the refugee camps, only young women from upper- and middle-class families, especially high caste Brahmin and Chettri families, had opportunities to obtain university and post-university education outside the refugee camps. Young adult refugee women with university and post-university education often chose to resettle, sometimes even by themselves. Most uneducated (or less educated) groups of refugees, on the other hand, were anxious about resettlement and chose, at least initially, to stay back in Nepal. Uneducated elderly refugees were most anxious about resettlement. Many uneducated elderly refugee men were in a disadvantaged position. They felt they would not be able to find work and provide for their family if they resettled. Many uneducated elderly refugee women married to these groups of refugee men were therefore hindered in making a choice and stayed in Nepal. Gender, age, ethnicity and caste, along with class differences between refugees, privileged educated refugees and marginalized uneducated refugees in the process.

6.1.7 Considering 'Ableness'

The relationship between 'ableness' (health, well-being, and (dis)ability) and the resettlement choices of the Bhutanese refugees, and more so the process, was complicated. Families with sick and/or disabled members took considerable time with their resettlement choices because they (the sick and disabled), in many cases, had the least access to information about resettlement (S. Kubo, personal communication, January 15, 2015). For instance, 71-year-old Bhim Bahadur Poudel from *Beldangi – I* camp chose to stay in Nepal with his mentally impaired son even though ten of this family members, including his wife, had resettled to Rochester, NY. Bhim Bahadur was despondent when he said,

> Before the resettlement program my children were with me. I could ask them to do things for me as well as teach them about life, based on my experiences. I thought I would be able to rely on them during my final days, but they left me and their disabled sibling and resettled to America. What can I say? This is my *karma* (fate). **I wish my son who is left behind with me was not disabled, but I cannot do anything about that** (B. B. Poudel, personal communication, January 16, 2015).

Bhim Bahadur did not know what the future held for him and his disabled son, because the GoN or the UNHCR had not made any commitments or shared long-term plans for the refugees staying back in Nepal. However, as mentioned above, some refugees believed the GoN would build or provide permanent habitats for the elderly and disabled Bhutanese refugees remaining in Nepal (T. N. Adhikari & N. B. Thapa, personal communications, January 16 & January 13, 2015 respectively). UNHCR Field Head Mr. Kubo did not confirm the above rumor. He did, however, mention that the UNHCR had plans to use resettlement 'strategically' to negotiate with the host government (GoN) and/or the RGoB to integrate and/or repatriate remaining Bhutanese refugees (S. Kubo, personal communication, January 15, 2015).[131] To date, this has yet to be done.

Moreover, if refugees were diagnosed with conditions that were considered a public health concern (such as active tuberculosis) during one of the health screenings in Nepal, they were treated and screened multiple times before they and their family could resettle. These public health concerns delayed resettlement cases anywhere from six to forty-eight months. For instance, 49-year-old Surya Bahadur Chettri of *Beldangi – II Extension* camp and 66-year-old Nar Bahadur Thapa of *Beldangi – I* camp experienced delays because they were suspected of tuberculosis. They were treated and reexamined for tuberculosis multiple times, which

[131] According to Mr. Kubo, the UNHCR's plan was to approach the two governments with resettlement data and say what the international refugee regime had done such far. It was now your (the respective government's) turn to show cooperation by providing a solution for the predicament of the remaining refugees in Nepal.

delayed their process (S. B. Chettri & N. B. Thapa, personal communication, January 16 & January 13, 2015, respectively). Similarly, clinical conditions like (acute) depression, PTSD, and other public health concerns, such as alcoholism, substance abuse, and/or addiction were also treated before the refugees could resettle, especially if the condition(s) or concern(s) were a threat to the individual refugee or other people (K. Raines, personal communication, January 15, 2015). As expected, refugees with family members experiencing such conditions and concerns were subjected to delays.

Like refugee women who were associated with the home, a private and feminized space that was distinct from public and masculinized space (see Collins, 1998:67), the weak, feeble, and dependent family members like the sick/unhealthy or disabled were also feminized. This was because they remained in the home, avoiding 'public' spaces riddled with diseases and barriers. Due to their association with the home and their dependence on other family members, the sick and disabled were considered inferior to healthy and 'able' family members. Ailments and disability were viewed as 'abnormal' and the 'other,' and the subordination of the unhealthy and disabled legitimatized ableism. Combining simultaneous hierarchies of age and gender added additional complexity. Elderly men lost their authority in their family when they became unhealthy, disabled, and/or dependent on other family members, especially if their health and disability affected their cognition and judgement. Women's disabilities, especially those that were closely connected with their reproductive (in)abilities, meant that their roles and/or position within the family was replaceable by someone else. According to the Muluki Ain 2020 of Nepal (i.e., Nepal's Country Code 1963), when a man's first wife was: a) suffering from an incurable sexually communicable disease, b) incurably insane, c) unable to bear children, d) unable to walk due to paralysis, or e) blind in both eyes, he was legally allowed to marry another woman (see HRW, 2003:27). Therefore, single and married women with disabilities who did not have children (assume biological) were one of the most marginalized groups of refugees in Nepal. They were often unable to make choices and/or resettle without the support of others.

More often than not, families with members who had health problems or disabilities took more time with their resettlement choices. When 'ableness' intersected with other disadvantaged categories of identities such as gender, age, ethnicity and caste, class, etc. the choice whether or not to resettle became even harder for refugees. In reality, the resettlement choices of the unhealthy, disabled, or other vulnerable family members, depending on the extent of vulnerabilities and dependence, were dominated by the resettlement choices of their caretaker(s).

6.1.8 Including Bhutanese Refugees Married to Locals and Vice Versa

In Nepal, women acquire citizenship through their male family members, especially their fathers or husbands, rather than on their own right (Laczo, 2003:76). Under Article 5 of the Nepal Citizenship Act, 2006, foreign women, including the Bhutanese refugee women who are married to male Nepali citizens, were eligible to acquire citizenship by naturalization (Nepal Law Commission, 2019). In theory, since Bhutanese refugee women married to Nepali men and their children were eligible for Nepali citizenship, they were considered ineligible for the resettlement process. However, as pointed out by Balingit (September 15, 2012), Bhutanese refugee women were denied Nepali citizenship by the local authorities because they (the authorities) either did not know the law or did not want refugees to become Nepali citizens.[132] Thirty-eight-year-old Amrita Shankar, a CMC administrator who lived in *Sanischari* camp for 24 years, experienced such difficulties trying to acquire Nepali citizenship. Amrita's parents, brother, and sister-in-law (from *Beldangi – I camp*) had resettled to Scranton, PA, while her younger sister and brother-in-law (also from *Beldangi – I* camp) had resettled to Massachusetts. Amrita and her two daughters were initially ineligible and later delayed in their resettlement to Scranton due to her marriage to a Nepali man. Amrita tried to gain Nepali citizenship through her husband, but as expressed below, gave up and decided to remain a refugee because the process was neither easy nor straightforward.

> I tried inquiring about citizenship through my husband, but it was not easy, so I stopped trying. **They asked me to get citizenships of my ancestors; ancestors who migrated to Bhutan from Nepal. They even told me my parents had to be Nepali citizen in order for me to get Nepali citizenship**… **The legal process was confusing and not easy to understand or follow.** We have had a simple life, one that is similar to that of a sheep. Almost everything in Nepal, especially governmental departments, is connected with corruption. **I heard that it takes a lot of money (hundreds of thousands of Nepali rupees) to get a Nepali citizenship. I did not have that kind of money. So, I did not get a Nepali citizenship.** I thought it was better for me to stay a refugee. I lived in this camp with my parents. I registered my daughters in the camp and raised them as refugees. **We are refugees, but at least we have an identity. I thought it was better than not having an identity at all. I felt that if I moved outside the camp, I would be lost. Especially, I thought my daughters would be lost and confused about their future, so we remained refugees and maintained that status despite my marriage to a local man** (A. Shankar, personal communication, January 14, 2015)**.**

[132] I did not encounter any Bhutanese refugee woman who had acquired Nepali citizenship through her husband during my fieldworks in Nepal, both 2011-2012 and 2015. Neither did I come across respondents who knew or had heard of such women.

According to Amrita, who had shared the painful experiences of displacement and refugee life with her parents and siblings, acquiring Nepali citizenship was inadequate. Her bond of love, attachment, and cooperation with her parents and siblings was stronger than her marriage to a local man. She, therefore, divorced her husband and received custody of their daughters to resettle to Scranton, PA. In January of 2015, when I visited their home in Nepal, they had completed their process, which she reported took eight years, and were waiting for their date of departure. Amrita strongly believed that divorce was her only option since her husband could not resettle with her and their children. As refugees, Amrita and her daughters had the choice or option to resettle, but as a Nepali citizen, her husband did not. She also believed that it was not good (or even possible) to make her citizen husband into a refugee. Like Amrita, many Bhutanese refugees divorced their spouses even though they did not have marital issues in order to resettle. For instance, 35-year-old Dilli Ram Biswakarma's cousin and his (cousin's) wife lived in the same hut despite being divorced. According to him, they were not really divorced, because if they were, "they would not be able to stand each other, let alone live together, enjoy each other's company, and share the same bed" (D. R. Biswakarma, personal communication, January 17, 2015). He felt because of requirements of the resettlement program, Bhutanese refugees were using divorce or dissolution of marriage to their advantage and taking it too lightly, which to him was not a positive phenomenon (Ibid).

According to Mr. Kubo (personal communication, January 15, 2015), because refugee women married to Nepali men could acquire citizenship in Nepal, they did not fall under the criteria of people the UNHCR could resettle to the CWG countries. For these women, he added, Nepal could become their new country, responsible for their rights and protection. He suggested that refugee women should use other channels of migration, such as the 'family reunion program,' instead of resettlement to reunite with their resettled families. Unfortunately, most refugees were not aware of such programs or immigrations laws, so divorcing their spouses to qualify for resettlement appeared to be their only viable option.

Refugee men married to local women were in better positions to resettle their families than refugee women married to local men. That is not to say that the choice or the process was without difficulties. Nepali women married to foreign men could not convey Nepali citizenship to their foreign spouses and were often "literally stripped of their national identities" (Menz, 2016:533). Refugee men, their Nepali wives, and their children all qualified for resettlement. Their mixed marriage, however, led to a lengthy and costly process because of additional steps, investigations, and required documents. For instance, 40-year-old Ritu Narayan Kafle from *Beldangi – I* camp had to separate his nuclear family's case from the rest of his (extended)

family because of his marriage to a Nepali woman. Moreover, Ritu and his wife (a Nepali citizen) had to follow additional steps and file extra documents compared to refugees married to refugees (R. N. Kafle, personal communication, January 16, 2015). Nevertheless, Ritu and his wife were able to get the necessary documents to commence their resettlement since his wife had Nepali citizenship.

Nepali national, 31-year-old Rekha Rai from *Beldangi – II Extension* camp was unable to acquire Nepali citizenship because she was married to a refugee. Rekha was from *Illam* district and married her refugee husband in 1996 at the age of 12 (although she said she was married at the age of 17-18). Since she was under the age of 16, she could not acquire Nepali citizenship through her father before her marriage. Rekha wanted to resettle and tried to get Nepali citizenship numerous times, but the Nepali authorities told her she was ineligible because she married a refugee and lived in a Bhutanese refugee camp. Making her resettlement chances worse, she was not registered in the camps, although she lived there for approximately 19 years. When I last spoke with her, out of her four children (three daughters and one son), only her first daughter was about to receive her refugee identification. Like Rekha's eldest daughter, her other children were underage and unregistered. Rekha mentioned, "if my husband wants to resettle, he can divorce me and leave. People who want to leave should be able to do so" (R. Rai, personal communication, January 13, 2015).

The narratives above provide evidence that the resettlement policy discriminated against refugee women married to local men and their underage children, in comparison to refugee men married to local women and their underage children. The UNHCR determined resettlement eligibility based on who the refugees were married to. The resettlement process, with its specific criteria for eligibility and marginalization of Bhutanese and local women, influenced the resettlement choices of Bhutanese refugees and often brought families to decisive crossroads. Not only did they have to choose whether to resettle or stay in Nepal, but also whether to divorce or stay married (D. R. Biswakarma, personal communication, January 17, 2015). Simultaneously, according to Mr. Kubo (personal communication, January 15, 2015), intermarriage between the Nepali locals and the Bhutanese refugees increased once the resettlement offer was announced, as the locals believed intermarriage with the refugees was their ticket to migrate to the United States.

6.2 What Role did Power and Inequality Play?

The previous section, which answers the question of whose choices were considered and whose were left out, emphasized the differences among the Bhutanese refugees and what

choices neglected groups had (or did not have). This section answers what role power and inequality played and highlights how multiple social category membership positions (groups of) Bhutanese refugees in asymmetrical relationships of social and material resources, as well as hierarchies of privilege and power, relate to one another (see Cole, 2009:171). These unequal and asymmetrical relations between the refugees influenced the Bhutanese refugees' perceptions (of themselves, others, and resettlement), experiences, the choices they made, and the agency they exerted in regards to their third country resettlement (see Cole & Sabik, 2009:184).

6.2.1 Unanimous Family Choice as a Justification for Inequality

As identified in the previous section (and throughout this dissertation), the UNHCR encouraged 'immediate' Bhutanese refugee families to apply for resettlement, accepting Declarations of Interest (DoI) and resettlement cases on a household basis. This understanding and/or policy was put in place so that the resettlement program could not separate Bhutanese refugee families. By doing so, the UNHCR idealized the family rhetoric and disregarded the contradictory relationship between equality and hierarchy within refugee families (see Collins, 1998). It assumed that in Bhutanese refugee families, like most traditional societies, the members "protect and balance the interest of all members – the strong care for the weak, and everyone contribute to and benefit from family membership in proportion to his and her capacities" (Collin, 1998:64). It disregarded the fact, however, that refugee families are organized around different patterns and degrees of hierarchy based on their gender and sexuality, age, class, ableness, etc., which through the process of socialization, assign appropriate roles and expectations among its members and lay the foundation for inequality in their community (Ibid).

In reality, as in most patriarchal societies, the Lhotshampa families culturally and materially favored masculinity where the oldest man, as the authority figure, possessed the power to choose whether or not to resettle. The Lhotshampa women, as identified by Derne (1994:203-205) and Cameron (1995:215-218), largely because of their biology (particularly menstruation and childbirth, which were associated with 'impurities' and 'pollution') were assigned 'inferior' positioning with their families (also see Yuval-Davis, 1997:6). The Lhotshampas were also socially organized based on the principles of the caste system, which as pointed out by Ranard (2007:3), "separates people into different social levels and influences the choice of marriage and other social relationships." Like other patriarchal societies, the Lhotshampas families also had a strong preference for sons, often because of the religious roles

a son had in his parent's funeral rites. Moreover, the Lhotshampas were patrilocal, which means that upon marriage, a woman moved into her husband's house, became a part of his family, and assumed responsibility for them. Sons were preferred over daughters because they brought home daughters-in-law who shared the burden of domestic work with their mother-in-law and the other women in the family, while daughters married and left their maternal home. This over time led to discrimination of women in health, education, nutrition, inheritance, and citizenship rights.

The gendered roles and behaviors associated with men and masculinity meant the Lhotshampa men were responsible for generating income and protecting the family. The Lhotshampa women, on the other hand, were restricted to the private domain (feminized space), undertaking unpaid domestic and care work with no or limited access to wealth, education, and other material resources. Men's status and their family's honor were associated with their occupation, achievements, and wealth accumulation (Griek, 2014:172). Historically, the Lhotshampas were predominately peasant farmers, translating to land holdings and/or higher number of sharecroppers (see Hutt:2003). Women's status and their family's honor, on the other hand, stemmed from their sexual, moral, and social conduct (Griek, 2014:172). This resulted in the control of their mobility and sexuality in the name of virtue and morality by their father or husband. This, along with the social stigma associated with pre-marital sex and inter-caste marriage, meant that many Lhotshampa women were married at a very young age. Women's subordinate social, political, economic, and cultural position also meant that they sometimes (un)willingly practiced polygamy. This was because marriage, even a polygamous arrangement, provided women access to family earnings, inheritance and wealth, nationality and citizenship, male protection, and sexual 'legitimacy' (see Showden, 2011:44).[133] Prestige, honor, and social movement had connections with the caste system. High-caste groups were more restrictive on women and their social movement versus the middle and lower-caste groups and their expectations of women (Griek, 2014:172).

These roles and expectations along with the rejection and denigration of social traits associated with an 'ideal' woman to define 'ideal' man in patriarchal Lhotshampa culture were often misinterpreted to imply women's inability to engage in 'objective' and 'rational' choice and thinking (see Derne (1994) and Cameron (1995)).[134] The Lhotshampa women, therefore,

[133] Many Nepali women, given how poor Nepal is, married Bhutanese refugees, even men who were already married, because in addition to all the things mentioned above, it provided them access to 'international assistance and protection' and 'third country resettlement.'

[134] Ideal Lhotshampa women, like most feminine South Asian women, are portrayed as nurturers, emotional, cooperative, devoted, and dependent. Ideal Lhotshampa men, like most masculine South Asian men, are

were not allowed to participate in significant personal and family choices. In fact, they were expected to defer their choices to their parents (especially fathers) and brothers until they got married. After marriage, they were expected to defer their choices to their husbands and their in-laws. This was reinforced by 31-year-old Naresh Rai from *Beldangi – I* camp, who claimed, "**once married, wives have to listen to and obey their husbands because they are their husbands**. They have to resettle if their husbands choose to resettle and where they choose to resettle" (N. Rai, personal communication, January 14, 2015).

Men, on the other hand, were socialized differently. They deferred their choices to their mothers while they were boys, which reversed once they became men. This shows that the Lhotshampa families were organized around the principle of 'gendered ageism,' wherein parents held authority over underage children (and their choices) and men gained power as they aged, while women lost it for doing the same.

These hierarchies of gender and age were also closely linked with hierarchies of 'ableness.' Elderly Lhotshampa men retained power and authority in their families as long as they were physically and mentally coherent and independent of other family members. Once those abilities were compromised, they, like the women, children, sick, disabled, and other feminized family members, were confined to the feminized private sphere. Even then, many elderly men retained some power. They counseled and advised younger adult men if and when they came for advice and opinions. In addition, they maintained their ethnic and caste as well as class privileges. Disability and aging devalued femininity and lowered the choices and power of women. Since women did not have the ethnic, caste, and class privileges on their own, disability and aging further disadvantaged women: physically, socially, economically (see Cole & Sabik, 2009:183). Unlike the disabled Lhotshampa men who were feminized, disabled Lhotshampa women were considered "genderless or asexual" (Cole & Sabik, 2009:182). This legally permitted Lhotshampa men married to disabled women, especially women suffering from an incurable sexually communicable disease, insanity, infertility, paralysis (which impaired their movement), and blindness in both eyes, to take another wife.[135] Their situation worsened when intersected with ethnicity and caste and class. Aging and/or

portrayed as industrious, providers, leaders, objective, rational, assertive/decisive, and independent. For more on feminine and masculine traits as well as how masculinity is defined in opposition of femininity see Angel (NA:21).

[135] According to the Muluki Ain 2020 of Nepal (i.e., Nepal's Country Code 1963), polygamy is illegal and punishable by law in Nepal with the exception of when a woman is disabled (see: HRW, 2003:27). These exclusions in polygamy law not only are gendered, but also promote pronatalism and ableism.

disabled women from working class *Parbatiya* and *Matwali* families were hindered in making a choice in regards to resettlement.

Therefore, the UNHCR, by presuming unity within the hierarchy of patriarchal Lhotshampa families, (re)produced sexism, heteronormativity, ageism, classism, ableism, ethnic and caste discrimination, among other systems of oppression, which all co-constructed one another. The Bhutanese refugees who experienced a combination of these inequalities simultaneously responded differently in their resettlement choices (see Porter, January 12, 2018). Their affiliation with different social categories, that intersect and/or combine, aided or hindered their freedom and affected their autonomy, i.e., their capacity to act. After all, as identified by Showden (2011:13), "agency is found in the interstices between identity categories, both public and personal, and between domination and governmentality, where autonomy and freedom meet." Most Lhotshampa men had superior positioning within their families and were able to exercise their agency and make a choice. Women, underage children, unhealthy and disabled refugees, and other disadvantaged groups had inferior positioning and were unable to either exercise their agency or had it diminished, which influenced their choice. In most cases, the disadvantaged groups conformed to the choices made by the patriarchal family member. There were, however, refugees in situations of multiple simultaneous oppression who influenced the choice of their families by reshaping their multiple, often contradictory and somewhat malleable, identities. Since, "agency is socially determined and socially enacted," they could negotiate the meaning of their role, expectation, and positioning in their families (Showden, 2011:12). This was how women like 54-year-old Mati Maya Subba and Birkha Bahadur Tamang's wife, both elderly *Matwali* women, negotiated their roles as 'wives' and 'mother' in their choices to resettle. With the support of their children, they resisted their husband's control over their choice and embraced the positive aspects of their gendered roles, expectations, and self-identity. The positive gendered ideology of being Lhotshampa women, who like most South Asian women, put family before self (see Showden, 2011:59), worked to their advantage. Utilizing these roles, these Lhotshampa women chose a better life and/or opportunity for their children and grandchildren and kept their (extended) families together.

Therefore, 'it was all in the family!'[136] The presumed unity within the hierarchies of the Lhotshampa families reproduced systemic oppressions, which hindered the ability of systematically subordinated groups of refugees within refugee families to choose or reject

[136] Phrase and claim made by Patricia Hill Collins (1998).

resettlement freely. Their multiple overlapping oppressions diminished their agency to various degrees, but as shown above, it was not impossible for all systematically subordinated refugees (see Showden, 2011:3) to exert their agency or influence their choices.

6.2.2 Management and Resettlement of Bhutanese Refugees by the GoN, the UNHCR, and the Resettlement Countries (and How They Maintained Inequality and Hierarchy of Power among the Refugees)

The resettlement of the Bhutanese refugees was not an apolitical process. Refugees had asymmetrical power hierarchies within their families that affected their resettlement choices. Asymmetrical power relations also existed between refugees, resettlement organizations (mainly the UNHCR and the IOM), the GoN, and resettlement countries. The resettlement countries, along with the GoN, set eligibility criteria and restrictions on the UNHCR and the IOM. In turn, the organizations operated their power and restrictions on the refugees. The UNHCR had the most paradoxical role of all the organizations involved. On the one hand, it resettled Bhutanese refugees to end their protracted statelessness, protect their needs and rights, and keep refugee families together. On the other hand, it policed the process and analyzed which refugees (individual and groups) deserved resettlement.[137] Based on a family's profile and needs, the UNHCR chose: a) which refugee's applications were submitted, b) where (which country) they were submitted to, c) how they were submitted (i.e., 'linked' with family who had already resettled or separated), and/or d) what level of priority (i.e., regular, urgent, or emergency) were assigned to them (See Griek, 2014:236-237). The resettlement countries made the final decision to accept or reject refugee(s) based on their country's quotas, laws, and policies. Such profiling, policing, and gatekeeping gave the UNHCR and the resettlement countries the authority over the Bhutanese refugees as well as imposed Western ideologies and norms on them. With the onset of resettlement, the refugees realized the status of their marriage and families impacted their resettlement process, which led them to develop strategies (altering their marital status and family composition) to qualify for approval. These strategies not only were perceived as manipulation of the system by the resettling organizations and the resettlement countries but also were detrimental to some refugees, their families, and communities, even though they helped others qualify for resettlement. This section considers the ways the managing and resettling of refugees adopted by the GoN, the UNHCR, and the

[137] How this was determined varied, and the issues that were considered included: why the individual refugee (or family) fled Bhutan, their situations in the camps, their ability to integrate abroad, and whether they committed 'serious' crimes in Nepal or Bhutan. See: *Third Country Resettlement Refugee Information: Refugees from Bhutan living in Nepal.*

resettlement countries aggravated and maintained inequality and hierarchy of power among the refugees.

a. *Refugee Registration*

Refugee identity was an individual claim based on how the GoN and the UNHCR recognized and registered the Bhutanese refugees. As such, refugees within the same family often had different statuses and identities, resulting in different degrees of access, eligibility, and claims for resettlement. Among other approaches adopted by the GoN and the UNHCR, the refugee registration system that issued a registration card (a ration card) under the name of the male head of the household was problematic. According to HRW (2003:8-32), this prevented women from accessing resettlement independently. Married women were listed under their husband's registration, while unmarried, divorced, or widowed women typically were (re)included under their father or brother's registration. Women in polygamous, mixed, and/or underage marriages (and their children) were especially vulnerable.

Polygamy is legal and practiced in Bhutan.[138] According to the Muluki Ain 2020 of Nepal (i.e., Nepal's Country Code 1963), polygamy is illegal and punishable by law in Nepal. The exception to this law is when a man's first wife is: a) suffering from an incurable sexually communicable disease, b) incurably insane, c) unable to bear children, d) unable to walk due to paralysis, e) blind in both eyes, or f) living separately after acquiring her share of marital inheritance (see: HRW, 2003:27). Although many Bhutanese refugee families were polygamous, the GoN and the UNHCR only legally recognized the first wife and did not register second and consecutive wives and their children in Nepal.[139] As unregistered refugees, these women and their children did not have access to or claims for resettlement. Moreover, since the resettlement countries and their immigration policies determined which refugees and their families were admissible, the admission of Bhutanese refugees who practiced (or intended to practice) polygamy was prohibited. For instance, the polygamy bar in Section 212(a) (10) (A) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) of the United States of America prohibited the admission of such refugees (Griek, 2014:243). In this way, while the Muluki Ain 2020 of Nepal normalized discrimination against women and disabled, the immigration laws and

[138] Polygamy is legal in Bhutan. King Jigme Singye Wangchuck, who ruled Bhutan from 1955 until 2006, has four wives, all of whom are sisters.

[139] Many elderly refugees who came from Bhutan as adults had more than one wife. The opinion about polygamous relationships among the younger Bhutanese refugees in Nepal had changed over time due to education, legal change (between Bhutan and Nepal), and the realization that polygamous relationships were not ideal for a peaceful household or life (see Griek, 2014:240).

policies of the resettlement countries imposed Western centric norms regarding ideal marriages and family composition on the Bhutanese refugees.

Like women and children in polygamous relationships, Nepali and Indian locals married to refugees also were not registered. Similarly, refugee women married to local Nepali men, who in theory under Article 5 of the Nepal Citizenship Act, 2006, qualified for citizenship of Nepal by naturalization (see Nepal Law Commission, 2019), had their refugee registration and status revoked. Children fathered by men who were not Bhutanese refugees as well as children born as a result of rape were additionally not registered in Nepal. As unregistered refugees, these groups of women and children too were refused access to or claims for resettlement.

Lastly, although the Lhotshampas were patrilocal, Bhutanese refugee women in underage marriages were not registered under their husband's registration and were thus denied the opportunity to resettle with their husbands. Since the Muluki Ain 2020 of Nepal (i.e., Nepal's Country Code 1963) only permits individuals to marry at the age of 18 with parental consent, or at the age of 20 (or older) without parental consent (Menz, 2016:534), girls in underage marriages remained listed under their father or brother's registration (instead of their husband's). Moreover, since underage marriages were illegal in Nepal, and despite the fact that Nepal ranks third in the number of child marriages in Asia (HRW, 2016:3), it impeded the resettlement processes of all family members, not just the underage girl and her spouse. In this way, the Muluki Ain 2020 of Nepal normalized not only sexism and ableism, but also ageism. It also made parental control over underage children and their choices seem 'normal.'

By denying these groups of women and children access to resettlement, the resettlement organizations and countries discriminated against refugees in polygamous, mixed and/or underage marriages and rendered them stateless. It did this despite claiming, in its *Third Country Refugee Resettlement Information – Refugees from Bhutan living in Nepal,* that it would not discriminate against refugees on the basis of their **age**, **gender**, education level, social status, religion, or ethnicity for resettlement (see UNHCR, 2007:3). They also denied refugees in mixed marriages, especially refugee women married to local men, the opportunity to resettle, contradicting Article 9.1 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDW79) that protects women's right to retain their nationality, if they wish to, and not automatically assume their husband's nationality because of their marriage to foreigners (see Lee, 1993:142). Additionally, the resettlement countries contradicted the Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC) that protects children from discrimination, including discrimination irrespective of their "parent's or legal guardian's race,

color, **sex**, language, religion, political, or other opinion, **national**, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status" (see HRW, 2003:69-70). By doing so, they rendered these children stateless as well.

Therefore, based on the GoN, the UNHCR, and the resettlement countries' handling of underage, polygamous, and especially mixed marriages, it can be summarized that the UNHCR determined resettlement eligibility based on who the refugees were married to rather than who they were. The GoN issued a separate ration card (often used as refugee identification) to a refugee woman only if she legally separated from her husband. This affected custody of their children and other spousal rights (such as right to property), so women often stayed legally married (even if they were in abusive or 'problematic' relationships) but physically separated from their husbands. Women also stayed in 'bad' marriages and abusive relationships because of the importance placed on the institution of marriage and the strong stigma associated with divorce. According to Rig Veda, the oldest of the sacred books in Hinduism, marriage was considered a sacramental union (Sharma et. al, 2013: S243). Marriage among the Hindus (also applicable to the Lhotshampas) was considered a spiritual union between a couple that should last seven-lifetimes, with socio-cultural expectations and obligations extending beyond the individuals entering the marriage (Ibid). Divorce, among the Lhotshampas, like most South Asian communities, was perceived as failure for women as both wives and mothers (see Das Dasgupta, 1998:215). It was also linked to class, status, and prestige and brought shame and dishonor to the family, impeding marital prospects of their unmarried siblings, and breaking families apart (Ibid). The Lhotshampa women were also discouraged to talk about marital issues and/or domestic violence because they were considered 'private' matters between couples. To make matters worse, women who endured such situations and resisted divorce to keep the family together were exalted within the Lhotshampa culture and regarded as brave, resilient, and exemplary (see Venkataramani-Kothari, 2007:16). With the onset of the third country resettlement program, marriage and divorce had different connotations for many Bhutanese refugees. The local law (Nepal's Country Code 1963) and laws of destination countries (such as Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) of the United States) influenced refugees' relationships, rendering new meaning and understanding towards marriages and divorces among the refugees. The refugees started viewing marriages and divorces in regards to the implication they had on their registration as well as their eligibility for resettlement.

Refugee men in polygamous relationships, as pointed out by Ms. Raines (personal communication, January 15, 2015), were resettled to the United States with their 'legal' wife, i.e., their first wife. Every wife after the first wife was not considered a wife but instead a friend

for resettlement purposes. If a refugee man did not want to live with his first wife, he did not have to resettle with her, but he could not claim someone else as his wife unless he went through the process of divorce and 'marrying someone else.' He was, however, permitted to resettle to the United States on his own with a group of female friends. Since polygamy was illegal in the United States, the man and his female friends had to sign a form saying they would not practice polygamy in the United States. The man could even stay in the same town with all of his female friends. Rai (2015:35) found in practice that many refugee men in polygamous relationships opted for the first option. They divorced their first wives and considered their 'favorite' wife and children for resettlement (Ibid). As such, the resettlement process reinforced patriarchy by privileging refugee men in polygamous relationships, while it penalized refugee women. It gave men the power to determine which spouse and/or children they wanted to resettle or stay in Nepal with. This was confirmed by 31-year-old Naresh Rai from *Beldangi – I* camp,

> Well, you have to divorce your older wife to resettle with your younger wife. Actually, the resettling organizations see your first wife as the wife you should resettle with since the law and the organizations only recognize the first wife, but not the second, third, or other wives. But **if you say you have children with your younger wife and want to stay with the younger wife, you can divorce your older wife and resettle with your younger wife and children** (N. Rai, personal communication, January 14, 2015).

As illustrated in Naresh's discourse, the law, policies, and norms pertaining to polygamy and resettlement undoubtedly favored refugee men over women in polygamous arrangements, but not all men were privileged (and not all women oppressed). Many polygamous men chose a preferred wife and family to resettle with, divorcing the first wife to resettle with younger wives with dependent children. In making this choice, they negotiated their roles as 'husbands' and 'fathers' and conformed to the gendered roles and expectations associated with being a 'good Lhotshampa man,' a responsible provider and protector of dependent family members. In these situations, these men exercised their suboptimal agency and believed they made the best choice available to them. The older wives, including the divorced first wife, were often resettled with their (biological) adult children. Nonetheless, since the intersectional identities of refugees were not considered while dealing with refugees in polygamous relationships, resettlement systematically oppressed elderly women, women with disabilities, women without (biological) children, women in mixed marriages, and others, especially women who simultaneously experienced all of those identities. For instance, 61-year-old Dil Kumari Rai, who was the first wife of 70-year-old Harsha Rai from *Sanischari* camp, would have been thoroughly disadvantaged if her husband chose to resettle. She was curious and interested about life in the United States, but when asked whether she wanted to

resettle or stay in Nepal, she said it depended on what her husband wanted. Since she did not want to separate from her family (husband, co-wife, and their children: a 13-year-old son and an 11-year-old daughter), she wanted to do what her husband chose. According to Dil Kumari, she could not give birth so her husband "was compelled to get a second wife to bear children" (D. K. Rai, personal communication, January 17, 2015). He, an old and uneducated man, wanted to stay in Nepal, his place of birth. Dil Kumari was not particularly worried about her husband divorcing her, which he would have to do if he wanted to resettle with his second wife and their two children. She added that she knew some refugees who had resettled with both their wives and did not think her polygamous relationship hindered her resettlement chances. Nevertheless, given her age and without biological children of her own to resettle with, Dil Kumari was definitely vulnerable and marginalized by the resettlement process. Her gender, age, ethnicity and caste, ableness (lack of fertility), and education influenced her resettlement choice and potential. She mentioned if she were a young and educated man, she would definitely resettle, even by herself. She said,

> **A man can do what he wants, but for a woman it is difficult to resettle alone. Plus, I am old now.** I cannot even have a proper conversation with people since **I am uneducated. I get confused even when I have to go to Damak (the local market close to the camps). How can I resettle by myself?** I do not think a person like me can adjust overseas. **If I were young, I would be able to study and understand, but**…(Ibid).

Expecting Dil Kumari to utilize her agency and resist hegemonic norms and/or changes is unrealistic considering her sedimented intersected identities and situated positioning (see Showden, 2011:16-17). She had no choice but to conform to constraining norms, practices, roles, and expectations associated with her culture (including pro-natalism) and conform to the discriminatory rules and opportunities presented to her by the resettling organizations. This also shows that "agency may at times be impossible and overwhelmingly difficult, given the weight of the crosscutting axes of dominating power within an individual's situation" (Showden, 2011:33).

Dil Kumari was right when she said that many refugees in polygamous relationships had been resettled together, but these cases were not without problems for women. The UNHCR had submitted resettlement cases of many polygamous families as 'linked' or 'cross-referenced' cases to be resettled together due to high-level vulnerabilities and dependence among family members (Griek, 2014:242-244). As a result, some refugee men resettled and lived in close proximity with their other wives and children. However, as 'single women,' these women lacked spousal status, benefits, and rights in the resettlement countries. For example,

42-year-old Laxmi Darji's husband did not inform her when he began his resettlement process with his first wife and their (first wife and his) children. When Laxmi found out, she approached the UNHCR and started her own process with her 61-year-old mother Laxmi Maya Darji and underage son Ramesh Darji. Laxmi was uneducated and from a working class and low-caste *Parbatiya* family, and she worked at a construction site in Nepal and knitted woolen hats for additional income. Since her husband, his first wife, and their family were resettled in Pittsburgh, PA, the UNHCR sent Laxmi and her family to Pittsburgh as a linked/cross-referenced case. She was nervous to resettle to the United States with her underage son and her old and sickly mother and provide for them.[140] She hoped her husband would help raise their son (at least assist with his education), which she reported he did not do. Unfortunately, she could not do anything about it because she was not considered his wife and hence did not have spousal rights and/or claims in the United States. When I visited them, Laxmi was employed by the state of Pennsylvania, working as a caretaker for her mother. She was waiting for her brother Krishna, sister-in-law Radha (Nepali national), and nephew Deepak to resettle to Pittsburgh, PA to help her care for her family, especially their mother (L. Darji & family, personal communication, November 2, 2014).[141] Keeping in mind that although Laxmi's situation in Pittsburgh did not turn out as she envisioned when she made a choice to resettle, she was able to exercised agency at time she made her choice. While being multiply situated in "relationships to others and to cultural and political institutions by inhabiting a variety of roles, often at once," she exercised agency by accessing her past, evaluating her (then) present situation, and making a choice that was oriented towards a 'desirable' future for herself and her family (Showden, 2011:21). This is not to say that women in polygamous relationships who exercised their agency in resettling and were able to do so were not without problems. According to an IOM report (2011:8-12), the suicide rate among the Bhutanese refugees resettled in the United States was three times that of the general population. The report identified shifts in family responsibilities due to family separation or divorce as factors contributing to high suicide rates. Lhotshampa women, especially those who were previously in polygamous marriages, suddenly had to take up non-traditional responsibilities of providing for themselves and their families. This led to their increased vulnerabilities and marginalization upon resettlement.

