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Positive sexual health: an ethnographic exploration
of social and cultural factors affecting sexual
lifestyles and relationships of Nepalese young
people in the UK.

by

Dr Rajeeb Kumar Sah

Canterbury Christ Church University

**Thesis submitted to Canterbury Christ Church University for
the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

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Abstract

This PhD is an interdisciplinary research project in the field of public health, youth studies, sociology and cultural studies about the sexual lives of 16 young Nepalese aged 16-24 living in London. The research uses ethnography and biography to explore social and cultural factors affecting sexual health and lifestyles of Nepalese young people in the changing world. Sexual health still remains a taboo, which brings struggle for Nepalese young people to negotiate their sexual lives within Nepalese families and community. The current study explores young people's reflections of their sexual lifestyles and experiences, which is embedded in the sociocultural norms and patterns of the society, and their interactions with families, community and broader social structures. The findings suggest that detailed examinations of the connectedness between agency and social context provide more clear understanding of the everyday sexual lives of young people. The changing lifestyles of Nepalese young people in the western world provide accessibility to the new ways of living in experiencing sexual lives through transforming leisure activities and creating multiple opportunities for sexual intimacies and relationships. The popularity of nightclubs and changing attitudes towards sexual lifestyles create concerns for sexual health risks and vulnerability as well as conflict within family because of sociocultural dominance towards relationships and marriage. The data suggest that young people negotiate with several challenges, such as caste issues and parental consent, while transforming love relationships into love arranged marriage. It was found that lack of communication on sexual matters within family fuel the issues of trust and promote secret relationships and females are widely discriminated at different levels within Nepalese society. These structural factors along with lack of appropriate sexual health knowledge and education limit expressions of positive sexual lifestyles and relationships among Nepalese young people. Intersectionality in this study is used to investigate key structural influences of sexual health and lifestyles at multiple levels. This research uses grounded theory to develop a tentative social ecological model, adapted from an ecological model, to understand the positive sexual health experiences of Nepalese young people.

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To

My grandmother, parents, brothers,

wife Lalita and daughter Saanvi

*Human behaviour flows from three main
sources: desire, emotion and knowledge*

-Plato

Abbreviations and Glossary

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BGA	British Gurkha Army
BGS	British Gurkha Soldiers
BAME	Black, Asian and minority ethnic
BME	Black and minority ethnic
CBS	Central Bureau of Statistics
CNSUK	Center for Nepal Studies United Kingdom
FGD	Focus Group Discussions
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
ICPD	International conference on population and development
ILR	Indefinite leave to remain
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IPPF	International Planned Parenthood Federation
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
<i>Jaat</i>	Caste or subethnic group
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender
LR	Leave to Remain
MOH	Ministry of Health
MOHP	Ministry of Health and Population
MOPE	Ministry of Population and Environment
NHS	National Health Service
PHE	Public Health England
<i>Puja</i>	praying or worshipping
SRE	Sex and Relationship Education
STD	Sexually transmitted disease
STI	Sexually transmitted infection
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WAS	World Association of Sexology
WHO	World Health Organisation

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Introduction and Overview

Introduction

The sexual health of young people is a global concern and young people disproportionately experience negative health outcomes because of sexual activity (Russel, 2005a). The focus on negative sexual health outcomes such as teenage pregnancy and Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) and its prevention and management have restrained researchers from exploring the norms of positive sexual experiences of young people (Aggleton and Campbell, 2000). This PhD thesis focuses on positive sexual health and its relevance for the Nepalese young people in the UK. In this chapter, I will discuss the importance of my motivation and self-reflection towards the selection of the research topic. I then explain the purpose of this research study and outline the research questions that will be explored in this thesis. Furthermore, I will explain the concept of young people and sexual health for the purpose of this study and describe the roots and origin of the Nepalese population in the UK. Lastly, I will outline the structure of the thesis.

The decline in age at first sexual intercourse, increase in the number of lifetime sexual partners and changing patterns in relationship formation have transformed the sexual behaviour of young people in the modern society, producing a new dimension to sexual development in emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2000; Wellings and Johnson, 2013). Young people see sexual maturity as a normal stage of their sexual development which identifies sexual behaviour, sexual selfhood and sexual socialisation as key components of the development (Tolman and McClelland, 2011). In contemporary society, sex is more often used as a lifestyle for recreational and communicational purposes than for procreation (Godbey, 2008). It has therefore become crucial to understand the sexual health of young people from a holistic approach, building on the understanding of sexual lifestyles and quality of sexual relationships and experiences; since negative sexual experiences can result

in physical and psychological pain, affecting sexual and mental wellbeing and contributing to sexual dysfunction (Wellings and Johnson, 2013). On the contrary, positive sexual health experiences contribute to sexual wellbeing and quality of life, as well as benefit the control and prevention of STDs and teenage pregnancy (Russel, 2005b).

The United Kingdom (UK) is a multiracial, multicultural and multiethnic society with different languages, beliefs and practices (Nazroo, 2006). Over the last three decades, sexual health has become one of the major public health issues dominating public and political agendas in the UK (Coleman, Hendry and Kloep, 2007). The Health promotion for sexual and reproductive health and Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) strategic Action Plan 2016 to 2019 -published by Public Health England- states that building an open and honest culture where everyone is able to make informed and responsible choices about relationships and sex is necessary to improve sexual health outcomes (PHE, 2015). The Department of Health (DH, 2013) reported that good sexual health is important to individuals and societies and this varies depending on factors such as age, gender and ethnicity. Increasing cultural and religious diversity in the UK has signified the need to understand social and cultural factors influencing the sexual health, lifestyles and relationships of the young Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) population. BAME groups have been identified as having a disproportionate burden of sexual ill health in the UK (Sinha *et al.*, 2005). Despite the provision of sexual health education amongst BAME communities; South Asian young people tend to be socially excluded, marginalised and vulnerable to risks associated with sexual health (French *et al.*, 2005; Testa and Coleman, 2006). There has been limited research on the sexual health of BAME populations and little is known about the sexual health of South Asians in the UK. Although the number of Nepalese young people in the UK is increasing, Nepalese populations have not been part of any of those studies (Adhikari, 2012). It is therefore important to address the lack of Nepalese sexual health research by conducting this study into the sexual health of the young Nepalese population in the UK. This study explores young people's understanding and reflections of sexual lifestyle, relationships and marriage experiences that are embedded in the

sociocultural norms, and their interactions within familial and extrafamilial structures, which plays a significant role in promoting positive sexual health.

Motivation and self-reflection

As a Nepalese young man, I did not have any sex education in schools; nor any conversations about sexual matters within the familial environment. The discussions with friends were often limited to the allure of the opposite sex and our attraction towards them. After leaving Nepal at the age of 19 to study Medicine, I realised that my knowledge and understanding on sexual health and related issues were nominal. As a medical student, my sexual health knowledge improved significantly and I believed I had gained understanding of both social and clinical aspects of sexual health. However, after coming to the UK at the age of 25, I was again at the crossroads in constructing my identity towards my sexual lifestyles and relationships. As an immigrant in the UK, I felt my sexual experiences and expressions were affected by a complex web of individual, sociocultural and economic factors. I had to regularly balance the interplay between my identity as a socioeconomically independent individual taking independent decisions regarding my sexual lifestyles and relationships against collectivist feelings and responsibilities towards my family, society, culture and religion. Although I was edging into adulthood, I noticed that sexual behaviour and practices of young people during emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2000) were different in the UK from what I had experienced over the years, possibly due to different sociocultural milieu or expressions of sexual freedom in the modern society. In my experience, the differences in social and cultural factors seem to have a greater impact on the sexual lives of young immigrant in the multicultural society of the UK. This motivated me to conceptualise a research project that would help to understand the sexual health, lifestyles and relationships of Nepalese young people in the UK.

Purpose of the study

Globalisation and easier access to knowledge has increased awareness about sexual health issues but it has also played a huge role in changing the sexual attitudes and behaviour of young people (Altman, 2004). Nepalese young people are not immune to this changing landscape and their sexual attitudes and behaviour have therefore changed significantly over the years (Adhikari and Tamang, 2009). Experiencing sexual lifestyles and relationships has gained popularity through dating and premarital sexual relationships (Regmi, Simkhada, and van Teijlingen, 2010b; Regmi *et al.*, 2011). Sexual health risks and the vulnerability of Nepalese young people is increasing due to the influences of various sociocultural factors and lack of formal sex education in Nepalese schools (Mahat and Scoloveno, 2001). As most young Nepalese arriving in the UK have spent some or most of their early years and education in Nepal, the lack of appropriate sex education in Nepalese schools has an abiding effect on their sexual lives in the UK (Pokharel, Kulczycki and Shakya, 2006; Acharya, van Teijlingen and Simkhada, 2009). There is some evidence suggesting social and cultural taboos about discussing sex and sexual topics limits Nepalese young people's communication with their families, peers and social groups on sexual health related matters (Griffiths, Prost and Hart, 2008; Regmi, Simkhada and van Teijlingen, 2008; Menger *et al.*, 2015). The changing sociocultural context experienced after coming to the UK enforces young people to create hybrid identities (Hall, 1992; Nilan and Feixa, 2006), which increases the struggle between two cultures (Anwar, 1998), creating challenges and opportunities in experiencing sexual lifestyles and relationships.

There has been a dearth of research on the sexual health of Nepalese young people in the UK. The Nepalese population is part of the South Asian community and belongs to the BAME group in the wider context of the UK. 'South Asian'¹ is a term used to represent people from the South Asian subcontinent, which is comprised of eight countries including Nepal. There

¹ South Asian countries include Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, **Nepal**, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

have been several studies on the sexual and reproductive health of South Asian population in the UK (Bradby and Williams, 1999; Hennink, Diamond and Cooper, 1999; Weston, 2003; Tariq *et al.*, 2007; Ahmad *et al.*, 2009; Griffiths, Prost and Hart, 2008; Poonia, 2008; Jayakody *et al.*, 2011; Cowburn, Gill and Harrison, 2015). However, most of these studies associate the term ‘South Asian’ with research on Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi population and none of these studies have included participants from the Nepalese community. There are marked ethnic variations towards sexual attitudes, behaviour and outcomes depending on the wider determinants of sexual health such as gender, social norms, cultural values, religion, family relationships, peer influences and sex education (Fenton *et al.*, 2005; French *et al.*, 2005). This demonstrates the need to study social and cultural factors, which plays an important role in shaping the sexual attitudes and behaviours of the Nepalese population. This is one of the first research studies on the sexual health, lifestyles and relationships of Nepalese young people in the contemporary multicultural society of the UK.

The sexual health of young people is affected by a complex web of sociocultural factors interwoven together to make an impact on sexual lives of young people (Rao *et al.*, 2012). In order to explore these factors, my inquiry moves back and forth between the past and present lives of young people. This flexibility is necessary to record the factual experiences of young people towards sexual lifestyles and relationships, by eliminating any presumptions and allowing young people to speak for themselves. Since an adolescent’s development is linked to various activities during their growth over time, I have made an attempt to explore sexual lifestyles and relationships of Nepalese young people within the changing sociocultural context of Nepal and the UK in accordance with the social change (Furlong and Cartmel, 2007) and global youth culture in the late modernity (France, 2007). The research methodology for this study enabled me to work inductively to explore different aspect of young people’s sexual lives. New ideas and patterns were developed throughout the research process that were necessary to understand the holistic picture of young people’s sexual health.

Research questions

This PhD study explores the following four research questions:

1. *What are the understandings and experiences of Nepalese young people towards sexual health, lifestyles and relationships?*
2. *How does changing leisure and lifestyles of young people provide opportunities for romantic and sexual relationships?*
3. *Examining the role of structural factors affecting young people's sexual lives towards relationships and marriage.*
4. *How do young people negotiate their sexual agency against structural factors in the sociocultural context of the UK?*

In this thesis, I present the story of 16 Nepalese young people aged 16 to 24, who have lived in the UK for between 6 months and 9 years. The purpose of this research is to investigate young people's changing leisure, lifestyles and relationships against various structural factors at familial and extrafamilial levels. The study investigates intersections of key social and cultural factors influencing young people's sexual perspectives and experiences towards lifestyles and relationships. The aim is to create understanding about the sexual lives of young people in the multicultural society of the UK through the eyes and voices of Nepalese young people living in the UK. The objective of this research is not to generalise young people's sexual experiences within the Nepalese community but to investigate and negotiate variations in sexual health understandings and sexual lifestyle experiences of Nepalese young people in the multicultural society of the UK.

This research fills the information gap and seeks to add to the original knowledge and understanding on young people's construction of sexual health in experiencing sexual agency, by negotiating with structural factors present around them in contemporary society. The wider purpose of this research is to lead the way for further studies that would make policy makers vigilant towards safeguarding Nepalese young people from sexual health risks

and vulnerability. This qualitative research uses an ethnographic and a biographical approach to explore social and cultural factors affecting sexual lives of Nepalese young people in southeast London. Although the primary site for ethnographic observation was Plumstead² and adjacent areas, further observations were made visiting cultural events and nightclubbing organised by Nepalese community³ and event organisers⁴. Besides participant observation, the research collected additional data through the in-depth ethnographic interviewing of 16 Nepalese young people living across London. In an attempt to achieve the aims and objectives of this study, it is imperative to conceptualise young people and sexual health for the purpose of this study and explain the roots and origin of the Nepalese community in the UK.

Conceptualising Young people and Positive sexual health

'Young people' are understood as being in a transitional developmental stage between childhood and adulthood and as being broadly aged between 10 and 24 years, a concept that varies greatly across cultures (Mitchell, Wellings and Zuurmond, 2012). Arnett (2004) argues that 'emerging adulthood' suits best to understand the changing lives of young people aged 18-25 years. Various terms are used to describe people belonging to this age group; such as adolescents, teenagers, youths or young people. However, these terminologies are not used in a uniform way. The World Health Organisation (WHO, 1997) considers young people are aged between 10 and 24 years while aged 10 to 19 years are seen as adolescents and 15 to 24 years as youths. The United Nations (UN, 2008) use the term young people and youth interchangeably for those persons who are aged between 15 and 24 years. The Department of Health in the UK variously defines young people as aged 16-19, under 20s or 16-25 years. For the purpose of this research, although I use the term 'young people' principally, other terms are used interchangeably to emphasise the transitional developmental stage.

² A district of South East London located in the Royal Borough of Greenwich

³ Nepalese community living in different parts of the UK come together or independently organise cultural events within their local communities which is attended by Nepalese population of all ages.

⁴ Event organisers organise nightclubbing or live events attracting most of the Nepalese young people from all parts of the UK.

The term ‘sexual’ refers to “*everything that, suggests, promises and/or stimulates sex*” (Carr and Poria, 2010: 1). The World Health Organisation (WHO, 1948: 1) defines ‘health’ as “*a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity*”. In this respect, sexual health can be understood as physical, mental and social wellbeing in relations to sex or sexual activity and not only to the absence of STDs. The concept of ‘sexual health’ has evolved significantly since the end of the World War II, primarily in response to various political, social and other historical events such as sexual revolution⁵, LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender) movement, impact of HIV/AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) and the ongoing struggle over sexual and reproductive rights (Edwards and Coleman, 2004). The World Health Organisation (WHO, 2006: 4) defined sexual health for the first time in 1975 as

The integration of the somatic, emotional, intellectual and social aspects of sexual being in ways that are positively enriching and that enhance personality, communication and love.

This initial definition of sexual health laid the foundation for a comprehensive understanding of human sexuality and its relationships to health outcomes beyond the absence of disease or infirmity. It emphasised components that promoted sexual wellbeing and enhanced positive dynamics of the sexual lives of the population. The discussion and consultations for defining sexual health are ongoing and there have been several revisions by different bodies. For example, the 1994 International conference on population and development (ICPD)⁶ included sexual health as a part of reproductive health. Reproductive health included care for sexual health in a broader context, beyond fertility and illness, to enhance life and personal relations. Later, sexual and reproductive rights were included; considering human rights of women in deciding their sexuality and sexual and reproductive health freely

⁵ The social movement that challenged the traditional codes of behaviour related to sex and sexuality throughout the Western world during 1960s to 1980s.

⁶ ICPD took place in Cairo where 179 countries, including the UK, agreed and adopted a 20 year programme of action emphasizing integral links between population and development focussing on individuals’ needs and rights in sexual and reproductive health and improving it.

without coercion, discrimination and violence (IPPF, 2008). Consequently, the current working definition⁷ of sexual health is the result from a meeting held by WHO in 2002, where consensus was achieved amongst global experts to include aspects of mental health and human rights in defining sexual health (Edwards and Coleman, 2004). This revised definition is widely used when considering new research or creating new strategies or sexual health promotion campaigns around the world (WHO, 2006: 5).

A state of physical, emotional, mental, and social well-being in relation to sexuality; it is not merely the absence of disease, dysfunction, or infirmity. Sexual health requires a positive and respectful approach to sexuality and sexual relationships, as well as the possibility of having pleasurable and safe sexual experiences, free of coercion, discrimination and violence. For sexual health to be attained and maintained, the sexual rights of all persons must be respected, protected and fulfilled.

The current definition of sexual health incorporates positive, autonomous, respectful and pleasurable aspects of sexual experiences; broadening the public health context of sex and sexuality and thereby highlighting the importance of wider determinants of sexual health in achieving sexual rights of the population, through the experience of positive sexual health (Aggleton and Campbell, 2000). It is crucial to protect the sexual rights of young people; which constitutes the right to have sex education, protection from sexual health risks, experiencing sexual lifestyles in making an independent decision to be sexually active or not, choosing partners to have consensual sexual relationships with and making independent decisions in opting for relationships and marriage (WHO, 2006; Lottes, 2013; Galati, 2015). Russel (2005b) describes that positive sexual health experiences among young people is not only about sexual dysfunctions and avoidance of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) or unintended pregnancy but also about sexual

⁷ The working definition was developed through a consultative process with international experts beginning with the Technical consultation on Sexual health in January 2002. It does not represent an official position of WHO but it offers a greater understanding about sexual health.

rights, lifestyles and fulfillment of equitable relationships; achieving mutual and pleasurable sexual experiences.

Historically, the sexual health of young people has often been interpreted as a source of problem and risks. Dencsombe (2001) advocates an '*alternative perspective*' to understanding the health risks involved, whereby it is necessary to understand the social construction of young people's sexual lives in their choices of sexual lifestyles and relationships. Veal (1993: 247) describes, "*lifestyle is the distinctive pattern of personal and social behaviour characteristic of an individual or a group*". Lifestyle in western societies involves choice; where the degree of freedom of choice varies depending on individuals, groups, space and time. Sexual lifestyles are individually constructed behaviours to make their own free choices of relationships and marriage, which is adapted in response to their social, cultural and economic environments (Wellings, 2012). The sexual lives of young people in the western society of the UK are characterised by individualised leisure activites and lifestyles; shaped by social structures such as social class, gender, culture, religion, ethnicity family relationships and access to sex education, internet and media.

The new perspective of positive sexual health focus on an in-depth investigation into affirmative meanings of sexual ideation and experiences of young people that are shaped by complex interactions of ideological, biological, social, cultural, familial and extrafamilial influences (Aggleton and Campbell, 2000; Russell, 2005b; Diamond, 2006). Structural factors such as society, culture, religion and family relationships affect sexual rights of young people in experiencing sexual lifestyles and making independent decisions towards relationships and marriage. In this thesis, I focus on affirmative definition of sexual health, which incorporates 'sexual lifestyles' and 'sexual relationships'. I focus on the need to consider sexual rights and sexual fulfillment within equitable relationships and to explore and understand young people's sexual lives in accordance with positive sexual health. Here, I use the terms sexual health, sexual lifestyles, sexual relationships, sexual rights and sexual lives; independently, in combination and interchangeably to

debate the sexual health of Nepalese young people. Sexual health, lifestyle and relationship issues covered in this thesis are shaped by the analysis of data collected during participant observation and in-depth interviewing of Nepalese young people in experiencing their sexual lives in the sociocultural context of the UK.

Roots and Origin: Nepalese community in the UK

In order to undertake this PhD, it is important to offer some background context of the Nepalese population, which guides to understand the formation of the Nepalese community within the UK. This section discusses the geographical outline of Nepal, its historical connection with the UK, the formation of the Nepalese community in the UK and also provides an overview of the Nepalese population within the UK.

Nepal is a landlocked sovereign South Asian country between India and China with a total population of 28 million (Ministry of Population and Environment (MOPE, 2016). The geographical landscape of Nepal is divided into three regions: Terai, Hill and Mountain. I come from the Terai or Madhesh, which is a southern strip of flat lowland tropical and subtropical region covered with rich cultivable and fertile lands, along the Nepal-India border. The Hill or Pahad region incorporates the capital city Kathmandu and is home to most of the British Gurkha Soldiers (BGS). Most of the research participants for this study come from this region of Nepal. The Mountain or Himalayan region in the northern part of Nepal is home to 8 of the 10 highest peaks of the world. Nepal is admired all over the world for its distinct features. Nepal is the home to the highest peak of the world, “*The Everest*”, which attracts visitors from around the world. The bravery, honesty and courage of the BGS is well recognised by the British population and people around the world. The BGS has served in the British troops since 18th century, initially for the East India Company and now for the British Army.

Map of Nepal

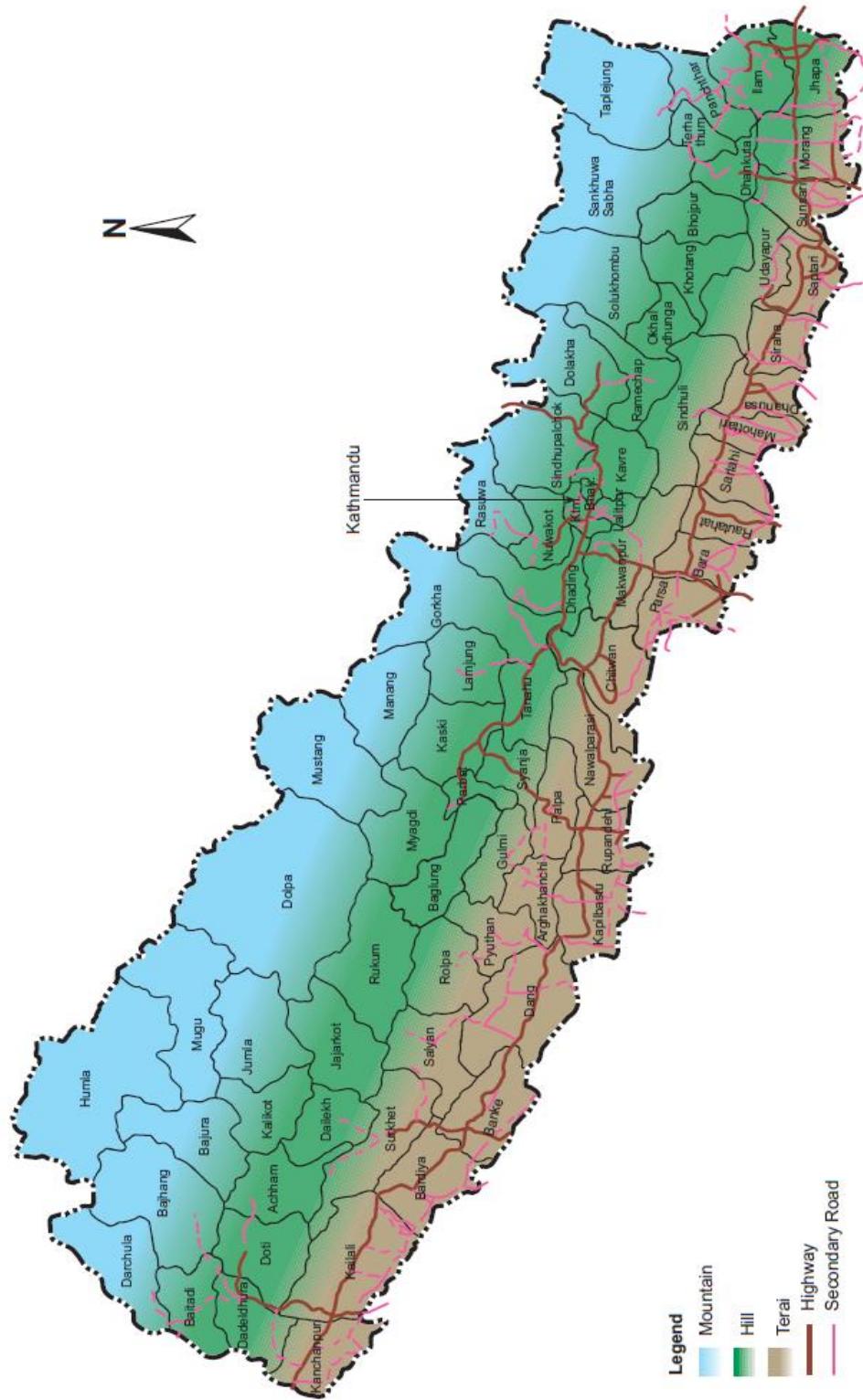


Figure 1: Map showing three regions of Nepal

Source : The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF, 2006)

During the mid-nineteenth century, Nepal gained further attention and became popular on the world stage due to the “*Hippie Trail*”⁸. In the 1960s, Kathmandu was best known as the last stop on hippie trail. It is believed that people were attracted to Nepal as cannabis was readily available for consumption (Blackman 2004). Cannabis is connected to the Hindu religion and is considered a gracious gift for Lord Shiva devotees (Dhital *et al.*, 2001). The religious allegiance still remains an integral part of Nepalese society. The only Hindu kingdom of Nepal has now become a secular federal republic with Hindu still a major religion followed by over 81 % of the population and Buddhism by 9% (MOHP, 2011a). The connection between Hinduism and Buddhism is well established, as Lord Buddha -a symbol of peace- was born in a Hindu family in the Lumbini district of Nepal. Hinduism has played a crucial part in the development of Buddhism and this interrelationship can be readily seen among the Nepalese population living in Nepal and the UK, where families affiliate themselves with duality in religion.

Hinduism manifests itself in different forms and is considered both as a way of life and a highly organised social and religious system where caste is the Hindu form of social organisation. According to Hindu Veda the four categories of caste originated from a primordial cosmic man, who was sacrificed at the beginning of the creation of humankind: the mouth became the priest (*Brahmin*), the arms the warrior (*Kshatriya*), the thighs the merchant (*Vaishya*) and the feet the outcaste (*Sudra*) (Kunwor, 1984; Clarke, 1995). King Jayasthiti Malla (1382-1395 AD) of Kathmandu first decreed the law that stratified the whole Nepali society based on the division of *Tagadhari* and *Matwali*: *Tagadhari* were the ruling elites, who wore a sacred thread on their body and included *Brahmins*, *Kshatriyas*, *Thakuris*; *Matwalis* were the people originating from hills and included castes such as *Rai*, *Magar*, *Limbu*, *Gurung*, *Tamang*, *Sherpa*, *Newar*, *Tharu*, *Sunuwar* (Dhital *et al.*, 2001; Jhingan *et al.*, 2003). The National Census of Nepal in 2011 reported that there were 126

⁸ An overland route linking Europe to Asia attracting people from western countries like USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Europe along the overland route on a journey searching for spiritual enlightenment, and experiencing fundamental ethos of communal living, harmony with nature, experimentation, and recreation drug use (Johanson, 2012; Gregory, 1974)

*jaat*⁹ with more than 10 religious affiliations and 123 spoken languages and dialects (CBS, 2012). Although the caste system has changed significantly in the modern age, the Nepalese population have seen only limited transformation of the caste system in their everyday lives (Subedi, 2011).

Nepal was considered as one of the peaceful countries in the world. However, in the last two decades, Nepal has experienced severe social and political uncertainties because of the royal massacre¹⁰, abolishment of the monarchy¹¹, Maoist insurgency (Hachhethu, 2008), the people's revolution, massive earthquakes, struggle during the constitution writing, unofficial blockades from India, unrest and protest against the implementation of constitution in the southern part of the country and currently the implementation of the constitution at local, state and national levels through democratic elections. The ongoing political crisis and natural adversities¹² have led to renewed problems of poor health, poverty, bad governance, unemployment and corruption. As a result, large numbers of young people have been migrating to other countries for work, study and settlement. According to 2011 Census, Nepal has over 5 million young people aged 15-24 years; however, about a million (one fifth) were reported to be living abroad (CBS, 2012). Approximately 900 migrant workers leave Nepal every day for overseas employment; most of them are young people below the age of 25 years (IOM, 2012). Although Gulf countries are major destinations for labour migration, many have migrated to the United Kingdom, the United States, Australia, India, China and Canada for study and as highly skilled migrant worker.

⁹ Jaat is caste or subethnic groups within Nepalese population. In the context of UK, Nepalese is an ethnic group, caste or jaat can be understood as subethnic groups within the Nepalese ethnic population.

¹⁰ The Nepal Royal Family massacre in 2001 saw the King and Queen of Nepal being shot dead after the heir to the throne went on the rampage with a gun before turning it on himself (BBC, 2001).

¹¹ Nepalese people voted to abolish the royal rule and end the 240 years of monarchy (BBC, 2008)

¹² The political crisis includes the Indian Blockade and the ongoing constitutional crisis. The natural adversities include the April 2015 Earthquake that killed around 9000 people and affected 40 percent of the total population in 39 out of 75 districts in Nepal (MercyCorps, 2016). The other natural disaster includes the August 2017 Flooding in the Southern part of Nepal.

The increase in the Nepalese migrant population living in the UK started around the middle of the twentieth century and remained low till last decade (Adhikari, 2012). The 2001 UK Census recorded 5938 Nepalese living in the UK; probably the true number were underestimated, as 2001 Census of Nepal suggested these numbers to be 7221 (Adhikary *et al.*, 2008; Casey, 2010). The settlement rights for Gurkhas in 2004 and changes in the UK visa policy resulted in an increasing number of Nepalese migrants coming to the UK as Gurkha settlers, professionals, students, refugees and asylum seekers (Sims, 2008). The UK census (2011) recorded 60,202 people of Nepalese origin living in England and Wales, a rise of over 1000 per cent since the last census. The Centre for Nepal Studies UK (CNSUK) estimated the total number of Nepalese population at 80,000, whereas Nepalese community organisations in the UK estimate the real number to be much higher (Adhikari, 2012). There are no available data about the number of young Nepalese living in the UK. However, limited statistics from the survey conducted by CNSUK in 2008 shows that about 25% of the total Nepalese population in the UK is in the age group of 15-24 years (*Ibid.*, 2012).

The Nepalese population in the UK predominantly comprises of the retired BGS and their families and accounts for about 60% of the total Nepalese population in the UK (Gellner, Hausner and Shrestha, 2014). Most Gurkhas belong to subethnic groups or castes such as *Gurung*, *Limbu*, *Magar*, *Rai*, *Tamanag*, *Sunuwar* and come from the Hill districts of Nepal (See fig.1). The CNSUK survey identified people from 26 castes living in the UK; which included the Gurkhas as well as other castes such as *Bahun*, *Chettri*, *Newar*, *Thakuri* and people from *Madheshi* and *Dalit* groups (Adhikari, 2012). Although people from different castes have their own languages, most of them share and speak “Nepali” as the national language and affiliates themselves with Hinduism or Buddhism or both. The religious affiliations of the Nepalese population, although similar, are quite complex and many associate themselves with paired or multiple religions. Although half of them practice Hindu religion, this is less than in Nepal and their affiliation is often together with Buddhism. Buddhism followers among Nepalese communities in the UK are higher compared to that in Nepal. However, the trend of associating with

multiple religions continues even in the UK. In addition, many Nepalese are attracted to the Hindu Gurus like ‘*Sai Baba*’ and ‘*Osho*¹³. Most people from Nepalese community visit Indian temples for Hindu rituals and celebrate Hindu festivals. Many of these populations also celebrate Buddhist festivals.

In 2011, Nepalese communities in Greenwich came together to open the first Nepalese Hindu (Pashupatinath) Temple¹⁴, just a mile away from Plumstead high street, to promote the Hindu religion within the context of Nepalese cultural philosophies. It organises regular events and prayer on most auspicious religious occasions such as *Dashain*, *Tihar*, *Nag Panchami*, *Shivratri* and *Teej*. Religion among Nepalese population is neither fixed nor monolithic but it is contested, fluid, and often multiple. Hausner and Gellner (2012) states that the Nepalese populations in the UK are culturally and religiously diverse and for many Nepalese, religious identities or labels are not of much importance; though for others, religious affiliations are predictable and fixed. For Nepalese young people, the cultural and religious affiliations play an important role in shaping leisure, sexual lifestyles, relationship and marriage.

Structure of the Thesis

The thesis is organised into ten chapters; in addition to the introduction and overview section, bibliography and appendices. Each chapter of this thesis evaluates key social and cultural factors and provides analysis at individual, familial and extrafamilial level, which supports towards the understanding of a tentative social ecological model of positive sexual health¹⁵. The structure of the thesis is as follows:

Chapter One: *Literature reviews and theoretical frameworks* provides a selective review of the relevant literature, which situates the research in the

¹³ *Sai Baba* and *Osho* are Hindu philosophers, who attracts followers with their philosophies.

¹⁴ The details about this Hindu temple can be read at <http://pashupatinath.nationbuilder.com/> (Accessed on 18/08/2017).

¹⁵ Explained in the conclusion chapter (see section 10.1)

field of sexual health, youth studies and sociology in the modern societies of the changing world. The chapter illustrates the sexual lives of young people; characterised by individualised lifestyles and relationships which are shaped by various structural factors such as social class, culture, religion, ethnicity, family relationships and sex education. The theoretical framework for this research is informed by the social ecological model, which brings the leisure and lifestyles at individual level together with the structural factors at familial and extrafamilial levels to study the sexual lives of Nepalese young people. I use intersectionality from the public health perspective to explain the intersections of these factors at multiple levels.

Chapter Two: Research methodology and methods provides a detailed account of the theoretical underpinnings for the choice of the research methodology and methods used to conduct this study. The preparation of the data collection is explained with an ethnographic observation of the ‘Nepalese Hub’ and illustration of the journey in accessing and exploring research sites to present them as ‘an ethnographic site’. The selection of an ethnographic site makes way for engagement with the Nepalese community, which helped in sampling young people and the research site for the purpose of this study. I explain the use of participant observation and in-depth interviewing for the data collection and knowledge production. Ethical considerations explain the importance of research ethics and illustrate how they were considered throughout the research process. In addition, I define and conceptualise ethnography and its connection to biography, which binds this research together. I explain my positionality and illustrate the use of reflexivity during the fieldwork and interviews. In the process, I discuss my struggle with identity as an ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ in the context of the fieldwork. Subsequently, I explain the process of data transcription and data analysis to present the voice of young people through ethnographic writing.

Chapter Three: Changing leisure and lifestyle: a new way of living investigates the leisure and lifestyle changes experienced by Nepalese young people at the individual level with the negotiations of the familial factors. The chapter discusses the opportunities created by leisure for young people to

experience their sexual lifestyle and relationship in the contemporary society of the UK and illustrates concerns raised by structural factors that limit the involvement in a new way of living. Young males see sexual engagement as a part of leisure lifestyle and experience it in the form of casual sex or by visiting sex workers; while females, although expressing positive attitudes towards casual sex, disagreed that it was part of leisure activity. The sociocultural acceptance of alcohol within Nepalese society has created a distinct culture of intoxication that presumably pursues young people towards the risk taking behaviour.

Chapter Four: *Nightclubbing as a lifestyle: a private space for sexual intimacy* illustrates nightclubbing as a new way of experiencing changing leisure and lifestyle at the individual level. The ethnographic observations demonstrate that young people create a private space within the leisure context to experience their sexual lives and discover opportunities for fanciful relationships in the changing leisure spaces. It was found that the nightclub setting constructs a private and confidential confined space to experience sexual intimacies and relationships in warm and loving surroundings. I argue that the Nepalese young people are increasing their participation in nightclubbing and see it as part of their sexual lifestyle. Lastly, I examine the challenges and constraints perceived by young Nepalese while experiencing nightclubbing as part of their transformed lifestyle.

Chapter Five: *Young people's sexual lifestyles and relationships* explores sexual intimacies and relationships of young people at the individual level, which is constrained and influenced by factors at the familial level. I investigate the secret nature of dating and romantic relationships among Nepalese young people where boys are expected to make the first move within a relationship. In addition, I examine the importance of gender roles and differing expectations of sexual intimacy within a romantic relationship. I will discuss young people's attitudes towards premarital sex and investigate sexual double standard towards female virginity. Following this, I will explore the reasons behind 'breakup', which is often due to the change in personal circumstances or family pressure.

Chapter Six: Continuum of marriage: contesting young people's views assesses the marital beliefs of Nepalese young people at the individual level and explores the practices of marriage within Nepalese communities at familial and extrafamilial level. Here, I explore young people's perceptions of marriage and their negotiations in addressing the struggle between deciding for love and arranged marriage. Young people's conformity towards parental consent coupled with the importance of caste for marriage in the collectivist family create an erratic space between consent and coercion for the young people. As a result, young people are inclined to agree to an arranged marriage and therefore compromising their freedom to express sexual rights towards selecting a preferred partner for a consensual sexual relationship. The chapter concludes with the discussion of a case study that illustrates an alternative form of marriage -'love arranged marriage'- which is a transformation of love relationship into an arranged marriage and is presumably preferable the young people as well as parents.

Chapter Seven: Parental connectedness, gender norms and communication on sexual health looks at young people's relationships with their parents and explores the challenges of communication on sexual matters within the familial environment, which lies at the intersections of individual and familial level and is also influenced by the extrafamilial factors. I begin with the discussion on young people's limited parental connectedness that often restricts communication on sexual matters within Nepalese families. I examine young people's struggle to meet family expectations and strictness, fueling trust issues. I will then present a case study to investigate gender discrimination among Nepalese families and societies, which often restricts young women to express their freedom and makes their sexual lives hypersensitive. I conclude this chapter with the discussion of 'a ripple effect' where people start spreading rumours depicting women's characterisation and mocking their dignity.

Chapter Eight: Young people's perceptions and experiences of changing cultural and/or religious norms addresses young people's perceptions about the importance of religion and culture at the familial level,

which is often influenced by the extrafamilial context. The chapter explores changing sociocultural norms and religious beliefs among Nepalese young people. I argue that young people's understanding of culture and religion are interconnected and associations are fluid and therefore diminishing to adapt to the busy life of the UK society. The findings suggest that young people do not consider cultural/religious beliefs play a central role in shaping their everyday sexual lives, although the interactions of structural factors prompt young people to disguise their sexual lives at familial and extrafamilial levels.

Chapter Nine: *Young people's sexual health education and knowledge* focuses on young people's sexual health knowledge and understanding, as well as its interconnection with the accessibility of sex education through school, internet and media; which is often associated with the extrafamilial context. I explain the journey of Nepalese young people in accessing sex education in the schools of Nepal and the UK. I argue that young people, especially females, get limited support regarding their sexual development; which make them to rely on family, peers, internet and media for relevant sexual health knowledge. As a result, young people have limited and dispersed knowledge about their sexual lives, which I explain through 'an aerosol effect'.

Chapter Ten: *Conclusions and recommendations* summarises young people's perceptions of their sexual lifestyles while experiencing relationships and marriage within the constraints of familial expectations, traditional sociocultural norms and lack of sexual health education. I puts forward an exploratory theoretical model to understand the positive sexual health of Nepalese young people in the UK, which is adapted from the social ecological model. I outline the opportunities and challenges identified during the use of ethnographic methods for this study. I then conclude the overall findings of the thesis by discussing the positive sexual health and the contextual factors that affects the sexual lives of the Nepalese young people. I discuss the importance of gender norms to understand the concerns of gender discrimination within the Nepalese patriarchal society. There will also be a discussion on the use of intersectionality in this thesis, in an attempt to

understand the multiple levels of intersection between different structural factors and their influence on sexual health, lifestyles and relationships of Nepalese young people. The thesis ends with a series of recommendations for future areas of research.

Chapter One: Literature reviews and theoretical frameworks

1.1 Introduction

This chapter undertakes a selective literature review on sociocultural factors affecting the sexual health, lifestyles and relationships of young people and describes the theoretical framework that situates this thesis within the academic debates of sexual health, youth studies, sociology and cultural studies. I start the discussion with literature search strategies followed by looking at the sexual health and wellbeing of the Nepalese population in the UK and discussing the understanding of the sexual lives of young people through their agentic experiences, shaped by structural factors around them in contemporary western society. The discussion recognises the social changes that have transformed the leisure and lifestyles affecting the sexual lives of young people in the modern world. This brings the changes in young people's attitudes and experiences towards romantic relationships and sexual intimacies; which alters the sociocultural practice of marriage, causing concerns for both young people and their parents. The choice of sexual lifestyles and relationships is embedded within the societal structure where communication related to sexual health topics within the family, sociocultural norms and religious values play a significant role in shaping the sexual lives of young people. The lack of sex education limits the knowledge and understanding of sexual health, lifestyles and relationships affecting the sexual lives of young people. I examine the social ecological model and intersectionality theory to provide the theoretical framework to understanding the social and cultural factors affecting the sexual health, lifestyles and relationships of young people at multiple levels in the wider multicultural society of the UK.

1.2 Selective review of the literature

For the purpose of this thesis, I undertake a selective review of the literature on social and cultural factors affecting sexual health, lifestyles and

relationships of Nepalese young people in the United Kingdom and Nepal. The keywords used for the purpose of this literature search were young people, sex, relationships, sexual, health, leisure, lifestyle, nightclub, knowledge, wellbeing, attitude, behaviour, romantic, marriage, romance, intimacy, sexual communication, parental connectedness, social, culture, religion, caste, Black and Minority Ethnic (BME), Nepal and United Kingdom. The synonyms of the keywords and alternative spellings, where appropriate, were identified such as youth, adolescence, teenagers, behavior. Similarly, an appropriate truncation and combined keywords such as sexual health, sexual lifestyle, sexual relationship, nightclub* were used to capture all relevant materials for the words and phrases. In addition, the Boolean operators 'AND' and 'OR' were used to combine the topic areas together. The initial literature search was done using Google Scholar and Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU) Library Search, which were then extended to searching databases such as Pub Med and Science Direct.

The initial aim was to include studies related to sexual health and wellbeing of Neaplese young people in the United Kingdom. However, due to the lack of research about sexual health and wellbeing of the Nepalese population in the UK, the literature search included sexual health research related to Nepalese young people in Nepal and BME groups in the UK. The abstract of all the journal articles published in English language were reviewed to identify research articles with a focus on young people's sexual health, lifestyles and relationships. In addition, the British Library catalogue and web based information were searched to identify studies and reports relevant to Nepalese population.

1.3 Sexual health and wellbeing of Nepalese population in the UK

There has been a lack of research about the health and wellbeing of the Nepalese population in the UK. Only few studies have incorporated research on sexual health and lifestyle experiences of Nepalese population. I have identified one peer-reviewed journal article and 3 reports that have some

relevance to the sexual health and lifestyles of the Nepalese population in the UK. I report and review these studies below:

1.3.1 Health and Lifestyle of Nepalese migrants in the UK (Adhikary *et al.*, 2008): This is the only peer-reviewed article published about the health and lifestyle of the Nepalese population in the UK. The study is a cross-sectional survey with the majority of participants being male and over the age of 24. It reported that the overall health status of Nepalese migrants appears to be good. Although the study examined lifestyle factors such as alcohol, smoking and exercises; it did not discuss the influence of these lifestyle factors on sexual health or any other aspects of sexual health within the Nepalese population in the UK.

1.3.2 A sexual health needs assessment “Engagement with Hard to Reach and ‘At Risk’ Populations” (NHS Eastern and Coastal Kent, 2009): The study incorporated people from Nepalese descent in the form of three focus group discussions (FGDs)¹⁶ to collect the data for this report. The study described the Nepalese population as living in a tightly knit community, where social norms and traditional beliefs of sexual purity are valued and maintained to larger extent; especially for women and before marriage. Married women reported a lack of information about contraceptive methods and its side effects, especially for emergency hormonal contraception (EHC). The data collection methods and sampling for this study were ambiguous. The findings and discussions focused largely on young women, with little information from young men. However, this assessment was useful to gain initial information about the understanding and needs of the Nepalese population in the sociocultural context of the UK. The study suggested and demonstrated the need to explore social and cultural factors affecting the sexual health and wellbeing of Nepalese young people in the UK.

1.3.3 Health Needs Assessment of the Nepali Community in Rushmoor (Casey, 2010): This report was based on the information collected through

¹⁶ The three FGDs were separate with 9 males and 12 females in a sixth form college and with 11 married women in a community centre within the barracks in Kent

interviews from the healthcare professionals and community service providers -including Frimley Park Hospital in Surrey- and the focus group discussions within the Nepalese community, which included approximately 50 participants. The report identified problems of higher abortion rates and lack of information on contraception amongst the Nepalese population. The study found the widely reported practice of smoking ‘heroin’ amongst Nepalese young people, making them at higher risk of substance misuse; as well as sexual health risks and vulnerability. In addition, the study reported that there was a lack of awareness and communication in healthcare settings for the Nepalese population because of language problems and the low level of translated materials. While this study focused on health needs assessment and access to healthcare services, there was little information regarding sexual health, lifestyles and relationships of young people.

1.3.4 Health and Wellbeing of the Nepalese population: Access and experiences of health and social care services in the UK (Simkhada et al., 2015): This mixed method study used survey questionnaires with 338 participants, interviews with a pharmacist and a Nepalese volunteer worker and two FGDs¹⁷ to collect data for the purpose of this report. The majority of participants in this study were aged over 24 years and the study was able to collect little information on sexual health and wellbeing because participants felt shy and showed an unwillingness to fill in sexual health related questions. The interview with a pharmacist highlighted the issue and stated “*sexual health is like drug addiction, I heard it has some taboo in this society. I think they are not using the sexual health services until very late as it has got taboo*” (p.8). While this research discussed the experiences of the Nepalese population in accessing health and social care services in the UK, the study has no specific information about the sexual health of young people.

Several other studies and reports (Jolly, 1999; Amani, 2008; Sims, 2008) have focused on the health and wellbeing of the Nepalese population in the UK but have no information that is relevant to young people’s sexual health

¹⁷ The mixed FGD was conducted with 9 older men and women while another FGD included 7 adult males

and wellbeing. Furthermore, I found some dissertations that were submitted as part of postgraduate studies; with the research focusing on the mental health and wellbeing of the Nepalese population in the UK (Thake, 2014; Upadhyay, 2015; Sah, 2016). These studies have little to contribute to the understandings of the sexual health, lifestyles and relationships of Nepalese young people in the UK.

The sexual health of young people is embedded within their social and cultural structure at individual, family, community and national levels (Shovellar *et al.*, 2004; Viner *et al.*, 2012). Coleman and Testa (2008) described that social and cultural background influences young people's attitudes, beliefs, behaviour, perceptions, emotions, diet, dress, body image, lifestyle, sexual activity, sexuality and almost every aspect of life and varies hugely across age, sex, marital status, family structure, social class and religion. Familial expectations and sociocultural context presents strong challenges for Nepalese young people in the UK, as they experience a contrasting and conflicting set of social and cultural values after arriving to the UK from Nepal at an early age. Young people often clash with their traditional values to integrate with their British counterparts and find themselves stranded between eastern and western culture, sometimes even causing conflict within the family while willing to adapt to the western freedom (Anwar, 1998). The limited information shows that the Nepalese community in the UK is closely knit; where traditional norms of sexual purity are valued and maintained to a larger extent before marriage, especially for women. The lack of communication on sexual health topics is largely due to social taboos and unwillingness to discuss sex and sexuality (French *et al.*, 2005; Kim and Ward, 2007). The attitude and experiences of Nepalese young people towards dating, relationships and sex is positive. However, its expression in the public space is different compared to how it is presented in a confined private and confidential space. The dichotomous nature of expressions of sex and relationships make it difficult to understand Nepalese young people's sexual lives in the contemporary western society of the UK.

1.4 Young people's sexual health in the changing world

Sexual experimentation and the initiation of sexual relationships is a normal part of a healthy adolescence but, like many activities that engage young people, fun and enjoyment is accompanied by the potential for harm.

