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An Assessment of the Social Impact of Feminist Network Organizing: A Qualitative Study of the First Nepali Women's Global Network (NWGN) Conference

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An Assessment of the Social Impact of Feminist Network
Organizing: A Qualitative Study of the First Nepali Women's
Global Network (NWGN) Conference

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M.A., Lehigh University, 2005

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An Assessment of the Social Impact of Feminist Network
Organizing: A Qualitative Study of the First Nepali Women's
Global Network (NWGN) Conference

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INTRODUCTION

Civic participation is most meaningful when it resolves social problems. In a globalized society, transnational feminist networks challenge existing patriarchal political structures that discredit women's achievements. Changes to state policies on immigration that facilitate fewer obstacles to transnational migration and the ease of communication of ideas through the Internet and transnational media outlets have created opportunities for the exchange of common interests and the formation of collaborative efforts to initiate social change with transnational implications.

Understandably, transnational feminist networks foster their motivation in advancing women's rights from non-essentialist principles that assert gender equality. Yet, the complexity of these networks based on the multiple identities of network participants calls for further analysis of their functioning. Similarities in ethnicity or country of origin, for example, may draw women to establish and participate in these networks; however, social actions stemming from a network's goals and values are broadly contingent on participants' educational, economic, and social characteristics. Furthermore, organizing among diverse diasporic populations of women of developing nations calls for a deeper understanding of challenges to patriarchal structures. Recognizing the complexity of individual social change on a personal level as well as process-based institutional social change challenging social norms, I posit the following two research questions 1) Can conferences organized by feminist networks initiate social change? and 2) How can feminist networks best promote grassroots level social actions? These questions are of theoretical significance because they address organizational effectiveness in inspiring individual actors to initiate social changes and take note of

structural components at the organizational level that factor into these individual acts of social change. Prior to introducing the specific network of women whose actions I have examined as a way of addressing the above two research questions, I present the theoretical framework that guides this analysis.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical strands that are pertinent to my data analysis include post-colonial discourse, gender literature, and intersectionality literature. Specifically, contributions from post-colonial theory facilitate an understanding of the social location of a diasporic population of conference participants who are from a developing nation. Themes from gender literature and intersectionality literature guide my multilayered analysis of the complex relationship of factors that influence an individual's role in initiating social change.

POST-COLONIAL APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF GENDER

Post-colonial gender scholars (Bulbeck 1998; Eisenstein 2004; Mohanty 2003; Narayan 1997; Oyewumi 1997) recognize the vestiges of colonialism and challenge the application of United States-centric gender scholarship to non-Western populations of women. A post-colonial theoretical framework establishes the means by which to understand the contestations of non-Western feminist network participants and their post-conference actions in light of network concerns pertaining to discontent with the patriarchal social structure, cultural variations, and the native informant, or "Authentic Insider" (Narayan 1997) role associated with diasporic populations.

Even astute Western academics, according to Narayan, could fall victim to common problems, or "Preoccupations," in their interactions with studies of non-Western

populations. To demonstrate the nature of the interaction that takes place between the Western scholar and the non-Western individual, Narayan problematizes the general methodologies that Western scholars often employ in their work and introduces the “dual imperatives” of the “anthropological perspective” (Narayan 1997:125) that endorse a commitment to acknowledging and embracing diversity as well as a sincere effort to address preexisting negative viewpoints on colonial cultures.

Furthermore, in Grewal’s (2005) discussion on postcolonial cosmopolitanism that recognizes the postcolonial cosmopolitan subject as a colonial subject, national subject, and traditional subject, she recognizes the repression of traditions, Eurocentric paradigms, and modern global feminisms that call forth a rescue narrative in reference to the female subject who is from a developing nation. She finds that postcolonial cosmopolitan subjects have emerged in the context of the experiences of diasporic subjects. In this context, conference participants with distinctive relationships to their country of origin may embody different roles as insiders, community member-activists that foster ties between the country of origin and the United States, and American activists based on the way in which they may value matters pertaining to women’s rights differently.

Overall, post-colonial theorists recognize the need to respect the cultural diversity in subjects’ experiences as structures and systems may shape them differently. Key themes from post-colonial scholarship establish a framework that acknowledges the way in which the conference challenged the binary West v. the non-Western World concept that delimits the perceived potential of women of developing nations to make feminist demands for equal rights. As such, principle concepts of post-colonial theory inform our

understanding of the agency of women of these diasporic populations to engage in activist efforts with the goal of initiating social changes. In addition, gender scholarship informs my data analysis by contributing an awareness of the complexity of understanding gender-based social contestations.

GENDER AS A SOCIAL STRUCTURE

Gender studies as a discipline reveals the unfixed, fluid nature of gender in the context of gendered structures, interactions, and ideologies. In relation to women's demands for equality, Connell (1995) reinforces the variable nature of the gendered structures and illustrates how these affect different groups (classes, races, sexualities) of women and men. Grewal and Kaplan (1994) and Mohanty, Russo, and Torres (1991) also call attention to structural diversities within different cultural contexts. They stress the importance of studying feminisms and the experiences of women of developing nations from a multilayered viewpoint that considers differing structures of domination and hegemony that go beyond binary understandings of oppression. As such, location and ideology influence the individual's understanding and experience of the hegemonic structure. Therefore, this research indicates that there are hierarchies between and among women and men.

In reference to study design and implementation, gender scholars (Connell 2009; Kitzinger 2009; Pascale 2007; Vidal-Ortiz 2009; West and Fenstermaker 2002; West and Zimmerman 1987, 2009) recognize the complexity of studying gender matters that encompass the elements of race, class, sexual preference, religion, and culture. Western feminist dialogue spanning the past three decades has formulated an intersubjective knowledge base that characterizes a framework for addressing women's issues including

gender violence, motherhood, political participation, and inequality in the workforce. Subsequently, women's activists are concerned with a myriad of complex issues that empower women's societal involvement in the context of a patriarchal society.

Gender scholars recognize the significance of the participatory process of women recounting their experiences. Mohanty, Russo, and Torres (1991) underscore the utility of testimonials and narratives in identifying the lived experience under the hegemonic patriarchal structure that clarifies the politicization of the consciousness. Taking into account the fact that the nature of women's involvement in challenging the patriarchal social structure may be contingent on their location, ideology, and other matters of identity, this study provides an intersectional understanding of women's efforts for endorsing rights claims and enacting social changes. Recognizing the inherent complexity of evaluating social change, Risman (2004) argues that social change can occur in two empirically observable ways since social change can either be rooted in identity that challenges cultural norms or through institutional means that call attention to inequality. She cites the need to focus on the processes that bring about social changes with the understanding that institutional change is difficult to measure. Contributions from intersectionality literature complete the theoretical framework of this study by accounting for the complexity of unequal power relationships that contribute to an individual's role in initiating social changes.

INTERSECTIONAL FRAMEWORK

Intersectionality literature calls our attention to unequal power resulting from race, class, gender, ethnicity, immigration or citizenship status (Collins 1990; Cranford 2007; Crenshaw 1995). Glenn (2002) and Collins (1990) recognize the matrix of

domination that characterizes the experiences of marginalized populations in their interactions with more privileged populations. Crenshaw and Cranford's discussions of immigrant women of color and their varying experiences in addressing gender inequality matters that differ based on race, class, and access to resources support the conversation on intra-group identity differences that result in dissensions among women's networks. Crenshaw's (1995) discussion of structural intersectionality focuses on immigrant populations and the heightened barriers associated with some immigrant women's experiences in the United States that are augmented in the context of their subordination with regard to permanent resident status, language barriers, and overall disempowerment as a result of their male or spousal dependence. Furthermore, Cranford's (2007) study of Latina immigrant women and unions calls attention to conflicts in women's realization of union goals associated with women's access to childcare. Here, I highlight literature on intersectionality pertaining to the immigrant's experience because it leads us to examine the way in which the literature on intersectionality does not account for transnational social spaces (Purkayastha 2010).

My study that identifies dissension within a feminist network is in dialogue with Purkayastha's (2010) recognition of the gap in literature associated with an intersectional framework that considers transnational contexts. Key to Purkayastha's framing of her analysis of the religious and familial connections that educated migrants foster in the context of their lives in the United States is her emphasis on, "the specific structures of inequality that arise from socio-historical processes in different contexts, that have to be understood together, if we study people located in transnational contexts" (Purkayastha 2010:31). As such, when studying immigrant populations, it is imperative to deepen our

analytical insights to account for multiple levels of power and privilege. Furthermore, Purkayastha recognizes the need to extend our intersectional lens “to make it applicable to transnational contexts, where individuals can be part of the majority and minority groups simultaneously” (Purkayastha 2010:39). In transnational contexts, Nepali women leaders who hold United States advanced degrees hold more clout than they do in their national contexts. Understanding this factor contributes to our understanding of the programs that transnational networks implement based on the availability of political opportunity structures and the origins of their agenda focus.

Theoretical strands from post-colonial theory, gender literature, and intersectionality literature conceptualize my framework of analysis of Nepali women’s organizing in an effort to supersede the practices that a patriarchal system has imposed on their lives. As such, these three bodies of literature enable me to frame my inquiry that posits the research questions: 1) Can conferences organized by feminist networks initiate social change? and 2) How can feminist networks best promote grassroots level social actions? I center this evaluation on the study of the social impact on the ability of one transnational network, the Nepali Women’s Global Network (NWGN), to bring about social change through the instrument of a conference. By studying the social change that has evolved from its conference and the grassroots level organizational structure of NWGN, a female-led network, we can better explore the process of bringing about social change through the vehicle of conferences.

HISTORICAL FRAMEWORK

INTRODUCTION TO NWGN AND GENERAL PLAN OF RESEARCH

In this study, I evaluate the efforts of NWGN, established in the United States in

2002, to foster a supportive network through “networking, support and self reliance among Nepali women through education, advocacy, service and collaboration with groups with similar missions” (NWGN, “Our Mission” 2008). Specifically, the mission statement underscores three organizational priorities including: the creation of more chapters at the global and regional levels, the provision of leadership training to its members, and outreach efforts to assist women in conflict. Through the organization of the first NWGN Conference, held on August 9, 2008, NWGN set out to achieve its institutional aims that demonstrate its commitment to Nepali women’s empowerment both in the United States and in Nepal.

This research explores the impact of conference attendance to inspire social activist change, and more generally, this study clarifies social activist change through the means of a conference. Ultimately, this study addresses the impact of conferences on social change and explores whether this conference served as a cultural celebration of an expressive voluntary organization without initiated, identifiable social impact, or if its influence was more profound in its effort to build momentum among Nepali women to initiate social changes, as an instrumental organization (Glanville 2004). It also examines the conditions under which a conference can have an institutional impact in promoting grassroots level social actions.

The forthcoming discussion regarding the conference’s impact addresses a practical matter that informs NWGN’s future conference preparation. Following the first NWGN Conference, conference organizers did not issue evaluative surveys in an attempt to garner feedback for future conference planning. In that regard, the conference created a sense of pro-social solidarity, but failed to inquire how this sentiment might be

prolonged. This analysis of the conference's strengths and weaknesses increases our understanding of the utility of conferences to bring about social change. Keck and Sikkink (1998) affirm the emergence of transnational alliances and their efforts to promote gender rights, therefore, necessitating the specific aim of this study. Furthermore, while literature exists on Nepali women's activism within Nepal, there remains a gap in our understanding of Nepali women's diasporic organizing to counter patriarchal societal values that Nepali women face on a global basis.

Before I situate my study, I believe it is necessary to contextualize my affiliation with NWGN given my non-Nepali ethnicity and academic interest in studying and assisting this organization. My association with NWGN stems from my responsibilities as a graduate assistant at the University of Connecticut in 2008 that facilitated my introduction to NWGN and its leaders. As a result, I attended the first NWGN Conference on the Storrs, Connecticut campus of the University of Connecticut. Eager to demonstrate my support for NWGN's mission, I paid my fee for registration, made a voluntary contribution, and offered to record the conference minutes. Subsequently, this study evolved from my follow up conversations with key organizational leaders regarding the fervent comments and participation that I witnessed at the conference, the sense of social solidarity that the day's events generated, and my interest in working with NWGN leaders to qualitatively evaluate the social impact of NWGN's first conference and to contribute to NWGN and other transnational social movement organizations through my analysis.

In order to address my broad research questions through my specific analysis of the outcomes of the first NWGN Conference, I first provide historical background that

acknowledges common experiences of the Nepalis in the United States and in Nepal that are essential to understanding transnational organizing. Second, in the methods section, I introduce the study's triangulation of methods through two sets of interviews with a diverse sample of female NWGN Conference participants and a diverse sample of male and female Association of the Nepalis in the Americas (ANA) 2009 Convention participants in addition to my analysis of the overall efforts of NWGN Conference participants to lobby for gender equality. Third, I present and analyze the data that I collected from my 24 interviews and external analysis of NWGN's organizational influence. Finally, I take note of the sociological significance of this activist study in underscoring the need to respect the myriad of intersectional identity matters as they may influence motivations in bringing forth social change.

THE NEPALI COMMUNITY OF THE UNITED STATES

Ranjeet and Purkayastha (2007) highlight the marginal attention that Nepali Americans have received in scholarship and activism in the United States and the tendency for scholars who are not familiar with Nepal to group Nepali Americans with Indian Americans. Changes to immigration policy led to an increased Nepali population in the United States. Purkayastha and Ray (2009) underscore the centrality of the Immigration Act of 1965 that allowed more immigrants from developing countries to migrate to the United States. In addition, they underscore the importance of an amendment to the Immigration Act of 1990 that instated diversity visas and the influence of the Civil Rights movement that led the United States to open its borders without regard for racial preferences. While many South Asian American groups came on visas giving preferences for highly skilled professionals, most recent Nepali immigrants came to the

United States on diversity visas. The issuing of diversity visas and the subsequent variation in the backgrounds of immigrants following the Immigration Act of 1990 has shaped the current picture of the social characteristics of the Nepali diaspora in the United States (Purkayastha and Ray 2009).

Purkayastha and Ray underscore the gender inequality in the ‘family reunification immigration quota’ that took effect following the Civil Rights movement. Most often, Nepali women must wait two years to establish citizenship in the United States in accordance with Citizenship and Immigration Service (CIS) guidelines that mandate a two-year timeframe to verify marital continuity and the spousal privilege of citizenship. Gender inequality is also inherent in the Nepali woman’s experience in Nepal. In other words, Nepali woman immigrants leave a patriarchal structure in Nepal and confront other gendered policies that limit their social, political, and economic rights in the United States.

In addition, after entering the United States, immigrants from South Asian countries often join regional associations as a way of fostering kinship networks based on national ties. Purkayastha and Ray (2009) underscore the rise in South Asian organizations since the 1980s given that many South Asian Americans from India and Nepal for example, did not identify with the traditions of the East Asian organizations that had been previously established given an earlier history of immigration from East Asian countries. In Brettell’s (2002) analysis of Indian American organizing in the United States, she underscores the ability of these immigrant organizations to foster the elements of family, matchmaking, solidarity, trust and social capital that subsequently elevate the power of minority populations in the United States. Citing the work of Alba

and Nee (1999) and Portes and Zhou (1994), Brettell acknowledges the role that these organizations may play in future inquiries regarding immigrant assimilation. She cites Schoeneberg's (1985) study of immigrant populations in West Germany in which Schoeneberg states: "Depending on whether they essentially direct their organizational efforts toward the preservations of traditions and the defense of their culture of origin from the influences of the new culture, or whether they make it possible or even necessary for their members to relate to members of the host society, ethnic associations will have social consequences for the assimilation of their members" (Brettell 2002:877). Scholarship on South Asian organizing (Abraham 2000; Ranjeet and Purkayastha 2007) introduces us to the potential of South Asian women's organizations to raise awareness and make a direct societal impact with regard to domestic violence that South Asian immigrant women confront in the United States, for example.

GENDER INEQUALITY IN NEPAL AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS

In the context of this research that examines the experiences of Nepali Americans in response to matters pertaining to women's rights in Nepal, I discuss the many limitations that Nepali women face based on their traditional cultural roles of subservience, resulting from a male-dominated society. In marriage, Nepali women lose aspects of their personal identity; their identities are shaped by their husbands' identities. For example, Nepali law does not grant citizenship to the children of Nepali women who are married to foreigners. This matter of citizenship presents a clear violation of human rights as outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which dictates that rights and freedoms are equally guaranteed regardless of sex (UDHR 1948:Article 2). Based on findings from her role as a development worker, Laczo (2003) affirms that

citizenship rights for women pass through male relatives. Notably, she recognizes that in Nepal, many Nepali women are not aware of the ramifications of patriarchal citizenship practices. She underscores the prevalence of organizations that are based in Nepal that are working to educate women on the way in which citizenship rights influence access to independence that enables further educational and employment opportunities that transcend male relations.

Human rights scholars including Sen (1997) and Merry (2006) recognize that human rights in Western cultures differ from human rights in other cultural contexts. Noting the differences among Asian societies, Sen encourages observers of non-Western cultures to fully comprehend and understand the historical foundations that guide human rights discourse in these societies. With this respect for societal differences, I acknowledge the need to be culturally mindful of the foundations of human rights in the Nepali context that may prevent larger social changes. Nepali women living in the United States who participated in the first NWGN Conference demonstrate their disapproval with the patriarchal society of Nepal and assert their interest in altering this structure. As Donnelly argues, “Human rights are *rights*, not benefits, duties, privileges, or some other perhaps related practice. Rights in turn are special entitlements of *persons*” (Donnelly 1982). Expanding on this definition, human rights are resolute and are granted to the individual on the basis of his or her humanity.

Nepali women’s issues pertain to human rights violations, with a focus on the problems of human trafficking, abortion rights, educational rights, property rights and citizenship rights. Manzione (2001) recognizes Nepal’s ratification of the six major conventions that elaborate on the core principles of the UDHR and the nation’s signature

of a human rights document endorsed by the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). In particular, she underscores the triple oppression that poor Nepali women of the *Dalit* population, the lowest caste in Nepal, confront in her discussion of Nepal's human rights challenges. With a positive outlook for future human rights compliance in Nepal, Manzione highlights the significant role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in contesting problematic aspects of the Constitution of 1990 and the Civil Code that do not adequately address women's rights issues. These findings mirror Soros' (1987) earlier acknowledgement of educational barriers and high illiteracy rates that create obstacles for Nepali women in spite of the Civil Code Act that granted property rights to women, outlawed forced marriage, and abolished polygamy. Furthermore, Manzione also cites the need for further affirmative action policy implementation to increase female representation in Parliament to promote more attention to issues of prostitution and the trafficking of women.

While the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action and subsequent five-year assessments on the progress toward achieving the goals in 2000, 2005 and 2010 have outlined plans for achieving gender equality through support from governments, United Nations agencies, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), cultural and nation-specific interpretations demonstrate the difficulty in affirming the universality of women's rights. In the following section, I account for Nepali women's activist campaigns that illustrate their challenges.

NEPALI WOMEN'S ACTIVISM

Nepali diasporic organizing stems from the national tradition of movement organization and political protests that are common in Nepal based on its recent

contentious political history marked by violence associated with the move toward democracy (Whelpton 2005). The 1990 ‘People’s Movement’ for democracy that encompassed women’s involvement in response to the patriarchy, the violent ousting of the royal family, and the Maoist insurgency that reached its height in 2001 characterize the fragile nature of the Nepali peace process. Studies of Nepali women’s organizing during the Pro-Democracy Movement of the early 1990s, in response to the Nepali government’s mistreatment of women, reveal how women of diverse educational and generational backgrounds expressed their dissatisfaction with their marginalized democratic rights through the *Tij*, a Hindi women’s festival that incorporated lamentations via the accessible format of the *dukha* (suffering/hardship) song (Holland, Fox, and Daro 2008; Holland and Skinner 1995). Furthermore, Purkayastha and Subramanian (2004) and Radachowsky (2004) recognize the significance of *aama samuha* (mother group) organizing in the villages of Nepal as women form informal networks as a way of channeling governmental attention to their interests pertaining to a wide array of issues ranging from infrastructure matters to women’s gender parity in education. In sum, Nepali women are accustomed to a variety of activist mechanisms for initiating social change agendas.

In the United States context of South Asian organizing, Abraham (2000) introduces us to the potential of South Asian women’s organizations to raise awareness and make a direct societal impact with regard to domestic violence. Similarly, Rudrappa (2004) denotes the rise in South Asian organizing in response to women’s domestic violence issues among this community in the United States and underscores the paradox in which South Asian domestic violence caseworkers may limit the autonomy of their

female South Asian clients by relying on traditional gender identities and imposing solutions that limit clients' self respect. In their focus on the Nepali American community, Ranjeet and Purkayastha (2007) introduce the cultural factors preventing Nepali women victims of domestic violence from seeking assistance from South Asian organizations in the United States. These hindrances are associated with confidentiality concerns, trust issues with supportive agencies, an absence of Nepali caseworkers, and the cultural proficiency of South Asian case workers. Overall, the literature on South Asian women's organizing in the United States focuses on service organizations and not on rights based organizations like NWGN that provide a context for discussing social matters that directly impact Nepali women both in the United States and in Nepal. Furthermore, the literature on South Asian women's organizing in the United States does not account for social divisions as byproducts of organizing among diasporic populations.

This paper that explores one particular conference's motivational role in inspiring individuals to participate in social change is based on this understanding of the various reasons that individuals choose to become connected to an activist network that influence their subsequent efforts to bring about social changes that parallel activist themes. My study may expand this literature based on my analysis that reveals how a diasporic population of women, with seemingly similar motivations for organizing, confronted obstacles that may have hindered the post-conference social impact. In the methodological section that follows, I address how I organized my study to account for the range of internal viewpoints within NWGN, external audience recognition, and the identifiable organizational impact.

METHODS

This study is based on interviews with fifteen NWGN Conference participants, nine participants of the 2009 ANA Convention, and an analysis of NWGN's organizational influence on the potential language of the forthcoming Constitution of Nepal. In the first two sections that take note of the two populations of interview participants, I outline the respective organizations' missions, my participant recruitment, the population, the interview logistics, and interview structure. In the third section, I introduce my discussion of NWGN's formal statement on the rights of women of Nepal that the organization has submitted for governmental review.

INTERVIEWS WITH NWGN CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS

OVERVIEW OF NWGN CONFERENCE

One hundred and seventeen women and men gathered at the University of Connecticut for the first NWGN Conference in August 2008 to create networks and publicly assert Nepali women's issues. In particular, the conference addressed issues impacting the lives of women living in Nepal as well as the lives of Nepali women living in the United States to promote awareness and advocacy. To effectively address these issues of women's rights, the conference had four specific aims. First, the conference organizers sought to create a discussion on the status of women in a global sense and, more specifically, the status of Nepali women in Nepal and the United States. Second, the conference aimed to share the NWGN mission with participants. Third, the conference aimed to disseminate information regarding NWGN's mission for collaboration with other organizations to increase Nepali women's access to resources to affirm their rights. Fourth, the NWGN Conference had an expansive goal of creating an ongoing dialogue

pertaining to issues that Nepali women confront (NWGN, “Our Mission” 2008). I reference the conference mission to clarify its social impact in the analysis section of this study.

RECRUITMENT

As noted earlier, my relationship with NWGN leaders facilitated my introduction to many of the fifteen NWGN Conference participants that I interviewed for this study. While my participatory role as a researcher and member of NWGN guided my path of entry in carrying out this study, my relationship with key leaders solidified the welcoming atmosphere that I experienced throughout my research. On a few occasions, I interviewed women based on introductions that came about through interviews; however, the majority of the interviews with the NWGN Conference participants evolved from leaders’ recruitment assistance. At the actual conference, I had conversations with only three of the fifteen women that I interviewed for this study. Therefore, my connection to key organizational leaders confirmed my role as a researcher and interest in benefitting this organization through this sociological inquiry. Furthermore, my relationships with both the past and current presidents of NWGN ensured a more diverse participant base as a result of differing social networks.

With support from NWGN leaders in gathering e-mail addresses and phone numbers for follow up contact, I successfully recruited fifteen women to interview from the NWGN Conference participant population. To demonstrate my commitment to NWGN, I joined NWGN as lifetime member and paid a one-time 100-dollar registration fee. In my recruitment e-mails, I informed the potential participants of my lifetime membership status and support of this network. Furthermore, my participation as a

researcher has inspired my personal interest in advancing the work of NWGN; I continued my engagement as a participant at the second NWGN Conference in Scranton, Pennsylvania on July 31, 2010.

POPULATION

The NWGN Conference participants that I interviewed in this convenience sample ranged in age from 20 to 52 years of age. Most of the women were born in Nepal; only one of the interview participants was born in the United States. All of the women ethnically identify as Nepali. To give an overview of the migration patterns of these women, women within this population migrated to the United States for higher education and economic opportunities for themselves and/or for their husbands or came as children with their families. Some of the women benefitted from diversity visas. Demographically, the women in this sample represented different classes and educational backgrounds. The majority of the women received degrees in higher education from the United States; a few of the women were educated in Nepal and a few were still in the process of completing their education in the United States. Of the fifteen women, twelve are married, two have never been married, and one is divorced. Eight of the fifteen women are mothers.

INTERVIEW LOGISTICS

I conducted the fifteen interviews between July 19, 2009 and October 10, 2009. From Connecticut, I traveled as far south as Scranton, Pennsylvania and as far north as Boston, Massachusetts to conduct these interviews. Interviews lasted between forty-five minutes to two hours and took place in women's homes, coffee shops, offices of employment, and at various sites on the campus of the University of Connecticut. I audio

recorded and transcribed all interviews. On one occasion, I had an interpreter for an interview since my interview participant was not comfortable with her English fluency. The women were hospitable and often offered me Nepali tea and snacks when we met at their homes. Overall, the women underscored their interest in giving back to NWGN through their insights that will contribute to NWGN's future conference implementation and organization matters.

INTERVIEW STRUCTURE

When I conducted the interviews, about a year had passed since the first NWGN Conference. Recognizing that interview participants may have had selective memories or problematic retrospective interpretations of events, I gave participants ample time to reflect on their social actions to be most effective in understanding their consciousness of the social impact of the conference. I structured the interviews into four parts (See Appendix I. for a complete list of questions) that often led participants to return to earlier themes throughout the course of the interviews. I informed interview participants that their identities would be kept confidential and that they could feel free to share their experiences with me.

First, I asked NWGN participants to provide background information to give them the opportunity to discuss their daily routines and history in the United States and in Nepal. For example, if they had migrated to the United States from Nepal, I asked participants to talk about their lives in Nepal and in the United States with consideration for the date of their migration to the United States. I based this factor on the understanding that women who migrated to the United States as adults would have different personal experiences motivating their interest in Nepali women's issues than

Nepali women who were born in the United States or who had migrated at an early age would have.

Second, I asked participants to address their political history and activism in order to understand whether or not they were politically active individuals prior to their conference attendance and involvement with NWGN. I requested that participants narrate their interest in becoming involved with NWGN and describe how they first came to learn about NWGN.

Third, I asked participants to discuss their involvement with NWGN before the conference and their impressions of the conference. These questions enabled me to get a sense of participants' general sentiments regarding the conference and how meaningful this conference experience was for them based on their possible prior activist involvement and conference experiences with other organizations. Lastly, I asked participants to reflect on their responses to the conference and subsequent awareness of NWGN initiatives.

INTERVIEWS WITH ANA CONVENTION PARTICIPANTS

OVERVIEW OF ANA CONVENTION

Each summer, beginning with the inaugural convention of 1983, members of ANA gather at a different convention site during the July 4th holiday weekend for their annual convention. These meetings provide cultural, social and educational opportunities for Nepalis who are living in the United States and Canada. Often, Nepali families who live throughout the United States and Canada reunite at these meetings. In addition, there are opportunities for further networking through forums that center on women's issues and youth issues that impact Nepalis on a global basis, for example (ANA, "Past

Conventions” 2010). ANA’s key aim is to foster a closely-knit cultural community of Nepalis in the United States and Canada that encourages collaboration among Nepalis on social, cultural, and educational levels. In addition, as Brettell (2005) and Purkayastha and Ray (2009) acknowledge in their study of South Asian organizations, ANA strives to preserve elements of Nepali culture and partners with other organizations with similar interests throughout the world (ANA, “Bylaws of ANA” 2009). Overall, my decision to interview ANA Convention participants provided the opportunity for me to gauge the American Nepali community’s awareness of NWGN’s social impact in addressing women’s rights concerns.

Through my experience as an attendee at the 2009 ANA Convention, I learned that ANA Conventions encompass a mix of cultural entertainment opportunities along with educational opportunities. Sporting events, fashion shows, and dances are popular sites for networking. In addition, through my discussions at the ANA Convention, I learned that it is common for individuals to seek out marital opportunities within the Nepali community at this venue. Furthermore, from a thematic perspective, forums pertaining to career advice and women’s issues as well as film screenings, such as the screening of *Sari Soldiers*, offer educational components for this community. In addition, at the 2009 ANA Convention, businesses ranging from jewelers, travel agents, eyebrow threading professionals, and proprietors of Nepali foods and spices added to this celebration of Nepali culture. In terms of social activist work, service providers such as immigration attorneys and other non-governmental organizations also occupied tables throughout the convention halls. The variety of activities of the ANA Convention made for a challenging recruitment period given that many convention participants were busy

with the proceedings. In the next section, I outline my method of recruitment and take note of the way in which I gained access to this organization.

RECRUITMENT

I registered for the ANA Convention in June 2009 and paid the minimal registration fee online. My relationships with some key Nepali leaders enabled me to recruit interview participants; however, I had no preexisting ties to any of the ANA Convention attendees. I introduced myself to potential participants by randomly approaching individuals throughout the convention halls, explaining my project to them, and showing them my recruitment letter that indicated that I was studying Nepali women's organizations and was looking for their insight. Initially, I feared that I would not be able to capture the attention and interest of ANA Convention attendees given their preoccupation with other convention matters and plans with family members; however, after exchanging cell phone numbers with a few individuals and having short conversations with individuals throughout the halls, over the course of the convention, I was able to recruit nine individuals to sit down with me for the interviews that lasted between 45 minutes to two hours.

POPULATION

Despite the challenges that I faced during the recruitment phase, I succeeded in establishing a diverse population sample of convenience. Of the nine interview participants, they all ethnically identified as Nepali and were born in Nepal. Four of the nine participants were men and they ranged in age from 27 to 59 years old. To give an overview of the migration patterns of these ANA Convention participants, individuals within this population migrated to the United States for higher education and economic

opportunities for themselves and/or for their spouses, or came as children with their families. Some of the interview participants benefitted from diversity visas. In terms of education, all of the interview participants except for one of the men distinctly acknowledged the importance of education for others and for themselves. About half of the interview participants reported that they benefitted from the United States' higher education system while the others received their education in Nepal. Only one of the interview participants, the youngest participant, reported that she was still in the process of completing her educational training. The interview participants traveled from as close as the San Francisco Bay area to attend the convention in Oakland, California to as far away as Florida, Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Illinois to attend the 2009 ANA Convention. Six of the nine interview participants are married and four of them are parents.

INTERVIEW LOGISTICS

I conducted the interviews in the public setting of the conventional hall, which was a hotel lobby. I only conducted one of these interviews at an outside coffee shop. At times, the level of activity in the convention hall was so intense that throughout the course of the interview, children would be running by kicking balls, children cried or interacted with their parents during the interviews, and loud music played in the background. In retrospect, I was fortunate that the interview participants were patient with the circumstances as I tried to create an atmosphere that allowed them to express their insight into Nepali women's rights organizing in the United States. The ANA Convention served as an ideal site for bringing together Nepalis from diverse geographic

locations within the United States and variant social networks and diminished the role of these minor inconveniences and distractions.

INTERVIEW STRUCTURE

I conducted semi-structured interviews for my interviews with ANA members that gave participants the opportunity to reflect on their prior knowledge on the topic of organizations that focus on Nepali women's rights and facilitated the subsequent assessment of the external image of NWGN in its achievement of social change. Within this context, I did not expect them to acknowledge NWGN as a leading force in Nepali women's activism. As noted in the interview schedule for interviews with ANA participants, my membership in NWGN is not a factor that I present to the participants until the end of the interviews to encourage their initial broad reflection on Nepali women's human rights organizations without my mention of NWGN. I also informed the participants that their comments would be kept confidentially and that I would use pseudonyms in my future presentation of findings.

I divided the interview schedule for the ANA Convention participant interviews into three parts (See Appendix II. for a complete list of questions). First, I asked questions regarding participants' background information in order to understand their ties to Nepal and history in the United States. Second, I asked questions regarding the participants' political history and activism to assess their organizational involvement with ANA, awareness of social issues of importance to Nepali Americans, and understanding of Nepali women's rights. I outlined rights concerns pertaining to citizenship, human trafficking, inheritance rights, marriage rights, and economic rights to provide background to inform the participants' responses. Third, I addressed women's

organizations that specifically focus on Nepali women's rights and asked for the participants to speak freely on their awareness of these organizations and subsequent knowledge of NWGN and the realization of its conference goals.

MACRO LEVEL POLICY LEVEL IMPACT OF NWGN'S FIRST CONFERENCE

The third methodological component of this study considers the NWGN Conference's broad outreach in influencing constitutional concerns pertaining to the gender neutrality of the forthcoming Constitution of Nepal. I evaluate the current state of affairs in Nepal in relation to the recommendations that NWGN leaders were invited to send to the Constitutional Recommendation Committee of the Non Resident Nepali Association International Coordination Council in March 2009. This document underscores Nepal's adoption and signature of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the need to implement CEDAW provisions. Specifically, the document outlines the incorporation of an affirmative action plan in Nepali legislation. Other pertinent items of this document include marriage rights, reproductive rights, judicial rights, economic rights, and gender-neutral language in the Constitution. In the wake of a new Maoist government, the Constituent Assembly in Nepal is in the process of drafting a new Constitution. This process represents a turning point in the context of women's rights since it is an opportune time for women to assert their rights in the formation of this central text. For the purposes of my analysis of NWGN's global outreach, I focus on activities that NWGN has initiated at its leadership level as well as its general membership level in line with these activist matters as the third component of evaluation for this study.

ETHNOMETHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

In measuring social change, it is necessary to understand the barriers that are inherent in the process of conducting interviews and the subsequent analysis of participants' responses. An ethnomethodological analytic foundation guides this study that aims to understand the framework that influences the agency of NWGN members who aspire to achieve gender equality within a patriarchal structure. In his ethnomethodological contribution, Garfinkel (1967) acknowledges the subjective nature of understanding responses and speaks of the significant task of the sociological observer to make sense of "the indexical properties of members' talk and conduct" (Garfinkel 1967:11). He takes note of the problematic nature of making sense of another individual's interpretation of the world that underlies his or her actions. He concludes this idea by stating, "As a result, the sociologist cannot avoid some working decision about the various phenomena intended by the term "rationality"" (Garfinkel 1967:262). In line with Garfinkel's statements regarding the role of the interviewer in establishing the participants' intended meanings, after I recorded the responses of my interview participants, I decided how to categorize reported modes of conduct and acknowledgements of social action. I have employed this mode of analysis with the understanding that my interpretation of social action might differ from the interview participants' definitions of social action.

Citing Sharrock and Anderson (1986), Pascale (2007) states, "ethnomethodological analyses investigate how people make sense of the world by examining the interpretive work that people do on a daily basis – the practices through which people accomplish, manage, and sustain, what comes to appear as social facts"

(Pascale 2007:10). She underscores the need to put one's cultural interpretations aside when she states, "In order to examine the techniques through which an apparently objective social world is produced, it is essential to suspend notions of a shared culture" (Pascale 2007:10). Furthermore, as previously noted in the post-colonial theory section, cultural differences can impede accurate analysis. Through interviews that allowed for significant life history discussion, I addressed cultural authenticity.

Even with a solid cultural understanding, clear meaning formation poses a challenge in carrying out this study. In referencing Garfinkel's (1967) "documentary method" of analysis, Pascale states, "In daily life, people rarely say literally what they mean – some things must pass without saying. The point of documentary analysis is to examine the tacit knowledge underlying what is said that enables what is said to make sense" (Pascale 2007:11). Hall (1996) also addresses the role of the researcher in emancipatory action research and calls attention to the necessary component of reflexivity as it relates to understanding the responses of the interview participant without framing an individual's responses to meet one's own cultural interpretation. She recognizes the importance of calling attention to this relationship in the search for authenticity in social inquiries.

As I proceed with the data analysis phase of this study, I am cognizant of the above factors that may challenge my interpretations. This ethnomethodological approach guides my evaluation of the agency of NWGN Conference participants and their engagement in socio-political activities that address systemic inequality. In addition, during the interviews, my persistent follow up questions and requests for elaboration helped to counteract difficulties in understanding the responses of my participants.

DEFINING SOCIAL IMPACT

I evaluate the conference's social impact based on the number of reported representations of activist-oriented behavior that have taken place between the date of the conference, and the interview date, the awareness of Nepali American leaders in the United States of NWGN and its initiatives following the conference date, and the identifiable progress of activist campaigns that champion women's rights pertaining to Nepali laws. I define social impact as participants' efforts to initiate social change in alignment with the NWGN Mission. Specifically, through my interviews with NWGN Conference participants, I evaluate their actions based on comprehensive background questions that demonstrate the participants' activist orientations prior to the conference and following the conference. These in-depth interviews enable me to assess if conference participants altered their socio-political behaviors on a personal level and on an institutional level as a result of their conference attendance. Through the NWGN interviews, I learned about NWGN participants' involvement in activist behaviors before and after the conference, with whom they may have worked in engaging in these efforts, the ideologies that guided their behaviors, and consequential alliances that may have evolved from their socio-political engagement. By incorporating the ANA interviews and subsequent constitutional analysis, I achieve an understanding of NWGN's external influence

ANALYSIS OF NWGN INTERVIEWS

NWGN members who challenge the patriarchal, gender-biased institutional structure of Nepal operate within the framework of a keen awareness of the subordination of women in Nepal based on their firsthand knowledge and experiences as well as how

their efforts will be interpreted in the West. Efforts to restructure the repressive social and political reality in Nepal are forthright oppositional claims that challenge cultural norms. Therefore, interview responses from NWGN participants that parallel the post-colonial theoretical framework, revealing their vested interest in challenging the social norms of Nepal. Some of the questions allowed for NWGN participants to reflect on their political activism and the timeline of their personal awareness pertaining to issues of gender equality. In addition, my analysis of NWGN members' interview responses considers the current rise in the level of concern with Nepali women's issues for these Nepali women who have integrated into a Western societal context as well as the personal understandings and lived experiences of interview participants based on their individual interactions within Nepali society.