[140] When I visited Laxmi and her family in Pittsburg, she reported that her mother (Laxmi Maya) had been diagnosed with Alzheimers, Diabetes, and TB in Nepal.
[141] However, Krishna's case was still in the resettlement pipeline because of his mixed marriage with a Nepali national (L. Darji & family, personal communication, November 2, 2014)

Refugee men in polygamous marriages were not the only ones filing for divorce so they could resettle. A prime example was 28-year-old Rinku Thapa of Hut No. 81, Sector A (2), *Beldangi – II Extension* camp (mentioned in Chapter V), who divorced her local husband to resettle to Pennsylvania with her two children (R. Thapa, personal communication, January 5, 2012). As previously mentioned, divorce had an altered meaning with the onset of resettlement. Divorce lost some of its negative connotation, especially for women. When these women were presented with several overlapping, competing, and contradictory norms and expectations, they negotiated and mediated power and chose which identities to resist and which identities, norms, and expectations to keep or conform to (see Showden, 2011). Women like Rinku (a young, educated, high-caste *Parbatiya*, and 'registered' refugee) divorced their husbands and resisted patriarchal norms that hindered their access and ability to make choices for themselves and their families. However, they often simultaneously held on to their family orientation by doing so. The reason why these women divorced remained the same as why they stayed married (or in abusive relationships) before the resettlement program, i.e., to keep their families together and/or for the sake of the children. After all, agency is not just directed towards self-interest but also includes responsibilities towards others (Showden, 2011:39), and in exercising agency, these refugee women held on to a huge part of their gendered identity. Women in polygamous or mixed marriages had better chances for divorce if they were 'victims' of domestic violence. Women in such situations received the social support of extended family members, especially their natal family, like fathers, brothers, and other relatives, who were willing to absorb them and their children (back) into their household. As a result, they had the political support from the GoN and the UNHCR who were willing to (re)register them as refugees and provide them a choice to resettle. This, as indicated by Showden (2011:79), shows "often in acceptance of the identity 'victim' that one can gain some critical perspective on why she had made certain choices and how she can engage outside help to open up future possibilities for enhanced freedom." Nevertheless, divorce to exercise agency or to resettle was not without problems. The dissolving of marriages led to increased family disputes, domestic violence, and family separation (disintegration and dispersion) in the refugee camps in Nepal (Rai, 2015:36)

Making the decision to divorce and then going through with it were actions that did not always come to fruition. Many refugees had difficulties divorcing their spouses due to their intersecting identities, their position within their families, and their dependence on their spouse for resources and materials. Twenty-five-year-old Khinamaya Bhattarai from *Sanischari* was in a mixed marriage and unable to divorce her abusive husband due to the fear of the physical violence he would bestow on her and their children if she left. As a working class and high-

caste *Parbatiya* refugee, Khinamaya filled out a DoI form without the knowledge of her husband in September 2014.[142] She wanted to resettle with her children Sakshyam (son) and Merina (daughter), but her husband would not allow it. Khinamaya's grandmother, parents, and sisters resettled to Melbourne, Australia, and she wanted to go there too. Khinamaya's husband was not against resettlement and also wanted to migrate to Australia, but as a local Nepali man, he was ineligible for resettlement and did not want to be separated from Khinamaya and their children. He said,

> I am not a refugee, I am a local citizen. **If the resettling agencies take us together as a family, we will go. But, I will not let my wife and children go without me. If we cannot go together, we will stay back in Nepal. We will stay together as a family. We will not leave anyone behind**…This camp belongs to all of us, me included. We will stay here and live our lives. What can I say? I am a difficult and stubborn person. I love my children and my wife very much (Khinamaya's husband, personal communication, January 17, 2015).

Like most families with children, Kinamaya thought resettlement to Australia would give her children better opportunities, but her husband was not open to the idea of divorce or any other form of separation. Moreover, Khinamaya heard rumors that the UNHCR and IOM stopped resettling refugees who divorced their spouses in order to resettle. According to her, they wanted all, even those in abusive relationships, to make a unanimous choice as a family (K. Bhattarai & family, personal communication, January 17, 2015). In hindsight, although it appears Khinamaya lacked agency to divorce her abusive husband, as suggested by Showden (2011:77), her agency should also be judged by the "web of conflicting demands and constraints that led to her choices." She chose to stay married because of fear of what her husband might do (to her and her children) if she left him. She also chose to stay based on the rumors about the UNHCR and the IOM that divorce did not guarantee resettlement. Additionally, although we do not know for sure, staying married could have been a part of an elaborate survival and/or departing strategy adopted by Khinamaya. Enlisting help from family and relatives (which Khinmaya was already doing), getting finances in order, and formulating plans on how to support dependent children are examples of utilizing one's agency. As identified by Showden (2011:77), marriages and families, as dysfunctional as they may be, are more integral in our sense of self than other (for instance public) relationships. Therefore, to assume that one must divorce, especially in situations of domestic violence and abuse, "to be

[142] Khinamaya's husband was intoxicated during the interview. A handful of arguments erupted between the two during the course of the interview. There were instances when I was nervous for Khinamaya's safety, but a close relative stayed with the Bhattarais and accompanied Khinamaya almost the entire time to ensure Khinamaya's husband did not subject her to physical violence.

an agent worthy of respect does not merely miss the contextual ambiguity of women's lived situation: it indicates a fundamental misunderstanding about what is at stake in private life" (Ibid).[143]

Similarly, there were other refugee women in mixed marriages who (un)willingly stayed back with their local spouses and families even though they wanted to resettle. As such, they resisted the pressure to divorce their husbands. Such was the case of 36-year-old Khila Bastola, a middle class and high-caste *Parbatiya* refugee from *Beldangi – II Extension* camp, who was a teacher by profession. Khila wanted to resettle to Ohio so she could live with her family and friends. Unfortunately, since she was married to an Indian citizen, she and her daughter remained in the camps in Nepal. Khila's family and friends in Ohio pressured her to divorce her husband, get sole custody of her daughter, and resettle to the United States. Since her husband also did not have any physical assets (house, land, or other forms of property) in Nepal or India and could not provide for them, Khila's relatives thought she should leave him. Khila was torn – she feared if she did not resettle, she would never see her 82-year-old mother again, but she did not want to leave her husband either, since Khila and her daughter were the only family he had. To make matters worse, Khila's husband had multiple sclerosis and depended on her income for his livelihood. Khila claimed refugee women married to Nepali or Indian men ought to have the same opportunities to resettle as the refugee men married to Nepali or Indian women. She felt that the UNHCR and the IOM required refugee women in mixed marriages to get divorces or 'mutual divorces' in order to qualify for refugee status and resettlement (K. Bastola, personal communication, January 16, 2015).[144] Khila chose to stay with her husband even when it hindered her chances for resettlement. She did not let the resettlement policies influence what was important to her sense of self, family, and community. In this way, she exercised her suboptimal resistant agency from her situated social location and by doing so, she resisted ongoing and subtle pressures from her family and friends as well as the UNHCR and the IOM, respectively, to divorce her husband. On the other hand, she also conformed to the gender expectations of the Lhotshampa women to become part of their husband's family and assume responsibility for him (and his relatives) upon marriage.

[143] Mahoney (1994:74) found that women stayed in abusive relationships for reasons such as: the hope for change in the relationship (as well as abuse), love for the partner, the partner was her only family, sharing children with partner, lack of economic alternative, pressure (from family and friends) to stay together, uncertainty about options, health issues (such as depression), etc.

[144] Some Bhutanese refugees had chosen to mutually get divorced so one of the partners and their children could qualify for resettlement. The agreement among the couples was that the one resettling would sponsor the immigration visa of the other (most often the refugee ineligible for resettlement) upon acquiring permanent residency (or citizenship) in the resettled country. As a result, many divorced refugees continued to live together (in the same hut) even after their legal separation.

Lastly, resettlement gave rise to 'new-age' underage marriages where late teens (mostly girls) married men (mostly) in their twenties, to avoid separation due to resettlement (Griek, 2014:249-250).[145] Since such marriages affected the resettlement choices and processes for all family members, parents of these underage girls often pressured them to divorce their spouses so they (the families with the girls) could resettle. As the choices of the underage children were 'trumped' by the choices of their parents, females in underage marriages had their agency impeded. There were, however, parents and guardians who were willing to respect the choices of children in underage marriages while complying with the rules and norms of the resettlement organizations and countries. One such situation was of 29- year-old Assistant Principal Rudra Subedhi from *Sanischari* camp whose 16-year-old (underage) niece, who he had adopted, married her boyfriend. When I last visited Rudra's house on January 14, 2015, he was waiting for his niece to turn 18 (as of January of 2016) so she could be included with her husband's family and resettle with him. Rudra, his wife, son, and his nephew would then have the hold on their resettlement case lifted, allowing them to move to Iowa (R. Subedhi, personal communication, January 14, 2015). By not pressuring his underage niece to divorce her husband, Rudra resisted ageism as well as Western norms pertaining to 'ideal' marriages and 'ideal' family compositions. His situation also proved that divorce is situational. It is "the right answer for some women and thus needs to be facilitated, but it is wrong answer for others, so leaving needs not to be mandated" (Showden, 2011:71).

As a general observation, because of how the Bhutanese refugees were registered, resettlement choices and processes were more accessible to male refugees than female refugees, especially those in 'complicated' (polygamous, mixed, and underage) marital arrangements. The process especially favored resettlement choices of refugee men in polygamous (underage and mixed) marriages because they could not only choose whether to resettle or stay in Nepal, but to whom to resettle or stay back with. Even though some women in polygamous relationships were able to resettle in close proximity to their husband, they did not receive the same status, support, and rights as the 'first' or 'favored' wife. This did not mean that all women in polygamous, mixed, and underage relationships had the same fate or experience. In fact, many Bhutanese refugee women took it upon themselves to control their own destiny. Some women, with the help of their maternal family or on their own, divorced

[145] Unlike the host community, practices of underage marriages among the Bhutanese refugees greatly declined due to the free education and advocacy for gender equality provided in the refugee camps by Caritas Nepal and the UNHCR (Griek, 2013:12). This positive trend, however, reversed with the onset of resettlement.

their husbands so they could (re)gain their refugee status and qualify for resettlement. In some instances, these 'empowered' women in situations of abuse and domestic violence exercised their agencies and changed the opportunities for themselves and their children. In other situations, pressure on refugees, especially women to divorce to be registered and/or qualify for resettlement increased instances of family disputes, violence, and separation (see Rai, 2015:36). It also led to high suicide rates among the refugees who had resettled to the United States (IOM, 2011:8).

b. *Contradictory Resettlement Ideologies*

The UNHCR and the resettlement countries provided refugees contradictory information on how they wanted them to make a choice. On the one hand, they wanted refugee families to make a unanimous choice, leading to the reproduction of patriarchy, heteronormativity, ageism, ableism, classism, ethnic and caste hierarchies, and other systems of oppression. Simultaneously, they stated anyone 18 years or over could choose to and resettle by themselves, which imposed Western ideologies of individualism and independence on the refugees as well as reinforced ageism and ableism. Bhutanese refugees who were eager to leave had little choice but to comply with the resettlement policies, regulations, and associated impositions (see Griek, 2014:265). They broke ties with their extended families and resettled with their nuclear families or alone. For example, 25-year-old Yanu Tamang (Gurung) applied for resettlement with her younger brother to Utah (and later migrated to Pittsburgh) without the consent of her parents. Yanu's father, Rajman Gurung, frequently participated in pro-repatriation activities and was unwilling to resettle. As a result, Yanu resettled without her parents or their permission (Y. Tamang (Gurung), personal communication, October 27, 2014). In doing so, Yanu exercised her individual agency, and although she lacked her father's approval, the resettlement law and policies along with her age, education, class, and 'ableness,' privileged her to make a choice. Such initiatives by young and educated refugees, however, affected the Lhotshampa families and family dynamics, which were the focal points of their community and their social support systems.

Before the onset of resettlement, the Lhotshampas considered their extended relatives their close family. They were (inter)dependent on one another for their livelihoods and lived together (in the same hut or close by) in the refugee camps. On average, a Lhotshampa household consisted of elderly parents along with their unmarried relatives, unmarried children, married sons, daughters-in-law, and grandchildren. But since the UNHCR and resettlement countries resettled the Bhutanese refugees as a nuclear family, with a married (heterosexual)

couple at its center, the refugees began to see their families differently. The refugees, as identified by Griek (2014), began to assess and evaluate their (intersubjective) relationships with their family members in terms of their resettlement potential and implications. Refugees broke ties with their family members who lowered their chances for resettlement. This was demonstrated by 38-year-old Sancha Maya Subba of *Sanischari* camp. According to Sancha Maya, her husband and in-laws were stubborn. They came from *Dagana*, a remote part of Bhutan, and only talked about repatriation. Sancha Maya, on the other hand, wanted to resettle for the sake of her children. As the Bhutanese refugees began to resettle, she feared the schools in the camps would close down, leaving her with no means to educate her children. She requested her hut be separated from her extended family, especially from her brothers-in-law. She wanted to avoid her brothers-in-law's daily alcohol abuse and quarrels about resettlement and also did not want their (brothers-in-law's) jail sentence to hinder her (nuclear) family's chances for resettlement. She moved from sector D to sector K with her husband and three children and filed for resettlement as a nuclear family. Influenced by Western ideologies of individualism, independence, and ideal family (nuclear family = ideal family), she exercised her individual agency. She also resisted the patriarchal and ethnic and caste norms that hinder women's agency and choices. Although Sancha Maya managed to convince her husband to accompany her and their children to their screening meeting with the UNHCR and the IOM, he moved out of the house (as well as the camp) after the meeting. He only returned to their home fortnightly (on the day the refugees received their ration) so he could collect ration on behalf of the family, then would leave almost immediately. He also did not show up for their follow-up meetings with the IOM, resulting in Sancha Maya's case file being returned to the UNHCR from the IOM. Eager to resettle, Sancha Maya asked her husband for a divorce and the custody of their children, but he did not want to do that either. She stated that every time she brought up divorce, her husband stayed quiet without uttering a word (S. M. Subba, personal communication, January 14, 2015). Sancha Maya's husband's silence could be interpreted as his agency to stay married and keep his family (both nuclear and extended) together in Nepal. Her husband also resisted Western influence over his life and held on to his ideals and norms associated with the Lhotshampa families. As identified by Showden (2011:20), "it can be an act of agency to hold on to what one needs to continue to have a sense of oneself *as oneself*." Both Sancha Maya and her husband's attempts to separate her hut and stay married, respectively, were forms of resistance that show the Bhutanese refugees' "ability to craft solutions that deviate from the rules imposed upon them" (Griek, 2012:27).

In summary, the contradictory resettlement ideologies and discrepancies between the refugees, the resettlement organization, and the resettlement countries on what constituted an ideal family size led the refugees to lose one of their biggest assets and the backbone of their community, i.e., their (extended) families. Due to the inflexible and contradictory resettlement process, Bhutanese refugee "families were separated and extended support structures dissipated" (Griek, 2014:256).

c. *Lack of Transparency and Discrepancies in Handling Resettlement Cases*

There was lack of transparency in the information and communications provided by the resettlement organizations to the Bhutanese refugees (Dhungana, 2008:18). Refugees were not informed of the reasons why their resettlement cases were delayed, dropped, or denied, which made the choices of many difficult. This was clearly apparent when Bhutanese refugee leader T.N. Rizal (personal communication, December 31, 2011) questioned, "why are many Bhutanese refugees denied the option or delayed in their resettlement if they are being resettled on humanitarian grounds? What is so humane about resettling some refugees and denying or delaying others?"

The refugees also received odd and misleading advice from a variety of sources (Griek, 2014:266). Griek (2014:266) found that IOM staff had allegedly advised underage youths to marry their lovers to avoid separation due to resettlement. Similarly, she also found that the UNHCR Field Assistants (FAs) had allegedly advised refugees to divorce their spouses to qualify for resettlement (Ibid). Lastly, in 2015, my interviews with Bhutanese refugees in Nepal revealed that they received mixed information and suggestions about resettlement from their resettled families and friends, which they had a hard time navigating. This added to their confusion and made their choices difficult. Refugees were distressed because they had little understanding of resettlement steps, timing, and country-specific variations and requirements (IOM, 2011:19). Having experienced the resettlement process first-hand, 20-year-old Roshan Regmi from Pittsburgh, PA made a bold statement about the lack of information and transparency in the refugee camps. He said, "people are stuck in Nepal not because they do not want to resettle, but because they are confused by everything they hear" (R. Regmi, personal communication, October 29, 2014).

Due to the lack of information, refugees interpreted ineligibility and delays in the process as problems with their case. Such confusions led the refugees to take what they believed to be 'corrective' actions to improve their chances and speed up resettlement. For example, according to 40-year-old Suk Rani Rai from Pittsburgh, PA, her brother was married to a Nepali

woman and hence unable to resettle to Pittsburgh. This led to quarrels and resentment between the couple (Suk Rani's brother and her sister-in-law) and as a result, her sister-in-law took their child and temporarily moved to her parent's home in Western Nepal. Angered by the event, Suk Rani's brother married a refugee woman from his camp hoping it would provide him a way to resettle. Unfortunately, his second marriage further complicated his resettlement chances (S. R. Rai, personal communication, October 29, 2014).

Like Suk Rani's brother, there were other Bhutanese refugees who had adopted strategies such as eloping, running away from home, or remarrying to create obstacles for their spouses (and their family's) resettlement process. For example, 31-year-old Naresh Rai's first wife, with whom he chose to start their resettlement process to Canada in 2011, eloped with a local Nepali man, complicating their process. Before eloping and going missing on October 15, 2011, Naresh and his first wife had already completed their DHS interview and were due for their health screening. Naresh, who since then had remarried and had a baby, wanted to resettle to Idaho to be with his parents and siblings. When I met him in 2015, based on the recommendations of the resettling organizations, he was working on getting a one-sided divorce to re-establish eligibility for resettlement. Naresh went to the VDC office to acquire a missing person certificate, a pre-requisite document for his one-sided divorce from his first wife. The VDC officials wanted Naresh to tell them who his wife eloped with. Naresh did not have that information, nor could he acquire the certificate, and hence could not get a divorced or resettle (N. Rai, personal communication, January 14, 2015). Similarly, 54-year-old Mati Maya Subbha's daughter ran away from home, putting a hold on her husband and four children's resettlement process to Australia. Like Naresh, Mati Maya's son-in-law too had opted for a one-sided divorce so he could resettle (M. M. Subbha, personal communication, January 17, 2015). One may ponder whether, or to what degree, the actions of Suk Maya's brother, Naresh Rai's first wife, and Mati Maya Subbha's daughter can be considered to be indication of agency. After all, "one cannot simply say that anything a person does is evidence of agency. The primary criterion for whether one is an agent must be whether one's actions foreclose other possibilities, not whether they make some observer squeamish or are not what we would do in the same circumstances" (Showden, 2011: xiii).

In addition to lack of transparency and associated confusions, refugees in similar situations were also subjected to discrepancies in the handling of their cases. While some families with similar profiles were resettled with their case linked with previously resettled families, other were separated and resettled elsewhere. For example, Sushmita Tamang and her children, cited in Shanahan (2013:28-29), were rerouted to Raleigh-Durham, NC (where they

did not have family or friends) instead of being resettled near her husband Bijay Tamang in Houston, TX. Supposedly, Bijay's first wife issued threats against Sushmita and her children, all of which were unconfirmed rumors.[146] As a result, however, the resettling organization chose to reroute Sushmita and her children at the last minute without informing them or Bijay about the change. This illustration shows that although the first choice (whether to resettle or stay in Nepal) were made by the refugees, all the other significant choices and decisions in the process were made by the resettlement countries, or the resettling organizations working on their behalf.

Similarly, while some cases, on the basis of health, disability, and protection needs, were expediated, others for very similar reasons were delayed. Refugees usually did not know the reasons behind the differential handling of their cases. The UNHCR and the IOM claimed that they, based on urgent protection or medical needs, expediated resettlement cases of some Bhutanese refugees to help them benefit from the medical treatment overseas if they were not a health risk to themselves or to others in the resettlement countries. Such health risks, according to Ms. Raines (personal communication, January 15, 2015), "bumped the refugees to the top of the queue." For example, 40-year-old Ritu Narayan Kafle's brother's disability expedited his family's resettlement to the United States. Ritu, who had to separate his resettlement case from the rest of his family, declared that his family's process was much faster than anybody he knew (R. N. Kafle, personal communication, January 16, 2015) and surmised it was because of his brother's disability.

However, not all resettlement cases of refugees with ailments in need of urgent medical care were expedited. For example, Krishna's father had big dreams to see the United States and so the family started their resettlement process to Pittsburgh in 2008. During their health screening, Krishna's father was diagnosed with cancer. Instead of having their resettlement process expedited, Krishna and his family were held back in Nepal. Krishna and his family believed this was because of his father's cancer. Krishna's father passed away in 2010, after which, Krishna and his remaining family were resettled to Pittsburgh in 2011 (Krishna, personal communication, October 27, 2014).

According to Ms. Raines, the delays were the result of extra coordination and preparations, by the IOM, and the resettling organizations in the receiving countries to ensure

[146] This was a rare situation. In most situations, refugees were resettled where their cases were filed. Moreover, in many instances of polygamous marriages, the Bhutanese refugees in the United States were settled close by (same state and sometimes even same city) so they could maintain family relations even though they were forbidden from practicing polygamy. See Griek (2014) and Shanahan (2013).

refugees with health concerns, disabilities, and other difficulties had the necessary support they needed. She added that additional time was required to find the right community and the right resettling organization. They had to ensure they (the receiving community and organization) had the appropriate health facilities, services, and professionals, and that these were made accessible to the refugees. Unfortunately, refugees were not informed of these reasons, resulting in confusion and frustration with delays in their resettlement process. This was the case for 35-year-old Kiran Chettri of *Beldangi – II Extension* camp, whose parents and sister had resettled to Minnesota. He and his nuclear family were not able to resettle for two reasons: a) his marriage to an Indian citizen and b) his wife's health condition. Kiran's wife suffered from acute depression and a neurological disorder, initially resulting in rejection, and then later a delay, in the process. Kiran wanted to resettle to Minnesota for his wife's health treatment and to help his ageing and uneducated parents, who were undergoing difficulties adjusting in the US following his sister's marriage (K. Chettri, personal communication, January 9, 2012). I met Kiran and his family during both my fieldworks in Nepal. His resettlement process in 2015 had not advanced any further from when I saw him in 2012.

Another refugee who had to repeat his medical check-ups, especially his urine tests, but was never informed what was wrong with him, was 43-year-old Lok Bahadur Bhattarai from *Beldangi – II Extension* camp. Lok Bahadur had applied for resettlement to Canada in 2012. He reported his neighbors, who had started their process to Canada after him, had resettled and returned to Nepal (and the refugee camps) to visit friends and relatives, while Lok Bahadur and his family still waited their turn. In the meantime, Lok Bahadur's disabled daughter chose to file her case to go to Canada, same as her parents and siblings, but was advised to resettle to the United States with her husband and his family. Her case was expediated due to her disability, and she resettled in 2015. When Lok Bahadur wanted to change his resettlement destination to the United States (from Canada) to be close to his disabled daughter, he and his family were advised to keep their application for Canada. Lok Bahadur was very disappointed and disheartened. In addition, he had borrowed NPR. 200,000 from one of his neighbors and bought things like pots, pans, and clothes to take to Canada. It had already been two years since then and the clothes were old, torn, and tattered. The neighbor pressed him to return his money, but they were still waiting for IOM's/resettlement country's verdict. Once he knew their date of departure, he said he could tell his neighbor about it. He could also tell him how soon he could return his money upon reaching Canada. As of January 2015, the resettling organizations had not informed of Lok Bahadur the reason why his resettlement process was delayed. Having gone to the UNHCR field office eight times to inquire about his departure date, he was told he

would be informed any day now, but he had not heard anything for more than two years (L.B. Bhattarai, personal communication, January 13, 2015). The rules imposed on the refugees and the control over their resettlement process by the resettlement countries and the resettling organization made it hard for refugees like Sushmita, Krishna, Lok Bahadur, Kiran, and their families to exert agency and act differently than expected (for instance exercise resistance) in the "oppressive nexus of power relations" (Showden, 2011:17).

Similarly, resettlement cases of refugees with criminal offenses were handled on a case-by-case basis, rarely clear-cut, and usually affected entire families. According to the UNHCR Resettlement Handbook (2011:101), to protect and maintain the integrity of the resettlement process, Bhutanese refugees who perpetrated 'serious' non-political crimes and heinous acts under Articles 1F(a), (b), or (c) of the 1951 Refugee Convention were denied international protection and eligibility for resettlement.[147] Some examples of these crimes mentioned in the *Background Note on the Application of the Exclusion Clauses: Article 1F of the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees* (UNHCR, September 4, 2003) included murder, rape, arson, armed robbery, and other offenses with the use of serious force. The UNHCR did not submit resettlement applications of refugees who had been convicted of one or more of the above-mentioned crimes, which was not appreciated by the GoN (S. Kubo, personal communication, January 15, 2015). According to Mr. Kubo, the GoN wanted the UNHCR to resettle as many Bhutanese refugees as possible and did not want the UNHCR to leave refugees who had committed heinous crimes behind in Nepal (Ibid). The assumption was that refugees jailed in Nepal for 'petty' crimes were allowed to resettle, but refugees who had committed 'serious' crimes such as murder, rape, trafficking, etc. were ineligible. Admission to the resettlement countries for crimes committed in Bhutan and Nepal depended on the interpretation of the crime and the law and policy of the country (K. Raines, personal communication, January 15, 2015).

[147] According to Article 1F of the 1951 Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, the provision of the convention (for the purpose of this dissertation understand as eligibility for international protection and resettlement) do not apply to people who have committed: a) crimes against peace, war crime, or crime against humanity, b) serious non-political crimes outside the country of refuge (prior to admission as a refugee), or c) acts contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations (See: https://www.unhcr.org/3b66c2aa10). But as mentioned in the *Background Note on the Application of the Exclusion Clauses: Article 1F of the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees* (UNHCR, September 4, 2003), crimes against peace and acts against the purposes & principles of the United Nations are attached to individuals in position of high authority who can rage state level war or conflict. War crimes, crimes against humanity, and serious non-political crimes, on the other hand, can be perpetrated on the individual level (see: https://www.refworld.org/docid/3f5857d24.html). Nevertheless, war crimes and systematic and widespread crimes against humanity are not applicable to crimes committed by the Bhutanese refugees. Only serious (non)political crimes, such as murder, rape, arson, armed robbery, and other offenses with the use of serious force under Article 1F, are applicable to Bhutanese refugees.

For instance, 28-year-old Dev Narayan from *Beldangi – I* camp had started his resettlement process with his family to Ohio in 2008. Their case was first delayed because of his sister's poor health and later put on an indefinite hold when Dev's mentally disabled brother was jailed under accusations of rape. Dev claimed his brother was innocent. According to Dev, his brother splashed water on two girls who taunted him, eventually accusing him of rape. While in custody, Dev's brother was subjected to severe beating and intimidation at gunpoint by the Nepal Police during his interrogation. His brother, therefore, confessed to the crime and was sent to Biratnagar jail for eleven years. This put Dev and his family's resettlement case on hold. Dev's other family members consisted of his priest father, blind mother, two disabled brothers, and a sister. Neither Dev nor his siblings were married. He wanted to resettle to Ohio because his uncle who had resettled there promised to help him care for his family. Dev's uncle recommended him to leave the brother in jail behind and resettle, but Dev did not want to do that. He wanted the UNHCR to help his entire family to resettle to Ohio or for the GoN to give them land or property in Nepal so they could stay together as a family (D. Narayan, personal communication, January 14, 2015).

Other situations of jail-time fell into what might be considered a 'gray area.' Refugees jailed for (non)political activities were either waved on humanitarian grounds or were deemed terrorists and barred from the process. For example, 50-year-old Bhanu Singh Gurung was jailed in Bhutan in 1990 for seven years for not reporting episodes of robbery and vandalism in his village. As a result, he arrived in Nepal in 1997. He remained an unregistered refugee for the next 13 years. After registration in 2010, he expressed his wish to resettle to Canada, where his wife's family had resettled. The Canadian government, however, rejected his application because of his 'criminal record.' In 2011, he expressed another interest to resettle, this time to the United States. While he awaited the verdict, Bhanu was worried his application would be rejected by the United States for the same reason (B. S. Gurung, personal communication, January 4, 2012).

Moreover, what may appear as 'misconduct' to some was interpreted as 'serious' crimes by the resettlement countries. To illustrate, 28-year-old Ganga Ram Khanal and his family almost resettled to Erie, PA in 2010, but a few days before their departure the IOM told Ganga and his family that their resettlement was canceled. They were never provided an official explanation, but the family knew it was because Ganga slapped a student he tutored under the influence of alcohol. As a result, his entire family were denied resettlement. Instead of separating ties with Ganga and resettling themselves, Ganga's family (his brother and parents) chose to stay back until Ganga became eligible for resettlement (see: Balingit, September 16,

2014). Ganga's family (like Dev), who were provided with two undesirable choices, i.e., stay back together in Nepal as refugees or resettle without their son (or brother), exercised their limited agency to make a choice they could identify and relate with. With few means to change their situation, especially resist the norms that governed them, and despite their systemic marginalization and subordination, they reflected on their choices and picked between the lesser of two evils (see Showden, 2011: xi).

In some situations, crime and/or violence expedited refugees' resettlement process, particularly if the crime or violence was directed towards the refugee (and their family) in question. For instance, 40-year-old Narad Phuyal's 92-year-old father, as the head of his village, had met an American man in Bhutan in 1925 who recommended he visit the United States if ever the opportunity arose. When third country resettlement as a durable solution was offered in 2008, Narad's father was at the forefront. In the early days of resettlement, the anti-resettlement activists created an environment of insecurity in the refugee camps in Nepal. They vandalized huts, sent intimidating letters and death threats, and physically attacked refugees opting to resettle. Narad's family were victims to such violence. His brother was severely beaten and their hut burned to the ground. Since Narad and his family's safety were jeopardized, their resettlement case was prioritized. Narad and his family arrived in Scranton, PA in March 2008 after expressing their choice to resettle on January 14, 2008. Crimes and violence by the anti-resettlement refugees directed at Narad's family expedited their choice and their process.

As shown through illustrations above, the UNHCR and the resettlement countries exerted and maintained power in their relationships with the Bhutanese refugees based on established ideas about authority and governmentality that privileged them (see Porter, January 12, 2018). In the name of protecting the refugees and maintaining the integrity of the resettlement process, they exercised discretion in handling the Bhutanese refugee resettlement cases, barring some relationships and families while and allowing others to resettle. The Bhutanese refugees and their families, on the other hand, either had no choice in the matter or exercised their suboptimal agency to resist imposition on both their (intersubjective) relationships and their families (and other like institutions).

6.3 Where were the similarities?

The previous question, by considering how the roles power and inequality amongst the refugees played out, reveals how certain groups, in spite of their differences, shared commonalities in their experiences of privilege and oppression. This is one of the areas where

intersectionality differs from a single-axis analysis. In a single-axis analysis, difference(s) seem contrasting. With intersectionality, one is able to look for similar experiences, 'common grounds,' and connections (see Cole & Sabik, 2009:182 and Hirschmann, 2012:396-405). According to Cole (2009: 175), asking where the similarities are helps to "reassess presumptions about social categories and identify commonalities that cross across categories". This question helps us see social categories as "reflecting what individuals, institutions, and cultures do rather than simply as individual characteristics of people" (Ibid). These common sites (which Lykke (2010) calls nodal points) can be used to reconfigure one's situation, whether through social and material resources or reshaping meanings and understanding of categories, boundaries, and boundary-making processes (see Showden, 2011). These similarities and commonalities can become sites of resistance – spaces for building coalition, mobilizing politically, and bringing about social change, as provisional as they might be. It also helps us identify sites of interventions that help enhance (individual and collective) agency or interventions for policies and processes towards a more equal, humane, and just world.

Bhutanese refugees were multiply situated in their unequal relationships of power with each other as a result of differential (and sometimes contradicting) social, political, and cultural expectations placed on them by various institutions and systems. Based on where these refugees were positioned, especially within the families and community, they were (un)able to choose to resettle and/or protest rules and norms imposed on them. In other words, inequalities of power between and within Bhutanese refugees' multiple overlapping identities, which they experienced simultaneously, led to their intersectional positioning. The differences in their intersectional positioning led to differences in their ability, extent, and degree of agency they exerted and the choices they made (see Showden, 2011). As such, registered, adult, highly educated, upper class, and high-caste refugees, especially male refugees with good physical and mental health and without 'complicated' (polygamous, mixed, underage) marital status and/or criminal accusations, shared similar experiences of privilege as they were able to make their choices and resettle (or stay in Nepal). As more identities of privilege intersected, their choices and chances enhanced. On the other hand, unregistered refugees (especially refugee women in 'complicated' marital situations and their children), underage children, refugees with health issues and disabilities, and/or refugees with criminal records in Bhutan or Nepal shared similar experiences of disadvantage, which marginalized them from making a choice and hindered their ability, if not the extent and degree, of agency they exercised. As more identities of oppression and disadvantage intersected, their ability to choose and resist rules and norms imposed on them (and/or rework forms of power) ebbed (see Showden, 2011). Many Bhutanese

refugees disadvantaged by the resettlement process, such as refugees who missed registration (or had it revoked), refugee women in polygamous relationships (and their children), and refugees married to locals (along with their spouses and their children), shared the connection of being 'unregistered' in the refugee camps in Nepal. As such, they lacked legal/official refugee status and claim for resettlement. Some refugees from these groups, therefore, built coalitions and collectively participated in numerous mass protest, especially hunger strikes, to pressure the GoN and the UNHCR to register them as Bhutanese refugees in Nepal. For example, 50-year-old Bhanu Singh Gurung was unable to gain refugee status in Nepal for 13 years because of his 'criminal record' in Bhutan. Bhanu was jailed in Bhutan in 1990 for seven years for not reporting episodes of robbery and vandalism in his village. He participated in a hunger strikes in Nepal in 2009 to protest the discriminatory registration policies and processes adopted by the GoN and the UNHCR. After this, he was registered as a legal/official Bhutanese refugee in Nepal in 2010 and chose to resettle in 2011 (B. S. Gurung, personal communication, January 4, 2012). Comparably, 40-year-old Khina Maya Rai from *Sanischari* camp and 49-year-old Surya Bahadur Chettri from *Beldangi – I* camp, both of whom had their refugee status revoked because they missed refugee census in their respective camps, had themselves reinstated in 2012 after participating in similar political initiative in 2011. Both Khina Maya and Surya made their 'voluntary wish' to resettle in 2014 (K. M. Rai & S. B. Chettri, personal communication, January 14, and January 16, 2015, respectively). Like Khina Maya and Surya, 38-year-old Bishnu Adhikari was registered as a Bhutanese refugee in 2012 after participating in a hunger strike in 2011. This allowed her to make her choice to resettle and start her process in 2013. (B. Adhikari, personal communication, January 14, 2015).[148] Lastly, 33-year-old Tsering Rendup, a Drukpa and an unregistered refugee, missed the refugee registrations of 2009 and 2012 because he lived outside the camps. Although Tsering was still an 'unregistered' refugee when I met him on January 14, 2015, he was optimistic that a sit-down meeting he had orchestrated with other unregistered refugees, CMC representatives, and concerned representatives from the NUCRA a month later to talk about their grievances would change his 'official' status (T. Rendup and family, personal communication, January 14, 2015). In all of these cases, as indicated by Showden (2011: xviii), coalition building brought together "autonomy and freedom by encouraging critical reflection, increasing exposure to alternative

[148] Bishnu left Bhutan and came to Nepal in 2008 after her husband, upon his new marriage, ousted her from their home (B. Adhikari, personal communication, January 14, 2015).

ways of approaching situations, and providing the discourses that help women understand and articulate their goals and desires."

The above illustrations show that 'who Bhutanese refugees were,' i.e., the 'official/legal' refugee status, was an extremely permeable category. Bhutanese refugees could lose and/or (re)gain refugee status at any time, given the context of the situation, and this was also the reason why the Bhutanese refugees were barred from their choices and the process. Therefore, it was appropriate site for (provisional) coalition, collective political action, and intervention to make the resettlement equal and just for many Bhutanese refugees, even though it did not necessarily challenge the gendered, racialized, classed, and other systemic inequalities and oppressions that came with the resettlement offer. Hopefully, the Bhutanese refugees remaining in Nepal can identify similar commonalities and connections to form coalition and carry out collective political action, one that is geared towards a permanent solution for their statelessness.

Conclusion

By using the 'family' rhetoric, i.e., asking the Bhutanese refugees to make a unanimous choice as a family, the UNHCR, the IOM, and the resettlement countries normalized and reproduced the existential hierarchies of power and inequality among the Bhutanese refugees. Similarly, by ignoring the historical and present structural relations of inequalities rooted in the Lhotshampa culture in their management and resettlement of refugees, they aggravated, if not maintained, the power relations and inequalities. Among other things, how the Bhutanese refugees were registered in Nepal, the imposition of contradictory ideologies on them (especially since the onset of resettlement), the lack of transparency, and the discrepancies in handling resettlement cases created an environment of confusion, which either privileged or marginalized the refugees in making a choice and exercising their (resistant or other forms of) agency. As such, the resettlement organizations and countries exercised their power over the Bhutanese refugees. They often considered the choices of adults, especially the patriarch, for resettlement, while they ignored the choices of women and other feminized groups of refugees such as underage children, sick and disabled, 'criminals,' and local men married to refugee women. Although different, these groups shared commonalities in their experiences of exclusion and/or marginalization. Their experiences of disadvantage and/or marginalization, however, worsened with membership in more oppressive categories of identities, which they experienced simultaneously. Memberships in more oppressive social categories diminished their ability to exercise their agency and make their choice in regards to resettlement. For

instance, making a choice was especially difficult for an illiterate and disabled elderly woman from a working class and low-caste *Matwali* ethnicity who, as a second wife not registered as a Bhutanese refugee in Nepal and without (biological) adult children to resettle with, was compelled to conform to the choice made by her husband (or other family members).

Depending on their membership in multiple intersecting social categories, some marginalized groups of refugees were able to resist gendered, racialized, classed, and other discriminatory norms, ideologies, and expectations imposed on them and still qualify for registration and (sometimes also) resettlement. They protested the discriminatory rules, policies, norms, and expectations put on them, using their own version of the 'family' rhetoric. For instance, refugee men in polygamous marriages divorced their first wives to resettle with (younger) wives with dependent children to provide for dependent family members. In doing so, they resisted domestic and foreign laws that define 'ideal' relationships, marriages, and families, while abiding by the gendered, classed, ethnic, caste, etc. understanding of what it meant to be a good Lhotshampa man, in particular a good father. Similarly, refugee women in polygamous and mixed marriages divorced their spouses so they could be registered and could resettle to provide a better future and lives for their children (and grandchildren). In doing so, they resisted patriarchal norms and resettlement policies, while conforming to a gendered, classed, ethnic, caste, etc. understanding of what it meant to be good Lhotshampa women (especially mothers or grandmothers). There were still other groups of refugees who given their intersecting identities, situated positionings, and intersubjective relationships exercised different resistant agency. They resisted Western norms and ideologies imposed on their marriages and families by choosing to stay with 'problematic' (sick, disabled, local, 'criminal,' etc.) family members who either hindered or impeded their choice and possibility to resettle.

In essence, this chapter showed that refugee's intersecting identities, situated positionings, and intersubjective relationships were all interconnected and influenced their choice and agency. It provided a complex and nuanced understanding of choices made and agency exercised by the Bhutanese refugees towards the durable solution that was offered to them. In addition to making varied perspectives and (multiple) choices by the Bhutanese refugees visible, especially how they experienced and responded to resettlement, this chapter broadened the understanding (and construction) of 'who the Bhutanese refugees are.'

Chapter VII: Conclusion

This dissertation started with two goals: to identify the diversity (of identities and experiences) between and within the Bhutanese refugees, and to identify and analyze their resettlement choices and agencies. With these goals in mind, this study further examined: a) the causality and origin of the Bhutanese refugees, b) their experiences at home and in the refugee camps in Nepal, c) efforts made towards resolving their situations and societal integration, d) their inclination and reluctance towards resettlement, and e) the ways in which and the reasons why they chose to resettle (or not resettle). To meet these objectives, this dissertation referred to literature on resettlement, refugee theories, intersectionality, agency, and the history and politics of Bhutan to contextualize answers central to this research. Additionally, three field researches were conducted in Nepal and the United States, which focused on interviews with the government and non-government officials, scholars, media personnel, local community members, and, most importantly, different groups of the Bhutanese refugees. The qualitative data, especially, the interviews with the various groups of refugees, which were collected to understand 'how the refugees perceived their situation' and 'why they chose to resettle or stay back' was then analyzed. The perceptions of refugees who had already resettled have also been incorporated into this dissertation.

The divergence between the goals, along with the following questions raised in Chapters III, IV, V, and VI: a) why and how were the Lhotshampas ousted, b) why were they stuck in Nepal for over 20 years and what were their (refugee) experiences like, c) who chose to resettle, who chose to stay in Nepal, who were unable and/or hindered in their choices, and d) what differences did their intersecting identities and intersecting systems of oppressions they experienced make in the choices they made and the agencies they exercised took the readers through the landscape of domestic (Bhutan's), regional (South Asian) and international politics along with refugee experiences and perceptions. This final chapter revisits those chapters (or questions) to draw linkages among the issues raised and simultaneously describes research findings.

As indicated in Chapter III, the Bhutanese refugees fled Bhutan as a result of a well-orchestrated exclusionary nation building efforts in the country, particularly the enactment and implementation of the 1985 Citizenship Act of Bhutan. This, along with other incidents in Southern Bhutan, such as the 1988 arbitrary census, repression of democratic movements, human rights abuses by the government, rebels, or both, and forced expulsion, compelled the Lhotshampas and smaller population of Ngalongs and Sharchops to flee Bhutan and seek

refuge in Nepal. The study revealed that the experiences of the refugees in Bhutan before their flight were not alike. The study discovered that some refugees, most of whom were male and were better off in Bhutan, i.e., had higher economic, social and political status, were upper and middle-class and highly educated leaders; working class and uneducated repatriation activists; and/or were elderly affluent landlords from Southern Bhutan, identified with their country and retained home orientation and preferred to stay in the refugee camps in Nepal over resettlement. These groups of refugees were guided by their past. They believed that resettlement would lead to detachment from their 'ancestral land,' and their identities and statuses back home. Additionally, they believed it would make their efforts towards repatriation irrelevant. On the other hand, the majority of the respondents, most of whom were minorities in Bhutan and were either marginalized and/or subjected to discrimination, such as women, children, youths, and other working-class refugees, had alienated themselves from their country and their Bhutanese identity. They primarily favored resettlement.

Similarly, as pointed out in Chapter IV, the presumed temporary refuge and statelessness of the Bhutanese refugees turned protracted in Nepal when the GoN showed no signs to locally integrate the refugees despite their social, cultural, and religious similarities with the host community. The refugees were unable to return home when bilateral talks between the GoN and the RGoB failed and when the refugees' advocacy, peace marches and 'insurgency' proved ineffective to receive international support. This resulted in the refugees enduring mixed experiences during their administered settlement in Nepal. The study illustrates that their experiences in Nepal during displacement were not alike either. Some refugees, like the uneducated and elderly men, especially from middle and low-caste *Matwali* ethnicities, were (somewhat) satisfied with the camp assistance and services. They were content with their experiences in the camp, especially the favorable conditions for their mobility, employment, religious practices, and non-violent political activism. As such, they chose to prolong their settlement in the refugee camps. While others, particularly the women, children, and educated youths, were pressured by their impermanence along with the reduction in assistance and services, the deteriorating security, and the increasing social concerns in the refugee camps in Nepal. These groups of refugees, when able to exert their agency, chose to resettle based on their evaluation of their (then) present situations.

Along with the above, the Bhutanese refugees chose to resettle or stay in Nepal based on their perception of the resettlement countries. Young and educated refugees were especially attracted by the remittances pouring into the refugee camps and were expectant of a better life and societal integration (which according to most refugees was citizenship) and chose to

resettle. However, other refugees (such as the elderly) were skeptical of the intention of the resettlement countries and fearful of downward social mobility and integration difficulties in the West, so they had apprehension about resettlement. This dissertation, therefore, established that the agency exercised and the choices made by the Bhutanese refugees were based on: a) their experiences in Bhutan prior to flight, b) their experiences in Nepal during displacement, and c) their perception of resettlement and resettlement countries. In general, some Bhutanese refugees chose to resettle because of push factors in Bhutan and pressure in Nepal, while other chose to stay in Nepal to retain their social identity, personal power, and control over their lives.

However, the above conclusions are inadequate because they do not highlight the situation of 'all' Bhutanese refugees. In fact, the choices the refugees made and the agency they exercised was more complex and nuanced. As indicated in Chapter V, there were many refugees who chose to resettle unwillingly. They chose to resettle with (or without) a clear understanding of what resettlement offered because they believed it was a favorable option for their children and other younger generations in the family. Similarly, there were groups of Bhutanese refugees who wanted to resettle but were unable to make a choice to do so. 'Unregistered' refugees, women, underage children, refugees with poor health and disabilities, and refugees with 'criminal' and 'fraud' accusations in Nepal and Bhutan were some among them. As such, Chapter V establishes that Bhutanese refugees' membership in social categories such as 'official/legal' status, gender and sexuality, age, ethnicity and caste, class, 'ableness,' etc. influenced their choices to resettle or stay in Nepal.

Building on Chapters III, IV, and V, and connecting the theory in Chapter II, Chapter VI continues an intersectional analysis of the choices made and agency exercised by Bhutanese refugees. Chapter VI describes how Bhutanese refugees' affiliation with different intersecting social categories of gender and sexuality, age, ethnicity and caste, class, 'ableness,' etc. aided or hindered their freedom, autonomy, and resettlement choices. Most adult Lhotshampa men, due to their superior and privileged positioning within their families and communities, were able to exercise their agency and make their choices freely. Women, underage children, unhealthy and disabled refugees, and other disadvantaged groups of refugees, on the other hand, due to the inferior positioning within their families and experiencing sexism, heteronormativity, ageism, classism, ableism, ethnic and caste discriminations, among other systems of oppressions, were either unable to exercise their agency or had it diminished. In most cases, these groups of refugees had no choice but to conform to the choices of their family members, especially the patriarch. There were, however, some refugees in situations of

multiple simultaneous oppressions who could change (or resist) the choices made by their families by negotiating their social, cultural, political roles and expectations; rearranging their relationships with one another and with various institution and structures; and reshaping their multiple, often contradictory and somewhat malleable, identities.

Chapter VI also highlights the asymmetrical power relations between the refugees, resettlement organizations (mainly the UNHCR and the IOM), the GoN, and the resettlement countries and how they affected the resettlement choices made and agencies exercised by the Bhutanese refugees. The GoN, resettlement organizations, and the CWG operated their power and authority over the Bhutanese refugees by profiling, policing, and gatekeeping the resettlement processes. They chose which refugees would be resettled, where, how (individually or as families), and how soon. Additionally, they imposed domestic (GoN) and Western (CWG) ideologies, norms, and laws on the refugees and their families, which reproduced and normalized sexism, ageism, ableism, pro-natalism, classism, ethnic and caste hierarchies, among other systems of oppression and discriminated against the refugees and aggravated, if not maintained, inequalities and hierarchies of power among the refugees. These resettlement policies, norms, and laws especially discriminated against refugees and refugee families with 'complicated' marital arrangements, poor health and disabilities, and 'criminal' accusations in Nepal or Bhutan.

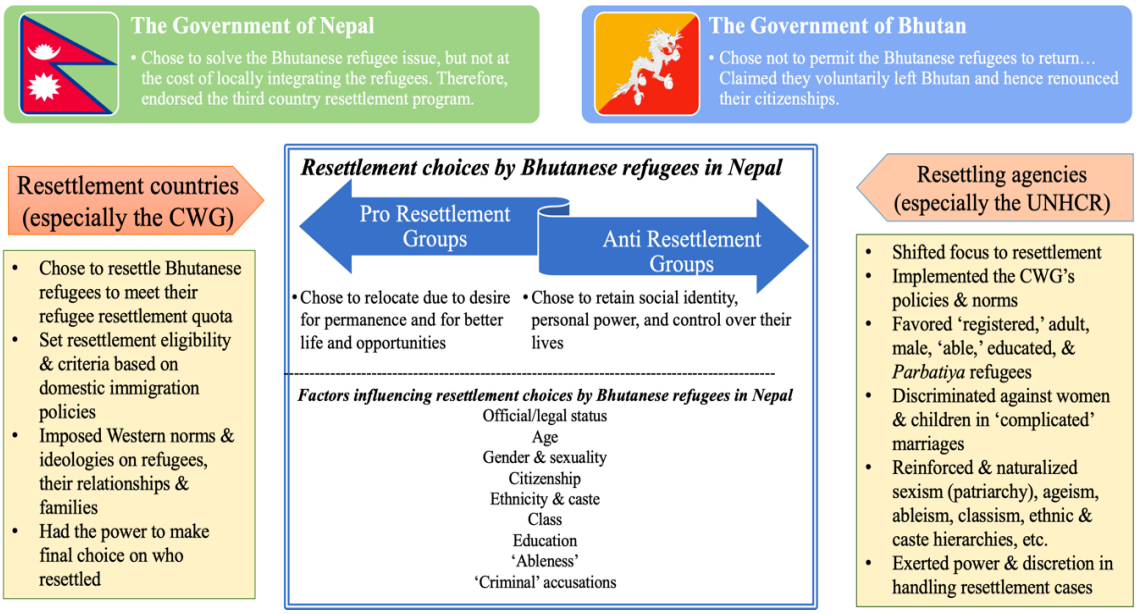
The third country resettlement program favored refugee men in polygamous and mixed marriages. The Bhutanese refugee men in polygamous marriages could choose to resettle with their first, i.e., 'official/legal' wives or divorce them to resettle with their 'favorite' wives and children. Meanwhile, their second, third, and consecutive wives and their children lacked legitimacy and were denied refugee status and choice to resettle. Similarly, refugee men in mixed marriages could resettle with their local wives and children, provided their wives could obtain Nepali/Indian citizenship documents or passports. Meanwhile, refugee women in mixed marriages had their refugee identity revoked and were also denied the choice to resettle. Unlike polygamous and mixed marriages, underage marriages affected the resettlement choices and impeded the resettlement processes of all family members. This did not mean that all women in polygamous, mixed, and underage relationships had the same fate or experience. In fact, many Bhutanese refugee women took it upon themselves to control their own destiny. Some women, especially young and educated women from high-class and high-caste *Parbatiya* families with the help of their maternal family or on their own, divorced their husbands, (re)gained their refugee status, and qualified for resettlement. These 'empowered' women, especially ones in situations of abuse and domestic violence, resisted patriarchy, exercised their

agencies, and changed future possibilities for themselves and their children. Similarly, other women stayed back with their husbands, albeit unwillingly, and resisted pressures to divorce and sever family bonds and ties. In doing so, they also resisted the Westerns norms pertaining to 'ideal' marriages and 'ideal' family compositions. For other refugee women with sedimented intersected identities, for example the uneducated, elderly, disabled women from working class and low-caste *Matwali* ethnicity, divorce or any form of resistance to hegemonic norms was a high bar. They had no choice but to conform to the rules, norms, and expectations presented to them. There were yet other Bhutanese refugees who adopted strategies such as eloping, running away from home, or remarrying to create obstacles for their spouses (and their family's) resettlement process. Their actions, however, cannot be considered agentic.

The resettlement organizations and countries exerted and maintained power in their relationships with the Bhutanese refugees based on established ideas about authority and governmentality that privileged them (see Porter, January 12, 2018). In the name of protecting the refugees and maintaining the integrity of the resettlement process, they exercised discretion in handling the Bhutanese refugee resettlement cases, barring some Bhutanese refugees with poor health, disabilities, and 'criminal' and 'fraud' accusations in Nepal and Bhutan, while allowing others to resettle. The Bhutanese refugees, especially the ones who were eager to resettle, broke ties with their sick, disabled, 'criminal' family members and chose to resettle with their nuclear families or alone. They did this to enhance their choice, chance, and speed of resettlement. In doing so, they exercised their suboptimal agency and resisted the norms and expectations associated with culture and society. They, however, accepted Western ideologies of individualism, independence, 'close' relationships, and 'ideal' family imposed on them by resettlement organization and countries. Other refugees in similar situations, chose to stay in Nepal with family members who impeded their choice and chance for resettlement. They exercised their limited and situated agency and picked between the two undesirable options. In doing so, they held on to their families and value systems while resisting Western impositions on their relationships and culture. Therefore, the inequalities of power between and within the Bhutanese refugees' multiple overlapping identities, which they experienced simultaneously, led to their intersectional positioning. The differences in their intersectional positioning led to differences in their ability, extent, and degree of agency they exerted and the choices they made (see Showden, 2011). However, certain groups of Bhutanese refugees, in spite of their differences, shared commonalities in their experiences of privilege and oppression. Unregistered refugees, especially refugee women in 'complicated' marital situations and their children, underage children, refugees with health issues and disabilities, refugees with criminal

records in Bhutan or Nepal shared similar experiences of disadvantage, which marginalized them from resettlement. In many instances, these groups of refugees shared the connection of being 'unregistered' in the refugee camps in Nepal, which barred them from making their choice to resettle. Therefore, numerous Bhutanese refugees built (provisional) coalitions and collectively participated in numerous mass protest, especially hunger strikes, to pressure the GoN and the UNHCR to register them as Bhutanese refugees in Nepal. In doing so, they qualified for resettlement and showed their "ability to craft solutions that deviate from the rules imposed upon them" (Griek, 2012:27). They also reshaped the understanding (and construction) of 'who the Bhutanese refugees are.' All of this indicates that resettlement choices were not simple (see Fig. 8).

Figure 8: Bhutanese Refugee Resettlement Choice Dynamics



Source: Compiled by author

This dissertation, by showcasing the varied perspectives and (multiple) choices made by the Bhutanese refugees, especially how they experienced and responded to resettlement, provided a complex and nuanced understanding of the situation of the Bhutanese refugees as well as the third country resettlement process. It exposes how the concerns of many refugees can be disregarded and left unaddressed when the differences between refugees, their experiences, their needs, and their perceptions are generalized. It also shows what can happen if refugees' intersectional identities and positionings are ignored when formulating programs,

policies, and (durable) solutions for them. In the case of the Bhutanese refugees, because the resettlement process did not adopt an anti-oppressive framework, the process had adverse impacts on some resettling as well as most refugees remaining in Nepal and their families. This dissertation also shows the disparity between 'what many Bhutanese refugees wanted' and 'what solutions were provided to them' by the international refugee regime. Such flaws on the part of the regime are the reason why many refugees (including the Bhutanese refugees) have remained trapped in a never-ending spiral of negative experiences, even after their social reintegration. Although this dissertation neither elaborates on nor validates the above speculation, there is room for research into why there is a gap between what refugees want, and the solutions that are provided to them by the regime. What ought to be done to bridge that gap, either with this or other groups of refugees in the future, should be considered.

Refugee resettlement is complex and varies according to the large number of national and international variables and stakeholders involved. This dissertation addresses one aspect of this issue. In pointing out the need to listen to the refugees and consider the differences among them it answers the research questions posed. At the same time, it simultaneously stimulated other questions and queries, which it has not answered. Some of these questions are: How could the third country resettlement of the Bhutanese refugees have been more just and humane? Could there have been other (better) choices available to the Bhutanese refugees other than resettling or remaining in Nepal? What eventually happened to the Bhutanese refugees marginalized by the third country resettlement process? Are the experiences of the Bhutanese refugees and their resettlement choices unique to this case or are they applicable to refugee groups in other parts of the world? Were the Bhutanese refugees satisfied with the choices they made and the agencies they exercised? Or, did they (at a later time) regret their choices and their actions? Not being able to answer these questions are some of the limitations of this research.

My intent for these questions is to serve as a point of departure for other in-depth research and analysis about Bhutanese (or other groups of) refugees. My hope is this dissertation contributes to the search in finding better solutions to statelessness in the near future, solutions that are acceptable to 'all,' if not most groups of refugees, along with other stakeholders involved in the third country resettlement process.

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Appendix – I

Table: Nepal Social Hierarchy, 1854

Hierarchy	Habitat	Belief/religion
A) WATER ACCEPTABLE (PURE)		
1. Wearers of the sacred thread/tagadhari		
"Upper caste" Brahmans and Chhetris (Parbatiya)	Hills	Hinduism
"Upper caste" (Madhesi)	Tarai	Hinduism
"Upper caste" (Newar)	Kathmandu Valley	Hinduism
2. Matwali Alcohol drinkers (non-enslavable)		
Gurung, Magar, Sunuwar, Thakali, Rai, Limbu	Hills	Tribal/Shamanism
Newar	Kathmandu Valley	Buddhism
3. Matawali Alcohol drinkers (enslavable)		
Bhote (including Tamang)	Mountain/Hills	Buddhism
Chepang, Gharti, Hayu	Hills	
Kumal, Tharu	Inner Tarai	Animism
B) WATER UN-ACCEPTABLE/Pani Nachalne (IMPURE)		
4. Touchable		
Dhobi, Kasai, Kusale, Kulu	Kathmandu Valley	Hinduism
Musalman	Tarai	Islam
Mlechha (foreigner)	Europe	Christianity, etc.
5. Untouchable (achut)		
Badi, Damai, Gaine, Kadara, Kami, Sarki (Parbatiya)	Hill	Hinduism
Chyame, Pode (Newar)	Kathmandu Valley	Hinduism

Source: Adapted from Gurung (2002).

Source: Bennett, Dahal, & Govindasamy (2008:2)

Appendix – II

Table: Major Castes and Ethnic groups of Nepal with Regional Divisions & Social groups (based on 2001 Census)

	Main Caste/Ethnic Groups (7)	Caste/Ethnic Groups with Regional Divisions (11) and Social Groups (103) from 2001 Census	
Caste Groups	***1. Brahaman/Chhetri***	**1.1**	**Hill Brahman** Hill Brahman
		1.2	**Hill Chhetri** Chhetri, Thakuri, Sanyasi
		1.3	**Tarai/Madhesi Brahman/Chhetri** Madhesi Brahman, Nurang, Rajput, Kayastha
	2. Tarai/Madhesi Other Castes	**2.1**	**Tarai/Madhesi Other Castes** Kewat, Mallah, Lohar, Nuniya, Kahar, Lodha, Rajbhar, Bing, Mali Kamar, Dhuniya, Yadav, Teli, Koiri, Kurmi, Sonar, Baniya, Kalwar, Thakur/Hazam, Kanu, Sudhi, Kumhar, Haluwai , Badhai, Barai, Bhediyar/ Gaderi
	3. Dalits	**3.1**	**Hill Dalit** Kami, Damai/Dholi, Sarki, Badi, Gaine, Unidentified Dalits
		3.2	**Tarai/Madhesi Dalit** Chamar/Harijan, Musahar, Dushad/Paswan, Tatma, Khatwe, Dhobi, Baantar, Chidimar, Dom, Halkhor
Adivasi/Janajatis	***4. Newar***	**4**	**Newar** Newar
	5. Janajati	**5.1**	**Hill/Mountain Janajati** Tamang, Kumal, Sunuwar, Majhi, Danuwar, Thami/Thangmi, Darai, Bhote, Baramu/Bramhu, Pahari, Kusunda, Raji, Raute, Chepang/Praja, Hayu, Magar, Chyantal, Rai, Sherpa, Bhujel/Gharti, Yakha, Thakali, Limbu, Lepcha, Bhote, Byansi, Jirel, Hyalmo, Walung, Gurung, Dura
		5.2.	**Tarai Janajati** Tharu, Jhangad, Dhanuk, Rajbanshi, Gangai, Santhal/Satar, Dhimal, Tajpuriya, Meche, Koche, Kisan, Munda, Kusbadiya/Patharkata, Unidentified Adibasi/Janajati
Other	***6. Muslim***	**6**	**Muslim** Madhesi Muslim, Churoute (Hill Muslim)
	7. Other	**7**	**Other** Marwari, Bangali, Jain, Punjabi/Sikh, Unidentified Others

Source: Bennett, Dahal, & Govindasamy (2008:3)

*Note: *According to this table, there were 7 major caste and ethnic groups, 11 caste and ethnic groups with regional divisions, and 103 social divisions in Nepal during the 2001 census.*

Appendix-III

Steps Involved in the Resettlement of the Bhutanese Refugees from Nepal to the United States		
Steps	Activities involved	Authority involved
1.	Expressing desire to resettle by submitting a Declaration of Interest (DoI) form to the UNHCR	Refugee(s)
2.	Refugee verification and assessment of need and justification for resettlement	UNHCR
3.	If verified, interview and counseling about the resettlement process	UNHCR
4.	Refugee case documentation, especially filling out the 'RRF'	UNHCR
5.	Photo and signing the RRF by refugees	UNHCR
6.	Submit refugees' resettlement cases for approval to the embassy of the resettlement states (maintain correspondence for clarifications)	UNHCR
7.	Submit refugees' resettlement case file to IOM upon approval by the concerned states	UNHCR
8.	Interview and counseling about the resettlement process and photo by Refugee Support Center (RSC), South Asia	IOM
9.	Case management, security checks, and pre-screening of refugees by Refugee Support Center (RSC), South Asia	IOM
10.	If eligible to migrate under the US laws, interview and screening by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) officer (in the case of the US)	DHS
11.	If approved, visa medical examination by the MHD, IOM at least six months before departure	IOM
12.	If cleared, exit-permit and Travel Document interview with the GoN	GoN,
13.	Five-day cultural orientation by the Refugee Support Center (RSC), South Asia	IOM
14.	Pre-departure medical screening for refugees previously diagnosed with TB approximately 3 weeks before departure	IOM
15.	First pre-embarkation medical check before departure to Kathmandu by the MHD	IOM
16.	Domestic travel to IOM Transit Center in Kathmandu, Nepal	IOM
17.	Travel Documents and Exit Permits	GoN
18.	Fit-to-travel (final pre-embarkation) health examination and final orientation	IOM

Source: compiled by author from information gathered from UNHCR, IOM, and CDC websites and interviews with UNHCR and IOM personnel