(Furlong, 2013: 182)

Young people today are experiencing significant social changes in contemporary society (Furlong and Cartmel, 2007). They are growing up in different circumstances and experiencing contrasting challenges in a completely different world to their parents (Ibid., 2007). There are an increasing number of young men and women pursuing further education due to the demand for the educated work force in the changing labour market that includes flexible employment practices, frequent job changes and staying in training or education for a longer period of young age (Arnett, 2004). The increase in the transition period towards settling into long-term adult roles has brought changes in the sexual lifestyles and relationships of young people because of the increasing age at marriage, maintaining the balance between love and work and wider acceptance of premarital sexual activity and cohabitation (Arnett, 2000; Furlong and Cartmel, 2007). The postponement of family formation and marriage has given rise to a new way of sexual lifestyle with an increase in dating, romantic relationships and premarital sexual activity; changing sexual experiences as well as perceptions and expectations of young people within a relationship in contemporary society (Regmi *et al.*, 2011). Moreover, the patterns of dependency have been transformed in the context of education and labour market experiences, which allows young people to select from varied life choices and chances that confers to new risks and opportunities (Woodman and Wyn, 2015). Young people are faced with a greater range of choices towards their sexual lifestyles and relationships, yet it remains constrained by the complex network of factors (Veal, 1993). These factors are often understood as social determinants of sexual health, which is

characterised by the interaction of factors associated with an individual and the environment in which they are born, grow-up, work and live (WHO, 2010).

Jones (2009: 30) describes, “*Young people do not act in a vacuum but in a social context which helps to shape even the most apparently autonomous actions*”. The sexual attitudes and behaviour of young people are strongly influenced by social and cultural factors, which are interwoven together to make an impact on the sexual lives of young people in the community (Croghan, 2006). The sexual health attitudes and behaviour of young people at the individual level are largely influenced by several factors at family, community, society and national levels that incorporates broader structural factors; which is a complex web of biological, psychological, social and cultural factors (Dahal, Hennink and Hinde, 2005; Blum *et al.*, 2012; Rao *et al.*, 2012; Wellings, Mitchell and Collumbien, 2012; Plourde *et al.*, 2016). The biological trait is understood as the representation of their chromosomes that is normally demonstrated through anatomical and physiological features. The psychological factor is demonstrated through the sexual agency of young people, which is identified as individual characteristics and is shaped by social and cultural factors that act as structural determinants in the given context. The variations in behaviour of young people have been understood in various ways depending on individual characteristics such as personality, attitude and knowledge; as well as the social environment in which they live, the influence of family and friends, education, socioeconomic situation, culture and religion (Regmi, Simkhada and van Teijlingen, 2010b; Viner *et al.*, 2012; BC and Basel, 2013). The dichotomies of individual and structure overlap to a larger extent, in such a way that it is almost impossible to assess them separately (Ingham, 2006). Wellings (2012) describes that it is important to recognise the sexual agency of young people as well as the consequences of the social structure in which they experience their sexual lives, while theorising sexual health practices and sexual health outcomes. The extent to which the sexual behaviour of young people is shaped by social structures and the extent to which they consider them as lifestyle choices is an important indicator to understand the positioning of young people in wider multiethnic and multicultural society.

The sexual health of young people is not only about negative health outcomes such as early teenage pregnancy and STDs but also about positive aspects of sexual health¹⁸ (Aggleton and Campbell, 2000). The ill health of an individual in the society exists at the intersection between individual and social contexts shaped by upstream forces (Shoveller *et al.*, 2004). It has been found that young people in an unstable sociocultural environment with limited resources are more likely to engage in challenging sexual behaviours that put them at higher sexual health risk and limit their positive sexual lifestyle experiences (Rwenge, 2000). The exploration of the wider context in which young people live and act is necessary to understand their positive sexual health, which focuses on sexual experiences through contemporary lifestyles and relationships and goes beyond the traditional exploration of STDs, contraception and teenage pregnancy.

1.5 Leisure, rituals of intoxication and sexual lifestyles

Young people's lifestyles are essentially more paradoxical in terms of the juxtaposition of the predictable and the unpredictable than they ever have been in the past.

(Miles, 2000:15)

Godbey (2008) asserts that the leisure patterns of an individual depend upon the lifestyle choices assumed by them. Lifestyle is *the specific pattern of everyday activities that characterises an individual* (Reimer, 1995: 124). Lifestyle consists of making an independent choice for domestic practices, food, housing, dress and appearance, selection of leisure and behavioural activities that relate to their consumption patterns (Veal, 1993; Cockerham, Rutten and Abel, 1997). Leisure is one of the components of lifestyle experiences, which is a varied set of activities chosen freely that incorporates personal interests, market provisions and public resources and is crucial to sexual self-development and individual lifestyle experiences (Veal, 2001;

¹⁸ See section "Conceptualising Young people and Positive sexual health" (pg. 7)

Kelly, 2012). A sense of individuality is one important feature for adolescent development, which is the time to explore '*who am I?*' and '*what do my social experiences and relationships mean to me?*' (Kotarba and Wells, 1987: 413). Dwyer (2000) describes young people's diasporic identities as negotiated and articulated based on gender relations within the social and local contexts of their everyday lives. Leisure refers to freedom in experimenting with adult roles and the opportunity to explore one's ability to create personal identity and to learn new skills, attitudes and behaviours that are acceptable within the sociocultural group (Kelly and Godbey, 1992; Tirone and Pedlar, 2000). In the contemporary world, young people's changing lifestyles and leisure pursuits are heavily influenced by the consumer culture; which signifies individuality, self-expression and a stylistic self-consciousness (Featherstone, 1987; Miles, 2000). Young people's lifestyles and patterns of consumption, which tend to symbolise cultural identification, have been severely affected by the refined marketing techniques of the multinational industries that target the spending power of the contemporary youth (Miles, 2000; Furlong and Cartmel, 2007). Leisure and lifestyle are focused on the daily lives of young men and women; where individual attitudes and behaviours construct an independent identity in relation to other people within a given structure, which differentiates individuals and connects them to groups within the society.

Young people actively build and rebuild their lifestyles and identities around leisure, work and space to experience and participate in new urban economies where they start spending greater amounts of time in mixed gender environments (Ball, Maguire and Macrae, 2000; Furlong and cartmel, 2007; White and Wyn, 2008). Young people in contemporary society experience leisure in different forms such as hanging out, attending and participating in sports and outdoor physical activities, watching television or videos, listening to music or radio, playing computer games, browsing web and digital spaces in which leisure becomes a 'fluid' concept (Abott-Chapman and Robertson, 2009). Young people gathering together in clubs or pubs is part of growing up and many would have adopted some adult leisure practices by the age of 16, with rituals of intoxication at the centre (Roberts, 2006; Blackman, 2011). The appeal of nightclubs is strongest among the young

people aged 18-24 and has become an integral part of many young people's consumption lives (Hollands, 2009; Mintel, 2013). The combination of assumed private space -with freedom, the presence of the opposite sex, live music, intoxicating agents and many other factors- creates positive and favourable conditions to build relationships, which may result in sexual intimacies or relationships (Kotarba and Wells, 1987). Jackson (2004) illustrates four forms of sexual experience in the nightclub setting: search for sex, expressing the feeling of sex and sexuality through displaying ones own body, creating communities based around sexual orientation and sharing sex or engaging in sexual play through sexual-self exploration.

Young people see leisure as a personal space, where they express their freedom to experience sexual lifestyles (Wearing, 1998). According to Miles (2000), young people are willing to take more risks in their leisure in the pursuits for pleasure. France (2007) argues that young people's risk taking behaviour is part of the normal transitional process and they are willing to take more risks in their leisure time that may be driven by hedonistic and self-centered values. Risk taking behaviours such as alcohol, drug abuse, cigarette smoking and unsafe sex are prevalent among young people's everyday lives in contemporary society (Abott-Chapman and Robertson, 2009). More young people are engaged in casual sexual relationships and hope that these non-dating sexual encounters will lead to conventional dating relationships, possibly a long-term relationship (Manning, Giordano and Longmore, 2006; Wentland and Reissing, 2011). The understanding of casual sex varies from having one off sex with a person whom they have never met before or sexual engagement with friends or colleagues with whom they are not in a committed romantic relationship (Weaver and Herold, 2000; Eisenberg *et al.*, 2009).

Sexual activity is not only central to leisure but all forms of leisure have sexual connotations and meanings attached to them (Kelly, 2012). For young people, leisure takes place in a greater variety of settings; which means the time and place is key for sexual interaction (Kelly and Godbey, 1992). The opportunities for young men and women within romantic relationships for

relation building or sexual intimacies is sporadic and opportunistic; and takes place within leisure defined spaces including parks, temples, markets, cinema, shopping malls or at home when other family members are not present (Alexander *et al.*, 2006). The space created for young people's leisure such as shopping centers, dance clubs, youth centers and schools are mostly controlled by adults; however, young people manage to create a 'private space' within this space to experience their sexual lifestyles (Varner, 2007). Luster and Small (1994) argue that adolescent sexual lives are presented with a higher number of risk factors and they are likely to experience increased risky sexual behaviours through cumulative risk factors, which varies by gender. The leisure and lifestyle experiences of young people in the developing and developed world are significantly different due to the accessibility of resources but they are also shaped by sociocultural traditions and patterns of availability (Furlong, 2013). The local context plays an important role in influencing and shaping risk-taking behaviours among these young people. Some of these risk-taking behaviours may be specifically related to sociocultural norms and traditions. For example, drinking alcohol within the Nepalese community is part of the culture (Dhital *et al.*, 2001), whereas nightclubs are considered compulsory for young people in the western society and not going to clubs may be identified as 'being different' and may force them to be socially excluded. Blackman (2009) suggests that the idea of normalisation operates for young people's alcohol and drugs consumption and in this thesis I will explore the idea of normalisation in the context of young people's sexual lifestyles and relationships to understand the positive sexual health.

Young people's leisure and lifestyle experiences have long been a source of social cohesion as well as conflict between themselves, their families, community and society (Furlong, 2013). Crawford and Godbey (1987: 119) identified 3 types of constraints for leisure behaviour: *intrapersonal*, *interpersonal* and *structural*. Intrapersonal constraints include individual psychological barriers that stop people participating in leisure activities; interpersonal constraints involve interaction or relationships between individual's characteristics and structural constraints include factors such as

family obligations, socioeconomic conditions, space and time, resources and opportunities that limit personal desire to experience leisure (*Ibid.*, 1987). These constraints are interrelated and the leisure participation depends on constant negotiations of multiple factors based on a hierarchy of importance that is influenced by the structural factors around them (Crawford, Jackson and Godbey, 1991; Jackson, Crawford and Godbey, 1993). Although young people have the time and opportunities for leisure activities; in many cases, the leisure lifestyles are restricted by the lack of spending power, legal implications, parental restrictions and cultural practices (Glendinning, Hendry and Shucksmith, 1995; Furlong and Cartmel, 2007). Leisure, rituals of intoxications and sexual lifestyles are central to the development of young people's sexual lives in the modern society but are constrained by several challenges raised by the structural factors around them. In this thesis, I will explore to what extent Nepalese young people develop the skills and competence to adapt to the situation and overcome barriers to experiencing leisure and sexual lifestyles in the contemporary society of the UK.

1.6 Romantic relationships and sexual intimacies

Romantic relationships are more common practice amongst young people than it has usually been anticipated and refer to mutually acknowledging continuing voluntary associations or interactions with emotional attachment, expression of affections and ongoing or expected sexual behaviour (Collins, Welsh and Furman, 2009). Giddens (1992) described that contemporary romantic relationships in western countries do not follow the same patterns that were experienced previously during more traditional cultural contexts and today young people are involved in constructing their own meaning of such relationships. Young people's romantic relationships in contemporary society are integrated into their individual development and wellbeing, which is triggered by strong passionate desire and attraction while driven by the young person's emerging needs for affiliation and intimacy with people other than their family members (Connolly and Goldberg, 1999; Collins, 2003; Furman and Shaffer, 2003). The interactions with companions outside the family

network create an opportunity for possible romantic relationships and sexual intimacies in wider social networks.

Social networks and sociocultural norms play an important role in determining expression of romantic relationships (Connolly *et al.*, 2004; Sprecher, 2011). There is a strong emphasis on maintaining the pride and honour of the family within the South Asian community and every individual member of the family is expected to accept certain sociocultural norms that restrict their expressions of sexual intimacy in public (Griffiths *et al.*, 2008). Dating and relationships are a private and secret matter for the majority of South Asian young people, which means verbalisation of sexuality outside of marriage is considered inappropriate amongst many Asian populations (Okazaki, 2002; Menger *et al.*, 2015). Hennink, Diamond and Cooper (1999) -in research among South Asian girls in Britain- suggested that young women's romantic relationships and sexual behaviour are influenced by cultural traditions, religious obligations, family adherence and community expectations. Young females are inclined to keep their romantic relationships secret because of the expectations compared to male counterparts; to maintain familial pride, honour and reputations within the society. Studies suggest that women need to maintain their own dignity of being good and respectful since boys remain prestigious and girls are seen as characterless or prostitutes within society if they are understood to be in romantic or sexual relationships (Regmi, Simkhada and van Teijlingen, 2010a). Despite all the sociocultural norms and expectations, the popularity of dating culture amongst Nepalese young people has seen increasing number of young boys and girls involved in romantic relationships and premarital sexual activity (Regmi *et al.*, 2011; Menger *et al.*, 2015). The normalisation of dating and romantic relationships in young people's individual development, due to changing leisure and lifestyle behaviours, creates many opportunities for sexual intimacies within love relationships.

In contemporary society romantic relationships are grounds for affiliation, intimacy and sexual encounters (Furman and Shaffer, 2003). Love is a traditional representation of romance while sex is an expression of love within

relationships (Borusiak, 2012). However, the concept of love and sex vary depending on the man and woman involved in a relationship. Peplau, Rubin and Hill (1977: 97) identified 3 distinct types of couples based on interactions between love and sex in their relationship: *sexual traditionalists*, *sexual moderates* and *sexual liberals*. Sexual traditionalists believe in sexual abstinence and for them, love alone is not enough to justify sexual intercourse. For sexually moderate couples, love is enough to justify sexual intercourse and long-term commitment is not always necessary. Sexually liberal couples approve casual sex and believe romantic relationships are not required to engage in sexual activities (Ibid., 1977). The research also reported that men usually encourage sexual intercourse in a relationship while women limit a couple's sexual intimacy, which may create disagreement about the timing of first sexual intercourse in a dating relationship (Ibid., 1977). According to Baumeister, Catanese and Vohs (2001) males have frequent and intense sexual desire in a heterosexual relationships, while females prefer to spend longer within a new relationship before agreeing to engage in the first sexual intercourse. Furthermore, it was reported that women's prime focus in a relationship is on emotions and caretaking; whereas men emphasise sexual intimacy, which creates a situation where females have to often comply with the sexual needs of their male partners (Ibid., 2001).

Impett and Peplau (2003) conducted a systematic review on sexual compliance in heterosexual relationships that described which individuals are more likely to comply with their partner's sexual desire and explored the reasons behind it. This research suggested 3 different perspectives to explain sexual compliance in a relationship: gender, motivational and relationship maintenance perspective. In heterosexual relationships, young females are likely to be sexually compliant in order to meet their partner's sexual desire ahead of their own and will gladly engage in unwanted sex to safeguard themselves and their relationship. This is presumably linked to gender differences in sexual desire, modesty in taking the lead to initiate sexual interactions or to accept the power and dependence within the relationship in order to promote the development and stability of a committed relationship.

(Impett and Peplau, 2002; 2003). For some couples, sexual compliance is associated with the motivation of gaining approval from romantic peers, impressing peers, pleasing partners, feeling more desirable or gaining sexual experience and is integrated with emotional reactions, sexual risk taking and sexual violence (Dewitte, 2012).

The attitudes and experiences of young people towards intimacy and sex have changed over the years and both men and women within a committed relationship equally value sexual intimacies; however, the differences seem to exist during adolescence and at an early stage of the relationship (McCabe, 2005). Connolly and Goldberg (1999: 278) proposed that romantic relationships at any age evolve through four distinct stages: *initial infatuation, affiliative, intimate and committed romantic relationships*. The relationship initiates with physical attractions to gain confidence in finding a romantic partner without any actual interaction or intimacy and with limited contacts, which progresses into affiliation involving companionship and creating opportunities to learn to interact with the opposite sex and meet potential partners (Crissey, 2005; Meier and Allen, 2009). Once they gain confidence and experience, there is a possibility of intimate romantic relationships that may involve passionate feelings, emotional intimacy and sexual activity. Sexual activity in an ongoing relationship may be used to increase closeness, bonding, acceptance and commitment to strengthen relationships or to turn short-term relationships into long-term relationships (Meston and Buss, 2007). This final stage combines passion, affiliation and intimacy in redefining romantic relationships with commitment and exhibiting caregiving behaviour that leads to long term committed relationships and maintains continuity of the relationship (Shulman and Seiffge-Krenke, 2001). Age and experience play an important role in the progression of these stages for romantic development and are consistent among both males and females (Connolly *et al.*, 1999). However, not all romantic relationships progress into long-term relationships, which leaves many young people to experience multiple breakups in the early years of their lives.

Breakups are a normative part of young people's individual development and social experience and both males and females are equally likely to report romantic dissolutions (Connolly and McIssac, 2009). For young people, romantic relationships often are a transitory stage where physical attractions are combined with emotional experiences¹⁹ to bring boys and girls together (Shulman and Kipnis, 2001). However, there is a lack of commitment or care giving; which diminishes the prospect of mature and long term committed relationships but increases the chances of breakups (*Ibid.*, 2001). Most romantic dissolutions are self-initiated, especially by girls, because of their relatively greater sensitivity towards the needs within a romantic relationship (Connolly and McIssac, 2009). Young people associate their breakups with failure to meet the romantic needs for intimacy, affiliation, sexuality, identity and autonomy that is rooted in personal needs. Romantic relationships and breakups are central to young people's development and play an important role in identifying self-confidence and developing interpersonal skills related to sexual intimacy and passion providing emotional support and security (O'sullivan *et al.*, 2007). Asian young people are least likely to report romantic relationships or breakups although an increasing number of Nepalese young people are involved in dating and romantic relationships in current years (Connolly *et al.*, 2004; Regmi *et al.*, 2011). This has changed the sexual experiences and behaviour of Nepalese young people and provides ample opportunities to engage in premarital sexual activities, which presumably creates a dilemma because of the sociocultural norms and affect their sexual practices leading to marriage.

1.7 Sociocultural practice of the marriage

Marriage is a comprehensive union of spouses with a special link to children alongside the norms of monogamy, stability and exclusivity (Girgis, George and Anderson, 2010). Although there are race and ethnic variations in attitudes and expectations towards marriages, it is a central feature of nearly every culture and religion (Crissey, 2005). Gupta (1976) described marriage

¹⁹ Sexual fantasies, feelings, thoughts and behaviour

as an immemorial institution for family establishment, production of children and securing social and economic positions of family; which is embedded within the social structure with expectations influenced by various social, cultural, structural, economical and individual factors. Young people with strong religious beliefs positively associate themselves with marriage expectations in contrast to the young people with limited cultural or religious beliefs, who are more likely to have positive attitudes towards premarital sex and cohabitations (Manning, Longmore and Giordano, 2007; Soons and Kalmijn, 2009). Although singlehood is considered as a lifestyle and modern way of living in many western countries to express individualisation, young people in general are more positive about having cohabiting relationships (Thornton and Freedman, 1982; Poortman and Liefbroer, 2010). Cohabitation is becoming popular amongst young people due to growing social acceptance and many see it as a pathway or preparation for marriage; expecting to marry at some point in their life span (Manning, Longmore and Giordano, 2007). This indicates that the practice of marriage is still favoured by the majority of populations around the world.

The institution of marriage remains popular amongst South Asians in the UK and they are likely to be married during their lifespan compared to other minority ethnic groups (Goodwin and Cramer, 2000). Marriage and family formation among the Asian population is seen as linking families to meet broader social obligations and is considered as the bedrock for a strong society (Jones and Yeung, 2014). South Asians are viewed as collectivist in nature, where people are interdependent within their groups and familial relationships take priority over individual preferences (Ghuman, 2000; Triandis, 2001). Marriage within the South Asian community is seen as a social and economic bond for religious and cultural groups to strengthen the community; which is largely experienced in the form of an arranged marriage, where women are considered as a 'gift' and are expected to leave their family in order to move into their husband's home after marriage (Bhopal, 2011). The arrangement of such a marriage is made by families and relatives, who take the initiative to introduce prospective brides and grooms to each other; usually on the basis of family reputation, socioeconomic conditions, education,

religion and caste (Allendorf and Pandian, 2016). The understanding of arranged marriage is sometimes confused with and complicated by the understanding of forced marriage, which is a significant issue for all South Asian communities in the UK (Phillips and Dustin, 2004; Gangoli, Razak and McCarry, 2006). The Home Office (2017) report shows that the Forced Marriage Unit (FMU) has provided advice and support to 1,428 victims, mostly young females below the age of 25. In forced marriage, the prospective partners have no choice and one or both victims are coerced into the marriage against their will (Chantler, Gangoli and Hester, 2009). On the contrary, in arranged marriage: the prospective partners have their say while making their choice and have the freedom to accept or reject the marriage proposal (Uddin and Ahmed, 2000).

Today, the practice of arranged marriage is shifting where there has been a substantial decline in arranged marriages and apparent growth of love marriages within the South Asian communities around the world (Allendorf and Ghimire, 2013; Allendorf and Pandian, 2016). In love marriage, young people choose their own spouse for love and make an arrangement to marry with or without the agreement of families and society. As young people are increasingly involved in non-familial activities²⁰, more parents are willing to allow young people to interact with potential spouses and have their say in the spouse selection process (Ghimire *et al.*, 2006). The increasing participation of women in higher education provides young females with further opportunities to negotiate their personal choice and independence within families, against traditional social structures (Bhopal, 2011). Pande (2015) asserts that an increasing number of South Asian females are able to navigate their way around the strict cultural expectations in order to negotiate with family members about their preferred choice of spouse for the marriage. Besides the intergenerational differences, there are increasing numbers of young people self-introducing their spouses to their family networks²¹; where

²⁰ Non-familial activities during childhood and early adulthood include education in schools, nonfamily work, nonfamily living, interaction with the media, participation in youth groups and other young people's activities independent from family.

²¹ I discuss this as 'love arranged marriage' (See section 6.5)

they exercise their personal choice and aspiration of marriage together with their family (Goodwin and Cramer, 2000).

Arranged marriage within Nepalese society is a family custom that varies greatly among different ethnic groups, castes, religion and localities; which range from the custom of dowry, bride price, exogamous, endogamous, polygyny or polyandry (Ghimire *et al.*, 2006). Castes play an important role in the cultural practice of marriage among the Nepalese population (Allendorf and Thornton, 2015). Arranged marriage supports the caste system and maintains the kinship ties, which is an important feature of Hindu community (Ghuman, 1994; Charsley and Shaw, 2006; Allendorf and Ghimire, 2013). However, the significance of an arranged marriage is decreasing and there is an increasingly dominant pattern of arranged marriages where prospective partners are involved in the decision-making process together with their parents, rather than their parents alone making the final decision about the marriage (Allendorf and Pandian, 2016). The transformation of arranged marriage into love marriage is widely seen amongst Nepalese young people and is understood as 'arranged love marriage', where the traditional concept of arranged marriage integrates with the contemporary understanding of love marriage (Allendorf and Thornton, 2015). This has also increased the number of inter-caste marriages, which is associated with educational and occupational endogamy rather than the focus on the social exchange or cultural practice of marriage (Chen and Takeuchi, 2011). However, it is understood that these couples are likely to have relatively lower social standing within their own ethnic communities (*Ibid.*, 2011).

Early marriage or child marriage is prevalent within the Nepalese population and is associated with household poverty, lack of education and unemployment (Yabiku, 2005; Bajracharya and Amin, 2012; Ghimire and Samuels, 2014; Menger *et al.*, 2015). Although the age at marriage has been rising, marriage in Nepal occurs at a relatively younger age (Caltabiano and Castiglioni, 2008). The Nepal demographic and health survey 2011 reported that the median age at first marriage among men aged 25 to 49 years is 21.6 years and for women is 17.5 years (MOHP, 2011b). The survey also reported

that 29 percent of teenage girls aged 15 to19 years are in formal marriage relationships compared to only 7 percent of teenage boys (*Ibid.*, 2011b). Nepalese parents often want their daughter to get married at a younger age, which creates an ideal environment for arranged marriage but young people are increasingly getting involved in the decision making process for the choice of spouse (Ghimire *et al.*, 2006). The rise of ‘arranged love marriage’ means marriages among Nepalese young populations can be understood as a continuum rather than the dichotomous variable of love and arranged marriage.

1.8 Parental connectedness and conversation on sexual matters

Families are central to the sexual socialisation²² of young people. Young people’s conversations with parents on sexual matters play an important role in shaping young people’s sexual attitudes and behaviour, as well as positive sexual development (Lefkowitz and Stoppa, 2006). It has been identified as one of the protective factors for young people’s sexual health that is linked to preventative measures, less risky sexual behaviours and reduced physical or sexual violence (Markham *et al.*, 2010; Hicks, McRee, and Eisenberg, 2013; Sidze and Defo, 2013). It has also been positively associated with young people’s sexual abstinence, delayed sexual onset, use of condoms and decreased number of sex partners (Babalola, Tambashe and Vondrasek, 2005; Kajula *et al.*, 2013). Studies suggest that through sexual communication, parents have opportunity and ability to educate young people about sexual values, beliefs and expectations as well as sexual health issues and facts; which ultimately influences their sexual attitudes, behaviour and decision-making to experience positive sexual health (Aspy *et al.*, 2007; Kim and Ward, 2007; Jerman and Constantine, 2010).

Young people’s communication with parents regarding sexual behaviour is multifaceted, where the conversation can have mixed responses depending

²² Sexual socialisation is a process involving several interrelated social-psychological components which, collectively, not independently, determine sexual self-concept, values, attitudes and behaviours (Spainer, 1977 p. 87)

on the quality and quantity as well as the connectedness between young people and their parents (Miller *et al.*, 1998; Dilorio, Pluhar, and Belcher, 2003; Aspy *et al.*, 2007). The quality, frequency and timing of parent-child communication can play an important role in the continuity of conversations or subsequent discussions about sex and sexual matters between parents and young people (Babalola, Tambashe and Vondrasek, 2005; Zhang *et al.*, 2007). Parental connectedness refers to young people's attachment to parents by sharing parental warmth, love, support and closeness; which simplifies the association of young people to parental values and guidance (Sidze and Defo, 2013). Connectedness has been recognised as a central element for positive youth development and it protects young people from potentially harmful sexual behaviours, including sexual risk-taking behaviours, by facilitating open conversation between young people and parents (Parera and Suris, 2004; Markham *et al.*, 2010).

Selective studies suggest that young people prefer to receive sex and sexuality information from their parents; however, few are able to receive such information from parents (Babalola, Tambashe and Vondrasek, 2005). Likewise, parents believe they should communicate with their young children on sexual health topics; however, many parents struggle to initiate conversations due to discomfort, embarrassment and fear that discussing sexual matters may promote sexual activity among young people (Jerman and Constantine, 2010; Lagus *et al.*, 2011; Cederbaum and Hutchinson, 2016). Moreover, many parents lack knowledge and are not fully equipped to provide accurate sexual health information to their younger children (Dilorio, Pluhar, and Belcher, 2003). Young people believe that discussions on sexual matters with parents can be ambiguous, filled with warnings, primarily based on fear and related to family pride and sexual abstinence before marriage (Kajula *et al.*, 2013; Sneed, Tan and Meyer, 2015). It may be that parents are naturally inclined to be concerned about their young children's sexual health risks but the fear based approach is likely to discourage young people to ask relevant questions. Moreover, young people may feel controlled by parents and that can lead to more risky sexual behaviour as a protest in response to parental control. Aspy *et al.* (2007) suggests that there is a need to move

away from discussing negative sexual health risk behaviours and focus on constructive conversation around positive and protective aspects of sexual experiences that can support young people to make an informed choice towards their sexual lifestyle and relationships.

The gender of parents and young people plays an important part in shaping conversations around sexual matters between them (Zhang *et al.*, 2007; Wilson and Koo, 2010). Mothers are predominantly involved in having conversations around sexual matters with their young children and they are inclined to speak to their daughters rather than sons (Rosenthal and Feldman, 1999; Jerman and Constantine, 2010). Kim and Ward (2007) reported significant gender differences among Asian families, where male family members are less engaged in the sexual socialisation process. Fathers are perceived as providing substantially less information than mothers on almost all aspects of sexual health and lifestyle (Jerman and Constantine, 2010). Young males are less likely to receive adequate information from their parents towards sexual health (Dessie, Berhane and Worku, 2015). However, paternal factors are independently associated with young people's sexual behaviour relative to maternal factors (Guilamo-Ramos *et al.*, 2012). Although mothers are widely considered as the main sexual communicator within a familial environment, fathers play an important role and provide perspectives on sexual socialisation among young people (Hutchinson and Cederbaum, 2011). Parents are more likely to discuss sex and sexuality with their daughters than sons, regardless of the culture, and young people are likely to approach mothers rather than fathers for any support or suggestions about sexual matters (Abramson *et al.*, 1983; Feldman and Rosenthal, 2000). Mothers speak to daughters about the biological processes (e.g. menstruation, reproduction) and potential sexual health outcomes (e.g. pregnancy, abortions). However, discussions around sexual lifestyles (e.g. dating, relationships) are limited. Parental sexual communication is often different with sons and daughters; where messages to daughters are mostly restrictive and focus on the potential negative outcomes of sexual activity, whereas messages to sons sometimes promote sexual exploration and pleasure (Kim and Ward, 2007). This sexual double standard is more

common amongst young people; where young females are often communicated to about the responsibilities of maintaining family pride and honour by not engaging in premarital sexual activity, whereas young males are not bound by such responsibilities and are permitted to explore their sexual experiences (*Ibid.*, 2007).

South Asian families are reluctant to talk about sex and sexualities among family members and in society. Elders from family and religious leaders emphasise that sexual activities are confined to marriage and thus talking about sex and sexuality to young people before marriage is not welcomed (Bradby and Williams, 1999). Parent's cultural traditions and religious beliefs influence South Asian young people's sexual behaviour and decision-making, regardless of whether they are born in the UK or moved to the UK from the subcontinent (Jayakody *et al.*, 2005). Similarly, young people with strong religious beliefs are more likely to perceive strong messages about sexual abstinence compared to those who are less religious and accept premarital sexual activity as part of the sexual lifestyle (*Ibid.*, 2005). South Asian young people receive mostly prohibitive sexual messages that encourage sexual abstinence before marriage and regard sex as a taboo topic to discuss (Kim and Ward, 2007). Discussions on sexual matters at home or in public spaces is taboo within South Asian culture (French *et al.*, 2005). A cultural taboo about sexual perceptions and expectations within hierarchical familial relationships, where young people are expected to show respect to their elders, hinders an open and explicit communication about sex and sexual matters with people from different generations (Okazaki, 2002; Chung *et al.*, 2005). Asian parents generally avoid direct communication on sexual matters and use non-verbal ways to suggest sexual norms and South Asian young people usually respond to these secret clues positively (Kim and Ward, 2007).

Young people's conversations within family depend on parent's personal characteristics, education level, ethnicity, religiosity, immigration history, English language proficiency and family environment (Kim and Ward, 2007). There are significant cultural differences in parental communication on sexual matters and the contents of parental conversation is correlated with the

demographic factors of the parents and the young people (Abramson *et al.*, 1983; Jerman and Constantine, 2010). Studies suggest that most research on parental sexual communication focuses on White Americans (Dilorio, Pluhar and Belcher, 2003). There have been limited studies around parent-child sexual communication in the UK with little or no relevance to the South Asian or Nepalese population.

1.9 Sociocultural values and religious beliefs

In the UK, the lives of young people are characterised by heightened risk-taking behaviour and self-exploration of life in many different directions, including sociocultural values and religious beliefs (Arnett, 2000; France, 2007; Griffiths, Prost and Hart, 2008; Kehily and Nayak, 2008). The self-exploration of young people is integrated within their own native culture but it also endorses the characteristics of the majority culture, demonstrating both similarities and distinct differences across cultures (Barry and Nelson, 2005). The sexual health development of young people is embedded in their social structure and cultural contexts, where sexual behaviour of young people is shaped by the strength of affiliation to their sociocultural norms and religion (Shoveller *et al.*, 2004; Stoppa and Lefkowitz, 2010; Bell and Aggleton, 2013). The influence of ethnicity, culture and religion varies within and between different ethnic groups, which has a strong influence on young people's decision making about their sexual socialisation (Sinha *et al.*, 2005; Fraser and Sim, 2007; Jayakody *et al.*, 2011). Although young people from BME communities are born or have lived in the UK for many years, there are still significant differences in their sexual health behaviour and decision making, due to the influence of traditional cultural norms; which further varies depending on the age and gender of an individual (Simkhada *et al.*, 2006; Sinha *et al.*, 2007). South Asian young people often experience conflicting sexual norms and values between families and communities in terms of what is expected in accordance to their faith and what actually happens in their lives away from the home environment (Testa and Coleman, 2006). There is a strong focus on protecting families' honour within South Asian communities

and young people, especially females, are expected to maintain cultural and religious norms through their sexual decision making and by concealing shameful or deviating behaviour (Griffiths *et al.*, 2008). The dressing style is one of the examples that is used to construct ethnic and religious identity, which is interwoven with patriarchal discourses within traditional context and racialised discourses within the contemporary society (Dwyer, 1999). Sociocultural norms of South Asian young people prohibit them from exhibiting their sexual experiences or at least constrain them to keep it secret from their families and societies.

Religion is an important aspect of culture and culture may influence religious beliefs, which plays a significant role in shaping young people's attitudes and behaviour towards sexual health (McNamara Barry *et al.* 2010). Although religion plays an important role in young people's sexual lives, its practices and beliefs vary according to age, gender and race (Rostosky *et al.*, 2004; Landor *et al.*, 2011). Adamczyk and Hayes (2012) suggest all major religions have some proscriptions regarding sex and sexuality -which has a significant influence on young people's sexual development- but the patterns differ among different religious groups at the individual level, depending on gender and religious affiliation (Stoppa and Lefkowitz, 2010). Muslims and Hindus tend to have more conservative sexual attitudes compared to Christians and they place particular importance on virginity until marriage and discourage premarital sexual activity or any form of formal/informal private interaction between different sexes (Adamczyk and Hayes, 2012). Hennink, Diamond and Cooper (1999) reported that young Muslim and Sikh women have more restrictive cultural norms compared to Hindus. Although many Hindu communities also discourage regular private interaction between males and females, this is mostly related with caste or cultural traditions rather than the religion (Adamczyk and Hayes, 2012). There may be a greater pressure for young people to respond to their sociocultural norms; especially for young women, who are expected to carry the family honour and preserve cultural identity within the society (Inman *et al.*, 2007). Family and parental religious affiliations also play an important role in determining young people's religiosity (Park and Ecklund, 2007).

Researchers have found that religion contributes to positive youth development and is negatively related to risky sexual behaviour (Wagener *et al.*, 2003; Ebstyne King and Furrow, 2004). Religiously active young people are more likely to delay their first sex and have fewer sexual partners (Meier, 2003; Rostosky *et al.*, 2004; Barkan, 2006; Sinha, Cnaan and Gelles, 2007; Landor *et al.*, 2011). Sinha *et al.* (2007) argues that someone's ethnic origin or religious beliefs are not the only factors to determine their sexual behaviours; sometimes exaggeration of sociocultural norms and religion or preconceptions about certain sociocultural groups can present false perceptions and representations about the community, which have serious implications on the contextual understandings and interpretations of sexual attitudes and behaviour of young people from the minority ethnic groups. Religion in the suburban world creates opportunities for creativity and innovation that provides flexibility for the young people to experience their sociocultural freedom (Dwyer, Gilbert and Shah, 2013). The changing sociocultural norms of the contemporary society possess different challenges for young people to maintain the balance between modern societal norms and traditional cultural values. Similarly, parents are faced with complex challenges to retain their own cultural identity among their young children, due to a dissimilar sociocultural environment compared with their culture of origin (Inman *et al.*, 2007). Young people in contact with western culture are prone to endorse more individualism, eroding traditional sociocultural beliefs and practices (Gao *et al.*, 2012). Although the traditional sociocultural and religious norms remain in the spotlight, the sociocultural norms in a changing society are likely to be produced and reproduced based on individual characteristics and various structural influences present in the contemporary society; which consequently shapes the sexual lifestyles and relationships of Nepalese young people.

1.10 Sexual Health Knowledge and information of Nepalese young people

Sexual health knowledge and understanding of South Asians is relatively poor compared to young people from other ethnic backgrounds (French *et al.*, 2005; Sinha *et al.*, 2005). The majority of studies undertaken on sexual health knowledge focused on information related to HIV/AIDS, with some relating to wider knowledge and understanding about STIs. Although most South Asian young people are aware of STIs; overall sexual health knowledge varied and was inadequate depending on education, gender, ethnicity and area of residence (Neupane, Nichols and Thapa, 2003; Stone, Ingham and Simkhada, 2003; Dhital *et al.*, 2005; Jaiswal *et al.*, 2005; Mahat and Scoloveno, 2006; Upreti *et al.* 2009; Gupta *et al.*, 2011).

South Asian young people are less likely to discuss their sexual experiences and behaviors to their peers or in their family, further restricting sharing of knowledge or guidance on sexual health matters (Testa and Coleman, 2006; Sinha *et al.*, 2005). French *et al.* (2005) reported knowledge gaps among Bangladeshi and Indian young people and found that young people receive limited sexual health information at home and rely on school-based sex and relationship education (SRE), which takes little account of cultural traditions and religious beliefs while delivering sex education. South Asian young people desire improved SRE and increased sexual conversations within family. However, the political interest in addressing negative sexual health outcomes such as HIV/AIDS, STDs and teenage pregnancy has left little scope for providing knowledge and information about other aspects of positive sexual health (Griffiths *et al.*, 2008).

Internet and media have become an integral part of young people's sexual lives and key sources of information for sexual health and relationships, opening new ways of communication and relating issues to create conversations and interactions. Some young people see the internet as a main source of sexual health information because of the anonymity in accessing information (Batchelor, Kitzinger and Burtney, 2004). Young people

are the quickest adopters of social media and information technology such as mobile phones, internet, instant messaging, Facebook and Twitter which contribute towards both risks and benefits. Some of the benefits include knowledge, information, learning, empowerment, social development and interventions; whereas risks are addiction, harassment and predatory sexual solicitation (Wood, 2012). Young people value the media as an accessible source of information relative to other sources such as school or parents (Buckingham and Bragg, 2004). Media has played a significant role in shaping the attitudes and behaviour of young people towards sexual health. However, the explicit portrayals of sex and sexuality in media through films, videos, printed media and now through the internet have increased the sexual health risks/vulnerability (Batchelor, Kitzinger and Burtney, 2004). The electronic media (radio, television and internet) is popular among Nepalese young people and a significant proportion use it in their leisure time. Collins *et al.* (2004) suggested that sexual content on media in general affects behaviour and encourages young people to initiate all types of sexual activity, including sexual intercourse.

Simkhada *et al.* (2012) reported that sexual and reproductive health knowledge among rural Nepalese adolescents was moderate and young males fared better compared to their female counterparts. The lack of sexual health information may be because sex education is not taught adequately in schools of Nepal as teachers did not want to deal with such sensitive issues and feared criticism from the society and their colleagues or teachers lacked skills to engage with students on sexual health topics (Pokharel, Kulczycki and Shakya, 2006). Lack of formal sex education programmes, presence of untrained or unskilled teachers and demonstrators to deal with sensitive issues, feeling of shyness among students and unfavourable atmospheres for educating and training young people about their sexual health matters leave a considerable gap in their sexual health knowledge and understanding.

1.11 Theoretical framework for understanding sexual health

This section describes the emerging theoretical framework relevant towards understanding the sexual health, lifestyles and relationships of young people. It enabled me to deal with preconceived notions about the sexual health of Nepalese young people and allowed collection of data systematically during the fieldwork and interviews. The framework assisted in the critical analysis and interpretation of the collected data to come up with a new theoretical description based on the core principles from these theories. Furthermore, it helped me to narrate the voices of young people independently without the influence of an existing theoretical framework. Different theories have evolved over time to help explain sexual behaviour and the complex negotiation of factors that shape the sexual lifestyles and relationships of the young people at multiple levels. Here, I discuss Bronfenbrenner's ecological model in order to examine the interrelationships between individual and structural factors at the multiple levels of intersections and to understand the sexual lifestyles and relationships of young people; which contribute toward their positive sexual health. The discussion of intersectionality seeks to understand and explain the agentic experiences of young people at the intersections of two or more structural factors. It further illustrates intersections of individual, familial and extrafamilial factors that affect the sexual lives of young people at multiple levels within the wider sociocultural context of the western society of the UK.

1.11.1 Ecological model

An ecological transition occurs whenever a person's position in the ecological environment is altered as the result of a change in role, setting, or both.

(Bronfenbrenner, 1979: 26)

The ecological paradigm has a long history in an ethnographic research where individuals are considered as functioning in a social context that

influences their behaviours (LeCompte and Schensul, 1999). In particular the work of Park and Burgess at the Chicago School of Sociology during the 1920s and 1930s focused on the techniques that capture the social reality of the lives of young people and their interactions in the natural environment by detailed observation (Hart, 2010). The social ecological paradigm provides a guiding framework to understand the social change of young people through the interactions between persons and the social context constituting their environments and cultural diversity (Revenson, 2002). The social context of the young people can be represented at different levels such as familial environment, peer network, access to school, employment, culture, religion, internet, media and other factors within the wider society; which interact with each other to shape the agentic experiences of young people towards sexual health (Furlong and Cartmel, 2007; Currie *et al.*, 2012). Small and Luster (1994) examined various risk factors contributing towards the sexual activity of the young people and used an ecological perspective framework to organise these factors at 3 levels: *Individual, familial and extrafamilial*. Research suggests that there are numerous risk factors that exist at multiple levels of young people's social lives, which combine together to determine their sexual health and lifestyle and therefore the multiple systems must be taken into account while studying sexual lives of young people in the changing environment (Miller, Forehand and Kotchick, 1999).

Bronfenbrenner's ecological model (1977, 1979, 1995, 2009) identified the combined effects of individual, family, and extrafamilial influences on the individual and captured the complexity of the sociocultural world in which young people are born, live and grow. Young people's social and sexual lives are influenced by the interactions of the various sociocultural factors present within the ecological environment. The foundation of an ecological model lies on the understanding that behaviour has multiple levels of influences; which includes intrapersonal (biological, psychological), interpersonal (social, cultural), organisational, community, physical environment and policy (Sallis, Owen and Fisher, 2008). The social ecological model (SEM) illustrates dynamic relationships among individuals, groups and the surroundings (Golden *et al.*, 2015). It is a theoretical framework for understanding, exploring

and addressing social determinants of health at multiple levels. The individual experiences and behaviour towards sexual health is given a meaning in the form of its relation to the broader sociocultural context (Chen, Thompson and Morrison-Beedy, 2010). The application of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory to STIs suggest that risk behaviours are ecological phenomena, which is maintained over time as a result of the complex interactions among multiple spheres (Baral *et al.*, 2013).

The sexual lives of young people are not necessarily a natural phenomenon but are constructed; being inherently embedded into social and cultural factors such as socioeconomic situation, family relationships, moral values, cultural values, religious beliefs, media, peers and education. These act as major determinants in explaining sexual lifestyles and experiences and are specific to particular time and space (Lock and Strong, 2010). The commodification of leisure and lifestyles has further integrated the sexual health of young people into the wider sociocultural environment (Abbott-Chapman and Robertson, 2001). Social structures limit the capability of individual sexual agency to achieve positive sexual health and each individual has to improve his or her quality of life depending on available opportunities in a given social structural context (Collumbien *et al.*, 2012). The intent of the current study is to discuss the individualised perceptions and opportunities as well as the wider sociocultural factors using an 'ecological model' that favours investigating the interactions between young people's sexual behaviour and the sociocultural context of the Nepalese young men and women in the modern society of the UK.

1.11.2 Intersectionality: (Public) Health perspectives

My focus on the intersections of race and gender only highlights the need to account for multiple grounds of identity when considering how the social world is considered.

(Crenshaw, 1991: 1245)

Intersectionality theory, devised by Crenshaw (1989), explained that factors such as sex/gender and race/ethnicity constitute together to lead to multiple marginalisation. Initially, intersectionality was used to theorise the matrix of gender, race, ethnicity and class. It is argued that intersectionality requires more sustained attention towards understanding different logics of social divisions and inequalities and their intersections at the multiple levels (Yuval-Davis, 2006). Recent theoretical developments to understand intersectionality have explored the potential to incorporate several other domains of social positions such as socioeconomic status, caste, age, religion, educational background, sexuality and migration status that lead to the marginalisation and intersect at the same time to experience multiple marginalisations, even so, one does not take priority over another. Since the first introduction of the concept of intersectionality by Crenshaw (1989), several different approaches and perspectives have been used to understand and describe the intersectionality and use it in their respective field. In this thesis, I discuss intersectionality from the public health perspective and use this theory to explain the multiple level of intersections created by ethnicity, caste, gender, parental connectedness, socioeconomic status, sex education, religion, migration and educational background, which is experienced by Nepalese young people towards sexual health, lifestyles and relationships in the contemporary society of the UK.

Knudsen (2006: 61) defined intersectionality as “*a theory to analyse how social and cultural categories intertwine*”. Collins and Bilge (2016: 25) describes, “*Intersectionality is a way of understanding and analyzing complexity in the world, in people and in human experience*”. Hancock (2007) considered intersectionality as a research paradigm to study the race, gender, class and other organising structures of society in order to relate it to the standard logic of the identity politics that influence political access, equality and social justice. Hankivsky and Christoffersen (2008) explain that intersectionality seeks to disrupt the linear thinking that prioritises any one category of the social identity. Intersectionality is “*a theory of knowledge that strives to elucidate and interpret multiple and intersecting systems of oppression and privilege*” (Ibid., 2008: 275). The theory of intersectionality

stressed complexity with and within different categories, subject formations, positions and identified that it was mixed together; making it difficult to distinguish the level of analysis. Leslie McCall (2005: 1771) explained complexity of intersectionality and defined it as "*the relationships among multiple dimensions and modalities of social relations and subject formations*". McCall identified 3 distinct approaches to demonstrate the complexity of intersectionality on the basis of their stance towards categories and how they understand and use analytical categories to explore the complexity of social positions. She described *anti-categorical* and *inter-categorical* as two ends of the continuum with *intra-categorical* in the middle of it (Ibid., 2005: 1773). Although McCall described complexity of intersectionality with these 3 different approaches, she acknowledged that all intersectionality research may not fit into these categories and some researchers may cross these boundaries of the continuum to explain their use. This research deconstructs analytical categories and operates with gender, sex, sexualities and culture to avoid fixed structured categories because social life is considered too complex and to make fixed categories to simplify social fictions leads to social inequalities while justifying and producing differences among categories (Yuval-Davis, 2011b). Intersectionality in this research adopts existing analytical categories to examine social categories and demonstrate relationships of social inequalities at multiple and neglected points of intersection in order to reveal the complexity of lived experiences within different social positions (Crenshaw, 1989).

Davis (2008: 79) describes "*intersectionality initiates a process of discovery, alerting us to the fact that the world around us is always more complicated and contradictory than we ever could have anticipated. It compels us to grapple with this complexity in our scholarship*". Intersectionality has emerged to demonstrate the relationships between different sociocultural categories or positions such as gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, class, disability, nationality, education, economic situation; pointing towards the identities of an individual (Hankivsky, 2012). The intersections of these categories in the globalised world can shape the social and political belonging of the people and describe the structure of the society that can influence political access,

equality and social justice (Yuval Davis, 2011a). It shows that the potential of intersectionality is expanded further to be used across disciplines with a wide application to various areas of research. The use of intersectionality in the field of public health and healthcare has the potential to play a critical role in addressing the issue of health disparities and social inequalities (Hankivsky *et al.*, 2010; Veenstra, 2011; Bauer, 2014; Larson *et al.*, 2016). Bowleg (2012: 1267) states "*intersectionality provides the discipline of public health with a critical unifying interpretive and analytical framework for reframing how public health scholars conceptualise, investigate, analyse and address disparities and social inequality in health*". The complexities of health disparities in the field of public health can be understood by identifying multiple intersecting identities or social positions of the oppressed groups and understanding systems of privilege and oppression that lead to multiple social inequalities. Bowleg further describes intersectionality as a theoretical framework where multiple social categories intersect at micro level of individual experience to reflect multiple interlocking systems of privilege and oppression at the macro or sociostructural level (*Ibid.*, 2012). The values of intersectionality theory present a new way to understand social inequalities with the potential to uncover previously unknown silent health inequalities (Veenstra, 2011). The theory requires different social positions to be considered in tandem rather than distinctly. This is because different social positions in contemporary societies are considered to be corroborating each other and intrinsically interwoven in such a way that they cannot be unwinded from one another.

The health policy of any country is largely interrelated to its social, economic and political policies. The use of intersectionality theory for research on immigrant health may help to address the issues related to race, gender or class that create discrimination and inequalities within healthcare (Viruell-Fuentes, Miranda and Abdulrahim, 2012). Crenshaw (1991) noted the difference in structural and political intersectionality but few have become the focus of political and policy attention. The process to integrate structural and political intersectionality remains unclear. However, it can be addressed by noting different categories independently as well as interrelated at the same time but it is important that these categories are not conflated or reduced just

to a separate group (Walby, Armstrong and Strid, 2012). The real challenge is to identify whether all intersectional identities or social positions are of equal importance and understand the extent of these intersections. Hancock (2007) considers that intersectional positions are of equal interest, which offer the potential to represent research participants with some of them experiencing marginalisation without experiencing any form of privilege. Brah (1996) acknowledges that different dimensions of social life cannot be separated into discrete or pure strands. Hankivsky *et al.* (2010) explain there is no predetermined or pre-hierarchical pattern between categories and every category of social identity is necessarily more important than any other. Intersectionality does not simply bring different categories together but also unpacks them to understand what is created and experienced at the intersection of two or more axes of oppression. It helps to recognise the multidimensional nature and several levels of differences between the social identity categories.

Intersectionality is beneficial in gaining a depth understanding of the social determinants of sexual health, as it considers bringing multiple social categories together simultaneously and mutually to constitute differences and disadvantages among the general population (Crenshaw, 1991; Cole, 2009; Viruell-Fuentes, Miranda and Abdulrahim, 2012). Intersectionality may be used to analyse changes, variations and processes; focusing on minority cultures or marginalisation (Knudsen, 2006). The aim of the intersectionality in this thesis is to explore the complex structural determinants that influence the sexual health, lifestyles and relationships of Nepalese young people and understand the interrelationships between identity, social positions and systemic oppression such as racism, classism, and sexism.

1.12 Conclusion

This chapter presented a selective literature review to demonstrate the understanding of sexual health, lifestyles and relationships of Nepalese young people in the wider context of young people's sexual development in the

western world and the contemporary society of the UK. The chapter examined the literature on young people's individual characteristics, portrayed in the form of their sexual lifestyles and relationships and its relationships with the structural factors at multiple levels. Towards the end of the chapter, the ecological model provided the framework to discuss these structural factors at different levels; which will be adapted to illustrate the findings from this research study to explore the social and cultural factors affecting the sexual lifestyles and relationships of Nepalese young people at multiple levels. The discussion of intersectionality explained the interaction between various factors at multiple levels leading to health disparities and inequalities; which is necessary to understand the sexual health, lifestyle and relationship of Nepalese young people from the public health perspective.

Chapter Two: Research methodology and methods

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a framework for the research and I argue that the methodology and methods have provided a systematic approach to explore the social and cultural factors that shape sexual health, lifestyles and relationships of Nepalese young people in the UK. The chapter starts with the discussion about the theoretical underpinnings for the choice of qualitative research, informed by ethnography and biography, which fuses the study together. Next, I discuss an ethnography of the 'Nepalese Hub' and illustrates the systematic process of selecting sites, entering into the field, deciding on the sampling process and recruiting research participants for this study. I provide a detailed account of the data collection methods, participant observations and in-depth interviews; which are used for conducting this ethnographic research. I examine the importance of ethical considerations for this research project and demonstrate how ethics were maintained throughout this research process. Following this, I explain the use reflexivity to describe my work and present the account of the fieldwork and interviews; which explains my positionality as a researcher and my struggle to identify as an insider and/or outsider identity within the wider Nepalese community. In addition, I present a detailed reflexive account of data analysis and ethnographic writing that includes data transcription, translation, interpretation and presentation.

2.2 Theoretical underpinnings for the choice of qualitative research

Qualitative research investigates deep into the reality of social life and provides opportunities to explore all possible social variables by examining the perceptions and behaviours of the local population within a specific social setting, with a manageable boundary set by the researcher (Holliday, 2007). This approach captures the experiences of what people say and do and brings out multiple realities of socially constructed meanings by interpreting

the complexity of participants' social lives that exist within every social context (Burns, 2000). In this PhD thesis, qualitative research was applied; as there was little knowledge and information about the research topic. The in-depth, investigative nature of the qualitative research allowed the research participants to express their feelings and experiences in their own words. The flexible and fluid nature of the qualitative research suited this study in understanding the meanings, interpretations and subjective experiences of the marginalised population or the vulnerable groups (Liamputong and Ezzy, 2005). The qualitative research provided opportunities to gradually build rapport and establish trust with the research participants that was necessary to discuss and explore the sensitive topics of sexual health, lifestyles and relationships (Lee, 1993; Liamputong, 2013).

According to the qualitative research theorists and the ethnographers -*Lofland (1967), Blumer (1969), Matza (1969), Denzin (1971), Schatzman and Strauss (1973) and Guba (1978)*- the proper nature of social research allows researchers to get deeply involved in the complex social reality of what they study in its natural state, undisturbed by any external factors (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007: 7). However, the social world could not be understood based on simple causal relationships or with the addition of social events because human actions are based on different social meanings such as people's intentions, motives, beliefs, expressions, values and social rules; which influence their behaviour (Savin-Baden and Major, 2013). Young people's sexual behaviour in this research sought to use an open approach that explores the the meaning of social and cultural determinants, which shape their sexual lifestyles and relationships. Ethnography enabled me to explore the meaning and understanding of situations and actions through interpretation as well as providing an explanation of young people's sexual lives from an insider perspective (Mackenzie, 1994). It also contributed to both the description and explanations of regularities and variations in human social behaviour across and within the multicultural societies of the UK.

2.2.1 Defining ethnography: use of ethnography in this study

The historical context of ethnography explains that during 1920s and 1930s, famous anthropologists such as Malinowski (1922), Boas (1928) and Mead (1935) explored several non-western cultures while searching for cultural patterns and rules. After the Second World War, when tribal groups were disappearing, researchers started living with them and writing about them. As time progresses, the ethnographers could not find any isolated cultures and therefore they decided to write about their own culture. From the 1920s onwards, the Chicago School of Sociology and its members examined the marginal culture and socially strange subcultures such as slums, ghettos and gangs of the city using ethnographic research (Lutters and Ackerman, 1996; Deegan, 2001; Hart, 2010). The real challenge and responsibility for an ethnographer was to describe the patterns of changing beliefs and behaviour influenced by their age, gender, ethnicity and the space in which they lived and to understand the cultures and subcultures in order to explain the conflicts arising from encounters of different cultures. These changes provided a quiet revolution in the form of *new ethnography or contemporary ethnography* (LeCompte and Schensul, 1999: 5). The contemporary ethnographies focused on a particular aspect or dimension of the culture because it was no longer possible to spend years on a single site. It was problem oriented addressing the specific issues or problems in a community context, which narrowed the research in an attempt to focus on the research achievements by using specific 'lens' to view the community. For the purpose of this research, I used a cultural lens to focus on understanding the sexual health, lifestyles and relationships of Nepalese young people in the multiethnic and multicultural society of the UK. Spradley (1979: 3) defined ethnography as "*the work of describing a culture*", where an essential component was used to understand another way of life from the native point of view. This related to the understanding of Malinowski (1922: 25) where he stated the goal of ethnography is "*to grasp the native's point of view, his relation to life, to realise his vision of his world*". As of Nepalese ethnic origin, as a researcher, I approached this research in relation to my social and sexual life to learn from the young people rather than studying them; as well

as presented the original voice of the research participants from a native point of view.

Ethnography is a culture of studying ‘culture’ where culture is understood as “*the acquired knowledge that people use to interpret experience and generate social behaviour*” (Spradley, 1979: 5). Every culture provides people to see the world differently and it associates with particular behavioural patterns for that group of people (Wolcott, 2008). It includes tradition and values that are supposedly good, true and believable and is assumed as reality for that particular group of people. In modern complex societies, each human group creates their own culture and transfers it from one generation to another with modifications in order to create another new culture. Human actions in any context are based upon -or are influenced by- social meanings such as intentions, motives, rules, beliefs and values. My aim as an ethnographer is to highlight the importance of studying young people’s behaviour in the context of cultures and subcultures in order to understand social, cultural and traditional rules, norms and routines in the contemporary society of UK (Cook, 2005). I studied real perceptions and experiences of young people by observing them in the private space of ‘nightclubbing’ as well as in the open public and community spaces. Young people have learnt to see, hear, think and act in different ways to constitute their own ‘culture’ differently within the changing society and after arriving in the UK. Nepalese young people’s behavioural patterns towards their sexual health, lifestyle and relationships reflected their traditional values and constructed culture; contributing to the ethnographic nature of this study.

The meaning of the word ‘ethnography’ can be ambiguous. Wolcott (1999) viewed ethnography as a research perspective rather than a way of doing it. Brewer (2000) defined ethnography in two ways: 'big' and 'little' ethnography. Big ethnography resonates with qualitative research as a whole whereas little ethnography restricts its meaning to fieldwork or field research. Brewer added that ethnography was not just a way of collecting data but it involved both methodology and methods of collecting data. Atkinson and Hammersley (1994: 248) described the ambiguity in understanding ethnography as “a

philosophical paradigm to which one makes a total commitment, for others it designates a method that one uses as and when appropriate". Atkinson and Hammersley proposed positions between these two extremes, arguing that ethnography is a form of social research with a strong focus on exploring the nature of particular social phenomena; with a tendency to work primarily with unstructured data, explaining a small number of cases but in detail with an analysis of data which involves explicit interpretation of meanings and functions of human actions, mainly in the form of verbal descriptions and explanations. Geertz (1973) inspired this, by arguing that ethnography should not be defined on the basis of tools and techniques used for data collections but on the basis of a special characteristic of "*thick description*". According to Denzin (2001: 100), *thick description*

goes beyond mere fact and surface appearances. It presents detail, context, emotion, and the webs of social relationships that join persons to one another. It enacts what it describes. Thick description evokes emotionality and self-feelings. It inserts history into experience. It establishes the significance of an experience or the sequence of events for the person or persons in question. In thick description, the voices, feelings, actions, and meanings of interacting individuals are heard, made visible.

Thick description not only reveals facts but also captures and records the voices of lived experience to provide commentary, interpretation and interpretations of these interpretations and commentaries. I use ethnography as a style of research to understand young people's actions and their lived experiences by accessing field settings and observing their activities; participating and involving in close association with them, to learn and explore social meanings of influencing factors of sexual health through the collection of unstructured data during field visits and from in-depth interviewing of research participants.

Fetterman (2010) describes the ethnographer as an individual with an ability to keep an open mind about the groups or cultures they are studying but not

an empty head. Before entering the field, an ethnographer begins with an understanding of the problem, a theory or model, a research design, specific data collection techniques, tools for analysis and writing styles. As an ethnographer, I started my journey with an understanding of the particular group of young people and their sexual health lifestyles and behaviour, relevant existing literature, theoretical frameworks for designing this research and a brief understanding about data collection, analysis and presentations. This supported me to enter the field with an open mind but not with an empty head and helped to accumulate knowledge to find focus without developing a preconception about the research topic or a particular perspective. An existing knowledge with an open mind helped me to explore rich ‘thick description’ using a flexible approach with appropriate data collection techniques²³. It allowed multiple interpretations of social realities and data throughout the research process through insider’s perspectives.

The characteristics of ethnography can be wide ranging depending on associations, traditions and nature of research. Taylor (2002) summarised these characteristics of ethnography as research of people and aspects of their lives and social worlds to produce rich text without disturbing the simplistic originality that fits within the ongoing debate of ethnography and qualitative research. I understand ethnography as an inductive approach for learning about the social and cultural life of groups or communities in natural settings with recognition of culture (LeCompte and Schensul, 1999). I used myself as a primary tool for data collection (Fetterman, 2010) to understand the everyday lives of participants through participant observations (Spradley, 1980; Delamont, 2004; Gobo, 2008) and explored it further to gather thick descriptions (Geertz, 1973) using in-depth interviewing to collect data about the sexual lives of Nepalese young people. It helped to understand people’s ways of life (Denzin, 1997) in demonstrating human experiences (Willis and Trondman, 2000) through social meanings and activities of people in field settings to understand people’s actions and experiences of the world and ways in which their actions arose, while reflecting back on their experiences. I

²³ See section 2.7 Doing ethnography: data collection methods

used cultural lens to write this ethnography and present a credible, rigorous and authentic story of an observed behaviour and reflexive accounts of an individual by giving voice to the people in their own local context (Van Maanen, 1995; Wolcott, 2008). The central aim of this research is to use ethnography to understand and explore social and cultural factors that influence young people's actions and experiences that shape their sexual health, lifestyles and relationships in contemporary society of the UK.

2.2.2 Connecting ethnography to biography

“Ethnography is what ethnographers actually do in the field” (Fetterman, 2010: 15). Ethnographers were expected to present disclosure of lives of those under ethnographic gaze but this had been changing in recent decades and they are persuaded to think about the relationship between the researcher and the informant to evade ‘hidden ethnography’ (Reed-Danahay, 2001; Blackman, 2007). Biographical research aims to investigate experiences and outlooks of individuals in the context of their everyday lives, framed within their broader historical context (Henderson *et al.*, 2007: 13). Heinz (2009: 8) writes, *“a biography is not just a subjective narrative about one’s life history but a time and space related reflection of past events, the timing of transitions, and future plans”*. Nayak and Kehily (2008) described that biographical research and life history method is used to enhance the illustration of young lives. Woodman and Wyn (2015) emphasise the use of biographical approach to study the holistic view of young people’s lives that focuses on everyday cultural practices to provide a productive framework for conceptualising their cultural practices. The connection between ethnography and biography strengthens the information collected through fieldwork observations, with the subjective experiences of young people to give them the voice in their local context.

My understanding about the connection of ethnography and biography is informed by my emotional experiences as a researcher (Blackman, 2007) and by participants’ perception and experiences of social and cultural factors that

shape their sexual health, lifestyles and relationships; which yields in subjective knowledge (Merrill and West, 2009). Ethnography constituted an ongoing process of the fieldwork that connected with my personal experience as a researcher to present descriptions, interpretations and representations of human lives of the community and thus locating this research between the interiority of autobiography and exteriority of cultural analysis (Tedlock, 2005). The use of life history or biography of participants, which most frequently emerged from fieldwork, is an alternative form of ethnographic data used for this research. Biographical method served to present narratives of Nepalese young people by understanding their experiences and the outlooks of their daily lives (Merrill and West, 2009). I was motivated by the requirements of getting inside informants' perspectives to understand their subjective experiences (Rosenthal, 2004). Although ethnography and biography constituted distinct methodologies, the ties that bind them together is that they share common concerns with communicating lived experiences by writing, narrating and representing lives of common people in the society through life stories, rapport and voice (Blackman, 2010). The use of auto/biography in conjunction with ethnography also helped me to bring out my experiences about the research topic during fieldworks to enhance the use of reflexivity in exploring the sexual health experiences of the informants. My status as a doctor often played a role during interviews and informal conversations in building rapport and creating a trustful environment as soon as the communication started. This distinct methodology was used to explore social and cultural issues that influence the sexual health, lifestyles and relationships of Nepalese young people.

2.3 Setting the scene: ethnography of the 'Nepalese Hub'

The ethnographic description follows the traditional patterns of the qualitative work undertaken by the Chicago School of Sociology, in particular by Parks and Burgess during the 1920s and 1930s. Plumstead, in the Royal Borough of Greenwich in South East London, was selected as an initial site for this research; as it is considered as the 'Nepalese Hub' due to a large number of

the Nepalese population residing in this area. The area boasts Army Barracks that have a connection with the British Gurkha Army (BGA), which is related to the majority of the Nepalese population in the UK. The Center for Nepal studies in the UK estimated that 40% of the Nepalese population in the UK reside in the South East of England and 37% in London (Adhikari, 2012). Having lived in London for around a decade, I had opportunities to get involved with various Nepalese social and cultural organisations; which helped me to identify Nepalese communities in London. Plumstead is quite popular among the Nepalese population all over the UK, which was evident as one of the female participants, who recently arrived in the UK, described her first impression of Plumstead as:

When I came here (in Plumstead), I could see Nepali everywhere. It reminded me of living in Patan²⁴.. it was surprising.. here I could see many elderly ladies wearing lungi²⁵, which we could not see even in Patan.. Here you can find many like them.. Sometimes I feel I have come to live in one of the village of Nepal.

(22 years old female)

Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) describe that the decision to locate an ethnographic site for the study needs careful consideration with an assessment of the advantages and disadvantages of various locales. I decided to base my study in Plumstead, since it has the largest Nepalese community in London and certain features of Nepalese society were readily visible on the streets of Plumstead. The preparation of fieldwork started with a visit to Plumstead to meet my friends and colleagues, as well as the Nepalese population in the local community. The playgrounds and parks of Plumstead, Plumstead Common and Woolwich were common places where Nepalese young people gathered for casual meetings or sports activities. Soon, I realised that Nepalese society was not limited to Plumstead but neighboring

²⁴ One of the major cities of Nepal located in the south-central part of Kathmandu Valley

²⁵ A long piece of cloth used as a female garment, usually one end wrapped around the waist and other draped over the shoulder, also known as saree.

wards such as Glyndon, Abbey Wood, Woolwich Common, Woolwich Riverside and Charlton (fig. 2) were filled with Nepalese families.

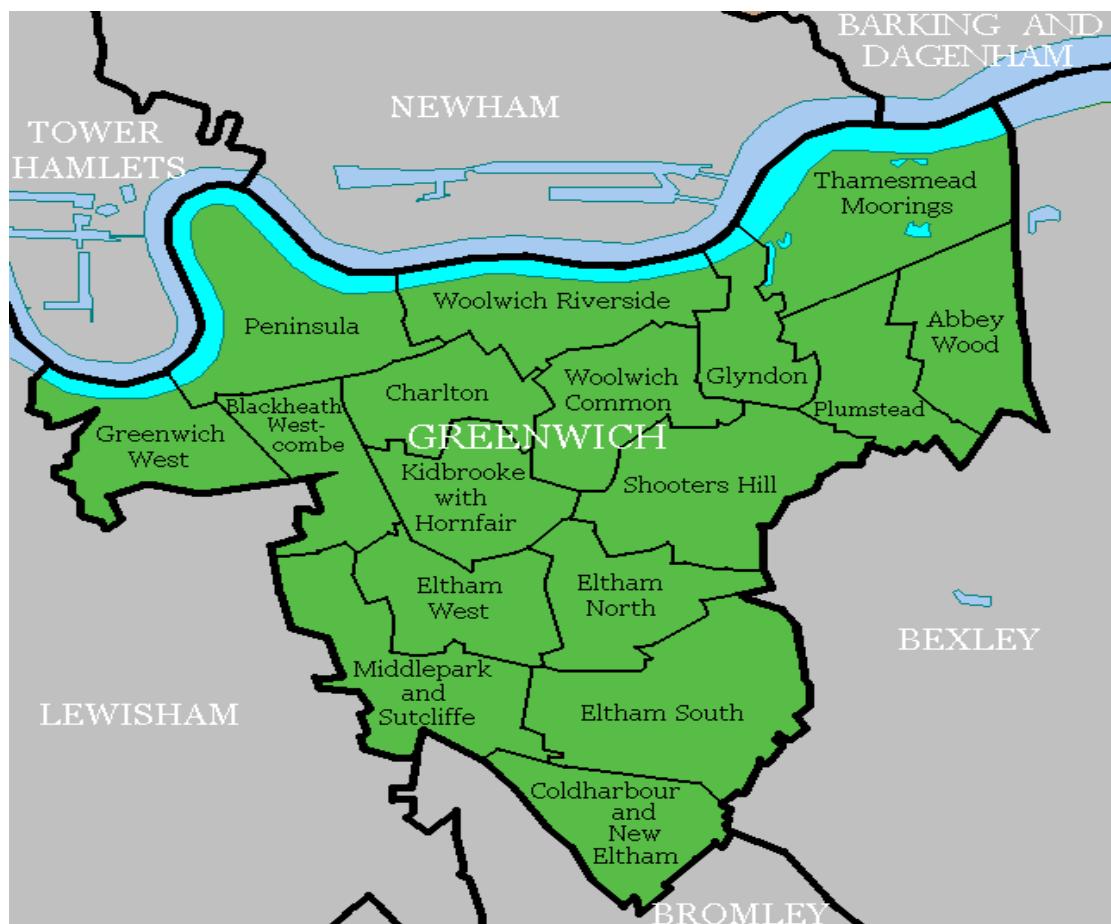


Figure 2: Plumstead and surrounding areas in Greenwich

I started reviewing the patterns of movement of Nepalese families by discussing it with the local Nepalese population and community leaders. Every individual had different assumptions about this movement and they reported it from their own personal perspectives. Most common assumptions that emerged during informal discussions was '*sudden increase in large number of the Nepalese population since 2004*'²⁶, '*moving away from deprived areas*', '*looking for better places which are bright and secure*' and '*affordability of rent and house prices*'. Although the Nepalese population lived in different wards of Greenwich, their central hub was Woolwich Arsenal town center and Plumstead High Street. Plumstead High Street played a significant

²⁶ There were large influx of Nepalese population in the UK after 2004 due to the settlement rights of retired Ghurkha soldiers who has worked for the British Army.

role in this research as it looked like a ‘Mini Nepal’ and was an ideal place for the fieldwork.

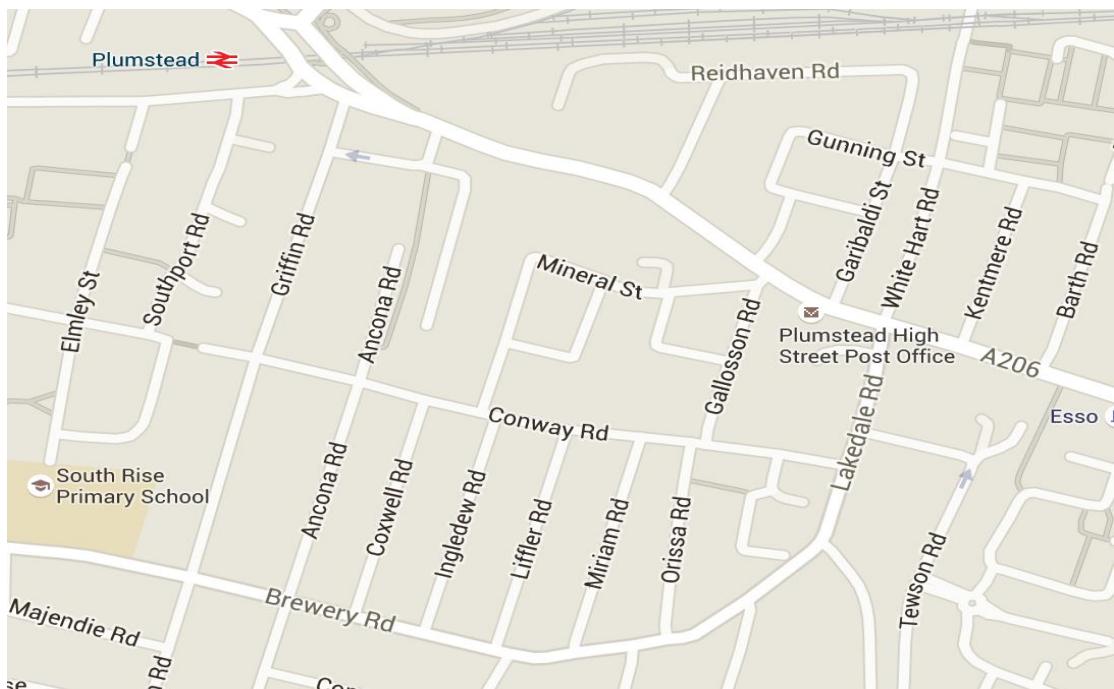


Figure 3: Schematic view of Plumstead High Street

Deciding and contextualising site(s) was the first stage of my ethnographic journey. I started this journey from Plumstead rail station, as this is the start of Plumstead high street (Fig.3). As soon as I came out of the train, I could recognise Nepalese men and women coming in and out of the station. After coming out of the station, I saw a Nepalese restaurant called *Danphe*, named after the national bird of Nepal, on the righthand side of the street. The windows of this restaurant displayed images of typical Nepalese food ‘*Momo, Sekuwa and Bhutuwa*’ as well as posters and leaflets advertising Nepalese events²⁷ and parties in the local area of Greenwich, as well as other parts of London. As I walked near the restaurant, I could strongly smell spices from typical Nepalese curries. I looked into the restaurant and saw a few middle-aged Nepalese men sitting with half glasses filled with beer and chatting in the Nepalese language. The first major turn on the righthand side of the street looked like a residential street. It was a quiet street and only a few people were walking; I recognised that some of them were Nepalese. I kept walking

²⁷ See appendix 1

straight on the high street and found another Nepalese restaurant, Nepalese grocery stores, a meat shop, a travel agent, an accountancy firm and mobile accessories shops. I saw advertisements for rooms to let, posters advertising Nepalese events, exchange rates for Pound Sterling and Nepalese Rupee on the windows of the shops on the high street; many in Nepalese languages. The high street was busy with many Nepalese faces moving around, coming in and out of stores and speaking in Nepalese languages to communicate with each other. The houses on both sides of the street were low lying with exteriors looking old, outdated and in need of repairs and facelifts. The second major turn on the righthand side of the high street was Lakedale Road. It looked more like an extension of the Plumstead High street. I saw some more grocery shops on both sides of the road, run by Nepalese shopkeepers, and a remittance agent shop that was selling Nepalese gift items and groceries. I saw another Nepalese restaurant displaying Nepalese flags and food items on its door and window. I did not find any supermarket or grocery chain stores on the high street, except that for the first time, I saw a small Tesco Express; which looked quite empty compared to the other local stores. The Lakedale road bifurcated into Brewery Road and the continuation of Lakedale road passes by Winn's Common Park -a gathering point for Nepalese young people- and ended near Swingate Lane; the location of the Nepali Pashupatinath Temple, which was established in 2011. At the bifurcation of Lakedale road, there was an open space which was filled with some Nepalese young people who looked intoxicated with alcohol.

The continuation of the Plumstead High Street looked muted and markets were diminishing to just a few local stores. I kept walking to see some supermarket chain stores such as Iceland, Boots, the Co-operative and a petrol station. The crowd was getting thinner and numbers of Nepalese faces were decreasing. As I walked further, I saw a local police station and a library. I entered into the library, which was very quiet with only a few people inside. I looked around the library but could not see any Nepalese faces. However, I found a section where they had books in different languages and -to my surprise- I saw few books written in Nepalese languages. I saw a leaflet saying "*Kurakani* (conversation): Every Tuesday 10 to 12". I wanted to know

more about it and went to ask the librarian for more details. He explained to me that it was a community class for a group of Nepalese children, young people and elderly people, where they had conversations and interactions with each other to learn and improve their English language skills under the supervision of a Nepalese librarian. When I asked about the limited number of Nepalese books on the shelves, the librarian cited the problem of finance and pointed out that they had to rely on donations for buying or bringing books in different languages into the library. I asked him how often Nepalese people came to the library. His answer was "*they are one of the major minority ethnic groups to use the library services here*". I stayed there for an hour but could not see many Nepalese and decided to return to the Plumstead high street, where I could again see a large number of Nepalese people at the bus stop. They were either waiting for buses, moving around or coming in and out of the stores. I entered the betting shop on the corner of the Lakedale road and I could again see a large number of Nepalese men in their 50s and 60s and some in their 30s and 40s. I started walking back towards the Plumstead Rail station and saw a significant presence of Nepalese people on the high street. After reaching the Plumstead rail station, I decided to walk on the other side of the Plumstead high street.

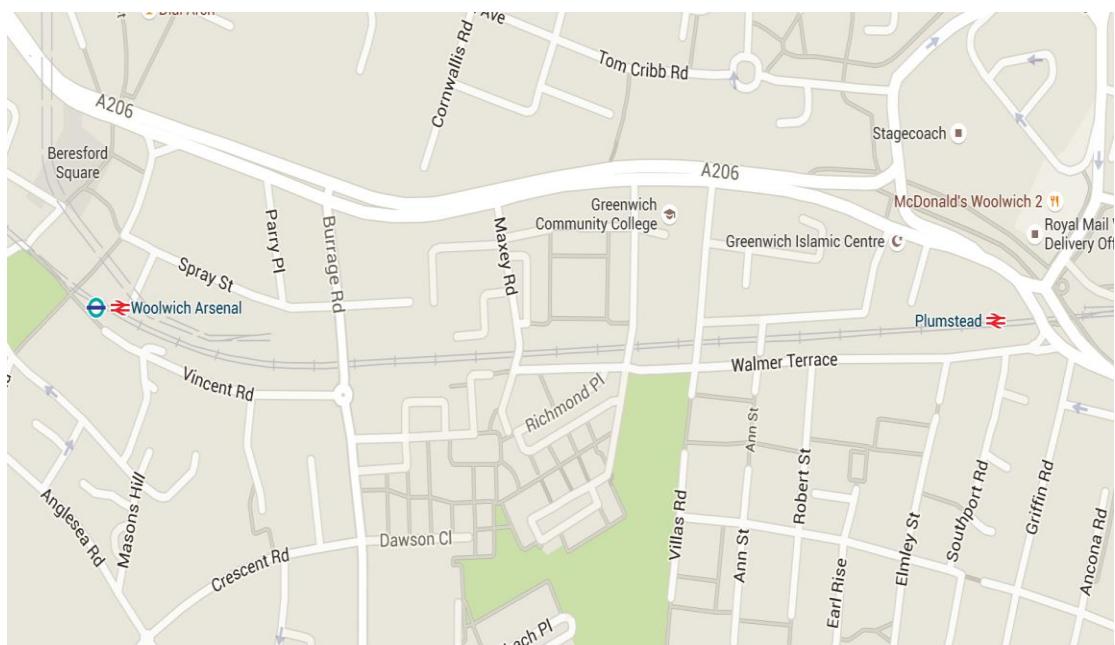


Figure 4: Schematic view connecting Plumstead and Woolwich

The other side of the Plumstead high street was Plumstead Road which connects Plumstead to Woolwich Arsenal (Fig. 4). The Plumstead Road started with another Nepalese restaurant called “*Namaste*”, a Nepalese word to greet people. This is one of the famous and busy Nepalese restaurants of the area and is popular amongst most of the Nepalese population around London for its traditional food and style of sitting arrangements, where customers have to take off their shoes before entering the dining room. People have to sit on the floor and food is served on low-lying tables. The presence of Nepalese ambience was felt strongly around this Nepalese restaurant due to the continuous flow of Nepalese men and women coming in and out. I walked further on the Plumstead high street to pass African stores, a Mosque and Greenwich Community College; before reaching Woolwich Market. Most parts of this street did not have many shops except at the start of the road and then after reaching near to the Woolwich Market. After reaching the Woolwich market, I made my way towards Beresford Square (fig. 4) where I saw a caravan named *Namaste*. Later, I came to know that it was another branch like the *Namaste* restaurant on Plumstead high street and sold only famous Nepalese foods such as *Momo*, *Samosa Chat* and *Chowmin*. The fast food caravan outlet is popular in Woolwich and is surrounded by Nepalese young customers most of the time. It looked popular amongst young people, as they serve food in take away containers at cheaper prices.

Woolwich was another place with a strong presence of the Nepalese population. I moved away from the caravan to reach Woolwich Square, where I saw Nepalese older people sitting in the areas around the square watching television on a giant screen. I saw more Nepalese faces walking around, speaking to each other in Nepalese languages. I approached a middle aged man and started chatting about the presence of the Nepalese community in Woolwich. He showed me a Nepalese restaurant, an educational consultancy, an accountancy firm, a private college and a fish and chip shop in the square; all run by Nepalese owners. He asserted that there were other restaurants, cafés, and colleges in Greenwich owned by Nepalese businessman. He suggested that there were a large number of Nepalese students studying at

the government and private colleges in the local area. He also described that there used to be more Nepalese colleges with a large number of Nepalese students but most have closed down since the United Kingdom Visa and Immigration (UKVI) student visa regulations had become stricter. After finishing the conversation, I walked towards Woolwich Market and found a small kiosk with Nepalese flags selling traditional Nepalese clothing and a Nepalese '*Gurkha Café*', filled with Nepalese customers.

My initial field visits to Plumstead and Woolwich -in South East London- and conversations with Nepalese people during these visits provided enough evidence to consider it as a 'Nepalese hub', which convinced me that I was in the right place for my research study. However, it also raised concerns since the advertisement of events and parties on windows of Nepalese shops on the Plumstead high street indicated that the movement of the Nepalese population was not limited to the surroundings of Plumstead or Greenwich but moved around London to participate in various Nepalese parties and events. Through these events and parties, people met and engaged with other Nepalese people coming from different parts of London and outside London to demonstrate the interconnectedness of Nepalese culture, while sharing their lived experiences.

2.4 Construction and connection of ethnographic site(s)

The movement of the Nepalese population in and around Plumstead demonstrated the need for an ethnographic observation at various sites. Marcus (1995) proposed the concept of multi-sited ethnography. However, he specified that spatial boundaries should not distinguish single site ethnography with multi-site ethnography but that cultural context should be the major characteristic to separate them (*Ibid.*, 1998). Hammersley and Atkinson (1995: 41) assert that "*settings were not naturally occurring phenomena, they were constituted and maintained through cultural definition and social strategies. Their boundaries were not fixed but shifted across occasions, to one degree or another, through processes of redefinition and*

renegotiation". Holliday (2007) describes the research setting as a small social setting, which is part of a complex social world, created by a researcher with an operational boundary for the purpose of research. Holliday asserts that the researcher should identify and construct the boundaries for a research study but should also ensure that the setting has a sense of boundedness. Spradley (1979: 10) described '*culture*' as an important characteristic of any ethnographic research. Therefore, as an ethnographer, I was persuaded to create an artificial boundary for the purpose of this research in order to conduct observations and in-depth interviews to collect data that will have the context of the Nepalese culture and the sense of boundedness. The informal discussions with the local Nepalese people assisted me in tracking the movements of the Nepalese population in and out of the Plumstead area. I found that although many young people lived in the neighbourhood of Plumstead, they moved all across London and other parts of England for the purposes of work, study and for socialising with friends and families. This showed that the sense of cultural connectedness took priority over spatial boundaries and Nepalese young people often created their own spatial boundaries, defying the National territorial boundaries, in order to share their cultural interests and life experiences; as illustrated in figure 5.

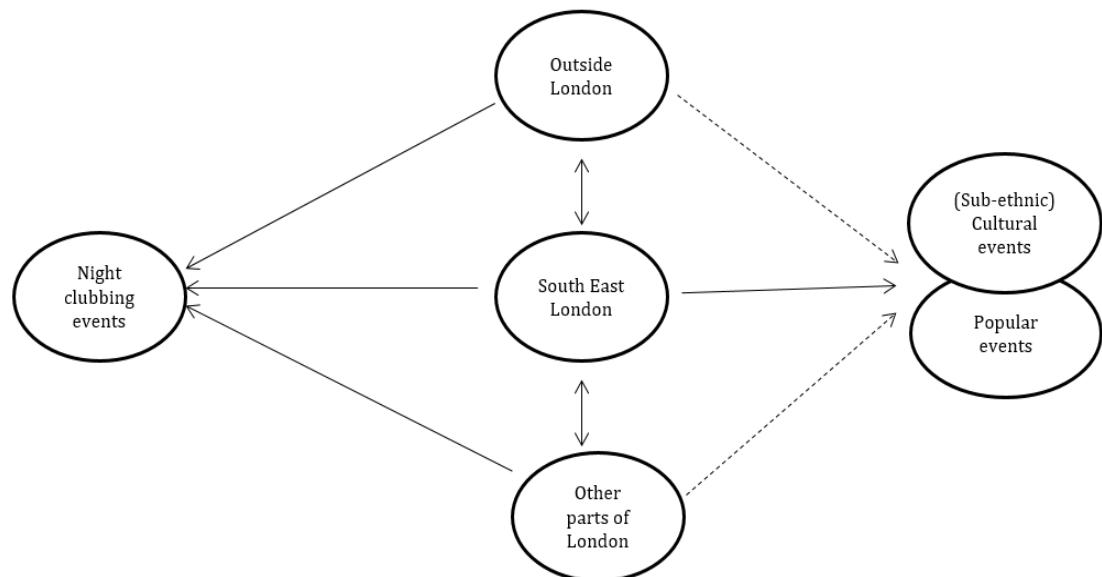


Figure 5: Movement of Nepalese young people

The movement of the Nepalese population between South East London (Plumstead/Woolwich), other parts of London and outside London was very common. The movement normally took place in search of jobs, family reunions, better livelihood, affordable renting and housing. Within the fieldwork, it was found that the Nepalese population created artificial boundaries in order to create a confined space in which they experienced and shared their cultural connectedness through cultural or popular events and lifestyle experiences through nightclubbing. Each of these confined spaces had distinct characteristics and fit to the context of this research into understanding the lifestyle experiences of Nepalese young people. I illustrate these confined spaces as:

- The Nepalese population living in every localised area/region of the UK organised their own cultural events to celebrate festivals such as *Dashain*, *Tihar* and *Teej* or popular events such as Nepalese football tournaments or music concerts within their own locality. Although these events were open to everyone with a small entry fee, the focus was to bring all of the Nepalese population together for sporting activities or to celebrate important cultural festivals; regardless of their age and castes. The major attendees for such events varied. Football tournaments or music concerts would see a large presence of Nepalese young people whereas cultural festivals were dominated by middle aged and older men and women with a small number of young people, comparatively. Young people often formed small groups within these events to create their own space; where they introduced and engaged with each other to widen their friendship network, shared contact details to build friendships and frequently made an initiation towards romantic relationships.
- The Nepalese population living in every localised area/region of the UK have different caste/subethnic²⁸ populations. Different castes such as *Rai*, *Magar*, *Gurung*, *Limbu*, *Newar*, *Bahun*, *Chettris* and *Madhesis*

²⁸ Subethnic population is understood as different caste groups within the Nepalese ethnic groups (See section 'Roots and origin....' pg. 13)

organised cultural events targeting their own population group in the local area. Although everyone was invited officially, the events organiser focussed on bringing people from the subethnic groups together. The presence of young people at such events was limited, especially as they were seen as volunteers to support managing such events or leading the stage performance through dancing and singing. As most attendees to such events are from the same caste groups, young people are vigilant in showing their romantic sides and limit themselves within the cultural boundary by wearing traditional clothing and portraying themselves in a traditional way. The main aim of such events is to promote and experience traditional subethnic culture, without focussing on wider Nepalese ethnic culture.

- Entertainment companies and Nepalese event organisers set up popular events such as music concerts and comedy shows by inviting Nepalese popular singers and comedians. These events are arranged in different parts of London and outside London, depending on popularity and demand. Young people remained cautious in expressing their sexual lifestyles in this space, as these events were popular among Nepalese population of all age groups.
- Entertainment companies also organise Nepalese nightclubbing events celebrating Nepalese New Year, Valentine's night, summer nights and after concert clubbing by inviting ethnic discs jockeys (DJs). These clubbing events are predominantly organised within Central London (Waterloo, Elephant and Castle, Vauxhall) with an aim to attract most young men and women from all parts of the UK. The central London location attracted more visitors, as it was easier to commute within London and from outside London. The number of such events have been increasing over the last few years due to an increase in popularity and demand for such events from Nepalese young people. Young people were confident in expressing their sexual lifestyles and relationships in this confined private and confidential space, as they felt

they were away from the observant eyes of family, society, culture and religion²⁹.

The movement of the Nepalese population to these cultural events, popular events and nightclubs allured me to visit these events to make an ethnographic observation. The initial observations of these events demonstrated that attendees of cultural events and popular events had a relatively older population compared to the nightclubs. This showed that the nightclub was an appropriate place to observe young people's lifestyle and behaviour since most attendees were young people experiencing their sexual lives outside the observation and monitoring of their parents, relatives and the wider traditional Nepalese community.

2.5 ‘Engaging with my people’: opportunities and challenges of entering and accessing the field

The problem of obtaining access to the data one needs looms large in ethnography. It is often at its most acute in its initial negotiations to enter a setting and during the ‘first days in the field’; but the problem persists, to one degree or another, throughout the data collection process.

(Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995: 54)

The beginning of fieldwork research starts with the access of the research site but most ethnographers struggle in gaining access to the field and I shared similar experiences (Burgess, 1984). I started my fieldwork by visiting Plumstead on 17th December 2013. Although I come from a Nepalese ethnic background and have friends in Plumstead, I was new to the area and unknown to the wider Nepalese community; which made an initial integration into the local Nepalese society challenging. Being an insider had little to offer

²⁹ Since this space provided an opportunity to observe sexual lifestyles and relationships of Nepalese young people, I present an ethnography of this space in chapter 4 “Nightclubbing as a lifestyle: a private space for sexual intimacy”.

in getting complete access to looking into the daily lives and routine activities of the Nepalese population. Fetterman (2010: 36) described that ethnographers could gain access to the field in different ways: sometimes access may mean entering the field with few contacts and multiplying these contacts to know more and more people, whereas sometimes it could be through visiting local public places and introducing yourself and your research and sometimes it could be through volunteering with local community organisations. I was mindful and followed this approach while entering the field. I knew some middle aged community leaders through the wider Nepalese network but I had no formal contact with any young people. I started visiting public places such as temples, the library and convenience stores in the Plumstead high street. I started talking to everyone and anyone during these visits. I realised that access to the field was a gradual process and there was a need to negotiate again and again with the same or new groups of people on same or new related topics. I needed to be flexible in order to adapt to the social environment and change myself according to the need of the situation and circumstances within the local Nepalese population. The most important part was to build and gain trust from the local community in order to understand the multiple field realities in which they lived as a family; which would build a connection in introducing me to their sons and daughters or other young groups. At the same time, there was a constant negotiation in building trust with young people to understand their lives and experiences towards sexual health, lifestyles and relationships.

I had no difficulty in identifying the Nepalese population in the diverse community of Plumstead. Coming from a Nepalese background helped me to understand Nepali language, which was heard most of the time in the Plumstead high street. I was aware of the dress sense of the Nepalese population, where most Nepalese men and women were wearing extra clothing in the winter of December. Many preferred to wear sweaters and jackets rather than coats. Married females were seen wearing traditional clothes like '*saree and kurta sarwal*' with '*bindi*' on forehead, '*chura/bala*' on their wrists, gold rings on their fingers and some other forms of gold jewelry on their neck, ear or nose. Unmarried females were seen in trousers and t-

shirts with *shawls* or jackets and some forms of gold jewelry. Men wore jeans or trousers with t-shirts, shirts, sweaters and jackets with scarves as another compulsory item for most middle aged and older people. Nepalese males were recognised as they wore one or other form of jewelry such as gold rings or chains. The facial and physical structure was another indication that helped me to recognise Nepalese people in the crowd. Most Nepalese have Mongolian faces, with male's height averaging 160-165 cm and female's 150-155 cm with an averagely built body. The accent while speaking the English language and body movement while speaking or walking was another indication that helped me to recognise them. I do not remember any instance where I failed to identify Nepalese men or women.

The first few people I met and interacted with were owners and workers at Nepalese convenience stores. I explained to them about my research and asked them to help and support me in finding appropriate participants. They gave me the contact details of the community leaders, as they would have more connections to introduce me to the young people. I received positive responses and assurance from the people I contacted and they showed willingness to help me in whatever way they could. I was overwhelmed with positive responses and it gave me confidence in approaching and speaking to every Nepalese person on the street. Nepalese shopkeepers assisted me by putting research leaflets³⁰ on their shop windows while others promised to pass the message onto their sons, daughters and friends. The majority of the Nepalese population agreed with the notion of the need for this research and showed overwhelmingly positive responses. However, I was cautious as I understood that all positive responses were not genuine. Some responded positively because I was a fellow citizen doing some work that would possibly benefit the overall Nepalese community in the UK. Although I received positive responses during fieldwork and was having formal/informal conversations with the local Nepalese population, I was nowhere close to my core participants; as I could not speak to any young people on my initial days doing the fieldwork. Attempts to locate participants through private and

³⁰ See appendix 2

government colleges were unsuccessful as local colleges showed little interest in identifying Nepalese young people. I managed to put research leaflets on the notice boards of colleges but the response was muted.

2.5.1 The 'luck' factor

Every field situation is different and initial luck in meeting good informants, being in the right place at the right time and striking the right note in building relationships is an important skill. Indeed, many successful episodes in the field do come about through good luck as much as through sophisticated planning, and many unsuccessful episodes are due as much to the bad luck as to bad judgment.

(Sarsby 1984: 96).

I agree with the above assertion, as I experienced a sudden change in my luck after initial struggles and it was like a fairy tale story. I was walking down Plumstead high street like on any other normal day and suddenly I remembered that I needed to buy some *Wai Wai* (Nepalese noodles). I went to a Nepalese convenience store, picked up some noodles and went to the payment counter; where I was the only customer to be served. As the cashier was from Nepalese ethnic origin, I started the conversation in Nepali language with normal greeting and continued explaining to him about my research, as it was necessary to make an initial connection before other customers arrived. I stood on one side of the counter, which allowed him to serve other customers. Using Nepali language for conversation was beneficial, as our conversations continued even when he was serving other customers. He showed a positive response -as had many others- and asked me how he could help. I responded quickly and asked him if he could coordinate arranging for me to meet with Nepalese young people in the local area. He suggested me to meet

Shambhu³¹, a Nepalese man working in an office nearby. He asserted that Shambhu had enough contacts with the Nepalese community leaders and young people and he would be the best person to help me. He promised to contact me if any opportunities arose. I did not receive any call from him but met him several times in his store, where he always showed support.

I left the store and walked to Shambhu's office without any appointment. I reported to the reception where I was asked to wait, as Shambhu was in a meeting. I was in the waiting area when another Nepalese person, Ramesh³², walked in to meet Shambhu. We were quick to recognise our Nepalese connection and started conversation with greetings. After his introduction, I introduced myself as a researcher and started talking about my research. He seemed quite interested and asked for more information. I gave him the advertising materials³³ and explained to him all aspects of my research. After initial conversations, he agreed to help and organise a meeting to introduce me to a group of Nepalese young people in Woolwich. We exchanged our contact details and arranged a date to meet in his office in Woolwich.

Now, it was the time to meet Shambhu as he invited me into his office and asked the reason for my visit. I gave a brief account of my research study and divulged my expectations about arranging a meeting with young people. Additionally, I handed out my advertising materials and research leaflets and explained the importance of this research for the local Nepalese community. He showed his concerns about the sensitiveness of the topic 'sexual health and lifestyles' and explained that Nepalese people would not feel comfortable relating with such research. Nevertheless, he promised that he would speak to the community leaders and inform me of their response. Sadly, I did not receive any update from him. Although many Nepalese community leaders helped me in distributing information and creating awareness, they were reluctant to discuss the research within the community or pass the information to young people due to the sensitivity of the topic. This negative response

³¹ Name changed for confidentiality

³² Name changed for confidentiality

³³ See appendix 3

from parents and community leaders hampered participant's recruitment, as Nepalese young people tend to seek permission from parents to participate in any extra activities or any form of research. From the wider experience of the fieldwork, I realised that the parental channel was a strong way of communication within the Nepalese society. Parents quickly shared information about the negative responses and took actions to stop their sons and daughters from participating in the research. The gatekeepers³⁴ in this research shared the opinion that discussions about sex and sexuality within the Nepalese community are still taboo (Adhikari and Tamang, 2009). I saw Shambhu again during my fieldwork, where we discussed the progress of my research. However, he again raised the issues of sensitivity related to the topic of sexual health, lifestyles and relationships.

I met Ramesh in his office on the agreed day; where he introduced me to Krit³⁵, the office manager. The office set up included two desks with a computer and stationery at the opposite end of the room, a bookshelf and drawers placed on one side of the wall and the other wall had windows with a landscape view of the town. The office also included another room which was set up as a classroom with desks, chairs, whiteboards and a computer with audiovisual facilities. This space was used by a group of young people who came every Sunday to learn Nepalese subethnic language and to prepare for a subethnic cultural event that was scheduled to take place in Woolwich later that month. Krit invited me to come and meet a group of Nepalese young people on Sunday. I asked Krit if I could get a time slot to speak to those young people during or after their language class. Krit assured me that he would arrange a time for me to speak to the young people and provide information about my research. As planned, I visited Krit's office on Sunday and saw the group of young people in their language class. During their break, I was invited to speak and explain my research. I took this opportunity to explain my research and hand round the leaflets to this group of young

³⁴ Gatekeepers in this research are individuals from the social and cultural organisations that have the power and network to link the researcher to the research participants or create an environment where the researcher would get access to the potential research participants.

³⁵ Name changed for confidentiality purpose, he was another middle aged Nepalese person and the office manager

people. They looked impressed and showed interest in participating in the research.

I started visiting this group of young people every Sunday, handed them my research leaflets and information sheet and explained to them my research again and again. I made efforts to build rapport by discussing their lifestyles and relationships through informal conversations but the conversation remained muted in most part; as they looked unwilling to share their personal lifestyle experiences. I was always restricted to limited conversation either because they had to return to their class or they needed to do practice for cultural events. I asked them several times to arrange time for formal interviews and they always showed positive intent but neither agreed nor disagreed about the time. I continued meeting these young people on Sundays and later met some of them during observations at the nightclubs and cultural events. However, I was feeling frustrated as I was struggling to make an impact on this group of young people and convincing them to have in-depth discussions about their sexual lifestyles or to arrange for formal interviews.

As an ethnographer, it could be a normal scenario but it was a frustrating experience for me in the first phase of the fieldwork. Frustrations in recruiting participants while researching sensitive topics are normal. Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) described that much can be learned from the rejection and failed attempts in making contact with people as well as their response towards the researcher. I was trying to motivate myself and learn from these experiences. This was a good example showing me the difficulties in recruiting participants from '*hard to reach*' and '*minority ethnic groups*'. It also showed how difficult it could be to enter the field as an 'outsider'. Although I come from Nepal, which makes me an insider to conduct this research, I belong to Madheshi subethnic groups and come from Terai region of Nepal; whereas most of these young people were from Hill region of Nepal (Fig 1). This made me an 'outsider' for this group of young people. As I was getting immersed in the fieldwork, I realised that the subethnic Nepalese population

were closely knit within their caste groups and were reluctant to allow outsiders.

In continuation with the limited ‘luck’ I had experienced, I met a Nepalese women in Krit’s office who became enthusiastic about my research and gave me the contact details of a young boy. I was quick to call the number and the Nepalese connection worked again. We arranged to meet the boy the same evening in a café in Woolwich and he said that he would come with his friends. I reached the café and waited for them patiently. After 20 minutes, I decided to call the boy and received the response that they would be there soon. A group of young boys arrived into the café after another 20 minutes. I was expecting to meet 2-3 representatives from the group but it turned out to be a large group of about 7-8 young boys and the number kept increasing for the next 20-30 minutes and reached around 20. The café became crowded and so we moved to a Nepalese café nearby in order to fit everyone on the table. Most of these boys looked below the age of 24. I started the conversation asking about them and then describing my research project. I made an attempt to explain to them the need for this research amongst Nepalese young people. These young males looked interested in participating in the research. We started seeing each other regularly on the streets of Plumstead and Woolwich where I made every attempt to speak to them and to develop a good rapport. Later, I came to understand that some of the members of this group were the same young people whom I had met earlier on Sundays. The difference was that the previous group of young people was formed and led by a community leader for the purpose of making them learn subethnic language and perform during subethnic cultural events; whereas, this new group was formed and led by the young boys themselves. The main aim of this group was to work as a group for sports activities and volunteer to help and support the Nepalese community in the local area of Plumstead and Woolwich. Some young people from this group were interviewed and we were together at some nightclubbing events. I also met them at local cultural events, saw them regularly on the streets of Plumstead and Woolwich and had regular informal conversations.

I experienced another instance of ‘luck’ when I met a Nepalese male in his late 30’s sitting in a restaurant where I had gone for my lunch. After greetings and introductions, I started to explain my research. He asked many questions and suggested that I conduct this research in Nepal, as it would be easier to get access to young people. After an hour of long discussions and convincing him about the need and importance of my research for local Nepalese young people in the UK, he looked convinced, gave me some mobile numbers and asked me to contact those Nepalese people. These contacts were beneficial and I got opportunities to meet another group of Nepalese young people who played football together. I arranged to meet this group in the football ground. I spoke to them about my research, distributed leaflets and information sheets and asked them to contact me for further queries. Some of them contacted me and we arranged for formal interviews. I also met some of these young people at the nightclubbing and on the streets of Plumstead and Woolwich during fieldwork.

My regular visits to Plumstead and Woolwich strengthened my contacts with the local Nepalese population and the community leaders, which helped to access the field openly. Putting advertising materials on shop windows and distributing leaflets created awareness about the research, which helped me to access the field positively. At one stage, it looked like most Nepalese people in and around Plumstead and Woolwich were aware of this research. Many new connections were formed and during initial contact they responded by saying that they already knew about this research from their friends or they had seen the leaflets in one or the other stores. The regular meetings with young people helped me to build rapport and I finally got access to participants for in-depth interviewing and participant observation at the nightclubs, where young people experienced their sexual lifestyles and relationships away from the parental eyes and sociocultural norms.

2.6 Sampling and sample size: recruiting young people and selecting site

It is the focus upon natural settings which presents the field researcher with problems of selection and control over the data that are collected. Field researchers are therefore constantly having to select locations, time periods, events, and people for study.

(Burgess, 1984: 53)

The research applied a non-probability form of sampling with a mix of *purposive sampling* and *snowballing techniques* (Bryman, 2016: 410) to select site for the ethnographic observation and to recruit research participants aged 16-24 years from Nepalese ethnic groups. Gobo (2008) describes that the purposive sampling identifies site with an extreme status of particular attributes. The selection of Plumstead and Woolwich as the primary research site for observation was based on the statistical data and my pre-investigation of the local area. The selection of nightclubs as a site for observation was based on the extensive inspection of different sites that brings young people together³⁶. The presence of a large number of Nepalese young people at the nightclubbing events provided the best opportunity to observe their sexual lifestyles and behaviour. The selection of this site for ethnographic observations using purposive sampling helped me to observe the lived experiences of Nepalese young people in a private and confined space, which was necessary in order to achieve the aim of this research project in exploring and understanding young people's sexual lives (Maxwell, 2013). These observations remained connected as many young people seen in the high street of Plumstead and Woolwich were also seen in the nightclubs; the same people participated in different locations (Spradley, 1980). I attended nightclubbing events on 7 different occasions and a detailed ethnography of one of these nightclubbing events is presented in Chapter Four.

³⁶ See section 2.4 construction and connection of ethnographic site(s) (pg. 72) [Movement of Nepalese young people]

The use of purposive sampling ensured that the young people recruited for in-depth interviewing were interested in sharing their sexual health, lifestyle and relationship experiences without any discomfort and at their willingness (Bryman, 2016). The aim was to recruit a wide range of participants in an attempt to increase diversity of experiences and to gain different perspectives in order to collect rich data (O' Reilly, 2012). Efforts were made to recruit young people from different castes, educational background, migration status, socioeconomic status and religion to ensure that the sample provided a wide range of experiences. Snowballing techniques helped to multiply the numbers of gatekeepers, which eventually aided in the ethnographic fieldwork and the recruitment of research participants for this study. Most participants were recruited through community networking where a message was passed from one person to another by distributing research leaflets, which included my contact details. Other recruiting methods included personal contacts, approaching community centre, visiting playground, attending events organised by the local Nepalese community, placing leaflets on advertising windows of local high street shops and placing/promoting leaflets on social media through popular Nepalese groups. Some were recruited during visits to public places and others through friends and personal contacts. Few contacted through email and showed their interest in participating in the study. All participants were involved in pre-interview discussions in order to maintain their comfort during interviews and to make sure the participant met the eligibility criteria to participate in this research. The arrangement of location and time for interviews were considered mutually with the research participants.

I conducted 17 in-depth interviews with Nepalese young people living in London, which included 10 males and 7 females. I had to exclude 1 interview from male because he was 27 years old at the time of the interview. Although he knew about the age limit, he expressed "*I thought age was not very important and I am interested to share my experiences of those years (16-24)*". As this was my first scheduled interview, I continued the interview and this helped me to gain experience of conducting an in-depth interview in a real setting with a real participant. I decided not to include the data from this

interview, as the experiences and information shared by this participant were similar to other participants aged below 24 years of age, and no new information was identified that could have significantly enriched the research outcome by increasing the age limit. Five female research participants cancelled their interviews hours before the scheduled time and they gave various reasons such as “*Sorry I do not think I would feel comfortable*”, “*Sorry I cannot make it*”, “*I do not think I can help you... I asked my dad and he told me not to go*”, “*My dad said don't go*” and one did not respond to my call on the scheduled day of an interview. As a male researcher, access to female participants to discuss the sensitive issues can be difficult because of the emotional sensitiveness attached to the topic (Blackman, 2007). It is necessary to understand that researching sex related topics among ‘hard to reach’ groups is challenging due to the taboo attached to such sensitive issues (Lee, 1993). Although there were several other potential young males and females who showed interest during the fieldwork, they neither agreed nor disagreed to an in-depth interview.

The final sample size for this ethnographic research included 9 males and 7 females and a total of 16 research participants for in-depth interviews; in addition to the ethnography of nightclubs, cultural events and the local area of the Plumstead and Woolwich. Although the sampling size represented fewer numbers of interviews than initially intended³⁷, the interviews produced depth information with lasting significance (Charmaz, 2014: 105). The final sample included first generation Nepalese young people living in the UK and was selected considering maximum variation strategy (Patton, 2002), where the wide range of participants provided rich data with different perspectives and varied experiences towards the sexual health, lifestyles and relationships of Nepalese young people. The demographic information of the research participants are details below in Table 1. The process of sampling, data generation and data analysis are seen more interactively (Mason, 2002) and the quality or depth of information collected from research participants

³⁷ The initial plan was to conduct 20 in-depth interviews (10 males and 10 females).

determine the data saturation rather than the quantity of the research participants.

Table 1: Demographic information of the research participants

Interviewee	Age	Sex	Visa status in the UK	Country of birth	Duration in the UK	BGA connection	Presence of family member	Educational level	Parental Marital status	Parental Occupation Mom/dad (only for those in the UK)
Asha	16	F	ILR	UK	9	Yes	Yes	GCSE Year 11	Married	Restaurant/Cleaner
Bishal	17	M	ILR	Nepal	4	Yes	Yes	Gap Year	Divorced/Remarried	Security/Cleaner
Bishnu	17	M	ILR	Nepal	4	No	Yes	Level 3	Married	Restaurant/housewife
Dinesh	18	M	ILR	Thailand	2.5	No	Yes	ACCA	Single mom	Restaurant
Dibya	18	F	ILR	Nepal	6	Yes	Yes	Level 3	Married	Security/Cleaner
Esha	19	F	ILR	Nepal	3	Yes	Yes	Level 3	Married	Sales agent/Care worker
Pujan	21	M	ILR	HongKong	7	Yes	Yes	Level 5	Divorced	Security/Parlour
Ravi	22	M	LR (S)	Nepal	3	No	No	Level 5	Married	N/A
Rishi	22	M	ILR	Nepal	7	Yes	Yes	Graduate	Married	Security/housewife
Richa	22	F	LR (S)	Nepal	0.5	No	Yes	ACCA	Married	Security/Mom in Nepal
Sagar	23	M	LR (S)	Nepal	4	No	No	Graduate	Married	N/A
Saurav	23	M	ILR	Nepal	5	Yes	yes	Level 5	Married	Security/

								(gap year)		cleaner
Sapna	23	F	LR (S)	Nepal	4	No	No	MBA	Married	N/A
Tilak	24	M	ILR	Nepal	2	Yes	Yes	Graduate	Married	Security/Care worker
Tulsi	24	F	LR (S)	Nepal	4	No	No	Graduate	Married	N/A
Tara (Married)	24	F	LR (S)	Nepal	2	No	Yes (Husband)	MBA	Married	Husband - Restaurant

2.7 ‘Doing ethnography’: data collection methods

After getting access into the field and deciding about ethnographic sites to observe and people to interview, the challenges lies with what and how to observe and collect (Gobo, 2008). The aim of the data collection in this ethnographic research is to observe and capture the details of the Nepalese young people’s experiences and attitudes towards sexual lifestyles and behaviour while collecting information that would help to understand the social meanings and perceptions of these young people in the sociocultural context of the UK. One of the major characteristics of ethnography is collection of data in natural settings (LeCompte and Schensul, 1999; Brewer, 2000; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007; Gobo, 2008; Fetterman, 2010). The natural settings could be any place where people interact such as street corners, playgrounds, waiting room, libraries, café, shopping malls, clubs/bars, community based organisations, home and other public or private places. As a researcher, I had no control over such places yet I needed to create an environment that would help me to build rapport and trust during the fieldwork and with the research participants, which would enable an in-depth inquiry into the sexual lives of the young people. Building rapport was a major tool in collecting data on sensitive issues without causing any misgiving. However, it takes time to build trust. While I continued my fieldwork observations, it took 3

months of hard work and great effort before I conducted my first in-depth interview.

Fetterman (2010: 33) describes the ethnographer as a human instrument in the field with an understanding of research problems, theories and other conceptual guidelines; who enters purposefully into a culture or social situation in order to explore its landscape and to collect and analyse data, relying on all its senses, thoughts and feelings. Fetterman further described that the most important element of the fieldwork was being there to observe, ask seemingly stupid and insightful questions and to write down what is seen and heard. As a researcher, I used my eyes and ears as a primary instrument to gather information and preserve it through writing the field diaries and notes. I looked for ordinary people with ordinary knowledge to ask all sorts of imaginative questions to build on their common wisdom and experiences to understand the Nepalese community and their perceptions about young people and popular youth lifestyles and behaviour. In addition to the ethnographic observation, talking to young people about their attitudes and behaviours towards sexual lifestyles and relationships provided initial insight in understanding their perceptions about sexual lives. These ordinary young people later became excellent informants through repeated informal discussions and finally through a series of in-depth interviews. Consequently, this research used participant observation and in-depth interviews to collect ethnographic data to study the sexual lives of young people.

2.7.1 Participant observation

Participant observation is an incorporated activity and a reflexive practice, unfolding the daily lives of participants in order to gather data by means of observing and participating in their natural social environment. Although complete immersion of a researcher was encouraged in traditional ethnographic study, O'Reilly (2012) described that contemporary fieldwork takes place in much more familiar settings in which one is already immersed and the reflective practice helps to explore our own role in unfolding the daily

lives of the participants. For me, it was about immersing myself into an already immersed Nepalese culture and applying my primary research instruments such as using eyes to see, ears to listen, mouth to talk, hands to write the field notes, legs to walk and go around gathering information (Madden, 2010). The interaction during the observation process was necessary to unfold social meanings and discover participants' experiences and interpretations about sexual lifestyles and behaviour in the given context. The interactions often used an iterative-inductive approach (O'Reilly, 2012), moving back and forth between foreshadowed problems and further exploring collected information to obtain thick description (Geertz, 1973). I observed, recorded and wrote everything without thinking about the future relevance of the collected data (Marcus, 1998). It helped me to clarify initial ideas, setting out a clear picture of what needed to be explored and produced using more refined techniques for data collection and further investigation.

I regularly visited the primary research site and made sure that observations were made at all times of the day and night, in all possible locations and on different types of participants. However, it was not always possible to watch and observe everything in this huge local area considering the requirement of specific age, sex and ethnicity of the participants. In fact, it was not possible to observe young people experiencing or talking about sex and sexual topics in an open public spatial context. Therefore, I developed a systematic plan to conduct participant observations, as required for the need of this research (Delamont, 2004). Besides Plumstead and Woolwich, I started observing young people in various settings such as youth clubs, cultural events, subethnic cultural events and popular events³⁸. These settings were important to understand the overall context and background of the Nepalese culture that influences young people's sexual lifestyles and behaviour but these events were mostly filled with middle and older age Nepalese people rather than young people. Youth clubs showed a comparatively good presence of young males but there were no opportunities to observe sexual lifestyles in this unisex group, even though they talked about 'sexy girls', 'nightclubbing' and

³⁸ See section 2.4 Construction and connection of ethnographic site(s)

'hanging out'. Spradley (1980: 39) describes that all participant observation takes place in a social situation with interactions among 3 primary elements: a *place, actors and activities*. The aforementioned settings were not an appropriate 'place' to observe the sexual lifestyles of young people. Since the 'actors' -in this case young males and females- were not always present together and if present were under the surveillance of 'social actors'. In addition, the 'activities' involving sexual intimacies required a confined or private space where young people would be confident in expressing their sexual lifestyles. Clearly, these settings were not a private space. However, nightclubs were seen as a confidential place where young people could express positive sexual health. The detailed ethnography of nightclubbing observation, away from the sociocultural norms of Nepalese society and showing experiences of young people's sexual lifestyles and behaviour, is illustrated in chapter four.

2.7.2 In-depth interviewing

The aim of in-depth interviewing in this research is to explore the '*hidden or conflicting emotions and perceptions*' about the sexual lifestyles and experiences of Nepalese young people in their own words with a friendly conversation and reflective understanding to create an account of their past, present and future actions, experiences, thoughts and feelings in the wider context of positive sexual health (Marvasti, 2004: 21). Different types of interviewing is suited to different social situations and in-depth interviewing can vary from informal conversation to more formal unstructured interviews (Fontana and Frey, 1994). An open-ended ethnographic face-to-face in-depth interview as an informal conversation can be used to investigate the breadth of the research topic; collecting thick descriptions (Geertz, 1973). Schensul, Schensul and LeCompte (1999: 121) describe ethnographic interviews as in-depth and open ended. Spradley (1979) described ethnographic interviews as a speech event that shared many features of friendly conversation. Byrne (2012: 209) described, "*In-depth interviewing was more open to hearing respondent's views in their own words*". Rapley (2004) discussed interviews

as social encounters where speakers collaborated in producing retrospective and prospective accounts or versions of their past or future actions, experiences, feeling and thoughts.

This research needed to understand the sexual lives of Nepalese young people in the multicultural society of the UK -within the backdrop of the Nepalese sociocultural context- and therefore in-depth interviewing suited the most to unravel different layers of sociocultural contexts to understand the sexual health, lifestyles and relationships of these research participants. To achieve this, I always started the interview with simple and unthreatening questions in order to build rapport, before introducing depth questions on sensitive topics (O'Reilly, 2012). Although I prepared an interview guideline³⁹ to prompt me on the key notes, I strictly avoided any specific order and ensured that the natural process of friendly conversation was maintained throughout the interview process. In doing so, I used all opportunities to use a reflexive approach in prompting participants' responses; to gain depth experiences and perceptions on the topics in discussion (Etherington, 2004).

For the purpose of the PhD research each interview lasted between 90-120 minutes, which included 60-90 minutes interview and 20-30 minutes of pre and post interview discussions. The locations for interviews were decided by mutual understanding between the research participants and myself. However, I ensured that the priority was given to the preference of the interviewee. Nine young people agreed to be interviewed in a confidential meeting room or a private corner of the local library. Four young people preferred to have a conversation in a local café, while 3 participants invited me to their home to take part in the interview. Although I offered a private space for the interview, I agreed to the arrangement made by the young people to ensure their comfort and convenience was maintained. In order to ensure that the ethical considerations were maintained throughout the interview process, I asked research participants about their decision to be interviewed in the public spaces of the library or café. The research

³⁹ See Appendix 4 for interview Guidelines

participants replied that they wanted to be interviewed in an informal setting rather than a closed room, which may be intimidating and influential. The movement of people in an open space made the setting informal, which allowed young people to relax and become confident to discuss their sexual lives, as they saw the interview as a normal friendly conversation. Informal conversations were more like casual conversations that helped to establish and maintain friendly rapport, which was necessary to explore the sensitive topic of sexual lifestyles and relationships. The conversations were built on a reflexive approach and did not involve specific types or orders of questions. The interviews were digitally recorded while note takings were minimal, as I wanted to maintain eye-to-eye contact and sustain the feelings of informal conversations, which was necessary to explore and investigate the depth of their perceptions and experiences towards sexual health. The notes of body language and typical expressions were made immediately after the participant left. In the case of home interviews, I came to the café as soon as I left the participants' residence; to document any expressions or indications from the interview.

2.8 Ethical considerations

An ethical approach to ethnography attempts to avoid harm to, and respect the rights of, all participants and to consider the consequences of all aspects of the research process.

(O'Reilly, 2009: 57)

The ethical approval⁴⁰ for this PhD research was obtained from the “Faculty of Health and Social Care Research Ethics Committee” at the Canterbury Christ Church University on 7th October 2013. After receiving the ethical clearance from a research committee, it was my responsibility to follow the procedures and guidelines in order to maintain the ethical practice throughout the research process. As a field researcher, I understood my duties and

⁴⁰ See Appendix 5 for an ethical approval letter

responsibilities to provide adequate information for people to make an informed choice to participate in the study by signing an informed consent⁴¹ and to protect young people by maintaining the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants at every stage of the research process.

Despite the pre-interview arrangement discussions, I started the interviews with a general conversation followed by a brief overview and description of the purpose of the research. In addition, I gave a participant information sheet⁴², which included brief descriptions about the research study, information about ethical considerations and contact details of the researcher and the research supervisor. Research participants were given time to read the information sheet and all the queries were answered before signing the consent form. Participants were informed that they had the right to withdraw from the research without giving a reason even after the interview and they could contact us using the details in the information sheet. While I discussed the issues of confidentiality and anonymity before starting the conversation, I emphasised this further where the interview was conducted in an open public space. As the movement of Nepalese people in the library and café was close to none, young people seemed confident and comfortable with the selection of the site for interviews. Moreover, most of the conversation happened in Nepali language, which ensured that the interviews were secured and confidential.

All the research participants were above the age of 16 and therefore could consent for themselves. To maintain the confidentiality and anonymity of the research participants, they were given pseudonyms and other relevant demographic and materialistic information was removed or changed to ensure that the participants were not identifiable. I explained to the research participants that the interviews would be shared with my supervisors but the data would be stored securely all the time and assured that confidentiality would be maintained. Additionally, I discussed the use of data in the form of quotes and extracts for knowledge exchange through conference presentations, monographs, books and journals articles.

⁴¹ See Appendix 6 for a sample of consent form

⁴² See appendix 7 for Participant information sheet

Although the duration of the formal in-depth interviews ranged from 60-90 minutes, the total duration of the meetings were much longer. All in-depth interviews started with an informal conversation about Nepal, Nepali and the Nepalese population in the UK. This was followed by a discussion about the research study, information sheet and ethical issues. Once the conversation about the research topics was completed, there were post interview discussions to make sure that the research participants left the interview situation without any concerns; after discussing their personal and sensitive issues. Although ethnography is arguably less exploitative than other methodologies (O'Reilly, 2009), I ensured that no form of exploitation took place and the research participants were protected and appreciated for their time and efforts participating in this research. To maintain this ethical practice, I presented a gift voucher worth £20 to each participant after the in-depth interview to thank them for making an effort to take part in this research.

2.9 Positionality and Reflexivity: struggle with an ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ identity

Savin-Baden and Major (2013: 71) describe that acknowledging the researcher's positionality within a given research study is accomplished in three main ways: *locating the researcher in relation to the subjects, participants and the research context and process*. I consider myself as a contemporary ethnographer researching my native Nepalese community and the young people within this community with whom I share social, cultural and linguistic features (Bulmer and Solomos, 2004). As an insider, I got an opportunity to understand insider's view of the realities; which helped me to identify and recognise multiple realities of the same context that facilitated in understanding thick descriptions of the given situation in details by exploring why people think and act in different ways. Having lived in the UK for over a decade, I draw upon my personal experience of social and cultural values for the migrant population in the UK. The insider identity also helped to interpret what was on the “inside” through the voices of informants, which was needed

to explore sensitive issues of sexual health and relationships (Adler, 2004). Since I was an insider, there was also a constant danger of losing critical views during observations and ending up as an ordinary group member.

However, I come from the southeast Terai region of Nepal, while most of these Nepalese young people came from the middle hill region of Nepal (fig. 1) and this made my identity different from the group that were being researched. Although we all came from Nepal, we practiced different subethnic cultures that were reflected during subethnic cultural events within the local Nepalese communities in the UK. Although we shared nationality and linguistics, I was comparatively older than most of the research participants and looked physically⁴³ different; which made me an ‘outsider’ within my own Nepalese community. As an outsider, the issues of subjectivity were minimised but it risked me becoming distant from the local people.

O’ Reilly (2012: 98) described that all ethnographers shared duality status of being an outsider and insider to some extent, which can be problematic in itself. Fetterman (2010) describes that a good ethnography requires both emic and etic perspectives and for a researcher, it is important to understand and describe social and cultural scenes from insiders’ or emic perspectives to collect data as well as make sense of the collected data from outsiders or etic perspectives. Insider and outsider orientations of a researcher are an integral part of an ethnographic research in understanding and accurately describing situations and behaviours. The interplay between my insider and outsider status helped me to become poised between familiarity and strangeness about Nepalese young people (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007).

Merton (1972) argues that the insider-outsider distinction is a false representation and every researcher has similar methodological issues around positionality. The positionality of a researcher in any ethnographic research is differentiated by an artificial boundary that is highly unstable and it should not be assumed fixed or ignored to consider the context of time and

⁴³ I belong to Aryans race while the most Nepalese population in the local community of Plumstead/Woolwich and research participants during interviews belonged to Mongolian race.

space (Mullings, 1999). No researcher can completely remain as an 'insider' or 'outsider'. The role is transferrable and interchangeable, depending on various factors in the given context of space and time. Young people liked to present their identity as 'Nepalese', 'Nepalese born British' or 'British Nepalese'; instead of focusing on their subethnicity. This brought all Nepalese groups under one umbrella in the spatial context of the UK, although it may vary in Nepal.

In addition, I had not been able to relate to female participants from insiders' perspectives and I was always an outsider for them even during in-depth interviewing, in contrast to the male participants. Here gender played a decisive role together with sensitivity of the topic. Researchers are seen as both outsider and insider and experience multiple positionalities along the process of research study (Ryan, 2015). Thus, most ethnographers now see emic and etic perspectives as an opposite end of the continuum and researchers move themselves continuously from one end to another on that continuum. I too placed myself on this continuum of insider and outsider - constantly moving between the two ends- and consider myself as a "semi-insider" or a "semi-outsider". The real challenge was to maintain the balance and proper balance gave me an opportunity to be inside or outside within the setting, to be a member and non-member of the same group simultaneously and to participate as well as critically reflect on what was observed during fieldwork (Brewer, 2000: 60). I tried collecting data from emic or etic perspectives and then critically reflected on the data to make sense of it from both emic and etic perspectives. To produce insightful information and the use of reflexivity in this research played an important role in balancing my positionality between the two extremes of insider and outsider.

2.9.1 Reflexivity: a research tool

During ethnographic fieldwork, the researcher is a major tool to collect data; which involves an interpretation of culture, identity and perspectives of the researcher. As a result, initial subjective positioning of the researcher often

influences the collected data. In such cases, the use of reflexivity becomes necessary to understand the full implications of the researcher's position (MacRae, 2007). Reflexivity helps the researcher to understand that it is not possible to remain outside the research process while collecting data; rather, the researcher is both integral and integrated into the research process and their position plays an important role in demonstrating how they have constructed the meanings of lived experiences (Savin-Baden and Major, 2013). Reflexivity during field visits and data collection was an important element that helped me to understand that I was part of the social world which I was investigating. It was an ongoing process that presented experiences and perceptions of the research participants correctly, which was then interpreted in such a way that the message was conveyed in text that could be understood correctly by the readers (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). It provided rigor to the research process and investigated research participants more critically and in-depth, rather than simply accepting everything that they said.

To be reflexive, I needed to be aware of my personal responses that allowed me to think critically about the process of data collection and the collected data and enabled me to consider the influence of various factors such as: setting, sensitivity of topic, power relations and social interaction with participants (Brewer, 2000; Etherington, 2004). Reflexivity allowed the fieldwork and ethnographic data collection to become a systematic process. While reflexivity puts an extra strain on the researcher, it helps to critically reflect during the data collection process as well as while writing an ethnographic observation (Blackman, 2007). It also allowed me to remain flexible and adapt in response to the unforeseen conditions, comforting the research participants during observations and interviewing. This was evident while interviewing female participants when I used my professional identity to ensure research participants trust and confidence in talking about sexual health, lifestyles and relationships. My professional background as a doctor, which is a well-recognised and respected profession in Nepalese society, helped me to get access into the community with positive responses from the majority of the Nepalese population and helped research participants to

overcome the anxiety of speaking about sexual health topics, as the participants knew they were speaking to a medical doctor.

Reflexivity during interviews was necessary to ensure that participants were responding accurately and interview data was interpreted in a proper way to convey the messages of the participants to the reader meticulously. Reflexivity also bridged the gap between interpretation of the collected data and the final presentation of the findings conveyed in text through writing up (Brewer, 2000). Reflexivity involved thinking about what I read and wrote as well as how it was constructed. Reflexivity in this research was used as a research tool to understand the systematic data collection process and the collected data, which was possible through repeated exploration of the internal dialogue about what I knew and how I came to know about it. It created a continuous interaction within myself that helped me to actively construct the interpretations and experiences of field during ethnographic writing, rather than simply reporting the findings of the research.

2.10 Data transcriptions, analysis and ethnographic writing

This section will discuss and explore the interplay between '*how to move from writing things down to writing things up*' (O'Reilly, 2012: 179). O'Reilly (2012) described ethnographic analysis as an iterative-inductive approach where data analysis is blended in the process of data collection and writing up. The data analysis is more like a spiral model demonstrating how analysis and writing up can lead back to further data collection and writing up again. Glaser and Strauss (1967) advised that strong preconceived assumptions restrict the development of research, which inhibits the possibilities of creating concepts emerging from collected data and thus advised the use of grounded theory. The aim of grounded theory was to focus on lived expressions and realities and it recognised social processes within the context in which they happened to produce a theory grounded in data, rather than relying on an existing theoretical framework to produce data.

The application of grounded theory offered a systematic, flexible and creative approach to explain social processes and human interactions, debating and engaging repeatedly with respondents during fieldwork; on sensitive issues within the framework of symbolic interactionism that is induced from the data rather than preceding them (Cutcliffe, 2000). Symbolic interactionism created opportunities for the construction of their own realities based on the sociocultural environment around them through active participation and interactions with each other in creating meaning in the situation (Holloway and Galvin, 2017). This allowed me to have partial control over the structure and process of the research. At the same time, research participants were able to actively construct their own realities and shared them during the course of this research, collaborating to developing a theoretical understanding of their lived experiences inductively (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). An inductive nature helped to develop an understanding -which was grounded in the views of participants- that suited the aim of this research to derive a new theoretical description; based on collected data from fieldworks and it narrated voices of young people independently, without any influence or any preconceived notions. This also assisted me in having regular interplay with the collected data and allowed me to draw upon my own experiences while analysing the collected data (Charmaz, 2014). Besides this, I also used intersectionality⁴⁴ to analyse the interactions of various social and cultural factors at multiple levels to understand the sexual health, lifestyles and relationships of Nepalese young people.

The ethnographic fieldwork informed the collection of data using participant observations and in-depth interviews; which were linked from the beginning of the research, where ethnographic observations and in-depth interviews proceeded in parallel with constant and continuous interactions. The ethnographic observations were summarised in the field diaries and all in-depth interviews were recorded using a digital voice recorder. The voice recorder was also used during fieldwork to quickly record any information where access to notebook and pen were not possible. The in-depth interviews from 16 participants accounted to a total of approximately 18 hours of voice recordings and the fieldwork recordings accounted to about 2 hours. The

⁴⁴ See section 1.11.2

interviews were conducted in Nepalese language with an occasional use of English language.

The voice recordings were fully transcribed to identify any important issues. A careful consideration was given while making decisions about the transcriptions of the voice recordings in order to protect the sensitivity and language of the research participants. I decided to transcribe the recordings myself to refresh the emotions, feelings and linguistic remarks involved during the interview process and immerse myself into the data to reflect and interpret the sensitivity of the collected data accurately (Holloway and Galvin, 2017). The verbatim transcriptions (Savin-Baden and Major, 2013) were done in Nepalese language using English scripts, to minimise typing errors while protecting the linguistic and sensitivity of participants' voice. Additional notes were made while transcribing the data, recording the experiences of the transcription process and the human experiences I encountered while listening to these sensitive issues again and again. The interplay of these experiences has been reflected throughout the data collection and ethnographic analysis process and is reflected in ethnographic writing through interpretations of the interpretations. The transcripts accumulated to over 500 pages with 1.5 line spacing texts. After the transcriptions, the transcripts were rechecked to check they matched the typed text; in accordance with voice recordings and added any missing components to make sure all the expressions, experiences and wordings were included in the transcripts.

Coding in this research started quite early on, after the first couple of interviews; which provided a connection between the collected data and an emergent theory to explain these data. Charmaz (2014) proposed at least two main phases of coding while conducting grounded theory: an initial phase or open coding followed by a focused or selected phase for construction and confirmation of the data. The open coding or deconstruction of data was an exploratory phase where I started coding lines or segments with the use of keywords such as *nightclubbing, sex, alcohol, fear, kiss, nervousness, family and peers* that helped to build up the codes progressively with more data (Rivas, 2012). The coding was done on the transcripts before translating it into English

language to protect the sensitiveness of the information. The initial coding provided openness and creativity in understanding the data, which helped in guiding the subsequent interviews. The constructive phase brought similar key words together to develop patterns of conversations and finally constructing themes, which later helped to construct a coherent framework (Gobo, 2008). O'Reilly (2012: 204) describes, "*Focused coding need not to be used only to generate grounded theories; existing theories can also be employed*". I brought the key words from the open coding together to categorise and create themes such as *leisure and lifestyles, sexual lifestyles, romantic relationships, sexual communication and marriage* which fitted to the existing framework of the social ecological model⁴⁵. Finally, all categories were unified and put together as chapters, in accordance with the existing theoretical framework, to develop a revised working model to understand positive sexual health.

Data translation and interpretation in this research was done after categorising the data based on initial themes. The translated data was brought together and characterised as themes, which was revised and revalidated by repeatedly listening to the voice recordings during the translation to make sure that the original sense of data was preserved and previously unnoted features were identified and reported (Silverman, 2014). Some of the Nepalese words and sentences were used in quotes to maintain the sensitivity of the information in Nepalese context. The short and long pauses during the interviews are presented as two dots (..) or three dots (...) respectively, which protects this feature while doing ethnographic writing. The translated quotes are presented by affiliating them with pseudonyms with age and sex in the brackets. The interpretation of data, which is an attempt to explain or translate what underlies beneath the words expressed during the interviews, were brought together under different categories with the use of double reflexivity (Blackman and Commane, 2011). This facilitated a way forward to explore a tentative social ecological model to understand the positive sexual health of Nepalese young people in the UK.

⁴⁵ See section 1.11.1

2.11 Conclusion

In this chapter, I presented the ethnography of the Nepalese Hub and explained the construction of an ethnographic site for the purpose of this research. The discussion of opportunities and challenges provided a snapshot of my experience in engaging with my own Nepalese people and the struggle I experienced after entering the research field. The purposive sampling guided me to select the ethnographic site(s) for observations, as well as the selection of research participants and the snowball sampling helped me to multiply the number of participants who were enthusiastic to share their sexual lifestyles and relationships experiences without feeling burdened. In addition, I discussed the challenges and struggles I encountered during the recruitment of research participants for the in-depth interviewing. I outlined and explained the use of in-depth interviewing and participant observations as the data collection methods. Furthermore, I discussed the importance of ethical issues and explained the application of ethical principles throughout the research process in the context of this particular research. I described the choice of ethnography and biography that provides the methodological framework to bind this research together. I then explained my positionality as a researcher and discussed my struggle as an insider and outsider in the context of this research project. The use of reflexivity provided me with strength in balancing my insider and outsider status as a researcher; as well as minimising the issues of subjectivity. Subsequently, I outlined the scheme of transcription, analysis, interpretation and presentation of the collected data through the ethnographic writing.

Chapter Three: Changing leisure and lifestyles: a new way of living

3.1 Introduction

This chapter investigates the changing leisure and lifestyles of Nepalese young people in the contemporary society of the UK that gives a new way of living. The chapter outlines the opportunities and concerns for Nepalese young people while experiencing the modern lifestyle in the western society. I argue that leisure creates opportunities for peer networking that provide convenience for building loving and affectionate relationships. I then examine sex as a part of the leisure activities by exploring casual sex and prostitution as measures of sexual lifestyles. Subsequently, I investigate the role of intoxication in the sexual lives of young people and its interdependence to the sociocultural acceptance of alcohol consumption within the Nepalese society.

3.2 Opportunities and concerns for a new way of living “*I hang out with my friends regularly... but I am not allowed to stay away in the evenings*”

The construction of leisure and lifestyle is an interactive process because of individual choices against the structural influences in contemporary society, which shape the everyday social and sexual lives of young people (Bramham and Wagg, 2011). The fieldwork and interviews demonstrated that young people's lifestyles in the western world create opportunities based on their leisure experiences and raise concerns depending on demographic features⁴⁶, space and association with family values, culture and religion. Young people see leisure as a way to balance freedom and control by creating opportunities to experience changing lifestyles to enhance their social and sexual lives. In separate conversations, young males and females describe their experiences of spending free time on various indoor and outdoor leisure activities as:

⁴⁶ Age, gender, marital status, education and migration status

Bishal (17M): Mostly I am with my friends... we get together and record music or do photoshoot... take videos or go to play football... one of my friend got a car... we go chill somewhere.. different places.. we enjoy our lives..

Rishi (22M): I spend my leisure time like hanging out with friends.. like in summer we go to beaches.. most of my friends are working.. so they pay for me.. we go and stay in hotels for 2-3 days enjoy the beaches, sometimes we organise barbecue.. we go to parks, shopping, clubbing, for roaming around, drinks.. anyway we regularly get together for smoking and drinking..

Tilak (24M): I don't have many friends here. Friends at work are limited to work. With local friends, we do not get enough time to meet but sometimes we get together for drinks. Normally, I spend my leisure time by playing games on computer.. sometime I read books.. if I get long break then I go to visit my relatives and near ones.. this is my social life..

Sapna (23F): I just watch serials or movies on television or if my friends are too having free time then we go for movies, shopping, concerts...

Young males in this research are able to select from a wide range of outdoor and indoor leisure activities that are suited to their personality and individual preferences. Sports are a popular leisure activity amongst young males at an early age but as they grow older and get economic independency, they support each other for the commercial leisure amusements such as excursions, clubbing, short breaks, getting together for drinks and other recreational activities (Nayak and Kehily, 2008). The selection of leisure activities and lifestyle experiences of young people in the western world is heavily influenced by the consumption industries and are diverse, which is shaped by the traditional culture, income and patterns of the accessibility and local availability (Haywood *et al.*, 1995; Roberts, 2009). Some young males and females in this research preferred to stay indoors experiencing private leisure through a family gathering involving friends and relatives, watching television, listening to the music, using the internet on digital devices or playing games and interacting with friends in the virtual world (Abbott-Chapman and Robertson, 2009; Kelly, 2012). In England, young people aged 16-24 years old prefer to spend their leisure time watching television, listening

to the music, spending time with friends and families, going to the cinema, pubs, bars and clubs and taking part in sports activities (Furlong, 2013). However, the leisure and lifestyle following migration involve constant negotiation of the sociocultural values and traditional norms at the intersection of gender, family relations and socioeconomic status, which is often reflected in the everyday social and sexual lives of the young migrants in the new destination (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1992; O'Reilly and Benson, 2009).

Young people's lifestyle and leisure activities are more active today than any time in the past and they undergo significant changes after arriving in the new social environment (Reimer, 1995; Stodolska, 2000). The national and local culture of the host environment affects the leisure and lifestyle preferences of young people (Furlong and Cartmel, 2007). In the western world, leisure is highly regarded for its positive benefits; as it provides young people with an opportunity to explore their own potential and to develop their personal identity and freely choose lifestyles suited to their individuality (Tirone and Pedlar, 2000). Young people spend their free time in different ways that vary from organised group activities to hanging around with group of friends or doing nothing (Furlong and Cartmel, 2007). The concept of 'hanging out' or 'doing nothing' may be unusual for parents but young people recognise it as a mode to talk, relax, enjoy, come up with weird ideas, maintain social relationships and make sense of the world around them by constructing their own sense of independence and identity (Corrigan, 1979/2006; Nayak, 2003; Abbott-Chapman and Robertson, 2009). However, the use of free time varies depending on age, sex, marital status, social class and other social, psychological and ecological factors (Glendinning, Hendry and Shucksmith, 1995). The gender differences in acceptance of leisure are changing and there is evidence of some convergence of men and women's leisure activities (Roberts, 2006). Young females in this research felt that their leisure and lifestyle experiences are similar to the men's. However, it is often constrained by parental strictness. In separate conversations with young females, Dibya and Asha described their leisure experiences as:

Dibya (18F): I hang out with my friends regularly... we get together and go out for shopping, dinner, movies and sometimes for drinks or coffee.. but they (parents) would not allow me to go out without a strong reason.. if I have not reached home on time after school then I would receive calls immediately from my families asking where am I.. why I am late and so on..

Asha (16F): Normally we go to library after school, sometimes we go to nearby parks with friends... sometimes we go to central London and other areas away from our neighborhood with close friends but for that we all need to get permission from our parents.. it mostly happens during weekend or holidays.. I also like going to "Nepali Mela", "Gurkha Cup", "Yalambar cup" or other day events organised by various Nepalese organisations.. but I am not allowed to stay away in the evenings. My parents worry about me if I don't come home by 10 or 11 pm.

RKS: Have you ever been out in the evening?

Asha: Yes, normally when we are returning from these football events⁴⁷.. it gets late and we reach home very late.. sometime it becomes very late and then I have stayed with my friends but only with Nepalese friends and if my parents know them very well. Sometimes, I even go to my friends place for study and stay with her at night but again only with very very close friends and if my parents know her and her family very well.. But even this is very rare.

RKS: How about night out or nightclubbing?

Asha: I am only 16 but even though I would like to go clubbing, I am afraid of my parents. They will never allow me to go. So, even if I will go, I will not tell my parents that I was going clubbing and I will make some excuse to go there..

The leisure activities of the Nepalese young females in this research mostly revolved around home and the local neighborhood, while any activities away from home were constrained by parental strictness. Women are less able than men to select from a wide range of leisure activities and females within Nepalese community is not only seen as different but also troublesome and, in some instances, marginalised due to a combination of factors such as family values, sociocultural regulations, domestic responsibilities and lower incomes (Yuval-Davis, 1997; Scranton and Watson, 1998). Gender differences in leisure activities in contemporary society have been changing but the changes are still limited and often challenged by structural factors around

⁴⁷ Events like Gurkha Cup and Yalambar Cups

them (Roberts, 2006; Kehily and Nayak, 2008). The freedom to make a lifestyle choice is often constrained by exclusion and accessibility, based on language and cultural differences (Taylor, 2001). Although the role of structural influences was evident during the fieldwork discussions and interviews, the young people manage to defy those constraints to experience their lifestyle choices. The lifestyle choices such as evening outs, nightclubs, dance club visits -and other leisure activities that were not supported by parents- occurred beyond the watchful eyes of their parents (Tirone and Pedlar, 2000). Moreover, the boundaries of home and away in the modern world are being blurred due to its interconnection -although it coexists independently- and young people are masters in switching between these two environments (Abbott-Chapman and Robertson, 2009). Young males and females in this research showed that they had a good understanding of parental expectations and concerns, which makes them develop the negotiation skills to create opportunities with an agreement that convinces their parents. This includes making excuses for not disclosing their actual whereabouts, if young people perceive that the agreement with parents would not be reached. Although male participants expressed that they were free in experiencing their lifestyles without family restrictions, they often made excuses to protect their privacy and to stop being challenged by parents. Bishnu illustrates this as:

Bishnu (17M): I am a free person.. I like roaming freely.. I don't like to say everything to my father.. I fear from him.. I am like.. he may stop me from going here and there.. most of the time my family does not know where I am "ma kaha gaye chu bhanera ghar ma tha pani hudaina dherai jaso".. They call me and then I respond to say that I am coming..

RKS: Do they ask you where had you been?

Bishnu: Yes, they do ask.. but then its like.. it's up to me.. I can make any excuses "maile chahi je bahana banai diye ni huncha".

Young people in this research suggested that Nepalese parents seek to maintain parental control to the highest possible level and therefore continuously seek to interfere with the independent lifestyle choices of the young people. As a result, young people become reluctant to discuss their contemporary lifestyle choices because of the fear that family values and

parental strictness would not respect their individual choices. Young people's oppression towards experiencing leisure and lifestyles are shaped by power relations practiced by parents to maintain the discipline within the familial setting (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1992). Research suggests that close parental monitoring of young people by keeping track of their whereabouts, leisure activities and acquaintances are associated with reduced delinquency, aggression and substance abuse and greater capacity to control anger and deal with frustration (Caldwell, et al. 2006; Pokhrel et al., 2008). Stavrinides (2011) reported that parents' active efforts to control young people or repeated attempts to gain information about their whereabouts did not decrease their misbehaviour, rather it made them more likely to reveal less information about their social interactions. The selection of the leisure activities is a key contributor towards lifestyles that determine the status of the young people in a given social context and may become a source of conflict within the family and the wider society (Veal, 1989). This raises concerns over the choice of leisure activities to experience an independent lifestyle for Nepalese young people. Fieldwork discussions within Nepalese community showed that:

Nepalese parents have negative perceptions towards contemporary lifestyles such as nightclubbing, night outs, sleepovers, late night parties, romantic relationships and other leisure activities that brings young males and females together without supervision. Nepalese parents were concerned that young people involved in such activities are "bigreko chora/chori" (spoiled sons/daughters), who may bring shame on the family and are at higher risks of not attaining good education or jobs.

(Field Diary, 19 January 2014)

The negative interpretation of young people's leisure is linked to the cultural deviance that negates the positive aspect of the leisure, which plays an important role in an individual's later life (Blackman, 2011). However, as Asha and Bishnu described above, parental control does not stop them from experiencing contemporary lifestyles but the fear of disapproval disconnects

the family relationships and raises issues of trust within the familial environment. Besides leisure activities, young females in this research also described further constraints in accepting contemporary fashion of dressings and use of makeup. Young females, Dibya and Esha, shared their experiences as

Dibya (18F): I was not allowed to use these nail polishes, they (parents) would not allow me to leave my hair free, they would not allow me to wear short clothes.. they were very strict at that time but after I started going to college.. they have not been that strict but still they are strict...

Esha (19F): My mom does not allow me to wear short clothes.. when we go for shopping my mom would not allow me to buy dresses if it is short or if the neck is more open.. she is like 'you should not wear such clothes.. what will people say.. also my dad does not allow me to wear such clothes.. Also somewhere I myself think that what would other people in the Nepalese society think if I wear such clothes.. I have many relatives who lives in this area and more often one or the other could see me when I am out with my friends...

Young people believe their parent's attitude towards clothing is 'old fashioned' because they deny them the fashion choices (Blackman, 1995). Young people use clothing and bodily decorations as a means of expressing themselves but youth subcultural style is not always a matter of individual preference, it is rooted in the sociocultural context of the young people (Nayak and Kehily, 2008; Hodkinson, 2009). Research during the 1980s demonstrated that the leisure pursuits of South Asian girls were constrained significantly by the lack of parental approval, strict dress codes, inadequate availability of single sex facilities and religious beliefs (Glyptis, 1985; Carrington, Chivers and Williams 1987). Young females in this research suggest similar concerns about their clothing but highlighted that these worries were raised only during an early teenage and got settled as they grew. Although it seems social changes are making inroads into the cultural values of Nepalese families in the western society, the changes are slow and limited, which means young people struggle to balance their lives in contemporary society. Tara, the lone married

participant in this research, highlighted the importance of her husband's involvement in her leisure pursuits:

- Tara (24F): *Normally I don't get any leisure time.. I have never been to clubs here.. if my husband is also free then we go out to café, movies, shopping.. if not then I stay at home... tidy up.. do regular household stuffs.. or sit around.. but we go out at least once a week..*
- RKS: *How about your husband, does he go out without you?*
- Tara: *Yes, sometimes.. Once during Nepalese Christmas night, he went to club with some of his friends and they told all the girls that they will go and check if everything is fine.. at those times there used to be fight among boys after drinking alcohol.. and then will come back to take us.. but they never came back [laughs]..*
- RKS: *Was there any other occasion when you went together to such events*
- Tara: *No.. we had planned few times but then he is always busy with his work.. Last time we planned to go to "MaHa⁴⁸ comedy Nights".. but my husband did not get a day off and I did not want to go alone [laughs].. it has become a habit now.. I cannot go out without him..*

Gender constraints limit the lifestyle choices and experiences of a married women within the Nepalese community. For married females, their husband replaces their parents as guardian and women's leisure, lifestyle choices and decision-making occurs in accordance with the lifestyle experiences of the husband. Tara illustrates this with her lifestyle experiences, which are often connected with her husband's availability and decisions over arranging leisure time activities. It was found that there are marked gender differences in experiencing leisure and lifestyles where females are seen involved in unpaid household or domestic activities and rely on their husband for fragmented leisure pursuits, whereas males tend to have pure leisure experiences with individualised and independent leisure time activites (Bittman and Wajcman, 2000). Patriarchal dominance within the marriage shows that the leisure activities of married women were more likely to be family-centered and home-centered compared to their male counterparts (Carrington, Chivers and Williams, 1987). Kalmijn and Bernasco (2001) in their survey among 1523

⁴⁸ Madan Krishna and Haribansa (MaHa) are popular Nepalese comedians and they organize events in Woolwich and other parts of London and outside London for Nepalese ethnic populations.

married and cohabitating couples in the Netherlands described that contemporary couples were often involved in collective leisure activities. Within marriage, the aim for leisure changes and joint leisure becomes priority and more central in exploring and expressing lifestyles and relationships (Kelly and Godbey, 1992). However, the concept of collective leisure activities within marriage relationships apply only to Nepalese females, whereby males have the power for decision-making and females abide by those decisions.

3.3 Leisure as pathway to love and relationship “*We share contacts and then it grows up into relationships*”

From the fieldwork, it was noted that the prospect of forming new relationships or strengthening existing relationships in a confined leisure space of the cultural events⁴⁹, festival celebrations, special occasions, parties and nightclubs are becoming popular amongst Nepalese young people. Esha illustrates the importance of such spaces in building the friendship network:

Esha (19F): I go to most of the Nepalese parties because.. for our festivals like dashain, tihar, teej.. we all are there.. all our families are there. My friends are there.. my cousins their friends.. It's a very happy time to meet everyone.. we introduce our friends and cousins to each other.. we spend time chatting with each other about ourselves...

RKS: Do you meet again after that event?

Esha: It depends.. sometimes we share phone numbers.. send texts.. add on Facebook and we continue speaking..

RKS: Does it lead to a relationship?

Esha: [Laughs]... yaaaaa... sometimes it does happen... One of my friends friend told her that one of the boys liked my friend.. then they both were introduced.. they both spoke to each other.. they spoke for 1-2 months.. They even went for a date...

RKS: Are parents aware of this?

Esha: Noooo... we make sure parents do not know about it.. normally these events are organised in one large hall.. we get together with all our friends in one corner of the hall, parents will be talking in their own groups.. we just meet and have normal friendly chat here.. then we share contacts..

⁴⁹ Cultural events are a form of an evening leisure activities organized by subethnic groups in their local communities

sometimes it grows into relationships.. mostly parents are unaware about this.

RKS: *Are you in relationship?*

Esha: *No... but before I had a boyfriend when I was 18 [feeling shy]*

RKS: *Can you say a little more about this please?*

Esha: *Ya... I met him when I was out with my friends.. he knew my friends.. I came to know him well through my friends.. and then from there we started speaking.. we went out together and that's how we got into relationship..*

Young people in this research used the space of festivals and cultural events to widen their friendship circles by networking with relatives, friends and peer networks. Young people use leisure as a primary venue for social engagement to get back into society and to interact with friends or support them for peer bonding to build friendships, companionships and intimate relationships (Kelly and Godbey, 1992; Caldwell and Smith, 1995). The leisure pursuits of young people have been reconceptualised within the globalised modern world, with the widespread use of global communication and information technology (Nayak and Kehily, 2008; Abbott-Chapman and Robertson, 2009). Miles (2000) described that young people do not consume media according to their affiliation to a particular culture but they negotiate it everyday through lifestyles that link it to their social status. Steele and Brown (1995) suggested that young people's identification of 'who they are' -and their every day negotiations of social and sexual lives- play a central role in perceiving the media, which shapes their attitudes and behaviour towards sex and relationships. The use of mobile phones and maintaining contacts through the internet and social media are widespread and new forms of communication which are blurring the relationship between the private and public spheres of the social and sexual lives of the young people avoiding parental scrutiny of their contacts (Henderson *et al.*, 2007; Harris, 2008). Esha asserted that regardless of presence of families, young people create their own private and confidential space in the crowd of cultural events in order to initiate friendships with a potential for dating and romantic relationships. Rishi shared his experience of leisure in the form of nightclubs, house parties and friends gathering; which in most cases were used as opportunities to build relationships with an expectation of sexual engagement:

Rishi (22M): I used to go regularly with my friends for nightclubbing, house parties.. house parties were more fun.. there used to be accommodation and so it was easy to take girls into the room but that was not always the case after nightclubbing.. but still people would go to hotels or arrange something after the night... but in house parties, it's like... boys and girls are there for it (casual sex)..

RKS: Do you have a girlfriend?

Rishi: When I went to University, only after that I started making girlfriends.. first time.. I met her in lecture.. actually, I would rather say I met her in one of those societies.. networking events.. I must say it was there where we came to know each other well and things happened..

RKS: What happened?

Rishi: We went for a date.. Initially, we went to events organised by our common friends.. Our friends used to invite us both.. that's how we came to know each other more.. became facebook friends.. started chatting, texting and then calling each other and that's how finally we started dating..

The events and parties are a popular arena for young people to widen their friendship network by creating opportunities to meet new people, which could be a starting point for the prospective dating or sexual relationships. These freshly formed connections with new friends convene together to attend parties and events in and out of the college or university, where sexual intimacies with these new friends or strangers under the influence of alcohol is not an unusual event (Bersamin *et al.*, 2012). Nightclubbing⁵⁰ and house parties provide opportunities for finding partners for romance and casual sex and the final hours of these events are ideal for sexual activities where young people are paired off and go to bedrooms, unoccupied rooms or hotels to find a private space for sex (Haywood, 1996; Northcote, 2006; Reingle *et al.*, 2009). Bishal shares his experience of engaging in sexual activity after the nightclubbing event:

Bishal (17M): I had my first sexual relationships at the age of 17. we had organised a party in a club.. After party, my friends left and I cleared everything with the club manager and then when I was returning, I saw this girl. I was knowing her.. she used to like me.. I also used to like her but not so much.. she was waiting for me.. when I came out she was like lets go for a walk.. but I was like tired... we walked for a while and then we

⁵⁰ See section 4.6: Nightclubbing... a private space for sexual intimacy

went to a hotel... then we had sex... She was older than me... after few hours we woke up.. had breakfast and left for our home

- RKS: *Did you continue the relationship after that?*
Bishal: *Nahhhh!!!! After that like we started being... just like friends... like normal people.. its just happened [laughs]... In this country people take sex just like normal.. anybody can have sex...*
- RKS: *Did you have alcohol?*
Bishal: *Yes.. but I was not too drunk and she was alright as well ..*

Young males in this research associated nightclubbing with 'girls and alcohol', where casual sexual relationships are part of the lifestyle under the possible influence of alcohol (Conner and Flesch, 2001). For young people, nightclubbing serves the purpose of securing the social networks through maintaining the friendship circle and finding partners for romance and sex (Reingle *et al.*, 2009). The fieldwork discussions showed that the club goers start the evening with their friends in a group, later get engaged with the wider clubbing community in order to meet an extended friend's network; forming new groups and -as the night passes- hopefully ending up in a possible intimate or romantic relationship (Northcote, 2006). Besides these confined spaces, Nepalese young people's sexual intimacies could also be seen during observations on the streets of Plumstead and Woolwich. My field notes state:

After a long day of the fieldwork, it was the time to return home at around 9:30 pm. I hopped on to a bus in the Plumstead, there were only few people in the bus. I decided to make my way to the upper deck. I saw a Nepalese young couple in the front seat talking in Nepali language, sitting and cuddling each other. I sat midway through the bus. I could see them hugging and kissing throughout my journey from Plumstead to London O2. There were people coming in and out of the bus but they were unfazed by this movement of people and they continued expressing their love for each other. This made me feel strongly that although Nepalese young people may behave modestly in the presence of their families and community, they express their feelings of love when they find themselves in a confined space; away from the sociocultural norms.

[Field Diaries, 17 December 2013]

From the wider experience of the fieldwork, it was clear that an appropriate public space -away from the Nepalese sociocultural norms- acted as a private space for expressing love and affection for young people. Young people's use of public or private spaces and the meaning they attach to these spaces are important aspects of their leisure and lifestyle, which can play an important role in creating relationships or strengthening existing relationships (Tarrant *et al.*, 2001). The social changes for the young people are associated with the changing relationship between the private and public spheres of sexual life (Thompson, 2009).

3.4 Sex as leisure - casual sex and prostitution “*You cannot control your sexual desire*”

Young people in the contemporary society are interested in enjoying every moment of their sexual lives and recognise sex as part of their leisure lifestyle, as seen by young males in this research. In separate conversations with young males, Dinesh and Ravi described visiting sex workers as of part their leisure lifestyle.

Dinesh (18M): In Nepal, we used to run away from school hostels on Saturday night to go to Thamel⁵¹. We used to enter club and then drinking, smoking and sex. I used to visit regularly since the age of 14 and the main focus was Girls, alcohol, cigarettes “keti, rakshi, churot”. I had group of 5-6 boys and we used to go to Thamel every weekend.. disco, dance clubs, jazz clubs.. we used to go there to find girls for sex.. My first sexual intercourse was at the age of 14 with a prostitute. They used to provide a space in the guesthouse to have sex.⁵²

Ravi (22M): Sex is a thing to play “sex khelaune cheez ho”.. sex is a thing to enjoy.. I had my first sex at the age of 16. I went to brothel “randikhana”.. I selected a girl and then did it.

⁵¹ A vibrant area in Kathmandu (Nepal), which is full of bars and clubs and a place where sex trade is normal, although illegal

⁵² Dinesh comes from a higher socioeconomic class family and have no financial concerns about money, as he gets all his expenses from his parent/guardians. Other boys with him also came from higher socioeconomic class families in Nepal. All these young boys used to run away on Saturday night because hostel incharge used to have day off and they were left unmonitored on that evening/night. Although legal age of consent for sex in Nepal is 16 and for drinking is 18, it is not followed in practice. It remains unmonitored and legal prosecution is very rare.

From the ethnographic interviews, it appeared that young people's perceptions and experiences of sex and sexual life varied based on social and demographic factors. Young males in this research see prostitution in the form of casual sex, as part of their recreation or leisure activity, which is readily available to buy in Nepal even at younger age. Young males from privileged socioeconomic situations have increased accessibility to financial resources and political backing, leading them to believe that '*girls, alcohol and cigarettes*' are the important features for contemporary leisure lifestyles. Ghimire *et al.* (2011) reports that finding female sex workers in Nepal is not difficult and senior colleagues or friends who have visited sex workers often introduce the service of recreational sex to their younger ones and the trend continues. Godbey (2008) describes sexual activity as one of the most important and enjoyable aspects of daily life, which is necessary for pleasure. 'Sex as leisure' or 'recreational sex' suggests engagement in sexual activity primarily for its own sake; for physical play or sexual pleasure without reference to building relationships, enhancing social status or other extrinsic goals (Kelly and Godbey, 1992; Kelly, 2012). For young males in this research, sex is an expression of sexual engagement as a self-contained activity through prostitution⁵³ or casual sex (Whitehead, 2002). Although the understanding of prostitution is complex, prostitution in the context of this research refers to a service provided by sex workers, who are paid for pleasing their clients.

Sagar (23M): I had never paid for sex in Nepal but I have paid for it in the UK. I did not want to be in any relationships here because of the busy lifestyles but you cannot control your sexual desires. So, I have paid few times to random sluts.

Young males, after arriving in the UK, continued visiting sex workers for recreational sex to satisfy their needs. From the fieldwork discussions, it was notable that young males were unwilling to commit to love relationships

⁵³ Prostitution has always been dependent upon men choosing to use their leisure time for sexual activity outside of marriage (Kelly and Godbey, 1992: 297) and treat sex as a transaction or service, which is paid for.

because of Nepalese female's attitudes and perceptions towards sexual activity within the uncommitted relationships. Young men believe that the challenges of sustaining a romantic relationship with a Nepalese woman would bring various challenges in the day-to-day busy lives of the UK, which would negatively impact upon their aim of achieving a better livelihood. Young females in this research view sex as

Tulsi (24F): I believe sex is not for pleasure but it is a process for producing children "sex bhanne kura pleasure ko lagi ho jasto lagdaina ke.. malai chahi sex bhaneko baccha banaune process ho jasto lagcha".

Sapna (23F): I think that's (casual sex) not very good.. I don't know.. but these days we can see that even Nepalese girls.. I haven't experienced it but I had a friend.. she was a student like me but she was younger than me.. we used to live together.. she was like that.. she used to go clubbing and she used to share her experiences after returning back.. She always used to say 'I met this guy or that guy'.. I think its becoming common even among Nepalese young people.

Dibya (18F): I don't like if people go clubbing and sleep with anyone.. sometimes they have boyfriend for 2 weeks.. they will have sex.. again they will have another boyfriend for another 2 weeks.. they will have sex... I think I will say them 'bitch'... If I come to know that my boyfriend used to have casual sex then I would breakup "ma breakup dinthey hola" because its not even safe for me..

Although young people in this research affirmed that their leisure and lifestyles create opportunities for loving and affectionate relationships, young females were divided and reluctant in associating leisure with sexual engagement. Some young females in this research critically disassociated themselves from the notion of 'sex as leisure', while others described casual sex as a risky behaviour. However, a few young women felt casual sex is becoming part of the normal lifestyle and described this by using an intermediary channel with an example of friend's (sexual) relationships. Sapna and Dibya suggest that sex within relationships was acceptable, whereas casual sex for recreation was associated with *bitchy* behaviour or sexual health concerns. Young people's sexual subjectivities are context bound and

most sexual activity is for the purpose of an expression in the form of relationships through the emotional involvement or recreation, where pleasure is the main motivation rather than procreation (Allen, 2003; Godbey, 2008). In contrast, Tulsi asserts sex should be experienced after marriage for procreation. This demonstrates that the conservative attitudes and traditional perspectives of sexual activity still exist amongst the Nepalese women groups (De Gaston, Weed and Jensen, 1996). Although there are reports about the involvement of Nepalese young males in casual sex with commercial sex workers, there is a dearth of study about the involvement of Nepalese females in casual sex (Ghimire *et al.*, 2011). Simkhada and colleagues (2010: 49) reported, “*the concept of a woman having casual sex without being a sex worker seemed to be difficult to accept*”. Despite the varied perceptions on casual sex, the fieldwork discussions and observations suggested that there is an increasing prevalence of casual sex amongst Nepalese young males and females.

3.5 Sociocultural acceptance of alcohol consumption and concerns over drug use “*I have learnt drinking alcohol at home*”

From the fieldwork and interviews, it was found that Nepalese young males and females experience alcohol consumption and drug use as a part of their leisure lifestyle during nightclubbing, hanging out with friends or family gatherings.

Bishal (17M): I started drinking last year... I drink mostly when I go to parties.. when I meet my friends.. I don't drink much.. just about two bottles of beer..

Sapna (23F): I do drink sometime in home when we get together with friends.. Normally we sit together with housemates (Nepalese sisters and aunties) and sometimes even our friends join us.. if it's birthday or any party then we get together in my or friend's home.. but we do not go out specifically for drink..

Esha (19F): I drink in birthday parties... In my birthday, my dad allowed me and my friends to have a shot of Tequila.. even when we go to Nando's.. I am allowed a glass of wine or a pint of

beer... sometime my mom gives me a glass of wine at home.. especially during festivals..

Despite the legal position that alcohol should be consumed only after the age of 16 or 17 years, most young people in this research have tried and experienced a state of intoxication before that legal age, since drinking alcohol is considered as a normal part of the young people's growing up and a key feature of the social and cultural events (Plant and Plant, 1992; Furlong, 2013). Young people in this research acknowledged drinking for enjoyment or social motives and the amount of alcohol consumption varied depending on the occasions, events, venue and companions; as well as age, gender and the time of consumption (Harnett *et al.*, 2000; Kuntsche *et al.*, 2005). Alcohol consumption amongst Nepalese young people is the result of increasing choices and freedoms towards changing leisure and lifestyles and therefore creating a new culture of intoxication (Blackman, 2009/2017). Young people's intoxication is linked with the wider social and cultural structure, which plays a significant role in understanding the alcohol consumption based on the normalisation that accepts it as a part of an everyday life (Blackman, 2011). Tilak, Tulsi, Tara and Richa belong to *Matwali* caste⁵⁴, where alcohol consumption is considered as a part of the traditional culture and rituals. These young males and females shared their alcohol consumption experiences in separate conversations as

Tilak (24M): Alcohol is normal in our family, we are Rai "Rakshi ta ghar mai aba .. hami ta Rai haru ho" .. sometimes we (friends) go out for drinks.. I am not a regular drinker but I do drink in parties, occasions, gatherings...

⁵⁴ The division of Nepalese society in different hierarchical caste system was based on the code of Manu. King Jayasthiti Malla (1382-1395 AD) of Kathmandu first decreed the law that stratified the whole Nepali society based on division of Tagadhari and Matwali. The Tagadhari are the ruling elites, who wear a sacred thread on their body and includes Brahmins, Kshetriyas and Thakuris; alcohol is strictly tabooed within their community except for some lower caste tagadharis such as Biswokarma, Damai and Sarki belonging to non-Matwali or Tagadhari community are permitted to use alcohol. On the contrary, for Matwali, alcohol is part of their social and cultural rituals. Matwalis are people originating from hills, have Mongolian faces and includes castes such as Rai, Magar, Limbu, Gurung, Tamang, shepa, Newar, Tharu, sunuwar and others who enjoy social and religious sanctions for the use of alcohol (Kunwor, 1984; Dhital *et al.*, 2001, pp. 1-4; Jhingan *et al.*, 2003).

Tulsi (24F): I am Newar and it is our culture to drink since childhood.. when we are praying we must have “raksi” (a form alcohol).. especially during Dashain.. when we were child we did not use to like it because of the taste but we had to drink that as it is like “prasad” (a religious offering).. even during parties we must drink.. even if it is just a little bit.. still we need to drink... so its like we are free to drink.. I drink sometimes.. sometimes I go out and drink with my friends.. but not regularly.. if I have day off next day or the following day then I drink at home.. I only like to drink when I am in mood “mood chaleko bela matra malai drink garna mann lagcha”.. when I drink.. I don't like to drink but I like to get drunk...

Tara (24F): I drink sometimes but very little.. sometimes with friends and family but not much.. its part of our culture.. we drink since our childhood in birthdays.. “pooja” (rituals).. we had to drink a little.. that's compulsion..

Richa (22F): We have been drinking since our childhood.. because it's integrated in our culture.. In many situations, culturally we must drink at least a little.. if it's birthday then we must drink.. it is not like drinking too much but we had to drink some from the age 11-12 years.

From the fieldwork discussions, it was found that young people's drinking behaviour is integrated within the sociocultural context in which they live and grow. Traditionally, Nepalese men start drinking at a younger age and drink both inside and outside the house; whereas women's drinking is mostly confined to the home environment (Dhital, 2001). However, the changing society has brought many young females out of their home to experience alcohol consumption as part of their lifestyle while celebrating special occasions and events (Shakya, 2013). Alcohol use is an integral part of the Nepalese culture and is closely associated with the caste of an individual (Dhital *et al.*, 2001). Drinking within the familial environment and during religious or cultural occasions is common amongst the Nepalese population, especially amongst the *Matwali* caste (Sharma and Khandelwal, 2000). WHO (2004) described that traditional and cultural occasions are the key moments in initiating the alcohol consumption. The homemade *jand/chang* and *raksi*⁵⁵ is the most common alcoholic beverage available within the familial

⁵⁵ *Jand/Chang* is a homemade brews fermented from rice/grains and *raksi* is distilled liquors from rice/grain, millet or barley and raw sugar.

environment and is often used according to the social, cultural and religious traditions for rituals and worshipping (Dhital, 2001; Dhital *et al.*, 2001). Since *jand/raksi* is a form of religious offering, even younger children are allowed to consume in small quantities. However, the cultural acceptance of alcohol consumption within the Nepalese community creates a blurred line between the acceptable level of drinking and excessive alcohol consumption (Rai, 2002). Contextualising drinking as a religious and social behaviour offers an acceptable justification for what is otherwise a source of risk taking behaviour. Cultural practices are an important indicator for young people's alcohol consumption and it is important to understand the risks and issues around it, rather than demonising the young people and perceiving 'youth as trouble' (Blackman, 2017). Most young people belonging to the *Matwali* group expressed the acceptance of alcohol consumption within the familial environment -regardless of age- and it often featured in the general conversations during this research.

Dibya (18F): I have been drinking... It's not like in our culture we must drink.. especially girls are not like must drink... my sister also did not drink.. my mom also did not drink.. but in my family they always joke like do you want to drink.. "khanchas... khanchas".. I always said... I don't want to drink [laughs].. sometimes my mom, when I am ill, she used to give me a drink like kind of "raksi" to get rid of fever..

The use of alcohol within the Nepalese society varies, with some families who believe that the success of celebrations, parties and festivals is integrated with the serving and consumption of alcohol; while others believe that alcohol may be used as a medicine for cold, pain, tension and tiredness (Niraula, Jha and Shyangwa, 2013). People from *Matwali* caste enjoy social and religious approval for the use of alcohol; whereas the traditional barrier for the use of alcohol amongst *Tagadhari* is getting weaker and -although not encouraged-they are permitted to drink depending on their castes and cultural integration (Jhingan *et al.*, 2003; Shakya, 2013). Alcohol in Nepal is widely available to all age groups without any restrictions; which has created a favourable social environment to begin drinking, especially for the young people (Dhital, 2001). Dinesh and Ravi belong to the *Tagadhari* caste and the alcohol consumption

in their family is strictly prohibited. However, the easy access to alcohol at home has led them to initiate alcohol consumption as a part of their secret lifestyle.

Dinesh (18M): We (he and his friends) used to steal whisky from my grandfather's cupboard, drink from it and refill it with water. We did it several times and no one ever came to know about it. Even today, my grandfather does not know about it [laughs]...

Ravi (22M): I have learnt drinking alcohol at home 'Ma gharmai daru rakshi khana sikheko ho'.. my dad does not drink.. alcohol or meat were not allowed in my home.. we are 'Bahun'⁵⁶.. it was restricted for everyone in my family.. my brother in law is an Indian lahure⁵⁷.. he came with a 'Rum' quarter⁵⁸ and asked me to keep safely.. I was the elder son in my family.. I was about 13-14years old.. so everyone used to say me to keep this and keep that.. It was Dashain period⁵⁹.. I kept the 'Rum' in my cupboard.. I knew it was alcohol but I had never consumed it.. I did not know the taste of it.. I wanted to taste it but it was not allowed in my family.. In the evening when no one was around I got a glass of water and then I started with one sip.. like tasting and then a little more.. I drank about half bottle mixing with water.. I filled the bottle with water and kept it again into the cupboard.. I was feeling dizziness so I slept on my bed... My mom came looking for me for dinner.. she smelled the alcohol and started shouting and crying.. I was like senseless but anyway that is how I started drinking...

RKS: What happened thereafter? Did you leave drinking or.. ?

Ravi: I continued drinking with my friends but I made sure my family did not know about it. My best friend was Damai⁶⁰.. he used to get alcohol.. I got used to drinking outside home with friends hiding somewhere "bahira bahira luki luki saathi haru sanga khaney bani paryo".. I drink almost everyday here.. like one or two bottle of beer..[laughs].. sometimes a little more [laughs]..

RKS: Any other habit?

Ravi: I had a concept since childhood that being a male, we should know everything.. we should experience and try everything "choro manche bhayepachi sab thok jannu parcha.. har cheez try garnu parcha".. sometimes I even smoke ganja.. I started it

⁵⁶ Also known as Brahmin, the highest caste within the tagdhari group and are responsible for religious rituals. Culturally they are not allowed to drink alcohol and are supposed to be vegetarian.

⁵⁷ Nepalese soldiers serving in foreign armies, also referred as Gurkhas, especially for those who served for British army. Alcohol consumption is popular among these groups.

⁵⁸ A quarter is a bottle which consists of about 200 ml of alcohol with the strength of 30-40 per cent

⁵⁹ Dashain is a popular Nepalese festival where drinking alcohol is normal, especially among matwali groups

⁶⁰ Damai is a caste within Matwali group, drinking is common and integrated within their culture

with friends when hiding out for drinking.. Now I smoke cigarettes and sometimes even ganja.. I don't take drugs but I have tried some.. one was nitrosan and another was Kapas.. I also eat surti and ghutkha⁶¹.. I have been chewing it from Nepal and I have continued.. you can find it in local off license here. Although it is illegal to sell these things still we can find it in almost every local shops here in plumstead...

Many young people in this research, including those from the *Tagadhari*, describe home as the leading place to initiate alcohol drinking; since there is little or no control about possessing alcohol beyond the reach of the children within the Nepalese families (Dhital *et al.*, 2002). This is further spurred on with the sociocultural acceptance of alcohol usage within the wider Nepalese society, in Nepal as well as in the UK. Family drinking, peer alcohol use, availability and accessibility of alcohol and sociopsychological circumstances are some of the contributing factors that create an environment for alcohol consumption among young people in Nepal (Parajuli, Macdonald and Jimba, 2015; Dhital *et al.*, 2001). In addition, the globalisation, western consumer culture and economic liberalisation have resulted in the normalisation of alcohol usage within the wider Nepalese society (Parajuli, Macdonald and Jimba, 2015). Harnett *et al.* (2000) describe that the initiation of alcohol, gaining access to places where it is served and the development of specific drinking cultures are important *rites de passage* for young people. Peer networks and their influence play an important role in creating a favourable environment for intoxication, which creates risk-taking behaviour for young people that often includes drug use (Bahr, Hoffman and Yang, 2005). Young people like to experience risky lifestyles such as consuming alcohol and using tobacco and drugs; raising sexual health risks for Nepalese young people in the urban areas (Regmi, Simkhada and van Teijlingen, 2010b). Rishi laughed when asked about the drug use and wished not to share his experiences but discussed the drug use amongst Nepalese young people in a more general way.

Rishi (22M): Drugs... like weeds... weeds are normal and people use that but I have never tried drugs till now.

⁶¹ Surti and ghutka is chewable tobacco

RKS: *Have you?*
Rishi: *[pause..... laughs] Let me say no... [laughs]*
RKS: *Do you know anyone using drugs?*
Rishi: *Yes, I have seen many.*
RKS: *any example?*
Rishi: *I knew this guy, he used to live locally.. he was not even 18 at that time.. I think he was addicted to cocaine, he experienced it 2-3 times in parties and then he got addicted.. After that he was not being himself. He used to ask money from people in the day and in the evening he used to get drugs.. Once you are into it, it is very difficult to come out of it.*
RKS: *Did his family know about it?*
Rishi: *I am not very sure about it but I think he definitely did not tell about this to his parents.. parents must have known about it from other people and then they supported him.*
RKS: *How common is it among Nepalese young people?*
Rishi: *It is very common.. it is one of the major issue in this local area⁶².. it is serious problem..*
RKS: *Do you know some other?*
Rishi: *Yes, after that I have heard many stories.. there were many boys whom I knew.. They were in the same gang.. They were Nepalese young boys... they do not used to take drugs initially but after some time they also started.. it ruined their life..*
RKS: *How about involvement of girls?*
Rishi: *There are many girls too... I have heard that there are many Nepalese girls who are drug addict and they sleep with people to get drugs.. I have not seen it but heard from a reliable source..*

Nepalese young people, especially males, are likely to have experienced the usage of *ganja*; which is readily available in the urban areas of Nepal through peer networks of drug users (Dhital et al., 2001)⁶³. Since the consumption of *ganga* is connected with the Hindu religion, it is easier to access and is accepted amongst various subcultural groups of the Nepalese society (Ibid., 2001). Dhital further reported that alcohol, tobacco, cannabis and other synthetic drugs⁶⁴ were widely used amongst Nepalese young people in Nepal. After coming to the UK, the cultural significance of the use of cannabis among the Nepalese young groups was evident; even in the UK. The usage of *ganga* amongst Nepalese young people was felt on several occasions during the

⁶² Local area of Plumstead and Woolwich, where the participant lives

⁶³ The survey was conducted in 16 districts of Nepal among young people aged 10-17 years with sample population of over 13000 and with more than 2000 interviews.

⁶⁴ Commonly used synthetic drugs were Cannabis, heroin, opiates, tranquilisers, glue and methaqualone

visits to nightclubs⁶⁵. The fieldwork observations and discussions revealed that drug use was one of the major concerns amongst Nepalese young people in the local community of Plumstead and Woolwich. However, young people were unwilling to share their experiences (Simkhada *et al.*, 2015). Drug use amongst the Nepalese population in the UK is an important issue for future research. Further research work needs to be done to establish whether and how the interdependence between alcohol consumption, nightclubbing and drug use can affect the sexual lives of Nepalese young people in the contemporary society of the UK.

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter outlined the changing leisure and lifestyles of Nepalese young people in the contemporary society of the UK at the individual level. Young people's choice of leisure in the contemporary world varies between outdoor and indoor activities, which influences the sexual lifestyle and relationships of Nepalese young people. Nepalese young people in the UK are persuaded to accept or organise a new leisure pattern in order to experience the new way of living and to adapt to the modern society that creates opportunities and concerns for young men and women to experience their sexual agency (Stodolska and Yi, 2003). The opportunities include participation of young people in the leisure activities that bring men and women together to create a favourable private space that is used to build initial contacts for friendships or love and affectionate relationships. However, the concerns are mostly created due to a combination of factors such as family values, sociocultural regulations, domestic responsibilities, lower incomes and surveillance from parents which affects young people's sexual lifestyle choices (Yuval-Davis, 1997; Scraton and Watson, 1998).

The lifestyle choices such as evening outs, nightclubbing, dance clubs -and other leisure activities that were not supported by parents- occurred beyond the watchful eyes of their parents (Tirone and Pedlar, 2000). Young people

⁶⁵ See section 4.5.5 and 4.5.6

see leisure as a personal space where young men are willing to express their sexual freedom through casual sex or by visiting sex workers, while women distanced themselves from the notion that sexual engagement is a part of leisure activities. The sociocultural acceptance of the alcohol consumption within the wider Nepalese society raises concerns about young people's risk-taking behaviour. However, it is necessary to make clear distinctions between risky behaviour and experimentation and accept the idea of normalisation of young people's alcohol and drugs consumption (Blackman, 2017).

Social changes are making inroads into the cultural values of Nepalese families in the western society but the changes are slow and limited, which makes young people struggle to balance their sexual lives between the traditional Nepalese culture and the contemporary free society of the UK. The intersections of individual sexual lifestyle choices -and the parental surveillance and communication on sexual matters- shape young people's romantic and sexual relationships⁶⁶ as well as the marriage relationship⁶⁷.

⁶⁶ See chapter 5

⁶⁷ See chapter 6

Chapter Four: Nightclubbing as a lifestyle: a private space for sexual intimacy

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents ‘nightclubbing’ as an example of leisure activity, which is used to experience the contemporary lifestyles that create opportunities for sexual intimacies. The chapter begins by providing the detailed account of an ethnographic observation of one of the nightclubbing events through the '*thick description*' (Geertz, 1973) of the place and the people. I argue that the Nepalese young people are seeing the nightclubbing event as a private and confidential space where young males and females interact with each other to build friendships, romantic relationships and sexual intimacies. Moreover, nightclubbing events are becoming an increasingly popular lifestyle choices amongst Nepalese young people in the modern society of the UK. Following this, I examine the challenges and constraints experienced by Nepalese young people towards experiencing the nightclubbing as a lifestyle or a new way of living in the contemporary society of the UK.

4.2 Overview of the nightclubbing observations

During thirteen months of fieldwork, I logged approximately 40 hours of ethnographic observation accomplished within the nightclubbing events organised specifically for the Nepalese young people in the UK. Best (2009) describes that the leisure and lifestyles of young people are integrated into the practices of consumption. Young people’s consumption in the contemporary world occurs within the urban nightscapes with the production of the nightlife experiences by visiting pubs, bars and the nightclubs (Chatterton and Hollands, 2003; Nayak and Kehily, 2008; Hollands, 2009). This section presents an ethnography of one of those nightclubbings organised by the

event organiser ‘Everest’⁶⁸ at the ‘Spider Club’⁶⁹ on Friday night from 10:00 pm until 6:00 am.

I came to know about this nightclubbing event, through social media, a month before it was scheduled. Social media is one of the most common and popular mediums used for advertising the Nepalese parties or events. It is a free media platform with many active social groups involving the wider Nepalese population of all ages and genders. Although these parties are advertised for everyone over the age of 18, the target populations are young people aged between 18 and 30 years. Since social media is popular amongst this age group, the organiser advertises ‘early bird’ discounted tickets through their official Facebook page to attract more visitors. Early bird tickets are sold at the discounted rate of £5, which increases to £15 for the normal tickets, £20 for the VIP tickets and the ticket rates are higher when bought at the entrance door. The strategy works well to attract the clubbers and spread the word about the event in the wider Nepalese population. Event organisers enlist individuals and business representatives such as convenience stores, travel agents and phone accessories shops to sell tickets on the streets of Plumstead, Woolwich and other areas; where there is an increasing presence of the Nepalese community.

4.3 Outside space of the Club

On the evening of the nightclubbing, two of my non-Nepalese friends⁷⁰ showed an interest in joining me for this nightclubbing, unaware of my

⁶⁸ ‘Everest (Pseudonym)’ is an event organizer who organizes Nepalese Nightclubbing events. There are other event organizers such as ‘The Signature’, ‘Style Rebel’, ‘Parcha productions’, ‘Party UK Nepal’; who organizes such events to celebrate Nepalese New Year, Valentine Day, Dashain/Tihar or create an special themed event – Reboot school theme, Royal Red and Blue. Most of these events are organized in the Central London Clubs and attracts visitors from Nepalese Community across the UK. These nightclubbing events are very popular among Nepalese young people across the UK and this popularity is visible with an increasing number of attendees in almost every subsequent event.

⁶⁹ A Pseudonym for the nightclub

⁷⁰ They made me aware of some of young people’s sexual intimacies and activities, which I could have missed otherwise due to multiple simultaneous activities in the nightclubbing. They also shared some of their experiences as an outsider and were surprised by seeing the lifestyles of young Nepalese due to preconceptions that South Asians, especially girls, are not allowed to come out of the home at night time.

research interests. We made our way to the nightclub where I informed them about my research interests and the purpose of my visit. We reached the club area at about 10:00 pm and we were looking around for the venue and its entrance. I was looking for directions on my mobile phone and all of a sudden, I could hear Nepalese voices. I took my eyes off the mobile screen and saw a big crowd of Nepalese males and females. I closed my mobile and started following them. I was sure that they were going towards the club because they were chatting in 'Nepglish'⁷¹ (Sharma, Joshi and van Teijlingen, 2015) about the clubbing experiences, alcohol and friends who were expected to join them. We were close to the venue and within minutes, we found the entrance to the club.

I could see a long queue of young males and females on the pavement of the high street under the dim streetlights waiting to enter the club. The presence of 5-7 security guards ensured that young people remained calm in the queue and the crowd was moving and managed, without any disturbance. The traffic on the street was slow, with only a few vehicles on the road. The other side of the street pavement was filled with several pockets of Nepalese youth, probably waiting for their friends, with new members joining every now and then who were greeted with a half hug and a loud cheer with the word "soalta or soaltee"⁷². Some 'boys only' group had big bottles of Vodka, Jack Daniels, lemonade and other forms of alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks preloading or pre-drinking before entering into the club (Foster and Ferguson, 2014). Some young people were using disposable cups while others were drinking straight from the bottles and passing bottles and cigarettes to their next friend in the group. Many were shouting on top of their head and were using phrases such as "fuck off, motherfucker, *machikney*⁷³, *mula*⁷⁴, *baal matlab*⁷⁵, *vejaa*⁷⁶,

⁷¹ A conversation using both Nepali and English language

⁷² Soalta or soaltee refers to male or female cousin - these relations are allowed to marry in some ethnic groups, especially in Mongolian tribe, also used as everyday slang word to mean something along the line of "buddies".

⁷³ Machikney is mother fucker in Nepali Language

⁷⁴ Mula is frequently used to express, happy, amusement, sorrow and laughter

⁷⁵ Baal matlab is used for I don't care showing hostility

⁷⁶ Out of your mind

*ghanta*⁷⁷". Boys were seen teasing girls saying "kya maal cha, kasto chowak cha, yelai ta thoknai parne ho (how beautiful girls, how sexy girls, I must fuck this girl)". Preloading was seen as less prevalent amongst young women; most girls in the groups were chatting, smoking and some were drinking from the disposable cups (Santos *et al.*, 2015). These young women had their drink bottles hidden in the plastic bags; possibly they did not want to show that they were consuming alcoholic drinks. There were also some mixed groups of boys and girls chatting, drinking and smoking in a more respectable and organised way compared to the 'boys only' groups. Most males were wearing jeans and females were wearing dresses but the real sense of clothing could not be understood at this point because the clubbers were wearing jackets, since it was a cold month in winter.

I was looking around the street where I saw a group of young males, whom I had met earlier during the fieldwork. Previously, we had visited other nightclubbing events together. I recognised them and approached to greet. They were not surprised to see me, as they knew about my research and the purpose of my visit. We all greeted each other and I was introduced as a researcher to some of the new faces in their group. I tried minimising the talk about me being a researcher and said that we all were friends there to enjoy the night as a group. The group had all boys and they were waiting for other friends to enter into the club together. They were drinking alcoholic beverages and screeching all sorts of phrases⁷⁸. Initially, they looked self-conscious with the use of those phrases because of my presence and tried to behave in an unnatural way. However, soon after we started talking to each other they returned back to their normal style of conversations and started using those phrases freely (Paris, 2009). Boys were passing drinks to each other and one of them passed his cup to me. I was reluctant at first but then I decided to take a sip from his glass to show that I was one of them, before passing the glass to another boy (Blackman, 2007). We waited for about 15-20 minutes and the group size doubled to over 15, as more young men joined us. We moved towards the queue and the number started to decrease again. I could see

⁷⁷ Used in rude manner to show someone down

⁷⁸ As discussed in Pg. 131-132

some of them met girls or other friends and left the group. We stood at the end of the long queue.

I started talking to the young boys in front of me in the queue. I did not know them but speaking the same language made it easier to start the conversation. These young males told me that they were organisers of similar Nepalese events. I got excited and I was looking to find out more about their experiences of organising the events. They had organised a couple of such events in the past and they were planning to organise another event celebrating Valentine's night. They had come to this nightclub to see the crowd and the place and to get experience from this party, which could help them to succeed in their own future events. They gave me the leaflet for their nightclubbing event. These young boys were confident in talking about their event, though one of them looked intoxicated by alcohol and another looked strictly okay. I believe they were the representatives, and had come to collect information and feedback for their organisers. They were wearing jeans and t-shirts with unzipped jackets. They were wearing a few bracelets on their hands and one of them was wearing a cap. They also had a cigarette packet in their hand. They lived outside London but had come for this nightclubbing and to attend another musical concert followed by a nightclubbing party, which was scheduled for the next evening. Although I knew about this concert and party, I decided to enquire to give continuity to the conversation and to understand their perceptions about such events. I asked them: 'What type of people come to such parties?' and 'Where do they come from?'. The answer was, *"It is mostly for young boys and girls and they come from all over England. They come in groups to enjoy full night party and return back next day. Some have friends or relatives here in London and they spend weekend with them. Many who have come today for this clubbing will spend their day tomorrow wandering or resting in friend's place or hotel and will attend the concert and party tomorrow and then will return back to their home on Sunday"*. The queue was still growing and we were moving forward to reach to the entrance of the club.

4.4 Entering the Club

The security guard was checking tickets and identifications (IDs) before allowing us to enter into the club. Most young people had bought their tickets in advance and only a few were in the queue to buy tickets. I was still with some young males from the group and my non-Nepalese friends. Two boys from our group were highly intoxicated -under the influence of alcohol- and one was shouting “*dai, ma ta ghar ma jhuto bolero yeha saathi haru sanga aayeko, ghar ma kaam cha bhaneko chu* (Brother, I have lied to my family to come here with friends, I have told them that I am at work)”. We tried to comfort him as the security officers were watching us. All of us were allowed into the club, although a few in that group were below the age of 18. I had met some of these boys earlier during the fieldworks and they had told me that they were below the age of 18. This is when I realised that these young males used fake IDs⁷⁹ to enter into the club, as they had discussed this during the fieldwork. I believe the security officer faced difficulties in differentiating between the photos on the IDs and their real faces; as most of these boys had similar Mongolian faces. I had encountered the use of fake IDs during my previous visits to the nightclubs and I could see a similar pattern here. Myself and my non-Nepalese friends were the last from our group to enter the club. We walked through a small passage to get into an open space of the club; the lights were very dim and I could only see some neon lights.

4.5 Making sense of the inside space of the Club

We entered the club down a dark corridor. Once inside the club, we heard techno music playing somewhere in the distance, amidst dark interiors, with the dimmed lights and rays of neon lights. We started moving towards the neon lights inside the club but a guard stopped us and told that we were not

⁷⁹



allowed into the VIP area, as we did not have the wristband needed for VIP access. I realised the lights I could see was the bar in the VIP area. I asked the guard for directions to the cloakroom and the area for the normal ticket holders. We walked towards the cloakroom -passing through a small dance floor- and the bar that could accommodate about 400-500 people. We continued walking towards the cloakroom and joined a long queue. I could again see some of the boys from the group I knew. I was patiently waiting in the queue and suddenly someone asked me "*Bro, can you lend me £2 please, I need to leave my jacket*". I was not surprised because I had experienced this during my previous visits. I told him 'yes' and started checking my purse. Unfortunately, I had no change and told him that we could move forward and I would pay together for him. He was like '*it's okay bro, no worries*'. He started speaking to his other friends and managed to gather money to leave their jackets. I too left my jacket and moved together with my friends to explore the inner space of the club.

We reached a new area: a large space with the bar and the dance floor. I left my friends in the bar and went to walk around the club to explore the hidden areas of the nightclub. I walked through the several areas of the club filled with young males and females in groups chatting, dancing, drinking and smoking. Most young people were without coats and jackets; which revealed their fashion sense of dressing, makeup, jewelry and body decorations. There were 2 dance floors, 3 well-stocked bars, an outdoor smoking area, male and female restrooms, a VIP area and a large open space between the first (biggest) dance floor and the bar with sofas and bar tables scattered throughout the club. I will start this section by describing the clubbers, followed by providing an insight into the different areas of the nightclub under the following sections: VIP area, dance floors, bar, outdoor and restroom.

4.5.1 Describing the Clubbers

There were around 1500 clubbers; mostly Nepalese young males and females in their late teens and early 20s, with some looking to be into their

30s. The number of young males seemed higher than the number of females. The dress of the men and women varied from formal to casual, plain to glamorous and boring to sexy. Dressing-up is fun and plays an important role in expressing young people's imagination to present their body within the confined space of the nightclub in order to ensure high level of participation; which marks the differences from their everyday world (Jackson, 2004). While most young males and females presented their individual characteristics with tattoos and dress sense; the group characteristics were visible because of the nightclubs space, their commonality of the spoken language 'Nepglish' and belonging to the same 'Nepalese' ethnic group.

Most males were wearing black or navy jeans, t-shirts and vests (white colour looked more popular). Some still had their jumpers and jackets with them, which may be because they did not want to spend money in the cloakroom. Some were in formal or semiformal clothing with trousers or chinos and shirts. Some had baseball caps; while others had a bow tie, waistcoats or blazers. Many men had one or both ears pierced. They wore black round stud earrings, hinged hoop earrings or round CZ stud earrings. Others wore rosary neck chains, ball link black chains and wooden bead cord necklace chains or leather necklaces with fancy pendants. Some of them also wore different types of bracelets such as bead bracelets, leather bracelets or cord bracelets and rings such as rounded band rings or spinning rings. Many demonstrated their tattoos over their arms and neck. The tattoos were not visible clearly due to the dimmed lights in the nightclub but some tattoos looked black and the others looked coloured with characters or scripts. Many had coloured hair with full or partial golden coloured and designed. Many had short side hairstyles, disheveled fringe hairstyles, prom hairstyles, trimmed hairs and some had long hairs with buns and ponytails.

Most females were wearing glamorous party dresses. The various dresses included mini dresses, strapless, playsuits, spandex pants, sleeveless, backless, deep neck dresses or shorts and t-shirts. Some of them were not wearing anything inside their tees or shirts, while others were wearing clothes that revealed one or other parts of their body. Jackson (2004: 53) describes,

“clothes make people fuckable, approachable, desirable, lickable, glamorous, aloof, funky, playful, fun, slinky, seductive, passionate, invisible, bizarre and beautiful”. All the girls were wearing some form of jewelry such as stud, hoop, big round or long earrings, necklaces and chains with fancy pendants, triangle hair tikka, headbands with cuff bracelets or multi row bracelets and multiple rings on their fingers. Many had visible scripted, character or bird tattoos on their neck, arms, wrists, chest, back, thighs and legs. Some had visible navel piercings, nose piercings and multiple piercings in their ears. The hairstyles for girls varied from long to short, straight to curled, greenish, white, golden coloured to brownish black and greyish black and open freestyle to various trendy hair designs. All of them wore nail polish; which included plain, multicoloured and designed nails. The makeup was noticeable and it looked like they had used various cosmetics on their faces with some opting for dark red or distinct lipsticks to look glamorous and sexy. It was evident that the young females wanted to look '*classy and never trashy*' (Kovac and Trussell, 2015: 195). These Nepalese girls looked similar to any other partygoers or nightclubbers in the western world and different from the Nepalese girls seen during the fieldworks in the cultural events. Young females recognised this leisure arena as their personal space for resistance to domination, where they found room to expand themselves beyond the subjective norms of the Nepalese society (Wearing, 1998).

4.5.2 VIP Area

The clubbers were spread around the venue and they constantly moved from one area to another; except the VIP area, which was reserved for VIP ticket holders who wore the pass in the form of wristbands. I was not allowed to enter this confined space initially, as I had a normal ticket. As the night went on, this space was left unattended by the guard and people were able to move into all areas of the club; including this VIP space. This space was like a large room, well lit with a bar in one corner and sofas adjacent to the walls. This space was less crowded compared to other parts of the club with few men and women ordering drinks in the bar or sitting on the sofas chatting and

relaxing with drinks. The minimal number may have been because most of them were on the dance floor or due to the ticket pricing or due to unawareness about access. Although young people preferred to stay on the dance floor or in the bar to enjoy the nightclubbing experience, some VIP clubbers came to catch a break in a less crowded space, take rest, relax away from the loud music and chat over drinks in order to develop relationships through peer networking. The area had a well-stocked bar but was less crowded and therefore was also a good place for clubbers who wanted to get drinks without staying in a long queue.

4.5.3 Dance floors

The nightclub had two dance floors, each had their own well-stocked bar. The first dance floor was a large area opening into an open space with the bar, which together comprised the major area of the nightclub. This dance floor was always crowded with the clubbers showing their dance moves with high energy. This area has dimmed lights in the background with bright blinking lights of different colours with special light effects dispersing the theatrical smoke and fog and high volume non-stop booming music binding the night together and enhancing the nightclubbing experience (Sanders, 2006a). This area was a long stretch with the DJ box at one end and a stage followed by a small open space at the other end. The DJ box was a secured area set up on the high grounds for the DJs with an entrance through an open space in the bar, possibly to stop the clubbers flocking into the DJ box. The open space below the DJ box had 3 tables adjacent to the wall on one side and opened into the bar area on the other side. The clubbers used these tables to keep their handbags, jackets⁸⁰ and drinks. Some young people were seen sleeping or lying on these tables, possibly because of intoxication, while others (mostly males) were standing as the onlookers⁸¹.

⁸⁰ Some young people preferred not to use cloakroom to keep their jackets possibly they did not have enough money or they wanted to save some money.

⁸¹ Boys sitting or standing with(out) drinks for the sole purpose of seeing girls without any participation on the dance floor. As night progresses, young males disappeared from this space possibly because of intoxication.

The 2-tier stage towards the other end of the dance floor was rope fenced from the 3 sides and opened to the lower tier, which then led to the dance floor. The stage was not attached to any walls and people were allowed to move around and climb or jump on the stage from any sides. Young people used this stage to show their individual dance skills, dance in small groups, watch others dance and have a clear view of the adjacent areas and the open space in the bar. Dancing within the club setting is a liberating experience where young people move beyond their everyday social, sensual and emotional boundaries (Jackson, 2004). A group of clubbers was always seen watching and clapping for each other, which kept them motivated to perform. Some young people sat on the edge of this stage to take rest while others were seen on the stage with their boyfriend or girlfriend, finding a corner or leaning on the fenced ropes to hug and kiss each other.

The small areas, just behind and on the sides of this stage, were like a private space, away from the crowd on the dance floor. These spaces were often filled with the 'lovebirds' embracing each other with passion for hours or pushing one or the other partner to the wall to smooch, touching body parts and -in some instances- private parts over the clothes. There were clear indications of sexual intimacies, which possibly would end up in sexual relationships as night falls and as soon as they get into a secured private space. This stage was very helpful for me, as I could observe most activities in and around this area by standing on a corner of this stage. I could see enthusiasm of the DJs, young people dancing to loud techno music under the flashing laser lightening with intense energy, sexual intimacies around the stage and building relationships in an open space of the bar area.

The second dance floor was a relatively small space with a bar on one side and a staircase leading to male restrooms on the other side. The well-stocked bar stretched from one end to the other followed by the DJ box, which was again on the high grounds that limited the accessibility for the clubbers. This open space was connected to all areas of the club with an exit door towards the far end, an entrance to the VIP area from the passage leading to the exit door, an opening into the open space of the bar connecting to the first dance

floor and a passage opening into female's restroom leading to the outdoor smoking area. In the center of this stretched space, there was a circular low-lying seating area where some young men and women were sitting while others were dancing on it. The corners of this space had a couple of square boxes where some young girls were dancing while others were sitting, drinking, chatting and taking rest. Although the area had dimmed light and non-stop music, it was brighter with less light effects and a low volume compared to the first dance floor. The area looked less crowded and with older young people compared to the first dance floor. However, it was difficult to generalise this as most clubbers were moving from one area of the club to another. I believe young people came to this smaller dance floor if they wanted soft music with a low volume to pursue conversations, which helped them to relax and restore their energy for the main dance floor.

The DJ box had similar faces, which I had seen in most of my previous visits to the nightclubs. Most of these Nepalese nightclubs recruit the same 4 DJs⁸² along with other newcomers. The names of these DJs are synonymous with the Nepalese nightclubbing experience and are advertised on the leaflets and posters⁸³ to attract the crowd, as they are popular amongst Nepalese young people. The DJs mostly played house music, trance, techno, hip-hop, and disco influenced dance music such as electronica, breakbeat with some English pop, rock and rap songs. As ethnic DJs, they played some popular Nepalese tracks to maintain the cultural construct of the music in this space (Bennett, 2000). As night falls, they played some Bollywood music in two or three episodes, which lifted the mood of the crowd and brought everyone on the dance floor. Most young people loved the Bollywood music and most girls showed their craziness by dancing to the Indian tunes. The influence of Bollywood tunes were clearly felt as they tried copying their moves from the music videos of those particular songs (Shresthova, 2010). Similarly, when Nepalese music was played most young people came united to be on the dance floor; reflecting the solidarity, love and togetherness for the country.

⁸² The four DJs are DJ CVA, DJ PHAT, DJ BICKEY and DJ DSD

⁸³ See Appendix 1 for sample of the advertised leaflets

4.5.4 The Bar

The bar area was a large open space with a stretched counter on one side and the first dance floor on the other side. This area was vibrant and popular among the clubbers, as it looked like a good place to take a break to rest from the dance floor without missing the music and ambience of the nightclubs. There were a few wide pillars and walls dividing the dance floor from the bar area. There were four sofas adjacent to those pillars and walls facing the bar where young people were seen leaning, sitting and gossiping. The open space also had about five or six round tables where clubbers were standing and chatting with their friends over alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages. Most groups here had both men and women, unlike the one outside the club, where mixed groups were not seen very often. The groups represented significant differences in terms of clothes, hairstyles, fashion and style (Hodkinson, 2009). Young people looked comfortable in this confined private space -without the feeling of restrictions- engaging and talking to each other with some physical interactions, regardless of their gender. It was noticeable that boys and girls were sharing jokes, teasing, taunting and laughing loudly; as well as sitting on laps and holding each other tightly, while maintaining the courtesy and mutual respect towards sexual aspiration. Some pockets of young people were seen hugging, kissing and embracing their partners; while others were socialising and enjoying, possibly building friendships and relationships.

The bar counter in this area looked crowded all the time with an approximately equal number of men and women ordering drinks. There were scenes where boys and girls were buying drinks individually and for each other. From the discussions within their groups, it looked like young people were buying drinks based on the round system where each member of the group had to buy one round of drinks for everyone. This helped them to avoid the long queue, where one of them ordered the drinks and paid for everyone while others were gossiping within the groups. Most boys were seen ordering beer, Jack Daniels, vodka, shots or other spirits with Coke or Red Bull. Girls were seen ordering water, lemonade, cocktails, beers, vodka or shots. Although their

beverage order looked similar, men looked more intoxicated compared to the women but as the night goes on many young females drank as much as males and they looked equally intoxicated.

4.5.5 Outdoor smoking area

The smoking area was located outside the club in the pavement of the high street. One of my friends was a smoker, which gave me an excuse to visit this area again and again. This space was barricaded and was under the watch of the security guards all the time. This space was crowded most of the time with young females slightly lower in number compared to the males; which looked in line with the overall proportion of males and females in the club. The outdoor space was cold -as was expected for the winter months- but still people were in t-shirts and vests smoking cigarettes. During one of my visits, I saw a boy wearing blazer and a bow tie. I said 'nice dress bro' to initiate the conversation, although I did not know him. He responded and explained that in such nightclubbing events, people should dress (blazer and tie) like this; as it looks more formal, fashionable and good. This was a good start for a general conversation and other young males joined us. The same spoken language⁸⁴ made the atmosphere comfortable and friendly, which helped us to build rapport quickly and we went on to discuss several topics such as the way females were dressed, their crushes, desire for girls and their smoking and drinking behaviour. Some of them looked under the influence of alcohol and were excited and willing to prove their points about attraction towards girls, smoking and drinking.

On another visit, I could smell *ganja*⁸⁵, as we entered this area. I asked my friends and they felt the same. It was difficult to identify who was smoking *ganja* in this large crowd of young people but it showed that smoking *ganja* in such parties were part of the experience for many young people. I had experienced similar patterns of drug use during my previous fieldwork visits to

⁸⁴ Nepali with a combination of English language

⁸⁵ 'Ganja' is a term normally used for cannabis or Marijuana

the nightclubs with young Nepalese, where smoking *Ganja* in an open area of the club was normal. I found some young people from the group I knew smoking cigarettes. I went to them, started talking about how they were getting on as the night was progressing and asked if they could smell something. They said, "*It is very normal in such parties, dai (brother). This is the place where people come to drink and smoke whatever they want. This is the fun part of the nightclubbing*". It looked like the use of drugs was part of the normal routine for the clubbers and was inextricably linked to the nightclubbing experience (Jackson, 2004; Sanders, 2006a). Although I could not speak to any girls in this area, there were a large number of girls smoking cigarettes; some sharing with friends. The physical connections between young men and women were widely seen; where they were holding hands, leaning on each other, flirting and sharing smokes. Not everyone in this area was a smoker, some had accompanied their friends, boyfriends or girlfriends. This space remained one of the busiest areas of the club throughout the night.

4.5.6 Restroom

The restroom was an important place for all the clubbers, especially because of the natural physiological need of the human body and for some unique activities around this space. The restroom for males was on the first floor, which could be reached using stairs from the smaller dance floor. There were about 10-12 steps on the stairs, followed by a balcony and an open space that led to the corridor; which had an entrance to the restroom. The open space and stairs were always busy with young people standing or sitting and watching activities on the dance floor from the top. Some couples were seen embracing their partners and leaning on the railings of the balcony and stairs. Others were sitting on the stairs, chilling and taking a rest away from the dance floor; without disconnecting from the clubbing atmosphere. Some girls were seen waiting in the corridor and moved away as their partners or boyfriends came out. Inside the corridor, there were two separate doors leading to a huge area with a large number of toilet cubicles and urinals. This space had a foul odour and the floor was wet most of the time. I did not see

any cleaners during my several visits and the condition of this area worsened as the night progressed. During one of my visits, I smelled *ganja* in the corridor and the restroom. I looked around but could not see anyone smoking. The smell may have come from someone who had smoked *ganja* in the smoking area and came to the restroom or possibly someone may have been smoking in the restroom. Regardless of the source of smell, it was evident that the use of *ganja* amongst Nepalese young people in the nightclubs was part of their lifestyle.

The female restroom on the ground floor had an entrance from the corridor connecting the small dance floor, smoking area and the open space of bar. As a male researcher, I did not have access to this public space, as it was a confined private space for the females but I could use my reflexivity to sense the happening through my observations of the corridors (Blackman, 2007). This corridor always looked busy with young people waiting for their partners or friends. Some couples were seen hugging and kissing in this small-congested space and intoxicated young males and females were sticking themselves to the walls and corners of this space. As night progressed, an increasing number of young males and females looked intoxicated with alcoholic drinks and sights of intimate relationships were predominantly seen in this area; along with other areas of the club.

4.6 Nightclubbing... A private space for sexual intimacy

The fieldwork visits to the nightclubbing events showed that parties and nightclubs were popular among Nepalese young people, who liked dancing to the loud techno music; often under the flashing laser lightening with LED foam sticks, cryo canon, glow necklaces and bracelets (Silverstone, 2006; Hollands, 2009). Young people in the nightclub looked very individualistic - comfortable and free- willing to explore their hidden identities in this confined private space where they chilled out, consumed alcohol, smoked cigarettes, used drugs, danced to the music, met new people and socialised with friends that shared a common interest in partying all night (Sanders, 2006b). It looked

like Nepalese young people in the nightclub were seeking to enjoy the night with full freedom; without thinking about their family, society, culture or religion. They were the new generation of young people enjoying togetherness and expressing freedom in the contemporary nightlife of London.

Young people looked 'fearless'; as they had created this confined space for themselves, which was private and confidential. The combination of assumed private space with freedom, live music, intoxicating agents, use of drugs and presence of the opposite sex created a positive and favourable situation to build sexual intimacies and relationships (Kotarba and Wells, 1987). Alcohol plays a central role in reducing self-consciousness, hindering judgment and facilitating sexual relationships both through personal consumption and through encouraging potential partners to consume in order to create a favourable environment for sexual encounters (Bellis *et al.*, 2008). Excessive drinking or routine consumption alters young people's decisions that increase the chance of risky sexual behaviour through unsafe sexual relationships and regrettable sexual experiences with different sexual partners (Thompson, Kao and Thomas, 2005; Bellis *et al.*, 2008). From the young people's perspective, participation in risk is a form of leisure that offers agency and self-determination. In contrast, government and media often see risks as a threat that deny young people an everyday normality (Blackman, 2011). Young people's risk taking behaviours are prevalent in the contemporary world through drug and alcohol abuse, as well as smoking and unsafe sex (Abbott-Chapman and Robertson, 2009; Furlong, 2013). For young people, hedonistic and risk taking behaviour in contemporary society is part of the normal transitional process in their natural search for pleasure (Hendry *et al.*, 1993; France, 2007).

During the fieldwork, young people took every opportunity to meet and engage with other common friends to expand their friendship network⁸⁶ in a

⁸⁶ See section 3.3 – Leisure as a pathway to love and relationships...

search for companionship and relationships. Besides couples⁸⁷, most people had come to the nightclub in groups with their friends or siblings. The couples from these groups were soon lost in the crowd or were left by their friends to find private spaces in the corners of the nightclub. Others members were in and out of the groups, possibly in search of sex and companionship, consequently decreasing the size of the group. The ones who were left in the group did not bother looking for other colleagues, ensuring and supporting their freedom until the morning when they had to leave together. The young people from the groups met each other several times on the dance floor in the other areas of the club. However, those with partners were given privacy to experience the night in their own way. These couples were seen mostly on the dance floors, the bar or in one of the corners of the club experiencing their sexual intimacies through holding, hugging, caressing, kissing and fondling. It looked like the young people had created this opportunity and made full use of it by expressing themselves and their love through sexual intimacies.

All the areas of the nightclub were filled with 'lovebirds'⁸⁸ and romance became more and more visible as night progressed. Young couples were seen using their hands and lips to caress their partner's body parts. Young men and women kissing on the dance floor were a normal sighting; some for longer periods while some left the dance floor to find a corner and continued kissing with increasing physical intimacies. As night falls, sexual intimacies were becoming visible in every areas of the club with increasing numbers of young people getting affectionate and passionate. There were some instances when young people were seen holding their partners tightly immersed in the fantasy, showing affection through the deep kissing and genital stimulation by touching breasts, buttocks and pulling legs. Couples were into their own world of heightened intimacy, carefree and unfazed by any onlooker or other people around them. Some looked unconscious, lost in sexual intimacies and not aware of any bystanders or people pushing them. The visibility of intense sexual intimacies showed that they were in sexual

⁸⁷ 'Couples' in this context is used as a term to describe young people with their partners, who probably may or may not be boyfriends and girlfriends or in a committed relationships.

⁸⁸ See section 4.5 – Dance floors, bars and restrooms were full of lovebirds engaged in sexual intimacies throughout the night

relationships or they were probably going to be in an intimate relationship following the night party.

Besides heterosexual couples, there were scenarios where two boys standing close to the bar counter in the smaller dance floor were showing intimacies towards each other. These boys were fondling, hugging and kissing each other for a longer period, I assume they were a gay couple. In another corner of the dance floor, I could see another male couple engaged in lip-to-lip kissing. There were some other instances when my non-Nepalese friends made me aware about the kissing of boys. Although hugging and cuddling amongst girls were visible, I did not see intimacies between girls. However, the prospect of lesbians among the Nepalese clubbers could not be neglected. It looked like the homosexual couples, similar to the heterosexual couples, were unfazed by any onlooker or other people around them. However, they were unlikely to disclose their sexuality outside these closed doors because of the backlash and fear from the family and the wider Nepalese society. None of my research participants identified themselves as homosexual, this may be possibly because young people were unwilling to disclose their identity about homosexuality. Homosexuality amongst the Nepalese population is an important issue but remains unexplored. Clearly, additional research is required to understand the perceptions of the Nepalese LGBT population towards sexual lifestyles and relationships.

4.7 Young people's increasing participation in nightclubbing

As I was standing in an open space outside the restroom, I recognised a popular face standing nearby, who had been attending most of these nightclubbing events. I started an informal conversation with him and asked "*How is the party today? Is it the same as previous nightclubbing or are there any differences?*". His answer was:

This is a very good crowd and it looks more vibrant today, this is better than many other parties, last time the new year party was

very good and this is great too. There is another clubbing night tomorrow⁸⁹ but I don't think it will be very busy there.

I again asked “How did you see this party compared to the previous ones? Are there any changes?”. He replied:

The night parties are getting bigger and bigger, the number of clubbers are increasing, they are becoming more free and relaxed in this environment. They enjoy parties and they are becoming more vibrant and energetic. Younger generation is getting used to the nightclubbing and so the numbers of such clubbing nights are increasing. But it depends on the organisers, the good and experienced organisers are more systematic than the new event organisers.

He highlighted that the rising number of clubbers and increasing nightclubbing experience of the Nepalese young people posed a great challenge for Nepalese event organisers. If the organisers were not able to maintain the positive experience for the clubbers, there were risks in organising an unsuccessful event; which will make young people to look for the alternatives and probably visit nightclubs that are more diverse and vibrant.

Nightclubbing is gaining popularity among Nepalese young people and the number of such nightclub parties has been increasing rapidly with the gradual increase in the number of clubbers. The nightclubbing for young people is becoming a place to experience freedom without worrying about families and the sociocultural norms of the Nepalese society. During my first Nepalese nightclub visit⁹⁰ in London in Sudbury⁹¹ in 2007, there were around 200⁹² clubbers; the majority of them being male. During those years, there used to be 1 or 2 Nepalese nightclub events every year that brought most Nepalese

⁸⁹ There was another nightclubbing event organised the next day just after the live musical concert.

⁹⁰ This was not part of my fieldwork for this research but my personal experience as a Nepalese visiting nightclub in the UK.

⁹¹ Sudbury is a suburb in the London Borough of Brent and Harrow in Northwest London.

⁹² All the numbers used here is an estimate based on the buzz amongst clubbers

club goers together. My next visit to a Nepalese nightclub was in 2008⁹³, organised in central London on a Nepalese New Year, the number of clubbers had increased to around 300. On another occasion in 2010, the number was around 500⁹⁴. My first nightclub visit for the purpose of this research was in 2013 in Elephant and Castle, where the Nepalese nightclub event had a crowd of around 800 people. Since then, I have visited 4 Nepalese nightclubbing events in central London and the numbers of clubbers have remained well above 1000, with some parties attracting more than 1500 young people.

The increasing number and popularity of nightclubbing events is because of a large influx of Nepalese migrants since 2004. During this period, Nepalese families were allowed to settle in the UK with their young children (Sims, 2008). After a decade, most of those young children have grown up to cross the legal age of 18 that is required for clubbing and these numbers have been increasing consistently. In 2008, about 25% of the total Nepalese population in the UK were in the age group 15-24 (Adhikari, 2012). From the fieldwork and interviews, it is evident that there are increasing numbers of Nepalese young males and females attending colleges and universities for higher studies. My conversation with parents during fieldworks and community workers were often based on their sons and daughters doing 'GCSEs' or 'A-levels'. This is widely reflected in social media where parents congratulate each other on their children's achievements at GCSE, A-level or for getting a place at the university. Higher studies settings are greatly associated with parties, alcohol and casual sex (Bersamin et al., 2012). The participation of Nepalese young people in the UK higher education has provided men and women with opportunities to explore the nightclubbing experiences in a more diverse situation and accept it as a part of their leisure and lifestyles. Thus, the likelihood of Nepalese young people engaging in nightclubbing, night parties, intoxication and sexual risks are increasing. A number of contributing

⁹³ This was also not part of my fieldwork for this research but my personal experience as a Nepalese visiting nightclub in the UK, which contributed in understanding the trends of nightclubbing events.

⁹⁴ These nightclubbing visits were not for the purpose of this research project but the prior experience of visit of such nightclubbing events helped me to understand the changing trajectory of the increasing numbers of the clubbers.

factors are always at play within the nightclubbing setting that shapes the sexual health of young people and a contextual analysis beneath single identities, experiences and social locations would help to better understand any disadvantages and marginalization (Yuval-Davis, 2006). The popularity and presence of Nepalese young people at such leisure activities is bound to increase in the future. This increasing number of clubbers has created demand for such nightclubbing events and this is evident, as in current times there is at least 1 nightclub party in every quarter of the year⁹⁵. In recent times, the Nepalese nightclubbing events are organised more often and are getting bigger⁹⁶.

Young people's increasing nightclubbing experiences have brought changes in attitude and behaviour towards nightclubbing and engagement in sexual lifestyle experiences. In my earlier observations of nightclubbing, during this research period as well as prior to this research, there used to be a section of the clubbers -especially boys- who were there just to see the girls -as 'onlookers'- but today the numbers of such boys were limited and they were not seen after the initial few hours. The disappearance of the 'onlookers' from the nightclubs shows that young people's visits to the nightclubs are associated with the leisure experience and engagement into the culture of nightclubbing. Although the structural influences could not be ignored, the Nepalese young people are becoming comfortable and empowered to enjoy, hang out, have fun and be together with their friends or partners to experience contemporary lifestyles in this confined private space of the nightclubbing; which has become an integral part of their sexual lives. Nepalese young people's approach to the sexual intimacies in the nightclub settings are changing. The Nepalese nightclubs are full of 'lovebirds' engaged in intense sexual intimacies and this was visible in all areas of the nightclub and it intensified as the night fell. This was different from my previous visits, where only a small number of couples were seen engaged in hugging and kissing. Notably, the Nepalese young people are getting accustomed to the culture of

⁹⁵ Many of these parties is organised to celebrate Valentine night, Nepalese New Year, Dashain/Tihar, December madness before New Year or musical concerts followed by nightclubbing.

⁹⁶ See Appendix 1 for some of the current leaflets for the nightclubbing events

nightclubbing and are developing confidence in experiencing their sexual lifestyles with every passing event.

4.8 Challenges and constraints for nightclubbing as a lifestyle “I work in restaurants and it is impossible to get a day off on Friday or Saturday”

The fieldwork and interviews indicated that there were two groups of Nepalese young people in the UK: British Nepalese⁹⁷ and Nepalese student⁹⁸, who envisaged nightclubbing as a part of their leisure lifestyle in experiencing a new way of living. British Nepalese, after the age of 16-17 years⁹⁹, were regular visitors to the nightclubbing events and had additional freedom towards the leisure experiences compared to the Nepalese student. Tulsi and Sagar, Nepalese students in their 20s, who came to the UK at the age of 19 on student visas, discuss various challenges and constraints that restrict their involvement in the contemporary leisure lifestyle:

Tulsi (24F): I am very grounded person.. Normally, I do not get any leisure time.. I like clubbing and I used to go to enjoy with my friends.. but now I don't go clubbing because I work in restaurant and it is impossible to get a day off on Friday and Saturday.. I have to work on weekends, as I have to pay my tuition fees, expenses...

Sagar (23M): I go to nightclubs occasionally.. sometimes.. I am not like the person who does not like going there (nightclubs).. In Nepal, I used to go frequently.. I like clubbing although I don't drink.. but here due to work... Friday and Saturday, I must work in the restaurant.. after finishing work.. sometimes if it is Nepalese night then I go.. it is good to see Nepalese friends..
RKS: Is it just because of work or..?

⁹⁷ **British Nepalese** have ‘permanent resident or ILR in the UK’ refers to the Nepalese young people with settlement rights and lives with families. These young people are officially treated as British resident and do not have any restrictions to work, qualifies for student funding for higher studies and are eligible to claim social welfare benefits.

⁹⁸ **Nepalese student** has ‘leave to remain visas’ refers to the Nepalese young people who have arrived to the UK on student visa or other visa and has limited time to remain in the UK or are have to renew their visa to be eligible to stay in the UK. They have restrictions to work (20 or 10 hours per week and in some cases working are not allowed), have to self-fund their studies and are not eligible to claim any social welfare benefits.

⁹⁹ They visited nightclubbing at early ages before the official age of 18 years with fake ID cards. See section 4.4

Sagar: *Here my decisions are also influenced by my financial situation.. I cannot go regularly because I need money and so I need to work.. also I need to think before I spend any money. Let's say if someone will ask me if I want to go to the party for free, even then, before answering I have to think about many things.. if I take day off from the work then may be I will be kicked out of the job because it's risky to take time off from restaurant on Friday and Saturday, if I don't work then I don't get paid for the day, how will I pay for other things like rent, food.. So it's not very easy to decide and attend every Nepalese clubbing nights.*

RKS: *Would it have been different if your families were here?*

Sagar: *Definitely it would have been different.. not everything but surely some of the things.. I never used to think anything before going clubbing in Nepal... Our Asian parents are very supportive financially.. if my families were with me then I would not have to think like if I don't pay rent this month then I will be in park, I would not think about I have to buy this or that to cook.. my parents would have done that.. There would have been some restrictions for sure but still while attending such parties I would not have thought more..*

Young people in this research, who are on student visas, have to prioritise work over leisure in order to meet their financial needs. Crawford, Jackson and Godbey (1991) proposed that individuals must overcome intrapersonal and interpersonal constraints before negotiating with the structural constraints and these structural constraints might continue to have relevance even after participation in the leisure activity. In most cases, the access to leisure participation is most powerfully determined by the structural influences such as hours of employment, family responsibilities and gender (Bittman, 2002; Jackson, 2000). This fits with wider discussions on the convergence of agency and structure that operate in tandem, where structure either constrains or enables the choices to determine the leisure and lifestyle of an individual, while agency plays its part as well (Giddens, 1984; Cockerham, 2005).

Structural influences such as time management for work and education, financial needs and family obligations are considered as important constraints for experiencing leisure and lifestyles amongst Nepalese young people in this research and they constantly negotiate with these factors in order to decide on participating or rejecting their leisure experiences (Jackson, Crawford and

Godbey, 1993). This is also because of the possible impact of these constraints on their prospect of future lives, as can be seen in the case of Tulsi and Sagar: where leisure engagement would have a potential impact on their finances, study and they may even have to leave the country¹⁰⁰. Tulsi and Sagar continuously negotiated time, work, studies and money before deciding on their participation in any leisure activities; as failure to do so would put them under financial constraints as well as failure to study, which is important if they want to stay in the UK¹⁰¹. Absence of families in the UK means they have little or no financial support and getting financial support from Nepal has many challenges¹⁰².

For the Nepalese young people in the research in order to meet financial needs they often took employment in restaurants¹⁰³. Since Nepalese students in the UK have to attend college or university during weekdays; evenings and weekends are the most suitable time to work, which takes up most of their social hours. As Nepalese students have restrictions to working hours in accordance with the legal requirements for the student visa, taking days off from a restaurant during the busy days of Friday and Saturday is very difficult; as there is a risk of ruining working relationships with managers. This would have a possible negative impact on job situations where young people would either lose their job or their working hours would be decreased, affecting their earnings. These restrictions have made Tulsi and Sagar compromise their

¹⁰⁰ Due to the potential visa issues. As the extension of visa is interrelated to study progression and enough finances to support their study in the UK

¹⁰¹ Tulsi and Sagar are on student visas, which means their main purpose of staying in the UK is study. If they fail to progress in the study that means their stay in the UK may be curtailed and will have to leave the UK and even if they pass the course they need to renew their visas on a new course which means they have to save or seek financial support from Nepal.

¹⁰² Getting money from Nepal is very unlikely because of the economic differences between the two countries, unless they come from a very rich family in Nepal. Most students in the UK are from the middle class family of Nepal and they come here with a dream of better life and education. In the process most of these students work to save money for themselves and in many cases to send remittance to parents as well rather than seeking financial support from their parents.

¹⁰³ It is comparatively easier to find jobs in Nepalese restaurants with networking and contacts but most restaurants they work have poor working conditions in terms of flexibility in working patterns. It is very limited or close to impossible to get a day off on the weekend, since the restaurant market depends on the business in the weekend. If they call off sick then there is a risk ruining relationships with the manager which means either they end of getting less hours to work or possibly lose the job.

lifestyles with selective leisure pursuits that do not affect their working patterns.

For young people on student visas, an increasing pressure of financial needs for their tuition fees; living expenses and expenses for renewing visas often made them save money by cutting off leisure expenses and working extra hours to earn more money. This leaves them with limited time and money to participate in the leisure activities. Richa has been living in the UK on a student visa for six months and describes her nightclubbing experience as one fulfilled dream. She talked about it in a humorous way and was continuously laughing during the conversation:

Richa (22F): I have been there (nightclub) once.. just once.. that also with my dad [laughs].. It was like when I came here my dad asked me if there was anything I wanted to do in London.. I immediately answered 'nightclubbing'.. I had never been there (nightclub) in Nepal.. I had even told my mom that the first thing I will do after coming here will be going to the nightclub.. after few days my dad took me there.. we were in a group with aunt and sister¹⁰⁴.. we went to one of the clubs in Piccadilly circus.. That's all.. I never got another chance to go again..

RKS: Why?

Richa: I don't have many friends here.. most of my friends are from my work place.. I am not having any link outside my work place and college.. so I don't know many people.. I don't have any girl as my friend.. I just know some boys from my work place... Normally I spend my time working or studying.. I don't go out much.. It was just once when I went out at night to the London Eye and central London just for roaming with some friends of my own age but again my dad knew those friends and someone told him about this night out..

Although the presence of Richa's father in the UK supported her in having an initial experience of nightclubbing, the interpersonal constraints restricted her from having any further leisure experiences. Since Richa has recently arrived in the UK, her friendship circle is restricted and all her colleagues are known to her father. The congested social networks limit opportunities to make

¹⁰⁴ In Nepalese societies every older female are aunty and similar age individuals are sisters. Richa's aunty and sister were just a lady and similar age girl from the community known to her through her dad.

friends from the wider sociocultural environment and create constant fear about private leisure experiences. Young immigrants arriving in the new country are faced with a new social and cultural environment and have to deal with a rapidly changing physical and emotional development due to an isolation, discrimination, lack of acceptance and separation from the families and the loved ones (Stodolska and Yi, 2003). The structural constraints of time, money, work, study and family obligations; together with the interpersonal constraints of not having suitable friends, partners or groups for private leisure activity are at play collectively to make sexual life challenging with the feeling of isolation and lack of acceptance within the new environment (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1992; Yuval-Davis, 2006). The feeling of isolation due to lack of friends, family restrictions or time for study and work were common constraints even for British Nepalese:

Dinesh (18M): Here, I have gone to the clubbing just 1-2 times. In Nepal, I used to visit regularly since the age of 14. Here I am busy with my study.. also my friends are all of old age.. so not interested at all.

Dinesh, a British Nepalese who came to join his mother at the age of 16, feels isolated and has restricted his leisure lifestyle due to similar interpersonal constraints as Richa. Peer preference can play a role in the decision-making of young people around their leisure pursuits but it does not operate independently and other factors are equally important in the decision-making (Caldwell and Darling, 1999). The life chances of young people are shaped by structural factors beyond their control, including gender (Furlong and Cartmel, 2007):

Esha (19F): My parents do not allow me for night outs. The only time I can stay away full night is on New Year's eve to see the fireworks at the London eye. That's the only time when I came home very late.. otherwise my actual time to reach home is by 10 pm.. I have never been to clubbing because my parents do not allow but I know many people.. many friends.. they go clubbing.. they do like sleepover.. these days its normal.. they don't listen to it...

Family obligations were another leisure constraint for young females in this research, especially due to the lack of parental approval for leisure activity away from home (Carrington, Chivers and Williams, 1987; Tirone and Pedlar, 2000). The leisure constraints faced by an immigrant community can be different from those found in the local population or other special groups and it can even be different within certain minority ethnic groups depending on various structural factors (Stodolska, 1998). The selection of lifestyle choices for these young people is not completely dependent on the social or cultural aspects of their life. Bennett (2011) describes that it also depends on the structural inequalities present within the social environment that are negotiated through the cultural practices that shape the lifestyles and behaviour of the young people.

Although young males had limited family obligations towards nightlife leisure experiences compared to their female counterparts¹⁰⁵, other structural and interpersonal constraints were widely reported by both¹⁰⁶ young men and women in this research. This shows that the presence or absence of family members, visa status or financial conditions on its own does not release the leisure constraints but the leisure expressions of young people are determined by the intersections of the interpersonal, intrapersonal and the structural constraints.

4.9 Conclusion

In this chapter, I presented an ethnography of the nightclubbing event, which is gaining popularity among Nepalese young people as part of their leisure and lifestyles at the individual level. The *thick description* of the space and the people in the nightclub explains how young people see this environment as a private and confidential space to experience their sexual lifestyles and relationships. It appears that sexual lifestyles in the context of nightclubbing

¹⁰⁵ See section 3.2, which describes changing lifestyles of young males and females and highlights the parental control associated with the changing leisure and lifestyles of Nepalese young people.

¹⁰⁶ Young people living in the UK on 'Student or leave to remain visas' as well as those on the 'indefinite leave to remain'.

include a confined space for loving and affectionate relationships, sexual intimacies and rituals of intoxication and drug use. The observations demonstrated that young people tend to express their freedom in this confined space by presenting their imagination through experimenting their bodies with arts, clothing and fashion. There is evidence to suggest that the nightclubbing experiences of Nepalese young people are changing, as an increasing number of Nepalese clubbers were engaged in the pleasure and recreation of the nightclubbing rather than being 'onlookers'.

The evidence from this study suggests that there are an increasing number of Nepalese young people experiencing nightclubbing as a leisure lifestyle in the growing number of the nightclubbing events. I argued that the Nepalese males and females experience various challenges and constraints that limit their expression of a sexual lifestyle. The migration status, financial situation, working patterns and gender norms are a few factors that act as a barrier towards the Nepalese young people nightclubbing experience. As nightclubbing is part of the leisure and lifestyle that young people experience at the individual level, it interacts with the familial factors such as parental connectedness and conversations about sexual health and lifestyles that shape young people's romantic and sexual relationships; as well as the marriage relationship.

Chapter Five: Young people's sexual lifestyles and relationships

5.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the changing attitudes and experiences of Nepalese young people towards sexual lifestyles and relationships. I begin the discussion by investigating the understanding of young people towards dating and romantic relationships and explain its secret nature. While sexual intimacies remain central to romantic relationships, males and females within a relationship have different expectations and men are expected to make an initial move. I then examine the importance of gender roles and differing expectations of sexual intimacy within a romantic relationship. I also discuss young people's attitudes towards premarital sex and investigate sexual double standards towards female virginity. Towards the end, I argue that 'breakups' can be the result of personal circumstances or due to family pressure and are part of young people's sexual development.

5.2 Secrecy in dating and romantic relationships "*We hide our sexual feelings and we don't want to share it with anybody*"

From the fieldwork, it was noticeable that dating, relationships and sexual intimacies are an integral part of Nepalese young people's leisure and lifestyle. Bishal, a teenage male, illustrates the difficulty in discussing sexual lifestyles:

Bishal (17M): 'Sex' is like... its quite normal in the UK but in Nepal.. its different.. When you say sex.. suddenly it's a big thing "sex bhanney bitikai aba thulo kura huncha".. I don't really like to focus on sex.. I like focusing on what I have to do.. I don't like wasting my time flirting with girls or so...

RKS: Are you in a relationship or were you in any relationships in Nepal?

Bishal: I was not interested in that. In Nepal, I liked hanging out with my friends.. I was not interested in girls.. I used to speak to girls but not in a way like girlfriends... I was not interested in making girlfriends..

- RKS: Any special friend who is girl?
 Bishal: I was not interested in such things... My school was very strict... they wanted everything to be perfect there... if you say boyfriend and girlfriend then they will inform parents and will call them to the school.. it was like that strict.. so there it was all about sports and study..
- RKS: Any relationships here?
 Bishal: No.. Nothing like that...
 RKS: Are you in a relationship? ¹⁰⁷
 Bishal: ohh.. yeah.. I am.. this is like.. it has been like 3.. just like 1 month

Young people in this research often showed an initial reluctance in sharing their sexual experiences and were selective in choosing the information to share. In most cases, during the research fieldwork and interviews, I always had to make an extra effort to create an environment where young people were able to discuss their dating, relationships and sexual experiences. Nepalese society still considers the discussion of sexual matters as taboo and people often contemplate having minimal conversation on this sensitive topic (Adhikari and Tamang, 2009). Tiefer (2004: 8) reports, “sex, for the most, is still a private and secret matter”. There is often doubt about the willingness of young people to divulge details of their sexual lives to a person who is not close enough. Bishnu and Sagar assert the secret nature of the romantic relationships within the Nepalese community and highlight the changing attitudes and engagement of Nepalese young people towards sexual experiences and expressions:

Bishnu (17M): We boys.. our brain is like that... like we get attracted towards girls.. I don't know about sex in Nepal but making girlfriends were very common.. If we talk about Nepalese young people, it is not only me but most of the boys have girlfriend but they don't want to talk about it.. they want to keep it secret.

Sagar (23M): If I talk about the young people in colleges... more than half of pupils have affair.. when they are in affair.. obviously they will have sex..

¹⁰⁷ When we went deep into the conversations, I generated another opportunity to ask the questions about his relationship status and then he said he was in relationship but still he was very reluctant in talking about this.

Bishnu believes that the attraction towards the opposite sex is natural and this can start at an early teenage. While these attractions are not always about sexual relationships, young males and females become friends or get into a relationship because of an emotional attachment (Holland *et al.*, 1998; Allen, 2003). Young people's introduction to the wider population beyond family members and heightened need for intimacy or sexual desire, because of puberty, drive an initiation to the romantic relationships (Patton and Viner, 2007). The initial interactions commence dating experiences for many young people advancing into romantic relationships, which usually create opportunities for sexual engagement. Young people's romantic relationships are considered as potentially significant and relational factors to the individual's development, embedded into the social networks to provide important social and relationship skills (Collins, 2003; Collins, Welsh and Furman, 2009; Rowsell and Coplan, 2013).

Bott *et al.* (2003) suggest that many South Asian men and women have increasing adulthood transition period due to the focus on education and career, which delay marriage; creating opportunities for dating and romantic or sexual relationships (Rauer *et al.*, 2013). Dating culture, a meeting between young men and women for romantic or sexual purpose, is gaining popularity amongst young people in Nepal (Regmi *et al.*, 2011). Despite the increasing popularity and acceptance of dating and romantic relationships among Nepalese young people, many prefer to remain quiet and keep it secret to themselves. Young people preferred to report sexual perceptions and experiences in a more general way or by using an intermediary channel, citing an example of a friend or a colleague. In separate conversations with young females: Asha, Dibya and Tulsi affirm the secret nature of their romantic and sexual experiences:

Asha (16F): *I think girls are a little bit secretive. We hide our sexual feelings and we don't want to share it with anybody..*

Dibya (18F): *There was one whom I liked [laughs]... but it never grew into any relationships.. it was only like Crush.. I never told him..*

Tulsi (24F): Most Nepalese young people like to keep their love life secret. If they develop crush or infatuation then they will keep it secret and in many cases they will never say to the person they love.. but I have heard several girls.. there are many girls who are in relationships and who sleeps randomly with many boys but it depends on us if we want to believe it or not.

Although the sexual lifestyles of young people have been changing in contemporary society, many young people are unwilling to discuss sexual intimacies or relationships; especially young women who are more likely to secure their feelings even rather than expressing it to their potential partners. In the study it was found that some women in contemporary society may feel free to express romantic relationships and sexual interaction citing their peers but there are uncertainties about such information. The confession of love in a romantic relationship is about making a choice of ‘the one’, which initiates expressions of one’s feelings and intimacies towards the selected ones that strengthen the relationship for future commitments (Gonzaga and Haselton, 2008). Nepalese women find it hard to make the first move in a romantic relationship and the onus is on men to make the first move and encourage females to go on a date (Regmi *et al.*, 2011). Sapna strengthened this discussion with the following conversation:

Sapna (23F): Currently I am not in a relationship but there is a guy whom I like.. we speak by chatting messaging but I have not told him...

RKS: Do you like him?

Sapna: Not like I like him.. but yes a little.. “Not mann paraune.. tara ali ali”

RKS: Why you have not told him?

Sapna: [laughs] Girls never say it at first .. don’t you know that..

RKS: If he proposes you, will you accept his proposal?

Sapna: Let’s see...

The expectations and roles of males and females in a love or romantic relationship are different, even before the commencement of a formal dating where men are assumed to be ‘proactive’, and the pattern continues even after they are in a sexual relationship (Winstead, Derlega and Rose, 1997). Young females within a romantic relationship wait for the man to make the first move and the man is likely to confess first, even though the female is

rather associated with love and commitment (Ackerman, Griskevicius and Li, 2011). Nepalese females, similar to most south Asian women, grow up in a patriarchal society where men are the decision makers and hold authoritative power while women have little power and choice (Brah 1996; Poudel and Carryer, 2000; Ahmad *et al.*, 2004). Although the traditional roles of men as initiators may not be important today, due to decreasing gender disparities, the pattern still exists in the modern day where females feel it is not natural for them to be an initiator in a romantic or sexual relationship (Meston, Trapnell and Gorzalka, 1998; Meston and Buss, 2007). This was widely suggested by a number of young females in this research; while both male and female partners maintained the secret nature of the relationships.

5.3 Sexual intimacies in dating and romantic relationships “*It is deserving to have sex in a relationship even before marriage*”

Here, I describe Nepalese young people’s perceptions and expectations of sexual intimacies within a dating and romantic relationship in the modern world. Although young people were reluctant in sharing their romantic relationship experiences, many revealed that they started dating at an early age. In separate interviews with young males, Tilak, Ravi and Bishnu share their experiences as:

Ravi (22M): My first relationship was at the age of 13 years.. The girl was of similar age... This was the time when boys feel shy even in speaking to girls in schools but I had a girlfriend... she was a close friend with whom I could discuss everything..

Tilak (24M): I had my first relationship at the age of 18.. girl was 2 year younger than me.. we used to meet, date.. We were in serious relationship.. we were not in sexual relationship but kissing, hugging, physical touching were normal..

Bishnu (17M): Initially when relationship¹⁰⁸ started.. for 1-2 weeks.. I could not dare to even kiss because we were just starting to know each other but as time passed we started becoming comfortable with each other and then kissing and hugging

¹⁰⁸ Bishnu’s love interest is from other ethnic group (non-Nepalese)

became quite normal. I first kissed her at the age of 13... we were in the same class. We used to walk together.. sit together.. hold hands, hugs, kisses on neck, lips whenever we found a private place... We lived five minutes distance from each other.. we were very close to each other.. She would call me when her parents were at work and we would watch movies together.. I have not seen her parents and they have not seen me.. it's like hide and seek.. One day we were watching movie.. there was a sex scene in the movie.. that's the only time we had sex.. It was not planned.. I asked do you mind me.. mind if I kiss you... she said go on and then I went (had sex).

It was found that sexual intimacies during romantic relationships involved hugging, kissing and fondling but not all intimacies ended in sexual intercourse. Although young people in this research reported to be in romantic relationships, many described it as an affiliation rather than sexual intimacies. Affiliation between males and females represent cross-sex friendships that may be merely an infatuation whereas passionate attractions, sexual intimacies and commitment are central features of romantic relationships (Connolly *et al.*, 1999). During late adolescence, having a boyfriend or a girlfriend may be more important than the real nature of romantic interactions (Bouchey and Furman, 2003). Romantic relationships are central to the development of the sexual lives of young people but they differ from individual to individual and are present in varying degrees in all loving relationships (Furman and Shaffer, 2003; Connolly and McIssac, 2011). Sexual intimacies and engagement within a relationship depend on individual characteristics as well as contextual factors¹⁰⁹. 'Locating private space'¹¹⁰ was seen as an important factor determining the sexual engagement -as seen in the case of Bishnu- and as is described by Dinesh:

Dinesh (18M): My mother¹¹¹ normally works in the evenings.. she is not at home in the evening.. that's when I call my girlfriend.. she comes to meet me and we stay together till 10-10:30...

¹⁰⁹ Media, intoxication, leisure or lifestyle activities

¹¹⁰ See section 3.3, the availability and easy accessibility of private spaces in the context of house parties

¹¹¹ Single parent

The conversations during the fieldwork revealed that many Nepalese parents work during evenings and nights in restaurant, care homes, security industries and factories. The romantic patterns of Nepalese young people are organised around the working hours of their parents. Young people in this research were selective and considerate towards locating a private space for sexual engagement and their romantic partner plays an equally important role in this whole process. Many young people in this research described 'home' as a perfect place for sexual engagement when other members of the family were absent, as they have limited affordabilty for the commercial private spaces due to financial constraints (Alexander *et al.*, 2006). Young people create opportunities for sexual intimacy if they meet in an isolated place such as a hotels, private room or home (Regmi *et al.*, 2011). Rishi, in an individual interview, presents his romantic experience and explains the gradual progress towards increasing intimacies leading to sexual intercourse:

RKS: *How did your relationship start?*

Rishi (22M): *We were in university.. we met during study.. we started talking.. we had our group of friends.. we started spending time together for this and that.. and obviously after that you fall in love... that's all [Pause] We were in physical relationships if that's the question.. ask me some questions.. I don't know what to say?*

RKS: *How did the physical relationship start?*

Rishi: *emmm.. the first time it was unplanned.. It happened in her home.. here in London.. it was like proper... eemmm... proper sexual intercourse did not happen.. it was one like the oral type... not.. not like proper.. not proper sexual intercourse.. Later we could expect what will happen... there was a possibility that we will have sexual intercourse and so I started having condom for precautionary measures.. it (Sexual intercourse) happened after some days and we were in sexual relationships...*

RKS: *What about her family at home?*

Rishi: *eeemm... she was like.. actually she was living with her guardian.. her guardian has 3 houses, she was living in this house and her guardian used to come only sometime.. Usually her house used to be free and because of that we used to meet there most of the time..*

The uneasiness in discussing sexual intimacies was evident during most interviews. However, responding to the research participants and building

rapport using a reflexive approach assisted me in unfolding the sexual experiences of Nepalese young people. For young people in this research, the initiation of physical intimacies in a relationship were often unplanned and spontaneous; which led to sexual engagement, depending on the various contextual factors¹¹² around them. Young people perceive 'oral sex' as an abstinence from sexual intercourse, in the non-availability of condoms, to safeguard themselves from the risks of unwanted pregnancy. However, it opens opportunities and possibly prepares young people for future sexual engagement (Remez, 2000). Sexual intimacies follow a pattern and develop as the relationship grows, starting from receiving a proposal for a romantic relationship followed by physical intimacies, fondling, kissing that leads to sexual activity as the relationship strengthens (Alexander *et al.*, 2006). Esha shares her relationship experience but illustrates the progression of a relationship through an intermediary channel using her friend as an example to talk about sexual intimacies:

Esha (19F): It was our first time.. we were very shy with each other like.. it was not like what we see these days, they get very close to each other very soon.. it was not like that.. we were not like.. we were not very much into relationship.. we just went out few times.. In first outing.. it cannot be like that.. it takes time to build relationship.. to get closer.. It was just for a month.. he was also busy with his work and I was scared that someone might see us.. so we did not meet much...

RKS: Kisses?

Esha: No.. I have not kissed anyone until now

RKS: Sex?

Esha: [Quick Response] No... No... it has never happened.. that thing... there were not even any talks like that... nothing used to happen between us... it happens for my friends.. but for us it was only hugs.. but we had not met so long ago.. and were not very close either.. so...

RKS: What happened to your friend?

Esha: My friend has been living here for long time. She kisses her boyfriend even on the street every now and then when we are walking. Her parents know about her relationship and they are fine about it. She even goes and stay with her boyfriend for 2-3 days and her parents are fine even if she does not come

¹¹² Such as availability and accessibility of private and confidential space, condoms (in Rishi's case), media (intimate sex scene in the movie as seen in the case of Dinesh).

home.. These things depend very much on yourself, your families and other things around you...

RKS:

Did you go for any formal date?

Esha:

Formal date as in.... Yaaa.. but mostly we used to go in groups [Smiles].... I used to find it very difficult to go with him alone... and also I was scared that someone might see us... So we used to go in groups with his friends and my friends..

Young females in this research felt shy in discussing their sexual experiences and declined association towards sexual intimacies or intercourse with an increased voice intensity (Alexander *et al.*, 2006). Interestingly, young people looked relaxed while talking about the sexual experiences of their friends. Esha asserted that there were various factors that determine sexual intimacies within a romantic relationship: self-determination, parental acceptance and attitude towards romantic relationships, length of romantic relationships, duration of stay in the UK and other structural influences. The intersections of these factors determine the sexual experiences and expressions of young people.

Shyness amongst young people is associated with social difficulties in maintaining a quality personal relationship with reduced communication competence and as a result, young people are at increased risks of being rejected and victimised by their peers (Nelson *et al.*, 2008; Arroyo and Harwood, 2011). Self-consciousness and low social self-esteem play an active role in affecting young people's confidence in getting into a romantic relationship or impede the dating process making them hesitant in expressing love or sexual relationship (Leck, 2006). The desire of young people to pursue romantic relationships is further diminished because of anxiety and inability to initiate and maintain interactions to continue a high quality relationship with a potential partner (Rowse and Coplan, 2013). Young people's lack of understanding about a '*formal date*' indicates that they are supposedly willing to be in a romantic relationship but with a minimal understanding about the relationship and with a limited or no opportunities for sexual intimacies. Young people see the development of sexual intimacies within a romantic relationship as associated with an emotional attachment and acceptable in a love relationship; however, sex in a romantic relationship was less important

for young females compared to their male counterparts (Peplau, Rubin and Hill, 1977; Solomon and Knobloch, 2001). This suggests that women view love as a precondition for sexual engagement and young females in this research, compared to men, looked keen to invest more time in building a romantic relationship before initiating sexual intimacies.

5.3.1 Women want love men want sex “*It was very difficult to have sexual relationships with Nepalese girls*”

From the fieldwork and interview data, it was clear that the expectations of young females and males from a romantic relationship is different: young females look for an emotional support to build relationships for a long-term commitment whereas young males preferred to have sexual intimacies as a central feature within a non-committed short term relationship. Tara argues that physical intimacies are part of a love relationship and premarital sexual intercourse is not required to sustain a romantic relationship:

Tara (24F): I was in a relationship since the age of 18. I think the important thing in a relationship is to understand each other.. sit together.. to discuss how to make life better in future... whether there is sex within the relationship or not.. this is not a problem.. even if it is that's fine and even if it is not.. it is still fine.. the main thing is how well they support each other.. sex is not very important.. support is important.. “sex teti jaroori chaina.. support jaroori cha”... we had no physical (sexual) relationship.. it was nothing like deep.. but hugging and kissing.. these things happened as it happens in any normal relationships.. but nothing like deep physical (sexual) relationships..

Nepalese young females see their body as culturally constructed, are cautious about sexual intimacy within a relationship and prefer to delay sexual intercourse (Thornham, 2000). Females expect romance in the form of feelings, expressions of love, support and emotional attachment and prefer sex at the later stage within the context of an ongoing committed romantic relationship (Carroll, Volk and Hyde, 1985; Meston and Buss, 2007). McRobbie (1991: 101) describes “*romance is the girls’ reply to male sexuality. It stands in opposition to their ‘just being after the one thing’, and*

consequently it makes sex seem dirty, sordid and unattractive". Dibya regards sex as an important aspects of a romantic relationship and believes that it becomes difficult to meet the romantic expectations of men without being involved in sexual intimacies.

Dibya (18F): Let me tell you about one of my friend, she was very cultural girl.. she used to say that she has a boyfriend and they were in a relationship but she always used to object for sex and used to say that they should have sex only after marriage. Sometimes boy can breakup if they don't get the physical relationship.. so I don't know after how long they went into the sexual relationship or whether they had the relationships or not.. but she always used to claim that she will only have sex after marriage.. But we used to always make the point that obviously if you have a boyfriend then you will have sex.. how long will they wait to have sex.. so I think if you have sex like this after being in a relationship then its fine.. if I have really loved someone.. if we are in relationship for some time period.. then obviously its deserving to have sex in a relationship even before marriage.. if not then during relationships, they should not even kiss.. even that is a physical touch.. even kisses should be done after marriage..

Young females consider the longevity of a love relationship whilst making decisions towards the timing and willingness to engage in physical intimacies or sexual activity. Young females look for a committed relationship and then they are prepared to engage in sexual activity, if they feel it is required to sustain their relationship; whereas men want sex within a caring and trusting relationship to maintain the quality of a relationship (McCabe, 2005). Meston and Buss (2007) described that physical intimacy and sexual activity in an ongoing relationship is used to increase closeness, bonding, acceptance and commitment; which strengthen the romantic relationship or turn a short-term relationship into a long-term relationship. Romantic relationships are grounds for sexual intimacies and young females are likely to be a compliant partner by putting a male's sexual desire ahead of their own to avoid trouble in a relationship and promote commitment and stability for a progressive relationship (Holland *et al.*, 1998; Furman and Shaffer, 2003). Nepalese young females often fail to challenge masculinity and are therefore expected to respond to the traditional patriarchal culture (Blackman, 1998). The sexual compliance of females in order to maintain a romantic relationship -together

with the shyness towards sexual intimacies- induce difficulties in communication, decrease responsiveness and lower sexual interaction and satisfaction; affecting the quality of a relationship, which may lead to a 'breakup' (Impett and Peplau, 2003; Arroyo and Harwood, 2011; Rowsell and Coplan, 2013). Dinesh explains:

Dinesh (18M): Currently, I am not in a relationship. After coming to the UK in last 2.5 years, I had couple of relationships that lasted just 5-6 months each... [RKS: Why?]... It was very difficult to have sexual relationships with Nepalese girls "Nepali haru sanga sexual relationships huna dherai garo bhayo"... In 5-6 months we hardly had 1-2 times.. they felt very shy.. I used to feel guilty and I felt like I was raping them and so I broke off with them..

Rishi (22M): Nepalese girls are like... once they are 20-21.. their main focus in a relationship is marriage.. but other girls here are not like that.. there may be some girls (Nepalese) who does not focus on marriage but majority of girls are like that..

A number of young males in this research described that the lack of natural sexual compliance and women's priority for long-term commitment within a relationship deters young males from getting into a romantic relationship with Nepalese women. Young men in this research were less serious in pursuing a long-term committed relationship, while females were constantly looking for their 'Mr. Right' and have an exclusive focus on an emotional love and being in a monogamous relationship in order to continue towards a long term relationship leading to marriage (Farvid and Braun, 2006; Rauer *et al.*, 2013). Females were more likely to engage in sexual intercourse with the male, if they expected to marry. On the contrary, males were more likely to seek sexual intercourse with the females they do not intend to marry.

Young males demonstrate their masculinity through actively seeking short term sexual relationships without commitments to increase the number of sexual partners -while females are expected not to engage in sexual activity and behave as a passive defender- and consequently, those permitting sexual intercourse are labelled as 'easy or slut' and are not considered to be eligible for marriage (Schmitt, 2003; Kelly, 2012: 465). Holland (2009: 408) quotes a

16-year-old woman “*the girl is not meant to want sex, even if she does, and she’s not meant to say that she does, but I mean a boy, he’s meant to be sort of more dominant, ‘I want sex’, you know, caveman type of thing*”. In the dominant masculine culture of Nepalese society, women’s sexual drive and motivation are seen as inferior compared to their male counterparts; who have more frequent and intense sexual desires (Baumeister, Catanese and Vohs, 2001). Young people’s construction of such sexual attitudes and behaviour is integrated into the wider sociocultural norms and its acceptance within the society.

5.3.2 Premarital sex and Female virginity “*Boys always search for pure girls*”

In this research, young people’s attitudes and perceptions towards premarital sex vary and they have different expectations towards female virginity. Bishal kept smiling while talking about premarital sex:

Bishal (17M): Sex before marriage is a common thing [laughs].. people can have sex like when they are 14 or something.. so that's okay....

Although sex before marriage within most South Asian countries, including Nepal, is discouraged and is socially unacceptable; premarital sex amongst Nepalese young people is widely accepted and is part of their sexual lifestyle (Okazaki, 2002; Griffiths, Prost and Hart, 2008; Adhikari and Tamang, 2009; Regmi, Simkhada and van Teijlingen, 2010a; BC and Basel, 2013). The popularity of dating and romantic relationships has encouraged Nepalese young people to engage in premarital and extramarital sexual behaviours (Regmi *et al.*, 2011; Acharya *et al.*, 2015). Young males in this research were proactive in talking about and accepting sex before marriage, while young females were thoughtful and cautious while discussing this topic:

Asha (16F): Personally, I don't mind sex before marriage.. like whatever happens... if I did sex before marriage.. I don't mind but I should use protection and I should be in love with that man. After that, it's my decision however I must think a lot before deciding to have sex..

Dibya (18F): I think sex before marriage should be done with the person you really love... it should not be like casually sleeping with everyone and anyone.

Richa (22F): I don't see any problem with sex before marriage.. really.. I think its normal.. if there is an understanding between the two person.. if both gives consent for it then do it.. its not a big deal.. if they can continue their relationship for a long time its much better but if not.. still that's absolutely fine.

Sapna (23F): I think its better not to have sex before the marriage is fixed.. because there are many who has boyfriend for 6 months.. another boyfriend for another 6 months.. I think its not good even for the person... even emotionally it affects living with one boyfriend and then going with another.. if a person know that I like him and I am going to marry him then there is no problem...

In separate conversations with young females, it was found that they have varied opinions towards premarital sex. Some young females see premarital sex as a part of their sexual lifestyle but highlighted the importance of an informed choice, consensual engagement, issues around safety and multiple casual sexual partners; while others saw it as part of a committed romantic relationship that is leading towards marriage. This may be because social norms for premarital sexual relationships are stricter for females compared to their male counterparts (Hindin and Hindin, 2009). Multiple relationships raise concerns about the identity and character of the female within the family and the wider Nepalese society, which may also affect the girl's prospects for marriage. Moreover, breakups among young people are a risk factor associated with major depressive disorder (Monroe *et al.*, 1999). Multiple relationships correspond to multiple breakups that can lead to an emotional breakdown. Sapna asserts that if young people can manage the transition between relationships, breakups and subsequent relationships without being affected emotionally and psychologically then sex before marriage could be acceptable. The cautious positive attitude of females towards premarital sexual activity was further illustrated through their concerns about 'female virginity' (Bersamin *et al.*, 2007; Higgins *et al.*, 2010). In the conversation

below, Dibya contemplates premarital sex, but is thoughtful about the ‘double standard’ towards the female virginity:

Dibya (18F): Before I used to think that virginity should be secured and you should loose it to the person you marry.. it is for someone.. someone whom you have loved... after marriage you hand it to one person.. But in this 21st century that's not possible.. But it does not mean that you go on sleeping with anyone.. If you love someone and if he loves you then there is no problem in loosing virginity with him even before marriage. But if you loose it to too many people then you are called bitch.. so it should be saved for one special person whom you love.. If I were in a relationship I would not mind to have sex even before marriage... I think it will even make the relationship much stronger.. if it is an honest relationship then I am sure it will strengthen the relationship.. but if you loose your virginity to someone randomly whom you don't love then you will have regret all your life about it.. and that may lead you to even spoil your life.. So I think its fine to lose virginity even before marriage but should only take this step after understanding the pros and cons very well.. but I don't like one thing.. if boys sleeps with every girls still he is not a bitch.. but if we sleep with the one whom we love.. still we are bitch.. why it is so?.. I get very angry with this.. If boys come to know that the girl has lost her virginity then it is more likely that boys will breakup.. Boys always search for pure girls but even if boys have slept with 100 million girls it does not matter “Keta haru le keti ta pure khojcha ni ta je bhaye pani... Tara keta 100 million keti sanga sutos kehi difference hudaina”..

Sapna (23F): Boys always like to marry girls who has never had any boyfriend or who were never in any relationships.. they always like to be the first one... Boys always expect the girls to be virgin..

Rowseal and Coplan (2013) suggest that sexual intimacy in a relationship refers to closeness, interdependence, passion, fondness, care and warmth that overhaul love and kindness towards each other to strengthen and enhance the quality of a relationship. Dibya argues that a quality relationship is not to be achieved from the first day within companionship, it is built gradually over time and if one finds the right person then there is no difficulty in having sex with that ‘special person’ to lose their virginity (Blackman, 2016). Some young females regard virginity as a valuable gift for a special person and its loss is seen rather complicated for them and they are concerned about

managing this loss (Holland *et al.*, 2000). Dibya fears that if men come to know that a female is not a virgin then they see the girl as '*randi*' (bitch) and it increases the chance of a breakup, initiated by the male partner. The social process by which young females end up having multiple sexual partners are labelled as '*sluts or slags*', while men with similar behaviour are seen as '*studs*' (Lees, 1993: 30). Dibya shows her frustration towards this 'double standard' and suggests that the best way to protect virginity is to abstain from romantic relationships before marriage. Nepalese young females showed an indication of an emergence of a 'more independent or individualised girls' (McRobbie, 2004). However they remain concerned over men's unrealistic expectations of marrying a virgin girl. Young males Ravi and Tilak affirm this as:

Ravi (22M): I want that my prospective wife is a virgin "Ma chahanchu ki mero huna wala wife virgin nai hos".

Tilak (24M): To larger extent.. I will look for a virgin girl.. who does not have experience.. from a good family background..

Bishal (17M): It (female virginity) is not too important.. In the current world, no one cares.. no one gonna get a girl like virgin.. even if we go back to Nepal.. you wont find a virgin girl [laughs].. Its gonna be very difficult to find virgin girls.. I don't mind like if she is virgin or not.. But of course she need to be like hard working.. good character.. good from heart..

Sagar (23M): These days there are very few people who does not have sex before marriage.. so expecting myself to have sex and then look for a virgin girl or expecting my partner to be virgin is not good and I should not even think about it...

Young males in this research showed mixed perceptions towards female virginity. Although Tilak and Ravi were in romantic and sexual relationships, they expect women to be pure for the marriage, affirming the issue of '*double standard*' raised by young females in this research. The expectation of female virginity is integrated into the Hindu cultural connection, where an important feature of the Hindu marriage ceremony is *Kanyadaan* 'virgin-girl gift': a ritual ceremony where a father figure gifts the virgin daughter to the male who

becomes her husband (Allen, 2000: 221). Female virginity before marriage is still seen as an important sign of woman's purity and is indicative of women's good character in the dominant Nepalese patriarchal society (Gupta, 1999; Holland *et al.*, 2000). Traditionally, '*good family background*' was associated with a polite and courteous girl from a cultural family. However, this is not a credible indicator for measuring a female's virginity. In contemporary society, *good family background* corresponds to the urban and educated family, where the likelihood of premarital sexual activity among young females is higher (Adhikari and Tamang, 2009; BC and Basel, 2013). A number of young males in this research -like Bishal and Sagar- downplayed the importance of female virginity, raised concerns and were critical about the '*double standard*' set by traditional sociocultural Nepalese society in the modern world.

5.4 'Breakup': self-initiated or social pressure

As much as dating and romantic relationships are normal, so are breakups and reengaging in a new relationship. Some relationships end prematurely, while others end after sexual intimacies or engagement and are possibly triggered by personal circumstances or structural factors around the young people. In separate conversations with young males, Sagar and Tilak share their experiences of breakups; which are interconnected to the changes in their personal circumstances:

Sagar (23M): I was in a relationship in Nepal but then I came here.. Even now we speak to each other but as we are far from each other.. we are not in a serious relationship anymore...

Tilak (24M): I had my first relationship at the age of 18.. when I came here.. we broke up... we started losing contact and then it came to an end..

Nepalese young people come to the UK in a search of a positive life. This often results in a breakup if they were in a relationship in Nepal. In many cases, young people continue to speak to their girlfriend and do not end their relationship formally. Nevertheless, as the physical presence in the

communication is lost; the connection and closeness between the couple starts diminishing and gradually the romantic relationship comes to an end, even before the couple realises or officially breakup. Romantic relationships and breakups are closely connected with the development and social experience of young people in the context of an autonomy, identity, affiliation, sexuality and intimacy (Collins, 2003). Young people's dating and romantic relationships at early ages are integrated with the adolescent development process and it often dissolves before reaching its full maturity because of one or the other reason (Connolly and McIsaac, 2009). Sprecher (2011) described that the development, maintenance and decline of a romantic relationship is rooted and influenced by the social networks around the young people, whose approval or disapproval determines the continuation of the relationship. Esha illustrates this as:

Esha (19F): In our third outing, someone saw us when we were hugging each other and my mother came to know about this and that was the end of our relationship.. My family shouted at me and so I had to breakup "mero ghar bata gaali garera beak up bhayeko ho".. When I returned home, my mom asked 'do you have boyfriend?'.. I replied yes... my mom did not like it and did not agree with it.. neither did my dad.. they told me first I should focus on my study and complete it.. only then I can make boyfriend.. They made me understand that I was too young.. I was just 18.. I know after 18 I could have been in relationship legally but still if parent says no then I have to listen to them.. Later my mom stopped speaking to me for few days...

Besides personal circumstances, the breakups are also triggered by family circumstances or social pressure. The disclosure of a romantic relationship to a parent through any sources lead to a lengthy family conversation. Such conversations are often one sided. Parents speak and young women are expected to listen to the consequences of the romantic relationship, since love relationships are seen against the traditional sociocultural norms of the Neaplese society (Regmi et al., 2011). Dating and romantic relationships may become a common source for conflict and tension within the family, since the expectations and opinions of young people and their parents towards the

friendship between the male and female vary (Laursen, 1995; Furman and Shaffer, 2003).

Young people are expected to wait until they complete their study before getting into a romantic relationship (Leslie, Huston and Johnson, 1986). This is possibly because dating may have a negative impact on the career aspirations of young people (Higginbottom *et al.*, 2006). In addition, it may bring shame and humiliation on the honour of the family (Hennink, Diamond and Cooper, 1999). Research suggests that family fear can build an indirect pressure on young people, which stops them from dating or engaging in a romantic relationship (Parks and Adelman, 1983; Felmlee, 2001; Sprecher, 2011). Although Esha is aware about the legal age requirement for taking independent decisions, she decided to breakup to show her proximity towards the family, demonstrating the collectivistic nature of the South Asian young people (Dion and Dion, 1993; Medora, 2007). From the fieldwork data, it was evident that structural factors were a common reason for breakups among young females:

Richa (22F): I have never been in a formal relationship. In Nepal, there was a guy whom I used to like and he used to like me but my mom did not like him and that's all.. our friendship ended there.. [Smiles].

Dibya (18F): I was afraid of getting into relationships because obviously my family would have known about it.. I have an elder brother, if he would have known about it then he would have killed me...

Young females in this research often feared that their relationship would be revealed to their family, which would affect their dignity within the family and the wider society¹¹³. It was difficult to understand whether Richa and Dibya wanted to be in a relationship or not but it could be understood that they lacked confidence in decision-making towards their sexual lives. They relied on their mothers to make decisions on their behalf and accepted it without considering their own preferences. This raises questions about how these young females could be empowered to make quick or independent decisions

¹¹³ See section 7.5 'A ripple effect'

in a crisis situation, if they ever get into a romantic or sexual relationship. Lack of confidence could put them at risk of sexual violence and forced sexual behaviour. From the fieldwork data, it was clear that parents feel it is their responsibility to make decisions for their young daughters until they are married¹¹⁴. This puts extra pressure on young people to avoid getting into any form of dating and romantic relationship; or they are likely to date without parental knowledge and if revealed, they were likely to breakup (Lau *et al.*, 2009). The breakups for young males were also influenced by parental involvement but boys experienced a higher degree of freedom to make independent decisions and their individual circumstances overpowered the parental influence as a reason for the breakup.

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter investigated the perceptions and experiences of Nepalese young people towards dating, romantic and sexual relationships; which develop as a result of constant interplay between individual and familial environment. It was found that the attitudes and behaviour of Nepalese young people towards dating and sexual relationship in contemporary society are changing. Despite this, young people often showed initial reluctance in sharing their sexual experiences and were selective in choosing what information to share. Young people preferred to keep their sexual lifestyles secret due to the taboo attached to the discussion of sexual matters within the Nepalese family and society (Adhikari and Tamang, 2009). Young people were likely to get into dating or a romantic relationship without parental knowledge because of the fear that parents would force them to breakup (Lau *et al.*, 2009).

The relationship between young males and females at the individual level is based on the perceptions and beliefs towards dating, romantic relationships and sexual intimacies. The familial factors such as parental connectedness, familial expectations, gender norms and sociocultural values play an important role in shaping young people's experiences and behaviours towards

¹¹⁴ See section 7.3 'parents should stop taking responsibility about everything'

romance and sexual relationships. Although young people demonstrated positive attitudes towards sexual intimacies within a romantic relationship, the roles and expectations of men and women within a romantic relationship were different. It was found that young females expect men to make a first move towards dating, romantic and sexual relationships (Regmi *et al.*, 2011).

While sexual intimacies were the central component of most romantic relationships, young females looked for a committed relationship and then they were prepared to engage in sexual activity; if they felt it is required to sustain their relationship (McCabe, 2005). On the contrary, males looked for sexual intimacies from the beginning of a romantic relationship and if sexual relationships were not developed, they preferred to end the relationship and look for another partner. The evidence points out that young males and females have different opinions about female virginity but the majority of young people raised concerns and were critical about the '*double standard*' set by traditional sociocultural Nepalese society. The findings suggest that young males were proactive in discussing and accepting sex before marriage while young females were cautious and perceived premarital sex as the part of a continuing love relationship to strengthen the bonding that will eventually lead to the marriage. The data indicates that breakup among females were often caused due to family or social pressure, whereas individual circumstances overpowered parental influence as a reason for men's breakup.

Chapter Six: Continuum of marriage: contesting young people's views

6.1 Introduction

This chapter investigates marital beliefs of Nepalese young people and explores the social practices of marriage within the Nepalese communities. The aim is to explore the concerns of Nepalese young people towards negotiating and contesting the marriage relationships. This chapter starts with a discussion on young people's understanding and attitudes towards marriage and investigates their preferences for arranged or love marriages. I then investigate the importance of parental consent and caste issues for young people's marriage relationships that create an erratic space between consent and coercion towards the marriage for the young people. Subsequently, the chapter presents the views of a married participant, as her personal experience explains an alternative form of marriage 'love arranged marriage', which may be preferable for both Nepalese young people and their parents.

6.2 Young people's attitude and perceptions towards marriage "Why do people get married... It's just to show to the society"

The fieldwork suggests that young people's construction of positive or negative views about the marriage depends on situations and circumstances in which they grow and live. In separate conversations, young males argued that they were too young to discuss about marriage.

Bishal (17M): I don't think this is the right age for me to think about marriage.. there are people who wants to get married.. settle down.. have a big happy family.. but for me I need to settle down.. have my house.. and then only marriage is going to come...

Bishnu (17M): First I will complete my degree.. University degree in mechanical engineering.. I will not marry before the age of 25.. that's fixed.. I will not change it [Laughs]..

Dinesh (18M): I think marriage only in 30s.. I could not think of that before I am settled well because that's a lot of responsibilities ...

Although marriage in Nepal occurs at relatively young age¹¹⁵, the age of marriage has been rising due to the improving accessibility and opportunities for young people towards the education and employment (Caltabiano and Castiglioni, 2008; MOHP, 2011b). From the fieldwork discussions, it was understood that young males within the family discuss prospective future career that often involves thinking around improving education, employment and livelihood rather than relationships and marriage. On the contrary, young women's conversation within the family are usually linked to the marriage and they start discussing values, perceptions and expectations from marriage from an early age of six or seven years (Ghimire and Samuels, 2014). Nepalese girls grow up playing "gharbar"¹¹⁶, where children portray their innocent understandings of the marriage on the basis of what they see in their family and the society. In separate conversations with young females, Asha and Richa assert that marriage conversations within Nepalese families are the representation of social norm.

Asha (16F): Sometimes we talk about marriage, especially if someone is getting married and if mom knows her then she will bring up the topic. She (mother) will say like this person is so good. She keeps on telling such things and my response is like okay.. I don't want to marry.. then she will be like you need to look for boys who does not drink, does not smoke, etc.. etc....

Richa (22F): My mom always say that after marriage I should go around with my husband to see different places.. that is what I will look for.. I will look for an educated guy who will respect me and give me the freedom after marriage..

¹¹⁵ The median age at first marriage among men aged 25 to 49 years are 21.6 years and women are 17.5 years. 29 percent of teenage girls aged 15 to 19 years are in formal marriage relationship compared to only 7 percent of teenage boys. (MOHP, 2011b)

¹¹⁶ A role-play where group of girls takes the role of different members of family (husband, wife, children, etc.) and act as a married couple

The marriage related conversation between Nepalese young females and their mothers are often around a *good prospective groom*¹¹⁷ and a *good family background*¹¹⁸. Nepalese young females shape their understanding of marriage based on the conversation with mothers and her expectations of the prospective groom. Richa's expectations of the marriage is set by her mother and has started preparing for her post marriage plan based on the suggestions received from her mother, which encompasses safety net and empowerment even after the marriage. Young females in this research expected their husband to be '*a good boy*'¹¹⁹. This is important to meet their expectations of having a supportive husband who can understand and back their career aspirations, dreams and allow them to experience free social lives after the marriage (Charsley and Shaw, 2006; Constable, 2011). From the data, it was noticeable that although boys and girls grow up in a similar family surrounding, parents were cautious to bring marriage discussions with their sons. But, whenever opportunity arises, young males were reminded about the criteria or restrictions of the marriage, which included finding a *beautiful girl from the same caste*¹²⁰. The fieldwork suggests that Nepalese young people get overwhelmed by the expectations and restrictions from the parents, which restrict their freedom to express their perceptions about the marriage. With the increase in age, young people's conversation within the family causes differences in opinions based on the observations of the marriage within their family and the society. This creates a situation where young people start developing negative attitudes towards marriage relationships.

Richa (22F): Why do people get married... I think it is just to show to the society "Marriage nai kina garcha manche ley.. society lai dekhauna ko lagi ho jasto lagcha". I am not worried about marriage... even if I don't marry that's fine...

¹¹⁷ A *good prospective groom* refers to a good boy for the marriage who is well educated, have good job and income with a social status within the Nepalese society

¹¹⁸ See section 5.3.2

¹¹⁹ A *good boy* in the contemporary world is a good prospective groom with modern thoughts who are willing to give freedom to their wife after the marriage. (See section 6.3)

¹²⁰ Traditionally for parents, the focus of a *prospective bride* is around her beauty and belonging to the same caste.

Rishi (22M): Marriage means I think.. this is only a term given by the society.. I sometimes do not believe in it because.. sometimes it is like wife and husband want to be separated but because they have been married.. and only for this reason they live together although they do not like each other.. they would spend their life like that..not speaking not living together but staying married for the society.. because of that personally at this stage I do not agree with marriage at all..

Richa and Rishi¹²¹ believe that marriage in Nepalese community, sometimes remain just for the sake of the society. Although Richa does not want to marry for the sake of the society, she understands that this would not be possible, as the decision about her marriage is integrated with familial expectations. Young males in this research shared a similar opinion, though they felt they could experience more freedom to decide about their marriage. The attitudes of young people towards the marriage is closely connected with the attitudes and understanding of their parents, siblings, friends and relatives (Jennings, Axinn and Ghimire, 2012). Thornton and Freedman (1982) report that the young people living through a divorce may inquire the value of marriage and develop negative attitudes towards the marriage, which presumably complicate their decision-making process towards the marriage. Poortman and Liefbroer (2010) describe that the attitudes towards marriage and relationships have been changing over the decades and young people increasingly recognise singleness as an alternative and legitimate lifestyle; however, marriages still thrive and remain central for personal and social relationships in the contemporary society.

6.3 Love vs Arranged marriage “Love marriage is better but it’s too complicated... arranged marriage makes all family members happy”

Young people have differing views and attitude towards the love and arranged marriage. Although young people in this research supported the need of romantic love for marriage, various complex factors shape young people's understandings and perceptions towards decision-making about love or

¹²¹ Rishi's parents are divorced and Richa's parents have lived away from each other for more than a decade.

arranged marriages. In separate conversations, young males show strong affiliations toward love marriage compared to arranged marriage.

Dinesh (18M): I think arranged marriage is really silly “arrange marriage ta malai ekdam silly nai lagcha” [Laughs]... you don’t know each other.. you haven’t spend any time with each other... it is just like jumping into your life.. so I don’t think this is good.. For me if I find someone then its okay or else I probably wont be married...

Rishi (22M): I do not believe in arranged marriage.. I am completely against the arranged marriage.. I think we marry someone because we love her and love should happen naturally but that is not the case in arranged marriage. In arranged marriage, your parent find your partner and now you have to love her.. you have to marry her.. girls normally think that you can become happy even after arranged marriage as they say that when you stay together then the love will automatically be there... but I think that is wrong.. Of course there will be love when you live together but this love will be different.. this is not the love you have selected so it will be different and it may be like you must love her because you are married now and you do not have an immediate option to leave her...

Bishnu (17M): I like love marriage because in love marriage you know almost everything about the girl.. you know her, her attitudes.. behaviour.. you personally know her for some time .. whereas arranged marriage you never know how long it will go.. like it will work out or not.. may be it could end in divorce... so I like love marriage.

Dinesh laughs about arranged marriage and considers it as an inappropriate choice for an important decision of the life, which would affect the future prospects of his social and sexual lives. The challenges of committing to a relationship without knowing each other can result in unwelcome consequences to constrain the relationship, which may end the marriage due to unhappiness and misfortune. The wider impact of the divorce, which is against the sociocultural norms of the Nepalese society, creates further complications for young people’s social and sexual life, compromising the full circle of the life (Pothen, 1989; de Jong, Ghimire and Thornton, 2006). Rishi argues that the love should come naturally; it should not be forced or made compulsory through an arranged marriage. The arranged marriage in Nepal

corresponds to the arrangements between families, which overpowers an individual choice of the couple getting married (Caltabiano and Castiglioni, 2008). Educational opportunities and urbanisation in the contemporary society have created favourable circumstances for relationships and freedom to make an informed choice to marriage based on affections (Allendorf, 2013). Young people in this research preferred to have the freedom to find a love with mutual understanding and shared interests, and then collectively decide to make an arrangement for marriage. In separate conversations, young females affirmed the choice of love marriage and highlighted the importance of selecting '*a good boy*' for the marriage.

Asha (16F): *I think marriage should be like.. between two people.. between the one who loves you and the one whom you love.. that's all.. I think love should be the most important thing.. but also the boy should be good.. well educated, working and career oriented because if the boy is uneducated then what we will do in future, we have to decide because only love will not make the future.*

Tara (24F): *It does not matter whether it is a love marriage or arranged marriage. My sister had arranged marriage and I had love marriage, we both are happy with it... so basically it depends on the guy you marry..*

From the fieldwork discussions, '*a good boy*' refers to the prospective groom who is rich, educated, employed, have an ability to create financial safety net without hardships and are capable of leading the family socioeconomically with love and support. Asha signifies the importance of love and trust in a relationship but presents a realistic view about the need to securing family after the marriage by '*choosing the right man*' (Lees, 1986: 98). Young females in this research believe economic stability through prospective partner's education and employability would provide long-term security guarantee for the family; and therefore view this as an important requirement for both love and arranged marriage. Tara believes it is not about the cultural practices of arranged marriages or experiencing the freedom of sexual rights through the love marriage; but the success or failure of the marriage is determined by the failure in recognising the cultural negotiations and reflexive

engagements that are embedded in its practices (Pande, 2014). Although ‘*finding a good boy*’ is central to the cultural practices of the arranged marriage, young females believe the key is ‘*how to find a good boy*’. A number of young people advocate for arranged marriage and defend their decisions referring to the complexity of individual and social factors that intersects together at multiple levels to act as a barrier for the love marriage. Tulsi argues that the probability of trouble in a love marriage is higher compared to the arranged marriage and explains this as

- Tulsi (24F): Frankly speaking, I like arranged marriage.. I used to think from childhood that I would never make any boyfriend.. I will directly go for arrange marriage...*
- RKS: Why?*
- Tulsi: I have seen quite a lot of love marriages ending very badly “lathalinga bhayeko”.. they were in love, then married and then their relationships were soured and finally ended.. and that’s why I think arranged marriage is the best option.*
- RKS: There are chances that even arranged marriage can end badly...*
- Tulsi: Sure there are chances.. but in love marriage you know each other very well before the marriage.. you have known almost everything about your partner and there is nothing new to explore and so there is no excitement after the marriage.. but in arranged marriage you do not know anything about each other... it is just the start of the relationship.. like the start of the love.. and so the love develops very well and bind the relationships strongly.. there are many things you want to explore about each other, as you have not known each other before and so it lasts longer..*

The fieldwork suggests that young people’s inclination towards arranged marriage is associated with the fear of an unsuccessful love marriage. Xiaohe and Whyte (1990: 710) reports the traditionalist view in support of the marriage as “*love matches start out hot and grow cold, while arranged marriages start out cold and grow hot*”. This notion was reflected during the conversation with Tulsi, which raises concerns about the sexual agency of the young people. This may be because young people are less informed about the choices they are able to make or allowed to make due to various relational and contextual factors that facilitates and inhibits their sexual agency (Bell, 2012). Another such contextual factor that puts pressure on the sexual

agency of the young people is their drive to ensure support from the parent and wider family network towards the marriage decision. The separate conversations with young females in this research; Dibya, Richa and Sapna illustrate the importance of familial support for pre and post marital relationship.

Dibya (18F): I believe in love marriage but my parents say after love marriage there may be various problems.. if it is arranged marriage then in case of any problem parents and other senior members can get involved.. but in love marriage, as I would have decided it by myself, I would have to solve the problem independently.. I have to deal with my problem on my own...

Richa (22F): Although I like love marriage, I have decided to go for arranged marriage [Laughs]... if my parents will not force me to marry, then I will better not marry but if I marry it will be arranged marriage.. [RKS: Why?]. When I think about marriage, I think love marriage is better but its too complicated. First you need to find a good guy, then fall in love, then ask the family, convince them and get their approval.. it is too complicated so it is better to do arranged marriage where you do not need to do anything [Smiles].. Anyway you have to get married then its better to get married by making all the family members happy.

Sapna (23F): It is better to opt for arranged marriage.. it is not like every love marriage is always successful or arranged marriage is unsuccessful.. but if I do love marriage and if that marriage will not become successful then I will have to bear all the responsibilities and hardships without any support from my family [laughs].. I have seen one of my sisters in my relatives had such problem... and now she is always used as an example in our family that if I do love marriage and if that will not be successful then I will have difficulties like that sister.. In all my relatives only few have done love marriage.. most of the marriages has been arranged..

The concerns about the consequences of the marriage play a significant role in affecting confidence of Nepalese young people towards experiencing their sexual lives independently; which signifies the importance of parental involvement in ensuring a good marriage relationship. The fieldwork suggests that the Nepalese parents play an active role in making decisions for young

people's marriage compromising their sexual agency. Decisions about the marriage corresponds to the responsibilities of a family formation, which is considered too important to be left to young people; and therefore parents take this responsibility and play an active role in looking for a potential spouse for young people's marriage compromising their sexual agency (Ghimire *et al.*, 2006). Young people's injustice towards looking for a potential spouse is the result of power relations practiced by parents to maintain the discipline and cultural values within the familial setting (Yuval-Davis, 1997; Collins and Bilge, 2016). South Asian young people often have a strong preservation of the cultural identity and they feel it is their duty to maintain personal and family honour in the society; and more so for the young females (Goodwin and Cramer, 2000; Bhopal, 2011). Nepalese community is seen as collectivist where family expectations, obligations and duties often override personal preferences (Triandis, 1995; Jennings, Axinn and Ghimire, 2012). Young people in this research were not able to detach themselves from the collective responsibilities towards the family and the community, which affected their agentic experiences towards relationships and marriage.

6.4 Parental consent crucial for marriage "*I will not run away from home because that will make me more sad*"

Young people in this research suggest that parental consent is crucial in decision-making towards love or arranged marriage. The traditional sociocultural norms and caste hierarchy are seen as major concerns, which stop parents towards consenting for young people's marriage. Sapna and Ravi suggest that it is important for young people to understand the sociocultural expectations and be realistic about the level of freedom they can experience towards relationships and marriage.

Sapna (23F): I think young people need to think about their parents before deciding whom they want to marry. They need to think that if I marry this girl or boy then will my parents accept it or not.. even if we decide then we need to take a step forward to convince our parents about our relationships and decisions for marriage... if they will be happy then its much better.. I

don't suggest we should get married if that makes our parents feel sad.. it is better to try to convince...

Ravi (22M): At the end, I will follow whatever my mom dad says... I will try my best to convince them about my relationships and decisions for marriage but if they will not agree then I will leave.. I can understand that I will be the one to marry the girl and she will live with me.. but she will also live in the family... I live here but they live in Nepal... in a society... so they need to take the decisions... and I will follow whatever they decide..

Young people in this research expressed reluctance in going against families, were inclined to act responsibly to commit into a romantic relationship and were determined to convince their parents to obtain an approval for marriage. Young people value parental attributes because of their hard work and effort to secure the family from any concerns and prioritising the interest of the family over their own preferences (Stopes-Roe and Cochrane, 1990). In response to this, young people see obedience and respect towards elders as an extremely important characteristics of Nepalese family relationship (Niraula, 1995). Young people rely on shared expectations towards selection of a prospective spouse and expect an agreement to be reached based on acceptance of parental authority maintaining the respect (Ibid., 1995). Young people's failure to reach an agreement with parents, leave them with an option to either accept the parental decision for arranged marriage or go against the family and marry in a rebellious manner to abide with an individual choice. In separate conversations, Dibya, Esha and Bishnu look for collaborative approach to garner support towards the marriage.

Esha (19F): I don't think my parents will have any problem if the boy is good, educated, working and his family background is good... even if he is from different caste and as long as he is Nepali, my parent would not mind. Now, it depends on me if I find a guy who is good.. my mom has already told me that they will not have any problem if the boy is good but if not then they will find someone for arranged marriage.. I will try to convince my parents about my marriage but if still they do not agree then I will do whatever my parents say.. Because if I do not listen to them and if I go against my parents then people in society will discuss it as evil.. they will say like his daughter has ran away with someone.. her daughter did like this or that when her parents did not allow... so because of all our

relatives and the society the best thing would be to agree with whatever my parents decide.

Dibya (18F): If I would have boyfriend then I will marry him.. My parents would accept him if he is well educated, rich and good... if he is similar to what parents has been expecting then they may accept him... Initially I will tell my parents that I love him.. I will try to convince them but if my parents will not agree then obviously.. I will not run away from home because that will make me more sad.. so if they will not agree then I will agree for arranged marriage... and then if I will be sad or unhappy then I would blame my parents.. but if I am in deep love then I would rather stay unmarried.. but if there is a caste difference then there may be a bigger problem...

Bishnu (17M): If I like a girl, we are in a relationship and if I want to marry her then I will talk to my parents.. I don't think my parents will have any problem if she is from the same caste.. I will try to convince them (parents).. it is not good to runaway with the girl against the family will.. it will dishonour the family "tesley family ko nakkai katincha" ..

Here, young people assert that parental consent is an important part of the marriage decision, and going against the family would bring shame and disgrace affecting family's pride and honour within the society (Medora, 2007). Marriage in the South Asian community is a contract between two families and it corresponds to the responsibilities of the extended families¹²² where the authorities are generally allocated according to the age and sex; males having greater authority over females within the same age category whereas, females having greater authority over the men younger than themselves (Brah, 1978; Anwar, 1998). Families and relatives arrange the marriage with a view of strengthening pride and honour of the family in the society, considering family reputation, education, caste and religion as some of the major requirements (Goodwin and Cramer, 2000; Bhopal, 2011).

Pande (2014) suggests that the problem in understanding arranged marriage and love marriage is due to the binary opposition in constructing

¹²² Extended families refer to the families and relatives who may or may not live together and share financial ties but are bound to mutual ties and obligations to maintain the generational dignity and pride of the families in the society.

'arrangement' and 'love' where both marriages are seen at the two opposite ends of the continuum. Young people in the contemporary society see the process of marriage on a continuum; since young people's involvement with non-familial activities, access to the education and exposure towards media have brought significant social changes where young people are increasingly involved in transforming the arranged marriage into a love marriage (Ghimire *et al.*, 2006). Young people wish to play an active role in the decision-making process within the arranged marriage rather than going against it. The increasing involvement of young people in a spouse selection and family conversations to identify common expectations in terms of looking for *a good boy or a beautiful girl from the same caste* bring young people and parents to the consensus for the marriage. However, the caste differences of the potential spouse can become a major barrier towards reaching an agreement with parents. The intersections of gender, social class and ethnicity plays an important role in reconstruction of collective identities that is crucial for the balance of power towards the decision-making for the arranged or love marriage (Yuval-Davis, 1997). In many cases, young people and parents remain in disagreement over the caste issues, which leave young people with an option to go against their family and marry in a rebellious manner. However, young people were reluctant, rejected this option and asserted the obligations for constant negotiations with the parent and family, expecting the consensus for the marriage.

6.4.1 Caste raises concerns for marriage "*If I marry a girl from different caste.. I will not be allowed to stay in home*"

Nepalese young people's understanding and anticipation about the importance of 'caste' for a marriage proposal are different. However, young people asserted caste is key to secure unconditional support from parents towards their marriage. In the conversation below, Asha explains the collectivist nature of the Nepalese society and highlights the importance of caste for a potential marriage proposal.

Asha (16F): *I think in the Nepalese society, most parents want their children to marry within their culture.. it is not like western countries people where they don't mind even if they marry other people of any religion or society... In our culture, mom dad says us to marry a Nepalese guy.. Even in Nepali, you know those different castes like Gurung, Rai... we are told to marry our people.. Like my mom is thakuri and dad is magar, so we are magar thakuri.. so my mom says I should marry either thakuri or magar.. She will not mind if I marry others but she says it should be mainly thakuri or magar.. however I must marry a Nepalese guy.. I will give you an example. Let's say I like a white boy.. if I like a white boy, mom will never allow me to marry him.. because of our culture.. she fears our culture will be lost... like when our kids will grow up then they will forget Nepalese culture so she will never allow me to marry a white boy... I argue by saying that if I marry a white man then what will happen to you.. and then she will again start the same thing no no no... I must marry Nepalese.. our culture will be lost and so on and then she will end up saying you are still young.. you will understand it when you grow up.*

RKS: Have you ever tried to convince her in such argument?

Asha: Yes, sometimes I do try to convince her but she is more worried about our culture. If I will like any Nepalese then she will not have much problem but again she starts talking about restrictions like don't marry Rai or others... she wants me to marry magar or thakuri and if they don't find a good magar or thakuri then they will find some other good Nepalese.

RKS: Do you worry about it?

Asha: Yes, sometimes I get worried from inside.. like if I like a Nepali boy.. I will not be worried that much but if I like someone from different culture then I will be worried a little because mom and dad may not accept it and it will make me more worried.. but anyway if I like a white boy then mom will find a good Nepalese boy.. if not magar then may be any other good Nepalese boy... but will not accept the white guy..

In the above conversation, Asha explains the expectations of parents towards maintaining the kinship activity through the marriage (Charsley and Shaw, 2006). Asha clarifies that any marriage discussions within the Nepalese families are incomplete without focusing on the caste issue, and the arguments would extend to any level but the outcome of the discussions always remain the same "*you must marry a Nepalese boy and from our own caste*". The hierarchies of the caste provide an important differentiation in the Hindu religion and is seen as an extension of the kinship ties (Gupta, 1976; Ghuman, 1994). Parents are often worried about the cross-cultural or

intercaste marriage, as they believe it will weaken the ethnic ties; and their native culture or the caste will be lost gradually (Talbani and Hasanali, 2000). Palriwala and Uberoi (2005: 23) states, “*ethnic communities can only continue to exist as such via community endogamous marriages that ensure the transmission of the community’s values and culture to the younger generation*”. Castes form the strong basis for arranged marriages, which are commonly seen within the Nepalese society; the substantial number of intercaste marriage will blur the caste identities and make it difficult to have clear distinction between the subethnic cultures (Allendorf and Thornton, 2015). Young people often argue with parents to change this perception; however, they usually struggle to persuade parents because of the challenges associated with the cross-cultural or intercaste marriage adjustments. Bishnu and Tilak explain this as:

Bishnu (17M): My parent still talks about castes.. he says if you marry a girl from a lower caste then its better not to live with us “tallo jaat ko keti lyao bhane ham sanga na base huncha”.. If I marry a girl from different caste I will not be allowed to stay at home... My parents will always look for Nepalese girls and that also who belong to the same caste.. But for me I don't mind.. I don't know what is the caste in international system but if she is Nepali then that's fine....

Tilak (24M): In our caste, it's a bit difficult.. in my case, my mom will never agree for it but I don't mind it at all.. but we Nepalese like to stay within a family and so even I will try my best to find a girl within my community and would like to marry her.

RKS: What if you will like a Nepalese girl from a different caste?

Tilak: In that case it will be very difficult for me... because our thinking will not match.. from living style to the way we communicate.. to the way we live in a society.. everything thing will be different.. so it will be very difficult..

RKS: And what if you love some girls from other ethnic origin?

Tilak: [Overriding].. In my family that's not possible.. definitely that's not possible..

RKS: So in that case what will you do?

Tilak: My main priority will be my family.. because even after marriage its about making a family... So for me my family will be the main priority.

The PhD suggests that young men's opinion about the caste system was flexible; however, it raised concerns within the familial context. This is

because females, after the marriage, move to live with the male and his family. The adjustments of cultural affiliation of female in her 'new home'¹²³ bring various challenges depending on the original cultural identity of the female. The South Asian community is seen as a society with collectivist cultural beliefs where duties and obligations from the culture of groups override the personal preferences (Triandis, 2001; Medora, 2007; Jennings, Axinn and Ghimire, 2012). Young males in this research looked set to compromise their personal preferences to meet the family expectations towards the marriage.

Young females in this research were equally concerned, and in many cases more alarmed, about the prospect of intercaste marriage relationships. Young females believe that their parents would definitely reject the marriage proposal, if the men were from different caste or culture. Richa argues that the parental rejections of a prospective spouse follow a hierarchical pattern.

Richa (22F): Although my dad says he is not much worried about the caste.. he is just concerned that I should not like a muslim guy.. Besides that anyone will be fine.. nepali.. indian.. anyone.. he says 'if you are happy then I do not have any problem'... but I don't think he is going to accept it... [RKS: What if you like anyone except Nepalese or Indian?]... No... they won't agree.. I strongly believe that they wouldn't agree.. Neither mom nor my dad will agree.. even I would not agree.. even my heart will not agree for anyone except Nepalese or Indian.

Young people in this research describe that the degree of control about their marriage depends on the expectations from parents and families. This is initially set at the highest possible level, where parents want young people to marry within their own caste; however, some parents were willing to compromise and accept a spouse belonging to the same cultural or religious groups, while others were flexible enough to accept if they come from same ethnic groups or the same country. Notably, young females asserted that their parents were against the interracial or interreligious marriage. The

¹²³ New home for the females after marriage refer to the home of her husband. In Nepalese tradition, females move into male's house and live together with husband's family.

intersections of race, ethnicity, religion and class, which influence the identity politics among the migrant women plays an important role in the decision making towards the love or arranged marriage (Dwyer and Shah 2009). Young females believe some parents may express positively in favour of an intercaste or an intercultural marriage, but this does not guarantee that they would accept and support the young people for an intercaste marriage within their own family. The fieldwork suggest that there are hierarchies of acceptance for the intercultural marriage proposals; this depends on parent's education level, familial context and socioeconomic situations. Asian females are raised in a protected and controlled home setting where they are expected to accept the sociocultural values and do not have confidence and power to challenge the traditional norms (Talbani and Hasanali, 2000). Young females are expected to follow the cultural traditions, religious obligations, family loyalties and community expectations (Hennink, Diamond and Cooper, 1999; Dion and Dion, 2001). The marriage decisions made by young females are based on fulfilling these expectations and it overrides all the personal preferences. Dibya explains this as '*double standard*' within a family; where females are treated differently and in a controlled way, compared to men in the same family.

Dibya (18F): I have noticed one thing and I always argue about this in my family.. my brothers age is to get married and so my parents ask him, if you have a girlfriend then let us know and we can arrange the marriage.. I used to ask mom will you accept any girl from any caste and mom was like 'yes .. what can I do ..as he likes that girl so we will accept her' but if I said that what about me liking someone from other caste and she was like.. complete rejection.. My brother can marry any caste any girl he wants but I need to marry only the guy from my caste.. I used to argue about this then my mom used to explain... my brother will bring the girl into the family but I will have to leave the family.. If I go into other caste family then if there will be any issue they will not be able to help or support much.. because after marriage I will not have any link with my family.. and guys family and his caste will be responsible for me and everything related to me.. if something become an issue in that caste then I cannot complain about it to my parents... I will be like.. but the same applies to the girl my brother will bring... even that girl will come from different caste to our

caste and we will accept her then why its not the same in my case... but there is no way to convince parents about it..

Dibya illustrates that the gender discrimination¹²⁴ within Nepalese families is a traditional feature and it is challenging to make any changes to this cultural norms. Dibya argues about the equal sexual rights within a family but the negotiations remain discontented and she fails to persuade parents to agree to the sexual norms of the young people. Nepalese parents expect daughters to behave in accordance to the sociocultural norms or it may create issues in finding a prospective groom from the same caste. Parents are inclined to take decision to find a prospective groom within the same caste because it ensures that the control is maintained through the closely knit society, which creates a safety net for females in their 'new home' after the marriage. Moreover, parents seek to keep control over the marriage of the young people to maintain the support that would possibly be required in the events of post marriage conflicts (Goodwin and Cramer, 2000). This is required for both men and women; however, females are seen vulnerable because they have to move in 'a new home' to live with new people.

The fieldwork data indicates that the familial expectations from males and females within the Nepalese society, similar to other Asian community, are different (Dion and Dion, 2004; Charsley and Shaw, 2006). Females are seen as a parental responsibility and a temporary member of the family who have to leave parent's home after the marriage; whereas, males are expected to provide a social and financial support to the parents in their old age. Therefore, parents tend to support son's decisions towards the marriage, as they need to be in a good term with their sons. Saurav, a young male, affirmed this 'double standard' by discussing his sister's love relationship that raised concerns within the family because of the caste differences but he did not feel such restrictions while looking for a girl for his own relationship or marriage.

¹²⁴ See section 7.4 for other aspects of gender discrimination within the Nepalese families.

Saurav (23M): *My sister is in love with a guy from another caste, when we came to know about this we all were shocked.. it was known to the society.. we felt very bad as there is a caste difference.. and because of that parent's expectations are ruined.. even if son is spoiled, at least daughter should be good, daughter in law should be good "choro bigrey pani chorri ta sojho hos, buhari ta sojho paos" .. and from the daughter side son-in-law should be good.. that is the expectation.. but now what they (parents) can do.. slowly they have digested the fact and accepted it.. They can't break the relationship... if they force for the arranged marriage then it is her own daughter.. it may ruin her whole life.. there is also a fear that she might run away.. so it is better to accept it and that's what my parents have done although they are not very happy with this..*

- RKS: *How about if you like a girl from other caste?*
Saurav: *After coming to the UK, I researched about the caste, ethnicity, religion, etc. and as a result I have developed an open mind.. For me it does not matter, I just want a good girl whom I like and who likes me..*
RKS: *How about your family?*
Saurav: *I think they will accept it because I am the only son for them. Also, I have good relations with my family.. they believe in me and they think me as a good son.. I am not really bothered about it.. sometimes my dad jokes that I can even marry an African girl... but I know he is only joking.. Besides that there is not any problem..*
RKS: *So, what will happen if you really like a black girl?*
Saurav: *I think then there will be a problem.. they may not agree..*

The qualitative data indicates that women within Nepalese society are considered as upholders of the morality (Dasgupta, 1998). Young females are more often burdened to meet the expectations of the family and society in maintaining sociocultural norms and traditional values that secure the prestige and dignity of the family within the wider society (Pande, 2014). To meet these expectations, young females limit their freedom to experience romantic relationships; or if in a relationship, they go against the family to elope for the marriage, which often disconnects all the ties with the family. Since eloping may bring further humiliation and disgrace to the family, parents tend to compromise and accept the intercaste marriage (Allendorf, 2013; Ghimire and Samuels, 2014). However, as indicated by Saurav, parents see it as an offloading of the daughter's responsibility; and disconnects with young females leaving them without family support and increasing their vulnerability towards emotional breakdown (Goodwin and Cramer, 2000). On the contrary,

young males often get opportunities to negotiate and discuss about the choice of a girl for the marriage, even if they come from a different caste or race.

6.5 Tara's case study for '*Love arranged marriage*' "*If I love someone.. I would like to make it arranged*"

The findings indicate that Nepalese young people are actively negotiating their choice of a spouse through the 'love arranged marriage'. To illustrate this, I use Tara's¹²⁵ case study, who negotiated her love relationship within the family to transform it into an arranged marriage. An ethnographic interview with Tara investigates the story of family negotiations that occurred during the transition between the love relationship and the marriage. Tara was enthusiastic in sharing her experiences and highlighted the intersections of key social and cultural factors that acted as the barriers during the process of the marriage. Tara explains the negotiations she had to carry at multiple levels before receiving a final approval from her parents for the '*love arranged marriage*'.

Tara (24F): *Mine is love marriage.. Because its love marriage my parents wanted it quickly...*

RKS: *Can you describe a little more about your love marriage?*

Tara: *We faced such a huge problem "hamro ta kasto problem bhayeko thiyo"*

RKS: *What Problem?*

Tara: *I am from Kathmandu. My dad wanted a guy whose family lived within the valley but as my boyfriend was from outside the valley.. I did not say anything to my parents about him. Also his family background was not very strong.. his family is not as strong as my family.. so he had gone to Dubai before.. his family was not very settled.. even they built the house just now after we sent money from here to build a house.. I could not say to my dad because he had no house, he was not as educated as me.. he did not have a permanent job.. he was just a young guy.. I used to think let him become something and then I will talk to my parents about him.. he stayed in Dubai for a year and returned back... at that time my parents were already talking about my marriage.. I was in the last year of my Bachelor degree.. I did not want to meet other boys but my mom took me to many places to meet boy's families for*

¹²⁵ A 24-year-old married female - the only married research participant of this study

the marriage.. when they used to ask me did you like then I used to reject and say.. I don't want to get married [Laughs].. Dad never forced me for marriage.. he gave me everything I had asked for but never forced me to get married... Once we got a call from my dad's elder brother for a possible marriage proposal, the boy was a doctor.. from good family.. but still I rejected the proposal and said no I don't want to marry.. Then my uncle said.. meet with the boy and then you can change your mind if you don't like him.. but at least meet him... they all were thinking that I don't have boyfriend.. They assumed if I had then I would have informed them... they decided to invite the boy's family to our home.. I left the home a day before they were supposed to come.. I ran away without saying anything to anyone... but still I was feeling.. I was thinking about my parents.. how my parents will be dishonoured in the society 'kasto beizzat huncha society ma'... From inside I knew that I was going to return back but still I left the house and went to see my boyfriend... soon I received a call from my mom.. she asked me to return home.. My boyfriend told me and made me understand that this was not the right thing to do and then he took me to my home... when I returned.. I could not face my dad at all... about a week I could not face him and then slowly things started to become normal.. That's how my parents came to know about my relationship.. they decided to plan my marriage with my boyfriend and make it look like an arranged marriage..

RKS:

Tara:

Were there any problem thereafter?
After that... it was like we got married but it was very quiet marriage.. It was just like we married just in front of our families without involving societies... Daddy said.. let them go out somewhere.. let them achieve something.. have a career.. become something and then when they come back.. we will reorganise the marriage ceremony grandly by inviting everyone "ramrari dhun dham sanga bihe gardinchu"... but his (spouse) family was not worried at all.. his family says that as now we are married... we should plan a baby and when we return back we should return with a baby.. My husband's families have welcomed me in their house... Our marriage is still secret and many of my families and relatives still do not know about it..

RKS:

Tara:

Why did you decided to have a quiet marriage?
Me and my boyfriend had already started processing to come to the UK... Also I had not informed my dad about it and I told him only at the last moment.. the only reason I wanted to come here was because I wanted to be with my boyfriend... I had no other reasons... because I had never wished to leave the country.. I had everything in Nepal.. I was pretty happy with my lifestyle in Nepal... My boyfriend wanted to come here and so we decided to apply for the visa... I had not

informed my dad about anything.. I informed him only after we had received the UK visa.

RKS: *Did you face any other problem after the marriage?*

Tara: *No.. nothing happened after that.. The society does not know about our marriage.. only very close relatives know about it... Even his family is very free... His mom and dad is younger than mine and they have all boys in there family.. they don't have daughter.. I am the first girl in their family and so they all love me... I could only stay for a week with them and then we had to come here...*

RKS: *Is he from the same or different caste?*

Tara: *We are from the same caste..*

RKS: *Do you think it would have been different, if he was not your caste?*

Tara: *May be.. but for my dad caste was not very important.. still if he would had been from other caste then of course my dad would have felt bad about it.. It would have been a little difficult for him to say in the society that his daughter has gone with bahun or chettri or others but I think yes because of the same caste it has definitely helped and made the negotiations easy... but still I will say my dad agreed for it only because I forced to marry this guy..*

RKS: *How about your mom?*

Tara: *My mom is very free.. When I was child sometimes we used to talk about my marriage and she always used to say.. its not important to see the family or caste but the boy is most important.. if boy is good then it does not matter which caste he comes from but yes.. he should not be 'Kami' or 'Damai'... any others will be fine...*

RKS: *What if your parents had not agreed for marriage?*

Tara: *I would have stayed at home without marrying "Ma bihe nagari ghar mai basi rakhthey".. I would have only married him or I would not have married at all. I would have tried my best to make my parents understand about our love. I can understand that parents are concerned about the future of their daughter. They think their daughters are still child.. we can't take good decisions.. in future we will be sad and that will make our life difficult.. Parents always feel like this... but these days love marriage is very common in Nepal... even many of my friends had love marriage... these days girls have boyfriend.. if parent will even force a little to marry another guy.. obviously parents will force at least a little.. then girls run away from home to marry their boyfriend... Parents are like... if we even find a prince then still they think like this boy is not good "aba woha haru le ta hamि le aaba jasto prince nai khojera lyaye pani yo ramro chaina.. yo keta ramro chaina bhane jastai feel huncha ni ta woha haru lai"... so I think it is better if you have to marry the boy you like then stick to your decision and make it clear to your parents that you will marry the guy you like or you will not marry at all and live unmarried.*

In this one detailed example, we see that a successful transformation of a love relationship into an arranged marriage is possible with a confident debate with parents and families; where Tara adopted a different type of resistance to facilitate an effective negotiation (McRobbie and Garber, 2006). However, it raises concerns whether the successful transformation is based on the mutual agreement between young people and families; or parents see it as an offloading of the responsibility of daughter's marriage because of the concerns related to the additional humiliation and disgrace for the family¹²⁶, in case of refusal. In addition, Tara raised concerns about the extent of an open conversation within the family and highlighted the importance of men's socioeconomic situation, caste and gender in negotiating the marriage proposal within the family.

Tara's parents and extended families were in search of a good boy and repeatedly asked Tara to meet prospective grooms; whereas, Tara deliberately declined all the offers. Parents within the Nepalese community believe young people do not have the skills to make decisions for the marriage and it is parental responsibility to look for '*a good boy*'¹²⁷ from the same caste for their daughter's marriage (Ghimire *et al.*, 2006). Tara understood the familial expectations of the prospective groom that needed to come from the same caste with good education and socioeconomic stability. Although Tara's love interest was from the same caste, she was doubtful about the acceptance of her relationship within her family since the boy lacked education and financial stability. As Tara was allowed to be involved in the decision-making process for the arranged marriage, she understood that she would not be forced to marry unwillingly. However, Tara was not confident to reveal her relationship to the family and kept it secret because of the familial expectations to abide by the traditional sociocultural norms, while tried to postpone all the marriage proposals; and she was never asked about her

¹²⁶ See Section 6.4.1 offloading daughter's responsibilities (pg. 193)

¹²⁷ See sections 6.2 (pg. 178) and 6.3 (pg.181)

existing relationship, before or during the marriage process¹²⁸ (Jennings, Axinn and Ghimire, 2012; Allendorf and Thornton, 2015).

Nepalese young people often struggle to initiate to negotiate their marriage proposal within the family, which makes them feel unwelcomed towards the system of an arranged marriage (Ghimire and Samuels, 2014; Guragain *et al.*, 2016). If Tara's marriage is seen on the continuum: one end is controlled by her parents, who are busy carrying their responsibilities and the other end is controlled by Tara, who remains quiet about her love relationship (Pande, 2014). Lack of open discussions about the relationship and marriage within the family often create trust issues between the young people and parents, which makes it difficult to achieve a mutual agreement that will keep parents as well as young people joyful, and bring the two closer on the continuum of marriage. Moreover, the struggle to balance the dilemma between family expectations and standing for love enforce young people like Tara to take a decision to leave the family home without informing parents, although she anticipated it would bring shame and disgrace to the family (Allendorf, 2013).

Young people understand the social and cultural responsibilities towards the family; however, they are often overwhelmed with the familial expectations and are forced to take decisions that reflects their individual choice. This leads to a situation where young people's love relationship is revealed to the parents in an unconventional way, leaving little choice for parents to discuss young people's marriage proposal. The process of marriage still remains on the continuum but the degree of control in this case moves towards the young people. As seen in the case of Tara, she was happy with the final decision but it seems her parents were obliged to support daughter's decision because of the concern that she might elope again bringing further humiliation to the family. This was evident in the form of Tara's family decision to have a quiet ceremony rather than a full-fledged marriage celebrations, which is a social and traditional norm within the Nepalese society.

¹²⁸ The marriage process here is understood as looking for prospective bride or groom before making a final decision for marriage.

Although Tara was successful to marry the love of her life, it raised concerns as the decisions taken throughout the marriage process came from her partner. This raises a broader issue about gender inequalities within the Nepalese society (Brah, 1996/2005). When Tara left her home without informing her parents, it was her partner's decision to bring her back into the family. Tara's families were unaware about her love relationship, whereas she had seen partner's family on several occasions, who were all well informed about their love relationship. Caste was not an issue for Tara, as her partner belonged to the same caste. However, she raised concerns that it would have further complicated the situation for her, if it had been an inter-caste marriage¹²⁹; whereas, her partner would not have had any issue to negotiate this within his family. Tara's family opted for a quiet marriage whereas partner's family were jubilant to accept her within their family, a new home for her. Tara further described that it was her partner's decision to come to the UK and she merely wanted to accompany him. Tara asserted that all these decisions were mutual, although her partner was in control of most of these decisions.

The process of deconstructing the traditional roles of females are not simple and often it serves as the means to confirm and strengthen the traditional masculinity (Beck, 1992). Young males often negotiate with their families to come to an agreement for love arranged marriage but the negotiation for young females are much more complicated; first with her own family and then with the partner and partner's family. This demonstrates that young females are marginalised in both arranged and love marriage. In arranged marriage, parents take the control of the decision-making; whereas in the love marriage, prospective groom take the control of the decision-making towards the marriage. Young people in this study opined that there is a need to consider and negotiate the degree of freedom on a continuum of marriage; which would presumably bring young people and parents closer towards making a consensus decision in the form of 'love arranged marriage'.

¹²⁹ See section 6.4.1

6.6 Conclusion

Although young people's marriage relationship is part of their individual sexual lifestyle, families play an important role in decision-making towards the marriage of the young people, which is shaped by the sociocultural values and traditional norms of the wider Nepalese community. Arranged marriage is a result of the constant interplay of various sociocultural factors at the familial level, whereas love relationship at the individual level requires constant negotiations with familial and extrafamilial factors to transform a romantic love into a marriage relationship through '*love arranged marriage*'. In this chapter, I discussed young people's understanding and attitudes towards marriage and investigated the interpersonal, disciplinary, cultural and structural domains of power to explain their concerns associated with the love and arranged marriage (Collins and Bilge, 2016).

Nepalese young people in this research showed positive attitudes towards marriage but demonstrated their struggle in deciding between love and arranged marriage due to the traditional sociocultural norms associated with marriage. The evidence suggests that young people see parental consent and caste issues as major concerns for experiencing sexual agency towards the marriage. It was found that Nepalese young people were reluctant in going against the family decision for their marriage. Young people's collectivist beliefs often create a struggling situation, while taking an independent decision for the marriage. The fieldwork data and the case study indicated that the '*love arranged marriage*' is a way forward for the marriage relationship within the Nepalese families, as it brings the young people and the parents closer on the continuum of the marriage to reach a mutually respectful agreement.

Chapter Seven: Parental connectedness, gender norms and communication on sexual health

7.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the dynamics of young people's relationships with parents while discussing sexual health topics within the familial environment. Young people's conversation with parents on sexual matters is restricted due to sociocultural taboo related to the sexual health topics and lack of parental connectedness that facilitates communication on sensitive topics. Here, I shall examine how young people struggle to maintain the pride and honour of the family within the Nepalese society. Young people's attempt to meet parental expectations by negotiating family strictness raises the issue of trust within family relationships. The chapter illustrates gender discrimination with the presentation of a case study. The sexual lifestyles and relationships of young females are sensitive that can be scandalised to affect women's dignity and reputation; I explain this concern through the idea of a 'ripple effect' within the Nepalese society.

7.2 Patriarchal dominance and emotional attachment with mother “We love each other but we do not communicate”

From the fieldwork it was found that young people's relationship with parents play an important role in their competence of communicating sexual lives and the decision-making. Pujan describes an intermittent relationship with his father, which affects the conversation between them.

Pujan (21M): Our (young people and father) relationship is like we love each other but we do not communicate much with each other.. [RKS: Why?]... I think this is because.. in most Nepalese families... our parents like to raise their children with very strict rules and regulations of the family.. and because of that children struggle to openly discuss their feelings with their parents.. when children grow.. gradually parents become less strict but by that time most of the children do not feel comfortable from inside to talk.. as that is not the regular thing.. if you see here the European children

and parents are very friendly since their childhood and so they can easily express their feelings saying I love you mom or dad.. hugging kissing and they continue this even when they are grown up.. but for us I have seen many young people put parents photos on Facebook and would write Happy birthday dad or mom.. But they would never go and say the same thing on the face.. this is same in my case.. we love each other from inside but we cannot bring it out and express it by sharing or communicating with each other...

Young people in this research described that their communication with parents were minimal because of the restrictions imposed by parents on the young people. In fact, young people use social media to express love for their parents in the virtual world rather than during family conversations, which create concerns about the extent of family relationships. This inhibits openness during conversations affecting parental bonding and fails to create opportunities for communication around sexual matters. Catalano *et al.* (2004: 102) described bonding as “*the emotional attachment and commitment a child makes to social relationships in family, peer groups, school community or culture*”. Parental connectedness refers to young people’s bonding with parents by sharing parental warmth, love and support to improve emotional attachment and commitment, which facilitates open conversations on sexual health topics (Sidze and Defo, 2013). Rishi lived with his mother in Nepal, away from his father, since he was two years old. He then moved to the boarding school in Nepal to complete schooling before coming to the UK at the age of 15.

Rishi (22M): When we (he and his mom) came here, we had some problems in our family so I had to go and live with my maternal relatives in Wales. Then, I returned back to live with my parents in London. I went to university and now I have returned back to live with my mom.

RKS: What about your dad?

Rishi: Actually my parents are separated now. I do not speak to my dad these days.. It was just yesterday that I went to my dad’s place but I did not go to meet my dad.. I just went to bring my things.. I do not have good terms with my dad..

RKS: and mom?

Rishi: It’s fine with mom but its more like I am adult.. I do everything myself.. I don’t talk much about my life to my mom or dad.. I am completely independent from my mom and dad..

Bishnu (17M): My dad is even stricter than my mom... I don't even speak to him if there is not anything specific to talk... I cannot speak to him on any topic.. it is not possible.. if I have some paper work then I will just ask him to sign and that's all.. he is busy most of the time with his work... and also when I grew up in Nepal, my dad was not there.. so I don't feel very comfortable speaking to him...

Young males like Rishi and Bishnu appear to have lost opportunities to develop or strengthen bonding with fathers because of the lack of interactive communication during the youth development. This is because Nepalese fathers often have to go to work abroad or are busy with working commitments to improve the livelihood of their family. In traditional South Asian society, patriarchal dominance is prevalent since men are considered as breadwinners of the family while women spend most of the time caring for young people and looking after the household (Chao and Tseng, 2002). As a result, young males have limited opportunities for conversation on sensitive topics with parents and many would have never discussed sexual related matters with their parents (Nolin and Petersen, 1992; Rosenthal and Feldman, 1999). Interactive communication helps to construct and flourish family relationships, however lack of communication lead to disassociation of family connectedness that diminishes warmth, love and support (Dilorio, Kelley, and Hockenberry-Eaton, 1999). Young people argue that weakening parental connectedness is related to lack of building relationships during childhood and adolescence, which deteriorate further if continued during the young age. Connectedness is recognised as a central element for positive youth development and it may protect young people from potentially harmful behaviours, including sexual risk-taking (Markham *et al.*, 2010). Sexual behaviour of young people is negatively influenced by the family structure and young people are likely to be associated with earlier sexual activity and higher number of sexual partners, if the parents are separated (Wight, Williamson and Henderson, 2006). Young females in this research shared similar opinion. A teenage female Esha, lived with her grandparents in Nepal before coming to the UK to join her parents at the age of 16, shares her experience as

Esha (19F): I am not very close to my daddy.. My daddy came here when I was 18 months old.. I have not stayed with him for a long time.. there is a huge gap and we have not been able to be comfortable with each other in talking about all the personal issues.. but he loves me a lot... I am grown up now and because of that it is little difficult for dad to speak to me... if there is anything with which my dad is not happy then he speaks to my mom and she would shout on me but my dad will never get involved in any argument... We do chat sometimes on normal casual stuffs like about study, college, needs but not about friends or boyfriends or parties.. But my mom.. she would ask everything... she would get into every details like when did the party ended... why are you late.. who else was there and so on... Suppose if I am talking on phone then she would ask who am I speaking to... then I will say the truth.. I say everything to my mom and I don't lie to her.. if I lie then mom starts shouting.. she gets angry.. if she gets angry then I try not to speak and sometimes we would not speak for 1-2 days...

Esha believes love and support from her father is preserved, despite her father uses mother as an intermediary channel for conversation on social or sexual concerns. Although fathers play a less direct role in sexual matters of their daughter, an increased daughter-father communication can delay sexual initiation and diminish sexual intimacy (Miller *et al.*, 1998). Young female's sexual socialisation can be constituted by father's conversation on sexual matters but a lack of father-daughter communication deprives young females learning from father's unique contributions that prepare females for dating and romantic relationships (Hutchinson and Cederbaum, 2011). Although fathers provide valuable information and emotional support in his advice about sexual relationships, mothers are often the primary source for reproductive education (Wisnieski, Sieving and Garwick, 2015). Lehr *et al.* (2005) reported that mothers are largely involved in interactive communication about sex compared to fathers and young girls, in particular, are inclined to disclose their personal sexual or reproductive matters to their mothers. In the conversation above, Esha was quick to create bonding with mother besides staying away from her, because of her emotional nature¹³⁰ and was more likely to discuss her sexual lives with comfortable mother compared to disengaged father

¹³⁰ The connectivity of mothers emotional nature and their children starts from early infant period, which progresses further with the development of the children and young people (Cassidy, 1994; Leerkes, Parade and Gudmundson, 2011).

(Dilorio, Kelley, and Hockenberry-Eaton, 1999). A young male Pujan lives with his father and stepmother but he is hesitant to discuss his personal relationship with father while feels comfortable in sharing it with his biological mother.

Pujan (21M): I think I share more with my mom than dad.. My dad is a very easy minded.. cool person.. but I do not speak to him about my personal relationship.. Because I feel shy in talking to him about it.. he does not really mind at all even if I am in a relationship with white girl or black girl.. but still I don't feel comfortable in talking to him about it.. probably he knows about my girlfriend as I draw her picture.. I have her picture on my wallpaper, screen saver on my computer and phone.. he sees it.. he knows but he is like.. do whatever you want.. But with mom its more easy to share.. she knows most of the things about my personal relationships and sometimes she even advises to protect me... We don't go into very specific details but jokingly she will express her thoughts like she would say don't connect your penis "Turi na jod hain".. and I will be like stop.. that is her way of making me aware not to get into sexual relationships.

Young males in this research affirmed maternal bonding and described that Nepalese mothers often present sex related discussions in a humorous way to minimise embarrassment, since discussions on sexual topics are considered taboo within the Nepalese familial context (Adhikari and Tamang, 2009). Young people in this research claimed that the conversation on sexual matters with parents were relatively infrequent and limited due to the lack of detailed conversation about sexual health, lifestyles and relationships. In most cases, young people confine themselves by merely responding to parent's questions. This may be because young people were expected to show good behaviour and respect towards elders rather than openly asking questions that involve interactive discussions on sensitive topics of sexual health (Chung *et al.*, 2005). It was found that young people are frequently uncomfortable about explicit communication on sensitive topics and conversations are avoided due to cultural taboo and to perpetuate family harmony. Day and Padilla-Walker (2009) reported that young people's discussion with the mother is focused on relationship building skills and positive behaviours, whereas the discussion with father is focused on social

norms, compliance and frequently relates to adolescents' problem behaviour. Regardless of parental bonding, young females in this research were usually in a dilemma whether to share their sexual lives with either parents, because of the stigma attached with the romantic or premarital sexual relationships within the Nepalese society.

Asha (16F): *I personally think that Nepalese young people do not tell or share any information about their boyfriends with their mom or dad .. that is impossible.. especially girls will never say that because they are very worried parents will never accept her in any relationship.. we are grown up seeing such things in our society and so will never share with parents.*

RKS: *What if your parent come to know about it from some other sources?*

Asha: *It will be big threat.. they will threaten me like.. I will send you back to Nepal.. the guy will leave you.. he will break your heart.. every mom dad says like that... but I know it will not happen like that.. but still they will threaten and scare me.. Finally, I will have to tell the truth and then there will be many restrictions...*

Dibya (18F): *We normally have general conversations but never about boyfriends or partners.. I never spoke (to mother) about my private things.. I used to find it very difficult to share my personnel physical problems with my mom... there was no way talking to my dad or brothers.. I used to feel uncomfortable speaking to mom because her response used to be very hyper and she always used to relate things in negative way.. I used to be scared that she might take it in a negative way..*

The data suggests that young people's conversation on sexual matters with parents often create unfriendly environment within family with rejections and negativity around girl's reputation. Young people believe that parents make false assumptions if they initiate conversations on sexual matters (Eastman *et al.*, 2005). Nevertheless, women are more involved in communication on sexual matters compared to the males and mothers are frequent communicators about sexual topics than fathers (Rosenthal and Feldman, 1999). Young females were cautious and thoughtful in discussing personal relationships and private issues with mothers because of possible consequences related to the disclosure of relationships, yet many favoured to

develop maternal bonding as early as possible by enacting closeness or discussing lifestyles and relationships.

Richa¹³¹ (22F): My mom has been my best friend because it was very strict in my family.. not allowed to go out, not allowed to make friends, even while making friends I needed to ask my mom.. if my mom liked my friends then we could continue to be friends or there was no chance.. if I had to go somewhere then mommy.. if I wanted to do something then mommy.. it was like everything for me started with my mom and same was for her.. we were there for each other. It does not end there.. even on Facebook we used to go together, we used to use internet together... Every time it was mommy mommy for me and so she has been my best friend.. Mom can understand any changes in me with my facial expression.. one day she says what's on with you?? I decided not to hide and told her that there is a guy and I like him.. we are not in a formal relationship but he is a good friend and if you approve then may be. Then my mom said she did not like him and that's all we remained only friends thereafter.. nothing happened...

Esha (19F): I have decided if I have to go out with a boy.. I will inform my mother before I go out.. I know she would ask details about the boy but she would allow me to go... I would be honest in telling her if he is just a friend or close friend or a boyfriend... I would be honest with my mother and this is one of the reason why my mom trusts me.. but sometimes it may be a little difficult.. so I think even parents need to understand it... In this age these things are pretty normal.. but mom is also right in saying that I need to study first.. but at this age everyone has boyfriends.. there is no one without boyfriend.. it is sad that parents don't understand it.. but I think parents are also right in their place.. they give advice to protect us.. everyone wants their daughter not to be spoiled...

Young females in this research claimed that they were more close to their mothers in discussing their sexual lives and remained truthful compared to fathers. It was perceived that the attempted maternal bonding and honest discussions with mothers were crucial to secure her backing and support within the familial environment. In the conversation above, Esha's decision to

¹³¹ Richa had been living in Nepal with her mother and siblings in Nepal, away from her father, since she was 9 years old. As an elder daughter, she was the major support for her mother and likewise. The quote suggests how she has developed maternal connectedness during this period and is willing to maintain trust by being honest with her mother. She has just recently come to the UK to live with her father.

share information about her sexual lives with mother is the direct consequence of her failed romantic relationship that she did not disclose to her mother but friends and relatives revealed this to the family in an unconventional way. Esha failed to convince her family and she had to breakup due to the expectations and strictness from the family. Esha realises the family expectations and importance of parental support is central to her sexual development and she has decided to negotiate this challenge by sharing personal relationship information with her mother to seek permission to get in or continue any romantic relationships. Discussions about sexual lifestyles and relationships with parents and family members can have powerful influence on sexual behaviour and healthy sexual development of young people (Dittus and Jaccard, 2000; Bleakley *et al.*, 2009; Giuliano-Ramos *et al.*, 2012; Khurana and Cooksey, 2012; Sneed, Tan and Meyer, 2015). This is necessary to promote the positive sexual health by meeting the familial expectations within the Nepalese society as well as enhancing the experience of sexual lives of Nepalese young people.

7.3 Conflicting sexual norms through family strictness and expectations ***"I think parents need to stop taking responsibility about everything"***

Young people's experience of their responsibilities towards family strictness and expectations often give rise to conflict that creates the issue of trust within familial relationships. Asha describes that conflicting sexual norms and family values often deteriorates family relationships affecting young people's sexual lifestyle and relationships.

Asha (16F): *My parents are like.. they would not allow me to stay away during evening and late night, they will be like.. people on the street are not good.. drunk people are sitting around.. one day someone will catch you to rape and make pregnant.. Don't go roaming too much...*

RKS: *Why did she say that?*

Asha: *May be to safeguard me.. Here there are many news about such rape cases, she says.. she wants to protect me from such incident so she says not to stay away from home till late night. Mom and dad are worried that such people will*

approach me and will do something bad.. they are scared about it... it is possibly because of security reasons..

RKS: *How do you see it when comparing with your Non-Nepalese Friends?*

Asha: *This is what we speak with our friends that my mom will not allow me to go out.. and my friends will ask why.. and I will have no answer.. these are the things we talk sometimes. In our Asian families, most of our parents are very very strict compared to the parents of British and Europeans. These white people are a little free going and their parents allow them to go wherever they want to go... they are allowed to sleep anywhere with their friends.. for us, our mom and dad worry too much compared to those white parents.. our parents asks us everything like where are you going, why are you going.. but white parents are like go and just ask them to return home before agreed time.. we have to say everything in much details.. where are we going.. what we will be doing.. why are we going? Why we need to go and so on.. Sometimes I think about it but I know that in our culture it is not possible like what happens in white culture... so I have accepted it and I don't mind it at all. But sometimes I feel very strongly about it like when I cannot be with my friends for parties or sleep over.. I feel sad..*

Young female's protection and safeguarding within the Nepalese society is considered as parental responsibility and Nepalese parents are compelled to protect young people's sexual and reproductive lives by close observations of their day-to-day activities to secure them from the contemporary lifestyle behaviours. Nepalese parents justify these restrictions citing the issue of safety and danger while using public spaces during evenings and nights (Watt and Stenson, 1998). However, young people in this research believe that these restrictions are connected with the pride and honour of the family and to maintain influence and power in the social and sexual lives of the young people (Brah, 1996). Asha affirms that young people are expected to maintain the pride and honour of the family, which often means limited or no engagement in contemporary lifestyles behaviour¹³², as it gives bad reputation to the females and her family through the "ripple effect"¹³³ within the society. South Asian young people grow up in a collectivist family where the core arguments of parenting revolve around "family as center" with strong

¹³² See Chapter 3 – Changing leisure and lifestyles: "A new way of living"

¹³³ See section 7.5

emphasis on interdependence among family members and '*parental control and strictness*' as major component of the family relationships (Chao and Tseng, 2002: 60). The interdependence of family members are closely related to the sociocultural roots, which incorporates different characteristics such as non-confrontation, respect for older person, moderation in behaviours, obedience, filial piety, harmony, devaluation of individualism and strong sense of duty for family protecting the pride and honour in the society (Das and Kemp, 1997). In an ethnographic research in Tanzania, Wamoyi and colleagues (2011) found that familiarity of young people's everyday activities and behaviour was important for parents because of social respectability and obligations to protecting their daughters from undesirable sexual and reproductive health outcomes. Esha shares similar experience and highlighted that young people often decide to become rebellious to secure their independence and privacy.

Esha (19F): My parent worries about me. As I am a girl, they do not want me to walk alone at night. They say "people are not good, there may be bad people walking around at night.. who knows they might kidnap you"... [Laughs] They show great concern and there are times when it starts irritating me. For example.. normally when I go out for friends birthday party then the party finishes at about 11 pm and by the time I get trains and come home its late. My mom would start calling and shouting on me.. you were supposed to come by 10.. you are still out.. What are you doing.. why haven't you come yet.. blah.. blah.. we start having argument on phone and then again when I reach home... we start the argument all over again.. I tell them there are hundreds of girls walking alone at night so why can't I.. then mom will be like you don't understand it now but you will understand it later.. It is very irritating sometimes when I have such conversations...

Young females in this research experience higher degree of parental monitoring and control, which reduce their agentic experience towards the contemporary lifestyles in the western society affecting morale and confidence in decision making towards their sexual lives. Esha believes that extensive enquiry from parents about leisure and lifestyles curtails opportunities for formal communication within the family and give rise to arguments diminishing

parental connectedness¹³⁴. Daughter's attachment to traditional patterns of behaviour in immigrant families gives moral superiority to parents in negotiating and gaining more power in the receiving society. Young females confined behaviour due to parental restrictiveness protects core cultural values and asserts parent's desire to "*political and sociocultural claims on their new country*" (Espiritu, 2001: 415). Young females understand this notion but argue that young people need to be empowered by parents through constructive discussions to enhance parental connectedness, which will improve the sociocultural ties and trust issues within the family in the new country. Asha, a female teenager living in the UK since the age of 7 years, believes that young people should be allowed to make their life decisions and parents should not impose restrictions on young people's social or sexual lives.

Asha (16F): *I think parents need to stop taking responsibility about everything.. They should not shout too much on their children... our parents shouts all the time... it makes us feel angry and then we start lying to them.. Lying to parents is not good and we understand it and do regret about it... but we lie because we are left with no choices.. if we say them the truth about our lifestyles and asks permission then we know that the straight answer will be no.. so we have to lie a little bit.. although we regret about it later... I think they need to know that.. too much shouting or too much of restrictions is not good... Even if they want to be strict then it should be for valid reasons like coming home on time.. They should not worry too much about us.. our parents worry too much for their children. I think if they will be a little less strict, not shout too much then only we will start trusting them... We will think that as they have stopped shouting so we can start telling our parents where we are going and why we are going honestly rather than lying.*

RKS: *Why do they (parents) behave like that? What do you think?*
Asha: *I think it may be trust.. our mom and dad trust us but they cannot always keep an eye on us about where are we going.. like if we went out of London or why we went.. they can not see these things.. so they might not be trusting us too much.. like what I will be doing after going there... so it becomes difficult for them to trust us more.. they cannot see us so they cannot trust us more... Like if I am 18 plus and if I would like to go clubbing then I cannot say such things to my parents... and if I say then they will shout on me.. Also, it is very*

¹³⁴ See section 7.2

awkward to share such things with parents.. It is not possible to go clubbing by informing parents but I can go by making some excuses. If I say to my parents that I am going clubbing then obviously they will say Nooo.. because even they would know about clubbing.. they (parents) will have idea about it (nightclubbing) as they see British boys and girls clubbing and all the stories around it... they will assume the same and will fear that I may meet some boys there and may go to sleep with them..

Young people in this research claimed that hiding truth and lying to parents about their social or sexual lifestyles and relationships is a common practice within Nepalese family. This is due to the family restrictions and to maintain family expectations, at least in front of their parents; however, it creates a long-term trust issues within the family. Parents believe that containment of young people's lifestyle restrict their sexual lives and relationships; however, this may increase risky lifestyle behaviours and trust issues among young people because of reduced communication on sexual matters within families (Kajula *et al.*, 2013; Kerpelman *et al.*, 2013). Traditional Asian cultures endorse different norms and expectations for the sexual conduct of men and women, where female virginity is highly valued¹³⁵, and therefore regulated more closely compared to the male virginity (Blackman, 1995; Espiritu, 2001; Kim and Ward, 2007). In the above conversation, Asha asserts that parents need to engage in discussions with young people and approve contemporary lifestyle behaviours rather than imposing family expectations and strictness on them. It was found that the level of parental control and monitoring of the young people varied depending on gender, educational status or achievement, family structure and economic contributions to the family. Although females in this research expressed higher restrictions for them from families, young males equally indicated that they had to abide by the expectations from parents and protect social respectability of the family within the Nepalese society. One such expectation is that young people, regardless of gender, should not be involved in romantic relationships. Bishnu explains this as

¹³⁵ See section 5.3.2

Bishnu (17M): I have gone beyond their (parents) expectations.. normally parents expect us not to have girlfriends.. I have already made mistake by having a girlfriend...

RKS: Is it wrong to have girlfriend?

Bishnu: For dad mom, it is not good but for me it is good.. What can we do.. my dad cannot accept me having a girlfriend.. I cannot speak to him (dad) about my personal relationship... If I share about my relationship with my parents... then they would immediately ask me to leave her (girlfriend)... they would not allow me to meet her... they will stop me from leaving home... they might just allow me to go to college and return back straight.. I will give you an example... during exam period my parents do not allow me to keep my phone with me... it is so strict in my family... I can guarantee you 200% that my parents would not allow me to be in relationship... I will have to leave the girl.. so it is better not to say them anything and hope they will not come to know about it from outside.. this way I will be with my girlfriend and they will also not be aware of anything...

RKS: What if they would come to know about it from outside sources?

Bishnu: If my parents will come to know about my relationship then they will kick me out of the house.. I don't know why.. but its like.. I will give you an example.. we have skybox.. my younger brother, while playing with remote, will bring adult channels by mistake, where girls are lying... I was not even knowing about it.. but if my dad sees it then he is very angry and start shouting on everyone.. even my younger brother.. because of this I think he is very strict and he will kick me out of the house... Although it is good to speak and share but if he comes to know about it (relationships) then it would become very difficult for me.. even if I will have problems.. I would not share it with my parents..

RKS: How do you feel about it?

Bishnu: In general, it may be good because like if you don't have girlfriend then you don't waste time or money.. it does not affect your study.. but it affects personally as I am not allowed to do what I wish.. I cannot do what I want to do freely.. they (parents) do not want us to be in relationships..

RKS: Can they stop you?

Bishnu: No.. they can't do that.. it does not stop us to have girlfriends.. it is not only in my case but generally many Nepalese have girlfriends but they do not disclose it in their family.. they keep it secret.. they know what will happen if they disclose it into their family.. so there is no way that we can share our personal relationships with family..

Young people in this research believe that parental expectations and strictness widens trust issues within family, which play significant role in

reducing parental connectedness and conversation on sexual matters. Parents expect young people to stay away from risky lifestyle behaviours and sexual relationships; however, young people still get into relationships and keep it secret¹³⁶. Young people's activities and behaviour cannot be monitored and controlled all the time, despite parental continued effort, because parents spend little time with young people due to space, time and other family commitments (Wamoyi *et al.*, 2011). The complex interactions between various social structures at multiple levels contribute towards young people's experiences of multiple identities in their everyday lives (Yuval-Davis, 1997). In the above conversation, Bishnu describes how young people create their own space to experience sexual lifestyles and relationships and they negotiate it with their parents through restricting conversation on sexual matters, making excuses or telling lies to their parents. Bishnu is cautious towards disclosing his relationship status to his family, as he understands that the possible consequences would include outright family rejections and exclusion from family. Although all form of masculinity contributes towards the production or reproduction of the male dominance in relation to the women, masculinities also exist within a hierarchy where hegemonic masculinity can be used to consolidate the power and promote self-respect, especially within the powerful patriarchal society (Archer, 2001; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). Nepalese young people understand that parents like to maintain their authority and control with their patriarchal power¹³⁷ and young people have little negotiating power against this. Therefore, young people prefer not to disclose their lifestyles and personal relationship to their parents.

Pujan (21M): It (romantic relationships) does not go very well with the parental expectation.. Nepalese parents are like you must get A in study and if children get anything lower than that B or something else then parents start blaming their children.. They do not consider what other factors may have influenced the result but they start blaming and judging their children just on the basis of their result.. for parents, bad result is always related to the bad behaviour and they expect their children not to get influenced by their friends to take bad behaviour such as smoking or drinking.. but it does not work that way.. I have*

¹³⁶ See section 5.2 'Secrecy in dating and romantic relationships'

¹³⁷ Patriarchal power is the authority possessed by father in supporting young people with financial needs for their education and day-to-day activities (lodging, food and pocket money).

seen many friends whose parents say them not to smoke or not to drink but they do smoke and drink secretly and they make sure their parents does not know about it.. when they go back to home then they act like innocent showing they don't smoke or drink.. it breaks trust between the parents and the children...

Young people in this research believe that Nepalese parents relate the failure of young people's academic achievement specifically to their lifestyles and relationships, without considering other potential factors that may have contributed towards lowering the achievement (Frisco, 2008). Parental understanding of lifestyles and relationships correspond to smoking, drinking, having girlfriends or boyfriends and are considered as 'bad behaviours' of young people, which acts as the barrier to their academic achievement (*Ibid.*, 2008). Young people are enforced family strictness to achieve parental expectations in education as well as to maintain social and political power in society. Academic successes are considered best way to bring recognition to the family and repay parents for their sacrifices to win parent's confidence (Kim, Li and Ng, 2005). Parents often judge young people based on their academic success rather than understanding the reasons behind poor academic achievement (Jambunathan, Burts and Pierce, 2000). Young peoples' previous academic performances have little impact on parental expectations, as they wish their sons and daughters to receive high academic achievements and maintain it consistently in order to be able to attend reputed higher education institutions, which can secure their future financial needs (Inman *et al.*, 2007; Yamamoto and Holloway, 2010). Parents link education with moral development, where young people without focus on education are considered to follow bad path¹³⁸ (Cooper *et al.*, 2005). However, this does not necessarily stop young people from experiencing contemporary lifestyles but create a situation where the family communication is ceased giving rise to the issues of trust within the family.

¹³⁸ Bad path relates more specifically to behaviours and activities of the young people such as more frequent use of alcohol, smoking, drug use, hanging out on streets with bad company and engaging in gang activities.

7.4 Dibya's experience of gender discrimination "He is a boy so none of these rules apply to him.. I am a girl so all these rules are for me... Why is it so strict for females but more freedom for males"

From the fieldwork, it is evident that Nepalese young people are bound by family expectations and strictness, and the rules become stringent and family expectations rise for young females. The data suggests that males and females within Nepalese family are looked differently: men experience freedom and independence as they grow, whereas women are urged to follow the sociocultural and traditional norms. Here, I present an in-depth conversation with a teenage female, where Dibya talks about her experiences of discriminatory measures within her family and argues that this is a common practice within most Nepalese families.

Dibya (18F): Some of the the Nepalese culture I don't like at all... oh my god!!! I have just remembered one example... When my twin brother used to come home very late.. then my parents used to shout on him but when I used to come late then they used to shout on me excessively in a threatening way "danger bhanda danger dherai gaali garnu hunthyo".. So there used to be a big argument between me and "dai" (elder brother¹³⁹).. I used to think why it is so strict for females but more freedom for males.. I could not stand it and it used to make me angry.. They used to say that as I am studying health and social care.. I learn about gender things there and that is the reason I make argument [laughs]... yes, I learnt this in college but it used to make me more angry.. and the arguments used to get extended.. they also used to make comments like if girls do not come home full night then something something happens... girls have "izzat" (honour).. they have to protect it.. they may be raped and other things like this... I used to say.. even boys can be raped [laughs].. According to my brother if girls are once something something (raped).. then girls honour is like garnish.. it should always be kept decorated "chori manche ko izzat chahi gahana ho... tesaile sajayera rakhnu parcha"... [laughs].. something like this he used to say.. he used to make points like now as you have come here (to the UK).. your thinking has started changing like the girls here... and many such things he will have to comment on.. I used to make my point like in future anyway I will have to do night duties and then I will have to stay away from home at

¹³⁹ Dibya's elder brother is the guardian of the family and has the responsibility to maintain the 'discipline' in the family (see pg. 226-228)

night.. so what should I do then.. should I not work at night.. He used to make his point that gender differences should not be when you are working or in profession but when it comes to night out or clubbing then in such cases it should be strict and girls should not go out..

RKS:

Dibya:

What about your mom and dad?

Obviously my dad never used to be involved.. he used to be like.. it is about daughter.. so he was not getting involved.. I think.. dad used to find it little difficult.. mom used to try to make me understand.. I never used to understand it.. I still believe that boys and girls are equal and they should be treated equally.. but in my family, I strongly believe they treat us differently.. but still my mom used to think that as I will grow, I will automatically understand all these things.. but it was mainly my brother who used to lecture me occasionally from time to time for 1-2 hours... that I am not understanding.. I could have understood it better if I would have stayed in Nepal.. I have been spoiled after coming here (to the UK)...

RKS:

Dibya:

What about your twin brother?

My twin brother was free from all these arguments [jealous tone].. he is a boy so none of these rules apply to him. I am a girl so all these rules are for me.. Whenever there used to be any argument between me and dai, my twin brother used to sit in a corner and laugh [laughs].. even when my "mama" (mother's brother) used to come.. he used to make me understand.. when I was 13-14 my mom forced me to learn to cook but my twin brother was free and no one said nothing to him.. I used to get angry with this.. why do I need to learn and not him.. mom used to say after marriage he will be here so he will not need to cook but I will get married and will leave this house so I will need to cook in my new home.. things like this... I used to get very angry..

RKS:

Dibya:

Anything else?

Yes.. also like.. if I will do something then my dai will be like being a daughter if you see someone elder on street then you should do "Namaste" (greetings) with respect.. if my twins did not do that then there is no problem at all.. if I don't do that then I am spoiled daughter without any manner "bigreko chori.. dhang nabhayeko".. there were many such differences.. even at home when we were eating, as I girl I should have table manners.. I should eat like girls.. if I eat quickly "goam goam" then.. they will be like 'don't you feel shame.. being a girl you are eating like this'.. there was one instance when my mom was like I should only eat after my dad and when other males have eaten. I should not eat before them. Once I was very hungry and so I ate before anyone has eaten and mom shouted at me shit!!! aren't you ashamed "thuyaa talai laaj chaina".. how can you eat before giving food to your dad and brothers.. you should not do that [laughs].. I shouted back saying that I felt hungry and so I

ate.. what can I do... now they are used to it and they do not say anything even if I eat before them.. If I have to say in general then in my family girl means, she should be like a simple girl with manners “euta chitikka pareko.. sanskar bhayeko”.. this is very important in my family.. for boys they should be in limit but for girls they should be strictly under strict limitations... I always fight back in my family regarding gender differences but at last I lose the fight because I am alone and no one is there to support me.. parents need to be made aware about gender differences.. they do not want to change at all.. they want to stick to the traditional culture all the time fuelling more gender differences...

In the conversation above, Dibya illustrates that young females within a family are discriminated due to the intersections of various sociocultural factors at different levels. The discrimination can be in the form of guidance over the way girls should behave within family, with extended family members and relatives. For example, the obligations for the women to show respect to the families and relatives or the instructions for females to walk, sit or make decisions about the person with whom she should walk or sit. The discrimination can also be in the form of control over the eating behaviour in which females are not allowed to eat before the male family members in the family and should eat in a civilised way. Despite all these gender restrictions, