Navigating a culture of fear

Transgenerational processes and structural violence in Nepal

Carola Titze
Amsterdam Masters of Medical Anthropology
University of Amsterdam

Supervisor: Ria Reis
August 5th 2011, Amsterdam
It is very difficult for women to live this life and manage everything. There is ten times the difference in having a son and a daughter. If one has a son, everyone praises and is happy, but if it is a daughter, they are sad and they say ‘How many times can you push those daughters back down?’

_Sheetal, A Mother in Siddhikot_
Summary

Women lead difficult lives in Nepal. Suffering structural violence, they are subjected to hard work, lack of control over when and who to marry, and do not receive equal education opportunities to men. From a young age girls are taught to be fearful of their environment and subjected to extreme discipline by their parents, which is also enforced by society through discrimination, gossip and backstabbing. The research presented here focuses on how a culture of fear is transgenerationally transmitted to girls within families, and also through processes within society that produce the culture of fear. Finding suggest that a parent’s life history, poverty, social status and perceptions of their environment influences the fears that they subject onto their daughters, and that at the same time these fears are then perpetuated by the culture of fear that lies in the community as a whole. The emphasis is on explicit processes of how fear is transmitted to girls and with a particular focus of how these girls then navigate these processes. The use of fear is explored through four case studies, which emphasize four major themes of fear that predominate within society: fear of society, fear of God, fear of punishment and the fears that poverty brings. Within each case study there is a focus on how the life histories and worldviews of the parents and community influence the navigation of their daughters.

The research took place in a village in the district of Lalitpur, on the edge of the Kathmandu valley in Nepal. Four of eight families were chosen as case studies these represent families with mostly, if not all daughters. The inspiration for this project stems from my work experience in school psychology and an interest in determining parental mental health problems and the consequential effects on their children. This research is to address the gap in knowledge about the effects of structural violence and suffering on children, especially in identifying the causal relationships between the social context and child mental health.

Practice theory guided this research. On a general level, the aim of this research is to contribute to the growing field of child anthropology and more specifically, the aim is to contribute to a greater understanding through which processes of fear can transfer transgenerationally, and how it causes girls to navigate environments of suffering. This focused ethnographic research used participant observation, projective techniques, in depth interviews and focus group discussions.

Concepts: transgenerational suffering; social navigation; culture of fear; structural violence.
Thank you,

First and foremost I would like to thank my classmate Nawaraj Upadhaya without whom the research and this incredible experience would have never been possible. Taking on the extra challenge of ensuring my research access and happiness, while simultaneously doing his own research, is something I appreciate beyond words. His guidance, thoughts and especially his enthusiasm made my fieldwork an all around incredibly memorable experience. Thank you to Sujen Man Maharjan who tolerated my fast walking pace, terrible sense of humor and endless fascination with ‘odd things’ for an incredible six weeks of fun and laughter. Thank you to Ria Reis, who gave me the final push to go to Nepal, and always put me back on track. The guidance and insights always created clarity in moments of confusion and always brought new motivation and a desire to push myself to a new level. Also thank you to Joop de Jong who was always ready to answer to my struggles with patience and new insights.

I also particularly want to thank Suraj Koirala whose generosity and amazing family will always put a smile on my face. This thank you especially extends to all the many members of the Acharya family, which has become like my own. My appreciation also goes out to all the families and the teachers at the local school who helped me with my research and made me feel at home. I also want to thank all the amazing teachers and support staff who collectively creates AMMA. Creating a successful program is a team effort and it truly has been an incredible year with support and guidance that was inspiring and motivational. Last but not least I want to thank my classmates, whose enthusiasm, sense of humor and incredible motivation made this year an absolute pleasure.
# Table of Contents

**SUMMARY** 3

**STATEMENT OF RESEARCH PROBLEM** 7

**PART I: CHAPTER 1** 11
- A TURBULENT HISTORY 11
- TRAUMA AND SUFFERING IN NEPAL 12
- STRUCTURAL VIOLENCE AND SOCIAL SUFFERING 12
- SITUATING THE WOMEN 13
- THE FAMILY: IMPACTS OF HOUSEHOLD AND PARENTING 14
- PROCESSES OF TRANSMISSION 16
- RESEARCHING CHILDREN AND CHILD PERSPECTIVES 16
- POTENTIAL OUTCOMES 17

**CHAPTER 2** 18
- THEORETICAL APPROACH AND CONCEPTS 18
- RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND OBJECTIVES 18
- CONCEPTS 19

**CHAPTER 3** 21
- THE RESEARCH PROCESS 21
- THE ETHNOGRAPHIC EXPERIENCE 22
- PARENT’S FGDs 22
- SEMI STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS 23
- PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION 23
- CHILDREN’S FGDs AND PROJECTIVE TECHNIQUES 24
- FAMILY DRAWINGS 25
- SAMPLING AND THE CASE STUDIES 26
- ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS 27
- THE ETHICS OF GIVING AND TAKING 27
- THE INFLUENCE OF ETHNICITY AND CASTE 28
- RESEARCH DATA 30
- DATA ANALYSIS 30

**PART II: CHAPTER 4** 31
- SIDDHIKOT 31

**CHAPTER 5** 33
- REVEALING A CULTURE OF FEAR 33
- ENTERING THE FAMILY’S KITCHENS 36

**PART III: CHAPTER 6** 37
- FEAR OF SOCIETY 37
- EXPLICIT PROCESSES IN THE CONTEXT OF THEIR FIGHT FOR SURVIVAL 38
- Navigating social expectations 41
- Navigating discrimination 42
My professional career has consistently involved working with children and I left for Nepal with confidence that I would bond with the Nepalese children as I usually do during work encounters, or during my globe trotting adventures. I was about to receive a huge wakeup call. It was not that I did not get along with them, but rather that I could not bond with them through my usual tricks of goofiness, athleticism, talk about the fantastic nature of water guns, Disney movies, or talk of things like crushes and 'boy cooties.' In Africa I also had a language barrier but I was always able create a common bond through random actions, athleticism, or pulling out my camera to take ever increasingly creative photos of them. Not here, and especially not with the girls.

My research was about child navigation and child perspectives and the shyness presented by the girls and their unwillingness to engage, interact, play or laugh became a challenge in building rapport, but also to get their emic perspectives on family lives. On the flip side, this difficulty revealed a lot about girls and their navigation in their family and society. It especially provided rich data on the extreme level of social control that is inflicted on girls to be shy, not to interact with strangers and to be submissive to their parents and society's expectations.

**Statement of Research Problem**

There is so much discrimination in the society towards daughters. If there are sons, they say 'this is for the sons'. They don't count the daughters as family members. It is as if the daughters are unwanted.

*Sheetal, a mother in Siddhikot*

While visiting one of the families in the Nepalese village of Siddhikot, Sheetal a mother of three daughters consistently emphasized the importance of girls knowing their duties and responsibilities in order to prove their worthiness for a good marriage. She was married at the age of thirteen herself, and married her eldest daughter by force into an arranged marriage only shortly before we arrived. Now she fears that her other daughters may not live up to the expectations that parents might wish for their sons wives. The qualities that parents seek in future daughters in law are diligence, silence and obedience. From a young age, girls grow up with the knowledge that they are to be the
possession of their future husbands family, and are often neglected in education, nutrition and opportunities compared to male family members (Stash & Hannum 2001). Nepal is a patriarchic society “with most women having little or no say about whom and when they marry, whether or not to bear children, and/or how many children to have” (Turi, Tamang & Shah 2011:2). In Nepal the female gender is an independent risk factor for depression and anxiety (Kohrt et al. 2009), and preliminary findings have suggested that suicide is the number one cause of death for women of child bearing age, and 21% of these deaths were among girls eighteen and younger (Suvedi et al. 2009).

Research in zones of political violence has suggested that parents “serve as filters through which children process the meaning of threatening events” (Tol et al. forthcoming: 8) and that parents’ ability to ensure and make meaning of stressful events is essential on a child’s process of adjustment. In Nepal the parents role in providing understanding to their children of suffering, trauma and their environment is significant, because Nepal is one of the poorest countries in the world and has a complex history with long standing political and structural violence, which has resulted in high levels of social suffering on the population as a whole (Tol et al.2010). The effects of parents suffering and trauma on a child’s wellbeing have shown that suffering and trauma can transfer transgenerationally. Studies among Holocaust survivors and their offspring (Yehuda 2001), and Afghani torture survivors and their children (Daud, Skoglund & Rydelius 2005) have shown the children of survivors exhibited symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and reflect a traumatized worldview without having experienced the traumatic events themselves (Yehuda et al. 2001; Dickson Gomez 2002). This evidence provides an interesting base for looking into how particularly girls are affected by parents behaviors, attitudes and suffering in a place like Nepal, where structural violence is evident in families as well as the community.

Research on children in Nepal is minimal and especially on the link between social determinants and mental health (Tol et al. 2010). The effect of being discriminated against in society has an effect on mental health and perceptions of self worth, and this is particularly relevant for women of lower status within the Hindu caste system, which still has strong roots within society
This discrimination can have an effect from a young age onwards and how parents make sense of it to their children plays an important role in how a child understands their self-worth and their environment (Tol et al. forthcoming).

There is a noticeable gap in knowledge on transgenerational trauma and suffering in low income countries, especially in situations of political and structural violence where child mental health is of major concern (Dickson Gomez 2002). In post war El Salvador, Dickson-Gomez (2002) showed processes of how trauma was transmitted to children who did not directly experience the war. Children as young as six years old suffered from a traumatized world view, which was reflected by mistrust in neighbors, police, politicians and an exaggerated responsibility of wellbeing for their parents. Dickson Gomez’s ethnographic work remains the single qualitative study on transgenerational trauma in post war settings, and there is yet much to be discovered in order to understand processes of transmission and effects on children in situations of social suffering (Dickson-Gomez 2002). Relevant is also her emphasis on how transgenerational suffering extends past the family and into societal processes that also inflict suffering and trauma on the children and their perceptions of their own safety and environment.

Nepal’s history with political and structural violence provides a base for investigating transgenerational suffering within families, but also to investigate the impact of society on these processes. In order to shed light on how suffering is transgenerationally transmitted, I spent six weeks researching families in a village in Nepal and explored the explicit processes of transgenerational transmission to daughters, with a particular focus on how girls navigate these processes. I chose to focus on girls specifically because of the high degree of suffering for women in Nepal (Nightingale 2011; Turi, Tamang & Shah 2011). Findings revealed that explicit processes of instilling fear in the girls is the most prominent method of projecting transgenerational suffering, which lead to my focus on four themes of how fear is transmitted to girls. Fear has been explored particularly in post war settings and how it affects the psychology of the individual as well as the social fabric (Salimovich, Lira & Weinstein 1992; Totten 2009). In Nepal, Pettigrew and Adhikhari (2009) looked at the effects of fear on
society and how it evolved throughout the Maoist revolution, but how fear has been passed from parent to child and how it affects their worldview has not yet been researched.

By focusing on the explicit processes of transmissions of fear, I distance myself from implicit notions such as idioms of distress and psychological classifications of trauma and psychological processes and effects of fear. Idioms of distress have received some attention in Nepal (Kohrt & Hruschka 2010; Kohrt & Harper 2008, Kohrt et al. 2005), however explicit practices have not been studied in situations of suffering.

How girls then navigate these fears and the processes of transmission is also a major focus of what is presented here. Rosenkrantz Lindegaard (2010) looked at how boys navigate situations of violence in Cape Town, but applying the concept of social navigation to transgenerational suffering has not been done. This focus allowed me to provide insight on children as social actors in light of transgenerational suffering within families and the community.

Gaining knowledge and understanding into the explicit processes of transmission can aid future psychosocial interventions on the family level, and provide insight into what behaviors, actions and understandings promote resilience in children in light of suffering and discrimination. According to Tol et al., interventions in places that have high social suffering and political violence should aim their energy towards “altering problematic settings rather than disturbed intra psychic functioning” (2010:42). On another level, this research also contributes to the developing field of child anthropology and to viewing children as social actors in difficult life situations.
Part I: History and Society

This literature review follows the flow chart presented in the annexes.

Chapter 1

A turbulent history

Nepal is a small south Asian country, landlocked between Tibet and India, and it is known by tourists for its incredible scenery, to mountaineers for the Himalayas and Mount Everest, and to spiritual seekers as a place for meditation and yoga. By tourists the country is often expressed as a place of smiles and hospitable locals who skillfully wobble their heads with smiles and friendly gestures. But scratch the surface just a little and a complex hierarchical structure and a turbulent history unveils the underlying discrimination and power structures that has created a violent past and an unstable and unpredictable present.

Nepal has had a long history of political and structural violence, mass migration and poverty. It is one of the poorest countries in the world and has yet to recover from the ‘People’s war,’ a decade of violent conflicts that raged between 1996 to 2006 between the Maoist rebels and the Nepalese state. The Maoist insurgency was a result of deep-seated structural inequalities such as chronic poverty, unequal distribution of wealth, ethnic, regional and caste discrimination, disappointment with state governance and violent state responses to the Maoist movement (Tol et al. 2010).

In order to get a full picture of the psychosocial wellbeing of post war Nepal, with its long standing political instability and traumatic stress from the civil war, it is also necessary to look at the pre existing hardships such as lack of education, poverty, gender, family and financial stressors, and caste that contribute to the cause of social suffering (Tol et al. 2010). The Hindu caste system is no longer enforced but it still holds strong roots in Nepalese society today (Nightingale 2011; Dahal 1996). It was officially abolished with the new legal code in 1964, but in some cases it has become more distinct and prominent
since because those who were traditionally higher have “usurped much of the power, influence and prestige available in the system” (Dahal 1996:1), which has contributed to the political instability in the country.

**Trauma and Suffering in Nepal**

Research in Nepal on trauma and social suffering is in its infancy and difficult to characterize as a whole because of the ethnic diversity (Tol et al. 2010). Most research on Nepal on political violence and mental health has focused on either psychiatric symptoms and mental disorders in quantitative studies, or context and psychological distress in qualitative studies (Tol et al. 2010). Processes of transgenerational trauma fall into the latter category, however transgenerational trauma in Nepal has not yet been researched.

The impact of caste on mental health has been examined by Kohrt et al. (2009) found that Dalit castes have a higher rate of depression than higher castes. This greater expression of depression was mediated by a higher exposure to stressful life events, processes of poverty and livelihood insecurity, as well as discrimination.

Experiencing trauma and suffering is highly discriminated by Nepalese society, because it is associated with bad karma (Kohrt & Hruschka 2010). As a result families tend to hide negative events because of stigma and loss of social status. It is suggested that in order to cope with traumatic events, sufferers create a ‘conspiracy of silence’ (Danieli 1998), which can indirectly cause suffering for the offspring (Cohen 2009).

**Structural Violence and social suffering**

Structural problems can change the social fabric and perceptions of the world, and changing societal practices in turn influences and transforms ways of being in the world, individual perceptions, as well as how parents form a child's world view. Social suffering has been defined by Kleinman, Das and Lock as the “assemblage of human problems that have their origins and consequences in the devastating injuries that social forces can inflict on human experience” (1997.ix). Suffering has a close link between societal and individual problems and is closely related to lack of power and suppression. Social suffering can impact the social
experience for an individual, as well as the collective (Kleinman, Das & Lock 1997).

Different social ‘axes’ of suffering, including gender, class, race and socioeconomic status need to simultaneously be examined in order to shed light on the ‘political economy of brutality’ (Farmer 1997). No single axis can increase risk of extreme social suffering, and therefore Farmer calls for a “more fine grained and systemic analysis of power and privilege in discussions of who is likely to suffer and in what ways” (1997:297). Suffering in rural Nepal is not evenly spread and certain groups, classes, or ethnic groups may suffer to a greater extent because of their position in society. Nepalese women suffer from discriminatory laws, a higher work load, lower literacy and earlier average mortality and thereby topping the gender inequality index in South Asia (Gautam et al. 2001). It is the groups with the least amount of power that tend to suffer the most, and in Nepal the caste system suppresses ethnic groups and lower castes and thereby empowers those born into the upper classes. Those of a higher class cannot share food, or enter the house of a lower caste individual, and cleansing rituals need to be fulfilled in order to cleanse the body again if contact was established (Tol et al. 2005). For families growing up in the lower caste there is a lack of agency and ability to shift positions in society. Children in particular have been particularly affected by social suffering, and joined the Maoist rebel army in order to escape problems such as caste and gender discrimination, marginalization and ethnic discrimination (Kohrt 2010a). Social suffering affects those the most that have the least amount of power in society (Kleinman, Das and Lock 1997) and being low caste and female are major factors that can increase suffering in Nepal.

Situating the Women
The focus on how girls navigate transgenerational suffering in Nepal is a focus inspired by the literature on the high amount of suffering that women face through structural violence in the form of discrimination (Nightingale 2011; Leone, Mathews & Zuanna 2003) and domestic violence (Puri, Tamang, Shah 2010 & 2011, Dhakal 2008). Nepal is a patriarchal society where women have
little choice over marriage or the number of children to have (Turi, Tamang & Shah 2011:2).

Women on average are less educated than men (Stash & Hannum 2001), and carry a heavier psychological burden (Kohrt et al. 2009). According to Trivedi, Mishara and Kendurkar (2007), women also frequently lack social support for their suffering. Problems are often not discussed outside the family because of cultural values where guilt and shame are used to enforce the norms of the family, which can in turn lead to higher mental distress. Women in large are “overworked and unappreciated, working as ‘invisible’ producers, under a shadow of violence throughout their lives” (Trivedi, Mishara & Kendurkar 2007:221). The female gender was found to be a strong predictor of poor mental health in a study on caste and mental health in Nepal because of domestic and alcohol abuse of male family members, pressure to bear sons, many children with a competition for resources, and the stress of child marriage (Kohrt et al. 2009).

The difference of being born a boy or girl is evident from a young age onward. Leone, Matthews and Zuanna (2003) examined the discrepancy and found that mortality rate among girls is higher than with boys, with contributing factors such as neglect of younger daughters through lack of nutrition, care and access to healthcare. Women are desired especially as work force, but boys are highly prized because their role is to care for the elderly in old age, while the girls after marriage belong to the husband’s family. The boys also carry the family name and perform the funeral rituals, and for this reason women suffer great pressure to continue having children until they have a son. Growing up as ‘second class citizens’ can create high levels of suffering for females in families, but also in society and how daughters understand this is largely reliant on their family, the support and how they make sense of it.

The Family: Impacts of household and parenting
The crucial role of the family in explaining adverse situations and violence is well established (Betancourt & Khan 2008; Garbarino & Kostelny 1996; Wallen &
Rubin 1997). Research on Holocaust\(^1\) survivors and their children, (Yehuda et al. 2001) and Afghani torture survivors and their offspring (Daud & Rydelius 2009), have shown that trauma can transfer transgenerationally. There is evidence linking parent trauma exposure and subsequent maltreatment of children\(^2\) (Ertem, Leventhal & Dobbs 2000). The majority of transgenerational research has focused on the industrialized world and been conducted within a psychological framework with a focus on diagnosis, which distances from the explicit processes of transmission. Qualitative, and especially ethnographic research on transgenerational trauma is difficult to come by, even more so in post war settings and low- income countries.

Focusing on the family unit, there has been research on families in zones of political violence, which has shown that the family and parenting styles can serve as a protective factor for the child’s wellbeing. Tol et al.’s (forthcoming) discussion on ecological resilience provides insight into the importance of family in the mental health of a child. The review of research provides an analysis of coping strategies, protective factors from various cultures of children exposed to war encompassed by the concept of ecological resilience. Summarizing all the studies is not possible for this thesis, however results showed that family’s adaptive functioning, parenting styles and emotional arousal are central in preventing mental health problems among children from various zones of political violence such as Uganda, Nepal and Yugoslavia. Family cohesion provides protective effects, as well as high levels of family social support, healthy family adaptation and decreased negative role of perceived war stress. The influence of the parents’ ability to ensure and make meaning of stressful events is essential on a child’s process adjustment. What remains unanswered in Tol et al.’s review is through what daily processes the resilience is established.

---

1 Children of Holocaust survivors responded to events similar to PTSD: (1) The belief that the world is extremely dangerous (2) believing themselves to be incompetent and unable, and (3) blaming themselves for parent’s symptoms and problems.

2 A child growing up in a stable and safe environment that suffers one trauma can distinguish a traumatic event as unusual and have less risk of developing mental health problems, whereas repeated trauma such as war or continuous abuse does not provide the contrast of usual and unusual and leads to higher rates of PTSD and other symptomatology (Sack et al 1993).
Processes of Transmission

Processes of transgenerational transmission have been identified in domestic violence and child abuse (Gardner 1999). However, research so far has not considered the processes of transmission in every day life, as well as the circumstances in which transmissions occur aside from Dickson Gomez’s (2002) ethnography on post-war El Salvador. Her work remains the single anthropological account of transgenerational suffering in a post war setting. She distinguishes processes through which suffering can be transmitted between generations. She identified processes that relayed trauma of the war to children that had not directly experienced the war itself. Trauma is transmitted through the idiom of distress nervios, which expresses implicit somatic symptoms of problems that cannot be voiced, such as grief, loneliness, loss of social fabric and trust. Explicit transmissions are transferred through processes such as gossip, accusations, lies, envy and narratives of war. Her work sets groundwork in the work of transgenerational suffering in anthropology, however the identification of explicit symptoms is specific to El Salvador, and neglects the child’s perspective and reactions to the transmissions.

Researching Children and Child perspectives

Children’s voices are far underrepresented in research (Hardman 2001). Research on children is often carried out from an adult perspective, because of their ‘muted’ and vulnerable position in society (Christiansen 2000). Research on children in Nepal is especially minimal. The focus has been on child soldiers (Kohrt et al. 2010a, Kohrt et al. 2010b, Kohrt et al. 2008), a psychosocial intervention in a school (Jordans et al. 2010), and on the effects of witnessing violence of war (Pettigrew 2007, Boyden et al. 2006, Singh 2004). The only look at Nepalese children from an anthropological analysis is Pettigrew’s (2007) look at children and how they had to ‘learn to be silent’ during the Maoist conflict, and Kohrt et al. (2010a) look at mental health and psychosocial wellbeing of child soldiers in Nepal. Kohrt et al.’s data explains why children joined the rebel army at their own will. Children felt that they were excluded from society due to caste and gender discrimination, marginalization, lack of child protection policies, ethnic discrimination, as well as state sponsored human rights responses. This
was especially the case for the lower caste and poor families that lacked opportunities.

What is noticeable is that children’s voices are virtually non-existent aside from Kohrt et al. (2010a), and no research so far has looked at children’s home environment or children as social actors. Understanding how children socially navigate transgenerational suffering from a child’s perspective can shed new light on how children exert power and agency in their lives and adverse situations of suffering.

**Potential Outcomes**

There is a wide range of outcomes in how persons deal with trauma and suffering (Agaibi & Wilson 2005), and despite growing up in difficult circumstances, many children function well (Tol et al. forthcoming). Resilience has been a controversial concept and difficult to define, because of the difficulty of defining a ‘good outcome.’ One definition for resilience is the “ability to adapt and cope successfully despite threatening or challenging situations” (Agaibi & Wilson 2005:241). In this research the outcome for some children may be resilience because children’s navigation protected them from adopting a traumatized worldview. Worldwide there is a lack of research on resilience in non-industrialized, low and middle-income countries (Ungar 2008), and therefore this research may contribute to understanding how resilience is created among children in a Nepalese village.
Chapter 2

Theoretical Approach and Concepts

By looking at transgenerational suffering, this research bridges psychology and medical anthropology. Although the ecological framework is relevant, as demonstrated by Tol et al. (2010, and forthcoming), and de Jong (2007) within the psychological framework, I believe that practice theory will provide deeper insight into the actions of children, as well as provide an understanding into the process of transmission from the perspective of children as social actors. Practice theory in essence asks, what informs the doing? What knowledge or past experiences shape the present experience of doing (Ortner 2006)? People learn from what has happened in the past and navigate accordingly, or change practices to adapt to current situations. This research is grounded in the daily life of individuals and looks at practices, such as actions and reactions, and how these practices change based on individual interpretations and forms of agency within a given structure. I am looking at how practices shape an understanding of the world and how children choose to navigate these practices (Rosenkrantz Lindegaard 2010). The discussion and relationship between structure and agency are vital components of practice theory, as well as how power plays into this relationship (Ortner 2006). Analysis of power closely links in with Foucault’s (1980) look at production of power, especially in line with structural violence. Repression is the negative aspect of power, however it also ‘produces things’ such as forms of knowledge and discourse (Foucault 1980). Children are subjected to the power of their parents and this causes them to further ‘create things’ that allow them to live alongside their parents in light of social suffering.

Research Questions and Objectives

Practice theory guides my research questions to look at the power of parents and community and to what degree the girls embody the fear and navigate their environment accordingly. The objectives of this research are threefold: On the one hand the objective is to provide insight into the explicit processes that cause suffering to transmit between parent and child in rural Nepal, which ultimately results in the focus on fear. On the other hand the objective is to also explore
how children socially navigate these transmissions. On a more general level, the objective is to look at children from a generational perspective and contribute to the field of child anthropology and to seeing children as social actors.

**Research Questions:**

1. What are the mechanisms of transgenerational transmission of suffering?
2. How do identified explicit processes of transmission reflect a traumatic experience of parents, family and community?
3. How do girls socially navigate the transgenerational transmissions of social suffering?
   a. What do children do in the case of transgenerational transmission?
   b. How do children react to the transmissions?
   c. How do children understand the mechanisms of transmission?
   d. How do children resist the transmission?
4. How does the child’s navigation impact on the transmission process?

**Concepts**

**Social Navigation**

Rosenkrantz-Linegaard defines social navigation as “emphasizing how practices are constructed as a relationship between the social and the individual; it is a reflection of previous experiences, current positioning and anticipation about the future” (2010:40). The emphasis is placed on the relationships and interactions between an individual and the social. I am able to use social navigation to answer why and how children react to a particular process of transmission at a particular point in time. It also allows a look at situating practices in constantly shifting environments characterized by individual will and social forces (Rosenkrantz-Linegaard 2009). The focus therefore is on the interaction in which transgenerational suffering occurs, where it takes place, as well as how parent and child choose to respond and perceive the interaction.

**Transgenerational Suffering**

Although Nepal is a post-war setting, the village where the research took place did not suffer violence during the conflict. However, Siddhikot presents high
levels of suffering in the form of extreme poverty and structural violence against women, as well as individual traumatic life events, which provide the basis of the suffering of this research. Because of the multiple sources that contribute to suffering, I propose to use transgenerational suffering instead of trauma. By looking at transgenerational suffering I am also distancing myself from psychological diagnosis such as PTSD, depression and other classifications of trauma.

**Structural Violence**

Nepal presents both political and structural violence, however for this research the concept of structural violence suffices, because of the lack of political violence on the village during the Maoist conflict. By using the concept of structural violence, I am looking at “both individual experience and the larger social matrix in which it is embedded in order to see how various large scale social forces come to be translated into personal distress” (Farmer 1997: 261). Structural violence is present through the Hindu caste system that still has strong roots in society, as well as the discrimination towards women (Nightingale 2011). Structural violence is the concept that provides the backbone for identifying the social sphere that influences families and children in the village and their psycho- social wellbeing.

**Culture of Fear**

The term ‘culture of fear’ was introduced by Salimovich, Lira and Weinstein (1992) and referred to post war Chilean society where fear played a major impact on society and their interpretation of everyday events after violent conflicts. Nepal is a post war country, however the village of research was not affected by war. Unlike Salimovich, Lira and Weinstein, I use the term ‘culture of fear’ not in relation to direct violence or group trauma, but rather in light of the long standings social suffering, structural violence and loss of social fabric through increasing wealth disparity and discrimination within the village. In Siddhikot the combination of these factors have created a ‘culture of fear.’ Rather than looking at the psychological effects of fear, I chose to use the concept of fear as a social process of interaction and how it impacts social navigation.
Chapter 3

The Research Process

For six weeks, my translator and co-researcher Sujen Man Maharjan and I hiked up and down mountains, fought leaches together and drank uncountable cups of tea with families and villagers to collect the data encompassed by this report. Much like Pool (2003), I emphasize the importance and role of my translator as a co-researcher in the research process. His skill in interviewing and his insights and interpretations during the fieldwork are vital components of this work. As a result throughout the thesis I often say ‘we’ because we were a team in collecting the data, and his presence was of vital importance in all the meetings with families, children and villagers.

Sujen is of the ethnic group Newar, which are the original inhabitants of the Kathmandu valley. I do not believe that his ethnic background or gender influenced the results presented here because of the ethnic mix already present in the village. Sujen being male, and me female may have increased the accessibility to the male’s and still provided safety for the women through both of our presence during the interviews. I believe that my status as a foreigner was a more pronounced problem than his representation. Because few foreigners enter the village, I caused suspicion about my intentions as well as expectations for aid. Parents often implicitly expressed that they expected some form of relief and one mother told us that the women’s focus group discussion was greatly exaggerated because of their expectations for alleviating their suffering. Therefore, I always ensured that the participants knew that I was a student and I was there to learn.

Another interesting point was how the parents, as well as the children would address me. I was often the same age or a touch younger than the parents, but only now in the process of getting married. This arose the questions of how to address me and whether I would be didi (sister) or ‘miss’ or bohini (little sister), especially within my guest family. I did not enforce being addressed in a particular way because I was not completely sure of the implied significance in the hierarchical nature of the terms from the beginning. I tried to present myself as a ‘friend’ rather than an adult to the children, but this did not work until the
last couple of week of research. The rapport took incredibly long to establish and these struggles will be elaborated in this chapter.

The Ethnographic Experience

Sujen and I both lived with the family of one of our key informants at the base of the mountain. With the family I attended one engagement party, one wedding ceremony, a seven-day festival and countless family events. Although I learned substantial amounts about Nepali culture from the family, they are not included in this report. Part of the reason is because of their geographical location in a different village, higher socio-economic status (SES), and different ethnic background. The other reason is that suffering did not exist as it did with the families presented in the case studies.

