

**Mobility Matters: Tamang Women's Gendered Experiences of Work, Labour
Migration and Anti-Trafficking Discourses in Nepal**

by

Samantha May Devries

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ABSTRACT

MOBILITY MATTERS: TAMANG WOMEN'S GENDERED EXPERIENCES OF WORK, LABOUR MIGRATION AND ANTI-TRAFFICKING DISCOURSES IN NEPAL

**Samantha May Devries
University of Guelph, 2012**

**Advisor:
Professor Renee Sylvain**

This thesis examines the gendered work experiences and labour migration aspirations of Tamang women in Nepal. The purpose of this thesis is to describe the various factors that encourage and discourage Tamang women from travelling in search of paid work. I investigated these factors by conducting a qualitative study of Tamang women's gender roles, economic opportunities, economic contributions, physical mobility, as well as cultural attitudes regarding women's mobility. I found that participants wish to migrate in order to seek better employment opportunities, improve the financial status of their households, acquire prestige, as well as to experience adventure, modernity and independence. Although many participants wish to migrate, discourses about appropriate gender roles, women's sexuality, human trafficking, travel and safety are all influential in discouraging Tamang women from travelling in search of paid work. In this thesis, I argue that anti-trafficking campaigns contribute to propagating these discourses and discouraging women's independent travel.

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INTRODUCTION

June 7, 2008:

I am seated on a low stool next to the door so as to take advantage of the light because the room has become dark. The monsoon rains are heavily falling outside and the clouds have temporarily darkened the afternoon. The Tamang family, who have acted as my primary informants, are gathered inside around their television to wait out the storm. I am quite absorbed in updating my field notes when a new program starts on the television. Bhai catches my attention and motions for me to join them to watch the show. He explains to me that this show is a display of various ethnic dances from Nepal. They all become excited when the Tamang dancers perform. This is clearly what they were waiting to see since the program began and why they had wanted me to join them. After the Tamang dance is over, they comment on how beautiful it was and how much better the Tamang dancers were than the others. They then turn to me and ask my thoughts on what I just witnessed. I admittedly do not know much about Tamang dance, so I simply tell them I enjoyed seeing it. They know me well enough at this point to notice that my response lacks the enthusiasm I normally demonstrate when I witness something new. Bhai questions me about why I was not furtively taking notes during the program the way I do when I am observing the various tasks taking place in the village. Before I can explain, my interpreter, Phulmaya, exclaims:

When you first said you wanted to learn about Tamang culture, I thought I would have to go around finding people to wear Tamang clothes, sing songs and show you dances. But all your questions are about people's work?! Who will think that's interesting? Why not talk to Hindu women there are lots of them...?

I am a bit surprised by Phulmaya's comment. I have been here conducting fieldwork for more than a month already and she is my research assistant, so if anyone should understand the purpose behind my research, it ought to be her! Had I failed to properly explain the purpose of the research project to her? If she did not understand, how could I expect any of the other participants to understand? I am initially confused because Phulmaya and I had several conversations prior to this comment about the reasons why I had chosen to research women's work, labour migration and cultural ideas regarding women's mobility. I begin to answer her

question the same way I had before, stating my interest in women's rights, my desire to contribute accurate information to the public debates on women's migration and human trafficking. Rita Bahini interrupts me: "We know that! But why us? Why Tamang women?"...

Introduction:

This thesis investigates the migration aspirations and work lives of Tamang women from the village of Dhidopur, in the district of Makawanpur, Nepal. The purpose of this MA thesis is to describe the various factors that both encourage and discourage Tamang women from Dhidopur to travel in search of paid work. In order to understand these factors, I conducted a qualitative study of Tamang women's gender roles, economic opportunities, economic contributions, physical mobility, as well as cultural attitudes regarding women's freedom of movement within this field site. The main research question addressed in this thesis is: What are the social and economic factors that encourage and discourage Tamang women from Dhidopur to leave their village for the purpose of engaging in paid work?

The above section is a description of a conversation I had with my research assistant, Phulmaya, and her two cousins, Rita Bahini and Bhai. It is a reconstruction, based on my memory, field notes and personal journal. During this conversation, Phulmaya, Rita Bahini and Bhai are expressing some confusion over why I, someone who claimed to be studying "cultural" anthropology, would focus my research on a topic as mundane as work, especially when this aspect of Tamang life differed very little from that of their rural non-Tamang neighbours. In fact, many of the tasks that Tamang women perform on their farms probably differ little from those of rural women from other regions and countries. Conversely, they were interested in why I was not focusing on topics which were more uniquely "Tamang", such as their distinctive traditional clothing, religion, music and dances.

I initially made the decision to do research with Tamang women based on information I had encountered while reviewing the existing literature on these topics. On the topic of Nepali women's freedom of movement, several sources indicated that Tamang women were quite mobile in comparison to Nepali women from other ethnic groups. Niraula and Morgan found

that women from the hill region enjoyed greater freedom of movement than women from the Terai region (Niraula and Morgan 1996: 35). The majority of Tamang people are from the hill regions of Nepal. Both Fricke et al. (1993: 400) and March (2002: 141-2) report that in their rural village research sites, many young, unmarried Tamang women engaged in paid work that involved travelling away from their homes, such as trade, construction work and portering. Even young married Tamang women who do not engage in paid employment are quite mobile as they often travel back and forth between their natal household and the household they have married into, as well as between the house and fields or pastures where they perform agricultural labour (Fricke et al. 1993: 399; March 2002: 178, 216). In addition to being comparatively more mobile than women from other Nepali ethnic groups, rural Tamang women make significant economic contributions to their households through both agricultural labour and paid work (Fricke 1986: 78; Fricke et al. 1993: 400; Niraula and Morgan 1996: 41; March 2002: 139). It is less common for women in the Terai region to engage in paid work and it is mostly low-caste or poor women who participate in paid employment (Niraula and Morgan 1996: 41). Based on the above sources, it seemed that Tamang women would be suitable research subjects for this project because I was interested in investigating women who engaged in paid work and who were relatively mobile.

The above-mentioned sources imply a relationship between Tamang women's economic roles and their greater freedom of movement in comparison to Nepali women from other groups. I was interested in exploring this relationship in more detail and finding out whether the economic roles of the Tamang women in my field site afforded them more freedom of movement. In order to investigate the relationship between economic roles and women's freedom of movement, I sought answers to the following research questions: How mobile are Tamang women from Dhidopur? How does the work they do affect their mobility? How do Tamang women in Dhidopur economically contribute to their households? Since the purpose of this research project is to explore the factors that affect women's labour migration, I wanted to also investigate these additional questions: How do their gender and economic roles affect their desire to migrate in search of paid work? How do other factors, such as age, life stage, marital status, and education affect the participants' desire to migrate in search of paid work?

Another motivation behind my decision to do research with Tamang women was that they are frequently mentioned within the existing non-academic information on human trafficking in Nepal as particularly vulnerable to becoming victims of human trafficking. The reason Tamang women are viewed by these sources as particularly vulnerable is because the Tamang are amongst the most impoverished and marginalized castes in Nepal. These non-academic sources view Tamang women's impoverished and marginalized status as making them easily lured by traffickers promising good employment opportunities (HRW 1995; CBC 1996; Banerjee 2003: 127). They also describe Tamang women as economic burdens to their parents because daughters require a dowry for marriage and this makes them susceptible to being sold by their families to traffickers (HRW 1995; CBC 1996; Banerjee 2003: 127). Some sources claim that Tamang women have been historically exploited as concubines by the Rana ruling class of the Kathmandu valley in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and this historical oppression has continued in the form of sex trafficking (HRW 1995; CBC 1996; Banerjee 2003: 127). Other sources claim that there is a high demand for women with "Mongolian features" and fair skin in Indian brothels (HRW 1995; CBC 1996). Most of these claims that make a case for Tamang women's particular vulnerability to human trafficking are either inaccurate or unproven (Frederick 2005:129-130, 146). Tamang women are portrayed as vulnerable in these explanations because of their cultural traditions, history or race. However, the majority of policymakers and NGO staff are high-caste Hindus and do not have an accurate understanding of gender roles, women's status and social customs amongst Tamang people (Pigg 1992: 505). I was motivated to conduct research with Tamang women in part because I wanted to produce accurate information about Tamang women's economic roles, migration aspirations as well as the social and familial factors that contribute to their decisions to travel in search of paid work. I was curious to discover if there was any justification for selecting Tamang women as the target beneficiaries of anti-trafficking efforts. Specifically, I wanted to know whether Tamang women from Dhidopur felt pressured by their families to migrate in search of paid work and whether economic desperation was driving women to migrate. Furthermore, if women from Dhidopur did not feel economic or familial pressure to migrate, what other reasons might they have for willingly migrating in search of paid work?

Numerous recent academic sources on the topic of human trafficking argue that there are problems with current approaches to preventing trafficking (see Kapur 2003, Saunders and Soderlund 2003, Sharma 2003, Trepanier 2003, Ditmore 2005, Frederick 2005, Kempadoo 2005, Sanghera 2005, Sharma 2005). Several academic sources have argued that awareness-raising campaigns discourage women from migrating by utilizing trafficking narratives which reinforce gender ideologies of female dependence and vulnerability (Kapur 2003: 8; Frederick 2005: 137-8; Sanghera 2005: 11). During a previous trip to Nepal and during my field research for this thesis, I observed that this tactic was being employed by various anti-trafficking NGOs. As Tamang women were specifically targeted as the recipients of trafficking-prevention education, I wanted to discover if they were learning about trafficking through these initiatives and whether the academic arguments against these tactics were justified. Therefore, one of my research goals was to gauge Tamang women's awareness of the risks of labour migration and discern whether anti-trafficking efforts had made an impact on Tamang women's decisions regarding work-related travel. My approach to this topic involved seeking answers to the following questions: Have Tamang women in Dhidipur heard stories about human trafficking from awareness-raising campaigns? If so, how have these narratives affected Dhidipur Tamang women's aspirations to travel in search of paid work, their perceptions of the safety of travel and their desire to travel to certain places?

Relevance to the Study of "Public Issues Anthropology":

This thesis has been produced for the purpose of fulfilling part of the degree requirements for the Public Issues Anthropology Master of Arts program offered jointly by the University of Guelph and the University of Waterloo. The Public Issues Anthropology paradigm involves a research commitment to social justice, racial harmony, equality and human rights (Sanday 1998). It is the task of the public issues anthropologist to merge problem solving with anthropological theory and analysis in order to engage in public debates on human issues (Sanday 1998). Secondly, public issues anthropologists use their expertise to participate in finding solutions to specific problems of public concern (Johnston et al. 1997). Lastly, these anthropologists work not for decision makers, government officials or corporations, but for citizens, in order to enhance or preserve their common good (Johnston et al. 1997).

This thesis is an example of public issues anthropology because it makes relevant contributions to the understanding of Tamang women's gender roles, economic contributions and freedom of movement in Nepal. This knowledge can be used in the improvement of development projects which aim to economically assist Tamang women and prevent them from becoming victims of human trafficking. This thesis is also relevant to the public debate about women's mobility in Nepal; mainly, the best way to attempt to prevent human trafficking, while still preserving women's right to work and freedom of movement. Finally, in choosing to research Tamang women, the results of this thesis convey their perspectives, stated interests and concerns on matters related to work and mobility. I have used this knowledge to critique some of the development initiatives that have been aimed at Tamang women. In this thesis, the solutions to public dilemmas regarding Tamang women's mobility, access to paid work and enhancing women's rights in Nepal which I have suggested have been made with the goal of advancing the interests of the Tamang women who participated in this research project.

Outline of Thesis:

This introduction provides basic information on the research site and outlines the research questions investigated throughout this thesis. This introduction also outlines the ways in which this thesis is a relevant example of public issues anthropology. Furthermore, this introduction outlines the purpose, goals and content of this thesis.

The following section, Chapter One of this thesis, is a review of the relevant literature on labour migration, female migrants and immigrants, gendered work, women workers in the global south, human trafficking, as well as Nepali women's work, autonomy, and mobility. In this section, I also provide definitions for key concepts discussed throughout the rest of the thesis and describe the ways in which my research addresses gaps in the existing literature.

Chapter Two describes the qualitative methodology I followed and some of the ethical concerns that were involved in executing this research project. The following four chapters, Chapters Three, Four, Five and Six are data chapters which describe my research findings.

Chapter Three of this thesis provides detailed background information on the research site and participants. This chapter describes Tamang people as well as the participants' land, livelihoods, community and standard of living. Background information on the ethnic composition, language use, as well as the political situation in Dhidopur during this research trip is also provided. Furthermore, I provide a detailed discussion of Tamang marriage practices, the social status of Tamang women and their rights to ownership of moveable property.

Chapter Four is a detailed description of the work lives of the women from Dhidopur. In this chapter, I provide a description of a typical work day for the female members of the household in which I lived while conducting fieldwork and discuss the ways in which their typical work day compares with the usual work other women in Dhidopur do. I discuss the tasks that Tamang women in Dhidopur categorize as their "work" and how this compares with the tasks that I observed them performing. I also address the ways in which work is divided based on age and gender, the rationale behind this division of labour, and work-related gender inequality. Lastly, this chapter addresses Dhidopur women's reasons for satisfaction and dissatisfaction with farm work, the tasks they like and dislike performing as well as the work ethic of Dhidopur residents.

In Chapter Five, I discuss women's paid work in Dhidopur and the reasons why some of the participants wanted to travel in search of paid employment. This chapter also explores the case studies of the two return migrants who I interviewed, the perceived benefits of paid employment, as well as the criteria the participants used to distinguish between "good" and "bad" jobs. The importance of age and life stage as factors in determining a woman's willingness to seek paid employment away from home, as well as the reasons some women did not want to seek paid employment are also discussed. Included in this chapter is a discussion about why some cities or countries were viewed by my participants as desirable places to work.

Chapter Six is an exploration of the feelings and attitudes expressed by the participants regarding the prospect of leaving their village to work elsewhere. In this chapter, I address the various ways in which peers, relatives, neighbors, and trafficking narratives broadcast in the

media, influence the participants' feelings about migrating in search of paid work. This chapter also describes the ways that the participants expect that their relatives would assist them if they decided to travel for work-related reasons, the reasons why relatives might not want the participants to leave, and the Dhidopur villagers' attitudes regarding the safety and social acceptability of women's travel. Lastly, this chapter explores the reasons why the residents of Dhidopur feel it is generally unsafe and unacceptable for women engage in work-related travel, the factors used to determine if a particular trip is safe or acceptable for women to take, as well as the role that anti-trafficking education programs have played in influencing the villagers' attitudes regarding women's labour migration.

The concluding chapter of this thesis summarizes the most significant anthropological research findings and contributions of this thesis. In this chapter, I state the ways in which the subject matter contained within this thesis is relevant to many public issues in contemporary Nepal and suggest some ways in which the information gained through this research project can be applied to address some of these issues of social concern.

CHAPTER ONE – LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction:

In this literature review, I distinguish between international labour migrants, labour migrants, immigrants, illegal migrants and victims of human trafficking in an attempt to demonstrate some of the conceptual confusion and problems that these categories create when discussing women's cross-border movements. I also discuss how other academics have engaged with concepts such as human trafficking, trafficking myths, paid employment and discursive colonization in order to provide an intellectual context for my own research. I also include a discussion of the ways in which my research contributes to the existing information on female labour migration, the effects of discourses surrounding human trafficking on labour migrants, as well as Tamang women's work, autonomy and freedom of movement in Nepal.

Globalization, Labour and Mobility:

Within the current era of globalization, women's freedom of movement is becoming an increasingly urgent public issue. Globally, there are approximately 54 million migrant labourers in foreign countries, about half of which are women (Persaud 2003: 127). The process of globalization is currently driving an unprecedented volume of international migrants from impoverished countries to more wealthy countries in search of work. This general trend occurs partially because there is a high demand for low wage labour in wealthier countries and an abundant supply of workers willing to work for low wages in impoverished countries (Bales 1999: 12; Kapur 2003: 7-8). However, the process of globalization has not allowed the freedom of movement of people (labour power) on the same scale as it has facilitated the movement of capital and commodities. State governments all around the world are making efforts to secure their borders and control the movement of people across them. These controls have noticeably patterned racial and gendered consequences for potential international labour migrants.

International labour migrants are people who move across international borders in search of employment. International labour migrants may or may not have crossed borders legally, may or may not intend to stay permanently in the country in which they work, and do not have the same citizenship rights as permanent residents or citizens in the country in which they are employed (Baines and Sharma 2002: 92-3). Labour migrants are similar to international labour migrants, except that they migrate for work related purposes within their own country and do not cross international borders. Immigrants are people who have moved across international borders and have acquired permanent resident status or citizenship in the country to which they moved. Despite differences in the legal status of immigrants and migrants, these two groups often face discrimination in the countries or regions in which they have relocated (Ocran 1997:153). Since some immigrant groups face similar types of discrimination as labour migrants, I have included some of literature on immigrant women in this review, even though my research focuses on women who plan to migrate in search of work. I also found that the topic of female labour migration is often discussed alongside issues of human trafficking in the academic literature and have included some of the relevant literature on trafficking in this literature review.

Trafficking:

Since the 1990s, there has been a growing concern over human trafficking. The term trafficking refers to the forced transport of persons for the purposes of exploitation (UN 2000: Article 3(a)). The destination and type of work the person will be engaged in is important in determining whether the person has been trafficked. The use of force or coercion is the second defining feature of trafficking (UN 2000: Article 3(a)). Movement of persons without the intention to exploit them – sexually or economically – and without the use of force or coercion is not trafficking. As I specified above, the voluntary travel of people across international borders in search of work is called international labour migration. “Victims of human trafficking” are people who have been forcibly transported for the purposes of exploitation. The United Nations’ Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, addresses the issue of consent by stating that, “the consent of a victim of trafficking in persons to the intended exploitation...shall be irrelevant...” (UN 2000: Article 3(b)). Therefore, a person cannot consent to being trafficked.

As Kapur notes, at the national and international levels, the issues surrounding women's cross-border migrations are primarily discussed via anti-trafficking discourses (2003: 9). These discourses problematize women's labour migration, since women's cross-border movements are only ever discussed as crisis-producing, rather than life-saving (Sharma 2005: 89). Within these discourses, there is a common conflation of trafficking, women's migration and sex work (Kapur 2003: 8). This has led to some ambiguity as to which women are considered "victims of trafficking" entitled to state protection and which women are considered migrants, illegal immigrants, or migrant sex workers (Sharma 2003:55, 59, 61; Sanghera 2005: 9; Sharma 2005: 102-104). For example, Sanghera, in her work on trafficked people, has discussed how the law simultaneously constructs trafficked people as victims and criminals (2005: 9). Trafficked persons are often thought of as "illegal aliens" and treated like criminals because they are frequently employed in the informal sector or illegal work, their work conditions may not be up to legal standards, they might live in illegal housing, or they may be below the age of legal employment (Sanghera 2005: 8-9). She points out that their "illegality" prevents them from accessing state protection from labour-related, physical and sexual abuse (Sanghera 2005: 9).

Similarly, Sharma's work with Chinese women who arrived in Canada by aid of smugglers and were detained by Canadian authorities, allowed her to arrive at a similar conclusion: anti-trafficking laws aid in curbing illegal migration more than they assist victims of trafficking (2003: 55; 2005: 94). She reports that the Chinese women were economic migrants; but many feminists who advocated for them to receive legal status in Canada argued that they were "victims of trafficking" in order to gain public sympathy for them (Sharma 2005: 93). However, none of the women were able to qualify for state protection as victims of trafficking or as refugees and all were deported back to China (Sharma 2003: 61; Sharma 2005: 93). By narrowly defining who qualifies for state protection as a victim of trafficking or a refugee, very few international migrants qualify to legally stay in the countries to which they have travelled (Sharma 2003: 61; Sharma 2005: 92). This results in the criminalization of most migrations, the branding of most migrants as "illegal," and forces undocumented migrants to undertake more dangerous migration journeys in order to arrive in countries they wish to enter (Sharma 2003: 55; Kapur 2003: 8; Sharma 2005: 97).

Further evidence that anti-trafficking policies are designed to crack down on illegal immigration is that the most commonly expressed solutions to the problem of human trafficking are the implementation of policies to curb migration, the criminal prosecution of traffickers, and the securitization of national borders (Kapur 2003: 8; Sharma 2005: 96). Through their attempts to prevent trafficking, governments have implemented programs that prevent women from leaving their home countries. Preventing women from leaving their country is a clear violation of their rights to freedom of movement as guaranteed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which states: “Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and return to his country” (UN 1948: Article 13(2)). Gangoli reports that this has happened in Nepal, where there have been cases of unaccompanied women being refused entry into India, even though there is no evidence of trafficking or that they intend to seek work in the sex industry (2007: 53). Ryan and Hall (2001) also mention the way that the Thai government is attempting to prevent trafficking through their passport policies. The passport applications of women between the ages of 14 and 36 are subject to extra careful scrutiny and will be denied if the investigators believe that the women may be migrating abroad to work in the sex industry (Ryan and Hall 2001: 123). Several other writers have argued that anti-trafficking laws in receiving countries are used as a way to control women’s movement, crack down on illegal immigration and deport migrant sex workers (Chapkis 2003: 932; Saunders and Soderlund 2003: 18; Trepanier 2003: 51-2; Kempadoo 2005: xv). Although the literature documents the ways trafficking policies affect migrating women and migrating sex workers, there is little research on how these public debates affect women’s decisions to migrate. I explore this topic in my thesis.

While the above-mentioned research focusses on the effects of trafficking policies, there has also been some literature produced which analyzes the narratives of trafficking on which these policies are often based. As Kempadoo points out, many studies and claims about transnational organized criminal activities, such as trafficking, are plagued by exaggerations resulting from conceptual confusions, “guesstimates”, and unreliable evaluative information (2005: xix). There are very few reliable facts on which to base anti-trafficking efforts, so such initiatives often rely more on what some authors have titled “trafficking myths”. In her analysis

of discourses surrounding white slavery and human trafficking narratives, Doezema defines the term, “myth”, as follows:

...a myth does not imply something is ‘false’, but is rather a collective belief that simplifies reality....As an uncritically accepted collective belief, a myth can help explain the world and justify social institutions and actions. When it is repeated in similar form from generation to generation, a myth discloses a moral content, carrying its own meaning, secreting its own values. The power of the myth lies in the totality of the explanation. (2000: 26)

I have found this concept useful in my discussion on the ways that trafficking narratives influence my participants’ desires to travel in search of paid work. The topics that Doezema (2000) and Kempadoo (2005) primarily focus on are the ways in which both past and present trafficking myths serve to justify the restriction and control of migrant sex workers’ mobility and the outlawing of prostitution. Frederick (2005), however, uses the concept of the trafficking myth to discuss the way in which these narratives form the basis of anti-trafficking policies in Nepal and how new knowledge about human trafficking has altered the trafficking myth over time. His work has been especially relevant to my research because he outlines the historical, cultural and racial justifications for initially focusing on Tamang women as the beneficiaries of anti-trafficking campaigns (Frederick 2005: 129-131). My thesis expands on this previous research on trafficking myths because I explore the effects that these myths, propagated by the media and trafficking awareness-raising campaigns, have had on Tamang women’s attitudes and decisions regarding women’s labour migration.

Women, Migration and Employment:

Currently, the scale of women’s international migration is roughly equal to that of men; however, within the literature on labour migration, the term labour migrant carries masculine connotation (Pessar 2003: 77). As Pessar points out, until the 1980s when feminist scholars became involved in migration studies, the literature on labour migrants focused on male subjects and disregarded women’s economic, political and social contributions (2003: 77-8). When women were discussed at all, they were discussed as dependents of male labour migrants who passively followed their male kin (Pessar 2003: 77). Today, female labour migrants and their social, political and economic contributions are featured in the scholarly literature (Pessar 2003:

78). Other topics featured in recent research include women's independent migration, gender and immigration policy, the gendered nature of the work migrants perform, as well as the diversity of female migrants in terms of race, ethnicity, education and class (see Sassen 2000; Parrenas 2001; Baines and Sharma 2002; Chapkis 2003; Kapur 2003; Stasiulus and Bakan 2003; Kofman 2004; McHugh 2004; Mills 2005). This thesis contributes to this expanding literature on female labour migrants and addresses some of the gaps that currently exist in the literature. For instance, research on Tamang women's migration aspirations has not been conducted before. Similarly, while there has been some discussion within the scholarly literature on the trafficking of women from Nepal to India, there has not been research done on female labour migration between these two countries and research on Nepali women as labour migrants to other countries is minimal. Furthermore, my research addresses gaps in the literature by utilizing an ethnographic approach to understand the ways that local conditions encourage and discourage Nepali women's migration, as well as how women's roles, status and work influence whether they will migrate.

All around the world, the number of women entering paid employment is increasing. Simultaneously, employment is becoming increasingly precarious. This means that women are entering the workforce at a time when there are a decreasing number of full-time, long-term, and unionized jobs in the formal sector (Kabeer 2004: 6). There has also been an expansion of the informal economy, which has resulted in an increase in low-paying, devalued or unskilled, and unregulated employment opportunities (Kabeer 2004: 15). Women, particularly women from the global south, are the people who are occupying these jobs in the informal economy (Sassen 2000: 505; Kabeer 2004: 14). Migrant and immigrant women are more likely to work in the informal economy because they are often excluded from the formal economy due to discrimination based on race and / or gender, the devaluing of foreign education and work credentials, as well as language barriers (Ocran 1997: 153). This is especially true for illegal female migrants.

The literature has documented that migrant women are particularly vulnerable to economic, physical and sexual exploitation. Ocran observed this in her work on home-based garment workers in British Columbia. She found that the majority of workers were immigrant

women and that their status as immigrants, as well as the fact that they perceived their work to be illegal, created a distrust for agents of authority and resulted in a refusal to appeal to authorities with work-related complaints (Ocran 1997:157). Ocran also pointed out that the current legislation in British Columbia is insufficient for protecting homeworkers and regulating the labour standards of work done within the home (1997: 150-2).

Similarly, Baines and Sharma (2002), in their critique of the concept of citizenship, discuss migrant workers' vulnerability as caused by their status as permanent non-citizens within Canada. While their analysis focuses on migrant workers who have arrived legally in Canada, they demonstrate that this legal status does not necessarily protect migrant workers from labour-related harms. Migrant workers are permitted entry into Canada under the provision that they work in a specific job, for a specific employer, for a permitted length of time (Baines and Sharma 2002: 87). They cannot make changes to their employment situation or apply for permanent residency (Baines and Sharma 2002: 87). As permanent non-citizens, they are not entitled to the same rights and privileges as citizens, such as labour protections and social services (Baines and Sharma 2002: 92-3). Migrant workers are also deterred from forming unions and are controlled through threats of deportation (Baines and Sharma 2002: 93). Thus, they are very limited in their ability to protest or improve their work conditions. Stasiulus and Bakan (2003) also examine the vulnerability of legal migrant workers through their more specific research on migrant domestic workers from the Philippines and West Indies in Canada. They found that these workers face greater restrictions than other migrant workers because they are compelled to live in the private residence of their employer (Stasiulus and Bakan 2003: 49).

If the working conditions for migrant women from the global south are potentially dangerous or exploitative, why are so many women leaving their villages in search of work? Kabeer (2004) addresses this question through her examination of women's willingness to work in garment factories in Bangladesh. The workers complained of sexual harassment, lack of breaks, delays in payment and mandatory overtime (Kabeer 2004: 16-18). However, these garment factory jobs provided women workers with better wages than they could earn in the other wage labour opportunities available to them (Kabeer 2004: 16). They also enjoyed their work because of the social networks they formed, the increased decision-making power they had

within their households and the greater personal autonomy experienced because of the money they earned (Kabeer 2004: 18). Similarly, Mills discusses how young Thai women from rural areas want to migrate to Bangkok to work, despite the fact that this work is low paying, insecure and offers only limited benefits (2005: 537). Thai women are motivated to migrate to the city so that they can fulfill their duties to provide remittances for their natal families (Mills 2005: 536). However, they also want to migrate in order to become “modern women.” Mills’ informants wanted to earn the cash necessary to purchase commodities that signified that they were “up-to-date”, such as beauty products, stylish clothes, and televisions (2005: 538-9). Working in the city also allowed Thai women to experience adventure, freedom and independence that they could not enjoy while living with their families (Mills 2005: 538). These articles provide a balanced view of Bangladeshi and Thai women’s work experiences and the ways in which work can be simultaneously oppressive and empowering for women from the global south.

Parrenas’ (2001, 2005) exploration of the factors that motivate domestic workers from the Philippines to migrate reveals the importance of gender in understanding international labour migration. Parrenas found that in addition to the economic factors that encouraged women to migrate, domestic workers from the Philippines also wanted to migrate because of gender discrimination in the workplace within the Philippines, the unequal gendered division of labour within the family, and to escape domestic violence (2001:61; 2005: 58, 131). She also found that although migrant domestic workers were able to avoid some of these problems through migrating, these social problems remained unaffected and were exacerbated by the migrants’ departure. Female kin and hired domestic workers within the Philippines had to fulfill the migrants’ share of domestic responsibilities for very small wages or no money at all (Parrenas 2001: 74; 2005: 98-103). Parrenas, demonstrated how migration can empower the migrant, but be oppressive to the women left behind.

Parrenas (2001:71; 2005: 23), Kapur (2003: 8) as well as Stasiulus and Bakan, (2003: 56) explain women’s labour migration by the increase in demand for paid female reproductive labour in the Middle East, Europe and North America as a major driving force behind the increase in female labour migrants in the last couple decades. In the Philippines, exporting labour is a strategy for obtaining foreign currency in the form of remittances (Stasiulus and

Bakan 2003: 59; Parrenas 2005: 20-21). Sending a family member abroad to work has become one of the primary means of achieving middle class living standards (Stasiulus and Bakan 2003: 60; Parrenas 2005:18-21). Other factors which encourage international labour migration include population increase, rapid industrialization, improvements in transportation systems, land dispossession, environmental degradation, armed conflicts and an increasing awareness that there are better opportunities elsewhere (Bales 1999: 12; Kapur 2003: 7). While globalization and macro-economic explanations of labour migration are common within the literature, there is a significant absence of work addressing how women in Nepal experience these global trends, make decisions about migrating, and the networks they use to facilitate migration.

Women and Migration in Nepal:

There is not very much scholarly literature that specifically focusses on labour migration between Nepal and India, although the non-academic literature on human trafficking often states that vast numbers of Nepali women have been trafficked into India (HRW 1995; CBC 1996; Banerjee 2003: 126). Singh (2001) discusses migration between Nepal and India and the factors that motivate people to travel between the two countries in his chapter. He acknowledges that because there is an open border between Nepal and India, people from either country are free to cross this border at any time and reside in either country (Singh 2001: 80-1). There are no statistics on how many people cross the border (Singh 2001: 80). Singh argues that considerable wage differentials, land availability, the relatively close distance, similar culture and unrestricted entry and exit are the primary reasons why people from Nepal emigrate to India (2001:80). However, he does not address gender at all in his discussion. I have addressed this topic in my research in an attempt to fill this informational gap.

There is not a lot of scholarly literature that focuses on Nepali women's work as an exclusive topic of study. Fricke (1986), Fricke et al. (1993), Niraula and Morgan (1996), Liechty (2005), as well as March (1983, 2005), all mention some of the work activities that Nepali women perform, but women's work is not the main topic which these authors investigated. In their writing on Tamang women's work within the home, both March (1983: 730) and Fricke (1986: 78) have mentioned women's weaving. Fricke et al. mentions that Tamang women

manufacture all the clothes for their families and help with agricultural work (1986: 78; 1993: 400). March reports that Tamang women evaluate each other in terms of their weaving skills and their ability to establish or maintain social relations through the distribution of their textiles (1983: 730-1). On the topic of paid work, both Fricke et al. (1993: 400) and March (2005: 141-2) report that many of the unmarried women in rural Tamang villages were employed in portering and road construction jobs. Fricke et al. also mentioned that elder Tamang men complained about women's participation in paid labour because it increased women's autonomy in relation to their parents (1993: 400). However, Fricke et al. contrast a rural Tamang village with another Tamang village located in the Kathmandu valley, where women were employed in wage labour at much lower levels (1993: 400). The women who were employed in the Kathmandu valley worked mostly in carpet factories (Fricke et al. 1993: 400). Moreover, much of the scholarly work that has been done in Nepal is quite dated. The research for much of the literature that has been published on Tamang people was conducted in the 1990s or prior to then (see Hofer 1981; March 1983; Fricke 1986; Holmberg 1989; Fricke et al. 1993; March 2002). This thesis provides a current account of Tamang women's work in a region of Nepal that has been little studied by anthropologists.