Based on the interviews with NWGN members/conference participants, I have identified that feelings of alienation that I associate with the complexity of incorporating a transnational understanding in intersectional contexts limited their ensuing involvement with NWGN. While three women reported that they have become significantly more connected to NWGN and the advancement of the organizational mission through their post-conference involvement, it is apparent that the remaining twelve women reported that they did not move forward with their involvement with NWGN related matters following the conference. In moving on to the analysis phase, I acknowledge that the population of the twelve women whose actions toward initiating social changes in line with the conference mission is a highly active population of women with many life commitments. Therefore, a portion of their non-involvement can be attributed to the demands of life. However, of the twelve women whose conference related actions were

not monumental, I have identified accounts that indicate that circumstances that incorporate reasons rooted in multi-layered systems of oppression that post-colonial discourse, gender as a social construction literature, and intersectional studies help us to define, limited their ensuing involvement with initiating social changes in line with the NWGN Conference mission. The factors that contributed to a lack of conference inspired social change are 1) demographic and thematic conference matters and 2) practical conference matters.

THEMATIC AND DEMOGRAPHIC MATTERS

NWGN Conference participants who identify as South Asian may offer different interpretations of cultural, ethnic, and gender-related issues based on intersectional variations that may impact their association with Nepali traditions and practices. Subsequently, an NWGN Conference participant's given social circumstances relating to her educational attainment in the United States, profession, and class may characterize the nature of the challenges impeding her empowerment and her views toward the disempowerment of others.

Findings from the interviews parallel Holland, Fox, and Daro's (2008) research on educational alienation that silenced women with less access to education from actively participating in women's rights groups in Nepal. Common interests led these Nepali women to assemble for the NWGN Conference. Yet, my interviews with conference participants reveal that the organization inadvertently contributed to a lack of follow up acts of social change. These limitations were based on participants' sentiments of inadequacy with regard to their own educational and professional backgrounds that diminish their confidence in taking on advocacy roles for the organization and concerns

regarding NWGN's focus on Nepal-based issues and the conference's perceived lack of emphasis on actively initiating programs in the United States to assist Nepali immigrant populations who confront inordinate social struggles.

This section of analysis focuses on responses from NWGN Conference participants who identified that feelings of alienation and outsider status at the conference and with the organization as a whole have prevented them from moving forward in bringing about social change in line with the conference mission. Theoretical insights from post-colonial discourse inform the nature of the prioritization of the conference issues. Furthermore, concepts from gender research and intersectionality correspond to findings regarding the identifiable lack of social cohesion.

Specifically, within this analysis, I take note of matters relating to the conference themes that have discouraged these women from taking on a more active role with the organization. Women who were disappointed with the conference themes either had an active awareness of issues impacting Nepali women in the United States based on their personal struggles or based on their professional expertise. In terms of the diversity of my sample with regard to educational background, women who had either completed, or who are in the process of completing American university degrees, in addition to women who had been formally educated in Nepal, reported feeling sentiments of alienation from the organization based on their disagreement with the issue focus and a lack of social capital that has inhibited them from initiating conference based social changes.

SOCIAL PRESTIGE: EDUCATIONAL AND PROFESSIONAL STATUS

In this section, I acknowledge viewpoints from NWGN Conference participants who reported that the exclusivity of the leadership of NWGN and the panel participants at

the NWGN Conference with respect to educational and professional backgrounds precluded them from initiating social changes. Overall, this analysis illustrates how a divide that scholars of post-colonial theory, gender studies, and intersectionality literature address, relating to variations in social background in this transnational context, limited conference participants' roles in imparting social changes. Perceptions of unequal power associated with the intersections of the variables of educational background and professional status are evident in these comments.

Abhijita, a 52-year-old member of NWGN who earned university degrees in Nepal, recognized the lack of educational diversity on the panels at the conference and recognized her personal alienation. She noted:

I feel sometimes out of things because they are professionals and I am not professional. And, I am maybe more experienced and older than them. But, still I feel like oh still, I am just a mom [...] Even if I agree with all their vision and I have their kind of vision but still if there is a conference meeting; sometimes, I feel very awkward.

Similarly, Mukta, a 45-year-old social service provider who does not have a university degree, sensed an educational divide between those who presented at the conference and those individuals who attended the conference. She stated:

Here, most of the women are educated [they received their educations in Nepal], but they are here domestic workers. Then, we need to talk about their dignity, respect and they didn't talk. Or, they talk, the Ph.D., the Masters and the professionals and they blah blah – the high ranking – they talked about that, I didn't really like.

Mukta acknowledged the value of her tangible community contributions absent of a university degree. Recognizing the intersection of demographic matters that may influence an individual's perceptions, it is necessary to mention that women who were

formally educated in the United States or who are presently enrolled in American universities expressed similar views with respect to the professional and educational insularity of the conference and organization.

Dashita, who is 35-years-old, has an American graduate degree; however she is not presently working due to a lack of a work visa. Dashita reported feelings of alienation as a result of her lack of a professional platform to launch NWGN inspired acts of social change. Citing her intimidation as a conference attendee, she revealed that she did not speak up in the larger conference setting:

I know that I was just thinking that since I am not affiliated with any organization, where I can take the action – where I can take some of the access – those words that people spoke at the workshop is all within me – I don't have a place where I can do that. But, with their awareness, you know that if you don't sit in a proper chair, then you don't necessarily have to say anything when you don't have anything to say. But, what they said, I took it.

As such, Dashita's involvement as a conference participant was an educational and inspirational experience without consequential social change. As a non-member of NWGN, Dashita has moved forward with advancing the NWGN mission through grassroots level assistance to the community of Nepali women in her area; however, her actions are absent of any NWGN affiliation.

Elina, who is 20-years old, is presently enrolled at an American university. She spoke enthusiastically of her conference involvement and of her ideas for post-conference follow up through programs in Nepal. While she reported making some initial contacts at the conference, she has not satisfactorily followed up with any NWGN related acts of social change. Elina remarked:

You know how I was more energized at the time of the conference how I want to do all those stuff but I had less resources and less membership from other people. I can't be doing by myself all alone.

In sum, Elina perceived her commitment to her studies and lack of resources as a barrier to her further connection with NWGN in initiating social changes. Elina's lack of NWGN involvement is characterized by her belief that she is a student with limited resources. For Abhijita, Mukta, Dashita, and Elina, their insufficiency in advancing NWGN's mission through conference inspired social changes is related to their personal sentiments of alienation, intimidation, and perceived lack of resources. I conclude this section that focuses on social prestige by accounting for the perspective of a woman who, in spite of her significant social capital to advance NWGN's mission through conference inspired social change, chooses not to formally affiliate with NWGN.

Samata, who is in her thirties and has advanced degrees from American institutions, reported that her noninvolvement with moving forward with NWGN inspired social changes and her lack of membership are related to the hierarchical nature of NWGN. Samata provided insights on how NWGN could more effectively reach out to its broad membership:

We want to have some balance in the overall bigger picture. [We need to create] leadership opportunities for women who are not traditionally considered leaders, women who are not highly educated, women who are not from the dominant caste groups or class groups, women who are not rich; women who don't have the years. And Nepal also has the hierarchy of ages, where younger people are not given the same amount of respect as someone who is older. And so, having young leaders. So, really challenging - not only the gender dynamics but also multiple other oppressions, multiple other marginalizations.

Samata's dissatisfaction with NWGN due to its perceived exclusivity hinders her from further promoting NWGN to the clients with whom she has contact.

Social barriers that are largely rooted in educational and professional matters deterred Abhijita, Mukta, Dashita, Elina, and Samata from initiating conference inspired acts of social change. Contributions from scholars of intersectionality and gender studies explain these findings. The noted inattention to the diversity of backgrounds of conference participants accounts for perceptions of unequal power as a result of generalized expectations that the network audience would find the nature of the panel discussions to be representative. Next, I account for disagreement relating to the thematic nature of the conference that contributes to the lack of social change achievements among conference participants.

ISSUE AREA DISAGREEMENT: FOCUS ON WOMEN OF NEPAL

Throughout the course of my interviews, I learned that many of the women felt that there was too much of a focus on the women of Nepal and that attention to the needs of the Nepali women of the United States was lacking. These findings parallel theorizations from post-colonial literature given this divide in prioritizing reactions to gender inequality that exists on a transnational level. Furthermore, we learn that intersectional analyses must also account for variations in an individual's transnational location that may account for individuals' perceptions. In moving forward, I preface this section by acknowledging the intersection of social matters pertaining to education, profession, and social prestige that also characterizes the nature of these comments.

Mukta's statement clearly articulates her frustration with her perception of the prioritization of issues pertaining to Nepal:

*I don't like their topics, what they are discussing - the agenda. Because when I was in Nepal, **then** we discussed these topics. But, this is the very big one and the privileged women was there. I think they have to talk the major issues. Here it is also women have problem, but they didn't talk about the here. They talked only of Nepal, remote village women.*

While Samata found the conference themes to be constructive, she would have preferred to see more of a focus on the Nepali community in the United States instead of a focus that is reminiscent of Mohanty's (2003) observations of the "Third World woman" who is in need of rescue by those in the West. Samata expressed fervent dissatisfaction with the macro level conference focus. She noted:

We can of course raise issues about what's happening in Nepal; we can help raise money, we can do that. But, we can't really directly change people's lives there. Whereas, here we have the power to do that [...] And, for me, I am much more of a proponent of let's do things locally, where we can actually have an impact. I feel like we have more responsibility here and now. And, that's something that I found lacking there [at the conference].

Samata spoke of her frustration of the topic focus due to her variant human rights agenda:

*People in the audience ended up talking more about **women in Nepal**, their own personal experiences in Nepal. And, I kept trying to bring it **here**, but I felt there was a resistance.*

Unfortunately, Samata came away from the conference feeling irritated with the nature of the discussion and has subsequently chosen not to join NWGN. In this respect, the conference did not succeed in inspiring Samata to bring about social changes in line with the NWGN Conference mission based on issue-based matters. Samata is refraining from furthering her formal involvement with NWGN until it becomes a more inclusive organization in terms of its issue areas and participation.

Abhijita and Mukta expressed similar thoughts regarding the lack of emphasis on the needs of the Nepali community within the United States; however, they did not express their consternation at the conference. As women who were not educated in the United States, they are particularly cognizant of the significant social needs of recent immigrants who may have also have limited educational backgrounds based on their schooling in Nepal. Abhijita commented on the insular nature of the organization and its outreach:

And, also it looks like this organization is only professional people. It does not reach out to the people who maybe need it the most.

Furthermore, Mukta elaborated on the way in which the NWGN Conference overlooked vital problems facing the Nepali community of the United States as she also commented on the hierarchy of status of the women at the conference and the women in need in the United States. Mukta stated:

They [the women on the panels] are accessible women; we need to talk about those who are not accessible. Like, here we have a lot of women. They cannot read, they cannot write and they cannot speak. So, we are helping them to give them ESL class and this kind of. They don't know where to go, how to go, how to give the interview when they get the job.

In sum, Samata, Abhijita, and Mukta recognized a flaw within the organization pertaining to its grassroots level outreach. Their disappointment with NWGN has prompted their involvement with the Nepali community through other channels. Yet, their social actions cannot be attributed to the conference's role as a source of inspiration. They have not been able to satisfy their activist spirits through NWGN involvement.

Mukta, Abhijita, Dashita, Samata, and Elina each found their conference attendance to be energizing, uplifting, and educational; they came away feeling a sense of solidarity and comfort at knowing that so many women (and a handful of men) came together for a day of education on issues pertaining to Nepali people and a celebration of Nepali traditions. Yet, the impetus for their further inclination toward carrying out NWGN inspired acts of social change was weak as a result of demographic matters pertaining to the social prestige level of those who spoke on the panels as well as thematic matters regarding the macro level focus on Nepal. These findings reflect gender scholars' framework that calls for a multilayered viewpoint that supersedes a binary structure of oppression. In the next section, I focus on practical conference matters and structural matters of the organization that inhibited participants from initiating social changes.