The research took shape as a focused ethnography over a six-week period from mid May to the end of June 2011 in the district of Lalitpur, with a focus on eight families, of which four became case studies. The short research period required a specific focus on certain families, as well as a decisive focus on families with many girls and the girls perspectives on family life, and how they navigate transgenerational suffering. This focus was chosen because of the structural violence towards girls in society, which leads to higher levels of suffering in families and society (Nightingale 2011; Leone, Matthews & Zuanna 2003; Puri, Tamang & Shah 2011).

As a result of the minimal amount of information on transgenerational suffering in developing countries, this study was a qualitative exploratory study. The focus on children, parents and their environment provided a micro perspective of suffering with a focus on their perspectives and specifically, how children can take on the burden of their parents. To gain insight into families and child navigation, I relied on participant observation, focus group discussions (FGDs) with parents and children, semi structured interviews, and projective techniques.

Parent’s FGDs

In the first week of research I conducted a rapid appraisal of transmission processes through key informant interviews and two focus group discussions (FGD’s) first with Ammas (mothers and grandmothers) and the following day
with fathers and grandfathers. Based on the women’s FGD we were able to create a vignette for the men’s FGD (please see Annexes). These two focus groups provided insight into the difficulties that the villagers face on a daily basis as well as problems that are faced within the family.

**Semi Structured Interviews**

Particularly in gaining the life histories of the parents and their views on parenting and society, this method proved very effective. However, the longer we stayed in the field, the less we relied on recorded interviews. We found that the casual conversations often brought more honest and warm responses than during recorded and more formal sessions. Especially for our multiple visits, the parents appreciated the more casual approach.

With children this method proved to be inadequate. The recorder, the notebooks as well as the formal setting of the interviews intimidated the children. We quickly learned that in order to get child perspectives, more casual approaches would need to be taken. The inability of having in depth conversations with many of the girls about their families created some difficulties in understanding the emic perspective and their understanding of their environment and family suffering. We did end up gaining in depth information through our many visits and adventures, casual conversation and participant observation, however not enough to provide complete comprehension of the emic perspectives, and this presents a limitation to the results.

**Participant observation**

Gaining the child perspectives proved to be the most challenging aspect of this research. The first challenge was to gain the trust of parents, and to a certain extent the society to let us interact with their daughters. This required many cups of tea and ensuring that our intentions were honorable. The second problem was that once we had gained rapport with the parents, we only had Saturdays to build rapport and interview the children. The girls were in school from nine in the morning until four in the afternoon, and after school they had to do homework, chores and farm work. On these valuable Saturdays, we spent most of our day building rapport with the children and relied heavily on
participant observation and casual conversation. The third challenge was that building rapport was only possible outside the village and away from the eyes of elders and parents, which required us to take walks, hikes and only with larger groups of children who were familiar with each other and led to rich data on the social navigation of the girls.

Participant observation also proved very helpful in observing interactions between siblings, and between parent and child. It provided insight into family dynamics and relations, and became the primary source of data for child navigation around the home. A sleepover with one of the families and good relationship with the parents allowed extra time with some of the families and children.

Children’s FGDs and Projective Techniques

To navigate around some of the difficulties we were having in accessing children, the school provided extremely helpful and organized a family drawing session for boys and girls and four FGDs, with the girls of grade six, seven, eight and nine. Two of these FGD sessions we used to allow the girls to create social navigation flow charts (figure 4.2) because of the great hesitation to talk about family problems in front of classmates.

4.1 Past, Present Future Chart (version 1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Past Positive</th>
<th>Present Positive</th>
<th>Future Positive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Past Negative</th>
<th>Present Negative</th>
<th>Future Negative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sujen and I had first created the past, present, future chart (figure 4.1) in order to allow girls to express their concerns in a different medium, however we found the results were not portraying what we desired. I created the social navigation chart as a response to the weak results, which were still not as successful as wished, because of problems with copying, but they did provide deeper insight into the girls that had trouble expressing themselves verbally.
4.2 Social Navigation Flow Chart (version 2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>What problems do you face in the home or society?</th>
<th>What do you do in one of those situations?</th>
<th>What do you do to make yourself feel better?</th>
<th>Looking at these problems, what fears do you have for the future?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Society</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The FGDs with grade six and eight were held by Sujen and Nawaraj, while I sat at the back of the classroom and observed. My presence at the table often caused the girls to be very shy, and therefore my position as ‘observer’ was much more effective in getting emic perspectives of the children. Having Nawaraj bhai lead the FGD’s with Sujen eased the atmosphere with girls that we had no previous contact with and increased receptivity towards difficult life questions.

Family Drawings

The family drawing sessions were done with children from another village further down the mountain and revealed some interesting information about family perceptions. Only one girl drew her parents when we asked them to draw their family, and many girls decided to draw girls that they did not like or were in fights with, who seem to be as important as those that they deemed as family. Although the findings were interesting and revealed a lot about family perceptions, I decided to contain the data from the drawings within this section because the girls were from another village, which the teachers deem to have very different ethnic compositions and attitudes. However, I did find it relevant

---

3 Bhai is used to address someone as ‘brother’. Teachers are addressed as Sir, while Nawaraj chose to be as an adult with a less formal role while conducting his research.
to include one drawing, which specifically addressed social navigation and the effects of gossip in society.

Sampling and the Case Studies

The school, and particularly two teachers, provided us with access to the families and students. A team of teachers chose the families, but Sudeep Sir was the most influential in choosing the families. As a teacher he is socially involved and knows many of the student’s families and their home life situations. He introduced us to eight families, of which we chose seven, and added one extra family through friendship with one of the girls. The families were chosen based on different family compositions, different ethnic backgrounds and willingness to participate in the research. Being introduced by Sudeep Sir was helpful because of his good reputation in the community and especially in the families, as he was their provider of financial aid in the form of school supplies. It allowed easy entry into their ‘kitchens.’

Four of the eight families turned into the case studies presented here and the families were chosen based on their willingness to share their lives, family problems and suffering, and the ability and time to interact and socialize with the girls. In the remaining families, we either encountered no significant family problems, unwillingness to share their personal lives, or we did not have time or access to interact with the children because of chores and farm work. The reason why we focused on eight families is because families could never host us for long periods of time or on a frequent basis because of their work burden. By focusing

---

4 When families talk about who is included and excluded in the households they talk about collective or separate kitchens. I use this reference to talk about what are family matters that pertain to only one ‘kitchen.’
on eight, we made rounds visiting families in order to avoid losing their hospitality. A focus on specific families would have given richer data, however considering these circumstances it was not possible.

The age of the girls had a wider range than initially anticipated. The youngest was 8 and the oldest was 21. The older ages had to do with daughters that had recently been married off and had returned home for childbirth. We were lucky to have met these girls and on two occasions had long interviews with them and their experiences, which added substantial amounts of information to our data and the navigation of the girls.

**Ethical Considerations**

The sensitive nature of the research topic required careful considerations and ensuring the safety of the participants. Before starting the research, consent was asked by all participants and confidentiality was ensured. For children, double consent was asked, which meant that both the parent and the child had to agree to participate. To provide continued confidentiality the names of the family members and some basic facts around their lives have been changed to protect those families that participated. The name of the village has also been changed.

Both Sujen and myself have a background in psychology, which aided us in dealing with the heavy emotional aspect of many of these interviews. The parents shared their life stories, which were often filled with suffering and sorrow and occasionally led to crying and sorrowful moments. We always ensured their emotional safety before concluding the interviews and ended each interview on a positive note with a fun question and answer session where they could inquire about our lives or points of interest. This also helped to build rapport with the participants and they greatly appreciated it. By the time we left there was a consistent relief of having shared their lives and having spoken about ‘the unspoken.’ It often created a close bond between us, and evoked greater trust after having heard their life stories and ensured confidentiality.

**The ethics of giving and taking**

Sujen and I faced ethical dilemmas on a daily basis when it came to giving and taking. Visiting families repeatedly who have trouble feeding themselves consistently offered food and drink to us. Not eating food presented was
considered rude, and one family on two occasions killed chickens to feed us. The concern was our repeated visits and the financial strain we were placing on the families through our visits, and how we would thank them in an appropriate manner for participating. With one of the families who were also one of the poorest, we decided to order our ‘lunch’ with her the day before and we would then pay her for it because we had ordered it. With other families we emphasized that when we returned next time that they would not need to do anything for us because we were already fed. In this way we navigated around some of the difficulties and financial strains we were placing on the families through our visits. Sujen and I tended to always have apples with us to supply during interviews and adventures with the children. This was not intended to serve as a reward, but rather to prevent the obligation of giving us food and to ‘give back’ some of the generosity they were showing us. As a thank you at the end of the research period we took family photos and had them printed, as well as supplied schoolbooks and pens for each of the children.

The influence of Ethnicity and Caste

Although we had a mix of ethnic groups represented in the eight families including Chhetri, Tamang, Newar, Magar and Dalit, our case studies turned out to be three Tamang families and one Dalit family. This came as somewhat of a surprise, because the intention had been to get an ethnically diverse population. This unintentional focus on the Tamang and Dalit resulted because of their willingness to share their lives with us. Although the other families of Magar, Newar and Chhetri were incredibly welcoming and friendly, when we attempted to talk about their family lives, everything was generally Thik-cha- Thik-cha (fine-fine). Talking to these families’ daughters often reflected the same responses, even if we knew through gossip, from the teachers, or through mixed messages that the life at home was anything but harmonious. Nonetheless, this made it very difficult to include these families as case studies.

There may be two reason why the Tamang were more open to share their lives with us. One reason may be that the Tamang have their own distinct language, cultural practices and beliefs. The Tamang are considered one of the over hundred distinct ethnic groups of Nepal (Dahal 2002) and do not have a
recorded history. They are presumed to have migrated from China and traditionally practice Tibetan Buddhism and speak their own unwritten Tibeto-Burman language called Tamang. Tamang society is known for its egalitarianism, tolerance and minimization of psychic distress (Cole, Bruschi & Tamang 2002; Fricke 1986; Tamang V.S. 2051). In Cole, Bruschi and Tamang’s research on how children of Tamang, Brahman and United States cultures differ in their emotional reactions to difficult life situations, they found that “the Tamang view that emotions are usually communicated may reflect an openness and tolerance in Tamang culture that is captured in the Nepali stereotype that the Tamang are sojiho... [which] connotes the quality of being frank and without artifice” (2002:992). This may have contributed to our open and honest relationships during the research.

A second reason why they may have been more open and honest is because in the Hindu caste system the Tamang are classified under the Matwali ethnic groups that ‘pollute’ because they drink alcohol and eat buffalo. Therefore they are considered a lower, but not untouchable caste like the Dalit (Cole, Bruschi & Tamang 2002) and this lower status also presents a position in society where they have nothing to lose by sharing their problems. Their lower position is exasperated further by their low economic, social and political situation (Dahal 2002). Tamang are one of the ten dominant Janijatri groups in Nepal and have resided relatively close to the Kathmandu valley throughout the centuries, but are among the least educated and their social, economic and political conditions are relatively poor in comparison to other ethnic groups (Dahal 2002). Their literacy rate in the 2001 census was one of the lowest at 45.04% and this lower status leads to lower status positions in physical labor such as servant, cobbler and melapat, which are looked down upon. This may open them up to expressing their concerns and problems more openly because they may not have as much to protect or ‘save face’ as is traditional in higher castes, where pride and hiding of emotions and difficulties are highly valued (Cole, Bruschi & Tamang 2002; Cole, Tamang & Shrestha 2006). As a result, the focus of this research is a pronounced focus on low caste families.
Research Data

The FGDs and interviews were recorded and later transcribed by psychology students of Tribhuvan University. The transcriptions were checked for accuracy by my co-researcher, Sujen Man Maharjan. On a daily basis I recorded field notes with observations, quotes and analysis, which Sujen also read for accuracy of interpretations and analysis.

Much like Nightingale (2011), Leve (2007) and Tamang (2002), I would argue that generalizations about Nepalese women or caste cannot be drawn because of the ethnic, religious, linguistic and topographic diversity Nepal brings. The findings presented here are specific to Siddikot and the families and case studies are unique, as are the children's navigational strategies. Therefore the findings in this study are not generalizable, but rather present an in depth look at how specific families and particularly girls are navigating and coping with suffering and transgenerational transmissions of suffering at a particular place and a particular time.

Data Analysis

Six weeks of fieldwork can only provide a glimpse of what life in a village or a family is like. In many ways I felt like I took a snapshot of a fraction of time that merely represents an insignificant dot in the entire lifespan of these families. From a snapshot I can merely hint towards processes and worldviews, but making any conclusions or even suggestions may be inaccurate, and purely based on my assumptions. When I chose to look at transgenerational suffering and social navigation I knew I was taking on a challenge, especially in such a short time frame, but determination prevailed and I collected large amounts of data from families, villagers and the school. However, the data does not suffice to provide a full account of the processes, worldviews and true experiences of the parents, as well as their children. The analysis presented in the following chapters is largely my emic perspective of the experiences and especially any hints that might suggest a worldview. As a result I present what I found, but refrain from making assumptions about worldviews or definitive processes. The flow chart presented in the annexes includes the worldview of both the parent and the child and I do believe that they should be included there because they
may be indirectly present in the case studies I present here. The only difference is that I will not explicitly point them out, out of fear of making assumptions that are incorrect. I realize this limitation to the findings, but I do believe that considering the short research period and the massive amount of literature on resilience and risk, any attempts may cause mistakes that are unintended.

Compiling the data into this report required intense amounts of cutting and reducing the experiences into mere words that represent an even smaller fraction of the snapshot that I took during the six weeks. The cutting process left many voices and experiences outside the scope of this report. What are also not presented here are the perspectives and voices of villagers on life, processes and family life, and it was a section I had difficulty cutting. The reason for cutting it is much the same as above; I simply lacked a full enough picture to portray them accurately, and I often merely hinted at perspectives and processes. I do believe that through the stories of the families, that society and their perceptions come through and paint a good picture of the environment they live in.

Part II: Setting the scene

Chapter 4

Siddhikot

Everyday I walked up to the small village I had to revel in the view and the stunning location of this beautiful and small village sitting on the edge of the Kathmandu valley in Nepal. Although distance wise close to Kathmandu, its location at the peak of the first range of mountains at the elevation of 1800 meters, makes it as remote as many villages outside the Kathmandu valley. The village consists of approximately 500 inhabitants and sits on a ridge, with steep drop offs on either side. It enjoys a stunning view of the Kathmandu valley and on clear days the Himalayan range sits majestically in their viewpoint. Facing the side of the Kathmandu valley, the urban jungle sprawls at the foot of the mountain. Steep walking paths and one gravel road connects the village and the turmoil below, but turning 180 degrees, forest and jungle sit at their back door.
Panthers and leopards roam right into their small town, and have been known to steal goats if the village is quiet.

From the valley the town is invisible, which has caused some problems in getting funds or services. Villagers claim that those living further down the hill have denied the existence of Siddhikot to surveyors, government officials and NGOs in order to gain on allotted benefits. The remote and hidden location may have contributed to the village being spared influence of the Maoists during the revolution that ended in 2006. Villagers report that they came once to do some education, and aside from that the civil war left the village largely unaffected by violence.