Liechty (2005) discusses middle class attitudes of Kathmandu's urban inhabitants towards women engaged in paid work. He reports that his informants expressed a moral anxiety over working women (Liechty 2005: 13). Working women, especially those who were unmarried, dressed fashionably and appeared to have money, were the objects of powerful moral condemnation (Liechty 2005: 13). They were perceived to be immodest, too independent and were equated with prostitutes (Liechty 2005:14). Although Liechty's findings discuss only middle class Kathmandu dwellers' attitudes, there are some similarities between the attitudes he describes and the attitudes reported in this thesis. Moral disapproval, suspicion and social speculation about the sexual morality of women who work outside the village, were commonly held attitudes expressed by my participants. My results indicate that women who work close to home are not harshly criticized by other villagers. However, other researchers have indicated that the types of work that women do, women's autonomy, and the attitudes towards women with paid employment vary based on the regional location within Nepal. For example, Niraula and Morgan (1996) discuss the work of women within the two villages they researched in their

comparative study on women's autonomy. In the hill region of Nepal, women's paid labour includes petty retailing, vegetable growing and the sale of livestock or livestock products (Niraula and Morgan 1996: 41). In the region along the southern border, known as the Terai, only poor and low-caste women are employed in seasonal agricultural wage work (Niraula and Morgan 1996: 41).

Scholarly approaches to understanding Tamang women's relative autonomy differ from how Tamang women are currently described within the gender and development discourses in Nepal. High-caste Hindu Nepali policy-makers make the assumption that rural low-caste and outcaste women are even more oppressed than high-caste Hindu women due to their economic disadvantage. The development discourses in Nepal reflect this assumption and apply a Hindu bias to the understanding of the gender inequality faced by rural women (Pigg 1992: 505; Frederick 2005: 130). Rural low-caste and outcaste women are homogeneously depicted as poor, second-class citizens, who lack agency in economic and marital matters (Frederick 2005: 130). They are assumed to be a dowry burden to their parents, homemakers and economically inactive (Frederick 2005: 130). While these characteristics are applicable to many rural Hindu women in India as well as Southern and Western Nepal, they often do not apply to women from the hill regions, including Tamang women (Frederick 2005: 130). The homogenization of rural Nepali women within development discourses can be theoretically understood as a form of colonization and presents a series of problems in achieving such developmental goals such as "women's empowerment." Chandra Mohanty provides a particularly useful definition of colonization when she states that colonization "...almost invariably implies a relation of structural domination, and a discursive or political suppression of the heterogeneity of the subject(s) in question." (1997: 196) It is interesting to note that Nepal was never formally conquered or colonized by a Western power, as the majority of South Asian countries were (Pigg 1992: 497). However, processes of discursive colonization are salient features of development agendas within this country, as is made evident by the way in which Nepali women are assumed to have the same political and economic problems, needs, interests and goals. Mohanty argues that this development approach is harmful because:

Development policies do not affect both groups of women in the same way.
Practices which characterize women's status and roles vary according to class.
Women are constituted as women through the complex interaction between class,

culture, religion and other ideological institutions and frameworks....Such reductive cross-cultural comparison result in the colonization of the specifics of daily existence and the complexities of political interests which women of different social classes and cultures represent and mobilize. (1997: 164)

This has certainly been the case in Nepal for Tamang women, whose political goals have not been represented by policy-makers and politicians working to achieve “women’s empowerment.” Instead, the political agendas of high-caste Hindu Nepali women have been prioritized and it has been assumed that achieving their political goals would benefit all Nepali women. This thesis outlines research findings that demonstrate the incorrectness of this assumption. Furthermore, I suggest some ways in which these problems of discursive colonization in the development process can be addressed to include the needs of Tamang women, as indicated in statements made by the participants in this research project.

Finally, there has been some work done on women’s freedom of movement in Nepal that is worth mentioning. Niraula and Morgan (1996) used freedom of movement as one of the indicators of women’s autonomy in their comparative study. They found that women in the hill village enjoyed greater freedom of movement than Terai women (1996: 35). This difference can be explained by the cultural emphasis that the Terai people placed maintaining family honour through guarding women’s sexuality (Niraula and Morgan 1996: 43). Women from the hill village were also more likely to marry more than once and to report that their marriages were love matches, indicating that women in the hills enjoy a higher social status (Niraula and Morgan 1996: 43). Fricke also remarks that women from the hill areas enjoy a higher social status in comparison to women from the Terai or Kathmandu regions (1986: 119). However, Fricke (1986) and Niraula and Morgan (1996) do not discuss the ways in which the higher social status and greater freedom of movement for hill women is related to the work they do or the likelihood that they will migrate in search of work. My findings indicate that such a relationship does exist and that it is important to understanding the factors that affect Tamang women’s migration.

Conclusion:

In this chapter, I have provided definitions for the key concepts which I discuss throughout the body of my thesis. I have also reviewed the relevant literature on labour

migration, female migrants and immigrants, trafficking victims, gendered work, women workers in the global south, human trafficking, as well as Tamang women's work, autonomy, and mobility.

My research contributes to the existing literature on female labour migration by exploring Tamang women's labour migration aspirations. There has not been any academic research conducted on Tamang women's labour migration aspirations before. My research also contributes to the literature on labour migration by investigating the ways that gender influences women's desire to migrate and their migration decisions. This research project is unique because I utilize an ethnographic approach to learn about the local factors that encourage and discourage Tamang women's labour migration. While there has been extensive literature written on the ways that anti-trafficking policies and discourses affect female international labour migrants (see Doezema 2000; Ryan and Hall 2001; Chapkis 2003; Kapur 2003; Saunders and Soderlund 2003; Sharma 2003; Trepanier 2003; Frederick 2005; Kempadoo 2005; Sanghera 2005; Sharma 2005; Gangoli 2007), there has not been any literature produced on the ways these discourses influence cultural attitudes about women's freedom of movement in general. My research addresses this gap in information.

The second way in which my thesis makes a contribution to the academic literature is by expanding the existing information on Tamang people. Although the literature documents some of the work Tamang women do, Tamang women's work roles have not been an exclusive topic of study by previous anthropologists (see March 1983; Fricke et al. 1993; March 2002). While some anthropologists have investigated Tamang women's relative freedom of movement and autonomy in comparison to Terai-dwelling Hindu women, there has not been research on how this mobility was related to Tamang women's work roles and their likelihood to migrate in search of paid work (see Fricke 1986; Niraula and Morgan 1996). My thesis also provides an updated account of rural Tamang life, as most of the existing research on Tamang people was conducted in the 1990s or prior to then (see Hofer 1981; March 1983; Fricke 1986; Holmberg 1989; Fricke et al. 1993; March 2002). Furthermore, the field site where I conducted my research is in a region of Nepal that has not been studied by anthropologists doing research with Tamang people.

While this chapter focused on the theoretical and conceptual background for my thesis, the following chapter focusses on the methods I used to conduct this research project. In the next chapter, I outline my research methodology, and discuss the ethical issues involved in conducting this research project.

CHAPTER TWO – RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND ETHICS

Introduction:

I acquired the information contained within this thesis through implementing a triangulated research design which I developed prior to departing for Nepal in the spring of 2008. The research methods I used to gather the information contained within this thesis include participant observation, semi-structured interviews and life history interviews. This chapter will describe these methods of data collection, the rationale behind my choice of these methods and the manner in which these methods were used to gather the data for this research project.

While many of the valuable insights I gained during the field work phase of this research project can be accredited to the effectiveness of the research methods I employed, much of the information I acquired resulted from unforeseeable circumstances. As unforeseeable and perhaps serendipitous circumstances shaped the direction and implementation of this research project, I have also described some these relevant events in this chapter. Furthermore, this chapter outlines the manner in which I obtained informed consent from my participants, protected participants' personal information and endeavored to minimize potential ethical issues while executing this research project.

The Research Site:

I conducted my research in the Makawanpur district of Nepal. I selected Makawanpur as the site for my research because there are a substantial number of women who migrate out of this district in search of work. Since labour migrants are quite mobile and dispersed, it would have been difficult to find labour migrants at the workplaces or homes where they have relocated. Therefore, I decided to approach this topic by researching a site that produces a large volume of female migrants.

Makawanpur is located to the south and west of the Kathmandu valley. Nepal is divided into three main ecological zones based on elevation: mountains, hills and the Terai. The mountain zone is designated as the zone of highest elevation and contains some of the highest peaks in the world, including Mt. Everest. The hills are mountains of less extreme elevation. The Terai region is the flat lands in the south of Nepal and is the region that shares the border with India. Makawanpur is located in the lower hill region and it is, therefore, between the hill and Terai zones. The district is 2,426 square kilometers in size and has a population of 392, 604, according to the 2001 census (Law 2005). I chose this location in part because the Tamang are one of the main ethnic groups that reside in this district.

In the summer of 2005, I worked as a volunteer at an NGO, called ABC Nepal, which specializes in promoting women's rights within Nepal and preventing the trafficking of women into India. Another reason I selected Makawanpur as the location for my research is that I thought this region would be the most accessible to me, since ABC Nepal has established awareness-raising programs there. I intended to use my contacts at ABC Nepal to help me establish myself within the village where I conducted my research. I had also hoped that ABC Nepal would help me to find someone who would assist me with translation.

Gaining Entry, Finding Participants and the Field Research Schedule:

This project took me approximately 3 months to complete. I conducted this research project from May 9th until August 8th 2008. This length of time was necessary for me to select a research site, conduct interviews and build rapport with the research participants. I spent my first few weeks in Kathmandu, the capital city of Nepal, preparing to go to Makawanpur. Once in Makawanpur, I spent two weeks orienting myself, choosing a research site, finding a translator, meeting people in the village where I conducted my fieldwork and looking for potential informants. My initial plan was to live as a paying guest with a family residing in the field site. However, I ended up living as a paying guest with a Hindu family in the regional capital of Makawanpur, Hetauda, for the beginning of my stay. The father of my Hetauda host family was a relative of one of my contacts working at ABC Nepal. I stayed with them even after locating a research site because I was continually discouraged by my contacts at ABC

Nepal, the Hetauda host family, my translator and the people in the village where I conducted my fieldwork, from staying in the village. My contacts at ABC Nepal and my Hetauda host family did not want me to stay in the village because they were concerned about my safety, health and comfort. My translator and her kin in the village were most concerned about my comfort. They felt that I would not be able to stay there because I could not adapt to the lower living standards in the village. My translator's family and the other villagers were initially uncomfortable around me and shy to interact with me because very few foreigners ever come to their village. It took a long time to build rapport with the people residing in my field site and assure them that I was capable of living with them. Living in Hetauda helped to build rapport with my translator's family because I would purchase specialty food items or other desirable goods in the city and bring them to the village as gifts. I was finally able to move into my field site towards the end of my field trip and I stayed in the home of my translator's uncle for the last three weeks.

Prior to moving into the village, I travelled back and forth between Hetauda and my research site almost every day with my translator. The father of my Hetauda host family found a translator for me by asking the niece of one of his colleagues if she would be interested in working for me. My 25-year-old translator, Phulmaya Lama, assisted me in picking a research site. We chose her ancestral village as the site for my research mainly because she had relatives there and it would be easier to meet potential participants by utilizing their personal connections. The travel time between my field site and my Hetauda host family's home was about 45 minutes in an auto-rickshaw. Phulmaya and I typically arrived in the field site between 6:30 – 8:00am and left between 4:00 – 7:00pm. I usually engaged in participant observation from the time of my arrival until about 11am. Around that time, most women in the village took a break from farm work until about 1pm. I conducted most of my interviews during this time period, since the participants had more time to spend talking to me. I also engaged in participant observation from the time I finished my interviews to the time I went home in the late afternoon or early evening. Once I moved into the village, my daily routine changed slightly. I was able to spend more time engaged in participant observation, as I was able to observe my host family and the other Dhidipur residents all day. I would begin at approximately 5am and engage in participant observation until 11am. I continued to conduct interviews mostly between the hours of 11am and 1pm, and then I would resume participant observation from 1pm until 10pm. A more

detailed description of my involvement in my host family's daily routine is outlined in Chapter 4 in the description of my participants' typical work day.

I utilized a snowball sampling procedure in order to meet contacts and research participants. Although choosing Phulmaya's ancestral village was beneficial in that it was easier to find participants and build rapport with the residents of the village, in some ways this location was not an ideal place to conduct a study on female labour migration. Initially, my plan was to conduct this research project in a village where women were leaving in large numbers in search of paid work in order to investigate the factors that motivate women to migrate. As it turned out, very few women had left my research site to find paid work, although many had moved away to marry men from other villages. Since few women had left my field site, I found it difficult to locate informants who had left the village to work and returned. I was only able to find two participants who had left to work elsewhere and had returned. Nevertheless, I was able to find participants who had thought about working outside their village. From working out of this location, I was still able to learn about the factors that influence women's decisions about whether to migrate in search of work, but also the factors that encourage women to stay.

Research Methods and Data Collection:

For this research project, I conducted 30 semi-structured interviews with young women, between 15 and 25 years of age. I also conducted 10 life history interviews with married women in their thirties or older and 2 life history interviews with return migrants. I usually conducted between three and five interviews a week while I was in the field. I had to return to Kathmandu once during my research trip, in July, to renew my visa. Otherwise, I stayed in Makawanpur. A full list of the semi-structured interview questions I asked the participants of this research project is included in Appendix A. A full list of the life history interview questions I asked the participants of this research project is included in Appendix B. The background information I collected on the participants of this research project during both the semi-structured interviews and the life history interviews is summarized in a table located in Appendix E.

For this research project, I collected information on Tamang women's desire or intentions to migrate in search of work. In order to do so, I conducted semi-structured interviews with Tamang women. Semi-structured interviews enabled me to gain answers to my specific research questions by focusing conversations with my informants on specific topics, while still allowing my interviewees opportunities to provide a detailed account of their experiences. I relied on female informants over 15 years of age. Most women in my field site get married in their late teens or early twenties. At present, Tamang women from my field site rarely marry before the age of 15. Since marriage is associated with maturity and womanhood, I selected 15 as the minimum age for participation in this project. Since I was unsure how marriage influenced female migration in Nepal, I interviewed both married and unmarried women. Out of the 30 young women I interviewed, 11 were married and 19 were unmarried at the time of the interview (see table in Appendix E). I originally hypothesized that unmarried women are more likely to migrate in search of work because literature on migrants from other Asian countries has indicated that employers prefer unmarried female workers in their late teens and early twenties (Stasiulus and Bakan 2003: 59; Mills 2005: 537). In addition, unmarried Nepali women are expected to help support their natal families, while married women are expected to do domestic work for their mother-in-laws and produce sons for their husband's patriline (Fricke et al. 1993: 400; Leone et al. 2003: 70).

I worked with women as interview subjects because my topic is about women's work and migration. Nevertheless, I was open to including relevant male perspectives, gained through conversation and participant observation, in my analysis. However, I did not develop any significant relationships with the men in my field site. I was, therefore, unable to access a male perspective regarding female migrants, the social appropriateness of women traveling in search of paid work, and the speculative reasons why women chose to migrate. I did not develop any significant relationships with adult male informants because men and women typically do not socialize together. Men were often more shy to talk to me than women were and I did not seek out male company for fear of appearing inappropriately flirtatious. As a woman travelling alone, I was quite concerned with my reputation; I became even more aware of this as I learned more about villagers' attitudes. Furthermore, there were noticeably more women living in the village.

Many men, especially younger men, leave the village to find paid work, or are absent because their work takes them away from home during the day or for long periods of time.

Through the interviews I conducted with women, I collected information on whether the interviewees themselves would like to leave their village for the purposes of engaging in paid work and the reasons why or why not. I also inquired as to whether the informants were aware of the risks involved in migrating in search of work and whether these risks have played a significant role in determining the informant's desire to migrate.

Previous research has found that the decision to migrate in search of work is highly dependent on the worker's economic aspirations and needs (see Parrenas 2001; Stasiulus and Bakan 2003; Kofman 2004; McHugh 2004; Mills 2005). For this study, I investigated what Nepali women do on a daily basis and how their work contributes to the family's economic well-being. To investigate Nepali women's work responsibilities and economic contributions, I observed and inquired about women's reproductive labour, subsistence agricultural labour, as well as any paid work that they did. During interviews, I also asked about their level of satisfaction with the work that they do to assess whether dissatisfaction with their current situation was a major factor behind their desire to migrate.

I also engaged in participant observation through watching the farm tasks that women performed in the village and helping them out with their work when possible. The sorts of tasks I was able to participate in included husking corn, removing corn kernels from the cobb, peeling and cutting vegetables for meals, washing dishes, carrying water, carrying baskets of fodder or corn, planting rice, stacking cut fodder, hoeing up dead corn plants, picking vegetables, and cutting down dead corn plants. In addition, I observed the work that men did so that I could compare and contrast men's and women's work. Participant observation allowed me to gain insights into the daily lives of women in this region and to contextualize their reasons for choosing whether to migrate in search of work. Another advantage of this method is that I was able to detect discrepancies between what informants told me during interviews and their actual routine behavior.

Participant observation also allowed me to learn about gender roles and expectations within the field site. I was particularly interested in investigating the degree to which it is culturally appropriate for women to travel or migrate independently from their male kin. I observed the daily routines of the women in my chosen field site, paying particular attention to how far they routinely travel to work, shop, visit relatives and friends, etc. and whether they routinely travel by themselves or with others. I also collected information during interviews regarding how comfortable they feel with travelling alone, what they think of women who migrate by themselves, and how others feel about women who travel alone.

Lastly, I collected 12 life histories, both for women who migrated in search of work and then subsequently returned home as well as women who lived in the Makawanpur region of Nepal their whole lives. The advantage of utilizing a life history method is that the researcher can collect information on a participant's experience from childhood to present. The individual's experiences can then be used to better understand what it is like to live in a particular place or society, to gain a more nuanced understanding of a certain type of experience, as well as learn about changes which happened in the field site over time. I relied mainly on older women (over thirty years of age) for the life histories I collected. I conducted two life history interviews with two young women (ages 23 and 24) because they had both migrated outside their natal village to work and subsequently returned. I worked primarily with older women because they had more experiences to recount than younger women. All these participants were married women, with the exception of one of the young women I interviewed. By interviewing return migrants, I hoped to learn whether these women who had migrated experienced any harms associated with migration and the economic advantages gained by migrating. I collected the life histories of women who have stayed in Makawanpur for their entire lives so that I can gain their perspectives on what it has been like to live there. In addition, I wanted to acquire information on how gender roles, expectations and women's work have changed over time through collecting these life histories. This allowed me to gain a deeper insight into the history of my field site and the lived experiences of the older women in the village.

I recorded all the interviews and life histories with a digital voice recorder. I took notes during each interview to capture important points stated by the interviewee and observations

about the interviewee. Most of my interviewees were not fluent in English. Therefore, it was necessary to conduct the interviews in Nepali. In order to do that, I utilized the services of a translator. A translator was necessary to help me conduct this research project because my Nepali language skills were not adequate to conduct interviews on my own in Nepali. Since a translator was so integral to this research project and my translator had to spend a considerable amount of time helping me, I thought it was important to pay my translator for her services. Using a translator was advantageous to me because Phulmaya was a valuable primary informant. She helped me by providing me with useful insights, introducing me to participants, and answering all my questions. She also became a good companion and a source of advice on how I ought to behave in Nepal. Therefore, Phulmaya was both a linguistic and cultural translator to me throughout the course of my field work. My language skills did improve as my research progressed and towards the end of my fieldwork, I could understand quite a lot of what was being discussed without Phulmaya's assistance.

I kept written records of all the events and conversations I participated in on a daily basis. I usually took down these notes several times throughout the day. I constructed more detailed field notes after I arrived back in Hetauda or before going to bed when I was living in the village. I took many pictures to capture the daily activities of the people in my field site. Finally, I kept a personal journal in which I wrote about my experiences, feelings and impressions while I was in the field. This journal has aided me in conducting my fieldwork and reporting my findings because it allowed me to more easily remember the events I observed while in the field and provided an opportunity for reflection upon my experiences while I was in Nepal.

Ethical Issues:

Prior to starting field work in Nepal, I submitted a research proposal and obtained ethics approval for my proposed research project from the University of Guelph's research ethics board. Overall, the risk to the participants of my research project was minimal because the risks from participating in this research project were not greater than those the participants might encounter in everyday life. In fact, while conducting this research, I observed no harms caused to the participants as a result of participating in this research project. Prior to conducting this

project, I anticipated that the risks for participants would be limited to feeling uncomfortable or upset in reaction to the interview questions. I was also aware that I could not guarantee the participants would remain anonymous and anticipated that this may pose a social risk to the participants.

No one who participated in this research project expressed verbally or physically that they were distressed by the research questions during the interviews. Furthermore, none of the research participants expressed a desire to remain anonymous or keep our interviews private as the interviews were mostly conducted with several other people listening in or within hearing range. The interviews were mostly conducted in the home of the interviewee and there were often family members or visiting neighbors who sat in on the interview. The participants consented to having these other people present. Residents of the village where I conducted my research generally lived in dwellings with several other people in close quarters and were accustomed to having many people around them at all times. Also, information spreads quickly amongst the people within this small community. The participants were not concerned about maintaining privacy and anonymity, since they had little expectation of privacy and anonymity in general. It was my impression that the participants would chose not to share something with me that they did not want other people to know about.

Prior to each interview, I obtained informed, freely volunteered verbal consent. I decided not to obtain written consent because many of my participants were not literate. Participants were free to ask questions about the research project at any time during the informed consent process, during the interviews, and after the interviews were finished. A copy of the informed consent script is included in Appendix C.

In the case of participants under the age of 18 and still living with their parents, I obtained consent from their parents as well. A copy of the informed consent script for the parents of participants is included in Appendix D. I did not obtain parental consent for participants under the age of 18 who were married. In Nepal, married women moved away from their parents and into the home of their husband's parents. It would be inappropriate to ask a

participant's husband or in-laws for permission, since she is a socially recognized adult if she is married and can be considered for the purposes of this research project, an emancipated minor.

In order to protect the participants' personal information, I did not record their names in my research notes. I assigned codes to the participants and only I have access to these codes. For the purposes of this thesis, whenever I refer to statements made by specific interviewees, I have used pseudonyms. While conducting my research, I protected the information that I collected by locking away written records, audio recordings of interviews, transcriptions, photographs and my digital voice recorder in my suitcase. I also put a password on my digital voice recorder to protect the audio recordings of my interviews.

Conclusion:

This thesis is based upon data gathered during three months of fieldwork in the summer of 2008. I conducted the fieldwork for this thesis in the village of Dhidopur, located in the district of Makawanpur, Nepal. For this research project, I conducted 30 semi-structured interviews with young Tamang women between the ages of 15 and 25, 10 life history interviews with Tamang women over 30 years of age, as well as 2 life history interviews with Tamang labour migrants who had subsequently returned to Dhidopur. I gained further information on Dhidopur Tamang women's work, gender roles and mobility by living in Makawanpur and engaging in participant observation for the duration of the fieldwork phase of this project. The data I gathered while conducting fieldwork has yielded several major trends which I will discuss at length in the following four chapters.

CHAPTER THREE – THE LAND, LIVELIHOODS, COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL STATUS OF TAMANG WOMEN IN DHIDOPUR

Introduction:

Dhidopur is dynamic. However, this is probably the last adjective Dhidopur residents would choose to describe their village. During the life history interviews, I asked older Tamang women, and long-term residents of Dhidopur, about the changes that had taken place in Dhidopur since they were young. My questions about change were most often answered with the following response: “Nothing’s changed. Nothing ever changes around here!” Phulmaya and I soon learned that in order to encourage participants to mentally move past their impression of Dhidopur as a place where nothing new or exciting ever happens, we had to ask more specific prompting questions to urge women to tell us about the social, political, economic and infrastructural changes that have occurred in Dhidopur within their lifetimes. My purpose in asking these questions was to obtain data on how Tamang women’s work has changed over time and to obtain background information on Dhidopur. These life history interviews were especially fruitful and the details that were shared with me during these interviews account for much of the information presented in this chapter.

This chapter describes Dhidopur and the Tamang people who live there. Background information on the participants’ land, livelihoods, community and standard of living is provided in the following sections. I also discuss the political situation, ethnic composition, and language use in Dhidopur during this research trip. In order to demonstrate the ways in which the Tamang people in Dhidopur are both similar to and different from other Tamang communities studied by anthropologists, I have included information from previous ethnographic studies of Tamang people. I have particularly focused on discussing Tamang marriage practices, the social status of Tamang women and their rights to ownership of moveable property in this chapter because these are some of the ways in which the Tamang people of Dhidopur differ the most from previously described Tamang communities. My goal in including this chapter in this thesis is to familiarize the reader with the Tamang participants of this project and to demonstrate that the field site of this research project is a rural village embedded in the rapidly changing Nepalese nation.

The Tamang:

The ethnic group and caste known as “the Tamang” were created as a unified group by legislative decree in 1932 (Fricke et al 1993: 397; March 2002: 15). This decree decisively dictated that only the term, “Tamang”, should be used as the caste’s official title, replacing a variety of terms that were used previously, such as Lama, Murmi, Sain and Bhote / Bhotiya (March 2002: 15). Prior to glossing this group of regionally varied and linguistically related peoples as “Tamang”, the people living at the two extremes of their present territory around the Kathmandu valley most likely identified themselves as distinct groups (Fricke et al. 1993: 397).

Today, the Tamang are distinguishable from other ethnic groups in Nepal because their ancestors were of Tibeto-Burman origin and, like the ancestors they are descended from, they are Buddhists (March 2002:15). The population of Nepal is mostly comprised of people who are descended from Indo-Aryan ancestors and are of Hindu faith. While Nepal is quite ethnically diverse, most ethnic groups and castes are categorized according to whether they belong to one of two races; the Indo-Aryan peoples whose ancestors migrated north into Nepal from India and the Tibeto-Burman peoples whose ancestors came south over the Himalayas from Tibet (March 2002: 15). The Tamang language is also dissimilar from the national language, Nepali, in that it is categorized as a Tibeto-Burman language, while Nepali more closely resembles Indian languages like Hindi and Sanskrit. With approximately a million Tamang speaking people in Nepal, and four distinct dialects, Tamang is the most widely spoken Tibeto-Burman language in the country (March 2002: 25-26).

The Tamang are organized into exogamous clans; the sole function of the clans is to regulate marriage (Hofer 1981: 9). Marriage is ideally between bilateral cross-cousins, descent is patrilineal, and post-marital residence for young couples is patrilocal (Holmberg 1989: 30-1; March 2002: 209). Land is owned by men and passed down to their sons. Since Tamang people are patrilocal, sons are expected to live with their parents and inherit the family farm, while women leave their natal homes to move in with their husbands’ parents upon marriage. Women gain access to land through their husbands, but do not gain ownership rights to their husbands’

land should the marriage dissolve. Previous anthropological research has shown that Tamang women own property in the form of moveable goods, which they eventually pass down to their daughters when they marry (Hofer 1981: 10-1; Holmberg 1989: 80-1; March 2002: 21). The moveable goods Tamang daughters receive at marriage are referred to as “dzo” and can include money, animals, clothes, grain, jewelry and household utensils. Dzo-property is different from a dowry because it belongs only to the woman and she maintains the right to sell, use, or give away her dzo-property as she pleases (Fricke et al. 1993: 398; March 2002: 21). Since the majority of ethnic groups in Nepal utilize a conventional dowry system, the control that Tamang women maintain over the dzo endowments given to them at marriage is exceptional. This unique financial self-sufficiency amongst Tamang women is one of the reasons anthropologists have argued that Tamang women have more autonomy than the majority of Nepali women (Fricke et al. 1993: 398; March 2002: 90)

Land, Agriculture and Lifestyle in Dhidopur:

I conducted this research project in a village called Dhidopur. It is the ancestral village of my interpreter, Phulmaya Lama. Her paternal uncle resided there and it was with his family that I resided while I lived in Dhidopur. I will refer to this family as my host family or primary informants throughout this thesis. This household contained 8 permanent members: Phulmaya’s uncle (“Kaka”, age 50), his mother (“Mum”, age 70), his wife (“Kaki”, age 40), their three daughters (“Rita Bahini”, age 18, “Abisha Bahini”, age 16, “Rupa Bahini”, age 15), their only son (“Bhai”, age 12), and Kaki’s niece, age 8. For the purposes of this thesis, I refer to the members of this family by their kinship terms to make them easily distinguishable from the rest of the research participants, to whom I have assigned pseudonyms.

The village of Dhidopur consists of a small marketplace, a few restaurants, a rice mill and the surrounding farmland and homesteads. There are several small shops clustered around the marketplace, which sell various necessities and simple luxury items. It is common for the owners of such shops to live in the shops, but other than the shop owners, most of the population of Dhidopur lives in the surrounding rural area. Phulmaya’s relatives lived on one of the farms

close to the Dhidopur mill and I conducted my interviews mainly with women who similarly lived in the outlying rural areas surrounding Dhidopur marketplace.

The houses belonging to my participants were generally two story dwellings with anywhere from two to six rooms. The poorer participants typically lived in bungalows. Most houses were constructed using a combination of building materials including concrete, wood, corrugated metal (on the roof or for doors) and a homemade plaster of mud and cow dung. On average, each household had five or six family members.

None of the homes I visited in Dhidopur had indoor plumbing. Most households had their own composting toilet located apart from the main house structure, similar to an outhouse. Waste is flushed into the composting tank, which collects the gases produced by the waste. The collected gases are then rerouted back to the house and are used to power a gas burner in the kitchen on which the family cooks their food. In addition to the gas burner, there was usually a fire pit for cooking in the kitchen. Families access fresh water via a few large communal taps, located in mutually convenient locations. However, several households have access to smaller water taps outside their homes, which they only have to share with one or two other neighbouring households. One of the development initiatives that have had the biggest impact on women's workload in Dhidopur is the installation of water taps. This was the first and most frequently mentioned change in the village that was mentioned to me by my participants. Installing reliable water taps in several locations throughout the village has greatly improved women's lives by making water more accessible and has greatly decreased the amount of time women need to spend carrying water to their homes every day. Most families live within a few minutes walking distance to a tap. Fresh water is available throughout the day. One of my participants mentioned that even as recently as 15 years ago, water only flowed from the communal tap during set times in the morning and evening. Each home has several large brass pots that they use to transport water from the tap and use for storing water inside the house.

Presently, all the residents of Dhidopur have electricity in their homes. This is also a relatively recent development. Most of my participants reported that they first got electricity in their homes between 16 and 25 years ago. Most houses use electricity mainly for powering

lights, radios and sometimes televisions. None of the houses in Dhidopur have large appliances that require a lot of power, such as refrigerators, washers, driers, heaters, stoves or ovens. However, like indoor plumbing, these appliances are common in the houses in Hetauda.

The land on which my participants lived was good quality. Although the soil seemed to have high clay content, it was adequately fertile to produce the crops grown by the farmers. In addition, glaciers had not left behind large boulders for the farmers to contend with, as was the case in the neighbouring village located further up in the mountains. The farmers of Dhidopur were also fortunate in that their farmland was located on rather flat terrain by Nepalese standards. Hetauda and the surrounding areas are located within a large valley. The farms located in this valley do not suffer from soil erosion in the same way that farms located in the mountains do. As a result, Dhidopur farmers do not have to devote significant time and labour to building and maintaining terraces in order to combat soil erosion.

Dhidopur farmers live close to a major road, making the transport of their agricultural products more convenient than it is for farmers who live in more remote mountain villages. The building of this main road from Hetauda to Dhidopur was another major village development that happened during the lifetime of my participants. It is also easier for the residents of Dhidopur to go from their farms to the Dhidopur marketplace or to Hetauda. There are also frequent buses and tempos (auto rickshaws) that make these places faster to get to. The secondary changes that result from the building of the main road, which were mentioned by my participants, are that now people travel further away to get to their paid jobs and now there are more goods available for sale at the market. Being located close to the road also keeps the value of the land quite high. Since farmers in Dhidopur have fertile, flat land in a favourable location, they are able to effectively provide for themselves and their families by farming.

Subsistence agriculture is a viable option in Dhidopur because most of the farmers in this region own sufficient amounts of land to produce enough food to feed their families. While some families are better off than others, there is not a large gap between such families and their poorer neighbours. Families with larger plots of land still did not live in luxury. Nor do they possess a significantly larger amount of material goods or work fewer hours than their

neighbours with less land. When I asked about the size of my participants' farms, the dimensions I received were in katha units. This is the traditional unit of measurement used by farmers throughout South Asia. One katha is equal to approximately 66.89 square metres, or 720 square feet (0.0165 acre). Twenty katha are equal to one bigha (1338 square metres, 14400 square feet or 0.3306 acre), a larger unit of measurement sometimes used by my participants. When the participants were unsure how big their farm was, or did not want to tell me, they would usually say the land was either "not enough to eat", "big enough to eat, but not to sell", or "enough to sell." When a participant said that their land was "not enough to eat", they meant that they did not own a large enough plot of land to produce enough food to provide for their family's needs. Those participants who reported their land was "big enough to eat but not to sell" owned enough land that they could feed their families, but could not produce a surplus that could be sold. The participants who said their land was "enough to sell" were expressing that they were able to produce enough food for their family and produce a surplus that could be sold.

There seems to be no consensus amongst my participants about what constitutes a "small" farm. For example, one participant described her 4 katha (268 square metres or 2880 square feet or 0.0661 acre) farm as small, while another participant said she considered 4 katha to be a big farm. Naturally, my participants were not too concerned with objectively discerning whether their farms were "big" or "small", but with whether their farms were "big enough" to provide for their needs. Thus their perceptions of farm size were relative to their family situation. Whether a farm is big enough, or course, depends on how many family members need to be provided for. This is why it seemed easier for my participants to agree upon what a "big" farm was. A big farm is one that can support a large family and still produce a surplus for sale. Kaka's farm was an example of such a farm. This household contains eight permanent members and owns a property that is 1 ½ bigha, or 30 katha (2007 square metres, 21600 square feet or 0.4958 acre) in size. They were able to produce a surplus on the plot of land and most of my other participants expressed that they thought this was a big farm. Only one other participant lived on a larger farm. Her farm measured 32 katha (2140 square metres, 23040 square feet or 0.5289 acre). The average farm size, as reported by my participants, was approximately 14 katha (936 square metres, 10080 square feet, or 0.2314 acre). Only one of my participants had no

farmland. Another participant said her farmland was not big enough. The rest of my participants reported that they had either enough land to survive off of, or enough to produce a surplus.

The most commonly grown crops produced by Dhidopur residents were corn, rice, soybean, wheat and millet. Less common crops, which are usually grown on a smaller scale, include lentils, chickpeas and mustard. The farmers in this region were harvesting their corn in June, when I first arrived in Dhidopur. The corn harvest overlaps with rice planting. Rice planting starts in July and begins as soon as there has been enough rain to flood the paddies. After planting the rice, the remaining corn is harvested and the former cornfields are cleared and ploughed. In the case of my host family, soybean was planted in the field where the corn formerly grew, at the beginning of August. Other families did the same or, alternatively, planted millet in their former cornfields. I was told by participants that they also grow wheat in the winter. In addition to the cereal crops, most families keep a garden, where they grow various vegetables, such as long beans, pumpkins, potatoes, tomatoes, ochra, chili peppers, bitter gourd, long gourd, turmeric and spinach. Most farmers also had fruit trees or shrubs on their properties and would pick fruit for household use as they desired. Some of the fruits that grow in Dhidopur include custard apple, jackfruit, pineapple, peaches, mangos, pears, and limes.

Dhidopur farmers raise animals in addition to growing crops. All of my participants said that they owned at least a few animals. Most families had at least two kinds of animals. Goats, chickens and cows were the most common types of animals that were owned by my participants. Some families also kept water buffalo and oxen. Families that had goats and chickens usually had a flock of each. Typically a family would have between five and fifteen chickens. If they kept goats, they usually had between three and ten of them.

Slightly more than half my participants said their family owned a cow. Typically, a family would only have one or two cows. No one had more than three cows. Cows are comparatively quite expensive to purchase, required more work to maintain, and one cow usually provided enough milk for the family's daily needs. In Nepal, cattle are not bred to be slaughtered for meat. Most ethnic groups in Nepal think it immoral, spiritually contaminating and repugnant to consume beef. However, Tamang people do enjoy eating buffalo meat and

some families raise buffalo for that purpose. Other Nepali people, particularly high-caste Hindus, will not eat buffalo for the same reasons they will not eat beef. Tamang people express a preference for buffalo meat, partially because their status as buffalo-eaters differentiates them from Hindus and is a marker of ethnic difference. Dhidopur farmers who raise buffalo usually only keep between one and three animals. This is for the same reasons that they do not have many cows: buffalo are expensive to buy, slow to mature, and require a lot of work to maintain.

Families that owned oxen always owned two. This is because oxen are used as a team of two to plough the fields. Not every family kept oxen because they are also large and expensive to maintain. Furthermore, they are only useful during those times in the year when the fields need to be ploughed. A family with oxen had the convenience to use them whenever they wanted. Families without oxen are dependent on others to loan or rent them an oxen team during the ploughing seasons.

The Effects of National Politics on Dhidopur:

Nepal has experienced a lot of political change over the last several decades. Up until a few months before my field trip began, Nepal was governed by a hereditary monarchy (HRW 1995). In 1951, this political system replaced the oligarchical Rana regime that ruled Nepal from 1846-1951 (HRW 1995). In 1990, multi-party democracy was introduced and coexisted with the monarchy; however, the king retained executive power (HRW 1995). From 1996 to 2006, a civil war between the government forces and the Maoist Communist Party of Nepal raged on in the countryside, displacing and killing thousands of Nepalese people. The Maoists' demands included the establishment of Nepal as a republic and the removal of the King's unilateral power over the elected government. Shortly before I arrived to do my research in May 2008, the Communist Party of Nepal managed to win the largest number of seats during the election, held in April. Nepal then became a secular democratic republic and ceased to be a Hindu kingdom.

During interviews, I asked my participants how they were affected by the civil war because I wanted to find out how these political changes had affected people at the local level. The overwhelming majority of participants said that the civil war had no effect on them or their

village. Makawanpur was not one of the regions that were militarized during the civil war, so it is not surprising that the farmers in Dhidopur were unaffected by the conflict. In fact, one of the reasons Makawanpur was suggested to me as a research site is because it was considered quite safe and many NGOs were able to continue development projects there despite the civil war. Only one participant had any interaction with Maoist soldiers. She said that a few of them were travelling by and stopped at her house. She fed them rice. Two other participants said that they felt afraid of the Maoists and another participant said that she felt afraid to travel because she was scared of the Maoists. Makawanpur was probably affected by the civil war, since it would be unlikely that any region in a country involved in a decade-long war could remain completely unaffected. However, few of the participants personally felt the effects of this war.

Ethnicity and Language in Dhidopur:

While conducting an interview with 67-year-old Thulimaya Moktan, a long time Dhidopur resident, I learned that the ethnic composition of Dhidopur has changed quite a bit since she first moved there as a young bride, 54 years ago. Thulimaya Moktan was born in an isolated hill village. She said that when she was young, Dhidopur used to have a lot of Hindus from the tailor caste residing in it. They have all died or moved away and now there are more Brahmin Hindus. Most of the people, who live in and around Dhidopur, at present, are Tamang. I asked Thulimaya Moktan if there were fewer Tamang people in Dhidopur when she was young and she told me that, as far as she knew, there were always many Tamang people living there.

While there are significantly more Tamang people in Dhidopur, Brahmin Hindus live alongside the Tamang residents of Dhidopur. While caste demarcations prevent truly equitable relationships from forming between Tamang and Brahmin neighbours, the two groups regularly interact, sometimes forming friendships or exchanging pleasantries. As a result, there is minimal caste tension in the village. The two groups are not significantly separated by language, standard of living, or attire, but rather can be distinguished more easily by caste demarcations, race, dietary habits, various cultural customs and religion.

In my conversation with Thulimaya Moktan, I asked her if there were any differences between her natal village and Dhidopur. She said that as a girl in her natal village, she spoke only Tamang. She had to learn Nepali when she moved to Dhidopur, so according to her, Nepali has been the main language in Dhidopur for at least the last 50 years. During interviews, the participants did not mention language change when I asked about the changes that have taken place in Dhidopur over their lifetimes. However, I did notice that Tamang was not spoken often, and usually it was only spoken by older people. Most young people could understand Tamang, but did not speak it very extensively. This suggests that the Tamang residents of Dhidopur have not spoken the Tamang language as their first language for quite some time.

Marriage in Dhidopur:

Marriage patterns and the practice of giving dzo-property have changed significantly in Dhidopur in recent times. As I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, Tamang people differ from other Nepalese ethnic groups in that they provide their daughters with dzo-property, as opposed to a dowry, when they marry. However, the Tamang participants in this research project did not ever refer to dzo-property in their conversations with me or during interviews. Instead, they described household items and animals as being property of the family, not women's personal property. Some of my young informants mentioned to me that Tamang people from Dhidopur give dowries when the marriage is an arranged marriage. I did not specifically investigate this topic in depth; however, I have two thoughts as to why Tamang women in this region do not have exclusive rights to animals and moveable goods. The first is that it is possible the giving of dzo-property at marriage is not a universal Tamang practice. My research took place in a different region of Nepal than the previous research conducted by anthropologists such as Hofer (1981), Fricke (1986), Holmberg (1989), Fricke et al. (1993), and March (1983, 2002). Makawanpur is located to the south and west of the Kathmandu valley, while all of the above-listed anthropologists studied Tamang people north of the Kathmandu valley. Therefore, it could be the case that the Tamang people in Makawanpur have never given dzo-property at marriage in the manner described by other anthropologists studying Tamang people.

The second possibility is that the Tamang people in the region where I conducted my fieldwork have adopted a dowry system from their Hindu Nepali neighbours. In a dowry system, the bride's family gives moveable goods to the groom or to the groom's family. In this system, it is unclear who is in control of the dowry once it has been given and the amount of wealth that is transferred is negotiated on an individual basis (March 2002: 209). Dowry-related abuse of young brides, resulting from disputes regarding the control over and size of dowries in Nepal, has become increasingly more common amongst urban middle-class families (March 2002: 90). NGOs, policy-makers, the media and the education system in Nepal have united in an attempt to eliminate the practice of giving dowry in an effort to stop dowry-related violence. Several of the young Tamang women with whom I developed a close rapport expressed a disapproval of the dowry system that mirrored the stance taken by anti-dowry advocates.

As attitudes towards the dowry system become increasingly negative, the giving of a dowry at marriage is becoming less relevant amongst the Tamang people in Dhidopur. This is because arranged marriages are becoming less common in Dhidopur. Fricke et al. also report that arranged marriages are becoming less common in the Tamang communities they studied and less formal marriage ceremonies are becoming increasingly popular (1993: 397). They state that these less formal unions are being celebrated with fewer rituals, involve fewer family members and are more likely to be formed based on the wishes of the couple (Fricke et al. 1993: 397). Few of my young informants had ever attended a traditional Tamang marriage ceremony. Instead, young couples usually elope. Usually, an elopement involves the young couple running away together to the groom's house. If the bride is an acceptable match to the groom's parents, they let her into the house. If not, then they will not let her into the house. Once the groom's parents allow her to come into the house, the couple lives together as husband and wife. Couples who elope are said to have had a "love marriage."

Although many young Tamang people choose their own spouses, I found that premarital sexual encounters are extremely rare in Dhidopur. Unwed mothers and children conceived out of wedlock are so uncommon in Dhidopur that I was told by my informants that these scenarios were impossible. Courtships between young people in Dhidopur are conducted as secretly as possible. Courting couples usually have very little interaction with each other, since men and

women normally socialize in same sex groups. I was told by my participants that it is considered socially unacceptable to engage in sex outside of marriage, so young couples elope before entering into a physical relationship.

The speed at which love marriages have become the most common type of marriage in Dhidipur is quite surprising. While interviewing my older informants, women in their forties and older, several of them laughed at me when I asked them whether they had arranged marriages. I was told by some of my older participants that there were no “love marriages” when they were young and that all marriages used to be arranged. This contrasts with what March reports from her research site, where the most common type of marriage was marriage by mutual consent (2002: 50).

One of my older participants, 67-year-old Shanti Rumba, told me that she had a “pulled marriage”. In this practice, which March refers to as “marriage by capture”, the bride is captured by the groom and taken to his parents’ home (2002: 50). She reports that actual abductions of brides by force are extremely rare, if they ever happen at all amongst Tamang people (March 2002: 50). However, she mentions that in the community in which she conducted her fieldwork, the people discuss the idea of capture marriages a great deal and the image of capturing brides features prominently in both the rituals of arranged marriages as well as in the rituals of marriages of mutual consent (March 2002: 50). Discussion surrounding capture marriages comes up a lot because it allows people to explain why certain marriages are unhappy. The example March gives is that of a woman who now regrets having eloped with her husband and will then begin to claim that her husband abducted her (2002: 50).

My informants told me that a “pulled marriage” used to occur at traditional Tamang festivals called “mela.” At a mela, there would be a makeshift marketplace, where people would eat lots of food, drink alcohol, and they would gather to watch group singing competitions between young men and women. During the competitions, women can be “pulled” by men into a marriage. I was told that according to custom, a woman must go if a man pulls her, even if she is already married. The man would take his “pulled” bride to his parent’s house and if she was an appropriate match for their son, the parents would let her enter the house. If she was not, they

would not let her in. Once inside, they would put a necklace called a *pote* around her neck and use a red powder to make a red line down the part in her hair, called a *sindur*. Amongst Nepali people, the *sindur* and *pote* are routinely worn by married women as symbols of their married status, similar to the way North American people wear wedding rings on their left ring fingers. Although a woman could not refuse if she were “pulled” to the groom’s house, once she was there, she did not have to stay there or stay married to the young man that pulled her. If a married woman is “pulled” and she decided not to return to her previous husband after being pulled into a second marriage, this would mean that she would be choosing to end her previous marriage because Tamang people do not practice polyandry.

Pulled marriages do not occur anymore, probably because elopements have become so commonplace and mela festivals are no longer held. However, the existence of such a practice indicates that young Tamang women and men have not always entered obediently into marriages arranged by their parents, or stayed in them for that matter. In fact, Phulmaya told me that it used to be more common in the past for people to get married more than once. Therefore, despite the comments made by some of my older informants that there were no “love marriages” in Dhidopur when they were young, choice and consent were most likely important elements in Tamang marriages of the past.

Interestingly, although marriages are becoming less ritually elaborate and involving fewer family members in the formation of marital unions, marriages are becoming more permanent in Dhidopur. My informants explained to me that although sometimes Tamang marriages in Dhidopur end in divorce or informally break up, divorce is not socially acceptable amongst the villagers. Social disapproval is particularly directed at divorced or remarried women. Divorced or remarried women frequently become the subjects of malicious gossip or social exclusion, while divorced men are generally exempt from such social disapproval. Phulmaya said that divorced women or married women who leave their husbands to marry other men usually move away to another village in order to avoid such stigma. This social disapproval for divorce and remarriage amongst the Tamang people in Dhidopur, contrasts greatly with March’s (2002) description of attitudes towards divorce and remarriage amongst her Tamang

participants. On this topic, March states that Tamang women do not suffer a loss of prestige as a result of remarriage or divorce (2002: 52).

The majority of Tamang people in Dhidopur enter into monogamous marriages. Also, remarriage is possible for both men and women following divorce or death of a spouse. Polygynous marriages are also possible amongst Tamang people. Although polygyny is possible, I would argue that monogamy has become the norm in Dhidopur. Most of the young people that I talked to about this topic expressed distaste for polygyny.

Through my volunteer work during a previous trip to Nepal, listening to radio or television programs, and by browsing through the text books of my young informants during the research phase of this project, I noticed that the literature being produced to educate the Nepali public simplistically describes many cultural practices surrounding family life in rural Nepal as “backwards” or “social evils.” A common attitude expressed by the majority of well-educated Nepali people that I encountered was that educated and modern people do not engage in “backwards” traditional practices. Polygyny, polyandry, child marriage, child labour, dowry, consuming alcohol, having a big family, and belief in witchcraft are some of the practices that are depicted in these education discourses as “social evils.” I found it common for my young rural participants to express disapproval or ambivalence towards such practices or towards people who engaged in them. They expressed this disapproval or ambivalence towards these practices despite the fact that some of these practices were common amongst previous generations of Tamang people or are still practiced by their own families, friends and neighbours.

These attitudes are similar to those expressed by the participants in Stacey Leigh Pigg’s (1992, 1996) research on development discourses and villagers’ beliefs in Nepal. Pigg reports that educated Nepali elites frequently and condescendingly discuss villagers’ beliefs and practices as “superstitions” (1992: 505). They view rural people as “fettered by custom and blinded by tradition” (Pigg 1992: 505). These attitudes inform the social representations of Nepalese villagers that are contained in the schoolbooks and educational materials presented to students and the Nepalese public (Pigg 1992: 505). Furthermore, she states that “typical Nepali

villages” are depicted within development and educational discourses from the perspective of high-caste Hindus, as they form the educated Nepali elite who work as professionals in development and educational institutions (Pigg 1992: 505). The construction of a typical Nepali village which appears in development and educational discourses is one which is extrapolated based on ethnically specific, predominantly Hindu norms (Pigg 1992: 505). When non-Hindu peoples and villages are addressed, they are depicted as deviations from the Hindu norm (Pigg 1992: 505). Pigg argues that schoolbooks are some of the most influential sources of information for Nepali people because schools are the primary institutions of development in Nepal (1992: 502). The social representations of villagers as “backwards” in these schoolbooks are authoritative and to make reference to the ideas put forward in schoolbooks is one way in which a person can display to others how “educated” and “developed” they are (Pigg 1992: 502). Pigg argues that village people have an interest in adopting the ideas they learn in school because being educated is a symbol of their “developed” status (1992: 502). Obtaining the status of an educated and developed individual is the main way that people born into farming villages can hope to be upwardly socially mobile (Pigg 1992: 502; Pigg 1996: 173).

Pigg’s (1992, 1996) explanation of why rural Nepali people agree with dominant discourses that depict village life as “backwards” can also help to explain the disapproval and ambivalence which my participants expressed towards many of the social practices which take place within their own community and families. It was mostly young, well-educated women with aspirations to find work outside Dhidopur who expressed disapproval of the “social evils” I previously mentioned. It makes sense that these women with aspirations of upward social mobility would adopt views that identify them as educated and developed individuals. The residents of Dhidopur are well aware that urban-dwelling elites view them as “backwards.” However, like Pigg’s rural participants, most of the residents of Dhidopur do not view themselves this way, but instead see themselves as cosmopolitan villagers (Pigg 1992: 510; Pigg 1996: 174). They reason that Dhidopur is, after all, more developed than other villages up in the mountains that are not so close to a main road, do not have their own marketplace, running water, electricity, etc. In a similar fashion to Pigg’s participants, those Dhidopur residents who fashion themselves as cosmopolitan or developed individuals displace the identity of the “backwards villager” onto people from other less developed villages or onto people within their

own community who engage in “backwards” social practices (Pigg 1992: 510; Pigg 1996: 174, 192). This desire to be a “developed” and modern woman is a theme that emerged repeatedly during my interviews with Tamang women in Dhidopur. The content of development discourses and the ways they influence Dhidopur residents’ attitudes about women will be discussed in further detail in the following chapters of this thesis.

Tamang Women’s Social Status:

As feminist anthropologist Sherry Ortner has said, it is “notoriously difficult to assign a score of degree of gender equality or inequality in a particular society” (1996: 186). This is certainly a dilemma I faced while researching and writing about Tamang women. The topic of Tamang women’s social status is complex due to the multiple forms of oppression that Tamang women experience and the variety of perspectives from which their status can be considered.

Other scholars who have considered the question of Tamang women’s social status seem to agree that Tamang women enjoy a rather high status within their own homes and communities. In discussing men and women’s work roles, March has described gender roles within her research site as symmetrical and complementary (2002: 139). Gender roles are complementary in that men and women have different roles, but they complete each other. She argues that they are symmetrical because there is a gender balance whereby men and women contribute to a joint agricultural effort to the same degree and equally benefit from such efforts (March 2002: 139). Women are necessary and valued economic assets to both their natal and marital homes in Tamang communities. Tamang women exert control over and manage their own and their family’s economic resources. They do so by making decisions about borrowing, lending and investing their own dzo-property and making decisions regarding household purchases (March 2002: 69, 89-91; Frederick 2005: 130). The wealth Tamang women manage is significant. March found that in most households, if husbands and wives each sold everything they owned and inherited, the sale of each of their respective properties would provide them with the same amount of cash (2002: 89).

Women are well respected in their marital homes because within the system of bilateral cross-cousin marriage, Tamang women are not strangers in their marital homes (Fricke et al. 1993: 396; March 2002: 154, 169). Although Tamang people practice clan and lineage exogamy, they acknowledge kin relationships outside the lineage and Tamang women retain their natal lineage identity after marriage (March 2002: 86). Since their mothers maintain ties with their natal lineage, Tamang children are well acquainted with their mother's kin (March 2002: 169). Tamang brothers and sisters maintain deep, lifelong bonds with each other and express these special relationships emotionally, economically and ritually (March 2002: 86). Exchanging their children in marriage is one way that brothers and sisters can affirm their affection for each other (March 2002: 169). Therefore, in their marital homes, Tamang brides are welcomed as kin, despite having a different lineage identity, and sometimes are even in a position to be treated with seniority from their marital kin, such as when the wife is older than her husband and a classificatory "elder" to him (March 2002: 154).

Tamang women also solidify formal family bonds with their brothers through giving their brothers gifts of cloth and clothing (March 1983: 730-1). They also play crucial roles and give generous gifts during the major life cycle events of their brothers and their brothers' children such as first rice-eating, first haircutting, marriage and death (March 2002: 86). Furthermore, Tamang parents value their daughters and are especially affectionate with them, despite the fact that Tamang society is patrilineal. Although parents live with their sons, their own daughters often return to their natal homes to provide care to their own parents in their old age (March 2002:111). Maintaining close bonds with their brothers and parents provide Tamang women with a source of support and protection against abuse within their marital homes and a place to turn if their marriage should end in divorce (Fricke et al. 1993: 396; March 2002: 86). Other scholars agree that Tamang women's social status is quite high because Tamang women are quite autonomous (see Fricke 1986; Niraula and Morgan 1996; Frederick 2005). Even in arranged marriages, Tamang women can visit their natal homes as often as they like and usually choose to stay with their own family quite a bit until they become more invested in their marriage and marital home (Fricke et al. 1993: 399). Tamang women from hill villages enjoy more freedom of movement than Terai women and hill village people are less concerned about

maintaining family honor by guarding women's sexuality (Niraula and Morgan 1996: 43; Frederick 2005: 130).

In comparison to their Hindu Nepali neighbours, the average Tamang bride is older, usually marrying for the first time around 18 years old (March 2002: 210, see also table in Appendix E). Tamang men get married at around 19 years of age, a much younger age than Hindu Nepali men (March 2002: 210). This means that Tamang spouses are often close in age to each other, with it being equally likely that the wife is older than the husband as it is that the husband is older than the wife (March 2002: 210). This is reflective of Tamang women's relative autonomy because Hindu Nepali wives are less likely to have a say in their marriages as they are often married as legal minors, to men much older than themselves (March 2002: 211). Hindu Nepali women are often married before the age of puberty, to order to ensure they are virgins at the time of marriage (March 2002: 211).

In summary, Tamang women enjoy many liberties that Hindu Nepali women have been denied. However, this does not necessarily mean that Tamang women enjoy a higher social status than Hindu Nepali women within Nepalese society. While Tamang people allow women certain freedoms, this does not mean that the autonomy Tamang women are granted within their homes and communities is respected within the larger socio-political context of the country in which they live. Many Hindus believe the Tamang to be uncivilized and find the independence, outspokenness and mobility of young Tamang women shocking (March 2002: 211). Although Tamang people have resided in Nepal for many centuries, with legends putting their earliest migration into modern-day Nepal in the year A.D 911, it was the ancestors of Hindu Nepali people who wrote the legal codes which fixed Tamang as a dependent minority group and established Nepal as a nation (March 2002: 15, 36). Some Hindu Nepali people view Tamang people as outcastes because Tamang people do not observe caste rules of purity and impurity, create hierarchical relationships with other groups, or have Brahmin priests conduct their religious rituals (March 2002: 36). In addition to religious claims of moral superiority over the Tamang and other non-Hindu ethnic groups, high-caste Hindus occupy positions of power within Nepalese society. High-caste Hindus, such as Brahmins and Chhettris, make up approximately thirty percent of the national population; however, they monopolize government jobs as ninety-

five percent of government employees are high-caste Hindus (Frederick 2005: 130). Except in the case of Newars in the Kathmandu valley, high-caste Hindus are also the landholders, professionals, media persons and senior development workers in Nepal (Pigg 1992: 505; Frederick 2005: 130). The result of this unequal distribution of arable land, employment and opportunity, is that ethnic and low-caste groups, such as the Tamang, have been marginalized within Nepalese society (Frederick 2005: 130). As members of an ethnic caste, Tamang women face marginalization in Nepalese society due to their gender, low-caste status and visible racial difference from the Hindu majority.

Although anthropologists (see Fricke 1986; Fricke et al. 1993; Niraula and Morgan 1996; March 2002; Frederick 2005) have described many ways in which Tamang women enjoy rather high social status within their homes and communities, particularly in comparison with Nepali women from other ethnic groups, Tamang society is not gender egalitarian. Tamang women have been excluded from religious studies because the skills needed to learn and practice the letters of Buddhist texts can only be learned from a teacher who has themselves dedicated much time and effort to religious studies (March 1983: 734). The passing down of textual knowledge through generations of teachers to pupils can be traced through tutorial lineages akin to the social patrilineages that structure Tamang society (March 1983: 735). Tamang people view both types of lineages as decisively male (March 1983: 735). I also learned from my informants that Tamang women have not traditionally participated in village politics, as this was considered the domain of men, and the village political leaders of the past, whom my informants referred to as “Big Men”, were always male. Furthermore, as I previously stated, Tamang women do not have ownership rights to land. Land is owned by men and passed down to their sons. Since subsistence agriculture is the method by which most Tamang people make their living, the importance of access to land cannot be understated (March 2002: 89). Women’s systematic exclusion from land ownership renders them entirely dependent on male kin for access to land.

Dhidipur Women’s Rights to Property, Animals and Money:

The topic of Tamang women’s social status is further complicated by discrepancies between the existing ethnographic data on Tamang women and the results of my own research in

Dhidopur. Dhidopur Tamang women are similar to the Tamang women described in the above-mentioned anthropological accounts in that they are valued for their economic contributions to both their natal and marital homes. They maintain close relationships with their natal families and frequently visit them. In contrast to Hindu Nepali women, Tamang women in Dhidopur also marry later, to men close in age to them and often have the freedom to choose their own spouse. Dhidopur Tamang women are also similarly marginalized within Nepalese society and experience exclusion from various religious, political and land ownership opportunities in their village.

The discrepancies I noticed between Dhidopur Tamang women and the Tamang women described in previously conducted anthropological research mostly concern women's rights to moveable property, animals and money. Tamang women in Dhidopur do have access to and control over moveable goods. However, my research findings indicate that the nature of their rights to moveable property is different from what has been previously described by other anthropologists studying Tamang people. March reports that animals are typically considered to be the property of Tamang women, as animals comprise a major portion of dzo-property given to young women when they marry (2002: 140). An animal is slaughtered either when the family that owns it needs the money or when they have too many animals and it has become costly to maintain them in terms of time, food resources and space. Thus, animals in Dhidopur are investments that can be cashed in when the family is in need of some money. In contrast to what other anthropologists have reported, during my stay in Dhidopur, I discovered that animals are not considered the personal property of women, but are considered the property of the family.

Although women do not own animals in Dhidopur, women do play an important role in the economic decision-making process within their own households. Based on my observations, the Tamang women in my field site were the ones in charge of making decisions about day-to-day household spending. The female head of the household is in charge of purchasing things like oil, spices, meat, clothes, and school supplies for the children as well as other small purchases. She decides which items are necessary to buy and will make the purchase at the market herself, or will send one of her children to buy the desired items. While I did not observe

anyone make a major purchase during my stay in Dhidopur, my informants told me that the husband and wife usually jointly make decisions about major purchases.

Although it is unclear the degree to which Tamang women from Dhidopur managed their own moveable property, I did discover during my stay that at least some women managed their own money. In a discussion with Rita Bahini, I learned that in her family, everyone except Bhai had their own money that they each invested in a savings group. Due to the short nature of my stay, I was not able to investigate how common belonging to a savings group was amongst the women in Dhidopur. However, I do remember Kaki returning from her women's savings group meeting with several other women from the village, so I suspect that the household I stayed in was not the only household that participated in these savings groups. When I asked Rita Bahini where she got money to invest in her savings groups, she told me that Kaka gives her and her sisters money every month to give to the savings group. Kaka also gives a large, 40 kg sack of corn at the end of the harvest to each of his children, which is considered their corn. In their spare time, they husk and remove the kernels from the corn. When the corn is processed, they carry it to Dhidopur market to sell. Rita Bahini said that once they get money from the sale of their corn, they give the money back to their parents so that they can pay for the expenses related to their education. Rita Bahini also gives her salary from her teaching job to her parents. She said that she gives the money to her parents out of respect and, in turn, they buy her everything that she needs. To ascertain the extent to which women and children have control over their own money that they save, further research must be conducted. However, it seems that, in my host family at least, there was a system of exchange which allowed the children to contribute to the family income, which the parents would redistribute to the children to allow for them each to have all their needs provided for, yet also allowed them each to have their own savings.

While the social situation of Tamang women in Dhidopur is similar to that of Tamang women who have been described in previous anthropological accounts discussed in the previous section, I found that Tamang women in Dhidopur do not enjoy as high a social status in their homes and communities. In the following chapters of this thesis, I have included a more detailed discussion of these differences in social status, the possible reasons for these differences and how

Dhidopur women's lower status affects the ways Tamang people view women's mobility, work, autonomy, sexuality and safety.

Community and Co-operation in Dhidopur:

Dhidopur is a small community and, therefore, relationships between the residents are quite personal and intense. This fact makes living in Dhidopur generally satisfying because the residents can be quite helpful to each other, but it also means that Dhidopur residents have to be very careful in how they go about maintaining these relationships. Being able to rely on neighbours, friends and kin is a great source of satisfaction and support to Dhidopur residents; however, any discord between these usual allies can be quite disruptive to all involved.

In Dhidopur, it was common for women to offer fruits as snacks to visitors, relatives and neighbours when they visited. Women would also send fruits and vegetables home with visitors if they knew that they did not have such food items at home. For example, my host family had plenty of long beans and would give them to their neighbours and often sent bags of them home with Phulmaya. However, my host family did not have a lime tree, so when I visited with one of my participants, 51-year-old Sunita Moktan, she sometimes sent us home with a bag of limes. Dhidopur women view trading or gifting such food items was viewed as both practical and polite. It is a way of getting rid of superfluous and perishable produce that the family could not consume before it spoils. It is also a way of gaining access to food items that were not grown on their own farms.

Dhidopur women, however, did not share or gift their fruits and vegetables to just anyone. They usually would only do so with relatives and neighbours with whom they were on good terms. This type of exchange is considered polite, but buying and selling such food items amongst neighbours and relatives is considered inappropriate. For example, there was a Brahmin family that lived in the house next to my host family and they ran a small shop out of their house. I witnessed one occasion when one of the daughters from this family asked Kaki if she could buy some long beans from her. After some discussion, Kaki agreed, but complained to me later about it, "...those Brahmins always want to buy and sell everything." She was offended

that the neighbour's daughter insisted on buying the beans. It would have been more polite, if she had allowed Kaki to give them to her, since they are supposed to be close friends.

The exchange of meat and other animal products is accompanied by an entirely different set of social expectations from the exchange of fruits and vegetables. This was particularly true of buffalo meat. When one of the Dhidopur farmers slaughtered a buffalo, the expectation was that the other villagers would buy the meat. Kaka explained this expectation to me. He said, "Here [in the village], we like to help each other out. If he, over there [the neighbour], decides to slaughter his buffalo, we all try to buy some. He gets to sell all his buffalo and earns some money and we get to eat his meat!" It was particularly important for everyone to buy the buffalo meat because buffalo are such large animals that many families are needed to consume the entire animal. Also, without refrigeration, meat does not stay fresh very long. In the case of a large animal, such as a buffalo, the meat needs to be cooked, dried or smoked and it is better if this work is done by many people. In Dhidopur, the families would buy the meat and the women would process the meat that they purchased, making the task of preserving the meat much less onerous than if the family that owned the animal did everything themselves.

The slaughter of a buffalo is an event that causes a lot of excitement in Dhidopur. Although the Tamang residents of Dhidopur generally enjoy eating meat, they do not do so on a daily basis because meat is expensive. Chickens, since they are small, are consumed more frequently, but the slaughter of a buffalo is not a common event. While I was conducting my field research, I witnessed only one occasion where buffalo were slaughtered. Two buffalo were slaughtered the day before the first of Shrawan festival. Shrawan is the fourth month in the Nepali calendar and the beginning of this month corresponds with the rice-planting season, in the middle of July. When I arrived the morning the buffalo were slaughtered, almost everyone we met that morning mentioned it to us. Phulmaya and I went to the site where the buffalo had been killed and a large crowd had gathered there. It was mostly men standing around socializing and supervising the burning of the carcasses. After killing the animals with an axe, the men burnt the skin and hair off the animals to kill any parasites and bacteria on the skin. One man sat with a notebook and wrote down the names of individuals who wanted to buy meat and how much they

wanted. Some women were also standing around watching the fire and putting in orders for the meat, but there were fewer women around because so many women were planting rice that day.

When I asked older participants about the ways in which life has changed in Dhidopur over their lifetimes, a social change that was mentioned by a couple of the women I interviewed was that, in their opinion, people in the village are more cooperative. They specifically said that women help each other more. One example of this increased cooperativeness was given by 45-year-old Gorimaya Sintan. She said:

Before, when I was a girl, I used to have to go to other neighbouring farms to work there for money. Now, people here help each other more. I feel that it is much easier for women these days. I will go to someone else's farm and work there if they need extra help and then when I need help on my farm, they will come and work for me.