PRACTICAL CONFERENCE AND ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

In transitioning to more functional conference matters that have detracted from inspiring social changes among conference participants, this section more specifically addresses my second research question regarding the type of organizational structure that best promotes social actions. Besides the aforementioned thematic, hierarchical and professional issues, barriers relating to 1) the structure of the day's conference proceedings with respect to language, meeting formality, and the lack of a development of a plan of action as well as 2) post-conference projects and communications that stifled group cohesion inhibited NWGN Conference participants from engaging in grassroots level acts of social change. These findings are meaningful in the context of factors

pertaining to intersectionality and how differences in social locations shaped conference participants' perceptions.

CONFERENCE STRUCTURE

LANGUAGE

Throughout the interview process, it became apparent that the English conference proceedings without the option for Nepali language translation were problematic for some participants. In this section, I focus on the lack of Nepali language translation and reference its importance in limiting social change. Conference participants expressed their alienation from moving forward in inspiring others to join NWGN and in subsequently bringing about NWGN inspired acts of social change given this division.

Priya, who is 34-years-old and is currently pursuing an advanced degree in the United States, recognizes that there are Nepali women who are living in the United States who are not as vigorously assimilating to life in this country through learning English and by inserting themselves into spheres of educational opportunities. She spoke of a divide within her community between women who are interested in advancing their educations in the United States and obtaining employment in a professional field, and women who are content to work as fast-food restaurant employees, for example. She spoke of her challenges in reaching out to women within her community, whose English language skills are underdeveloped, to encourage them to attend the conference:

Like you see, the women's festival, they go there – you see, they talk in Nepali. Definitely, there are a lot of women who can talk in Nepali and English both. So, they will talk to you in Nepali – do you want to go? They will definitely say, “yes” – what is it about? We want to go and listen.

Priya cannot reach out to the community of Nepali women with whom she has most contact; they are not interested in being a part of this organization that has an American, academic feel. Consequentially, Priya does not have a platform to assist her in bringing about NWGN inspired social changes within her community.

Samata's concerns echoed Priya's insights regarding language. Samata recognized the need for translation services. In referring to conference setbacks that may have diminished NWGN outreach, Samata noted:

And, then also the fact that it was held in English mostly. And, that definitely made it inaccessible too, and I know it's very very difficult to have it in both languages.

Likewise, Dashita expressed how language had served as a divisive obstacle for a companion that she brought with her to the conference. Dashita stated:

I don't know how many of them are non-educated but I took one lady with me and I motivated her. I told her that there is a Nepali workshop – she is just a 45-year-old lady – and I took her. At the middle of the workshop, she was very bored because she didn't understand anything. The whole workshop was in English.

Dashita spoke of her frustration at not being able to inform her friend better of the nature of the discussion since she had just learned of the topic herself. Therefore, mutually, their attendance at the workshop was not as positive and inspirational as it could have been given this language barrier. Dashita explained:

At the beginning, she was happy and later she didn't understand [...] But, from a personal experience – after this workshop, they made some commitment to reach more women but I don't know how much the workshop has influenced at the lower level.

Language served as a driving force behind the way in which social prestige factored into conference participation; those with poor English skills experienced feelings of alienation

and had minimal inspiration in moving forward with social actions. In addition to language, the formal nature of the conference and its academic feel through the panel discussions comprised of presentations from highly educated Nepali women also restricted conference participants from initiating social changes and from further promoting NWGN's mission.

CONFERENCE FORMALITY

While there were features of the conference that were artistic and cultural such as the poetry competition, the sale of items from Nepal, South Asian foods that the University of Connecticut's Dining Services prepared, and the Nepali dance performance, many of the conference participants felt that the conference was too formally structured. In this section, I note a need for more cultural programming and less structured time.

Taking note of a need for a more flexible, informal conference format that would have appealed more to the Nepali women of her community, Priya stated:

Like poem and cultural programs, in the conference – they would attract Nepali women to go – rather than having meeting and giving a speech for one hour. If you have a speech and then cultural program and poem and all kind of different activities, they [Nepali women from her community who do not speak English fluently] will definitely get attracted to go there.

Abhijita expressed parallel sentiments regarding the formal nature of the conference proceedings that incorporates the level of professionalism that did not necessarily appeal to all conference attendees given variant social backgrounds with respect to language and educational level. Abhijita noted:

If there is a paper presentation done by a lawyer in highly standard language many people they cannot comprehend that people. Many people cannot relate to them but the poetry thing everyone can relate to them, so it was more appealing than everything else.

Furthermore, Samata found that the formality of the conference and the stringent structure of the day's events prevented obstacles to relationship formation since individuals did not have adequate opportunities to make new contacts. Samata stated:

You want to have all these exciting panels and want to have a little more unstructured time. That way, you can network with different people. I think maybe having discussion around different issues that come up that day itself.

Time constraints made it difficult to schedule unstructured periods into the day for casual discussions. Kalpana, who is in her early thirties and has a graduate degree from an American institution, made a similar perception based on the need for more impromptu discussions:

I feel like when you start talking about things like violence against women and issues that are very sensitive, we need to make sure that we give the entire room an opportunity to have that space to talk about it. And, sometimes when you're on the conference schedule, like you don't have that time flexibility.

As such, the formal, structured, academically oriented conference structure, in addition to language barriers, presented debilitating effects on the diffusion of conference themes to an audience with diverse needs. In the next section, I take note of NWGN's inability to develop a plan of action during the day's proceedings to facilitate its future outreach.

UNDERDEVELOPED PLAN OF ACTION

Fourteen of the fifteen interview participants identified that the conference lacked an emphasis on developing a plan of action to be further implemented through e-mail communications and other follow up contacts. In particular, the women who were most adamant about NWGN needing a more robust follow up plan of action were those who

had not taken on leadership roles following their conference attendance and who had not developed a relationship with the NWGN leaders. I take note of conference participants' sentiments regarding the need for conference discussion to develop a plan of action, based on the matters that participants discussed at the conference, to be implemented following the conference and their insights into the present lack of cohesion within the organization as a result of an underdeveloped committee structure for implementing conference inspired social actions.

Bhakti, who is 33-years-old and has not yet completed her university degree in the United States, and Harshini, who is 21-years-old and is presently a college student, assisted with conference planning and logistics for the day's proceedings. Bhakti and Harshini expressed their lack of involvement as participants in NWGN matters following the conference. Bhakti acknowledged that she is less involved now with NWGN and expressed her viewpoint regarding the need for more post-conference directives as a way of coordinating further social actions. She stated:

We had all these people come to discuss things and that was great, but now what, you know? It would be great to send e-mails to them and give them an update as to what's going on. And, I mean the whole group, not just board members, to give them an update, as this organization, this is what we are doing. And, these are the steps that we can take. And it doesn't have to be the whole issues, just one tiny little step at a time.

Similarly, Harshini noted that given that she is no longer helping with conference planning, she is not aware of the organization's future plans for social action and has subsequently not renewed her organizational involvement post-conference.

Cause, when I was helping them, I would talk to them. And, as we were talking, we would talk about issues in Nepal. And, that's better than not talking to them at all. And, it's definitely changed.

Cause, right now I haven't talked to any of them and I don't know what's going on.

Noting that no one has asked for her specific post-conference involvement, Harshini feels that there is no work to be done as a member of NWGN. As such, while she has advanced in her role as a leader of a Nepali student organization, she has not specifically engaged in NWGN mission related activities of social change.

Urjita, a 33-year-old woman with a graduate degree from an American institution, expressed her personal disappointment with not being more involved with NWGN following the conference. Yet, she stated that no one asked her to help; therefore, she has not taken the initiative to add more projects to her busy schedule. Urjita noted:

So, I don't know what I can contribute to NWGN. Maybe, I am just looking for, you know, where I can start, because I don't even know [...] But, I think if an appropriate opportunity comes along; I would be more than happy to be involved [...]

Urjita recognized her own responsibility in taking the initiative to assist NWGN in bringing about social changes; however, she did acknowledge never being given the chance to officially volunteer to assist in bringing about conference inspired social changes.

Kritee, who is in her early thirties and has her graduate degree from an American institution, expressed parallel views in terms of NWGN's lack of a plan of action. Kritee spoke of a need for more activist oriented, direct service outreach events; she noted:

During that conference – during panel discussions, um, I felt that you know that mostly we focused on discussing the issues – um – I don't remember necessarily, you know, developing a plan or anything like that [...] I think it's very important that organizations such as ours – um – need to take the role of activists to advocate, you know, on behalf of the victims.

In addition, Mukta's comments on the need for more tangible planning are reflective of the activist spirit that Kritee evoked in her response. She spoke of the need to engage more individuals in the organization that require education of their rights and to actually see NWGN function as an organization that initiates ways for its members to go out into the community to facilitate social changes. Mukta stated:

Always, we are talking the women's rights. But, some women are not aware; they are reading their rights only inside the room, not outside the room. The program is only for the program and everything is on the paper on the book. Not practical, yes. I want practical things, yes.

She noted that the organization needed to engage in more direct service programming as a way of evolving as a grassroots level activist organization. In other words, the organization needed to demonstrate that it could engage in issue discussions promoting education and advocacy in addition to practical demonstrations of its carrying out its stated initiatives.

Echoing the views of Mukta and Kritee, Abhijita expressed the need to establish the network as one of service provisions as a way of reaching out to a diverse population of Nepali women with variant social circumstances. Abhijita noted:

They need to do something where not only professional women - but everyone can be a part of it so they will know about it. So, just organize something.

In transitioning to the next section that takes note of the problematic communication and publicity network, Abhijita noted that if an NWGN-sponsored event or service opportunity were taking place, she could further promote NWGN as an organization. However, without such opportunities for publicity, she finds it to be difficult to promote NWGN through supporting its mission in her interactions with others.

In sum, without an identifiable plan of action and direct organizational outreach, conference participants were notably unaffiliated with NWGN following the first conference and failed to initiate social actions in line with the NWGN mission. As such, the discussions from the conference did not evolve into identifiable activist efforts in the spirit of the organization's mission. A grave incident within the Nepali community that involved the conviction of an ANA leader who was charged with sexually abusing his adopted daughter demonstrated NWGN's reactionary capabilities through e-mails condemning this man's action; however, as I will focus on in the next section, the dissemination of e-mails was not broad enough to reach all NWGN Conference attendees.

COMMUNICATION NETWORK

Throughout the interview process, I found that participants had variant experiences receiving e-mails from NWGN. Some women, in particular those who had been closely involved with planning for the conference and had established membership prior to the conference revealed that they receive frequent e-mails from the organization. On the other hand, women who were not as directly involved with planning for the first conference and had yet to establish their NWGN membership were not as connected to NWGN via its e-mail network. It was only until I began interviewing NWGN Conference participants that I learned that the organization sends out mass e-mails to an established constituency that post-conference, is in need of a data merge with more current contacts. The application for conference registration included a field for the participant to include his or her e-mail address. Yet, NWGN restricted e-mail dissemination to formal members who had paid their membership dues.

Subsequently, the lack of social actions attributed to NWGN Conference attendance is directly connected to the lack of cohesion through an adequate database of e-mail addresses. For example, when I asked Samata about the frequency of her receipt of e-mails from NWGN, she stated:

No. I mean, I've had e-mails forwarded to me by people, but I don't believe I'm on their list serv.

In terms of prolonging conference solidarity, it is difficult to build off of the conference themes through direct, grassroots level acts of social change when the population is uninformed and unaware of the organization's initiatives and its dissemination of information. Nandita, who is 28-years-old and has university degrees from the United States, reported that she does not get e-mails from NWGN after I inquired of the frequency of her e-mails from the organization. Nandita noted:

I don't think so. I remember when I was filling out the application form [to register for the conference]; I remember giving my e-mail address – but I have not been getting any.

The unintended consequences of an underdeveloped communication network have facilitated an uninformed community. For example, women who were not receiving e-mails from NWGN did not express an awareness of NWGN's response to the scandal that implicated the ANA leader. Kritee's observations acknowledged the need for the organization to establish itself by making broad statements condemning rights violations, such as this affair, when they influence the Nepali community in particular. She stated:

I think as women's organization, we have to take um a leadership role – you know – in regards to this particular issue. I don't think any other organization has put out any kind of statement yet. It'd be great if other organizations would do it too – but I strongly feel that we need to do this.

If conference participants and members are unaware of the scandal and NWGN's stance on the issue, based on a lack of e-mail communication, it is unlikely that they will engage in direct acts of social change that promote NWGN's mission by informing others and educating others about the risks of such cases of domestic abuse.