The society is of mixed ethnic backgrounds and castes, and the village is divided into blocks where the various ethnic groups and castes live. The ethnic groups that reside are Tamang, Newar, Chhetri and Magar. Over time some of the families have lost their ethnic tongues and rituals, and have merged with the Chhetri tradition. The caste that does live separated are the Dalit, which sit further down the mountain connected only by narrow walking paths to the main road.

Traffic in the village is virtually non-existent. Some have motorbikes and commute to Kathmandu for school or work, or to get supplies for their stores, but they are rare and a status of wealth. Most are farmers and live off of the farmland that surrounds the village and some families live on less than a euro per day. Many of the children have never been to Kathmandu, although they look at it every day. After finishing the School Leaving Certificate (SLC) in grade 10, children have to go to Kathmandu to continue their studies, which is a big concern for parents because of the distance and the financial strain and therefore only few continue after SLC’s.

Many of the villagers have to walk long distances to reach their fields and have tedious, long and steep walks to the markets at the bottom of the mountain to sell their vegetables or firewood. Employment in the village is very low. Most of the adults are not educated, or have only reached high enough education to spell their names and therefore rely on farming, and in some cases small tasks to sustain themselves and their family. The women in particular find this difficult,

---

5 This village will be discussed separately in Chapter nine.
and this lack of opportunity and employment has also lead to problems in society through alcoholism and gambling. Only a few months before our arrival, a community effort lead to abolishing the selling of alcohol and playing cards in the village, although many continue make it in their homes for ceremonial and cultural traditions. Drunken men were still a frequent sight at all times of the day throughout the village.

The turn to alcohol may be due to the fact that the social fabric has taken a big hit since development has hit Nepal (Dahal 1992), and Siddhikot was not left unaffected. The disparity between the poor and wealthy has increased, and those with little means are complaining that those that have prospered are becoming more selfish. The poor feel dominated and taken advantage of by the rich and villagers feel like they are being left behind while they watch the Kathmandu valley develop. The discrepancy between rich and poor, as well as the feeling of being left behind has contributed to the loss of social fabric in the village and an increase in fear that the villagers feel on a daily basis.

Chapter 5

Revealing a culture of fear

Spending so much time and hearing life stories and perspectives of families and different generations revealed results that were often unexpected and at the same time revealed prominent themes of processes of transmission that ran as an undercurrent in several, if not all of the families. What was the most striking was the use of fear within families to control and discipline girls, but also how society uses fear as a method of social control through discrimination, gossip, backstabbing and jealousy. Women are particularly victims of this because of their lower position in society (Trivedi, Mishra & Kendurkar 2007; Dhakal 2008).

Fear presents an interesting analytical tool for society because, according to Salimovich, Lira and Weinstein “fear is provoked in specific social situations...[and] can be described as an experience that is collective and observable as well as individual and denied, and one that acts on and shapes the form of collective behavior” (1992:72). They call such an environment ‘culture of fear’ and refers to the rupture of social fabric. Salimovich et al. use culture of fear for war or post
war settings after collective trauma, I however use the term not based on traumatic events but rather because of long standing poverty and structural violence which result in distrust, hostility, jealousy and fear of losing face in society.

Totten (2009) identifies the individual's need to protect the physical and psychological self in hard times. Self esteem, as well as the need to protect values and traditions are of essence. When a group functions poorly and not “providing protection and well being, people's respect for and valuing of the group diminish; their societal self concept is harmed” (Totten 2009:99). People define themselves to a certain extent by their group and if this association is unsupportive and causing suspicion and fear it harms the self-esteem and sense of security. If parents are fearful, this in turn reflects on the children. For example, in Siddhikot parents did not let their children play outside, or play with certain children out of fear of harm, gossip or loss of status.

Fear on a more general level in Siddhikot has increased with the loss of social fabric through increasing disparity between rich and poor and has increased jealousy and backstabbing amongst the villagers. Sudeep Sir, a teacher at the local school and social worker expressed this concern:

In the past there was social control in the society like the people would check and balance by giving feedback about their behavior. But now the situation is changing. People do not care about others. So the society is becoming disordered. Now there is a lack of social control [because] the living standards have improved for some people. People started imitating western culture and values. Now people have increased egotism.

Sudeep Sir

This egotism and lack of social control has evoked fear, especially amongst those that are poor and vulnerable. Salimovich, Lira and Weinstein further explain that when a person becomes aware of the magnitude or threat and their own powerlessness to confront it, this is when a situation is perceived to be dangerous or threatening and thereby evoking fear. Women in Nepal are often powerless through the structural violence they suffer, but also through their lack of independence and ability to change their conditions (Puri, Tamang & Shah 2011).

The Nepali word used to describe fear in everyday life is dar. Two other words demarcate more intense fears and are not used as frequently, which are
tras and bhaya, which are closer to terror. There are no clear demarcations between these words, but rather refer to different intensities of fear and can be used interchangeably. Talking of common fears is culturally acceptable, however expressing particular fears, such as sexual violence are not openly talked about.

Barabar, a social worker in the region broke down the role of fear in Nepalese society into four major functions for social control: For one, the presence of fear maintains family status, which means that it prevents unsolicited sexual relations, inappropriate interactions with society. The absence of fear presents a loss of prestige. Second, fear maintains social harmony through reinforcing social structures and preventing conflicts between individuals and groups. Third, the presence of fear prevents disasters or accidents from occurring, because it prevents children from wandering far or interacting with the wrong people. The fear of the environment and natural disasters was also very evident in discussions with parents and children. Instilling this fear enforced walking in groups, and especially not letting girls wander by themselves. And fourth, the presence of fear drives everyone to work hard. Fear kept parents on their toes, in order to do their work properly and to prevent gossip and backstabbing in society as well as within families. Mothers and fathers often expressed how children should be fearful otherwise they would not obey. For parents fear is a method of ensuring discipline and obedience.

Identifying fear in Nepalese society is not a new phenomenon. Pettigrew and Adhikari (2009) analyzed fear before, during and after the Maoist conflict in a rural village in Nepal. Particularly relevant is their look at their findings from before the insurgency, which was that “villagers supported and depended on others but they also feared them, their snubs, their jealousy, their anger and its consequences” (Pettigrew & Adhikari 2009:406). The fear of the villagers was predicated by the fear of giving offense and making social transgressions, fear of humiliation and social exclusion. Failure and its related loss of prestige, along with indebtedness were also of major concern. The fear analyzed here is a social process that was felt by individual villagers and shifted with societal changes as the threats to individual safety changed. Before the insurgency the fears that villagers experienced lay within societal processes that maintained social control.
In Siddhikot both society, parents and peers contribute to the fear that girls feel, and all contribute to the culture of fear. Therefore, I argue with Dickson Gomez (2002), that the processes of transgenerational suffering and trauma do not only lie in the family, but also within the society. The concerns for social control in society are gossip, backstabbing and jealousy, but how parents understand it and how they make their children understand it portrays different forms of suffering to the children especially in combination with the personal histories of the family and their position within society. How girls then navigate the suffering subjected by the community and how parents make sense of the suffering in light of their own family history to the children, has revealed a unique set of navigational strategies that I intend to discuss through four case studies.

In this report I will disentangle fear into four themes to reveal the various processes of suffering it inflicts, but also to show that the processes also lie in the community. The four main processes of fear that girls experience in the form of explicit transmissions are: fear of society, the fear of ‘him’ (god and father), fear of punishment and the fears that poverty brings. To disentangle fear completely is outside the scope of this research, and therefore the four themes are simply four of the major themes of fear I encountered within a much greater web of influence. My intention of looking at various explicit processes of fear is not to go into the implicit psychological processes and effects of fear, but rather use it to look at how families understand and make sense of interpersonal relations and their surroundings, and particularly how daughters navigate these different forms of fear. The case study presented for each theme is not intended to be unique to the heading they are under, instead they provide a guide to the discussion. In one family the processes of transmission and navigational strategies may often cross all four themes, and the choice of theme was determined by its emphasis on a specific focus of fear.

**Entering the family's kitchens**

Up until this point I have set the scene of the psycho-social world of Nepalese society, the status and role of women, as well as the purpose and role of fear in families and society. With this background in mind, it is time to take a literary
shift into the lives and navigational strategies of the particular families. The four families presented here are presented in a more literary style, and remove themselves from the academic writing that has prevailed up until now. The reason for this is because the life histories of the parents, the setting and the perspectives and the navigation of the girls need to be placed into context. I will summarize the navigational strategies and the specific fears at the end of each family. Because of my hesitation to talk about worldviews or risk and resilience factors out of fear of making wrong assumptions, the discussion section is a key element in tying the findings back in with the concepts and theories.

Part III: The Families

Chapter 6
Fear of Society

The husband is not well and there is responsibility to raise the children as well, so I remain silent and bear whatever happens. If we fight, there is a chance that we could get injured and we have to bear those expenses as well, and the police might come and put us in prison. That’s why we remain silent... they say my husband is a limp and cannot earn. The younger brother came here and broke things, frightened us and even beat me. Maya

Maya’s family is one of the poorest families in Siddhikot and struggles for survival on a daily basis. They live on less than a euro per day and have maxed out their loan capacity in the village, which has put them into a precarious position of need, as well as discrimination. The discrimination is not only financial, but also because the husband is disabled, suffers an alcohol problem, has a history with chophhnee6 and beating his wife and daughters. Another

---

6 Chophhnee according to informants is both possession and hysteria. It is caused because of extreme suppression of emotional reactions and feelings that are locked inside and not able to express. It is especially common in the case of women who are not allowed to speak freely. The villagers believe that it is caused by supernatural forces like angry gods or evil spirits and they usually seek help from dhami-jhakri (traditional healer) in such cases. It is not linked to witchcraft, and villagers in Siddhikot never addressed witchcraft as a source of fear or distress.
source of difficulty is that one of the daughters has also suffered saato ghayo\(^7\), and suffers abuse and discrimination from her family and in society as a result. Although society and the culture of fear is tied into all the families, Maya’s family particularly guides the discussion of how society influences their lives because of their complex social standing in society.

An individual is embedded in their family, community and society (Green 1992), and Maya and Mohan can be seen as being encircled by the culture of fear and placed within the context of their suffering. Poverty in itself has shown to increase fear because of the instability of everyday life and threats from the environment (Gullone 2000). Poverty, discrimination and threats to safety are all products of society, and therefore “much of people’s cognitive and behavioral repertoire is nurtured and mediated by community structures” (De Jong 2002:29). Throughout our interviews and encounters with the villagers, and especially the girls, this fear, as well as mutual dependence in society, was the theme that was most consistently addressed.

Of all the families, Maya and Mohan were the most vocal about their fears in their social positioning, which can be seen in the introductory quote to the chapter. Through our many visits and cups of tea we learned about how their life histories have brought discrimination, poverty and a feeling of inferiority.

Explicit processes in the context of their fight for survival

Mohan and Maya are Tamang and live with their three daughters, Rabina 15, Suntali 13 and Bimala 8 in a small mud home in the middle of Siddhikot.

Mohan has struggled with his health his entire life and has a severe limp that prevents him from getting a regular job. His ill health and weak physical stature discriminated him in his family and he was used as a servant to his brothers and parents growing up. He told us under tears about this problem: “I was rejected by my brothers and my parents as well because I could not work and earn.” Of his siblings he is the only one without any education.

---

\(^7\) The saato is the spirit or presence of mind in Nepali ethnopsychology. The saato provides the energy and vitality of life and prevents supernatural forces from entering the body. Fear can disrupt or dislodge the saato. When an individual becomes afraid, the saato can be shocked out of the body. This is known as saato gayo (Kohrt & Harper 2008). Children are more prone to soul loss because they are attached more weakly than in adults (Kohrt & Hruschka 2010).
After his marriage to Maya, she removed herself and Mohan from the house of Mohan’s parents to escape the abusive and slave like position her new husband had in the family. This separation removed them from the abuse, but also increased their struggle for everyday needs and, especially when the girls were young, the family often went without food. For much of his adult life Mohan has had an alcohol problem, which especially triggered episodes of *chophhnee* and bouts of violence towards his wife. He cried for much of the interview, which we held jointly with his wife and exclaimed: “It would have been good if I was dead, wouldn’t it? This is how it is, it is difficult.”

Because of Mohan’s disability and their lack of income, the family lacked support from the villagers. When Maya would go to the field or work, she often had to tie her children on a string to a post in order to keep them safe and prevent them from roaming. Maya and Mohan have to be extremely resourceful to feed the family on a daily basis. When they do not have enough food they have to rely on the generosity of others, and often they are unable to repay their loans, which creates tensions with the village. Maya describes the relationship:

> It is difficult because when the husband is not well, illiterate and without good income, everybody dislikes us out of fear that we will knock on their door, begging for help.

The family has loans outstanding and many are hesitant to provide more loans because they know that the family cannot repay. This lack of finances and resources leads to tension in the home, and often violent conflicts.

Since childhood Mohan has suffered discrimination by both society and his family. Mohan having grown up in the village has always known his positioning as inferior and less worthy compared to that of his brothers and often takes beatings and criticisms in silence. This lifelong discrimination and insecure positioning of Mohan has led to the family being impoverished, insecure of their position in society and often taken advantage of:

> Even if I tired to take a loan, no one would believe me as I have nothing to keep the mortgage. There are days when I have nothing to eat as well. The *pasal* (shop) has been kept with the help of a loan but it has gone in credits as well. If we ask customers for money, they keep making excuses saying that ‘who is going to run away without giving your money?’ They won’t pay the money. *Mohan*
The villagers realize their vulnerable position and their inability to resist and therefore they take advantage of the situation. They will not provide loans, and at the same time refuse to provide money for tea.

Maya is more of a fighter than her husband and instead of disappearing and seeking solitude like her husband, she is resourceful and tries to change the situation through work and white. However, like her husband, she feels dominated and fearful of society and their vulnerability.

The explicit processes of transmission that the daughters are subjected to, often on a daily basis, are closely related to the life long discrimination that Mohan and Maya have suffered in the village. Mohan’s chophnee, alcohol abuse and violence are linked to the tensions created by poverty as well as Mohan’s unstable mental state. It becomes evident here, that separating implicit and explicit processes of transmission is a challenge, because they are intrinsically linked. What can be said is that the violence that Maya and the girls attribute to his chophnee is an explicit process that has caused the family the greatest amount of grief.

The other processes that the girls are subjected to a daily basis are the daily scolding and commands from Maya. She enforces rigorous rules, demands obedience, submissiveness and obedience in order to prevent discrimination of the girls, or to prevent the family honor from being jeopardized through their actions. Both Mohan and Maya believe that imposing fear on the children of both themselves, and their surroundings is essential in order to keep them disciplined.

Rabina, Suntali and Bimala have very different ways of navigating and coping with the discrimination and suffering of the family, especially their father’s position and navigation in society. In the following sections I break down the navigational strategies of the girls into processes that are enforced through the expectations of the community as well as by the parents. The first process is the expectation of girls the social expectation of being shy and ‘invisible’, the second is how the girls navigate discrimination and bullying.

\footnote{Chophnee was often expressed by villagers as having experienced it in the past, or currently experiencing it and may be an implicit process that transgenerationally transmits within the village, as well as within}
Navigating social expectations

Fear of society and their position causes Maya to raise her children to be shy, submissive and not to ask for anything. Imposing fear in the girls to avoid eye contact, interaction with villagers and strangers prevents the loss of social honor, especially when their situation is already dependent on the generosity of others. Maya enforces this rigorously:

I have told them not to beg for food or anything if they are hungry. First tell me, not to strangers or others. They obey me and they do not eat anything even if they are very hungry without my indication.

In the presence of the village the three girls will not interact, walk with their heads down and suffer beatings and discrimination in silence. This is best described through an excerpt from my field notes, which describes Sujen and my first meeting with the girls:

Maya literally had to drag the girls into the room. None of them would look at us and continuously had nervous giggles. Bimala would peak at us with a cunning look, but decided to keep copying Suntali who had dug her head deep into her lap. I'm sure Suntali would have stuck her head through the floor if she could have. For about fifteen minutes I never got to see Suntali’s face. Rabina was laughing non-stop and insecurely looked at Suntali from time to time to ensure she was still being shy. Maya was a bit frustrated and joked that she would speak for them if they didn’t. She teased them a lot. After much effort, and distribution of lychees and apples the girls slowly raised their heads, but Suntali just held the delicacy in her fist and continued to bury her face. Again the other two girls copied her. The giggling and nervousness of the girls attracted everyone from next door and god knows who else until four extra people were watching the ‘spectacle’ of the Tamang girls meeting the researchers. Sujen and I realized we needed to escape this environment and we went for a walk. Suntali clung to Bimala while Rabina walked alone. We found a shady spot along the path and took a seat. All three girls did not sit, but rather huddled about six meters away with Rabina standing separately. We tried to engage them, asked silly questions and tried to be goofy. During this time, Suntali had her back turned to us and was busy poking a stick into a wall in a repetitive motion. I wasn’t sure if she was about to laugh or cry. Bimala clung a little to Suntali, more to offer her support than being clingy herself. Rabina tried a few times to take Suntali’s arm, but that was shaken off again very quickly every time and Rabina stood or walked alone. On the way home all three kids were more relaxed, however the closer we got to the village, the more tense and rigid they became again and they walked in silence. Back at the house, Suntali was right back in the plum tree, but the other two girls did not run but rather started to look at us with curiosity.

Maya was frustrated with their behavior in meeting us, but she later also told us that she wants her girls to act and avoid interaction and was quite proud of their hesitation and shyness. Maya further told us that she greatly favors Suntali
because of her diligence, submissiveness and shyness. Rabina and Bimala understand this favoritism, and therefore look to Suntali to copy her behavior in order to please their mother, and especially Bimala drops the act as soon as she is out of sight of her parents, and even more so outside the village.

Societies expectation towards girls to not be heard, walk with their head’s down and to be obedient was followed diligently by Maya’s girls in the village, as well as other girls we met in Siddhikot. However, taking them outside the village and far away from the ears and eyes of adults revealed a freer side of the girls. They ran, yelled, joked, hugged and goofed around in and around the caves. Suntali opened up and made eye contact on this adventure, and Rabina and Bimala were quite forward. Unlike her sisters, Bimala is outspoken and acts shy to please her mother at home and around adults, but there is nothing shy about the girl. As soon as we were out of sight of the village she lightened up, sat on my lap and happily ate apples with us. When we talked about her home life she made fun of her elder sisters for their tendency to hide and boldly proclaimed: “I get angry when my parent’s fight and I try to stop them. Suntali just hides and cries (imitating Suntali digging her head into her lap and dramatically wailing), and Rabina just hides.” She was mocking them and embarrassed them in front of their friends.

On our way home from our adventure, the closer we got to the village, the more the children separated and even the boys and girls would not walk in one line. Back along the main street, the children quietly went back into their homes without a word.

The girls understand the pressures and expectations of society and act accordingly. Previous events or misbehavior created punishment and from a young age the girls are subjected to act in a certain way around the village. The change in behavior was also evident at school, where the children laughed and interacted on a more relaxed basis amongst peers.

Navigating discrimination

Although Mohan suffered so greatly under the servant role in his family, Rabina is in many ways following in his footsteps. She always waited while her father was eating to serve him, or came to take his tools when he came from working in
the field. Bimala and Suntali commanded or scolded her in a similar way as her parents did, and both sisters avoided body contact with her. In the family as well as the community, Rabina is also rarely called by her real name. Her nickname is Bhunti, which means ‘shorty’ or ‘dwarf’ because of her shorter frame compared to her sisters. In the family and within society she faces great instability and insecurity and always stands apart. Her coping mechanism is to laugh, even when she is being hit.

The reason for discrimination and unstable situation is that Rabina suffered direct trauma during one of her father’s chophnee episodes. He attacked her with a piece of wood when she was three or four years old and she ran away and hid, and according to Maya has suffered saato ghayo ever since. Since then she has had speech problems and a learning disability that has placed her two grades below her younger sister. Rabina is terribly afraid of her father and Maya explains:

Mohan behaves like a ghost when he drinks and I also feel scared… His brain is not normal and even when we tend to say good things he takes it the other way. His eyes get big and he shouts. We all feel scared… All four are afraid of their father, but Bhunti, she fears the most. Most of the time my husband is the angry type and so she is afraid. Maybe this is the cause (of her disability). So, it has affected her studies… after returning from school she always asks, ‘did father scold me?’

Watching Rabina interact with her siblings puts her apart from them. They avoid her, as do other peers and adults in Siddhikot. We were sitting one day on the veranda of one of the homes with a group of children and Rabina was sitting in the middle of the Nepali matt. She was being violently shoved or punched from side to side in order to create distance. She was laughing quite hard, but we realized that this was her coping mechanism in difficult situations. Later that day we went on an adventure with the group of kids and Rabina was drinking out of a well when an elder man and his son came bye, who violently hit her on the back and yelled at her to move. Once again she laughed. We saw this pattern of laughing during tense moments repeatedly except when she was at home. There she did not speak or make eye contact. She stood as a shadow at the back every time.

Rabina faces open discrimination and bullying on a daily basis. In her home she acts as a servant and outside she faces open discrimination and
violence. Suntali’s experience with discrimination is not as physical or evident as that with Rabina. Instead, she fears more the verbal abuse. Suntali fears walking through the village by herself or going to any store because of fear of being scolded or mocked by villagers for their parents’ debts, and ‘uselessness’ of their father. This caused Suntali to climb through a path behind the houses that connects her house to that of her friends. Bimala on the other hand only avoided eye contact for split seconds and never avoided the villagers that hung out in Maya’s courtyard. Unlike her sisters, Bimala was also not afraid of her father and leaned on him in his presence, as with the mother. Neither Rabina or Suntali ever made body or eye contact with either of her parents, and especially with the father around they would disappear upstairs or into the safety of the plum tree.

A common trait of all three girls is that they never resisted the discrimination or violence they faced but rather managed it in silence. Rabina laughs amongst friends but in the village she is silent. Suntali keeps her head down in all circumstances, whether it be the village or at home. Bimala on the other hand knows when to act shy and is quite dominant in her family. Sitting in a friend’s home she joked: “my sisters are afraid of me! What kind of older sisters are they if they are afraid of the youngest one?” Both Rabina and Suntali quickly denied, but Maya confirmed that Bimala dominates her elder sisters through whit and force and usually gets what she wants. Still she acts shy around the villagers. She does not avoid them, but she understands the social expectation of shyness that is required to survive as a girl in the village.

The three girls have adopted different ways of coping with their position in the community and their poverty. Rabina lacks support from the family and community and stands alone. The impact of society is the most pronounced on her behavior through her avoidance and tendency to laugh during moments of tension. She lacks family cohesiveness and social support. Her sisters on the other hand have established a friend circle that they rely on. Rabina has adopted a similar position to that of her father as servant and has been discriminated against from a young age. The transgenerational processes of discrimination are most evident with her within the family as well as in society. The teachers fear that she will drop out of school soon, because of her learning difficulties and the teachers, as well as Maya, suspect that the direct trauma that Rabina suffered is
the direct cause of her speech and learning difficulties. Suntali, although favored by the mother is fearful of her parents, society and their criticisms and is painfully shy. She lacks self confidence and relies on support from her younger sister or her friends in order to make eye contact or interact with Sujen and I. Bimala, unlike her sisters, is resourceful, more trusting and outspoken and was also not afraid to sit with the villagers in front of the house. She is creative and resourceful and the teachers emphasize her intelligence at school. The fear that her sisters feel of her parents as well as society has not overtaken her in the same way.

**Chapter 7**

**Fear ‘Him’ and the purpose of Silence**

The fear of the father was a theme that we encountered in most families because of his role as providing discipline and punishment in the families. The following excerpt is taken from our arrival at the house. I hesitated to include it because of its length, but I find that it allows the most accurate glimpse into the family dynamics.

That evening we showed up at his house around five o’clock and as soon as we entered the courtyard, we saw two of his daughters quickly disappear into the house. His wife was still in the village working in the shop. After welcoming us we climbed onto the roof of his house, which had a spectacular view. We sat out there for a while and I wondered where his three daughters were. After a while of sitting I heard some giggles from the window that provided a pathway to the roof. I leaned over and saw two petite and pretty girls sitting on a bed, who quickly ducked in shyness when they saw my face. As much as I tried to encourage them to come out, they remained inside. Even Arjun encouraged them after seeing my efforts, but to no avail. We sat a while longer and Arjun’s phone rang. He quickly said goodbye and said he would be right back. He jumped on his motorcycle and was gone. Sujen and I took this opportunity to try and lure the girls onto the roof with us. It took a few minutes before the youngest one, Kripa, stuck her head out of the window and another few minutes before she joined us on the roof. With some friendly coaxing we convinced the elder to join us as well, although she leaned and somewhat hid behind the water tank in the corner. With the coast clear of parental supervision, Kripa quickly came and approached us and stared squarely in our faces. Sujen and I were in a goofy mood and continuously made fun of each other in order to loosen the atmosphere. Kripa caught on and proceeded to jump around the roof in a sort of performance, which we started calling “Kripa TV” to her great amusement. She would sneakily walk over to Sujen and whisper something into his ear and he was intended to translate it for me. The questions were anything from, do you like dresses, to how many siblings do you have and sometimes the questions made absolutely no sense at all. Sarita would laugh at her sister but maintained contact with the
water tank. I pulled out my camera, which eased the mood even more. Kripa proceeded to pose repeatedly making strange faces and poses. Sarita also joined in a few of the photos and Sujen and I smiled to see our efforts succeed. Just as we had broken the ice we heard the engine of the motorcycle and Arjun pulled back into the small courtyard. Before we knew it, the girls had disappeared off the deck through the small window. Again, we were sitting with Arjun on the roof watching the sun set while two pairs of eyes spied at us through the window.

An excerpt from my field notes

This excerpt revealed how the girls navigate the dominance of their father. They are invisible in his presence and more open when he is gone. Arjun’s family was one of the first families to convert to Christianity in Siddhikot, and therefore this family is somewhat unique to the rest. I use Arjun’s family to provide insight into how the father instills fear into his children through the fear of god and how this simultaneously causes the children to fear him as the portrayer of god’s fear and discipline.

The fears that are presented to the girls is also different from the other families because it is the only family that does not struggle for survival on a daily basis. Their relative wealth provides a different relationship to society and therefore I argue that it shifts the fears of the girls and their experience of fear is primarily funneled through the fears of their father.

Explicit processes placed in the context of life

Arjun and Shanti are Tamang and had three daughters, Sarita 16 and Kripa 9, and the eldest passed away a year and a half ago from cancer. Arjun grew up with an alcoholic and gambling father and was left begging for food for parts of his childhood. Following in his father’s footsteps, Arjun turned to alcohol for coping.

I was a heavy drinker and I used to black out sometimes and even could not reach the room. I slept in the coil of wires for many nights. I was a spoiled person.

He would barely provide enough money to his wife to feed the family. He left to go abroad for work and prior to his departure the alcohol problems weighted heavily on Shanti. In Oman he started getting ill and found himself often paralyzed in bed and he felt like he would die any day. The spiritual healers did not help and during this difficult time he came in touch with Christianity, and lead to his baptism, and cure from alcoholism:
More than religion, I would say I changed my principles for life. I became Christian over there and I am the first person in my family to convert. It was very difficult especially at the beginning when I came back with new principles… my father said ‘we sent you to earn money but you came back with a different religion which is only followed by ironsmiths and tailors. You don’t come to our house, get out of here! We won’t eat what you touch!’… But I didn’t accept failure in life, I didn’t give up! I started becoming crazier and started reading the bible regularly. After that my family started to realize that what I was doing was good.

This change in his behavior inspired Shanti to also convert to Christianity. Unlike his wife, Arjun is literate and this helped him become an influential figure in the community, and with the help of other motivated citizens achieved the abolishing of the selling of alcohol and gambling in the village. His influential role in the community brings both praise and criticism from the community and strongly affects his moods and that of his family.

The fear of god and the role of discipline

Christian people talk often about the fear of god but all are not similar. We (the family) being leaders, we must follow it a hundred percent, respect it and should teach others. Arjun

The children who walk with fear of their parents, they will be on a good path. If the child does not have fear of the parents, they may do wrong things and go on the wrong path. Sarita

Going through the transcripts of the interview with Arjun, but also his daughters, the words fear and discipline occurred so often that I leafed through the pages with amazement. Above are just two of many examples. The only one who did not emphasize the importance of fear was Shanti. She expressed how the girls do not fear her, but are terribly afraid of their father. At the same time she feels insecure in her position of only having daughters, and therefore respects Arjun’s emphasis of fear and discipline to ensure their care and the girls devotion to them in their old age.

Kripa was outgoing and goofy when we met her, but she is particularly the afraid of her father. Sarita explains: “she is a chatterbox and has no discipline. She talks a lot no matter who she meets… my father wants us to be disciplined and she is not like that.” Kripa’s lack of discipline creates frustration and anger in Arjun’s rigorous belief in it, and therefore Kripa gets scolded and punished for her free spirited ways. When he is present she does not speak or make eye
contact, but as soon as he disappears she is naughty, goofy and social. Sarita on
the other hand has embodied their father’s discipline and fear of god in all
aspects of their life, but therefore does not fear their father like Kripa.

We observed this contrast when we had dinner with the family. “Kripa
TV” was nowhere to be seen. We sat on the floor with Kripa sitting the furthest
from her father and ate in silence and never looked up. Sarita was smiling, and
was leaning on her father in comfort and familiarity. Later Kripa explains “I
tremble when father gets angry.” The fear of her father is evident in her
avoidance and silence in his presence.

The familiarity Sarita has with their father is not always as cozy:

If the people say wrong things even if he is on the right way and they
criticize him, then our daddy feels tension and he won’t talk to anyone in
the home. He keeps quiet. Then we don’t say anything and also keep quiet,
because if we talked, then there would be a lot of tension! Sarita

Arjun’s influential role in society is a responsibility he takes seriously and being
criticized for his role is something he does not take well. Christianity in the
village is received with very mixed emotions. Many men think it is only for the
weak and innocent who do not know what they are doing, and therefore Arjun
often faces criticism, especially because of the high number of women converting
in the village. He tries to create change and improvement and it causes problems
with villagers who do not share the same beliefs. The criticisms he receives
directly reflect on his family members through his behavior.

When the father is in a good mood, then the family has a joking and easy
going relationship. Then Sarita as well as Shanti feel at ease and they can joke
with Arjun. Kripa, because of her lack of discipline fears her father all the time,
and does not share the same intimacy with her father.

Unlike Kripa’s free natured ways, Sarita’s responses mirrored the values
that Arjun told us in his interview. The fear of god was reemphasized, and the
importance of the lessons taught by their father hold strong values in her
approach to life. Discipline is equally valued as with her father. A theme that we
also heard throughout Arjun’s interview, as well as the girls was to forget the
past in order to cope with the loss of the eldest daughter.
Mourning in Silence

To my understanding Kripa does not understand but Sarita does. We did what we could. ‘What daddy told and is in the bible is correct and now we should bury it and we should not remember it.’ They have understood now that there is no use in talking about it. They do not talk about the topic and they do not ask about it... They might feel but they never express. They never talk with me about it as they believe what I have told them and they have accepted it. Arjun

The loss of the eldest daughter runs as a deep current of pain in the family. The loss happened just over a year ago and all the family members feel her absence. When we first started to interact with the girls I asked how many there are and Sarita answered, “there are three of us: us two and one is passed.” Later we went inside and she showed me the room that the girls shared. The first thing Sarita showed me was her late sisters awards from school, and only after that her own. The next morning when we had an interview with Kripa and Sarita and breached the subject again about how they cope and the reply was “why remember the events that have already passed. It will only cause pain. It is better to forget.” And with that Sarita ended that topic and never returned to it.

During this interview Sarita also told us about their dreams in the future, which also mirrored what Arjun said in his interview. Arjun told us about his late daughters aim in life, which he thought was simple:

She used to say, ‘I will become a nurse, daddy.’ So my wish is one of my daughters to follow her footsteps and fulfill their sisters aim. I wish they respect their sister’s wish for which I am ready to do whatever I can.

Sarita’s answer to her aims for the future was “to become a nurse and serve my parents.” For Sarita pleasing her parents and serving them was strongly emphasized, much like their belief in fear and discipline. The importance of the teachings and lessons of their father play an important role in her life and she spoke highly of her parents. Arjun has a strong belief in using the bible to explain the traumatic event of the loss of his daughter to his family.

I tell them it is the plan of god so there is no use in challenging it or being too sad about these things. To explain I used to narrate similar incidents from the bible. I also used to give examples from books where the examples are much more traumatic than our own. For example, someone had only one son and he passed SLC with distinction. (It is a real incident from this place). The son demands a motorbike with 200cc. The family took a loan and bought the son the bike. On that very day the son was hit by a truck and the son died. We have several children, but what will
happen to those parents? There are many examples. To forget one’s
tragedy, we should consider other examples of other people in this world,
whose situation is worse than ours.

Arjun tries to make the feeling of their loss feel small in comparison to others,
but thereby does not leave any room for the children or his wife to mourn in
their own way. He creates a ‘conspiracy of silence’ around the loss of his
daughter. Breaching the topic of the eldest daughter’s death to Shanti forced her
to tears and to run out of the room. Sarita mentioned that the trauma is in the
past and no point in talking about it by request of the father, who minimizes the
experience by comparing other life stories.

The stability that the relative wealth brings removes the fears of everyday life
and survival. It creates more stability, but at the same time the fear of 'him' was a
pronounced fear to the girls on a daily basis. The fear of 'him' was interpreted in
two different ways by the girls; Sarita fears god and is therefore disciplined and
thereby only fears her father when he is in a bad mood. The household depends
on Arjun’s moods and acts accordingly. He uses the bible to explain their
suffering and minimizes their own pain and thereby creates a conspiracy of
silence around traumatic events. Sarita has embodied this and pushes herself to
be the best in school and display the discipline that her father desires. Kripa on
the other hand fears the consequence of her father, instead of fearing god. She
does not impose the rigorous discipline and obedience that god and the father
wants, but rather only sees the immediate threat of her father. She does not
embody the fear into all aspects of her life like her elder sister, but this increases
the fear of her father to a point that she trembles in his presence.

Chapter 8

Fear of Punishment

Fear is provoked when a situation is perceived as dangerous and the individual
realizes their own powerlessness to do anything about it (Salimovich, Lira &
Weinstein 1992). Fear in these instances is about power imbalances and feelings

---

9 The conspiracy of silence can be defined as the "explicit or unstated taboo, which forbids the asking about
or discussion of trauma... and results in children often only receiving information in fragments that are cast
in mystery, thus perpetuating a narrative void surrounding the subject of experience" (Denham 2008: 391).
of personal threat and inferiority, and the fear of being harmed. When a parent uses physical or verbal violence towards a child, power is executed and can evoke fear in the child. When society uses threats, discrimination and violence it serves as a tool to dominate and punish individuals and families to maintain their position in society. The fear of punishment, either verbal or physical causes individuals to navigate in particular ways and navigational strategies also depend on the types of punishment. Disentangling the fear of punishment presented similar challenges as trying to simply disentangle fear into four themes. Punishment in Merriam Webster's Dictionary is defined as: “severe, rough or disastrous treatment; a penalty inflicted on an offender; or suffering, pain or loss that serves as retribution” (2011). Although it defines what punishment does, there is no definition of what exactly the punishment is, and in many ways it is in the eyes of the beholder and how that person perceives it. Punishment can be verbal, physical, or unspoken and can be simply placed within actions or rejection. Therefore to define punishment in the culture of fear or in the home is a challenge, and what is presented here is merely a small glimpse at the creation of fear through punishment, and how it causes the girls to navigate for a particular, and usually more obvious form of punishment such as violence or scolding. For this case study, punishment will take different forms as it is talked about first in the culture of fear, and later within the family.

Explicit processes placed within a life of tragedy

We cry more and laugh less. We all stay together, that’s it. With the children it’s also like that. I advise them and tell them that today we are suffering, but tomorrow we can have happiness and good times if you work hard. They understand. *Sheetal*

The Tamang family lives in an unfinished cement house just below the village. The family consists of the mother Sheetal, Arati who is 15, and Pramila 14. The eldest daughter has recently been married off.

*Sheetal* was married at the age of thirteen. Both *Sheetal* and her husband Bikash came from very poor family backgrounds, both lacked education and had to struggle for daily needs until only a few years ago. They worked endlessly and sometimes not even sleeping trying to decrease the family's poverty. Their work ranged from *melapat*, to making and selling alcohol and to farming and cattle. By
saving every penny and through their hard work, they were able to secure their family and start building a new home. However, with this gain in economic standards, the suffering of the family took new forms.

Sheetal started to face health problems and for the past five years she has been unable to do heavy work. She suffered from intestinal complications and had to have several operations, which reduced her ability to do much work aside from household chores. The sequence of health problems caused a heavy emotional, work and financial burden on the family.

Shortly after her medical problems and hospitalizations, the father started spending all the hard earned money on alcohol in the village bars. After a misunderstanding with some villagers, he was beaten severely and came home in *chophhne* and ran into the jungle. They managed to bring him back, and took him to a religious healer (*jannee*), which helped for a period of time, but he was often violent and unpredictable. After some time Sheetal feared for the safety of the family and sent him to their family land in another district.

The problems in the family increased with the eldest daughter also falling sick. Following the heavy load of work and emotional burden from her parent’s illnesses and caring for her younger sisters, she started to suffer from hallucinations. The parents, unable to cope, started to ignore her, which made matters worse. These issues led to multiple hospitalizations and suicide attempts. She recovered when she found Christianity, and has recently been married off out of force. Sheetal beat her and locked her into a room until she agreed to marry.

With the mother unable to work heavy jobs, and the father restricted to farm work, plus the heavy medical bills, has put the family back into financial difficulties and leaves their house unfinished. Sheetal does much of the house work while the girls are at school, but still relies on her daughters after school to help with the heavy burden of farming, cattle and goats, as well as to bring in extra money working in other people’s fields.

**Fears of punishment in a culture of fear**

Their house sits slightly below the village and somewhat isolated and this may be part of the reason for their unsupported struggle, but more probable is the
rejection, humiliation, and threats Sheetal suffers from the villagers. She is being punished for beating up a teashop owner and vandalizing his store after he slandered her father almost ten years ago. Since then Sheetal has barely entered the village, and it can be said that her navigation is one of avoidance. She explains: "Why listen to bad things others say? I would rather drink black tea here in my house rather than tolerating such gossip about me." Sheetal is a strong woman, and talking about the traumatic experience with the village brought tears to her eyes. She feels isolated and cheated and even rejects public events or invitations to marriages. She sends the children on their own.

The mother’s already discriminated status in society was worsened with her husband’s mental health problems. He was punished for a drunken misunderstanding in one of the village bars and was beaten so severely that he suffered from *chophhnee*. Villagers said that he is not right in the head, which refers to disturbances in the *dimaag*\(^\text{10}\) (brain-mind), and is highly stigmatized \((\text{Kohrt} \, \& \, \text{Harper} \, 2008)\). Removing the father from the village was for the family’s protection, but also to protect him from the discrimination and threats from the village.

Since this incident the family cannot take any loans, or have loans repaid that they gave out to others when they did have money. Aside from being discriminated, the problem also lies in their poverty:

> When we have poor economic status, the society does not care about us. When my husband was earning well, they came to take loans from us, and we could also take loans. But now people don’t give us any money. We have such problems! They do not understand.

The punishment the family receives is through discrimination, but also their poor economic status. This fear causes the girls to avoid the village and the mother always needs to know where they are to ease her fears of what might happen to them if they roam. Sheetal fears punishment towards her daughters from society and keeps a tight watch on all their actions and tends to scold and beat them for being late or if they disobey. Her daughter’s diligence and work

---

\(^\text{10}\)In Nepali ethnopsychology the *dimaag* is the brain-mind and acts in accordance with collectivity and social norms. The *dimaag* is responsible for controlling behavior and thinking, and because of “the centrality of social relations in status and perceived well-being, any dysfunction that impairs social positioning is strongly stigmatized” \((\text{Kohrt} \, \& \, \text{Harper} \, 2008: \, 471)\).
ethic is as important as containing them within her control, and out of the control of the villagers.

Navigating the fear of punishment

The fears of punishment that Sheetal projects onto her daughters take the form of physical punishment through beatings and force, as well as scolding and reminding their daughters of their temporary position in the home. The punishment at home differs from the threats and fears they have from the community, because those in the home are more imminent and personal for the girls, especially for Arati who is in grade 10 and going into the SLC exams next year. For this case study the focus will only be on Arati, because we built a good relationship with her that revealed her fears of punishment and her fears of the future. Pramila was incredibly shy and nervous in every situation we encountered her in and we were unable to build a relationship with her during this short time. Although I may say ‘them’ or ‘the sisters,’ at times, the perspective is purely Arati’s.

Past experiences of violence, threats and scolding maintain Arati and Pramila under constant threats of punishment. The fears are also not just only shaped by their own personal experience, but also by the fate that their older sister faced. Punishment in the case of their older sister was being married off out of force. Arati told us about her older sister’s scars from her mother’s beatings on her legs and back that are permanently imprinted into her body from before the marriage. She was also very explicit about the suffering and neglect her older sister endured while she suffered hallucinations, and how it led to her conversion to Christianity against their mother’s wish.

Sheetal admitted to us about using force and violence in convincing her eldest daughter to marry. The husband’s family had shown interest in her for a while because of her ability to work hard, and after her breakdown with hallucinations and similar symptoms to her father, the mother thought it was best to marry her off. These past experiences have made the present unpredictable for the girls and the future unstable and fragile in their eyes. Arati
fears her mother's quick temper and her stubborn nature and navigates the home environment with caution and physical avoidance of her mother.

Sheetal told us about her relationship with Arati:

I scold her often. Maybe she feels bad, but I know that I am scolding her for a good reason. A girl has to go to someone else's family, so she should know how to do things. That's what I am trying to explain to her, but she feels hurt when I say such things.

Sheetal consistently repeated the importance of her daughters knowing the skills around the home in order to be useful in marriage. School is only temporary, as is their stay in the home, and therefore she believes that her daughters should not embarrass her once they go to a new home. Contrary to her mother's wishes and demands of being skilled around the home and the farm, Arati's ambitions were clear, she loves to study and dreams of continuing her education as far as possible. She wants to be at the top of the class at all costs, even if it requires confronting her mother on a daily basis in sometimes violent conflicts in order to pursue this dream. This difference in opinion between Sheetal and Arati puts a heavy burden on Arati when she is at home, but provides a solace at school. There she is smiley, bubbly and outspoken and one of the most recognized public speakers within the school. She feels safe and has the support of Sudeep Sir, one of the influential teachers who helps her when things get rough. She is keen to participate in quiz competitions that are set up on Fridays, is actively involved in the lessons and giggles with friends.

Considering I first met Arati at school and marveled at her English skills and open natured ways, I was surprised to see a complete turn of behavior at home. The times that I saw her at home she carried a frown on her face and kept her eyes down cast, nervously fiddled with her hands and did not speak or understand English. She would always nervously look to Sujen to translate if I said something to her, whereas at school she made her best efforts to speak English with me with a brilliant smile on her face.

How Arati navigates the fears of punishment in the home can be seen through her nervousness, as well as avoidance of her mother. Arati told us about her relationship with her: “I find it useless to talk to my mother because she does not understand why I study so much. A few days ago she hit me and now I’m not on speaking terms with her.” Although Arati is resourceful and open outside of
School, the insecurity of her position and the frequent conflicts with her mother weigh heavily on her shoulders. Her moods vary day by day, which was also observable throughout our visits. Sometimes she was happy and willing to interact and other days she barely made eye contact and pulled back if we asked questions. She expressed this during one of our visits: “Sometimes I feel hopeful about continuing my studies and the future, and other days I feel completely hopeless.” These mood swings depend on her relationship with her mother at that point in time. When she was beaten and was unable to please Sheetal she was down, while on other days she seemed much more positive, even at home.

Society has isolated the family. While the father has been moved to their land in another district because of his unpredictability and violent tendencies to protect the family, and himself from the villagers, the mother is stigmatized and lacks support outside of her daughters. The daughters are left to manage public affairs on their own, and Arati fears the consequences of the village if she speaks her mind.

The use of violence in the home is an immediate threat to the girls on a daily basis and outside the family they face insecurity and discrimination and Arati fears criticisms for standing her ground or trying to do good. Her current fears are created through her past experiences, as well as that of her sister, who she had relied on for support. Arati has found solace at school and has the support of a teacher to help her through difficult times. This safe environment provides support and comfort to her, even though at home she is suffering under the threats and also physical punishments from her mother. Having a safe environment or an individual who supports outside the family shows her comfort and outgoing personality.

The fear of punishment creates a threat to Arati’s sense of safety on a daily basis. Her biggest concern is her fear of punishment and talking about violence is what brought her to tears. Her safety is jeopardized on a daily basis and the financial instability of the family adds tension and responsibility to her as the oldest daughter to help ensure the safety of her sister. Arati was unique among the girls that I researched because of her open and honest ways and her free spirited nature at school. Her ability to open up about her and her family’s suffering stands apart from the other girls, but this openness also varied from
day to day and depended on how she felt, and especially what environment she was in.

Chapter 9
The fears that poverty brings

This last case study has been a struggle for me and I was tempted to remove it from this thesis because the data is simply not substantial enough to provide a full picture. However, through spending lots of time with the Dalit children through soccer games, adventures and hanging out, we got to know the culture of fear that persisted in the village and the contrast between the two villages is interesting for comparison sakes. Through this contrast of the two villages, I argue that in this case, the culture of fear differs between castes and villages only a twenty minute walk apart. I realize that this argument adds to the complexity of the findings, however I find this relevant but not diverting from the topic, because it shows how a different culture of fear can produce different fears for the girls and families which then transgenerationally transmit.

I had originally named the chapter ‘fears of marriage’, which are very real, but I found that the real problem for this family was that the fears of marriage were brought on by their poverty, their social position and their unstable position in the community. Only talking about the fear of marriage would have neglected the greater network of influences that create a particular fear. I have been struggling with this throughout all of the case studies, but this one in particular. The fear in this family is created by the instability the girls face due to poverty, caused by their social relations and the mother being a widow, and their mother’s ability to marry them off any day. These are some of the main fears, but as I talk about the case study, other fears will unravel. I will first introduce the family and then talk about the Dalit village.

While we sat in the small upstairs in her house with five of Sagoon’s six children, plus a couple of extras from the community, she told us about the suffering she has endured throughout her life without any hesitation. Her children listened attentively and this open sharing of her suffering in front of all
her children showed the extent to which her children share their mother's burden.

Explicit processes in a life of instability and fear

Sagoon lives with four of her six children in a small mud home in the Dalit village. The four youngest children still residing with her are Nalina 15, Kamala 13, Akash 5, and Pradeep 3. She was married at the age of fifteen to her husband, not knowing that she was the second wife. It was a deception and it was incredibly difficult for her.

Sagoon’s husband passed away almost two years ago from tuberculosis and alcoholism. He started drinking at a very young age and when he was drunk he was violent, unpredictable and abusive. When he was sober he was a good man and provided some money for the family. He used to work in another city and would come home every few months to visit. The family was terrified of his visits and hid any sharp objects that could be used as weapons. The children, as well as the mother, used to hide outside the home until he passed out because of his violent and abusive tendencies.

When he died the family of seven was then left without an income. The mother works the small plot of land in front of their house and gains any money she can from working other people’s fields. The eldest daughter had to leave school, even though she had free tuition until graduation to earn money for the family. Shortly after, she ran off with an older and already married man, and is now suffering in the new home. Out of fear of discrimination and fear of failure she is now refusing to come home, even though her life is miserable.

Sagoon had a psychological breakdown after her flight and refused to eat or drink for days. After her departure the eldest son who was studying in grade seven was starting to hang around the village, skip school and cause trouble and as a result the mother sent him to Kathmandu to work in a bag factory to earn money for the family.

Since the death of her husband, Sagoon has been facing difficulties in society with loans, as well as discrimination, backbiting and gossip. Widows are

---

12The first wife lived next door, but we did not find out about her until the last day in the field. Sagoon told us that she does not fight with her because they both suffer. It would have been interesting to interview the first wife as well, but unfortunately time did not permit it.
often blamed for the death of their husbands and they are often ostracized by the community and even blamed for bad events and witchcraft (Dahal 2008). Sagoon faces such challenges on a daily basis, and it has increased to the point that she is afraid of speaking to other men, because as soon as she does, the gossip and rumors start that she may run off with him. The family takes loans from the shop to get food and often are unable to repay and this results in the shop keeper coming to harass the family at home. The mother is now threatening the two older girls with early marriages to prevent them from running away and to ease the financial burden on the family.

The explicit processes that produce the fears in Sagoon’s family are deeply rooted in the culture of fear that resides in the Dalit village. She is fearful of her position as a widow and consistently threaten the girls to marry them off to prevent ‘run away’ like her eldest daughter out of fear that she might be left alone. Witchcraft is a threat that the family fears deeply. Kamala told us how tunamuna, black magic that caused illusions of love, forced her elder sister to run away with a married man. The fear of this reoccurring forces Sagoon to keep her daughters close and will not let them outside the house unless they have a purpose.

A different twist to a culture of fear

The Dalit village is completely removed from any other village our houses of other castes or ethnic groups and is only reached through narrow walking paths along the side of a narrow valley. The community is small and composed of around twenty-five families. Unemployment and alcoholism are major concerns to both children and parents. We witnessed how young girls ran up a grass bank out of terror in order to be out of reach of a of drunk man who came up the steep path. To the girls in the village drunk men represent violence, abuse and induces fears for their safety.

Most families struggle to meet everyday needs. The change in the legal code has not been able to improve the status of the ‘untouchables’ and they have the lowest economic, as well as social status, in all of Nepal (Dahal 1996). Although it is legally unacceptable to discriminate against Dalit today, many still face discrimination from higher castes when getting water from the tap, and
outside their community. Only in the mornings is the local water tap operational in the village, and in the evenings the villagers have to walk twenty minutes down a steep walking path to refill their water jugs. This job falls to the girls, and this journey to, and the fight for the tap, with those of higher castes is a major stress factor because of the heavy burden, and the discrimination and fights they suffer while going. The Dalit children were quite outgoing in their village and especially when we went on trips to the jungle, but when we went close to other communities and especially the elders, the children fell silent and walked or sat in silence to avoid scolding or discrimination by those of higher status.

Sujen and my first visit to the Dalit village and the family presented a stark contrast to any of the other families we had visited so far, but also the dynamics of the village presented such a different vibe that it left Sujen and I in amazement. In Siddhikot we had to lure the girls out of their homes to interact as well as make eye contact. Here, before I knew it I had several kids jumping onto my back and Sujen was asked about the details of our lives without much hesitation. Sitting on the family's porch, multiple neighbors showed up and a hoard of children surrounded us, who proceeded to violently shove and hit each other in play, but also to attain their desired positioning or attention.

The culture of fear was ever present in the Dalit village, but it took a different form. Children were not quiet, obedient, shy and disciplined, but rather loud, outgoing and violent towards each other around their parents. The culture of fear here was dominated by fears of witchcraft, gossip, violence, rejection and domination. Unlike Siddhikot, witchcraft was a very real threat, which also affected Sagoon's family, who we got to know over the last two weeks in the field. It was this short time span that restricted our ability to get rich data on the family, and therefore the discussion revolves around the family's fears around the greater culture of fear presented in their village and especially the effects on fears through poverty.
Navigating society

Through gossip, backstabbing and isolation the villagers ensure Sagoon’s vulnerable position, and the girls share the suffering of their mother.13 The fears in the Dalit village took a slightly different form from the girls we encountered in Siddhikot because of the different social surroundings and expectations.

The effects and fears of witchcraft was described to us by a few of the children. They told us how Pragya, who often came with us, was the daughter of an accused witch. Her mother was able to touch her tongue to the tip of her nose and villagers feared this. They thought it was abnormal and since then she has faced humiliation and rejection as a witch. This rejection extends to Pragya, which she bears in silence and the children told us how it makes her sad and sometimes angry. This fear of being deemed a witch or suffering from witchcraft was expressed by the children, and also resulted in some of the navigation of especially Nalina, which is discussed later.

The culture of fear that transgenerationally transmits is also in the form of open violence. This is best described through an excerpt from my field notes:

Sitting on Sagoon’s porch, the children’s play (aged approximately four to seven) was getting so violent that I had to get up because I was afraid of getting hurt in the process. Sagoon noticed my discomfort, grabbed a bamboo stick, raised it in the air and within seconds several children had run off, and her son had curled up in fetal position on the floor. After she had put down the stick, slowly the children returned and proceeded to punch each other violently, but at a greater distance... later we walked with a group of older children past a house and everyone fell silent, and one of the boys turned and said. “Her aunt, (pointing at one of the girls) lives there. It is a bad and violent house.”

The boys and girls were incredibly open about the violence they received in the home, as well as witnessed in the community. Fights, and especially drunken fights are very common, which causes the children to hide in their homes. The transgenerational transmission of violence has been called the cycle of violence (Patrick & Vaidyanathan 2011), and I argue that the Dalit village represents such a cycle of violence, not just within a family but within the greater community.

Milan, the head of an NGO that works with girls who run away from home told us how he noticed a big shift in children after the age of five or six, because it is

13The lack of social support has a negative effect on mental health and also a decrease in social status (Kohrt et al. 2009). Offering support to Dalit is not seen as beneficial because it is a ‘one way path,’ because they cannot return the favor later on. Even within the Dalit there is a lack of support because of the stratification within the caste itself, and Sagoon by being a widow is at the mercy of her neighbors.
then that “they have awareness of discrimination... and start discriminating against others. By looking they start doing.” In the above excerpt from my field notes, it is not just discrimination, but also how children learn about the violence and by watching their parents and peers they also ‘start doing.’ Kamala exhibited violence towards other children when we went on adventures, but not at home. To her peers she was extremely forceful, as well as towards Sujen and I.

While in Siddhikot the girls were shy and hesitant to take food, or use my camera to take photos, the Dalit children fought over it violently. I believe this is linked in their fight for resources on a daily basis. Sharing as such was not a concept that they displayed in our presence.

Navigating their unstable home environment

The unstable environment the girls live in is caused by poverty, society and their mother’s threats to marry them off. I will discuss all three together because they are all linked into an intricate web of suffering in this family.

Having so many children, and especially still young children without an income presents an economic burden on Sagoon that is beyond her capacity. The inability to take loans, and the threats from the shop keeper keep the girls fearful whether they can finish school, or even stay in their home. Their elder sister had to leave school to work as well as their elder brother, and they may face the same fate and are working hard to stay right where they are. In order to ease the burden on their mother, both girls save any money they earn or have in order to anticipate the debts at the shop.

Much like Maya’s and Sheetal’s family, poverty puts the family into a place of need and mercy of others. Sagoon’s position is even more fragile because of her position as a widow, who are often accused of witchcraft and discriminated (Dahal 2008). This isolated position concerns the children, and they share the heavy burden she carries both emotionally and through physical labor. When she works in the fields they go and help, and around the home especially, Nalina, being the oldest, has taken over much of the duties of caring for her brothers and housework.

Talking about their main concerns, their mother’s health and well being was expressed by Kamala and Nalina and even five year old Akash chimed in his
concerns about the well being of his mother. The desertion of the eldest daughter has caused a heavy burden on the family and increased tension. Since her departure the mother fears society to a greater extent, because she blames her loss of her daughter on tunamuna. This loss has increased her fear of letting her daughters roam out of fear that it might strike them as well. As a result she constantly scolds and threatens them not to wander outside the home.

Kamala takes it in silence, while Nalina tries to reassure her mother that she will not run away. Nalina exhibited much the same nervousness as the girls in Siddhikot, complied to her mother's wish and did not roam freely like her younger sister when we went on adventures. But talking to her in the home, she was honest about the difficulties she faces at home and in society. She mentioned that her mother plans to marry her off soon, but she on the other hand thinks that she is able to convince her otherwise. For Kamala and Nalina, helping around the home is ensuring their security and safety and preventing undesired early marriages. Both wish to finish their education, but they worry about the insecurity of their positioning on a daily basis. This worrying is exacerbated by their poverty, which increases their instability in the community and the girl's position within the family. The mother's fears weigh heavily on them and especially Kamala was tense and was always making sure her younger brothers were taken care of and the household work done. Now being the eldest, the heavy burden falls on her shoulder to ensure the wellbeing of her younger siblings.

Sagoon's family, living in the Dalit village, are embedded in a culture of fear that relates to their poverty, her status as a widow, violence and the fears of witchcraft. It forces particularly Nalina to stick around home and reassure her mother of her trust and support. Society poses a threat to the family, however the girls have a friendship circle that they stick to for support. In order to avoid gossip, they do not walk with others or with boys and stay out of the jungle unless they are in a group. This ensures their safety of witchcraft, as well as threats of drunken men and removes some of the fears from the mother. The fears that the family experiences is shaped by the threats they feel in society and is rooted in their past experiences as well as their current instability caused by poverty and widowhood. Although the details on the family are not as rich as I
would have hoped, I do believe that this case study revealed some important aspects and points of discussion. For one, it showed that the culture of fear is locally produced between villages and castes. It also suggests that the community processes produce a cycle of violence, as well as reemphasizes that poverty increases the fears that the girls feel.

**Chapter 10**

**Discussion**

The culture of fear is a vicious cycle. In Siddhikot and the Dalit village it is a structural mechanism that is so deeply interwoven into the deep processes of society that it consistently reinforces social structures through generations. Fear is experienced, it is produced, and it is expressed and thereby it is a process that impacts navigation and it is also a worldview. Disentangling a culture of fear into only four specific themes is a challenge beyond reckoning, because fear can reside in interactions, in the body and within the given structures that produce fear, and on a daily basis these are reinforced through actions as small as comments, feelings, looks, or gestures; or as big as violence, rejection and violent words. However, identifying four *major* themes of fear experienced within families residing within the greater culture of fear allows an in depth look at how personal and family histories perpetuate and perceive certain fears, and how girls then chose to navigate the given environment.

Transgenerational suffering in these families provides a glimpse into a certain place and time and particular explicit transmission processes that affect the girls within a particular environment. Much like Dickson Gomez (2002), my findings revealed that transgenerational processes were evident in the family and extended into the greater society, which I expose as a culture of fear. Dickson Gomez (2002) guided me to focus on the explicit processes of transmission, which revealed processes that transmit fear to young girls in light of structural and sexual discrimination. At the same time, the focus on the explicit processes took me away from implicit processes that were repeatedly evident in society, such as *chophhnee* and idioms of distress, and this presents a limitation to the results presented here.
The specific focus on girls takes a bottom up perspective on structural violence subjected by the Hindu caste system and female discrimination. Dalit and Tamang girls consistently face sexual as well as structural discrimination and their lives provide a glimpse of how power structures are transgenerationally reinforced to ensure subordination and social control between generations and social positions in society. Much like Farmer (1997), the results revealed how larger societal and forces impact individual suffering. The power of fear is executed by society to maintain social order, while parents use it to enforce discipline and diligence in young girls to ensure family honor and marriage potential.

Each of the four case studies presents a history of suffering which has thereby influenced the perception and perpetuation of certain fears to their daughters. These fears are enforced and further transmitted through explicit processes such as violence, narratives and threats, which emphasize the fears. I agree with Tol et al (forthcoming) that parents serve as filters through which children understand their fears. Mohan’s discriminated position in his family and society has directly infiltrated the lives of his daughters, and especially Rabina is facing the same fate as her father. Sagoon’s traumatic marriage and the loss of her eldest daughter have increased the fears for her daughter’s marriages and results in her subjecting constant threats onto them out of fear of her own position and vulnerability. Trauma, suffering and fear are so closely intertwined in the lives of these families to the point that they interconnect and become a way of perceiving and living the experience of fear and suffering as normalcy.

What girls then do in light of their parent’s and societies fears and the explicit processes is dependent on the individual character, her life history and subsequent worldview. The focus on social navigation plays with the intersection between structure and agency, and practice theory helps to focus on what informs the doing within each girl. The girls of all four families are raised in a culture of fear, but taking the perspective of these girls as social actors, it becomes evident that each child embodies the various processes of fear in different ways and thereby navigates the environment accordingly. Bimala’s lack of fear of her parents or society stands in sharp contrast to her two elder sisters who are in constant fear of the imminent threats of the father’s unpredictable
temper and the potential threats of the community through verbal or physical abuse. Each girl embodies the sense of fear and danger according to her experience and personality. The contrast in navigating fear is also seen between Sarita, who fears god and her father in all aspects of their lives, and therefore exhibit discipline and diligence. Kripa on the other hand only fears her father. She identifies the threat within a person rather than a force outside of her immediate environment. Fear takes the form according to the understanding and perception of who or what may do harm and is perceived as an immediate threat to their safety (Salimovich, Lira & Weinstein 1996).

The emic perspective of how children understand the explicit transmissions of fear, their own position in society and that of their parents is underrepresented in the data and is a major limitation of the study. The difficulty of getting girls to talk about their problems and perspectives in the short research period presented a challenge, and a limitation to the results. At the same time, through casual conversation and many visits we were able to get an idea of how children perceive their positioning and self perception in some of the families. Particularly Arati expressed her concerns of her mother not understanding her actions and desires, and thereby refused to talk to her unless she had to. She understands her family’s, as well as her own isolated position within society and fears the consequences of the village if she takes an active stance or belief.

One of the major ways of reacting to the explicit processes of transmission is silence. Kamala and Nalina manage their mother’s threats by quietly and diligently doing their work and not resist her comments. In Arjun’s home, his wife and daughters respect his stories and wishes from the bible and do not talk about the loss of the eldest daughter. The conspiracy of silence around traumatic events or suffering creates a silent burden in families (Danieli 1998). For Arjun, the silence was created through his belief in god and putting traumatic experiences in the past, which cannot be changed. The silence among Hindu families may be because of the belief in karma, which causes families to cover up suffering or traumatic events to prevent stigmatization (Kohrt & Hruschka 2008).
Expressing concerns about processes in society was much easier for the girls than expressing concerns in the home. Particularly the Dalit girls expressed their concern about the instability of their position and the discrimination they face at the water tap for their social status, and that of their mother as a widow. Lack of social support has been shown to have negative effects on mental health and decreases social status, (Kohrt et al. 2009) and lack of support was evident in all the families.

The culture of fear presented in the Dalit village revealed that it is locally produced, and that between caste and village, the fears in society take a different form. The immediate threat to the Dalit girl’s wellbeing was presented through fears of gossip, poverty, black magic, domestic and village violence, witchcraft, and the use of alcohol by men in society. Findings also suggest that within the Dalit village, a cycle of violence is transgenerationally transmitted to the children. Frisell et al. (2010) revealed how violent behavior transmits in families in Sweden and the cycle of violence in the Dalit village suggests that it can lie within the family, but also within the greater processes of the community that the children grow up in. Thereby the cycle of violence is integrated into the general processes that transmit the culture of fear transgenerationally.

In contrast, the culture of fear exhibited in Siddhikot pressured more explicitly on social behavior and expectations through social control, as well as social discrimination through lack of support and backstabbing. The violence was more contained within families. The difference between the two villages presents an interesting look at how caste and values can provide a culture of fear that is locally produced and enforced through different discrimination and fears through generations of suffering.

Poverty in itself created higher fears because of the unpredictability of what the future might bring. Gullone (2000) compiled research that found similar findings in various countries including in India. This increase in fear due to poverty was again especially evident among the Dalit girls, who feared the threats of the shopkeeper, their own position in society and the potential that they might have to leave their home any day. The fears that poverty bring were also evident in Maya’s and Sheetal’s family. Families felt isolated in their suffering because of their poverty, which contributed to open discrimination and
unwillingness by villagers to lend support. Poverty was one of the main contributing factors to increasing the fear that affected parents, as well as their daughters, who shared the burden of their parents. Arjun’s family was financially more secure and thereby the fears in the family took a different shape. In their family the fears revolved around silence and discipline, and fear of society was more rooted in Arjun’s effort to create change and their religious position. The instability for daily needs did not exist in the same way, and therefore Arjun’s daughter’s did not fear the future and its unpredictability as the girls did in the other three families.

How these explicit processes and navigational strategies then impact the worldviews of the girls is the next step in the research, but will require much more extensive immersion into their culture. Expressing an overarching theme that predominates among almost all the girls, I will suggest that fearful may be the most appropriate way to describe it. While Sarita fears failure in the eyes of their father and god, Kamala and Nalina fear what the future might bring because of poverty or the potential of marriage. Taking it one step further, the navigational practices of some of the girls may point towards aspects of resilience and risk and therefore impact their worldview. However, because of the difficulty of defining exactly what risk and resilience is in a mass of literature, the ability to suggest towards either risk or resilience is outside the scope of this report. Another reason for my hesitation to make any assumptions about risk or resilience is that the findings presented here are largely an emic perspective of the suffering and transgenerational processes. Sujen and I discussed our observations for hours, but the lack of voices from the children, the short time period, as well as a comprehensive picture of the villagers was insufficient to provide a full view. Therefore the interpretations are largely my own. These difficulties leaves the case studies open-ended and presents a difficulty in drawing any conclusions and is a major limitation to the study. In order to provide a full picture of how girls navigation and emic perspectives impacts their worldviews, a more longitudinal approach may present results that can draw such conclusions.

After spending time with families and also through the focus group discussions and meetings in teashops, there are topics and processes that were
outside of the scope of the chapters of this thesis, but are relevant for discussion. Pettigrew and Adhikari (2009) found that fear changed with time and events and in Siddhikot the culture of fear is also not static. Development and the increased disparity between rich and poor shifted the culture of fear into one of inequality and lack of support. Now the culture of fear is taking a shift with the opportunity of education and especially educating daughters. Most of all, mothers are sometimes sacrificing scolding and abuse as well as mounting debts in order to put their daughters through school, and thereby are not only changing the culture of fear, but also to a certain extent transgenerational suffering. The mother’s goals are to not see their daughters suffer like they did. Nightingale (2011) also documented in Nepal how women are using their education to empower themselves in society and use it as a method to create more independence and self worth. The women are seeing a window of opportunity to decrease the suffering of their daughters through education, because they believe that it allows them to speak in society and reduces being dominated or being taken advantage of. The importance of educating girls is a shift that has only taken hold in the past few years, and even between the oldest and youngest daughters in one family the change in attitudes were evident in pushing the younger ones to finish school, whereas the older ones were married at young ages. This presents a shift in society and how the education of girls will impact the effects of structural violence and suffering for women, may also present a change in the transgenerational processes for the next generation.

I do believe that the methods revealed valuable information on how family histories and a culture of fear lead to explicit (and implicit) processes of transgenerational fears and suffering. At the same time, this research has shown some of the difficulties of looking at the given concepts in such a short time frame. Overall, I believe a more longitudinal approach could reduce the reliance on the emic perspective, provide a more in depth child perspective, and reveal reliable data on resilience and risk factors.
Conclusion

In this report I have tried to show how a culture of fear is transgenerationally transmitted to girls living in a village in Nepal. Girls suffer structural violence and as a result grow up in fear of their environment, face daily insecurities and lack of control of their futures. Findings suggest that transgenerational processes in families are influenced by family histories, their position in society and poverty. At the same time, processes of transmission also directly lie in the greater culture of fear that the family resides in thereby extending the transgenerational influences on children into the greater influence of society.

The culture of fear is locally produced and can differ between community and caste and thereby influence the families in different ways. Poverty especially tended to increase the fears of parents and girls because of the daily instability and discrimination from society, and in the Dalit village a cycle of violence was evident in families as well as the community. By looking at children as social actors, findings showed that each girl is unique in how she navigates the transgenerational transmissions of fear in the family and society. Each girl's navigation and fears are determined by events and feelings from the past, and expectations of the future. The results are presented from an emic perspective, which presents a limitation in making conclusions about risk and resilience and the general worldview. I suggest that a longitudinal approach, a richer representation of the emic view of children, as well as including the implicit processes of transmission can reveal a more comprehensive picture of transgenerational suffering and the influence of a culture of fear on family suffering on a daily basis.
Annexes

Findings to follow up on

Other interesting findings that are related to transgenerational suffering as well as the culture of fear I will only point to briefly, because for elaboration more research needs to be done or new chapters started. These are threefold. Two interesting findings are related to birth order of the girls. For one, there were consistent findings of the eldest daughters suffering illnesses that were incurable or displayed through idioms of distress. This may be due to the heavy emotional and work burden on the eldest daughters on top of sexual discrimination and instability in their positioning. Why the eldest tend to suffer more is a point worth investigating in light of idioms of distress, coping and discrimination. The second finding in relation to birth order was that the youngest tended to cope differently and were often more free spirited than the elder. This may be due to the younger age, but also may be because they carry less of a burden than the elder siblings and are more protected through multiple caregivers. A longitudinal study would be interesting to explore these points, as well as to further explore the burdens and stressors on the eldest daughters and the role of idioms of distress. The third point for further exploration has to do with the high amount of women and girls converting to Christianity as a coping mechanism, and often thereby curing illnesses that are otherwise ‘incurable’ through traditional healers and western medicine. This was also particularly evident among the eldest daughters. In Siddhikot there is a high conversion rate, and it may be interesting to look at the role of conversion in curing idioms of distress, alcoholism and other problems and particularly what role Christianity and prayers have offered them versus Hinduism or Buddhism. In essence, what does Christianity offer in light of easing social suffering?
List of words/terms

Bhya
Bhai
Bhunti
Brahmin
Chhetri
Bohini
Chophhnee
Dar
Didi
Janajati
Matwali
Melapat
Jannee
Saato Ghayo
Sojiho
Thik-cha
Tras
Tunamuna

Intense fear
Brother
Shorty or Dwarf
Upper caste in traditional Hindu caste system. Traditionally the thread bearers: teachers and priests
Upper caste in the traditional Hindu caste system. Traditionally the warriors and protectors.
Little sister
According to my informants it is both hysteria and possession. It is caused because of extreme suppression of emotional reactions and feelings that are locked inside and not able to express. It is especially common in the case of women who are not allowed to speak freely. The villagers believe that it is caused by supernatural forces like angry gods or evil spirits
Fear as used in everyday language
Sister. It is commonly used to address women.
Ethnic minority groups in the Hindu Caste System
Enslaved alcohol drinkers in the Hindu Caste System
Laborer
Traditional Healer
Soul departed from the body
the quality of being frank and without artifice
Fine, ok, great
Terror
Black magic that can cause blind love

List of abbreviations

NGO
SLC
SES
VDC

Non Governmental Organization
School Leaving Certificate
Socio Economic Status
Village Development Committee
Interview themes: children in depth interviews

- Main concerns in the home
- Understanding of their role and position in the family
- Understanding of the role and interaction between family members
- Perceptions of parents or elders actions, reactions and interpretations of everyday events
- Beliefs and role of fear in parenting
- Understanding of own future
- Children's understanding of (the dangers in) their environment
- Role and perception of being a girl and society
- The role of poverty and perceptions of society
- Understanding and perceptions of own actions, reactions and interpretations in the home and outside of it
- Interpretation of everyday events
- Explanation of causes of suffering
- Methods of coping

Interview themes: parents and household members

Short life histories

- Reflection of own childhood in contrast with own children
- Understanding of position in society
- Explanation of causes of suffering
- Explanation of coping mechanisms
- Perceptions and understanding of the environment (political, social)

Current living conditions

- Main concerns in the home
- Understanding of their role and position in the family
- Understanding of the role and interaction between family members
- Perceptions of parenting and children
- Perception of potential of the future (for self and children)

Men’s Focus Group Discussion: Vignette 1

There is a man called Raju. Due to the unemployment in his village, he went abroad for a job about four years ago and left his wife and children in the village. His children are studying and for the support which is good enough to support the family. At present, his wife takes care of everything and his old mother also lives there. His mother can’t help the mother, because of her old age. In this kind of situation, what do you think about the family? For example, how does the mother feel without the support of her husband and what experiences does she have in the community?
A girl named Simitri is studying in class ten and her family is very poor. Because of the poor economic status the parents cannot fulfill her needs and the parent's frequently fight. She is having a lot of problems at home and feels afraid. How would she feel? What kind of problems might she be facing?

Open questions

References Cited

Agaibi, C.E., J.P. Wilson

Amnesty International

Betancourt, T.S., K.T. Kahn

Boyden, Jo, and Joanna de Berry

Christensen, Pia Haudrup

Christensen, Pia Haudrup

Clacherty, Glynis, David Donald

Cohen, Esther

Cole, P.M., B.L. Tamang, S. Shrestha

Cole, P.M., C.J. Bruschi, B.L. Tamang

Dahal, K.B.
Dahal, D.R.

Danieli, Y.E.

Daud, Atia, Per Anders Rydelius

Daud, Atia, Skoglund E., Rydelius Per-Anders.

De Jong, J.

De Jong, Joop. T.V.M., KomproeI.H., and Van Ommeren, M.

Dhakal, S.

Dickson Gomez, J.

Foucault, M.

Ertem I.O., J.M Leventhal & S. Doob

Farmer, P.

Fricke, T.E.

Frisell, T., P. Lichtenstein, N. Langstrom

Garbarino, J., K. Kostelny
1996  What do we need to know to understand children in war and community violence? In Minefields in their Hearts: The mental health of children in war and communal violence, R.J. Apfel & B. Simon (Eds). Chelsea: Yale University.


Kohrt, B.A., D.J. Hruschka

Kohrt, B.A. & Maharjan S.M.

Kohrt, B.A., I. Harper


Kohrt, B.A., Kunz, R., Baldwin, J., Koirala, N.R., Sharma, V.D, Nepal M.K.


Leone, T., Z. Matthews, Zuanna, G.D.

Leve, L.

Masten, A. S.

Nightingale, A.J.

Ortner, S.

Ortner S.
1984 Theory in Anthropology since the sixties. In Society for Comparative study of Society and History: 126- 166.

Patrick, C.J., U. Vaydyanathan
2011 Coming to Grips with the cycle of violence. Psychological Medicine 41: 41- 45.

Pettigrew, J. & K. Adhikari
Pettigrew, J.  

Pool, R.  

Puri, M., J. Tamang, I. Shah  

Pynoos, R.S., K. Nader  

Rosenkrantz Lindegaard, M.  

Sack, W.H, Clarke, G., Him, C. Dickason, D., Goff, B., Lanham, K., & Kinzie J.D  

Salimovich, S., E. Lira, E. Weinstein  

Sharma, B., Van Ommeren  

Singh, Sonal, Bohler Erik. Dahal, Kkagendra and Mills Edward  

Singh, S.  

Stash, S., E. Hannum  


Tamang, P.R.  

Tamang, S.  