I also observed women helping each other in this way. This cooperative behavior was especially noticeable during the rice-planting season. A group of young women would go to a neighbour's or relative's fields and work there planting rice for the day. The female head of household would spend the afternoon cooking while the girls worked in the field and would feed everyone a big meal when they were finished planting rice for the day. The same group of young women would then get together again when another one of their fields needed to be planted. March discusses this system of rotational labour as a means of assembling a larger workforce for the peak agricultural periods (2002: 135). Called *nang phapa phopa*, this system of exchanging labour is only effective for families that have slightly more land than laborers (March 2002: 135). Households with more laborers than land do not need additional workers, while households with more land than laborers are often short of help and cannot spare workers to work in the fields of other households (March 2002: 135). Perhaps the reason why Gorimaya Sintan notices that people are more cooperative in Dhidopur is because now most families have slightly more land than laborers. If, in the past, land holdings were more polarized, with a greater proportion of households having either too many laborers for their land or too few laborers for their land, the villagers would not be able to exchange labor. Instead, the larger land holders would have to pay the smaller land holders for extra help.

There is some evidence from the life history interviews and participant observation I conducted that local landholdings were more polarized in the past, although this is not a topic I

delved deeply into while conducting my research. My host family was particularly proud of the fact that they were descended from the former village “Big Man” and enjoyed telling me about the great things their grandfather, Lalbahadur Sintan Lama, used to do for Dhidopur. I use the term “Big Man” to describe Lalbahadur’s political position, not as an anthropological classification I am imposing on the ethnographic scenario I found myself in, but because that is the term my participants used to describe him. During the life history interview I conducted with her, Mum said that managing Lalbahadur’s fields and properties was a big task. He employed many people and had two wives, including her, to work the land. Lalbahadur Sintan Lama had 40 katha of land. Of that time, Mum says “We could count money by the doko [basket full], now we can only count doko of corn.” When Lalbahadur Sintan Lama died, his land was divided amongst his daughter, his brother and his two sons. Kaka inherited a sizable portion of the farm. Phulmaya’s father was given some farmland, which he later sold, and some property in Hetauda. Based on the interviews I conducted, there is not currently one farm that is significantly bigger than the others in Dhidopur in the way that Lalbahadur Sintan Lama’s farm was. After his death, when his property was divided, there was no one family that possessed significantly more land than the other farmers in Dhidopur.

Thulimaya Moktan also stated that she thought women cooperated more now than they used to: “Now women have it easy because there are other women to help them to care for their children. Women take turns watching each other’s children while they work in the fields.” Based on my own observations, I would agree that Dhidopur is a fairly cooperative community in this way. I am not in a position to state whether the people cooperate more or less than they did in the past, since I have only been there once and I only stayed for a few months. While I was there, however, I did observe women assisting each other with childcare. Children seemed comfortable travelling back and forth between the households in the village, especially between the houses of their relatives and immediate neighbours.

I also saw evidence that the residents of Dhidopur did not always get along with each other. Personal squabbles sometimes resulted in Dhidopur residents refusing to interact with each other. It is interesting to me that Gorimaya Sintan made a comment about how cooperative Dhidopur residents are with each other, since she herself was not on speaking terms with her

next door neighbours. Gorimaya Sintan had previously allowed Phulmaya and me to interview many young women in her house, but had evicted us when her neighbour's daughter, Sapana Moktan, age 15, came over for an interview. Gorimaya later apologized and told us that she would not allow Sapana Moktan or any of her family in her house because Sapana Moktan's father had a very bad temper. There had been an occasion on which Sapana Moktan's father had shouted very loudly at Gorimaya's family and they had not gotten along since then.

I also noticed that not everyone in the village helps everyone else when it comes to sharing labour. For example, one of the ways I hoped to develop rapport and compensate my participants for their time was to lend assistance to those women who had volunteered to be interviewed by me. When I saw an opportunity to help Shanti Moktan, age 17, and Manju Moktan, age 23, (sisters-in-law) to plant their family's rice field, I asked Phulmaya to come with me to plant rice in their field. She and Rita Bahini both thought my plan unusual. They told me, "We do not need to help them. We do not know those people." I was surprised since their farm was only a short walk from my host family's house. Therefore, despite proximity, villagers do not necessarily socialize with each other or cooperate for farm work. Phulmaya and Rita Bahini did join me in helping plant Shanti and Manju Moktan's field after some coaxing on my part, but they expressed to me after that they thought my desire to help Shanti and Manju Moktan odd.

In Dhidopur, there are definitely systems of cooperation amongst the farmers; however, these systems of cooperation arise from feelings of mutual obligation amongst kin and friends. As a result, simply residing in Dhidopur is not enough to belong to the "community." To benefit from the systems of cooperation that exist in Dhidopur, a person must be both embedded in one of the groups of participating family or friends and that person must also actively participate by maintaining a certain standard of behavior. Failing to act appropriately can lead to ostracism for an individual or an entire family, as was the case with Sapana Moktan's family. Failure to participate in systems of cooperation can insult other community members and also cause them to question the closeness of a relationship. I saw this happen in the above-mentioned incident where the neighbour's daughter offended Kaki when she insisted on buying the beans. As a result, most people who live in Dhidopur are quite concerned with maintaining good relations and a good reputation in the eyes of their fellow villagers.

Conclusion:

Dhidopur is a thriving, fairly co-operative and peaceful rural community which is populated by mostly Tamang people. In general, the residents are neither wealthy, nor desperately impoverished and, at present, there is not a big difference in lifestyle between the richer and poorer households of this community. Dhidopur has its own marketplace and Dhidopur's close proximity to the main road has allowed the residents to easily access transportation for themselves and their agricultural products. Furthermore, Dhidopur's proximity to the main road has facilitated the installation of amenities which have, for the most part, benefitted women, such as water taps, electricity, composting toilets and access to social services. However, these infrastructural and economic changes have resulted in social changes which do not necessarily benefit Dhidopur Tamang women. In my comparison of Dhidopur Tamang women to the Tamang women of communities described by other anthropologists, I have concluded that Dhidopur Tamang women do not enjoy as high a social status. In this chapter, I have discussed the ways in which Dhidopur Tamang women do have some control over family finances and their own money, but they do not appear to have benefitted from endowments of moveable goods, called dzo-property, that women from other Tamang communities receive from their parents following marriage. Dhidopur Tamang women also are not able to as easily leave unhappy marriages because divorce is becoming more stigmatized as Dhidopur villagers are adopting the gender ideologies of Hindu Nepali people, which they are learning in school, from development initiatives and from the media. In the following chapters, I will further develop the argument that Dhidopur Tamang women's social status is eroded in comparison to Tamang women described by other anthropologists. The next chapter is a detailed discussion of Dhidopur Tamang women's work and it is here that I will address the gendered consequences of Dhidopur's increasing integration into the market economy.

CHAPTER FOUR – DETERMINED TO WORK HARD: TAMANG WOMEN’S FARM WORK

Introduction:

Farming in Dhidopur is not for the faint of heart. Outside and exposed to the elements, Tamang women perform physically strenuous tasks in 40 degree Celsius weather, while contending with insects, snakes and other creatures. Inside their homes, they perform hours of tedious and repetitive tasks in order to process grains and prepare meals. While shaded and dry, the house is often no less hot than being outside; it is stuffy and the air is smoky from the kitchen fire. In Dhidopur, no one who does farm work escapes getting dirty and everyone goes to bed feeling tired. Farming women are determined to work hard in order to produce food for their families, care for their family members, and, if possible, sell some their surplus agricultural products. However, much of the work that Tamang farming women do is determined for them. While they did not complain about farm work, during interviews, many women stated that they felt they had no choice but to do farm work and did not have any other income-earning prospects.

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the work that Tamang women perform on their farms and the economic contributions Tamang women make to their households through this mostly unpaid labour. I explore how women’s farm work and economic contributions to their families change over the course of their lifetimes. In this chapter, I also describe the work that Tamang men do on their farms as well as the paid work that men do. I have included a discussion of the ways in which the participants justify the gendered division of labour and how this hierarchical division of labour overburdens many women, especially the female heads of households. Furthermore, I discuss the sources of satisfaction and dissatisfaction that participants expressed about farm work. My goal in investigating Tamang women’s farm work is to better understand their daily work lives, learn about how the participants feel about farm work, and determine the ways that their work and gender roles affect their desires to migrate in search of paid work.

A Typical Work Day:

In the home of my host family, Kaka and Kaki were usually the first to wake up. They woke up before dawn, at about 4:30am. At that time, Kaki would start the kitchen fire, milk the cow and get the milk boiled to pasteurize it. Mum, the children and I would wake up around 5am when Kaka called us to get up. One of the girls or Kaki would fetch water from the tap and bring it in the kitchen. We would all get dressed, washed and make our beds, then come downstairs where Kaki would have a simple breakfast of beaten rice and milk tea ready for us. The children and Kaka would eat pretty quickly and go off to school by 5:30am, while Kaki, Mum and I would sit on the front porch, eating at a more relaxed pace and chatting with the neighbours.

After tea, Mum would usually busy herself with letting out the chickens, feeding the chickens, picking vegetables for the morning meal and starting to prepare them (cutting, peeling, washing, removing seeds, and so on). Kaki would take advantage of the cool morning temperatures outside and start working in the fields right away. Some of the tasks she does in the morning include cutting down corn stalks, harvesting corn, picking vegetables for the morning meal or weeding the garden. She would also usually cut fodder for the animals in the cool of the morning. This involved either going to the jungle and cutting leafy branches from the trees or cutting grass that grows between the corn stalks in the fields. I and one of her daughters would usually accompany her and assist her in these tasks on days when the girls did not have class or a tutoring session. Kaki would usually finish these morning tasks by approximately 9am and she would then come into the house to start preparing the morning meal. She would then build up the fire, sift the rice, start the rice boiling, make dhido (a mush made of corn meal, the traditional staple of Tamang people), roast corn in the fire to snack on while the meal cooks, help Mum cut up vegetables and fry up enough curry to feed approximately 10 people. She usually makes 2-3 vegetable dishes which are eaten with either rice or dhido and curd or buttermilk. The morning meal is served between 10 and 11am, after Kaka and the children have returned from school or their tuition sessions. The girls usually help her serve everyone and set out the straw mats, on which the family sits to eat their meal.

After morning meal, the girls, Mum and I would collect the dishes and take them outside to the water hose beside the cowshed to wash the dishes. I or one of the girls would then put the clean dishes away, while Mum or one of the girls would sweep the kitchen floor. Any uneaten food would be given to either the family dog or the chickens.

The hottest part of the day, after morning meal, is considered a relaxation time by Dhidopur residents. In the home of my host family, Mum and Kaki would usually have a nap, while the children studied, watched television or played. Sometimes the family would engage in non-strenuous indoor work such as husking corn, removing the corn kernels from the cobs, or do laundry outside.

Following the afternoon rest period, around 1:30 or 2pm, everyone would get back to work. Either Kaki or Kaka would mix up a mixture of wheat germ, salt and water to feed to the cows and goats. Whoever did that would then make sure the cows and goats had fresh fodder. Kaki and the girls would then spend the rest of the afternoon harvesting corn, cutting down corn stalks, chopping up corn stalks to feed to the cows, husking corn, or removing kernels from the cobs. Around 4pm, everyone would take a break and have a snack. Kaki or Abisha Bahini would warm up leftovers from the morning meal, or cut up some fresh fruit for everyone, fry soybeans and serve them with beaten rice or roast some corn in the fire. After eating, the girls would go cut grass for the animals and Bhai would take the goats out to pasture. While the goats were out of the shed, Mum would take the opportunity to clean the goat shed. Kaki usually would go to pick vegetables for the evening meal, visit with the neighbours or go back to doing afternoon tasks. At 5pm, she would milk the cow again and boil the milk. By 6pm, Kaki would start preparing the evening meal. Kaka would usually water the cows and goats again once the goats returned from the pasture. Then the girls would return from cutting grass and Bhai would bring the goats back from pasture. The girls and I would then wash up and come inside to help Kaki prepare dinner. The girls, Mum and I helped prepare dinner by picking, washing, peeling and cutting up the vegetables, bringing in firewood, crushing salt, garlic and chilies into a paste, and setting out the straw mats.

As the sun set, at around 7:30pm, the whole family would settle on their mats in the kitchen as Kaki dished out the evening meal. After eating, the girls and I would wash and put away the dishes. After darkness fell, everyone stayed inside the house. Then the children would study upstairs or relax downstairs, watching television. Mum, Kaka and Kaki usually went to bed, at about 9pm. The rest of the family would follow and everyone would be asleep by 10pm.

While the tasks sometimes changed or were rearranged according to the season, for the most part, my host family followed this routine every day. This daily pattern was also followed by the other families in the village. Based on my interview questions that specifically asked about daily tasks and my observations of various women and girls at work, I would argue that there are a few daily tasks that Dhidopur women classify as their “work”. Although they may engage in a multitude of other farm tasks, the unchanging tasks of their daily routines were the ones that came to mind when they told me what their work involves. Cooking, cutting grass or going to the jungle, fetching water, planting rice, processing corn, going to school or studying, were all tasks that were performed on a daily basis by my participants. These were the tasks that were most consistently reported to me when I asked about the work that my participants did during the day. Further evidence that these tasks are considered “women’s work” is that the elderly women, who no longer perform these tasks, generally said that they do not work.

Tasks that were performed on a daily basis, but were not mentioned as frequently by my informants when they were asked to recount their daily routine include feeding the animals, taking the animals to pasture, watching children, cleaning the animals, washing dishes and cleaning the house. I would argue that these tasks were not mentioned by my participants as frequently because they are tasks that need to be done every day but they are not tasks that all women do on a daily basis. In most households I visited, cleaning, feeding and supervising pasturing animals is usually the responsibility of the youngest or oldest household members. For instance, in my host family, it was the youngest son’s job to take the goats to graze in the pasture and it was Mum’s job to clean the goat shed. Therefore, only the youngest and oldest women I interviewed reported these tasks as important parts of their day. Similarly, washing dishes and cleaning the house were responsibilities that fell to the girls and elderly women. The other tasks that were infrequently mentioned by my informants include cutting firewood, watering plants,

cutting rice, doing laundry, digging, milking the cow, taking husband his lunch, knitting, making wine, and cutting vegetables. Not everyone reported these tasks as part of their daily routine because they are not tasks that are performed in every household or they are tasks that do not need to be done every day. Similarly, most of my participants did not discuss paid work as part of their daily routine. This is because only five of my informants were engaged in some type of paid work.

Childcare was not as frequently mentioned as a major daily task probably because children in Dhidopur do not require a lot of adult attention once they get past their toddler years. Once they can walk around on their own, young children usually spend most of their time in the company of older siblings or cousins who take care of them and play with them while their mothers are busy with farm work. Relatives and neighbours cooperate with each other to care for children. In Dhidopur, children can go roaming from house to house, seemingly unsupervised by their parents, but watched by everyone.

Age and Work:

Young children usually spend the day playing with siblings, neighbours and relatives. Older children are expected to help out with the farm work and childcare. At present, almost all the children in Dhidopur go to school for some portion of the day. This is a recent development. Several mothers of school-age children I interviewed did not go to school when they were children. It is also common for children to go to a tutor after school for extra study time. Children work on their parents' farm once they get home from school or tuition. From about age 7 or 8 onwards, children are given a variety of responsibilities that are slightly less arduous than the farm work done by adults. I saw children helping their families by removing the kernels from corn cobs, husking corn, washing dishes, hanging laundry, sweeping the house, preparing food, piling the grass cut for fodder, putting the grass in the basket, stacking corn stalks, feeding the animals, taking the animals out to pasture, picking vegetables, bundling rice seedlings and bringing them to the women planting rice.

In general, children do not do work that is dangerous or requires heavy lifting. For instance, children do not handle the cows, oxen or ploughs because the animals are quite powerful. Children may carry heavy loads of corn, but they do not carry the same weight as an adult. The duty of cutting grass usually falls to the oldest children in the family because of the risk of getting cut by the sharp blade on the scythe-like knife used for this task. Children also do not plant rice because this work is very physically tiring.

Teenage girls and young unmarried women are capable of doing the work of an adult, but since they are often still in school, they are absent for a portion of the day. Although they do not work full-time on their parents' farms, young unmarried women do a big portion of the farm work. Since they are young and strong, they can carry heavy loads of corn from the field to the house or from home to the mill or market. Young women often carry heavy loads of corn husks, water jugs, or vegetables as well. Young women also perform the most physically exhausting tasks that require a lot of stamina, such as hoeing the fields, clearing the fields, cutting grass and planting rice.

Marriage does not change the types of farm tasks women perform very much. However, marriage does change the context in which a young woman works quite a bit because she moves into her husbands' parents' house. Young women also usually stop going to school after they marry to become full-time farm workers, wives and mothers. When conducting life history interviews with older women, I asked how their work changed once they got married. Most of the women said that the work they performed did not change. However, some women said that they had more cooking to do than before marriage.

Whether a woman finds married life to be easier or more difficult seems to depend on her relationship with her new in-laws and their economic situation. Several women describe this transition as difficult because their new in-laws were not easy to get along with. They described their new in-laws as "bossy" and the young wives were expected to do more work than they did in their parents' homes. One interviewee told me that she initially found marriage difficult because she felt so sad to leave her parents. In contrast, some women told me they had less work to do once they married because they married into families with better farmland. For instance,

one woman said she had less work to do because she did not have to carry water so far every day. Her husband's family lived close to the water tap. Another woman said that she moved to Dhidopur to get married from a village in the hills. She was relieved to move in with her in-laws because she did not have to work hard maintaining and building terraces, like she did as a girl in her natal village. Finally, one woman found living with her in-laws easier because she did not get along with her "bossy" step-mother and, as a result, she did not have to work as hard as when she lived in her natal home.

Although the women I talked to said that their work did not change very much once they got married, they generally agreed that having children increased the amount of work they had to do. Thulimaya Moktan described the difficulty of having to work and take care of small children at the same time when she told me,

When I had my children, I still had to do all the same things [on the farm]. I still had to work hard while I was pregnant and once my babies were born; there was no change in the things I had to do. I had to work and also carry the children... they [the children] would go to sleep and I would work. My mother and father and sisters lived close by and they would help me look after them. No one in my husband's house helped me with my children.

Thulimaya Moktan's description of this time in her life was a common one. Most women said that motherhood was difficult because they had to look after their children in addition to performing all the farm tasks that they did before having children. They also said that having children increased the amount of laundry that they had to wash because they had to wash the children's clothes as well as their own. When I asked women how they cared for their children while performing farm work, most said that they would leave the children with either their own mother or their mother-in-law. A few women said that they would leave the children alone and work while the children slept in the house. Most participants complained that their in-laws did not help them with the children, even though their in-laws lived in the same house. Dhidopur women seem to rely on their own parents to help them with childcare, especially if their own parents live close by.

Even though most women described motherhood as difficult, not all women chose to focus on the difficulty of motherhood when I asked about this time in their life. 51-year-old

Sunita Moktan had a slightly different response to my question about how her work changed when she became a mother. She said, “Well, small children are a lot of work. However, now my children are older. Now my work feels easier than ever! They help me a lot.” Sunita Moktan is the mother of seven. Her youngest three children still live with her and are teenagers. I suspect that Sunita Moktan’s more positive description of motherhood may be due to the fact that she and her husband moved out of her in-laws’ house before she had children. She did not experience the strain of living with and working for her in-laws, while raising small children. Sunita Moktan also received support from her family. She told me that she would leave her children with her mother whenever she needed to do farm work. In this response, she acknowledges that children initially cause more work, but quickly grow into little farm helpers. Therefore, as children grow and their parents age, the children perform the more arduous farm tasks and their parents gradually decrease their workload.

Elderly people do not do the more arduous farm work; however, they are far from being inactive. I was impressed by the amount of work that Mum did during the day. Despite being 70 years old, she still managed to clean the house, weed the garden, water the plants, clean the goat shed, feed the chickens, take care of babies, pick vegetables, prepare vegetables for cooking, carry firewood, take the kernels off the corn cobs and husk corn. However, when I asked her about the type of work she does, she told me “I’m resting now because I’m old.” When I asked what sort of tasks she does during a typical day, she replied “Nothing....sometimes I get vegetables, weed and water the garden... Sometimes I feed the animals grass and watch my little [great] granddaughters.” I then asked her if she was satisfied with the work she does and she said “Yes, I’m satisfied [nods head]. I want to work, although I’m too old to work hard. Now, I just sleep during the day.” Similarly, Shanti Rumba, a 67 year old participant, told me “I can’t work anymore. I can’t do any work because my joints cause me so much pain.” She then explained that her daughter-in-law and husband do all the farm work. Despite the fact that Shanti Rumba told me that she does not work anymore, I also witnessed her performing many farm tasks over the course of my fieldwork. Like Mum, she did more farm work than she reported to me in the interview.

Generally, as women in Dhidopur age, they continue to work on the farm, but enter into a type of “retirement” where they do not work as hard as they once did. However, not all women are able to “retire”. Traditionally, a Dhidopur woman can expect that one of her sons will live with her and her husband on the farm all his life and inherit the land when she and her husband die. If a woman has no sons or her sons choose not to stay in their natal home, as the woman ages, this can become a problem. Thulimaya Moktan experienced this predicament. Her grown children had all moved away and she lived alone with her husband on their farm. Now, at age 67, she shoulders the responsibility of performing all the daily farm tasks unaided by younger family members. She expressed the difficulty of her situation when I asked her if she found her work satisfying: “I have to do all the work. There’s nothing to like or dislike about it. Nobody helps me and I have to do it, so I have to be satisfied... Well, sometimes my husband helps, but we’re getting old. He does farm work when I’m sick.” Later on in the interview, when I asked her about how work has changed from when she was young until now, she told me that the type of work she does has not changed, but now that she is older, the work is getting harder. This is in contrast to the other elderly participants who claimed that they no longer worked, worked less, or “just rest” now that they are older.

Gender and Work:

The farm households in Dhidopur cannot produce everything that a family needs or wants. Most families in Dhidopur had at least one member who was earning money through wage work. Most of the time, the family wage worker was male. This greatly affects the gendered division of labour. Furthermore, there were certain farm tasks that fell to men alone and there were certain farm tasks that were considered “women’s work”. A farm requires the labour of both men and women to keep it operating effectively. In this way, gendered work expectations on the farm are complementary to each other. However, the division of labour on the farm was in no way equal, since women devoted far more time to farm tasks than men.

In her discussion over whether complementary gender roles amongst the Tamang are symmetrical or hierarchical, March argues that amongst the Tamang in her field site gender roles are symmetrical, since men and women both contribute and gain as much as the other when it

comes to field labour (2002: 139). In the case of the Tamang from Dhidopur, I would have to argue that gender roles are more hierarchical than what March reports from her research site. While both men and women work hard, Dhidopur women do more work than men, have less leisure time and earn less money. This difference between March's findings and my own can partially be explained by the difference in the reliance on wage labour. March describes the village in which she did her research as self-sufficient. Wage labour was mostly performed by the younger household members, regardless of gender (2002: 135-6). In Dhidopur, wage labour was done mostly by mature men, and families in my field site were reliant on these wages to provide for their needs. The men's absence during the day left the women in charge of performing the majority of the farm work. Women did not have equal access to paid jobs in Dhidopur, as most people believed that paid work was the domain of men.

While conducting interviews, I asked women about the ways in which the members of their family earn money and about the work that their husbands, brothers or fathers do. Given that most wage workers were men, a common theme that came up during the interviews was the various differences between men and women's work. Many of the women I interviewed said that the difference between men's work and women's work was that men work "outside" and women work "inside the home" or "around the house". By this, they meant that men work off the farm in paid jobs, while women work at home on the farm. The male wage workers from Dhidopur had a variety of positions. The two paying jobs that seemed the most common were driving (trucks, buses and auto-rickshaws) and carpentry or building. The other occupations that were reported to me included: teacher, water tap maintenance, domestic servant, artist, carpet factory worker, shopkeeper, soldier, policeman, guide, election committee office staff and accountant. Some men engaged in occasional income earning activities, but relied mainly on selling surpluses from the farm as their main source of income. These part-time activities included: fishing, construction work and shaman services. Three of my older interviewees told me that their husbands were too old to work. Lastly, two of my participants stated that their husbands did not have paid work and were searching for employment. Five interviewees reported that their son or brother does not reside with them because he works elsewhere, but sends money home to support the family. Despite the variety of positions Dhidopur men occupy in the wage economy, female participants also classified their employed male kin as "farmers"

because they owned the land, lived on the farm and performed farm tasks when they were not working in their paid jobs.

When I asked about the types of farm work that men did, the majority of the responses I received mentioned that it is the man's job to do the ploughing and digging. 15-year-old Ganga Lama's response was the typical one I heard "Men do the ploughing and digging to build the walls around the field. Women dig around the corn roots and plant rice." I only observed men ploughing and building the perimeter walls during my stay in Dhidopur. Both of these tasks require a great degree of upper body strength. Dhidopur farmers use an oxen team to plough their fields. In order to control such powerful animals and steer the plough behind them, the driver has to be quite strong. Similarly, the "digging" that women referred to in their interviews meant building up the walls that surround the rice paddies. Before the rice is planted, it is necessary to dig all along the borders of the field to build up the perimeter in order to keep the water in the fields once they are flooded. The work of digging with a specialized shovel around the field perimeter was exhausting and requires a strong pair of arms. It took Kaka several days to dig the perimeter walls of his rice field. Sapana Pakhrin, age 17, explained the reason there was a difference between men and women's work this way: "Men are energetic and women are not so much like that... Men can do the ploughing and digging. Women can't do that work." This belief that men could do more physically difficult work than women was common amongst Dhidopur residents and it was the explanation I was given for the way work was divided between the genders.

Tamang women are by no means physically weak. I saw women carrying very heavy loads of corn to Dhidopur market, standing in a bent over position planting rice for several hours at a time, and hoeing whole fields by hand. In fact, hoeing and digging around the corn roots is probably as much work as building the walls around the rice fields. In other places in Nepal, women and girls also help to maintain the terraces. Shanti Rumba told me during her interview that her natal village was located on a mountain and that, as a girl, she used to help dig to build the terraces. It seems that the classification of digging as men's work is a local phenomenon. I was also told that in the Eastern districts of Nepal, women do the ploughing, so although these "male" tasks require a lot of strength, women are capable of performing them. However, women

in Dhidopur are content with leaving these tasks to their male kin. None of the female participants wanted to do the ploughing and digging themselves. In a discussion between Phulmaya, Rita Bahini, Abisha Bahini and myself, I asked about what people in their village would think if a woman performed male farm tasks, like ploughing. They agreed that people in their village would disapprove of such behaviour and gossip about a woman that ploughed her own field. Although the classification of digging and ploughing as men's work is a local phenomenon and the villagers are aware that women are physically capable of performing these tasks, the behavioural boundary is quite firm. It would be considered inappropriate for a woman to engage in these activities.

When I asked about the differences between men and women's work, 17-year-old Rojina Pakhrin told me "Men's work and women's work is very different because men can do all things, the hard work. But women can't do all the things the men can." Rojina Pakhrin, like her sister, Sapana Pakhrin, quoted above, was in a position to be particularly aware of the difficulty of men's farm work. Their father had passed away, they had no brothers and the only man in their household was their elderly grandfather. After Rojina Pakhrin's interview, her mother chatted with Phulmaya for a little while about the difficulty of not having a man around to do farm work. She said to Phulmaya, "There is no man here to plough our fields. If the neighbour won't do it for us, I'll have to do it myself!" I initially took this remark literally and thought it was a particularly interesting contradiction to what I was being told by everyone else: women do not plough. In a later discussion with Phulmaya about the gendered division of farm labour, she clarified Rojina Pakhrin's mother's remark: it was made to emphasize her anxiety over finding someone to plough her fields. She would not actually plough the field herself.

Ploughing and digging are not the only tasks that Dhidopur men perform on their farms. The women I interviewed reported that their male kin also fed animals, took the animals to pasture, cut fodder in the jungle, cut grass, and prepare meals. There are many farm tasks that are done by both men and women. I observed men chopping firewood, picking fruits from the trees, picking corn, cutting down corn stalks, chopping cornstalks up for animal fodder, planting millet, hoeing the fields, caring for the animals, butchering animals, and cooking. Men typically do not do laundry, make wine, wash the dishes, sweep the house or look after small babies. I

rarely, if ever, saw men performing these tasks. I only once saw a man doing laundry, and it was just a pair of his own shorts. He was not doing the family's laundry. Women also do the majority of the meal preparation, processing of the corn, fetching water and cutting grass. A man may engage in these activities more or less often depending on the size of his household. For example, because Thulimaya Moktan's household consists of just her and her husband, I observed him cutting grass. He regularly cuts grass because there is no one else to do it, although he complains that he dislikes performing this task. Sometimes individual men would cook because they enjoy it. For instance, Kaki usually prepared all the meals in their household, but on the 15th of Shrawan, it is customary to make rice pudding and Kaka made the rice pudding because he likes to do it. When I asked Phulmaya, Abisha Bahini and Rita Bahini about what people in their village think about men who do women's work, they told me that nobody would comment on it. Rita Bahini told me "If they would say something about him, they would say 'Look! He is a very hard worker!' If he's planting rice or cutting grass." While it is thought unfitting for women to perform men's tasks, men who engage in women's work would not be negatively criticized. This indicates women's work roles are more rigidly defined than men's work roles.

As children, boys and girls do most of the same farm tasks. However, some participants mentioned that their brothers do not have to work as hard as they do on the farm. Boys with older sisters or several sisters had significantly more leisure time than anyone else in Dhidopur. Bhai was one such fortunate boy. With three older sisters still living at home, his only regular responsibility was taking the goats to pasture. He would work only during busy periods when the whole family was needed. For example, he would help harvest the corn, clear the corn fields, carrying produce to the marketplace, and take the kernels off the corn cobs. He would also sometimes help Kaka with his work. For instance, when it was time to plough the former corn field, I observed Kaka teaching Bhai how to drive the oxen team. However, his older sisters would do all the daily farm tasks, such as carrying water and cutting grass, as well as the more physically tiring tasks like planting rice and hoeing the fields. This was also the case in several other households. Many young women reported that the family member who worked the least was their brother. Others said that their brothers do not do much farm work.

This gender difference in the amount of work that Dhidopur villagers perform also exists amongst adults. I observed that men seemed to have more leisure time than women. When they were not away at their paid jobs or performing farm tasks, small groups of men would get together and sit on the porch outside their homes to chat or play cards. This difference in leisure time for men and women did not go unnoticed by my research participants. Whenever I asked the younger interviewees which member of their household spent the most time working, they agreed that their mothers worked the most.

Furthermore, some married women complained about the difference in the amount of work that men and women do during the interviews I conducted. Women with husbands that did not have steady paid work were more likely to focus on the difference in the amount of work men and women do when I asked about differences between men and women's farm tasks. For instance, 25-year-old Laxmi Jimba's husband was unemployed and trying to go abroad to Bahrain in order to find paid work. When I asked her about the difference in the work that men and women do, she said, "Women do the work around the house and when they are washing clothes and washing dishes, the men are going to visit other places. That's the difference. They [the men] don't do like that work. They don't help the women when they are washing laundry or washing dishes." With three young children, Laxmi Jimba probably had a lot of laundry to do. In this response, her description of the differences between men and women's work expresses a bit of her own frustration. She is frustrated by having a lot of work to do and the fact that her husband does not contribute because he prefers to spend his time socializing (i.e. "visiting other places"). Similarly, Chamelimaya Jimba, age 24, told me that in her household, she worked the most. As the only woman in her household, she was well aware of the disparity between men and women's leisure time: "It's very different. I have to do all work, like the kitchen work and around the house. Also [I do] the farm work. My husband, he does some [farm work] then goes to Dhidopur market, visiting other places, during the daytime." When I asked her what he was doing at Dhidopur market, she told me he was just going there to socialize with his friends and that he usually went there after the morning meal. Like Laxmi Jimba, she was similarly unimpressed by the way her husband spent his time socializing while she had so much work to do on their farm.

A woman, who lives in a household without any other female members, finds herself the position of running the family's farm all by herself. To these women, it is very obvious how disproportionate the allocation of farm tasks is between the genders. Although Shanti Sintan, age 37, had an employed husband, like Chamelimaya Jimba, she is the only woman in her household. She lives with her husband and three teenage sons. Although her husband helps her by cooking the meals, she still felt dissatisfied with the gendered division of labour: "I'm satisfied [with doing farm work] but I have to do all the work. Nobody helps me; I have no daughters, only sons. Sometimes it is boring to do it alone. I must work even if I don't feel like it because there is no one to help me." She expresses dissatisfaction, not with the work she has to do, but with not having anyone to help her do it. With three teenage sons, her household has enough labourers to work their small farm. However, she explains the reason that she does not have anyone to help her as being because she has "no daughters, only sons." Presumably, if she did have daughters, she would expect those daughters to help her with the daily farm tasks.

In contrast, the women who lived in households with plenty of other female relatives to do the farm work were not so upset about the fact that men had less farm responsibilities and more leisure time. My host family was one such household, with Mum, Kaki and three unmarried daughters, there was plenty of women to do the daily farm tasks. When I asked Rita Bahini about why Bhai did not have to do farm work, she chuckled and said, "Oh, because he's got so many older sisters! Mother and Father never made him do any work because they had us to do it." Her tone was warm and loving when talking about her brother not having to work as hard as her. I never noticed her or her sisters complaining that their brother did not have to work as hard as they did.

Work Satisfaction and the Importance of Working Hard:

I was interested in investigating how Tamang women felt about the work they did, so I asked women whether they enjoyed their work and what aspects they liked and disliked the most. My original purpose in asking these questions was to discern if a relationship between work satisfaction and the desire to leave Dhidopur to seek paid employment existed. I will discuss those findings in the following chapters. However, I found that the women's responses provided

me with some important insights regarding farming women's work ethics. In this section, I will address the participants' attitudes towards the work they do and the normative work ethics of Dhidopur farmers.

The overwhelming majority of participants said that they were quite satisfied with doing farm work. Approximately a quarter of the women I interviewed said that they enjoyed all the farm tasks that they did. Although they almost unanimously agreed that they were happy doing farm work, several women followed this initial statement by saying that they "have to do it." Therefore, I would argue that instead of saying that Tamang farm women are overjoyed by their work, it would be more accurate to say that they are resigned to be satisfied with work that they believe they must do. Some women made comments about not being educated enough to do anything but farm work and others told me that farm work was hard work.

However, amongst the farmers in Dhidopur, doing hard work is admirable. For example, Rita Bahini and Phulmaya told me that men who are willing to do women's farm work are considered very hard workers. Working hard helps Dhidopur residents to earn respect in the eyes of their families and neighbours. In fact, my strong work ethic helped me to develop rapport with the residents of Dhidopur. Initially, my host family did not want me to help with farm tasks because they were concerned for my safety and comfort. However, after I continually insisted on participating, I soon gained a reputation for being a hard worker. Kaka and Kaki made several comments about how I was always working because when I was not doing farm work with the family or conducting interviews, I was writing my observations in my notebook. There were a few instances where we had visitors to the house and one of the first things they would proudly tell the visitors who expressed interest in me was that I was a "hard worker, just like another daughter."

While working hard is considered a quality to admire in others and feel self-esteem about in oneself, being lazy is socially unacceptable. Women would gossip about people they considered to be lazy. For instance, Kaki pointed out to me a few times that she thought Phulmaya was lazy. Phulmaya's parents lived in Hetauda and she was unaccustomed to doing farm work. She attempted to avoid it if it were possible and told me she preferred working in her

father's shop to doing farm work because it is hot outside and the sun makes her skin dark. In Nepal, people believe that having fair skin is beautiful. This attitude earned her several eye rolls and snide comments from Kaki, Kaka and her cousin sisters. However, since she was not Kaka and Kaki's daughter, they did not insist that she work or reprimand her if she conveniently disappeared while the rest of the family worked outside. Rita Bahini, Abisha Bahini and Rupa Bahini rarely complained about the work they had to do. I observed only two instances where they complained. Once was after a long day of rice planting. They were complaining about how sore their muscles were from being bent over all day. However, these complaints were after the fact and they did not complain during the actual rice planting or about having to work hard. The other instance was more demonstrative. One morning Kaka, Kaki, Phulmaya, Rupa Bahini and Kaki's sister's 15-year-old daughter, Jamuna Gole, went to the corn field. That morning we were hoeing up the soil to remove the weeds and dig up the roots of the dead corn plants so that they could replant the field. Rupa Bahini was hoeing and she complained because it was really hard work. Kaka shouted at her to quit her complaining. It was surprising to me, since I had never before heard Kaka speak harshly to anyone. Laziness and complaining were not tolerated in his family.

Complaining about work may not be acceptable in Dhidopur, but most of the women I talked to had reasons for preferring certain tasks over others. The most disliked tasks included cooking, cutting fodder in the jungle, cutting grass, and fetching water. The women that said they did not like cooking mainly disliked this task because it is a hot and smoky environment in the kitchen. In the summer season, the additional heat and poor air quality from the kitchen fire, makes cooking unpleasant. However, some women said they preferred cooking to cutting grass or cutting fodder in the jungle because they were scared of the wild animals, especially snakes, or wished to avoid biting insects that they might encounter. The women who said they dislike fetching water disliked the task because the water is heavy and it is a lot of work to carry. A few women said that they dislike chopping firewood and cleaning the animals. The one woman who said she did not like chopping firewood told me it was because it was tiring for her. The women who dislike cleaning the animals said they dislike it because it was a dirty, smelly job.

The tasks that women reported liking the most included studying, cooking, cutting grass, cutting fodder in the jungle and knitting. Most of the girls who went to school said they enjoyed studying much more than working on the farm. Most of the young women I talked to were grateful for the opportunity to attend school. They found studying enjoyable and easy compared to the hard physical labour of most farm tasks. Some women said they liked cutting grass or going to the jungle because they preferred being outdoors to being in a smoky kitchen and because they liked the time they got to spend in the company of a friend or sister. The women who enjoyed cooking said they appreciated tasty food and liked making food for their families. One woman said that she enjoyed knitting and she liked to do it as a hobby in addition to doing it to produce clothes. Most women in Dhidopur do not knit or make their own clothes.

Despite disliking certain tasks, most women said that they generally enjoyed doing farm work. Dissatisfaction with farm work was not a result of disliking the tasks that women perform on the farm. Instead, women who expressed dissatisfaction with their work were unhappy for one of three reasons: their household lacked sufficient female labour power, they felt they had a lack of other work opportunities, or their family was struggling financially. When women lived in households that lacked sufficient female labour power, they felt overburdened with farm tasks. This was evident in the quotations made by Shanti Sintan and Chamelimaya Jimba in the previous section. In addition to feeling overburdened with doing all the farm work on their own, women living in households with no other female relatives were dissatisfied because they felt lonely or bored. Shanti Sintan expressed this when she said: “Nobody helps me, I have no daughters, only sons. Sometimes it is boring to do it alone.” Women often perform certain farm tasks together, such as cutting grass or picking corn. Women who live in households without other female relatives feel isolated while they are working. Although she was not the only female in her family, Dhanmaya Moktan, age 40, was alone at home during the day when her children were at school and this made her feel lonely: “I don’t like it when there is nobody here to help me. When nobody helps, I’m sad, I feel bored all by myself... my children help me when they are at home. When they help me around the house or in the field, then I feel happy about working.” Working with other family members, especially with female relatives, can make even the most difficult farm work more enjoyable. It is, therefore, understandable that the most

common complaint that women made about doing farm work was that they dislike having to do it all alone.

A few women said that they did farm work because they had to. 40-year-old Sukumaya Sintan highlights this lack of choice when I asked her if she enjoyed her work. Her response was: “I have no education, so I don’t have a job. I have to do all the [farm] work.” The older women in Dhidopur were self-conscious about the fact that they had not received a formal education. It was common in casual conversation for women to say “I am uneducated”. They were well aware that education provides work opportunities and since they did not receive an education, older women saw paid work as beyond their reach. A couple of women were dissatisfied with this lack of choice because they did not want to do farm work. For example, when I asked Laxmi Jimba if she enjoys her work, she said: “No, but I have to be happy with this work... I can’t say ‘I like doing this’ or ‘I don’t want to do that’. I have to do it all, I don’t have a choice.” This quotation reflects Laxmi Jimba’s resignation to perform work that she states she must do, despite the fact that she does not enjoy it. Similarly, 25-year-old Kalpana Thokar told me: “If I’m doing a task I like, then I feel happy. If I’m doing something I don’t like, then I feel bad...I don’t want to do that [farm] work, but I have to do it. How can it be satisfying? I have to do it all.” Kalpana Thokar states that there are some tasks that she likes, while others she does not like. However, what she finds dissatisfying about her work situation is that she has no other option, but to do it. When she asks me, “How can this be satisfying?” she is saying that she feels it is not satisfying having to do tasks that you do not want to do.

Sukumaya Sintan, Laxmi Jimba and Kalpana Thokar are exceptions in that they frankly stated that they were displeased by their lack of work opportunities. However, they may represent the feelings of other women who were less forthcoming with stating their dissatisfaction over the lack of control they had over their work options. Evidence for this was that several women said that they were satisfied with doing farm work, but then said “I have to do it.” It is possible that more women were dissatisfied over this lack of choice, but were hesitant to frankly state these feelings because they did not want to appear lazy. Since a strong work ethic is admired in Dhidopur, and expressing dissatisfaction with farm work is socially unacceptable, women may be hesitant to say that they are not satisfied with their work. The

women I interviewed generally claimed to be satisfied with their work, but do not have other opportunities available to them and experience social pressure to refrain from complaining, so it is difficult to definitively say whether women are as satisfied with farm work as they say they are.

As is the case in any household, lack of resources can be a major cause of family stress and unhappiness. Most households in Dhidipur had enough land or had a family member with a sufficient income to provide for all the household members. However, there were a few households that were struggling economically. Laxmi Jimba, Kalpana Thokar and Dhanmaya Moktan all mentioned during their interviews that their households were struggling economically. As I mentioned above, Laxmi Jimba and Kalpana Thokar stated they were dissatisfied with their lack of work options. Perhaps coming from households that were struggling economically made them more aware of their lack of work opportunities. However, Dhanmaya Moktan was the only one to mention her financial situation when I asked her whether she enjoyed her work. Her farm produced enough food for them to eat, but they did not produce a significant surplus that they could sell. Also, her husband was the only family member that earned money and he was only able to find occasional carpentry work. They were not starving, but they had difficulty meeting their needs with such a limited access to cash. Dhanmaya Moktan's response to my question about whether she enjoyed her work relays her dissatisfaction with their economic situation, "No, I don't like it. I can't get my children to study and I'm worried about feeding them. I have to worry about having enough good food for everyone." She then told me she likes doing farm work as long as her children help her do it and that she enjoys doing less physically demanding tasks the most. As I mentioned previously, Dhanmaya Moktan's other major complaint about farm work was that she felt lonely working alone during the day while her children attended school. Dhanmaya Moktan had a couple sources of displeasure with farm work, but the fact that it does not meet the needs of her family is definitely a major reason she does not find it satisfying.

Families that were able to meet their household needs were quite satisfied, even though they did not have the luxuries that many city dwellers enjoyed. Several people asked me repeatedly whether I preferred living in Hetauda or in Dhidipur. They were always pleased

when I assured them I preferred Dhidopur and they often responded by saying “simple living, great thinking!” By this they meant that living a simple lifestyle can be more satisfying than having an extravagant lifestyle because it allows for further development of one’s character and philosophical capacity. This is consistent with the Buddhist belief in lack of attachment to the material world. Rita Bahini also once said to me that she loved living on the farm and that she did not care they did not have an extravagant lifestyle because she found her family very satisfying. She told me, “We are not rich in things, but we are rich in love.” Dhidopur farmers are not saintly in their lack of desire for material goods; in fact, they do have material needs and wants. However, because they are peasants of an ethnic minority and lower caste, they are well aware of that urban dwelling, Hindu Nepali people look down on them as “backwards”. Their assertions that they have “great thinking” or that they are “rich in love” are self-affirming statements in face of the accusation of being “backwards”. They say these things partially to defend themselves and focus on the aspects of their lifestyle that they appreciate despite how outsiders may evaluate them. They found it refreshing to hear me say how much I liked their village and that I preferred Dhidopur to Hetauda.

Although it was not a major source of unhappiness, there was a fourth reason for dissatisfaction with farm work. A common complaint amongst the older participants was that farm work was getting harder or was too difficult for them to do in their old age. A couple of the older participants stated that they desired to do farm work, but their health no longer permitted them to. Maintaining their farm increasingly becomes a burden to older people who are unable to live with their grown children. This was the case with Thulimaya Moktan, whom I discussed in the previous section. However, all the older participants, regardless of the difficulties they were experiencing with doing farm work in their old age, said that they were satisfied with having lived their lives on their farms.

Conclusion:

Tamang farming women from Dhidopur work hard their whole lives, from girlhood to old age. They are very productive, since their farming efforts provide their families with almost all of their basic food needs. The surpluses produced from their farming efforts pay for a large

portion of the other products and services their families require, such as salt, oil, spices, kitchen utensils, soap, cloth, tailor fees, school supplies, and so on. Furthermore, the work they do to maintain their households and care for family members, provides for the needs of the village's current and future paid workforce. These productive women are fuelled by a strong work ethic. They are expected to work hard, they feel satisfaction from working hard and would experience social stigma if they did not work hard.

As a result of their strong work ethic, Tamang farming women in Dhidopur had few complaints about their work. The complaints they did have were that they needed more help with their work, they did not have other employment opportunities, as women age they have more difficulty performing farm tasks, and farming work alone does not always meet their families' financial needs. Most of these problems that farming women in Dhidopur experience result from an unequal gendered division of labour which has been exacerbated by Dhidopur households' increased dependence on the wage labour of mature men as the village has become more integrated into the market economy. My research findings indicate that, in Dhidopur, gender relations are more hierarchical than the symmetrical gender relations reported by March between Tamang women and men of her field site (2002: 139). Interestingly, while this unequal division of labour between the genders directly or indirectly caused problems that the farming women complained about, disliking specific farm tasks or feeling generally dissatisfied with farm work were not reasons Tamang women stated for wanting to leave Dhidopur to work elsewhere. While this chapter mainly explored women's unpaid farm work, in the next chapter, I outline the ways that Tamang women from Dhidopur earn money and the reasons they stated for wanting to migrate in search of paid work.

CHAPTER FIVE – DHIDOPUR WOMEN’S PAID WORK AND MIGRATION ASPIRATIONS

Introduction:

Tamang women from Dhidopur face many challenges in obtaining paid work. Gender ideologies which privilege men’s access to paid employment, a general lack of paid employment opportunities in rural areas, as well as the multitude of educational, childcare, household and farming responsibilities women have discourage them from seeking paid employment. Women in Nepal face similar employment options to those generally available to women in the global south. The work they have access to is often precarious in that there is a lack job security and jobs are poorly or infrequently paid, devalued or unskilled, and unregulated (Sassen 2000: 505; Kabeer 2004: 14-15). Despite these challenges, many of the young women I interviewed aspired to obtain paid employment and were willing to leave their village in hopes of finding work.

In this chapter, I discuss the paid work performed by Tamang women from Dhidopur. I interviewed both women who live in Dhidopur and currently had paid employment, as well as women from Dhidopur who left to work elsewhere and subsequently returned. There were very few women who performed paid work either in Dhidopur or away from home. The majority of participants did not engage in paid work, but many wished they could. This chapter explores the employment and migration aspirations of these participants in order to answer the following questions: Why do Tamang women wish to leave Dhidopur in search of paid work? Where do they want to go and what types of paid work to they hope to perform? Since not all of the participants wanted to leave their village to find paid work, I also inquired about the reasons why these participants wanted to stay in Dhidopur.

While conducting semi-structured and life history interviews, I found that factors such as age, life stage and education affect the participants’ desire to migrate in search of paid work. The research findings contained within this chapter demonstrate that development and anti-trafficking discourses which depict rural Tamang women as economically desperate, uneducated,

young, and naïve to the risks of labour migration are stereotypes which certainly do not accurately describe the women who participated in this research project.

Women and Paid Work:

Tamang women in Dhidopur have several methods of earning money; however, the vast majority of the research participants did not have a typical full-time paying job. For most women, their main way of accessing cash was through an employed male relative. The ways in which women earned money through their own efforts included selling surplus agricultural products at the market, performing occasional day-labour on someone else's farm and selling homemade alcohol, called *raksi*.

There were a few exceptions amongst my research participants. Some women earned money by helping to run family businesses. For example, Shanti Syangbo, age 20, spent her days making food and selling it in the hotel her husband's parents owned. She did not earn a salary, but her cooking contributed to the operation of the family business. Similarly, Sukumaya Gole, age 24, worked in a cosmetics shop that she owned with her husband. She supervises the shop, assists customers and sells the products to the customers. She and her husband shared the profits that they make from the shop. Shanti Syangbo and Sukumaya Gole did not have typical wage work because they were shareholders in their family businesses and were not paid a salary or an hourly wage.

There were a few other women who had more typical paying jobs, but only one had a full-time position. Rita Bahini had a part-time teaching job. She taught an adult women's literacy class in the afternoons. Women who wanted to learn how to read and write Nepali would gather on Dhanmaya Moktan's porch during the hottest part of the day when most people took a break from farming activities and Rita Bahini would give a lesson. Then, she would supervise the women as they practiced what they learned by doing exercises from their text books. For this, she earned a salary that she used to supplement her family's income. Similarly, Phulmaya Lama, had a short-term job as my research assistant and translator. While she worked for me, I paid her a monthly salary as well as covered her transportation costs from Hetauda to

Dhidipur. However, once I was no longer doing research in Nepal, she went back to living in Hetauda with her parents, where she helped to run her father's shop. She contributed by cooking, doing laundry and assisting customers. When she worked in her father's shop she was not paid a salary or by the hour, similar to Shanti Syangbo and Sukumaya Gole.

The one young woman who had a full-time paying job was 23-year-old Pramila Rumba. When I interviewed her, she was visiting her mother in Dhidipur, but normally she lives in a remote village where she works as a teacher, teaching the village children who are under 15 years old. Pramila Rumba was also exceptional in that her income was used to support her family and was not merely supplemental. She was the only woman I interviewed who was the primary wage earner in her family.

The types of paid work that were available to my research participants differed greatly from the types of work available to the Tamang women from March's (2002) or Fricke et al.'s (1993) research sites. March reports that historically, Tamang people, as members of an enslaveable caste, were obligated to provide *corvée* labour to the royal and noble families in Kathmandu in exchange for their usufruct land rights (2002: 62-63, 108). This work often involved portaging heavy loads over very long distances as well as maintaining the royal orchards, flocks and fields (March 2002: 20-21, 62-63, 141). Tamang people also historically sent at least one family member to engage in trade with Tibet in order to obtain salt (March 2002: 141). Their history as porters and traders has earned Tamang people a reputation for their strength, endurance, and mobility. March reports that as a result, the young Tamang people in her research site are most often hired as porters in the trekking industry, as workers for road construction and as soldiers in the Nepali, Indian, Singapore, or British military (2002: 142). Fricke et al. report that young unmarried women engage in wage labour as porters and road construction workers in approximately equal numbers as men (1993: 400). March also states that young Tamang people still engage in long distance trade; however, they no longer trade primarily with Tibet and are more likely to engage in trade with Kathmandu, lowland Nepal and northern India (March 2002: 142). The Tamang people in my field site, however, were not involved in the tourism industry, road construction or the military in significant numbers. They lived in the lower hills region of Nepal and this was not a location that was popular among

trekking tourists. Similarly, there were not many major construction projects being undertaken in the region, so few people were construction workers and only one of my interviewees reported having a relative in the military. Additionally, all of the people from Dhidopur who were employed as construction workers or soldiers were men and my participants considered these occupations to be men's work. Gender ideologies, which classified paid work outside the home as the domain of men, discouraged women in Dhidopur, especially mothers, from obtaining paid work.

The women who had paying jobs were all young women, under twenty five years of age. Shanti Syangbo and Sukumaya Gole were married, but Rita Bahini, Phulmaya Lama and Pramila Rumba were not married. None of the young women who had paying jobs had children. If a Tamang woman is going to work outside the home in a paying job, she will most likely do so before she has children. Both Fricke et al. and March report that amongst the Tamang people they studied, when women engage in wage labour, it is typically done by young women who are old enough to work, but are not yet responsible for their own household (Fricke et al. 1993: 400; March 2002: 141). This likelihood to seek paid employment prior to having children is also seen in other Asian countries. In her study of labour activism amongst Thai women factory workers, Mills states that most of the women factory workers are young and unmarried (2005: 117). Similarly, Stasiulus and Bakan state that in the Philippines, employers prefer unmarried female workers in their late teens and early twenties (2003: 59). While Kabeer warns against stereotyping textile factory workers in Bangladesh as "young and unmarried", she acknowledges that women often leave factory work, at least temporarily, upon marriage or having a child (2004: 17). Since having children has such a large impact on whether a woman will seek paid work or continue to engage in paid work, it is not surprising that all my research participants who had paying jobs were young and did not yet have children.

All of the women with paying jobs had attended school, but Rita Bahini, Phulmaya Lama and Pramila Rumba were particularly well educated in that they had attended college. Phulmaya Lama and Pramila Rumba had even received some education at the Bachelor level. This high level of education amongst the three women with more typical types of wage work is not surprising, since the types of work they were doing (teaching and translating) required a higher

than average level of education. Opportunities to work as a teacher or translator were rarely available to women in Dhidopur. Also, since they required a high level of education, most young Tamang women were excluded from obtaining such work. Most young women stopped going to school before the college level.

Case Studies of Return Migrants:

During my stay, I was only able to find two women who were return migrants in that they had left Dhidopur to work elsewhere, then later returned to live in Dhidopur. These two women were Pramila Rumba and Sukumaya Gole. While conducting interviews with these two return migrants, I asked them why they decided to leave Dhidopur to work elsewhere and who assisted them in leaving Dhidopur. I also inquired about what types of work they did, their work conditions, as well as about the benefits and disadvantages of working away from home.

Pramila Rumba was 23 years old and unmarried at the time of our interview. When I interviewed her, she was in Dhidopur living with her mother for a few weeks while on summer vacation from her teaching job in a remote area. Prior to moving away to work, she had lived in Dhidopur with her mother and younger brother. She has two sisters, both of whom had moved away to marry, and her father had died. With only three people in the household, and no one earning money, her family experienced financial difficulties. About a year before our interview, she was able to obtain a teaching position through a friend of a friend. Pramila Rumba decided to go teach Nepali and English to children in the hill village of Sarikhet, approximately two hours walking distance from Dhidopur. The reasons she decided to leave Dhidopur to work were to help her family financially and to earn prestige. She told me that her mother was very proud of her for having a good paying job. Although being a teacher is quite prestigious, Pramila Rumba told me that she would take another job if she had the opportunity. The salary from her teaching position is not sufficient to meet her family's financial needs. She also does not have job security because she is considered a temporary primary school teacher and she only gets paid every four months. There are other disadvantages to working in Sarikhet. She told me that she regrets that she cannot stay in touch with her family, or continue her studies for her Bachelor degree which she started before she left to teach. She is also unable to stay in contact with her

Buddhist group. She also dislikes walking to Sarikhet because she is afraid to walk so far through the jungle alone. Her brother also recently left home to work in an office and she does not like leaving her mother to stay in their family home all alone. She told me that she would prefer it if she could find a job that is safe and pays well closer to home.

Sukumaya Gole had a very different migration experience from Pramila Rumba. At the time of our interview, Sukumaya Gole was 24 years old. When she was 19 years old, she eloped with her husband and they moved to Kathmandu. There, her husband worked as a tourist guide and she held a variety of jobs to help pay for their expenses and save up money for their future. She said that at the time, her family was quite surprised by her behavior, but did not protest. She hinted that her neighbors found her behavior scandalous and that they gossiped about her. Sukumaya Gole and her husband lived in Kathmandu for approximately three years. When they returned to Dhidopur, they had enough money to buy a shop in Dhidopur market, where she now works selling cosmetics. The reasons she gave me for moving to Kathmandu were that her husband did not have his own house, so they had to share a house with his brother. That house was too crowded for all of them because her husband's brother had a wife and five children. Sukumaya Gole and her husband wanted to make enough money to buy their own house, so they moved to Kathmandu.

Living in Kathmandu was different from what Sukumaya Gole had expected. She had heard that Kathmandu had the best climate, it was the best lifestyle, the work would be good and the salary would be very high. While living in Kathmandu, she came to appreciate the benefits of living in Dhidopur: fewer expenses, no rent and it turns out she prefers the climate in Dhidopur. However, she told me that she does not like doing farm work, so she was happy to escape farm work in favor of working in the city. In Kathmandu, she and her husband rented a room. In order to afford that room, they both had to work. Sukumaya Gole worked for a year and a half making necklaces (called *pote*). She worked with approximately fifteen other women and earned 35 NRs per kilogram of necklaces. She liked the work, but her boss did not pay her and the other employees on time. Sukumaya Gole left her necklace-making job to work in a beauty parlor, where she fetched water, boiled water and washed laundry. She worked there for approximately six months before moving on to work in a restaurant. In the restaurant, she

worked in the kitchen sifting rice, waiting tables when the other waiters were on break, and doing the laundry. She did not like working in the restaurant because she had to work seven days a week, the salary was not enough and they did not pay her regularly. Sukumaya Gole told me that her husband helped her to find her restaurant job and the necklace-making job, but a neighbour in Kathmandu helped her find the beauty parlor job.

Sukumaya Gole and her husband benefited financially from working in Kathmandu because they were able to earn and save up enough money that they could purchase their shop in Dhidopur market. They live in the space behind the shop and they now earn money from the shop; however, Sukumaya Gole's husband still also earns money working as a guide. When I asked her if there were any disadvantages to working in Kathmandu, Sukumaya Gole told me that while she was away she missed her family and she worried about the welfare of her parents.

At first, it seems that Sukumaya Gole and Pramila Rumba have very different situations and labour migration stories. However, these two women share some similar experiences which are useful for illuminating what paid work is like for Tamang women in Nepal. First of all, both Sukumaya Gole and Pramila Rumba relied on personal contacts to help them obtain work. A second similarity was that Pramila Rumba and Sukumaya Gole were both motivated to find paid work in order to earn money to support their households. Their paid employment was essential to the financial survival of their respective households and their income was not merely supplementary. Although Sukumaya Gole and Pramila Rumba held very different types of jobs, both experienced underemployment. Sukumaya Gole emphasized in her interview that jobs in Kathmandu did not pay as well as she expected and that it was difficult to cover their expenses even when both her and her husband were working. Without her husband's income, Sukumaya Gole would not have been able to afford to live in Kathmandu off the money she was earning. Similarly, Pramila Rumba told me that she was not earning enough money at her teaching job to support her family in Dhidopur. Another common experience between these two women is that they both reported a lack of job security and infrequent pay. Sukumaya Gole has an average level of education and worked in low-paying, informal jobs, so it is not surprising that she experienced underemployment, job insecurity and problems with being paid regularly. Pramila Rumba, however, is a highly educated government employee. The fact that she is

underemployed, infrequently paid and lacks job security is especially indicative of the difficulties working people, especially working women, face in Nepal. Finally, Sukumaya Gole and Pramila Rumba shared a similar emotional experience because they both told me they had difficulties keeping in touch with their families. They both also disliked working far from home because they missed their families while they were working elsewhere.

Reasons to Find Paid Work:

Despite the difficulties working women face in Nepal, for every young woman in Dhidipur who did have paid employment, there were many more young women who did not have paid employment, but wished that they did. Out of the thirty young Tamang women I interviewed, twelve said that they wanted to leave Dhidipur to find paid work elsewhere. Some of the young women had put more thought into their futures than others, and not all the young women that said they wanted to leave are necessarily going to act on their desires. However, the fact that so many of my participants said they wanted to leave to find work indicates that there is a strong desire to earn money, but not enough employment opportunities for these young women in Dhidipur.

When asked why they wished to leave their village to find paid work, the most common response was that they wished to leave so that they could earn money for their families. 20-year-old Kamala Jimba expressed this desire to help her family and pay for her to further her studies when she said: “If I find a job, it will help my household. It will help me to be able to continue my studies, so I want to get a job. I want to help my family.” Almost all of the young women who wanted to find paid work away from home said that they would send their earnings back to their families. Some of the young women told me that they wanted to earn money for their families to improve their economic status. For instance, Phulmaya said the primary reason she wanted to earn money was to help her family, “I want to go abroad... I’m the eldest [unmarried] daughter. I want to earn money, lots of money to improve my family’s financial status... to make my family happy.” However, only two young women stated that their families were poor and needed the money. The rest said they wanted to earn money because their earnings from their paid jobs would make their families feel more comfortable financially.

A few others spoke of using their earnings to invest in their own or their family's future. For example, Shanti Moktan told me that she was thinking of possibly working in the future once her children are a bit older because she needs to earn money so that she can "...build a future for the children. They need nice clothes, good food to eat and we have to pay for their studies." The cost of education was a concern for several of the young women who said they wanted to earn money. Many of them wanted to earn money so that they could afford to study further. In fact, this was one of the reasons, mentioned by Pramila Rumba for her deciding to go to a remote region to teach.

Rita Bahini also mentioned another benefit to finding paid work outside her village: gaining work experience. She said she wanted to improve her skills by working in Japan. Improving work skills by working abroad seemed like a good strategy to the participants because the competition for paying jobs in Nepal is intense. Furthermore, Tamang women are at a disadvantage when looking for work in Nepal, since potential employers may discriminate against them on the basis of their gender and caste. In my interview with 21-year-old Juna Ghising, she brought up the difficulty of finding work in Nepal and the competition she faces in her own country: "I will probably go to Israel to work in a nursing facility there... In Israel, there are less [nurses], so I want to go there because the salary is very nice there. I don't want to work in another city in Nepal because there are too many nurses here." By this, she meant that because there are more nurses in Nepal than nursing positions, it is difficult to get a job. In this quotation, she also brings up another good reason for travelling abroad that most of my other participants did not address directly. When Juna Ghising says that the salary is good, she expresses her awareness that she can earn more money in another country than she can earn for doing the same job in Nepal. She does not state whether this is because the competition for nursing jobs has driven down the salary of nurses in Nepal or because she will be earning in foreign currency and the conversion of her salary into Nepali rupees will mean she is earning a lot more money.

I was surprised that none of my other participants discussed their reason for wanting to go abroad as a strategy for earning in a currency worth more than the Nepali rupee. Some young

women did make comments that implied they knew they could make more money if they went abroad to work. For example, a few young women said they wanted to work in another country because there were more good jobs there than in Nepal. When I asked them to define what a “good job” was, the main characteristic of a good job was that it had a “nice salary.” However, I cannot state for certain that my participants had a clear understanding of how the money they might earn abroad would convert into Nepali rupees, since they did not explicitly state that they were planning to work abroad in order to take advantage of the disparity between the value of their own currency and the currency of the country in which they would be earning.

Another major reason for wanting to leave Dhidopur was due to a lack of employment opportunities. A couple of women told me that there were no good jobs available in Dhidopur. This was another reason that Pramila Rumba stated for leaving Dhidopur to teach in a remote Nepali village: “I have to earn money, but there is no way to earn money here. So I have to go there [remote village] to earn money...to send back to my mother.” In fact, most of the young women said that they wanted to leave because they felt the opportunities available to them elsewhere were better than in Dhidopur. For example, Kamala Jimba told me, “I would like to go to Kathmandu to earn money. In Kathmandu there are many [job] opportunities!” Several other young women thought that it would be easier to find work in a big city like Kathmandu. Others thought that if they went abroad, the quality of the work that they would be doing was better and that they could enjoy all the amenities that a more developed country has to offer.

There were a few additional reasons which the young women gave me for wanting to leave Dhidopur to find paid work. For instance, Juna Ghising told me that in addition to earning money to send home to her family, she was looking forward to travelling to another country. Travelling was also an interest of Laxmi Jimba’s. Although she was unable to work away from home because she has children to care for, she did tell me, “I wish I could travel to other places and know how to earn money. I want to become educated. I’m always staying here at home, I wish I could go [abroad]. I want to meet new people.” Laxmi Jimba’s reasons for wanting to go abroad to find work probably stem more from a desire for adventure than a concrete plan for her future. However, she was not alone in fantasizing about travelling to a foreign country. When I asked young women about where they would go to find work, some, like Abisha Bahini, became

visibly excited. When she responded, her facial expression was clearly delighted and she clapped her hands in excitement after she told me she wanted to go to America because "... it is so developed there. There are many facilities and things to enjoy." Similarly, three other young women told me that they wanted to go to Japan to work because they think they would like the "culture" or "lifestyle" there. The desire for travel, adventure and independence was a motivating factor that Mary Beth Mills discussed in her research on Thai women factory workers in Bangkok (2005: 238). Her findings are similar to my own in that her participants reported the primary reason they sought work outside their village was to remit their wages back to their natal families, but also wanted to move to the city to have exciting experiences (Mills 2005: 238).

Some of the young women who said that they wished to leave their village to find paid work felt they would be doing something important with their lives by working. For instance, Phulmaya told me that if she went abroad to work, her family would be very proud of her. Since she was the oldest unmarried daughter in their household, she said that by working and earning money, she would be honoring her parents because she would be taking on the responsibility of providing for her family financially. Juna Ghising said she wanted to work abroad because she desired to be independent. I thought this response was interesting because few other young women stated that they desired independence. This desire to be independent was also expressed by another young woman, Hira Sintan, age 18. She further explained that her desire for independence was part of a larger agenda in which she desired to change society through education:

I want to go to a remote area [in Nepal] to work as a teacher. People out there [in the remote areas] are not educated. I want to do teaching so that they have a chance to get some education... People out there don't send girls to school, just boys. They keep their daughters at home to do the work around the house instead of sending them to school. If I go there as a teacher, I want to teach girls and convince their parents that boys and girls are equal...

This desire to enact societal change and work towards gender equality through working away from Dhidopur was only expressed by Hira Sintan. The other young women said that they felt that by leaving Dhidopur to work, they could significantly improve their own lives or the lives of their families. Hira Sintan was the only interviewee that addressed the wider social impact that her leaving to find work could have.

The Benefits of Paid Employment:

The majority of the young women who wished to leave Dhidopur to find paid work stated that they wanted to send the money back to their families and improve the lives of their families. However, some of the young women also mentioned the ways in which they would personally benefit from having a paying job and what sort of things they would buy with the money they earned.

Some women admitted that they wanted to earn money so that they could buy luxuries for themselves. Sapana Pakhrin said that the main reasons she wanted to go elsewhere to work was because she wanted to earn money that she could spend on herself. Her response was unique because all the other women that admitted they wanted to use the money for themselves initially said that their main aim in obtaining work would be to earn money for their families. Although Rita Bahini originally told me that she gave all her money that she earned through her teaching job to her parents, she later showed me her new *kurta salwar* (a style of clothing commonly worn by Nepali women) that she had bought with some of the money from her first pay cheque.

Phulmaya also kept some of the money she earned from working for me to spend on various personal items. Phulmaya and I went shopping together in Kathmandu on two different occasions. The first was when I had to return to Kathmandu to renew my visa and the second time was before I left Nepal. Many of the items she purchased for herself were beauty products. She told me on our first trip to Kathmandu when we were shopping for a new t-shirt for her, “I like wearing Western clothes! I’m looking so much progress, no?” By “looking progress”, Phulmaya was expressing her desire to look stylish, beautiful, wealthy and modern. The idea of “looking progress” came up at other times over the course of my field work. I noticed that it was common for people in Nepal to say the word “progress” in English even when they were speaking Nepali and when women were speaking in English to me, they would use the phrase “looking progress” in reference to modern fashion. For example, the two teenage daughters in the house where I stayed when I lived in Hetauda enjoyed looking at and getting me to wear my

Western clothes. These girls always wore t-shirts and jeans. They told me that they do not like Nepali clothes because they liked “looking progress.” Jeans and t-shirts were a bit too risqué for Dhidopur, so women wore *kurta salwar* or *suti dhoti* (cotton skirt and blouse, much like an inexpensive sari). However, having new clothes made with good quality fabrics and wearing various cosmetic products was considered “looking progress” there. This is what Shanti Moktan meant when she told me during our interview, “If I went away to work...I would buy some expensive things for myself. It would make me so happy to be looking progress!” This desire to have money to spend on personal appearance was mentioned by Mary Beth Mills in her research on Thai female rural to urban migrants living in Bangkok (2005: 538). She found that young Thai women workers wanted to work in the city so that they could be “modern women” and spend the money they earned to buy commodities that signified they were “up-to-date” (Mills 2005: 538). Like my Tamang participants, the items that Mills’ participants said made them look “up-to-date” included stylish clothes, televisions, and beauty products (2005: 538-9).

On our trip to Kathmandu, I also saw Phulmaya buy some things for her family members. She bought some sweets for her family, red bangles for her sister, sandals for Rita Bahini, bangles for Kaki and socks for her brother. She also insisted on buying red bangles for my mother. She wanted to give a gift to my mother to show her appreciation for our friendship and gratitude for providing her with paid work. She also gave her sister’s daughter 2,000 NRs for her first menstruation. In Nepal, giving and receiving gifts, especially if one has recently acquired access to cash or has taken a trip far away, is an important way of maintaining relationships. It is a form of reciprocity, since it is expected that the receivers of the gifts will give gifts in the future when they return from a trip or start earning money. Once her relatives found out that she had a paying job, Phulmaya was expected to treat her relatives to special food and gifts. For example, when we visited her sister in Kathmandu, because Phulmaya had just got a new job working for me, Phulmaya took her sister, her sister’s friends, her sister’s children, and me out to a restaurant for lunch. In a conversation with her afterwards, I realized that through spending money on her relatives, she was earning prestige. After the lunch, I had insisted on giving her more money to at least pay for my share of the lunch. She resisted a bit at first, but then seemed relieved, since the lunch had been expensive. I asked her why she had to pay for the lunch, since usually the elder person or the wealthier person pays in Nepal (in this case it

should have been her sister who paid). She told me that she had to treat her sister because she just got a new job and explained how her spending on her relatives makes them “look good” at her. Generosity earns prestige, just as handing over one’s wages to one’s family is a show of respect. Several of my interviewees mentioned that their family members would “look good” at them if they were to earn money away from home for the purpose of giving their wages to their family.

Most of the Tamang women I interviewed were content to rely on their male kin for access to cash and other financial resources. However, some were more interested in being self-sufficient, like Juna Ghising and Hira Sintan, as mentioned in the previous section. Similarly, Rammaya Sintan, age 21, had not really considered leaving Dhidopur to work; however, she had thought of what she would do with her earnings if she had a paying job. She told me that her parents were experiencing some economic problems, so if she was earning money, she would like to use the money to buy the things that her family needs. She then told me that, if it were possible, she would want to use the money to buy farmland for herself. When I asked her why she wanted to buy her own farmland, she told me: “My family already has farmland. I want to buy it for myself because nobody will give me that land... I would buy farmland away from Dhidopur because if I live away from here, it will increase my parents’ love for me.” Rammaya Sintan was not the only young woman I talked to who wished to have her own farmland one day. Rita Bahini told me once, when we were discussing what she wanted to do in the future, that she would like to have her own farmland. Tamang women do not generally own land because they do not usually inherit land. Tamang daughters can expect that their parents will not give land to them, which is why Rammaya Sintan says that she must buy the land herself, if she wants to own it. Rammaya Sintan expresses an atypical desire for independence when she says she wants to have her own farm and live away from her parents. It surprised Phulmaya and me. Most young Tamang women want to live close to their parents so that they can easily visit. She also said that if she were to go away to work, she would go to Kathmandu and live on her own, even though she has many relatives there. She thought that living on her own would be better because she would enjoy it more. Both Rammaya Sintan and Rita Bahini realized that one of the benefits of paid employment was independence and as more independently-minded than most of the other

young women in Dhidopur, they wished to ideally invest their earnings into assets, such as farmland, that could enable them to live independently.

Age, Life Stage and Reasons Not to Pursue Paid Employment:

Paid employment has the potential to provide women with some powerful resources, both social and financial. Since there are so few opportunities for women to obtain paid employment in Dhidopur, I was interested in understanding why so many of my research participants did not want to leave their village to find work. I found that the desire to migrate in search of paid work was affected by a woman's age as well as by which stage of life the woman was in.

Tamang people conceptualize the human life span through use of the Tibetan twelve-year cycle. Each of the twelve years in the cycle are named after a different animal and each cycle of twelve years is associated with a different life stage. The first twelve years of one's life are equated with childhood; the second cycle is a time of youthful freedom; the third is associated with early married life and the parenting of small children; the time of greatest responsibility and reaching full maturity happens during the fourth cycle; aging starts during the fifth cycle; the sixth cycle is equated with old age; and "venerable antiquity after that" (March 2002: 34-5). During my interviews, I found that most of the young women who said they wanted to leave Dhidopur to find work said that they would do so after they were finished studying, but before they got married. Also, amongst the young women I talked to who had moved into the third cycle of their life, very few of them said that they wanted to leave in search of paid work. If a woman were to leave Dhidopur to find paid work, she would be most likely to do so in the second stage of her life, during a brief window of opportunity between when she has finished studying and before she becomes established in her husband's household.

In Dhidopur, young women usually went to school during childhood and remained in school until they either could not continue to get good grades, their parents decided not to spend any more money on their daughter's education, or they got married. Most young women stopped going to school once they were married because they were expected to assume more responsibility for farm work in their husband's household.

Completing their studies was a major priority for many of the young women I interviewed. My impression was that each participant had a different idea of what “completing” their studies involved since, as I mentioned above, there were many reasons for girls to stop attending school. However, most of the young women I interviewed were aiming to at least pass the national exam, called SLC (School Leaving Certificate) administered at the end of grade 10. Following the successful completion of SLC exams, students in Nepal are eligible to continue on to grades 11 and 12. These two additional years of schooling are considered higher secondary school and are commonly referred to as “10 plus 2” or “college”. Students must complete grade 12 to be eligible to go on to study at the university level. While I did not collect data on the educational background of all my participants, sometimes participants volunteered this information during interviews or casual conversation. From these conversations, my impression is that most young women managed to write their SLC exam. Some continued on to attend higher secondary school, but did not necessarily finish grade 12. Only two participants had studied at the university level (but not completed a bachelor degree) and only one other participant said she was planning on going to university. Even the young women who were most enthusiastic about the idea of leaving Dhidopur to find work elsewhere were planning to do so only after they had finished school. The most commonly stated reason amongst young women for not wanting to leave in search of paid work was that they wanted to finish studying first.

A marriage, amongst Tamang people, becomes more secure once the married couple starts having children together. In Tamang marriages, the bride is not expected to move in with her husband’s family immediately after the wedding, but is free to come and go between her natal home and that of her in-laws. However, once a young woman has children as well as shared property with her husband, she becomes more invested in her in-laws’ household and is more likely to spend the majority of her time there (March 2002: 222). This is in contrast to the practices of their Hindu Nepali neighbors who expect the bride to permanently live in her husband’s parents’ home immediately following the wedding (March 2002: 222). Once a Tamang woman has become a permanent member of her husband’s household and assumes responsibility for the care of their children, she is less likely to leave the marriage, but is also less likely to seek paid employment outside the home. Therefore, a Tamang woman’s likelihood to

seek paid employment is determined more by whether or not she has children than by her marital status.

This was evident during the interviews I conducted. All of the women I talked to who had young children said that they did not want to leave Dhidopur in search of paid work because they did not want to leave their children behind. I only interviewed five women who were married but did not have children. There were not many women in this category because most women start having children shortly after getting married. Of these five women, three said that they did not want to leave Dhidopur to work elsewhere, while two said that they did want to go. The two married women who said they wanted to go away to work were both only recently married. Hira Sintan had only been married for nine months at the time of our interview. Shanti Moktan had only been married for a year and a half at the time of our interview. Both Hira Sintan and Shanti Moktan did not yet have children, and thus, they were not established in their marital homes. Shanti Moktan had certainly not assumed the responsibility of working on her in-laws' farm full time, since she was still attending school at the time of our interview.

Farm and household responsibilities were also mentioned as reasons why women could not leave in search of paid work. The three women who stated this reason for not being able to leave Dhidopur were older participants. As their in-laws age, and their children grow up, Tamang women assume a leadership role in managing the family farm by delegating tasks to their children and working hard to make sure all the farm tasks are completed each day. The older participants in their late thirties to early fifties were the ones who expressed an inability to leave due to their farm and household responsibilities. The older participants were also more likely to feel self-conscious about the fact that they did not attend school as girls. Some of the uneducated older participants were not confident that they could find a paying job away from home. Amongst the older participants, the women that were more than fifty years old told me that they were aging and were now too old to leave Dhidopur to find paid work. Two of the older participants, Shanti Sintan and Shanti Rumba said that they did not need to leave Dhidopur to earn money because their sons were planning on going. They felt that travelling elsewhere to find paid work was a pursuit best left to the younger generation.

Although the likelihood that a Tamang woman from Dhidopur would want to leave her village to find paid work diminished as the woman grew older and became more established in her husband's household, there was one reason that kept women in Dhidopur regardless of age or life stage. Several women were satisfied with their lives in Dhidopur and did not want to go anywhere. This satisfaction with life in Dhidopur, whether due to loving their families, enjoying farm work, not wanting a paid job, not needing money, or just really liking the village, was expressed by half of the participants.

There was a final reason why women did not want to leave Dhidopur to find paid work. Some women were concerned about how the other villagers would view them if they were to leave Dhidopur to find paid work. They said that the other villagers might spread malicious gossip about them if they left to work elsewhere. They referred to this phenomenon of malicious gossiping amongst villagers as "backbiting." This social reaction to mobile working women will be discussed further in the following chapter.

Desirable Locations for Paid Employment:

There were several countries or cities that women who wanted to leave Dhidopur mentioned to me as places they would like to go to work. In order of the most commonly stated locations, these places were: Kathmandu, Japan, the United States, Saudi Arabia, United Kingdom, Qatar, Israel, Australia, Pokhara (Nepal) and a remote area in Nepal.

Kathmandu was by far the most commonly stated preferred location to work that the young women mentioned to me. As the capital and largest city in Nepal, many rural Nepali people migrate there to find work. It was not comparatively far away from Dhidopur (about 5 hours by car) and several of my participants had been to Kathmandu before and liked it there. The interviewees told me that they believed Kathmandu would be the best place for them to go to find work because there are many job opportunities, it is easy to find work, and "good jobs" are available there. During interviews, I discovered that participants conceptualized paid work in terms of "good jobs" and "bad jobs". I was told that "good jobs" were high paying, salary positions. However, "good jobs" were also jobs where the work was morally acceptable, inside,

and had regular hours. Examples of jobs that fell into the “good” category included teaching, housekeeping, factory work, retail positions, working in hotels, nursing, nanny work, office work or seamstress work. My participants told me that “bad jobs” were types of work that paid poorly or irregularly, had long hours, involved an abusive employer, or involved doing work that was morally unacceptable. Examples of jobs that my participants categorized as “bad” included some types of manual labour, restaurant work and sex work.

There were a few other reasons why Kathmandu was such a popular choice amongst my participants. Two of the young women who hoped to earn money in order to pay for their education said they would want to go to Kathmandu because there are good colleges there. Several young women wanted to go to Kathmandu because they already had relatives there who they could stay with. Finally, Kathmandu was viewed by my participants as a place with many “facilities” and they hoped to enjoy those “facilities” when they went there to work. When I asked my participants to tell me what they meant by “facilities”, I received a variety of answers. Some, like the two young women who wished to further their education, meant educational institutions. Others mentioned good transportation, access to indoor plumbing and reliable sources of water, access to services, entertainment, pilgrimage sites and cultural landmarks, larger marketplaces and a greater variety of goods to purchase. Purnima Thokar, age 15, captured this desire to enjoy a higher standard of living and provided a good definition of what she meant by “facilities” in the following statement: “I would love to live in Kathmandu, I think so! This is the centre of Nepal and the facilities available are better than any other developed region [within Nepal]...they have the education system, as well as good services, and the infrastructure is highly developed.” In essence, the young women who wanted to travel in search of work were interested in going to places that offered a higher standard of living and an exciting, modern lifestyle. These responses are also reminiscent of Mills’ Thai participants who wished to experience adventure, modernity, freedom and independence by moving to a big city, in their case, Bangkok (2005: 538).

Similarly, Japan, the United States, Australia, and the United Kingdom were all seen by my participants as attractive options for them to go to because these places were “developed.” The desire to leave Dhidipur to live in a more “developed” place can be partially explained by

Pigg's argument that notions of development and underdevelopment are central to Nepalese identity and are the ways through which Nepali people understand their relationship to the Western world (1992: 497; 1996: 172). Due to over half a century of intense development efforts and the accompanying political propaganda promoting the necessity of these efforts in Nepal, the people of Nepal have adopted the idea that they are an underdeveloped nation and that they have a long way to go to become modern and developed (Pigg 1992: 498, 507; Pigg 1996: 163; Klenk 2004: 61). Within development discourses, villages in Nepal are viewed as the sites of least development and backwardness (Pigg 1992: 499). In the same way that having a cash income would allow the young women to "look progress" through the purchase of beauty products and fashionable clothes, travelling to a place considered more developed than Dhidopur would allow the young women to experience "development". The young women who said that they wanted to go to these countries to work believed that these countries would offer many "facilities" for them to enjoy and offer high paying jobs or top-quality educational institutions.

Although the above-mentioned countries were places that my participants wanted to travel to, it appears that it is uncommon for women from the Dhidopur area to actually go to these countries. None of my participants knew any women from Dhidopur who went to these countries. This is not surprising since it is difficult and expensive for Nepali people to enter these countries.

Japan was the second most popularly stated location the participants wanted to travel to in order to find paid work. It was an attractive option for participants not only because it was a "developed" nation with many "facilities", but because some women felt a cultural affinity with Japan. The Tamang people in Dhidopur were mostly members of the Buddhist organization Soka Gakkai International (SGI). Many of the young women I met in Dhidopur modeled themselves after the president of SGI, Dr. Daisaku Ikeda, describing him as their guru, or religious teacher. Dr. Daisaku Ikeda is Japanese and the SGI headquarters are located in Tokyo, Japan. Also, Sukumaya Gole's husband is a tour guide who has brought Japanese tourists to Dhidopur. During religious meetings, I noticed that he often assumed a leadership position in the group. Several of my participants told me that they had met Japanese tourists before and some had befriended them. These interactions with Japanese tourists, combined with the

admiration my participants felt for Dr. Daisaku Ikeda, contributed greatly to their desire to go to Japan.

When I asked the young women who said they wanted to go to Japan why they wanted to go there, most of the responses focused on shared cultural and religious values between them and Japanese people. For example, during my interview with Rupa Bahini, she told me the reason she would chose to go to Japan, “I like the culture and lifestyle of the Japanese people...what I like about it is that people respect each other over there...I know someone who lives there too. My guru, Dr. Daisaku Ikeda lives there.” As a member of a lower caste, it is understandable that Rupa Bahini wishes to go to a place where people show each other respect. Similarly, Rita Bahini said she wanted to go to Japan, “I like Japan. Because my mentor is from there. I have friends in Japan. I am a Buddhist, member of a Buddhism group. I have friends from that group that came here to Nepal from Japan. I know about Japan.” She explained to me that she learned about Japan from these friends that she had made through her Buddhist organization and she thought she would enjoy their culture. Both Rita Bahini and Rupa Bahini anticipated that they would feel welcome in Japan because they would be amongst fellow Buddhist people. Sukumaya Gole also felt drawn to Japan because of the personal connections she had made through her Buddhist organization. She saw a practical benefit to these relationships: “If I were to go abroad, I would go to Japan. I have many friends there to help me find a job.” Like the young women who said they wanted to go to Kathmandu, knowing someone who lives there was a major factor in deciding where they would like to go. In addition to the possibility that the person they know there could provide them with a place to stay, help finding work and monetary support, knowing someone who already lives there provided the young women with information about the place they wished to travel to. It also sometimes made the young women feel more confident about leaving their home. Rita Bahini told me that her Japanese Buddhist friends had encouraged her to travel to Japan one day and that is why she was not afraid to go there.

In contrast, some young women wanted to go to places they knew very little about. The Middle East was seen as an area that offered plenty of job opportunities for Nepali people and some of the participants personally knew Tamang women who had gone there to work. Israel, Qatar and Saudi Arabia were all mentioned as the preferred locations by women who viewed

these locations as the best places for them to go to easily find work. However, of the women that mentioned these places, only Juna Ghising seemed to have any detailed knowledge of the country she wished to go to because she had friends who had been there and told her about it. The other two women who were thinking of going to Saudi Arabia and Qatar said that they thought there would be lots of work there for them, but they both said they did not know much about those countries.

Some of the young women expressed a desire to go to a place because they heard it was beautiful. This was the case with Shanti Moktan, who wished to go to Pokhara. Pokhara is a city in Nepal. Situated next to a lake in a valley surrounded by mountains, Pokhara, is well known for its beauty and is a popular tourist destination. Shanti Moktan's response was unique because she was the only participant that wanted to go somewhere else to work just because it was beautiful. Other participants who mentioned the beauty of their chosen destination for work mentioned the beauty of the location as an additional, not a primary, reason for going there. For example one, of the reasons Purnima Thokar, age 15, wanted to go to the United Kingdom was because she thought it was beautiful there, however, her primary reason for wanting to go there was to study.

Finally, some women chose the location where they would like to work on the basis of the type of work they wanted to do. There were two women who fit this description. As I mentioned above, Juna Ghising wanted to go to Israel to practice nursing, and Hira Sintan, wanted to go to a remote area of Nepal to teach.

Conclusion:

Based on the research findings reported in the previous chapter on women's farm work and the findings reported in this chapter on women's paid work, my research suggests that the Tamang women of Dhidipur are not coerced by economic desperation to seek paid employment outside their village. The majority of households in Dhidipur are able to meet their needs through a combination of women's unpaid farming efforts and men's paid employment. The majority of young women who said they wanted to migrate in search of paid work said that they

wanted to do so in order to improve the economic status of their households, but not because they were extremely poor and their families needed the money. When Dhidopur Tamang women engage in paid work, their income is usually supplementary, as opposed to being the main source of cash on which their families rely.

The participants who expressed a desire to leave Dhidopur to find paid work wanted to migrate because they felt there were no job opportunities for them in Dhidopur and the surrounding area. The participants felt the ideal time to migrate was once they had completed their studies, but before having children. For most Tamang women in Dhidopur, this time period was in their late teens and early twenties. This explains why the all 12 of the participants who said they wanted to leave Dhidopur to work were under 25 years old. However, the majority of participants (28 out of a total of 40) did not have intentions to migrate in search of paid work. Women with childcare, household and farming responsibilities did not want to leave Dhidopur to find paid work. Other reasons women expressed for not wanting to leave Dhidopur include: wanting to complete their studies first, inadequate education to obtain a high quality job, satisfaction with life in Dhidopur, and fear of malicious gossiping or “backbiting.”

Contrary to feeling coerced by economic desperation to leave Dhidopur in search of paid work, the majority of participants who intended to leave were quite willing to do so. They wished to seek paid work outside their village in order to afford to buy themselves luxuries, to earn prestige in the eyes of their relatives and neighbours, as well as to become financially independent. Their preferred locations for seeking paid employment were cities or countries that the participants felt were “developed”; where they could enjoy a higher standard of living, opportunities for adventure or further education, beautiful scenery, as well as places which were culturally similar and where people would respect them. Most importantly, the participants wanted to travel to places that they felt had plenty of high-quality work opportunities. The young women demonstrated an awareness of the job prospects that were available to them. They were quite concerned about quality of work they would encounter, were unwilling to perform what they categorized as “bad jobs”, and only wanted to go places where they felt they had a good chance of finding “good jobs.”

In summary, the participants who expressed a desire to migrate were educated, young adults, who were neither motivated to leave Dhidopur due to economic desperation nor naïve about their job prospects in other locations. In this chapter, I introduced the distinction participants made between “good” and “bad” jobs as well as the participants’ concern with “backbiting”. In the next chapter, I will discuss the ways that fear of finding “bad jobs”, “backbiting”, cultural ideas about women’s independent travel, as well as trafficking narratives negatively affect Dhidopur women’s desire to migrate in search of paid work and restrict their mobility.

CHAPTER SIX – THE SOCIAL CONTROL OF TAMANG WOMEN’S MOBILITY

Introduction:

As it is in many other places, women’s mobility is a contested public issue in Nepal. Customary notions of appropriate feminine comportment, sexuality and gender roles which necessitate the protection and surveillance of women clash with contemporary ideas about gender equality which are espoused by development institutions and are being taught to the Nepalese public through the education system (Klenk 2004: 64). While conducting the field research for this thesis, I learned that although many of the participants wished to migrate in search of paid work, the residents of Dhidopur felt that women’s independent travel was not socially acceptable or safe.

In this chapter, I explore the various ways in which peers, relatives, neighbors, and trafficking narratives broadcast in the media, influence the participants’ feelings about migrating in search of paid work. In particular, I discuss the participants’ knowledge of trafficking narratives, as well as the ways that these stories influence their aspirations to migrate and their perceptions of certain places. The purpose of this chapter is to outline the various cultural attitudes about women’s mobility which influence Dhidopur Tamang women’s migration aspirations, discuss the ways that women travel despite constraints imposed on them by restrictive gender ideologies and identify the ways in which these ideas work to control their movement.

Emotional Responses to Leaving in Search of Paid Work:

The prospect of leaving home to find paid work elsewhere evoked strong and varied emotional responses in my participants. The majority of participants mentioned that they would miss their families or their families would miss them a lot. Of the young women who were most enthusiastic about travelling away from home to work, most were quite excited about it and looked forward to the opportunity for adventure, as I discussed in the previous chapter.

However, several young women expressed either a fear of leaving home or a strong determination to face their fate.

Several of the responses the young women gave me regarding their feelings about leaving home reflect the Buddhist worldview they subscribe to. The belief that life is suffering and the belief in fate (karma) are especially relevant to how some of my participants framed their answers during the interviews. A couple of young women saw leaving Dhidopur as something they must do, rather than a personal adventure that they chose to embark upon, much the same way several of my participants were resigned to be satisfied with doing farm work. For instance, 24-year-old Chamelimaya Jimba's response to my question about whether she was afraid to travel away from home to engage in paid work was: "If I have to struggle and I have to work, why should I feel afraid of other people? I'm not afraid of other people." Chamelimaya Jimba explained that she does not see the point of feeling afraid because she has no choice but to go to work. She sees struggling as inevitable. Similarly, Hira Sintan told me "Everyone one day has to die. In our life, we have to struggle. I am not afraid." For Hira Sintan, everyone meets the same end point and must experience hardship before they arrive there, so there is little point in fearing one's fate. Hira Sintan and Chamelimaya Jimba see hardship and work as part of life and are determined to face life's struggles without fearing what the future may hold.

There were some participants who were also not afraid to travel in search of work, but for different reasons. Some of the participants said who they were not afraid because they had self-confidence. Rita Bahini expressed this when she said: "I'm not afraid [to go]. I'm confident because I know the difference between good and bad." The young women who responded this way believed that as long as they made good choices, they could avoid compromising situations. All of the participants who said that they had self-confidence were well educated in that they had received many years of formal schooling.

I learned, from casual conversations, that knowing the difference between "good and bad" is linked, according to my participants, to being educated. An educated person can tell the difference between "good and bad" and cannot easily be fooled. This belief was expressed by Laxmi Jimba during her interview when she said: "Yes, I am afraid [to leave Dhidopur]... I have

no education. I could be taken anywhere.” Laxmi Jimba was scared that she would leave Dhidopur to find a good job, but be fooled into doing “bad work” or being taken somewhere without her consent. Essentially, she was concerned that her lack of education could lead to her becoming a victim of human trafficking. Shanti Sintan expressed a similar fear when she told me:

I’m afraid [to leave Dhidopur] because I’m uneducated. There are girls that go to work in the city and somebody else takes them away to another country, selling them abroad. I would go to Kathmandu to work in someone else’s house, then that owner could take advantage of me...if girl is educated, then she finds good job. If uneducated, then she finds bad job.

Shanti Sintan expresses her fear that if she went to Kathmandu to work as a housekeeper, she would be vulnerable in that job because her employer could behave inappropriately towards her. Not having an education was linked to working bad jobs in another way as well. Shanti Sintan used the scenario of her becoming a housekeeper because this is the type of work that she believes would be available to her. The women I talked to who did not attend school knew that they did not have the qualifications to obtain a good job.

The attitude that self-confidence and education can help a woman to avoid being taken advantage of can be understood within the context of the development and educational messages Dhidopur women are exposed to. Having an education, espousing the views promoted in the school system, and renouncing “traditional beliefs”, are some of the ways that rural Nepali people can display to others how “developed” they are (Pigg 1992: 502; Pigg 1996: 180-181, 199). The young Tamang women who claim they are not afraid to travel alone because they are “self-confident,” “educated,” and “know the difference between good and bad,” are essentially identifying themselves as “developed women” or “cosmopolitan villagers” (Pigg 1996: 181; Klenk 2004). The participants in this research project are similar to the northern Indian women in Klenk’s (2004) research on women as a category of development discourse. The women Klenk worked with similarly saw themselves as “developed women,” even though the urban-dwelling elite development workers could not distinguish her comparatively well-educated participants from other rural women (2004: 64). The young Tamang women who saw themselves as developed expressed similar views to the northern Indian women Klenk (2004) worked with. Regarding the definition of what it means to be a “developed woman”, both

groups of women put considerable emphasis on qualities such as self-confidence, education, economic self-sufficiency, as well as the ability to challenge conventional constructions of femininity and gender roles (Klenk 2004: 67-68, 75). Interestingly, in their discussions on underdevelopment and rural backwardness, both Pigg and Klenk argue that rural people do not adopt the identity as “underdeveloped” or “backwards” people, but displace this identity onto other villagers, other more “remote” or “traditional” villages, or to a different point of time in one’s life (Pigg 1996: 192; Klenk 2004: 70). However, I found that some of the participants did not see themselves as “cosmopolitan villagers,” and instead, identified more with being “underdeveloped”. The Tamang women who had not received a formal education were afraid to travel alone, or challenge conventional constructions of femininity that restrict women’s movement and income-earning opportunities because they feared their lack of education could lead to them being taken advantage of. Laxmi Jimba and Shanti Sintan (quoted above) are examples of women who have adopted, rather than, displaced the identity of “undeveloped village woman”.

In addition to feeling afraid to leave Dhidopur because they were concerned about the quality of work they would perform in another location, several of the young women were afraid for other reasons. A couple of women told me that they were afraid of what people from their village would say about them if they left Dhidopur to find work elsewhere and were concerned about their reputations. A few women told me that they were scared of going somewhere that they had never been before, of strangers, and of all the things that could possibly happen to them once they stepped outside the boundaries of their familiar village. Pramila Rumba was the most specific of my interviewees in regards to what it was she was afraid of. She had to walk two hours to get from Dhidopur to her teaching job in a remote hill village and said that she was afraid to make the trip back and forth. Much of the walk to her workplace was through the jungle and she was afraid of encountering thieves or kidnappers while walking alone on these remote trails, since there would be no one around to assist her if she encountered this type of trouble.

For some young women, whether they felt afraid to leave Dhidopur to work elsewhere was determined by the circumstances. Some young women told me whether they would be

afraid to leave would be determined by what type of work they would be doing. For example, Bimala Moktan, age 19, told me that she would be afraid if the job she was going to do was bad, but would not be afraid if the job was good. She said she was afraid of sexual harassment in the workplace or of being coerced into sex work. Other young women, like Phulmaya, said that they would be afraid to go alone, but would not be afraid if they knew someone who lived in the same place they were going to work or if they left Dhidopur to find paid work with a friend. These participants believed they could find the courage to leave Dhidopur if they knew beforehand what type of work they would be doing or were not going to be without friends or family in their new location.

Speculative Reactions of the Family Members of Migrating Young Women:

During the interviews, I asked the participants how they thought their family members would react to them leaving Dhidopur to find paid work. In asking about their perceptions regarding their families' reactions, I was attempting to ascertain the degree to which the young women allowed their perception of their family members' feelings to influence their decision to migrate in search of work. I also asked about who they thought would help them, encourage them or discourage them from migrating in order to find out the various familial pressures and resources that may influence the young women's decisions about whether to leave Dhidopur or where to go in search of work.

The participants told me that if they were to leave Dhidopur in search of paid work, they could count on close relatives for help making arrangements to leave and becoming established elsewhere. Of the participants who were still living at home with their parents, the vast majority said that they expected their parents would help them. Three of the married participants told me that they thought their husbands would help them. Other relatives that the participants mentioned were older sisters, uncles or aunts, friends, and one participant said her grandfather would help her.

The participants said they thought their relatives would help them in a variety of ways. The most common response to my question about how various relatives would help my

participants was that the participants anticipated that their relatives would provide them with financial support. Most of the young women thought that their relatives, mainly their parents or husbands, would provide them with money to travel to the place where they were planning on working. They also mentioned needing money to pay for living expenses before they started earning money themselves. The participants expected that their parents or husbands would provide them with the money they needed to travel to and become established in the place where they hoped to find paid work. Another way that the participants thought their relatives might help them was by either providing a place to live or by helping to find a suitable place to live. Some of my participants told me that they had relatives that they could live with in the place where they wanted to go to find work. A few others who wanted to work in Kathmandu said that their parents would go with them to help them find a suitable place to live. Finally, a couple of participants said that their relatives would help them by finding a job for them.

Participants also said that they thought their relatives would provide them with emotional support as well as give them advice about where to go, what type of work they should try to find, and how to live away from home. Abisha Bahini knew exactly what advice her parents would give to her, “Choose good ways, good work, make good decisions!” This advice is meant to remind her to behave appropriately while away from home. Gita Lama, age 16, also said that her parents would advise her not to make bad choices, but to always make good decisions and avoid strangers. These young women felt that their parents would be primarily concerned with their daughters’ behavior and moral welfare while they were away from home.

Another type of emotional support my participants expected to receive from their relatives was encouragement. They hoped that their relatives would encourage them to overcome their feelings of trepidation about leaving home to live far away. Some participants mentioned that they hoped their relatives would encourage them to stay at their jobs by talking with them on the phone and helping them to feel less homesick. Interestingly, when I asked the interviewees if there was anyone currently encouraging them to go and find paid work outside Dhidopur, the vast majority said that no one was encouraging them to do that. Only three participants said their parents were encouraging them to leave Dhidopur to find work and only one participant said her husband was encouraging her to leave Dhidopur to find work. The

reason for this apparent inconsistency in responses is probably because so many of the young women were still in school and their relatives did not expect them to leave in search of paid work until after they were finished studying. Although relatives were not encouraging most of the young women to leave in search of paid work at the time of the interviews, many participants expected that their relatives would support their decision to do so later. This indicates that the decision to leave Dhidopur in search of paid work is, for the most part, one that is made by the young women. However, their decisions are affected by the support that their relatives, neighbors and friends are willing to provide them with.

In fact, the young women were receiving the most encouragement to find paid work outside of Dhidopur from their peers. Participants seemed to discuss their dreams for their futures the most with their female friends. Several young women told me that their friends encouraged them by talking about places they could go to find work and talking about what kind of work they could do. Furthermore, Juna Ghising told me that her friends played a very important role in her decision to try to go to Israel to work. Some of her friends that she made while she was training to become a nurse had already gone to Israel to work and they had helped her by providing her with information about Israel and encouraging her to go there too. Like Juna Ghising, some of the other young women told me that they planned on travelling with their friends to find paid work.

I was also interested in finding out if anyone would discourage or prevent the participants from leaving Dhidopur to find work. The vast majority of interviewees said that they believed no one would try to prevent them from leaving or discourage them from trying to find paid work outside of Dhidopur. The young women who felt they would be discouraged from leaving told me three main reasons why they thought that their relatives would do so. First of all, some of the young women who were still studying expected that their relatives would discourage them from going to find paid work because their relatives wanted them to finish studying before they left. Secondly, some of the participants said that they thought their relatives would not like it if they travelled alone to find paid work. They expected their parents or in-laws would be uncomfortable with them travelling alone and be concerned about the young women's safety. Lastly, some of the participants thought that their relatives would not want them to leave

Dhidopur because their relatives would be worried about what the other villagers would think. Out of concern for their daughter or daughter-in-law's reputation, they would try to prevent her from leaving Dhidopur. These same relatives would also be concerned about their own family honor being negatively affected by having a daughter or daughter-in-law who is working away from Dhidopur. When I asked her if there were any reasons she would not leave Dhidopur to work, Hira Sintan said, "I live here in this society. If I go [away to work], then other village people will backbite me. So I don't [want to go]. If I go, other people will be saying, 'oh why is she going outside to earn money?' Just backbiting me like that." In this statement, Hira Sintan is saying that the reason she would not leave Dhidopur to work was because she did not want to face the negative social reaction that the villagers would have to her leaving. She thinks that the other villagers would be suspicious of her motives for wanting to leave Dhidopur.

In addition to discussing people who may potentially discourage my participants from leaving their village to work elsewhere, during the interviews, a couple of the young women mentioned factors that discouraged them from travelling far away to work. Sukumaya Gole told me that nobody would try to stop her from going to Japan, but not having a visa to get into the country would stop her from going there. Another factor that discouraged women from leaving Dhidopur to find work was not having enough money. A couple of other participants said that they did not have the money to afford to travel somewhere else and become established there. In order to travel away for work, especially if the desired destination was another country, the young women would require quite a bit of money to pay for work visas, transportation costs, and living expenses.

Most of the young women I interviewed stated that they expected ambivalent emotional responses from their family members if they were to leave Dhidopur to find paid work. Many said that they expected that their relatives would be happy about the financial benefits of having an employed daughter or daughter-in-law sending money home. Some participants anticipated that their relatives would feel proud of them if they managed to get a good job. Yet, most of them also said that their families would feel a bit uncomfortable with this arrangement. Nineteen-year-old Bimala Moktan said that she expected her family would be happy if she left home in order to work. When I asked her why they would be happy she said, "If I get a job, then

I will have lots of money to send back to my family...My family will be worried about me though. If their daughter leaves the home, then parents worry.” Although her initial response was that her family would be happy about her earning money, in this statement, she indicates that they would also be worried about her. Many young women said that their parents or their in-laws would be worried about their safety, the type of work they are engaged in, and about them living alone. Almost all of the young women said that they expected their family to miss them and feel sad because they were leaving. 17-year-old Sapana Pakhrin lives with her mother, grandparents and two sisters. She told me that she expected her family members to miss her:

If sisters are together than that is better. If I leave my house, then they [my sisters] will be sad...my mother would be both happy and sad. Now I live with my mother, but if I leave my house and we are apart then my mother will be sad. My mother will be happy when I leave the house to go to Kathmandu. When I earn money, in that way, my mother will be happy.

However, she also thinks that her mother will be simultaneously happy and sad because her mother will miss her, but also be happy that her daughter is earning money. The young women expected that their parents would have conflicting desires because their parents want to simultaneously protect the daughters by keeping them at home, but also want to allow daughters to migrate so they can economically contribute to the household.

Some young women said that they thought their families would not let them leave Dhidopur to find paid work. There were three main reasons why a young woman’s family would feel this way. Women who come from households where they are the only female member, or where the household did not have a surplus of female labourers, were more likely to say that they thought their relatives would not want them to leave. These households could not afford to lose a young worker. Also, if the young woman had children, her family would be against her leaving. The participants with children told me that they expected that their relatives would tell them that leaving would negatively affect the children. For example, Manju Moktan told me she thought that her husband and in-laws would be very angry if she wanted to leave to find paid work and they would scold her for wanting to leave her children.

Finally, the last reason why my participants thought that their relatives would not want them to leave is because their relatives believe it is inappropriate for a woman to engage in paid

work or to travel away from home to do paid work. Ganga Lama, age 15, told me that she expected her parents would tell her not to leave Dhidopur to work elsewhere. She explained that, in Nepal, people think that women who work “outside” have bad habits, bad morals and will engage in sex work. This attitude was also reported by Mark Liechty (2005) in his article on the commodification of food and sex in Kathmandu. His research amongst middle-class, Kathmandu-dwellers exposes a moral anxiety about women’s paid work and independence, which is shared by some people in Dhidopur (Liechty 2005:13). He reports that his participants felt quite uneasy about the autonomy unmarried women gained from paid employment. He states that unmarried employed women, especially those who dress fashionably, are targets of moral condemnation and are often suspected of being prostitutes (Liechty 2005: 13). However, in Dhidopur, the social reaction to women engaging in paid work is more complex. As members of a marginalized caste, it is quite a personal achievement for a Tamang woman to obtain a good paying job. While some parents would be suspicious or concerned about her sexual conduct, some parents would feel proud of their daughter’s achievements. Other villagers and family members might admire her wealth and “look good” at her, as I discussed in the previous chapter. I suspect the social reaction to a young, unmarried woman earning a good salary would largely depend on what she chooses to do with her earnings. I would argue that amongst the people of my research site, young women are able to gain prestige and avoid social suspicion by handing their earnings over to their families, as well as by distributing gifts upon their return to their relatives and friends. Flaunting their financial autonomy through dressing fashionably and ignoring social expectations regarding gift giving would probably generate a negative social reaction amongst villagers in Dhidopur similar to the one Liechty describes in Kathmandu.

Attitudes Regarding Women’s Mobility:

A Tamang woman gaining financial autonomy would probably not cause a negative social reaction amongst the villagers in Dhidopur. In other ethnographic contexts, it was quite normal for Tamang women to have their own wealth, independent of their husband and in-laws’ wealth, in the form of dzo-property (Fricke et al. 1993: 398; March 2002: 21). Industrious women are able, through wise investments, to build up their own wealth from the initial dzo-property they receive (March 2002: 70). In Dhidopur, all the women in my host family had their

own money that they invested in savings groups. When a Tamang woman had a paying job, it did not seem to inspire “backbiting” amongst her relatives and neighbors in the village. The residents of Dhidopur seemed far more concerned with and threatened by women’s mobility. Travelling far away from home and out of the surveillance of neighbors and kin was viewed as inappropriate for young women.

During the interviews with my participants, I asked Tamang women if they thought it was safe and acceptable for women to travel alone. Most of them told me that they did not think it was safe or socially acceptable for women to travel alone. Approximately one third of my participants said that they thought it is sometimes safe or acceptable for women to travel alone, depending on the circumstances. A few women said that they thought it was generally safe and acceptable for women to travel alone. However, when I asked my interviewees about the attitudes of the other villagers, my interviewees almost unanimously agreed that the villagers in Dhidopur do not think that it is safe or acceptable for women to travel alone.

While we were discussing what other people in the village think, I asked why people in Dhidopur did not think it was safe or acceptable for women to travel alone. One of the most common explanations for this attitude was that the villagers of Dhidopur were uneducated. Some of the women I interviewed explained to me that they thought the people in Dhidopur are narrow-minded and have conservative views about women’s roles. Phulmaya explained this when she told me why she thought the villagers did not agree with women travelling alone, “They are uneducated. They have narrow-mind. This is our culture and lots of people think that a woman should not travel on her own...If they are educated then they feel that one woman could travel alone.” Phulmaya was not the only person that explained these attitudes to me by stating that they were “traditional” or “cultural.” This was also demonstrated when Rita Bahini told me, “Our society does not think that it is safe or acceptable [for women to travel alone]. Because our society is traditional and conservative. They’re so superstitious!” Several women said that uneducated people think that it is not safe or acceptable for women to travel alone, but that educated people disagree. For example, Abisha Bahini said, “Our culture has a conservative mind. Especially the eldest people think that it is not good for women to travel alone...young people think it’s good. The eldest people are not educated. Young people are educated and they

know what is good and what is bad.” The women who told me that a lack of education was responsible for conservative attitudes were young and opposed the social consensus that it is unacceptable for women to travel alone. In fact, they viewed education as a solution that could improve women’s social status. Phulmaya expressed this to me when I interviewed her. She explained, “Educated people want to change our society...minds are changing...now lots of people are educated and they can think all things. Men and women are equal. They [educated people] think women also can travel alone.” She is confident that by influencing how people think, education can help people in Nepal to realize that men and women should be treated equally. She believes that education, and the gender equality it espouses, can also influence positive social change. One such change she hopes will be influenced is to ensure that both men and women are afforded the same privileges, such as freedom of movement.

I would argue that the young women who told me that they believe it is safe and acceptable for women to travel alone are idealists. They told me that they think it is safe and acceptable for women to travel alone because they believe in the ideal of gender equality and that women ought to be able to travel safely, independently and without suffering social stigma. However, these idealistic young women held a minority view. The majority of women that I interviewed said that they thought it was not safe or acceptable for women to travel alone. In discussing why they felt it was not safe or acceptable for women to travel alone, these participants expressed a keen awareness of the potential social and physical risks to women who choose to travel independently. In Nepal, as I came to understand, women who travel independently may potentially be subjected to malicious gossip (or in extreme cases, ostracism), and thus, travelling alone poses a social risk to a woman’s reputation. Physical risks women may face while travelling alone include sexual harassment, physical assault and rape. While becoming the victim of a violent crime like physical assault or rape is not commonplace in Nepal, women who travel independently are likely to encounter sexual harassment. However, participants reported being afraid of being preyed upon by men in all three ways. I will discuss these fears further throughout the rest of this section.

Most of the women I interviewed brought up the topic of “backbiting” when we were discussing how they and the other villagers felt about women travelling alone. Backbiting is the

term that my participants used to describe the malicious gossiping that happens amongst the villagers. Backbiting is a particularly powerful method of social control in Dhidopur. People who are perceived as transgressing social expectations of appropriate behavior are negatively gossiped about. In extreme cases, backbiting can ruin a person's or a family's reputation and lead to the villagers ostracizing the offending individual or family. I was told repeatedly during interviews that women who travel alone attract the suspicion of the other villagers and are likely to experience backbiting.

I posed a hypothetical question to my participants about what they thought that people in the village would say about a woman who travelled alone to another city or country to find paid work. I was told that the people in the village would be very curious about where the woman had gone, what she was doing there, who she went with or went to live with, and why she left. I was also told that the villagers would be particularly concerned with the type of work she was doing and whether she was conducting herself in a sexually appropriate way while away from home. Laxmi Jimba gave me an example of what she thought the villagers would say,

If a woman go alone outside then our society will say that she is going to other boys, she is going to do not good work. Not good work meaning that she's going to have sex partners, she's going to all boys for sex. Our society doesn't like that one woman travelling alone. When the woman leaves her house, our society starts to backbite her.

In her response, Laxmi Jimba is saying that people in the village would assume that a woman who travels outside the village to find work is probably leaving to become a prostitute. Several other participants gave me similar responses. Women who spend too much time at the marketplace, away from home, are similarly suspected of being promiscuous. Ganga Lama expressed this when she said to me, "If a woman travels alone every day to the market, then other people will backbite her saying 'why is she going all day, every day?' They will think she's going to do bad things...she's going to meet her boyfriend or she's going to meet men." Although the marketplace may provide more anonymity than the family homestead for individuals wishing to engage in premarital or extramarital affairs, it is unlikely that such individuals would be able to escape detection for long. News of such a scandal would spread very quickly, since Dhidopur is small enough and the kin networks are dense enough to ensure that anonymity is next to impossible.

Women who are spending too much time at the marketplace are also disapproved of by the villagers because it means that they are not doing their farm work while they are away. Shanti Sintan said she thought that the villagers would say that a person who goes to the marketplace too often is lazy,

...when women [are] walking alone [to the market], then other people are thinking bad things...other village people are looking bad at her...they backbite women when they go to the market because those women have goats to take out to pasture. They think that the woman should not be going to the market because there is work to do at home.

As I discussed in the previous chapters, people in Dhidipur greatly respect individuals who display a strong work ethic and disparage people who shirk their work responsibilities. Going to the marketplace more often than necessary can be a method of avoiding work on the farm. People who frequently go to the marketplace are suspected of having character flaws such as being lazy or being promiscuous and the residents of Dhidipur gossip about such individuals. Backbiting functions as a method of social control because fear of such slander discourages women from leaving the village, travelling outside the supervision of their relatives and neighbours, and from spending too much time at the marketplace. Fear of backbiting also encourages women to stay at home and work hard on their farms. As I mentioned above, Hira Sintan said she did not want to leave Dhidipur to work elsewhere because she was concerned about what the other villagers would say about her. A few other young women mentioned that backbiting was a major concern for them in considering whether to leave Dhidipur, but did not say that fear of backbiting would stop them from going. Some other young women said that they believed that their relatives would discourage them from leaving Dhidipur to find work elsewhere because their relatives would be concerned about the villagers backbiting and the resulting damage caused to their reputations.

The other main reason why people in Dhidipur objected to women travelling alone was because they believed it was not safe. This fear for the safety of women who travel alone is widespread throughout Nepal. I encountered many people during the course of my research trip who were concerned about my safety. Urban dwellers in Kathmandu and Hetauda warned me about the safety of going to live in the village on my own and tried to discourage me. Kaka and

Kaki did not want me to travel to Kathmandu alone and made me promise to bring Phulmaya along so that I would not be going alone.

During the interviews, I asked Tamang women why so many people felt that it was not safe for a woman to travel alone. Their responses provide some interesting insights into the perceived differences between men and women. One of the main concerns that my participants had about women travelling alone was that such women are considered vulnerable. For example, Rojina Pakhrin told me, “No, it is not safe. If one woman travels alone than other person will attack her.” Several other women mentioned the possibility of being attacked as a reason why people believe it is unsafe for women to travel alone. I also asked my participants if it was safe for men to travel alone. Most, like Pramila Rumba, agreed that it was safe for men to travel alone, “[If] one woman [is] going alone to other place, there is no way that she can do anything if another person attacks her. So it’s not safe and not acceptable....Men do better than girls. If there anything happens, then men can do a little bit better than woman.” Pramila Rumba is saying that she believes that a man is capable of defending himself better than a woman would be if she were attacked. Some of my other participants depicted women as innately vulnerable and men as more immune to attack in their responses. For example, Rupa Blon, age 22, and Rammaya Sintan, age 21, both told me that they thought it was safe and acceptable for men to travel alone, but that women have to be afraid of men attacking them if they travel alone. Some participants believed that there was a difference in strength between men and women and that is what allows men to have more freedom than women. Rita Bahini mentioned this difference when she was discussing with me why the villagers think that it is acceptable for men to travel alone, “Men can do all type of work. They are free...boys do everything. Men are strong, girls are weak. Men travel alone. Men and women are very different.” Pramila Rumba also indicated that she thinks men are stronger than women when she said that men are more capable of defending themselves against attackers, however, she did not state it as plainly as Rita Bahini.

A few of the women I interviewed viewed the difference between men and women as socially constructed. Both Laxmi Jimba and Hira Sintan mentioned the difference between women and men was that men were more “free” to go where they wished. Laxmi Jimba demonstrated her disapproval of this discrepancy when she stated, “In our country, they think

that the girl is under the man and the man controls. The men are free. When they want to go there, they can go, but for the girl, it is not acceptable to society. I don't like that." Laxmi Jimba and Hira Sintan acknowledged that it is considered both safe as well as acceptable for men to travel alone, but women who did the same would be perceived as putting themselves in danger and would experience backbiting from the other villagers. Some participants thought this attitude was an unfair double standard that was rooted in gender inequality. For instance, Renumaya Pakhrin, age 24, revealed that she felt this way when she said, "Men who travel alone are safe. More than women. It's acceptable too [for men]...because men dominate the women." In making this statement, she says male domination is the reason why it is more safe and acceptable for men to travel than it is for women. This is in contrast to the participants such as Rojina Pakhrin, Pramila Rumba, Rupa Blon and Rammaya Sintan who believe that there are essential differences between men and women. These differences they described are that men are strong, aggressive, independent and less vulnerable. They described women as weaker, defenseless, dependent and vulnerable to attack by men.

Another reason that participants felt it was not safe for women to travel alone was because they were concerned about sexual harassment, also known as "Eve-teasing". In Nepal, as well as other parts of South Asia, the sexual harassment of women while they are out in public is commonplace (Lakhey 2000; Lama 2000; Pradhan-Malla 2004; Gangoli 2007: 63). Staring, inappropriate verbal remarks, groping and touching are normal nuisances which women must face when they are in public places (Lakhey 2000; Lama 2000). Even though these instances of sexual harassment are common, they are very unwelcome to the women who experience them (Lakhey 2000). For example, Dilmaya Jimba told me about the time she was travelling with her sister and she was groped by a man. She then told me that she does not like travelling and she is afraid to go places alone because of it. Similarly, Chameli Rumba told me that she did not want to travel alone because, "When only woman travels alone then something will happen to her. Other boys will touch her body. I'm afraid of that." As Chameli Rumba and Dilmaya Jimba demonstrated, Eve-teasing negatively affects women by discouraging them from travelling in public places and causing them to feel afraid of travelling alone. Even women who have not personally experienced Eve-teasing are affected by it because the fear of being Eve-teased causes them to avoid travelling independently. Sexual harassment is a problem that all women face in

Nepal, regardless of race, age or marital status. Dilmaya Jimba and Chameli Rumba are at quite different stages of their lives, but have both experienced Eve-teasing. Dilmaya Jimba is 33 years of age and married, while Chameli Rumba is 15 years old and unmarried.¹

While sexual harassment could happen to any woman, my participants told me that unmarried women are more likely to be targeted than married women. This topic came up when I asked the interviewees whether it was more socially acceptable for married women or unmarried women to travel alone to work. Hira Sintan explained to me that the reason married women experience less Eve-teasing is because women wearing the symbols of their married status (*pote* and *sindur*) are supposed to be treated with more respect. She said that men are afraid to harass women who wear *pote* and *sindur*. Many of my other participants also said that married women are Eve-teased less; however, only Hira Sintan attempted to explain why this was the case.

Despite the fact that my participants agreed that married women are sexually harassed less in public, they were unable to give me a definitive answer as to whether it is more acceptable for married women than for unmarried women to travel alone to work in paid employment. This is because it is considered unacceptable for married women and unmarried women to travel in order to work for different reasons. Although married women are treated more respectfully in public by men, it is considered less acceptable for a married woman to work away from home. The reason for this is because married women are expected to stay at home, to work on their family farms and care for their children. Married women are accountable to more people than unmarried women. I was told that if an unmarried woman wishes to leave Dhidipur to work elsewhere, she only has to ask her parents for permission. If a married woman wishes to leave Dhidipur to work, she must consider the wishes of her husband, her children and her husbands' parents. For these reasons, married women are less free to leave home to work in paid employment and would be criticized as irresponsible if they chose to do so. In the case of unmarried women, it is more acceptable for them to have paid employment away from home

¹ I also experienced Eve-teasing while I was in Nepal and can empathize with my participants. My own experience was that I felt the most safe when I stayed on the farm with my host family and I often wished I could avoid going to public places because I had no desire to be bombarded with unwanted advances. However, my experience of Eve-teasing may have been different from the experiences of Nepali women. I suspect I was harassed more often because, as a foreigner, I was unable to blend into a crowd, and thus, attracted more unwanted attention.

because they have fewer responsibilities which tie them to their natal village. However, it is less socially acceptable for unmarried women to travel alone. Unmarried women are monitored more carefully by the other villagers, as well as experience more backbiting and sexual harassment when they travel away from their homes. In essence, it is more socially acceptable for married women to travel independently, but less socially acceptable for them to work away from home in a paying job. Independent travel is less acceptable for unmarried women, but it is more socially acceptable for them to have paying jobs away from home.

Factors that Determine the Safety and Social Acceptability of Work Related Travel:

Many of the women I interviewed informed me that there were several factors that determined whether it was safe or socially acceptable for a certain woman to travel for work-related purposes. One of those factors is the marital status of the woman, which I have addressed in the previous section. The other factors are the character of the woman in question, the distance she is travelling, how many people she is travelling with, and the time of day the travel is taking place.

I was told by several of my interviewees that a woman with a good reputation and who has demonstrated an admirable moral character in the past is less likely to become the object of backbiting if she leaves Dhidopur to find work elsewhere. Furthermore, they told me that they believed a woman with a good character is more likely to travel in safety and avoid “bad work.” Logically, they concluded that it was less socially acceptable and less safe for a woman with a bad moral character to leave Dhidopur in order to work elsewhere. Participants told me that women with good moral characters are less likely to be attacked or start working in a bad job because they travel straight from home to work and back punctually, avoid interacting with strangers or men, they are confident, make wise decisions and stick to their principles. In contrast, women with bad moral characters socialize more with men than women and wander wherever they want, whenever they want to go. Laxmi Jimba gave a good description of a woman with a bad character, “If the woman doesn’t like women, but just likes other boys. And she doesn’t want to talk to other women, just talk to men and just laughing with men and ignores the women, then that’s not safe.” A woman behaving this way would surely attract negative

attention from the villagers in Dhidopur, since women mostly prefer to socialize with other women and it would be considered lewd to flirt so obviously with men. Outside the village, this behavior would probably be interpreted as solicitous and would encourage men to make sexual advances.

Another factor which affects the perceived safety and social acceptability of women's work-related travel is distance. My participants mostly agreed that travelling to Dhidopur market alone was both safe and socially acceptable, as long as the individual concerned did not go there more often than necessary. I observed that women regularly walked by themselves from their homes to their fields and to Dhidopur market (which was about a kilometer away from my host family's house). However, whenever they had a choice in the matter, I observed that women usually liked to walk with their female friends or sisters to the market. They would plan trips to the market ahead of time so that they could go together. Women, especially young and unmarried women, preferred to walk in pairs or small groups for companionship. Trips to Hetauda, the district capital, were made less frequently and I observed that women usually did not go alone. However, during interviews, plenty participants said that they felt comfortable going to Hetauda by themselves. They also agreed that travelling to Hetauda alone was safe and socially acceptable for women.²

The participants were divided as to whether they would go to Kathmandu alone. They were also divided on whether it was safe and socially acceptable for a woman to travel that far alone. The participants who said that they would go to Kathmandu alone were mostly women who had gone there before and had relatives who lived there. Having made the journey before and having relatives to receive them made these young women more confident about being able to travel safely and independently. However, many of my other participants considered a trip to Kathmandu to be a long journey. All of my participants agreed that in Dhidopur, it is considered unsafe and socially unacceptable for women to travel long distances alone. Although my participants were divided as to whether travelling to Kathmandu was a long journey, they all reported to me that going to another country was certainly considered a long journey. I was told

² The villagers of Dhidopur usually travel by auto-rickshaw in order to get to Hetauda. Auto-rickshaw service between Dhidopur and Hetauda is quite regular during the day

that a woman who embarked on a long journey to another country on her own would attract the attention of the other villagers and they would most likely gossip about her.

Women could avoid inciting backbiting from their fellow Dhidopur residents by travelling with a female companion or in a group. If a woman travels with someone else, it is considered safer and socially acceptable. Most women simply told me that it was just safer, but a few elaborated on why it is safer to travel with a companion or in a group. A few participants told me that criminals would be deterred from attacking people who are travelling in a group and that is why travelling with others is safer. Hira Sintan said that a group is safer because if a couple of men attack, a group of people can fight them off, but a lone woman would not be able to fight off attackers. Kalpana Thokar mentioned another advantage to travelling in a group. She said that travelling in a group allows the people to solve any problems they may encounter together by discussing how to react amongst themselves.

The participants did not explicitly say that it is more acceptable for women to travel in groups because the villagers believe that women ought to travel with chaperons. Yet, several women implied this during interviews. For example, Manju Moktan said,

If women travel alone in our society, then [there will be] backbiting... They say 'Oh she's going alone! Where is she going? When is she coming back? Where she's coming from?' They will think that she's returning from doing that bad work. You know, that sex work...If woman goes in a group then our society thinks that is acceptable.

Several other participants made similar statements. They said that the villagers would be suspicious and ask a lot of questions about a woman who travelled alone, but would not behave this way if the woman was accompanied by another person. Especially since the concern is that women who travel alone will behave promiscuously, I would argue that Dhidopur residents feel that women need to be supervised at all times for their own good. Hira Sintan alluded to this when she said, "People don't want their daughters or daughter-in-laws to travel alone. They think that is not good." She later told me that the villagers would say women who travel alone are sexually improper, so people do not like it when their female kin to travel alone. People in Dhidopur would be suspicious of women who want to travel alone because if they do not want to be accompanied, then it is probably because they intend to misbehave. Therefore, choosing to

travel alone is a risk to a woman's personal and family honor. This is why Rupa Bahini told me "If a woman chooses to go alone, then society says that she is careless about herself and her family." In saying this, Rupa Bahini is pointing out that a woman who chooses to travel alone is essentially choosing to ignore the social consequences such an action could have for her reputation and her family's honor.

The final factor that determines whether it is socially acceptable for a woman to travel alone is the time of day during which the travel occurs. All my participants considered nighttime travel to be both unsafe and socially unacceptable. I only saw a woman walking alone at nighttime in Dhidipur once during my stay there. One of Kaka and Kaki's female relatives had come in the afternoon and stayed for dinner. It was after dark when she left and she insisted she would be fine walking home alone, but her choice elicited a string of protests from Kaka and Kaki. They wanted to escort her home, or for her to stay the night. When she left, they said many times to each other that they were worried about her safety. They made me promise I would not walk outside by myself at nighttime. Dhidipur residents are uncomfortable with women travelling even short distances alone at nighttime.

Many participants said that women who travel at nighttime are especially suspected of being prostitutes by the other villagers. Some other participants, such as Kalpana Thokar, consider travelling at nighttime to be an indicator of poor moral character. This is demonstrated by her statement: "A bad habit woman goes walking at night and all over, wherever she wants. Doing this is very dangerous. A good habit woman walks on time [to work] and comes back at the same time every day." Usually when my participants used the phrase "bad habit woman", they were referring to a promiscuous woman, as Kalpana Thokar did in the quotation above. However, men's 'bad habits' included a more varied range of unacceptable behaviors. According to my participants, 'bad habits' include improper sexual conduct, violent behavior, using drugs and consuming too much alcohol.³ Participants informed me that men with bad habits were more likely to exhibit these vices at nighttime, so it was unsafe for women to travel

³ Amongst Tamang people, it is considered socially acceptable for both men and women to consume alcohol in moderate amounts. Kaka and Kaki occasionally enjoyed a few shots of *raksi* in the evening after a hard day's work. However, binge drinking and public intoxication is not considered appropriate behavior. Alcohol consumption is a marker of ethnic identity in Nepal, as drinking is considered taboo by Hindu Nepali people

after dark. Shanti Moktan explained this to me when she said, “Things happen at night... I’m scared of those bad habit boys. Bad habit boys take those drugs and wine, then they will do anything, yeah? Like rape.” Shanti Moktan’s response is representative of the responses I received from many other participants. When I asked why they thought it was not safe to travel alone at nighttime, many women mentioned the risk of being attacked or raped. I cannot confirm through personal observation if it is as dangerous to travel at night as my participants fear, as I did not venture out in the night while I was living in Dhidopur. However, I did observe that in more urbanized areas, like Hetauda and Kathmandu, young men do frequent bars and drink alcohol after dark. Nepali women, in general, do not patronize drinking establishments unless they work there, so it is uncommon for women to be away from home for social reasons during the night. For Dhidopur residents, once it has become dark outside, one ought to be at home settling down and going to bed because they wake up so early in the morning to work on their farms. Anyone walking outside in the night is considered suspicious, since as a farming community, almost everyone is on the same schedule. As Kalpana Thokar mentioned in the above quotation, the Dhidopur farmers believe that people with good moral characters follow a disciplined schedule.

Women cannot completely control whether they become the subject of backbiting when they choose to travel away from their village. However, there are ways that they can travel which minimize the negative social reaction to their departure. Tamang women in Dhidopur work within the boundaries of socially acceptable female mobility on a daily basis by staying close to home, demonstrating a good work ethic, limiting trips to the marketplace, travelling with companions as much as possible and conducting their business during the day. Throughout the interviews, I was told that women who had good reputations would incite less backbiting if they were to leave Dhidopur, than women who already had bad reputations. The participants who wished to leave Dhidopur to seek work elsewhere had generally considered how they could travel in a safe and socially acceptable way. Kathmandu was the most popularly selected destination because it was not very far away, many of the participants had family there or could easily go there with a companion, the trip could be made without travelling throughout the night, and Kathmandu was perceived as a place with plenty of good jobs.

The Influence of Trafficking Myths on Tamang Women's Attitudes:

Just as there were factors that attracted the young women I interviewed to certain places, as I discussed in the previous chapter, there were also reasons why the young women viewed certain other places as undesirable locations to work. I was surprised to discover that none of my participants wanted to work in India and some participants specifically said they thought India was an undesirable country to work in. I was surprised by this because the literature that deals with labour migration from Nepal states that India is the country that receives the most Nepali labour migrants (Singh 2001: 80; Gangoli 2007: 53). The literature on human trafficking in Nepal similarly focuses on India as the main destination country for trafficked women (HRW 1995; Poudel et al. 2002: 84). Also, NGOs in Nepal specializing in the prevention human trafficking focus their efforts on stopping trafficking between Nepal and India.

I came to understand that this focus on trafficking between Nepal and India is precisely why the participants did not want to go to India. Several of the participants had heard what I will refer to as “trafficking myths”, which emphasized the danger of seeking out work abroad. “Trafficking myths” are stories about women who have been trafficked into the sex trade. Approximately half of the women I interviewed reported hearing stories about the trafficking of Nepalese women. They said that they heard trafficking stories on the radio, in the news or on television. A few women said that they heard such stories second-hand from neighbours or relatives. In referring to these stories as myths, I draw my definition of the term “myth” from Jo Doezema (2000), as previously discussed in Chapter One of this thesis. In referring to these stories as myths, I do not mean to imply that there is no truth to these stories or that the women these stories are about were not victims of human trafficking. Instead, I refer to them as ‘myths’ because these stories follow a predictable narrative formula, are repeated for entertainment, simplify reality, and are valued as a device for moral instruction (Doezema 2000; Frederick 2005: 127). Trafficking myths describe what are thought to be “typical” trafficking episodes and are often used in place of facts to rationalize anti-trafficking interventions (Frederick 2005: 127). Since preventing trafficking between Nepal and India has become the main priority of anti-trafficking efforts in Nepal, the young female participants who have heard these trafficking myths wish to avoid going to India to work.

The countries in the Middle East were also featured in trafficking myths as places where bad things happen to Nepali women who go abroad to work. Thus, some women said they wished to avoid travelling to these countries. During interviews, many women referred to the countries in the Middle East generically as “Gulf countries”. However, some women mentioned specific places they would not go. Dubai, Qatar, Israel, Kuwait and Pakistan were specifically mentioned as undesirable places to work. Interestingly, some of the young women I interviewed mentioned that they thought the countries in the Middle East and India are the easiest countries for Nepali women to enter and find work. It has been suggested by Doezema (2000: 46), Kapur (2003: 9) and Sharma (2003: 55; 2005: 92, 103) in their research on anti-trafficking discourses that the main aim of anti-trafficking campaigns is to control women’s mobility and sexuality through curbing female labour migration, rather than protect women from becoming trafficking victims. If this were indeed the case, it is not a mere coincidence that Nepalese anti-trafficking campaigns have featured India and the countries of the Middle East as dangerous places for women to go to. My own research confirms that these campaigns are discouraging women from wanting to migrate to the very places that would be the most accessible to them and where they would be the most successful at finding paid work.

The trafficking stories that participants reiterated to me all contained similar plot elements. The victim in these stories was typically a young, uneducated woman who wanted to go abroad to work in order to earn money. In most stories, the victim is tricked by a man (usually an Indian or Muslim man) who promises her a good job if she agrees to let him take her to India or a Middle Eastern country. Upon her arrival, she is coerced into sex work or is abused by her employer. In some stories, the victim acquires a sexually transmitted disease or becomes pregnant. In others, the victim is rescued and brought back to Nepal by an NGO. There were some other variations on this basic plot. Some participants said that the victim was sold by her family or abducted. Others said that the victim returned to Nepal independently or was retrieved by a family member. These basic plot elements which comprise the trafficking stories that were reiterated to me are consistent with Frederick’s account of the way that a typical human trafficking episode is described in Nepalese anti-trafficking discourses (see Frederick 2005).

Of the participants who reported hearing trafficking stories, many told me that such stories caused them to feel afraid. For example, Chameli Rumba, age 15, told me a story that she heard from some neighbors, the story of some women who went to Bombay to find work, but ended up performing sex work in a Bombay brothel. When I asked her how she felt about leaving Dhidopur to find paid work after hearing that story, she told me, “If I leave this village then I might find like that work. Like that sort of job, so I’m afraid.” This story significantly influenced Chameli Rumba because it caused her to feel afraid to leave Dhidopur to find work elsewhere. Similarly, after telling me a story she heard on the radio about a woman who was trafficked to Dubai, Laxmi Jimba stated, “When I heard that there is not good work and there is sex work like that, then I do not want to go there!” Like Chameli Rumba, Laxmi Jimba wished to avoid going abroad in search of paid work because she did not want to end up performing sex work.

As I discussed in the previous sections, there were several reasons why many of the women I interviewed were afraid to leave Dhidopur to work elsewhere. Many of the participants could identify with the victims in these stories because they too were young, rural women who did not have a lot of travel experience, but wished to find good paying work elsewhere. Trafficking myths make quite an impression on the women who have heard them because these trafficking stories are about some of the events that women, such as my participants, fear the most. Throughout the interviews, sexual violation and attack of women by men were themes that came up repeatedly and most participants voiced a fear of being sexually harassed or raped. Furthermore, the people of Dhidopur were quite concerned with women’s sexual conduct and the ways in which this behavior affected women’s personal and family honor. As previously stated, it is not considered socially acceptable or safe for women to travel alone or far away in order to work in paid employment, in part because such independence is problematic for the close monitoring of women’s sexual conduct. Trafficking myths justify existing gender ideologies which endorse monitoring and restricting women’s travel. They present worst-case-scenarios about what could happen to a woman if she chooses to leave home to work elsewhere. Trafficking myths are products of Nepalese culture in that they reflect social assumptions about gender, travel, other countries and foreigners; however, they are simultaneously involved in creating these cultural ideas because they explain and justify them.

In Nepal, awareness-raising programs which broadcast trafficking myths in the media are intended to educate women so that they can be empowered to make safe choices and avoid becoming trafficking victims. However, only one participant was empowered by learning about trafficking from such an awareness-raising message. Juna Ghising, recounted to me a story that she heard on the radio about a woman who went to a “Gulf country”, was trafficked into sex work and forced to work all night long without sleep. When I asked her if she felt afraid to go to Israel to work as a nurse after hearing this story, she said, “I’m not afraid. But I want to look and see how that place is before I work there. After hearing that, I will be careful.” Juna Ghising was the only participant who had heard a trafficking story and said that she was still making definite plans to go abroad. When I talked to her, it was evident that she had taken the time to learn about Israel and working there. It seems that she is the only participant who was educated in an empowering way from hearing trafficking myths because what she learned from that story was that she ought to be careful when pursuing work opportunities abroad.

Most of the participants who heard trafficking myths were scared by them. For several of the women I interviewed, hearing these trafficking myths caused them to feel afraid to leave their village to find paid work, as was the case with Chameli Rumba and Laxmi Jimba. I would argue that learning about trafficking was not an empowering educational experience for these women because the fear they felt deterred them from travelling independently to seek paid work. Instead of providing women with knowledge with which they can then use to find safe employment, the broadcasting of trafficking myths is serving to reinforce existing Hindu gender ideologies regarding women’s roles and restrict women’s freedom of movement (Frederick 2005: 138). Frederick reports that there is presently only one major NGO in Nepal, Maithi Nepal, which recognizes the harm being done by reiterating trafficking narratives in the effort to eliminate trafficking (2005: 138). This NGO’s new strategy is to replace messages about “trafficking dangers” with supportive safe migration messages (Frederick 2005: 138).

There are numerous academic sources that have taken issue with the conflation of female labour migrants with migrant sex workers and trafficking victims in anti-trafficking discourses (Doezema 2000: 33; Kapur 2003: 8; Ditmore 2005: 107-110; Sharma 2005: 90, 102). My

research indicates that, in Nepal, this failure to distinguish between female labour migrants, migrant sex workers and trafficking victims, results in the stereotyping of migrating women as promiscuous. In Nepal, the widespread broadcasting of trafficking myths in the media focuses public attention only on women who are trafficked into the sex trade. The difficulties faced by women who are trafficked into other types of work (sweatshops, circuses, domestic service, and so on) or women who willingly migrate in search of paid employment are not publically discussed or addressed (Kapur 2003: 8; Frederick 2005: 138; Sharma 2005: 90). This excessive media attention on sex trafficking has encouraged the stereotyping of female labour migrants as prostitutes, or at the very least reflects and perpetuates pre-existing cultural prejudices against mobile working women. The people in Dhidopur often stereotype women who leave to find work elsewhere, particularly in India or the Middle East, as prostitutes. Participants reported that the residents of Dhidopur suspect that women who travel far away from the village are going to act promiscuously or perform sex work. One participant particularly illustrated the connection between trafficking myths, backbiting and the treatment of women who chose to leave their village to seek work elsewhere. After reiterating the trafficking story she heard, I asked Juna Ghising if she knew any women who had travelled abroad to work. She told me about some women she knows in a nearby village who travelled to Middle Eastern countries to work. She and the other villagers suspected that maybe those women were involved in sex work,

A few women went to Gulf countries to work and they came back saying that ‘the work there is good’. But other people are saying that the work those women are doing is not good. They’re saying that those girls are going to bad jobs... They [the women who travelled abroad to work] are saying that their work is just housekeeping, but who knows? I’m not sure if that’s true. Society people think that they are housekeeping, but also welcoming guests.

Phulmaya clarified for me that Juna Ghising meant “entertaining men” when she said “welcoming guests.” Juna Ghising demonstrates in this quotation the way that the stereotypes perpetuated by trafficking myths are affecting migrating women. Since people are exposed to stories about women trafficked into the sex trade in Middle Eastern countries, it casts suspicion on all women who willingly leave their village to work there.

Trafficking myths may also serve to reflect and perpetuate racist stereotypes about Indians and Muslims. During the course of my fieldwork in Nepal, I observed that Indian people

are often stereotyped as crafty, ruthless, rude and financially motivated. I also observed that Muslims are frequently stereotyped as patriarchal, dangerous and violent. Although I heard several prejudiced remarks that utilized these stereotypes about Indians and Muslims while I was in Nepal, only one participant made such an explicit statement during her interview. When I asked her about which countries she might consider working in, Phulmaya said, "...India is our neighbour country. So many people go live there. Pakistan is a very dangerous country because there are Muslim people there." Later on in the interview, she said, "I would not go to Gulf countries...society thinks Gulf countries are bad for women. People backbite women that go to Gulf countries because there is just bad jobs there and women that go there have to work anything." In this quotation, she clearly states she thinks Muslims are dangerous. Less obviously, she also expresses the view that women migrant workers would be oppressed in such countries when she states these countries are bad for women and then implies women do not have decision-making power about the work they perform there (i.e. "...they have to work anything").

These racist stereotypes of Muslim and Indian men appear in trafficking myths, as it is usually Indian or Muslim men who are cast as the antagonists of such myths. In the stories the participants reiterated to me, it was usually an Indian man who tricked a Nepali woman into going to India to work in the sex trade or an Indian man who sold the trafficking victim to a brothel. In stories where a Nepali woman goes to a Middle Eastern country, Muslim men are cast in the role of abusive employers or sexual predators. The fact that an Indian man is the villain and a Nepali woman is the victim in such trafficking stories could possibly be illustrative of the tension that exists between the two countries. While in Nepal, I noticed that Nepali people generally resent Indians. Several people made remarks to me about how India is a larger and more powerful nation than Nepal. Nepali people also seem to resent Indian immigrants because they feel that Indians take all the good jobs, or they blame Indian immigrants for many social problems. The Indian man taking advantage of the Nepali woman in trafficking stories may represent the way that Nepali people feel dominated and taken advantage of by Indians.

Based on the prejudiced remarks I heard during my stay in Nepal and the negative portrayal of Indian and Muslim men in the trafficking stories I was told, I would argue that the

participants do not identify themselves with people from India or people of Muslim faith. In fact, I would argue that these remarks and stories categorize Indians and Muslims as “Other.” This is in stark contrast to the way that my participants expressed feeling an affinity towards Japanese people on the basis of their perceived shared religious values, as I discussed in the previous chapter. My findings suggest that the places my participants would prefer to travel to in order to find paid work are partially determined by the degree to which those places are perceived by the participants as culturally similar. Conversely, the places the participants would prefer not to travel to in order to find paid work are places that are perceived by them as foreign or “Other.”

Singh has argued that cultural similarity between India and Nepal is one of the primary factors that draw labour migrants from Nepal to India (2001: 80). This may be true for Hindu Nepali people. However, Tamang people are culturally different from Indians, most of whom are Hindu, in the same way that they are culturally different from the Hindu majority within Nepal. The participants did not want to go to India because, as foreign Tamang women workers, they would not be evading the caste system in which they are classified as social inferiors. Rather, the young women I interviewed wanted to go somewhere where people would respect them as human beings, in the manner that Rupa Bahini from the previous chapter, supposed that she might be more respected in Japan. Further evidence for this is that women only wanted to leave Dhidopur to find “good jobs.” They did not want to compromise their reputations, safety or personal dignity by engaging in “bad jobs.”

Conclusion:

The Tamang women in Dhidopur are not especially mobile. While they regularly walk from their homes to their fields, from their farms to Dhidopur market, and on occasion, from Dhidopur to Hetauda, they did not usually venture anywhere further away. Although they have the freedom to travel to their fields, Dhidopur market and Hetauda independently to sell their agricultural products, visit with relatives, and purchase necessities, even these short excursions could elicit malicious gossip if embarked upon too frequently. Women often opted to make even such short trips with a female companion or small group of women. Fear of “backbiting” and a

strong work ethic amongst the farmers of Dhidopur served as methods of social control which restricted women's movement within this field site. Dhidopur women avoided travelling alone, too often, or at nighttime, because they were concerned other villagers would think that they were behaving promiscuously or shirking their work responsibilities.

The residents of Dhidopur viewed making long trips alone as socially unacceptable and unsafe for women. Few young women said that their families were encouraging them to migrate in search of paid work. Young women who wished to migrate in search of paid work expected that their families would feel ambivalent about their decision to leave Dhidopur in search of paid work. Most anticipated that their families would support their decision, but be very concerned about their daughters' or daughter-in-laws' safety and reputation. Some young women said their families would not allow them to leave Dhidopur to work because they had children to care for, their household could not afford to lose a young farm labourer, or their relatives felt it was inappropriate for young women to migrate in search of paid work. This is contrary to the Nepalese development discourses which depict rural Tamang women as vulnerable to being trafficked because they are economic burdens, coerced by their insensitive or ignorant families to migrate in search of paid work.

Although some young women stated that they were not afraid to migrate alone in search of paid work, several said that they were afraid to do so. Women stated many reasons for feeling afraid to travel independently. They were afraid of being physically assaulted or raped, being coerced into "bad jobs", becoming trafficking victims, as well as experiencing sexual harassment and backbiting. In this chapter, I have demonstrated that women's fear of these travel-related risks to their bodies and reputations (whether they are likely to occur or not) have the effect of discouraging women from wanting to leave Dhidopur in search of paid work. The critique I have presented in this chapter is that anti-trafficking initiatives are disempowering because they reflect as well as perpetuate social assumptions about gender, sexuality, travel, foreign countries and foreigners that endorse the monitoring and restriction of women's mobility. In the next chapter, the concluding chapter of this thesis, I discuss possible ways that Nepalese development organizations, which aim to educate and empower rural women, can better assist women who aspire to migrate in search of paid work.

CONCLUSION

During this research project, I investigated Tamang women's economic opportunities and contributions, physical mobility, cultural attitudes towards women's freedom of movement, as well as gender roles and expectations within my field site. In this MA thesis, I have ethnographically described the local circumstances that both encourage and discourage women from migrating in search of paid work. My research makes contributions to several topics within the discipline of socio-cultural anthropology. In this thesis, I make contributions to the existing literature on the study of gender, Tamang people, and labour migration. My research is also a relevant contribution to public issues anthropology.

In choosing to focus my research on members of the Tamang caste, I aimed to increase the available information on Tamang people from the district of Makawanpur in Nepal. Previous anthropological research on Tamang people has mainly been conducted in the districts north of the Kathmandu valley. My research contributes to the literature on Tamang people because it investigates Tamang people from a different geographical location: those who live south and west of the Kathmandu valley. This thesis also contributes to the anthropological literature on Tamang people because it provides an updated account of the daily work lives of the Tamang women who participated in this research project. Most of the existing anthropological literature on Tamang people is dated, as the research for such publications was conducted in the 1990s or prior to then (see Hofer 1981; March 1983; Fricke 1986; Holmberg 1989; Fricke et al. 1993; March 2002).

My research project is also important because it addresses certain gaps in the literature on labour migration. For instance, my work is about women's perspectives on labour migration. It is important to gain gendered insights into this topic because women currently make up more than half the number of migrants worldwide and many women migrate independently (Pessar 2003: 77). Also, public debates on the issues surrounding women's labour migration often focus on the topics of human trafficking and sex work, especially in the case of women from

developing countries (Kapur 2003: 8). The Tamang women who participated in this research project, as a group, are not particularly mobile and they are neither sex workers nor trafficking victims. However, their mobility is nonetheless affected by public debates which conflate women migrant workers with sex workers and trafficking victims. In documenting the ways that the participants are affected by such discourses, this thesis draws attention to the potentially disempowering and gender-specific side effects of the campaign to prevent sex trafficking.

One of my main goals was to describe the Tamang women who participated in this research project as socially embedded individuals who make decisions about their work lives based on a variety of factors, both personal and cultural. This work is important because labour migration is often analyzed at the macro level, by using concepts such as economic push-and-pull factors, displacement due to conflict or natural disasters, immigration policies, migration patterns, and social networks (Bales 1999: 12; Kapur 2003: 7). Human beings are certainly subjected to forces beyond their control, so a macro level approach is useful, but it only partially explains why people migrate. In this thesis, I have examined the topic of migration from the perspective of the individual participants. The women I interviewed each have their own aspirations and agency, but are influenced, or sometimes limited, by their family, fellow villagers and expected social roles. I have attempted to capture the complexity of their perspectives in the documentation of my research findings.

One of the most important research findings discussed in this thesis is that the residents from my field site, the town of Dhidopur, found women's labour migration to be problematic for several reasons. The freedom that women could experience once they left the village setting was disconcerting to the villagers because those women's behavior (particularly their sexual conduct) could no longer be monitored by neighbors and kin. They were also uncomfortable with women travelling away from the village for safety reasons. Women who travel outside the protection and surveillance of their kin and neighbours were considered both physically as well as socially vulnerable. Their bodies would be vulnerable to attack. Their reputations would be vulnerable because the other villagers would maliciously gossip about women who left Dhidopur to work elsewhere.

In addition to making the above-mentioned contributions to anthropological knowledge on the topics of gender, Tamang people, and labour migration, my research findings could be useful in addressing pressing social issues in contemporary Nepal. The participants' responses highlight the social issues that are important to them, mainly the lack of economic opportunities in rural areas, as well as gender and caste discrimination. One of my goals in documenting their perspectives is to enable policy makers and political advocates in Nepal to take these perspectives into consideration. I intend to send a summary of my thesis to an experienced Nepali development worker whom I befriended when I worked as a volunteer at an NGO, called ABC Nepal, and follow her recommendation as to which other organizations may be interested in reading a summary of my research findings so that I may effectively disseminate the results contained within this thesis. In the following paragraphs, I have outlined some of the ways that the results of my research could be used to instigate positive social change for the women in Dhidipur and also make a relevant contribution to the field of public issues anthropology.

Based on the knowledge I have gained from conducting this research project, I suggest that future attempts to educate Nepali women about human trafficking ought to rely less on trafficking narratives. Education through the reiteration of trafficking myths is a scare tactic. While it is good that the public is made aware of human trafficking, the focus on reiterating tales of sex trafficking draws public attention away from other types of trafficking and stereotypes migrating women as sex workers. Retelling sex trafficking stories in the media also discourages women from travelling because they are afraid of being trafficked. Perhaps resources that are spent on raising awareness through the dissemination of trafficking narratives could be better utilized in efforts to make travelling easier and safer for women in Nepal. For instance, many of my participants were concerned about experiencing sexual harassment when they were out in public. Gender-sensitivity training in schools, work places and the media could help educate people about the harmful effects of sexual harassment. Also, encouraging women to report incidents and providing victims with legal support could enable women take action against sexual harassment. If offenders were aware that there would be consequences for sexually harassing women, it could deter them from behaving that way. Furthermore, women, and their kin, may feel more comfortable about women's independent travel if there was a system of either public or private transportation exclusively for women.

Another possibility for making travel safer for women and to prevent human trafficking is for the government in Nepal to establish labour-exporting programs and training programs for migrating Nepali people. Such programs exist in the Philippines. For instance, the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration and the Commission for Filipinos Overseas work with labour recruitment agencies to tailor the Philippines' workforce to meet the needs of foreign countries which are facing labour shortages (Parrenas 2005: 13). These government organizations also manage temporary migrant worker's labour contracts and oversee the departure of permanent migrants (Parrenas 2005: 13). Based on the labour needs of the receiving countries, the Philippines government creates training programs for potential migrants so that they have skills which are in high demand. If Nepal implemented similar programs and women were able to access such training, women could acquire marketable skills with which to obtain employment abroad. Since they are often filling a desire for underpaid labour in foreign countries and experience hardships due to their temporary worker status, this solution has admittedly done little to improve the rights of Filipino workers abroad (Baines and Sharma 2002: 92-3). However, it has provided an avenue for Filipino workers to legally gain entry to foreign countries. Such a program could provide Nepali women with safer migration options than relying on traffickers to gain them entry into foreign countries.

The results of this research project also demonstrate the impact of gender discrimination as a factor in Tamang women's decision to travel in search of work. Many of the young women who wished to leave Dhidopur in search of paid work wished to do so in order to help financially support their families because there were very few employment options available to them close to home, especially for women. While the majority of the participants reported being satisfied with working on their farms, most of them did not have other employment options and had to rely on an employed male family member to gain access to cash. Currently, women farmers in Nepal work long hours, receive little in the way of cash income, and are often overburdened because other family members are occupied with paid employment or school. These concerns, voiced by the participants in this research project, indicate that they would greatly benefit from efforts aimed at supporting the rural economy in Nepal. If farming were more profitable or if there were more paid work opportunities in rural areas, both men and women would not need to

seek paid employment elsewhere. Some examples of initiatives that rural people may benefit from include farming subsidies, microcredit programs to promote small businesses and agricultural investments, or agricultural co-operatives.

In the last few decades, the residents of Dhidopur have experienced rapid social, political and economic change. Polygamy, child marriage, divorce, remarriage, child labour, dowry, consuming alcohol, having a big family, and belief in witchcraft are all examples of the customs that are rapidly transforming from normal aspects of rural family life into “social evils” or “backwards” practices in the eyes of the younger generation. The present generation of young people in Nepal is exposed to many more forms of media (newspaper, radio, television and increasingly the internet), is more literate, and is far more likely to have attended school than previous generations. The values that are promoted in the schools and the media are generally those held by the high-caste, urban-dwelling, Hindu, middle class (Pigg 1992: 501-502; Frederick 2005: 130). From this perspective, many of the above-mentioned social practices are oppressive to women. While efforts to eliminate or change the above-mentioned practices may be significant political gains for high-caste Hindu women, women from other castes and ethnic groups would not benefit from such legal changes because these practices have different gendered consequences within various cultural contexts. Interestingly, it seems that high-caste Hindu Nepali women are fighting for rights that Tamang women enjoyed in the past (i.e. access to divorce, ability to remarry, control over personal wealth), while it is simultaneously becoming less socially acceptable for Tamang women to exercise those same rights because Tamang people are being educated to think of their own cultural practices as “backwards.”

My research findings indicate that the participants would greatly benefit from a women’s political movement that takes into consideration the needs of non-Hindu women. A more inclusive political agenda could allow women from all groups to gain rights and freedoms in addition to, not at the expense of, the traditions, rights and freedoms that they enjoyed in the past. The political representation of women from all castes and ethnic groups is crucial to the formation of a more inclusive women’s movement. Women from lower and ethnic castes ought to be included in development initiatives which concern them. This will involve a concerted effort to address existing caste and racial inequalities in Nepal.

The results of this research project also demonstrate the need for a more culturally sensitive education system. Such an education system would not homogenize the cultural practices of rural people and non-Hindu castes as “backwards” or “social evils”, but would discuss the traditional purposes as well as historical and cultural contexts of such social practices. If students learned about these topics, they could gain a more balanced understanding of why some practices are oppressive to certain social groups and learn to appreciate the social practices which are merely different, but not socially harmful. Students could also gain a greater understanding of the various ethnic and religious groups in their country. This may help to reduce discrimination in Nepal. Anthropological fieldwork is very useful in this way, since anthropologists often aim to produce work that contextualizes social practices and facilitates cross-cultural understanding. It is my hope that by adding to the existing literature on Tamang people, my thesis can be a resource for non-Tamang people, and perhaps future generations of Tamang people, to learn about the lives of the Tamang residents of Dhidopur.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Semi-Structured Interview Questions

Background information to be collected from all interviewees:

- 1) Name
- 2) Age
- 3) Marital Status
- 4) What are your current living arrangements?
- 5) Have you always resided in Makawanpur district? If not, where else have you lived?
- 6) Do you have any children? If yes, how many?

Questions about women's intentions or desires to migrate

- 7) Do you intend to leave your village to engage in paid work in the future?
- 8) Are there any reasons why you would not leave your village to engage in paid work?
- 9) Would you consider leaving your village to engage in paid work? Why or why not?
- 10) If you were to leave your village to engage in paid work, where would you probably go? Why?
- 11) If you were to leave your village to engage in paid work, why would you leave?
- 12) Who would help you make arrangements to leave your village and get established elsewhere?
- 13) Would you probably travel alone or with someone you know?
- 14) Would anyone you know try to stop you from leaving your village to find work? If so, why?
- 15) Would anyone you know encourage you to leave your village to find work? If so, why?
- 16) How would your family mostly likely react to you leaving your village in search of work?
- 17) Would you be afraid to leave your village to engage in paid work? Why or why not?
- 18) Have you heard rumors or stories about bad things that happen to women who migrate in search of paid work? If so, what happened to them?
- 19) Has learning about trafficking influenced how you feel about women migrating in search of work? If so, how?

Questions about other women who have migrated

- 20) Do you personally know any women who have migrated to engage in paid work?
- 21) If yes, what were the reasons behind her decision to leave?
- 22) What sort of work is she currently employed in?
- 23) Did anyone help her to leave or find a job elsewhere? If so, how did she know that person?

Questions about women's economic activities / contributions

- 24) Are you employed in paid work?
- 25) What sort of work do you do?
- 26) Please describe the tasks you perform during a typical work day
- 27) Do you enjoy the work you do? What do you like or dislike about your work?
- 28) What sort of work does your husband / father do?

Questions about perceptions of migrating women

- 29) Do you think it is safe and acceptable for women to travel alone?
- 30) Do other people you know think that it is safe and acceptable for women to travel alone?

Appendix B: Life History Interview Questions

Background information to be collected from all interviewees:

- 1) Name
- 2) Age
- 3) Marital Status
- 4) What are your current living arrangements?
- 5) Have you always resided in Makawanpur district? If not, where else have you lived?
- 6) Do you have any children? If yes, how many?

Questions about women's economic activities / contributions

- 7) Are you employed in paid work?
- 8) What sort of work do you do?
- 9) Please describe the tasks you perform during a typical work day
- 10) Do you enjoy the work you do? What do you like or dislike about your work?
- 11) What sort of work does your husband / father do?

Questions about perceptions of migrating women

- 12) Do you think it is safe and acceptable for women to travel alone?
- 13) Do other people you know think that it is safe and acceptable for women to travel alone?

Life history questions for older women

- 1) What sort of work did you do as a child?
- 2) How did the work you used to do as a child change as you got older?
- 3) Did the work change when you got married? If so, how?
- 4) How did having children change the type of work you did?
- 5) How has women's work changed in your village since you were a child?
- 6) How has village life been affected by the Maoist conflicts?
- 7) How have local development initiatives affected your village?

Life History questions for return migrants

- 1) What made you decide to migrate in search of paid work? (for returned migrants)
- 2) Did anyone help you to migrate? If so, who? (for returned migrants)
- 3) Where did you work and what were the work conditions like? (for returned migrants)
- 4) How did you and your family benefit from your decision to migrate in search of paid work? Were there any disadvantages to working far away from home?

Appendix C: Sample Informed Consent Script

My name is Samantha Devries and I am a Masters student in the Anthropology program at the University of Guelph in Canada. I am researching Tamang women's migration. I am interested in learning about Tamang women's intentions to migrate from Makawanpur district and their attitudes towards migrating in search of work.

Nepali women's labour migration is a topic that has not been researched very much. There is also very little academic literature that describes Tamang women's work and the reasons why Tamang women to migrate in search of work. The scientific community will benefit from my research because I will be learning something new. Society may also benefit if my work draws attention to the circumstances of Nepali women, their rights to work and their rights to freedom of movement

You can choose whether you want to be involved in this study or not. There will be no monetary compensation for your participation. If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to answer the questions I ask you. This should take between 1 and 2 hours of your time. You may ask questions about my research at any time before or after the interview. I will try my best to provide you with the results of my research once it is complete, if you are interested. I will record this interview using a digital voice recorder.

There are few foreseeable risks if you choose to participate in this interview and this study has been reviewed and received ethics approval by the University of Guelph Research Ethics Board. The risks are limited to feeling uncomfortable or upset in reaction to the interview questions and the social risk to your anonymity. If you feel uncomfortable answering any of the questions, you may choose not to answer and still remain a participant in this research. If you decide at any time that you no longer want to participate in the interview, you can tell me and we will stop the interview immediately. If you choose to stop the interview, the information I collected until then will be destroyed and not included in the results of my research. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because you agreed to participate in this study. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, you can contact the Research Ethics Coordinator, at the University of Guelph:

Telephone: (519) 824-4120, ext. 56606
E-mail: sauld@uoguelph.ca
Fax: (519) 821-5236
University of Guelph
437 University Centre
Guelph, ON, Canada N1G 2W1

I will make every effort to keep the information you share with me confidential. This means that I will make sure that your name or personal information will not be published and neither my translator nor I will tell anyone what you said during the interview. My notes, voice recorder, and the audio recording of this interview will be kept locked up and only my translator and I will have access to this information. Once I return to Canada, I will keep all your information locked

in a filing cabinet until the completion of my thesis. Following the completion of my thesis, this information will be destroyed. I cannot guarantee that you will remain anonymous. This means that other people may know that you were interviewed; however, they will not know what you said during the interview. If you like, you can review the audio recordings of the interview and you can tell me not to include certain answers in my research.

You may also contact the professor who is my advisor, Dr. Renee Sylvain. Please feel free to contact her if you have any questions or concerns about my research:

Telephone: (519) 824-4120 ext. 52721

E-mail: rsylvain@uoguelph.ca

University of Guelph

MacKinnon 601

Guelph, ON, Canada, N1G 2W1

You may contact me at any time while I am still here in Nepal or once I have returned to Canada with any questions or concerns you have about my research:

Telephone: (905) 473-2030

E-mail: sdevries@uoguelph.ca

Please verbally state that I have provided you with information about my research, your questions about the research were answered and that you agree to participate in this interview.

Name of Participant:

Received Verbal Consent: Yes No (researcher will circle one)

Date / Time:

Appendix D: Sample Informed Consent Script for Parents

My name is Samantha Devries and I am a Masters student in the Public Issues Anthropology program at the University of Guelph in Canada. I am researching Tamang women's migration. I am interested in learning about Tamang women's intentions to migrate from Nepal and their attitudes towards migrating in search of work.

Nepali women's labour migration is a topic that has not been researched very much. There is also very little academic literature that describes Tamang women's work and the reasons why Tamang women to migrate in search of work. The scientific community will benefit from my research because I will be learning something new. Society may also benefit if my work draws attention to the circumstances of Nepali women, their rights to work and their rights to freedom of movement

You can choose whether you want your daughter to be involved in this study or not. There will be no monetary compensation for her participation. If you allow her to volunteer to participate in this study, she will be asked to answer the questions I ask her. This should take between 1 and 2 hours of her time. You and your daughter may ask questions about my research at any time before or after the interview. I will try my best to provide you and your daughter with the results of my research once it is complete, if you are interested. I will record this interview using a digital voice recorder.

There are few foreseeable risks if you choose to allow your daughter to participate in this interview and this study has been reviewed and received ethics approval by the University of Guelph Research Ethics Board. The risks are limited to feeling uncomfortable or upset in reaction to the interview questions and the social risk to her anonymity. If she feels uncomfortable answering any of the questions, she may choose not to answer and still remain a participant in this research. You may observe the interview if you like. If she decides at any time that she no longer want to participate in the interview, she can tell me and we will stop the interview immediately. You also have the option of withdrawing her from the interview. If you or she chooses to stop the interview, the information I collected until then will be destroyed and not included in the results of my research. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because you agreed to allow your daughter to participate in this study. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a parent / guardian of a research participant, you can contact the Research Ethics Coordinator, at the University of Guelph:

Telephone: (519) 824-4120, ext. 56606
E-mail: sauld@uoguelph.ca
Fax: (519) 821-5236
University of Guelph
437 University Centre
Guelph, ON, Canada N1G 2W1

I will make every effort to keep the information your daughter shares with me is confidential. This means that I will make sure that your or your daughter's name or personal information will

not be published. Neither my translator nor I will tell anyone what your daughter said during the interview. My notes, voice recorder, and the audio recording of this interview will be kept locked up and only my translator and I will have access to this information. Once I return to Canada, I will keep all her information locked in a filing cabinet until the completion of my thesis. Following the completion of my thesis, this information will be destroyed. I cannot guarantee that your daughter will remain anonymous. This means that other people may know that your daughter was interviewed; however, they will not know what she said during the interview. If she wants to, she can review the audio recordings of the interview and she can tell me not to include certain answers in my research.

You may also contact the professor who is my advisor, Dr. Renee Sylvain. Please feel free to contact her if you have any questions or concerns about my research:

Telephone: (519) 824-4120 ext. 52721
E-mail: rsylvain@uoguelph.ca
University of Guelph
MacKinnon 601
Guelph, ON, Canada, N1G 2W1

You may contact me at any time while I am still here in Nepal or once I have returned to Canada with any questions or concerns you have about my research:

Telephone: (905) 473-2030
E-mail: sdevries@uoguelph.ca

Please verbally state that I have provided you with information about my research, your questions about the research were answered and that you agree to allow your daughter to participate in this interview.

Name of Parent / Guardian of Participant:

Name of Participant:

Received Verbal Consent of Parent: Yes No (researcher will circle one)

Date / Time:

Note: Unmarried participants below the age of 18 will also give their verbal consent and will receive all of the above information regarding this research project, participant's rights and contact information. Please see sample informed consent script.

Appendix E: Table Summarizing Participants' Background Information

Key Characteristics of Participants	Participants Ages 15-25 (out of 30)	Participants Age 30 and over (out of 10)	Total Number of Participants (out of 40)
<i>Marital Status</i>			
Currently married	11	9	20
Never married	19	0	19
Widowed	0	1	1
Average age at first marriage	17.7 years	17.5 years	Average age at first marriage for all participants = 17.6
<i>Parental Status</i>			
Have had children	7	10	17
Never had children	23	0	23
Average number of children born to participants with children	1.7	4.8	Average number of children born to all participants with children = 3.6
<i>Living Arrangements</i>			
Live with parents	19	0	19
Live with spouse in own house	5	8	13
Live with in-laws	6	1	7
Live with adult child	0	1	1
Average number of family members per household	5.7	6.2	Average number of family members per household for all participants = 5.8
<i>Occupation*</i>			
Works on family farm	25	10	35
Student	14	0	14
Works for family business	3	0	3
Teacher	2	0	2
Translator	1	0	1
Full-time farmer	12	10	22
Does no farm work**	5	0	5

*Many of the participants ages 15-25 reported multiple occupations because they worked on their family's farm but also attended school, had part-time employment or both. All of the participants age 30 and over were full-time farmers.

**Very few of the participants did not do farm work. Of the five individuals who did not perform farm work, three worked for family businesses, one was a student and one was employed full-time as a teacher.