In sum, an unstructured and disorganized e-mail address database has alienated women who attended the conference from participating in NWGN inspired social changes. Conference attendance and registration did not qualify an individual to receive e-mail communications from NWGN and the organization was not able to reach out to these women who represent a will to participate further and be aware of the organization's activities and stances on current events matters of importance to the Nepali community. Overall, the interview participants' interest in further assisting NWGN is evident in their statements as well as in the time that they took out of their schedules to meet with me to advance NWGN's mission through their constructive feedback. In my recruitment for this study, I specifically e-mailed and/or called women to request their participation. Had NWGN e-mailed participants as an organization, it is possible that they would have been successful in recruiting a broad range of women, from diverse backgrounds and limited connections to the past and present presidents of the organization, to engage in NWGN endorsed post-conference acts of social change. Furthermore, without an established e-mail communication network, efforts to widely promote the organization to the larger Nepali community were unrealized.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

In addressing thematic matters relating to the ways in which the NWGN Conference itself may have prevented conference participants in engaging in acts of

social change and the way in which practical decisions of the organization relating to NWGN the conference and follow up matters, it is apparent that the first NWGN Conference's effects in initiating social change through the mechanism of discussion are limited. In light of the above findings pertaining to social prestige, the disagreement on the conference issue focus, the lack of Nepali translation, the formality of the conference proceedings, the absence of an action plan, and an underdeveloped e-mail database, the effectiveness of the first NWGN Conference was not experienced throughout the course of the fifteen months after the NWGN Conference. Based on my findings, it is evident that a unified organizational structure with diverse leadership from all social backgrounds and age brackets and an effective, established plan of action would have better succeeded in promoting social action at the grassroots level would have seen more identifiable modes of social change given that matters of disagreement that I identified in my interviews would have been identified earlier in the conference planning process. NWGN is in its infancy as a feminist network and it is evolving with each change of leadership and the incorporation of new members. Overall, as an organization, in order for NWGN to best serve as an activist feminist network, it is necessary to develop itself as a broad based community of women who recognize both global and local problems, who engage in actions that demonstrate their concerns, and who participate in advocacy efforts that aim to pacify these issues.

Understanding the way in which certain conference participants responded to the conference based on their backgrounds and the subject matter of the conference offers clarity to the way in which conferences can generate distance based on differences in social backgrounds. As I have noted throughout this section, these findings are consistent

with theoretical contributions from post-colonial discourse, gender studies, and the literature on intersectionality. The women I interviewed identified issue disagreements that post-colonial scholars discuss in the context of establishing unity among these transnational populations. Furthermore, gender theory and intersectionality scholarship explain the responses that identified a need to broaden the discussion by incorporating diverse viewpoints. Next, I continue to address NWGN's efforts to initiate social change through discussion in addition to the organizational structure that best supports grassroots level organizing by incorporating an external perspective of NWGN and its conference.

ANA INTERVIEW ANALYSIS

My interviews with a diverse population of Association of the Nepalis in the Americas (ANA) members/convention participants revealed that they had barely any awareness of NWGN despite the strength of their ties to the Nepali community in the United States, their support for Nepali women in the United States and their activist efforts that promote Nepali women's rights in Nepal. In this section, recognizing that the individuals who I interviewed in this subset are connected to the Nepali diaspora as it is evident through their ANA Conference attendance, I divide my analysis of the ANA interviews into two sections 1) lack of awareness of NWGN and 2) suggestions for NWGN's further organizational outreach. As a whole, these interviews were informative on two levels; first, for their capacity to inform my research and second, in the recruitment of future NWGN members from my interviews and in the dissemination of the NWGN mission beyond the ANA Convention through publicity geared toward friends and family members who would find NWGN membership to be stimulating. I

address the practical role that these interviews played throughout the course of my analysis.

LACK OF AWARENESS OF NWGN

The ANA interviews revealed that there was not much awareness of NWGN and the NWGN Conference among the population that I interviewed. These findings are not consistent with what I expected to find; I had expected that there would have been more awareness of NWGN based on the demonstrated connection that these participants showed to the Nepali community in the United States through their ANA Convention attendance. Only one of the nine interview participants was significantly aware of NWGN prior to the interview. Her awareness of NWGN was based on her past affiliation with ANA and connections that she made during prior conferences. In this section, I introduce comments from ANA Convention participants who are committed to working on programs that specifically assist Nepali women to demonstrate that the NWGN Conference was not successful in initiating social change through the mechanism of discussion that translated into a larger community awareness of NWGN.

Yangani, a 59-year-old woman who has her university degree from Nepal had never heard of NWGN. While this ANA Convention was only Yangani's second ANA Convention, Santosh, who is 31-years-old and one of the four men I interviewed at the ANA Convention, has been attending the ANA Conventions on a yearly basis ever since 1999 when he came to the United States for his college education. After I introduced NWGN and spoke of its conference and role as an organization, Santosh noted:

I did not know that. My sisters [who live in the United States] have never discussed that with me.

Santosh, like Yangani, reports being highly connected to the Nepali community through news sources. While unlike, Yangani, Santosh did not report being directly involved with women's rights projects, he does remain connected to the Nepali community through his frequent reading of Nepali news sources and discussions with friends and family both in the United States and in Nepal. Yangani and Santosh do not work in fields that would closely align them with the work of NWGN; however, I discovered that even individuals at the ANA Convention who are involved in women's rights projects were unaware of NWGN and its work.

Amita, a 27-year-old graduate student, with deep commitments to assisting her community's South Asian population in her free time, reported her unfamiliarity with NWGN:

Um. I don't know. I've been super busy. So, maybe it may have been there. But, I might have just skimmed through it. So, I mean, I don't remember.

Furthermore, Bishnu, a 45-year-old professional in the United States indicated a weak awareness for NWGN's Conference and work as an organization. When I asked Bishnu whether or not he was familiar with any organizations that are specifically working on Nepali women's rights issues, he stated:

Yeah, there are a couple of them. I could send you the link of those organizations [mentioned a woman's name who is a member of NWGN] [...] there are several people. I was telling you there are attorneys [...] woman attorneys who are working on these kind of issues [...] I can give you the contact of those people ... you can talk to them. They are closer to you [...] you are in Connecticut.

While it is apparent that Bishnu did have some awareness of Nepali women's organizations, he was not familiar with the NWGN Conference and the organization.

Overall, it is apparent that an awareness of NWGN was lacking among these ANA Convention participants who demonstrated an understanding of Nepali women's rights as well as insightful attention to Nepali media sources. Following the conference, NWGN did publicize itself with the assistance of a Nepali media network in the United States and a press release based on the day's events; however, these forms of outreach did not effectively promote NWGN to this population.

SUGGESTIONS FOR NWGN'S FURTHER ORGANIZATIONAL OUTREACH

In each interview, I asked participants to comment on the way in which NWGN could have more effectively reached out to them through its conference and its follow up communications alerting the Nepali community to its conference's success. Common to the sorts of feedback that I received were insights regarding the need for NWGN to promote itself more widely on the Internet and through social networking sites such as Facebook as well as suggestions regarding the need for NWGN to expand itself through increased recruitment focusing on more outreach to men, women who come from the villages of Nepal, as well as other organizations with similar areas of focus. These suggestions pertaining to an improved communication network and membership diversity parallel the practical concerns that NWGN Conference participants expressed in regards to their lack of social change initiation.

INTERNET AND SOCIAL NETWORKING

While the Internet is a strong mechanism for outreach, Amita acknowledged that it is difficult sometimes to promote websites given that if someone is interested, that individual will find the website, otherwise there would be no need to do a Google search, for example, on the topic of Nepali women's networks. As noted earlier, Yangani

emphasized the need for NWGN to establish more of a presence on the Internet. She has been looking for sources of funding for her scholarships in Nepal and knowing about NWGN's collaborative resources as an organization with a wealth of connections in Nepal as well as to social services organizations in the United States could potentially benefit her project to fund girls' education in Nepal. She noted:

When you search on the Internet, the key word should be good. It should pop up easily. And, doing Internet, publicize through Internet because young people, young Nepali people in general, they are just very Internet savvy ... YouTube... keywords in Google ... I would say that.

Yangani's suggestion for NWGN to publicize more on the Internet parallels my earlier analysis from NWGN interviews in which interview participants mentioned that they had not been connected to NWGN because they were not receiving e-mails from the organization. A more robust Internet presence and e-mail circulation network among Nepali communities online would benefit the organization's outreach and could have made NWGN more known to Amita and Yangani who live on the West Coast.

RECRUITMENT THROUGH NETWORKING AND RESPECTING DIVERSITY

Three of the four male ANA interview participants including Bishnu, Santosh, and Bijay agreed that there was a need for NWGN to develop a more unified voice and commitment to diversity. Bijay, a 32-year-old man with university degrees from the United States, spoke of a divide within the Nepali community regarding those who came to the United States through the diversity visa program, who may be from village areas of Nepal, and those who came to the United States for educational purposes, who are more likely to have come from the capital city of Kathmandu. In reference to the organizational structure of NWGN, Bijay expressed the need for the Nepali community to develop a

unified voice in the United States in order to address issues impacting Nepali people living in Nepal as well as in the United States. Bijay noted problems within the diaspora that limit the effectiveness of Nepali organizations in the United States:

It's like if somebody is not the president of this organization, he will create his own ... he or she will create his own organization. And even in the tribal groups, like the groups in New York there are like five or six. I don't know why they don't work together. They have their own factionalism. So, that's why when that happens ... when the structures gets into factions ... there is no unified voice. So, that's why I have a lot of issues with the kind of the diaspora mentality of how to organize.

Bijay's insightful perspective parallels my above analysis of NWGN Conference participants' insights that are informed by post-colonial discourse, gender studies, and intersectionality literature. He noted that when organizations are not committed to diversity in their leadership with respect to demographic differences of the diaspora, the consequence might be organizational stagnation with new networks branching off from existing networks as a result of feelings of alienation. Santosh also agreed that partnering with other Nepali organizations would provide an incentive to NWGN's visibility and outreach. Santosh expanded on his comments:

I think the best way would be – try to be connected with all the organizations – all the Nepali organizations that are in the U.S. – and don't imagine that there are too many – every – in a major city there is one. So, if you get that message across to the president of – the committee members of that organization – then you will amount – just like you told me – I'm going to go back and tell twenty people ... and then see how that happens, there is a venue for this discussion and all these things – it is capable [...] I think we ... have a geometrical sequence of reaching out here. It could grow exponentially, no?

In this context, it is apparent that along with matters pertaining to social status factors, NWGN's lack of a strong communicational structure in terms of carrying forth its

messages following the conference to both inspire attendees to follow through with matters of social change and to inspire others to attend may have contributed to its lack of results in seeing considerable social changes that correspond with conference attendance.

In particular, on the topic of why similar organizations continue to evolve in the United States given that many of these networks encompass similar missions, Bijay addressed the way in which ANA is a divisive community and took note of the way in which these splits impede its strength as a cohesive organization. He stated:

It's not a very effective mechanism and for ANA in itself. There's also a difference here if you look at the audience you have here. That is in any conference you're going to see. There is a great division between young people. You'll see a lot of young people here who are students than who come from Nepal. So, they are basically here studying. So, they come here to play football and all that stuff, get together with friends, and drink and have lots of fun. But, there's another segment here which is more family, who have lived here for a long time; who are legal, who are legally staying here, who have citizenship and everything and their kids. And, these young people never connect and the reason is culturally, the people from Nepal who come here look at them as being American and that they do not kind of associate themselves with the Nepali culture and thinking and the other section of the population.

While Bijay's observations are specific to ANA, aspects of his observations can be applied to the described divisions that NWGN Conference participants have noted. While I do not wish to imply that the rowdier group of individuals represents the NWGN leaders who were educated in the United States and who are looking back on Nepali traditions, I feel that this above observation denotes the sort of fissure that exists within NWGN in which there are factions of participants who have different values with regard to the importance and the immediacy of response that they grant toward the remediation of issues impacting the broad Nepali community of women. An intersectional framework

that calls attention to these complex differences in social location explains this phenomenon.

Furthermore, Bishnu recognized a need for NWGN to diversify by reaching to men as a way of expanding the network. Recognizing the role that men have played in the past in designating women's educational rights, he realizes that there is a need to include men in the process of empowering women. Bishnu stated:

I am telling you the women who are coming from that part of the world; I'm not talking about the kids who are grown up here, they are still in the same mode. So, we have to make them aware - men basically - they play an influence in role to educate their own women in their house. So, there has to be a communication of all those things. Hey, you are in new country, new society; think about the issues a different way.

Bishnu drew attention to the matter of NWGN reaching all populations of women given the fact that some Nepali men may not initially approve of their wives' involvement in an organization like NWGN. By demonstrating that NWGN is not just an organization for female membership and that there is gender openness in terms of membership eligibility, Bishnu feels that NWGN could be more successful in increasing its membership base. As such, it is possible that through specifically reaching out to both men and women, who represent a traditional Nepali nuclear family arrangement, to join NWGN, the organization could increase its efficacy with regard to achieving social changes resulting from conference discussions. If men and women worked together, social changes evolving from conference discussions could be family initiated projects instead of singly initiated objectives. Gender scholars acknowledge the usefulness of this paradigm as a way of overcoming the binary understandings of oppression. Overall, Bishnu's suggestion parallels earlier discussions based on the inclusivity of NWGN and the

exclusivity that some of the participants felt based on their conference attendance due to demographic factors relating to the panelists' educational level, professional career path, and class, for example.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Overall, my interviews with ANA Convention participants revealed that news from the first NWGN Conference did not effectively reach members of the Nepali diaspora who are connected to the Nepali community within the United States as demonstrated by their ANA Convention attendance. In addition, the interest that ANA Convention participants expressed regarding learning more about NWGN and in providing their feedback as to how NWGN, in the context of post-colonial, gender, and intersectional theoretical frames, could more effectively reach out to the Nepali diaspora through establishing broader Internet visibility, welcoming membership from Nepalis with diverse backgrounds with respect to gender, class, educational level, professional career path, and immigration status, and networking with other similar organizations is theoretically insightful based on parallels to earlier findings that characterized the reasons for a lack of NWGN Conference participants' efforts to initiate social changes in line with the conference mission. As noted earlier, the lack of social change can be attributed to the conference organizing as well as to the organizational structure. In the next section, I take note of an NWGN initiative to prepare a document outlining the organization's insights for consideration in the drafting of the forthcoming constitution. This section acknowledges the way in which leaders within the organization worked to impart social change.

CONSTITUTIONAL INFLUENCE

With respect to the analysis of the efforts of NWGN members to influence matters pertaining to the Constitution of Nepal, the country of Nepal has not met its previously anticipated goal of finalizing a Constitution by May 2010. On May 28, 2010, the Nepali government issued a one-year extension on the previously establish two-year timeframe for developing a new democratic constitution from 2008. In a news release, Miley (2010) explains that in order to react to the impending dissolution of the Constituent Assembly and Interim Constitution, that were set to expire on May 29, 2010, Nepal's main political parties established an agreement to address this timely concern. Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal stepped down from his leadership in an effort to gain the endorsement of the Maoist party. Subsequently, the Maoist party exercises significant authority over the constitution formation process given the extent of its membership in the present power-sharing government. Rights violations relating to caste-based discrimination, same-sex marriage rights, and internal political conflict are seen as motivating factors to the slow peace process in Nepal.

Given this above discussion, it is pertinent to underscore that the NWGN Conference took place just after the initiation of the formation process of the new Nepali Constitution. As a way of influencing constitutional matters pertaining to gender equality issues, a subset of leaders of NWGN drafted a statement as members of the Non Resident Nepali Association International Coordination Council, Constitution Recommendation Committee. The statement emphasized Nepal's compliance with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) that Nepal adopted and signed. The following is an example of the language from this document:

The Constitution must address caste-based discrimination and lack of access to resources for women who live in remote areas and who are perceived to be part of low castes.

The document contains a number of directives with regard for the organization's unified voice on matters pertaining to caste-based discrimination, education, employment, governmental opportunities, rights in social spheres, divorce and marriage rights, women's health, social rights, economic rights, banking rights, citizenship and nationality, and judicial rights. Throughout the course of my interviews with NWGN Conference participants, I identified a lack of awareness of this document among the general membership. Next, I recognize that I perceived a common unawareness of NWGN's role in the constitutional process through my interviews.

LACK OF AWARENESS OF NWGN'S CONSTITUTIONAL INFLUENCE

In my interviews, I asked NWGN Conference participants if they could identify key projects that had evolved from the Conference and to elaborate on their awareness of these projects. Only the NWGN Conference participants who had taken on leadership roles since the conference were aware of the constitutional influence beyond the discussions that took place at the conference. Some of the participants mentioned their interest in being involved in the constitutional discussions; however, they had failed to get involved with this matter because they were not invited to do so. For example, Urjita stated:

Well, I've been reading up on it. I haven't personally contributed with any of my personal suggestions.

In addition, Kalpana took note of her passion to contribute to the constitutional recommendations and when asked about contributing, she stated:

Not yet, actually I want to get something together. I just have a lot of different issues I want to address. But, yeah, I am planning on sending something, but, I have not yet.

Throughout the course of my interviews, I found that for the majority of the interviews, except for those with members of the incoming leadership team, my discussion of the subsequent discussion with NWGN Conference participants of NWGN's role in influencing the constitutional considerations served an informative role in the course of the interview.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

NWGN as an organization has played a pivotal role in sending forth recommendations to be considered in the forthcoming drafting of the Constitution of Nepal. My findings with regard to the general membership's lack of awareness and involvement with contributing to this activist mission that evolved from the conference proceedings serve as an indicator that post-conference, the leadership narrowly initiated this project without incorporating contributions from those who are not in NWGN leadership roles. As such, the first NWGN Conference served as an entryway to future discussions regarding constitutional matters; however, the forthcoming document evolved from private conference call discussions, leaving an insignificant opportunity for wide network participation. NWGN did challenge institutional structures; however, the recommendations were not collectively drafted to account for the fluidity of the gender-based rights claims. Subsequently, it is apparent that the organization did promote steps toward initiating social actions through influencing the Constitution of Nepal; however, all individuals of the organization were not involved with this grassroots level course of action.

OVERALL TRIANGULATED ANALYSIS OF DATA

Given the above two analysis sections that focus on NWGN Conference participants' views regarding the thematic and practical drawbacks of the conference and the organizational structure, the ANA Convention participants' lack of awareness of NWGN and viewpoints regarding the further dissemination of its message and outreach to interested populations, it is apparent that the first NWGN Conference had a limited role in initiating social changes through the mechanism of discussion. Furthermore, by incorporating my third analysis section that centers on the constitutional influence of the NWGN leadership following the conference, I demonstrate that while the organization did have an influence in sending its views to the Constitution Recommendation Committee of the Non Resident Nepali Association International Coordination Council the general members and participants of the conference were not aware of this matter. As such, the organization did have a grassroots level impact in initiating social change as it is evident through its submitted document; however, the lack of awareness and broad, organizational cohesion behind this submission is noteworthy. In addition, as far as I am aware, only one or two of the women who took part in the NWGN participant interviews was directly involved in the discussion process that it took to draft these recommendations. Insights from post-colonial theory, gender theory, and intersectionality theory explain the organizational dissension that I discovered through my inquiry. In the next section, I consider the sociological relevance of this study with respect to our knowledge of diasporic populations and transnational feminist organizing.

SOCIOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE

My study of a Nepali women's network addresses questions key to gender scholarship surrounding the goals of women's rights organizing in transnational locations. How do locally based transnational women's networks advocate their goals while they negotiate the heterogeneity of network members and affiliates? Furthermore, how does the simultaneity of intersectional factors pertaining to both participants' demographic backgrounds and social locations in a transnational context shape networks' abilities to carry out activist missions? These questions are still missing from the post-colonial, gender, and intersectionality literature. My analysis fills these gaps by analyzing Nepali women's organizing in the United States in response to Nepali women's rights on a global, national, and local level.

The gender and intersectionality literature is useful for understanding conference participants' responses to the conference. As such, participants' social and educational backgrounds and their relationship to the conference subject matter offer clarity to the way in which conferences can generate distance. While social capital from United States educated, professional Nepali women may generate the foundation of organizations with the capacity to advance ideological concerns with women's rights in addition to providing concrete services, my data reveal that a hierarchical leadership structure limited NWGN's trajectory of grassroots mobilization. Women who attended the conference were notably vested in the organization's mission and clearly wanted to do more to engage with the organization as community activists. Limitations associated with the thematic focus on issues in Nepal and social prestige of the conference organizers impeded women from realizing the potential of their conference attendance through

NWGN inspired social actions. In addition, barriers associated with language, conference format, and the underdeveloped plan of action generated a post-conference atmosphere in which participants, recalling the problematic factors of the conference, were not inspired to recruit more members or to advance the NWGN mission based on frustrations with the first conference and a lack of understanding on the ensuing tasks at hand for the organization.

This analysis generates a basis for understanding the level of women's agency that is necessary within this culture to secure rights that the patriarchal institutional structure has historically repudiated. Specifically, this study adds to our knowledge base of transnational feminist organizing because of its focus on an organization that is presently in its formative years. In a transnational context, feminist organizations have gained strength; Tripp (2006) underscores the successes of the global South within this framework in her discussion of a rights-based consensus and acknowledges that feminist organizations of the global North could look to the work of global South nations as a model for their future efforts. Such an observation attests to the unfounded notion of the "Third World woman," as Mohanty (2003) discusses, who is in need of rescue by Westerners. This study contributes to our knowledge of activist work initiated by women of non-Western ethnicities in a Western context and adds to our understanding of the demographics of the women who take on lead roles in initiating social actions within transnational feminist networks.

Broadly, my findings suggest that women's rights networks must evolve as they incorporate new members and include diverse viewpoints in their programming among diasporic communities. While transnational feminist networks express their verbal

commitment to initiating social changes that parallel their core values at their conferences, their strategies for actually implementing these social changes should mirror the thematic concerns and social needs of the heterogeneous network audience and account for the simultaneity of power and privilege. This study demonstrates the social impact of women's rights conferences because they have the potential to be a significant source of social change if they are structured in such a way to allow for the unobstructed contributions of all participants.

In assessing the significance of this study, it is also necessary to account for the project limitations relating to the timing of the interviews and my interview sample. In terms of the NWGN interviews, they took place anywhere between eleven to fifteen months following the conference. Over the course of time, it is possible that women's viewpoints may have changed based on conversations with other conference participants. Just over one hundred individuals attended the NWGN Conference; I had the opportunity to interview only fifteen of these individuals. Most of these women were not official NWGN network members; I did not account for membership as a recruitment factor for consideration. Had I interviewed network members, it is possible that their perceptions would have been different given their ongoing e-mail communication with NWGN, for example.

Furthermore, in relation to the limitations of the data from the ANA interviews, while it is apparent that the individuals I interviewed were unaware of NWGN at that time, NWGN has since expanded as a network to become a leading force in Nepali women's rights. NWGN leaders, for example, are now invited to speak as experts on Nepali women's rights issues. Since my first introduction to NWGN in 2008, the

organization has a new president and executive board, opened a chapter in St. Louis, Missouri, hosted its second conference in Scranton, Pennsylvania in July 2010, has partnered with other organizations such as the Didi Project to globally transmit messages of gender equality, established a Justice Fund to assist women who are the victims of gender based violence, and has held gatherings to fundraise for the NWGN Justice Fund. Recognizing that it is difficult to fully capture an organization's impact as it is evolving, my data provide a prospective of the organization's social impact. Modifications to this study that could have accounted for the issue of time with follow up interviews with ANA and NWGN interview participants may have provided a less critical perspective of NWGN given its evolution to reach out to a wider audience.

CONCLUSION

Scarce literature exists on the topic of transnational Nepali women's networks comprised of diasporic populations. Discussions of Nepali issues are often subsumed in Indian literature. This study specifically attends to the plight of Nepali women in achieving gender parity and recognizes that non-Western feminist networks have made significant strides in an effort to overthrow the patriarchal structures of their cultures. This paper adds to our knowledge base of transnational women's network organizing from the perspective of a Nepali community. I implement a theoretical framework that incorporates viewing the study of gender as a social structure and challenges the binary West v. non-West model by demonstrating the agency of women of this diasporic population to mediate their own roles within their patriarchal culture.

Based on my analysis of my first set of interviews with NWGN Conference participants, I find that while transnational feminist networks that support women's rights

express their verbal commitment to initiating social changes that parallel their core values at their conferences, their strategies for actually implementing these social changes do not mirror the thematic concerns and social needs of the network audience. Conflicts relating to differences in social class and educational and professional status, the prioritization of agenda items, structural matters pertaining to language, conference formality, and an underdeveloped action plan, and a lack of group cohesion through follow up communications following the conference impeded NWGN Conference participants from initiating social changes following their exposure to discussions at the first NWGN Conference.

My interviews with an external interested audience at the annual ANA Convention in 2009 revealed that the first NWGN Conference, in spite of the organizational goal of reaching out to the broad Nepali community for the development of partnerships and awareness on the issues, did not promote conference related social actions because of inefficient communications and networking and outreach to diverse populations within the diaspora. In addition, while the organization has certainly made significant strides in reaching out to the Government of Nepal to demand that the Constituent Assembly take its gender related concerns into consideration in the drafting of the forthcoming Nepali Constitution, interviews with NWGN Conference participants revealed that participants were not actively involved with or aware of this project given that only the leaders took on this undertaking. As such, the conference did contribute to inspiring the leaders to take on this act of social change; however, closed discussions on this matter prevented the full participation of all conference participants in initiating this social change.

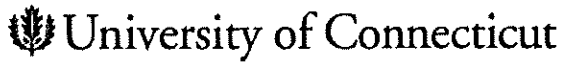
The NWGN participants in my study challenged the conference structure and the ability of one organization to subsume the interests of a complex, diasporic population with women's rights concerns at the transnational, national and local levels. NWGN Conference organizers aimed to foster an environment of solidarity for the advancement of Nepali women on a global scale; however, these findings ultimately show that for the organization to advance to meet the transnational dimension of a population with intersectional characteristics that are shaped by social location, it must continue to evolve to meet the needs of this broadly diverse community with variations in education, issue area concern, language, and social capital for the full realization of organizational goals. The network's lack of attention to a diverse audience in the conference proceedings, post-conference external outreach, and post-conference communication with conference participants may have prevented identifiable NWGN-inspired social change within the fifteen months following the NWGN Conference.

Since the period of my data collection, it is apparent that NWGN is responding to a diverse population of members and interested parties. The first NWGN Conference served as a catalyst for the organization's present role as a leading force in Nepali women's rights. For NWGN to continue to best serve as a transnational women's network with consideration for intersectional factors that embody a transnational dimension of the simultaneity of social factors, the network must consider its broad based community of women and men who recognize both global, national, and local problems and who engage in corresponding advocacy efforts that address these issues. Being aware of this transnational, intersectional dimension and having a diverse organizational structure will better position NWGN for future women's rights organizing.

Feminist network organizing creates opportunities for individuals to collaborate and form coalitions to address rights grievances. Through understanding how and why social changes evolve from conferences, other activist networks can further address specific rights abuses. This study demonstrates the social impact of conferences because they have the potential to be a significant source of social change if they are structured in such a way to allow for the unobstructed contributions of all participants. This research adds to our knowledge of feminist network conferences and informs and positions the future mobilization of NWGNⁱ and other activist networks.

APPENDIX I.

Interview Questions for Site I.



Principal Investigator: Dr. Davita Silfen Glasberg

Student Researcher: Barret Katuna

Study Title: An Assessment of the Social Impact of Feminist Network Organizing: A Qualitative Study of the First Nepali Women's Global Network (NWGN) Conference

ABSTRACT

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this study that will examine the social impact of the first Nepali Women's Global Network (NWGN) Conference that took place at the University of Connecticut on August 9, 2008. The aim of this project is to determine if feminist network conferences can initiate social change through the mechanism of discussion and to evaluate NWGN's efforts to promote social action at the grassroots level. Following the first NWGN Conference, no evaluative surveys were distributed; this interview will enable you to provide helpful feedback that will contribute to NWGN and other organizations that organize conferences as a method of achieving social change.

I will ask you questions regarding your personal history to understand your involvement with this organization and other organizations that will enable me to get a sense of your experiences in Nepal and in the United States. I will also ask you questions about your political activism and background that led to your NWGN involvement. In order to understand the impact of the conference, I will ask you to reflect on your actions following the conference. Lastly, I will ask you to reflect on your involvement with NWGN and the salient issues that you feel are important in moving forward. I request that you do not use names or any other identifiers for the people that you discuss during the interview to ensure that your privacy and the identity of others is protected. The interview will take between 1-2 hours of your time and will be audio-recorded unless you request that I take hand-written notes.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR NWGN MEMBERS

Section 1: Background Information

- 1) I would like to get a sense of your background history. Can you tell me about your life in the United States? Can you begin by talking about what you do on the average day? What is your daily routine? If you feel comfortable sharing

information regarding your immediate family (marital status, if you have children, please feel free to do so).

- 2) Do you or did you ever work outside of your home in this country? If so, can you talk about what you do? Can you describe your work environment?
- 3) Did you migrate to the United States? Or, did your parents migrate to the United States? Why did you or your parents come to the United States?
- 4) Do you still have relatives who live in Nepal? How would you describe your ties to the country? Do you visit often? Do relatives from Nepal visit you here?
- 5) Can you tell me about your experiences as a Nepali woman in this country?
- 6) What do you feel are some of the major issues that Nepali women confront?
- 7) How do you stay current on global issues? Do you read newspapers or utilize online news sources? Do you engage in discussions with friends or family members?

1(a.) For people who migrated after high school

- 1) Can you talk about your experience growing up in Nepal? (Probe to find out about the political involvement of the participant and her family as she grew up in Nepal).
- 2) Did you ever work outside of your home in Nepal? Can you talk about your daily activities in Nepal? What activities occupied most of your time?
- 3) Can you talk about your experiences as a woman in Nepal? Were you aware of issues that impacted you and other women in Nepal?
- 4) How did your identity or awareness of Nepali women's issues change or stay the same in the United States?

1(b.) For people who grew up in the United States

- 1) Can you talk about your experience growing up in the United States? (Probe to find out about the political involvement of the participant and her family as she grew up in the United States).
- 2) Were you aware of issues impacting women in Nepal as you grew up in the United States?

Section 2: Political History/Activism

- 1) Can you tell me about your organizational involvement, in general? Are you a member of any other organizations besides NWGN? Can you tell me about your involvement in these organizations? For example, do you hold any leadership roles in these organizations? Did you become affiliated with these organizations before attending the first NWGN Conference or after the conference?
- 2) When did you first get interested in the NWGN Conference? Historically, how did your organizational involvement with NWGN come about? Can you talk about your first organizational activity with NWGN?
- 3) What made you aware of the issues that NWGN values and advocates in its work?
- 4) Why did you come to the NWGN Conference?

Section 3: Section on Conference (Pre-Conference and Conference Questions)

- 1) Can you talk about your involvement with NWGN before the NWGN Conference? Did you have a role in planning or preparing for the Conference? Did you encourage friends or family members to attend the Conference after you decided to attend?
- 2) Were you active in raising awareness of Nepali women's issues before the NWGN Conference?
- 3) Can you talk about your sentiments as a participant at the conference? Did you find the conference to be engaging? Was there a particular aspect of the conference that you would have modified?
- 4) What was the most effective aspect of the NWGN Conference?
- 5) If you have attended similar conferences, how would you evaluate the NWGN Conference in comparison to other conferences?
- 6) At the conference, one man asked about the lack of attendance of husbands of the female conference participants? Could you respond to this remark?
- 7) Have you ever accompanied your husbands to conferences of organizations to which they are the primary affiliated members?

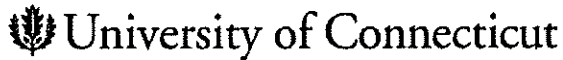
Section 4: Section on Conference (After Conference)

- 1) Do you recall your feelings as you left the conference? Were you complacent? Were you energized? How do you feel now that about a year has passed since the conference?
- 2) Do you volunteer for NWGN now? If so, what is your role?
- 3) Describe your involvement with NWGN after the conference (probe to find out if the individual was inspired to respond to the items discussed at the conference).
- 4) Can you tell me about projects or activities that you have engaged in since the conference that support the NWGN mission?
- 5) Did you talk about your experience at the NWGN Conference with any non-affiliated members? Have you recruited new members? Did you send e-mails to friends or relatives (Nepali or non-Nepali) or communicate your experiences after the conference?
- 6) Can you tell me about projects or activities that NWGN has initiated following the conference? (E.g. recruitment efforts, issue awareness, constitutional recommendations specifically underscoring recognition of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)).
- 7) Are you aware of the leadership structure of NWGN? How often does the leadership change?
- 8) How would you describe your connection to NWGN now? Do you feel that you are just as connected to NWGN now as you were prior to the conference, more, or less connected?
- 9) What expectations did you have from the conference and were they met?
- 10) Looking ahead to the second NWGN Conference that will most likely be held a year from now, do you have any thoughts you would like to share with conference organizers? What do you hope to gain from your membership in NWGN and future attendance at NWGN Conferences?

11) Is there anything else that we have not covered in today's interview that you would like to address regarding your experience as a conference attendee and subsequent involvement with NWGN?

APPENDIX II.

Interview Questions for Site II.



Principal Investigator: Dr. Davita Silfen Glasberg

Student Researcher: Barret Katuna

Study Title: An Assessment of the Social Impact of Feminist Network Organizing: A Qualitative Study of the First Nepali Women's Global Network (NWGN) Conference

ABSTRACT

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this study that examines the social impact of feminist network organizing. The aim of this project is to determine if feminist network conferences can initiate social change through the mechanism of discussion and to evaluate structural aspects that promote social action at the grassroots level for women's rights organizations. Specifically, I am focusing on the social impact of one transnational feminist network, largely comprised of Nepali women, following its first conference in August 2008.

I will ask you questions regarding your personal history to understand your involvement with the Association of the Nepalis in the Americas (ANA) and other organizations. These questions will enable me to get a sense of your background and awareness of issues of interest to the Nepali community. I will also ask you questions about your consciousness of issues impacting Nepali women. In order to understand the impact of the August 2008 conference, I will ask you to reflect on campaigns for Nepali women's issues that you are aware of and the sponsorship behind these efforts. I request that you do not use names or any other identifiers for the people that you discuss during the interview to ensure that your privacy and the identity of others is protected. The interview will take between 1-2 hours of your time and will be audio-recorded unless you request that I take hand-written notes.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR ANA MEMBERS

Section 1: Background Information

- 1) I would like to get a sense of your background history. Can you tell me about your daily routine? Are you employed? If so, can you talk about your employment responsibilities?
- 2) Did you migrate to the United States? Or, did your parents migrate to the United States? Why did you or your parents come to the United States?
- 3) Do you still have relatives who live in Nepal? How would you describe your ties to the country? Do you visit often? Do relatives from Nepal visit you here?

- 4) How do you stay current on global issues? Do you read newspapers or utilize online news sources? Do you engage in discussions with friends or family members?

Section 2: Political History/Activism

- 1) Can you tell me about your organizational involvement, in general? Historically, how did your organizational involvement with ANA come about? What is the primary reason for your membership? Do you hold any leadership roles in ANA?
- 2) Are you a member of any other political or cultural organizations besides ANA? Can you tell me about your involvement in these organizations? Do you hold any leadership roles in these organizations?
- 3) What do you feel are the social issues that are of most importance to the Nepali American community in the United States?
- 4) Based on your personal ties to Nepal and awareness of social issues through news media, what do you feel are the issues that are of most importance to the people of Nepal?
- 5) Can you comment on specific issues that impact the women of Nepal? (For example: citizenship, human trafficking, inheritance rights, marriage rights, economic rights) Is ANA addressing these particular women's social issues?
- 6) How did you become aware of these issues that specifically impact women?

Section 3: Section on Women's Rights/ NWGN

- 1) How would you describe your concern for Nepali women's rights? (I am referring to rights that encompass economic, social and political equality for women). Are you deeply concerned with women's equality in Nepal in terms of citizenship rights, economic rights, marriage rights, property rights, and health rights?
- 2) If you migrated from Nepal, would you say that your concern for Nepali women's issues changed after you came to live in the United States? If so, can you expand on this transformation?
- 3) Are you aware of any organizations that focus on Nepali women's rights? (If the interviewee cannot name any organizations, I will ask if he or she is aware of NWGN, Women for Human Rights: Single Women Group, America Nepal Women's Association (ANWA), Non-Resident Nepali Association).
- 4) Can you talk about your awareness of the goals and functions of these organizations?
- 5) If you have heard of NWGN, how familiar are you with the goals of NWGN?
- 6) Are you aware of the first NWGN Conference? Do you know of anyone who attended the conference? Are you aware of any of the major projects that have evolved out of the conference? (E.g. recruitment efforts, issue awareness, constitutional recommendations specifically underscoring recognition of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)).
- 7) Did you read any press releases following the conference that took place in August 2008? (If the interviewee is aware of NWGN and the conference, I will ask the individual to expand on how he or she became aware of NWGN).

- 8) Are you aware of efforts of NWGN to expand its membership to increase awareness and to promote equality for women in the new constitution? (If the participant is unaware of NWGN and of other women's focused organizations, I will ask the participant to comment on how such organizations can better communicate with the American and international Nepali community).
- 9) Has NWGN specifically had an impact on you since August 2008? If yes, can you please talk about your experience with NWGN? If not, can you talk about ways in which NWGN could have more effectively reached out to you?
- 10) Is there anything else that we have not covered in today's interview that you would like to address that will influence this study of feminist network organizing?

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ⁱ I attended NWGN's second conference on July 31, 2010. While this conference took place before I had the opportunity to formally present the findings from my assessment of the first NWGN Conference, conference organizers addressed many of the problems that I identified from the first conference that impeded subsequent social actions. While English was the official language of the conference, during a panel session that highlighted the Bhutanese refugee community of Scranton and its needs, the conversation switched back and forth between English and Nepali. In addition, the panelists represented a diverse population. Three men had official speaking roles at the conference and there was a marked increase in representation on the panels from women who were not educated in the United States. A pre-conference *Saajh* with dance performances added a celebratory feeling to the conference that may have contributed to a more welcoming atmosphere for all in attendance the following day.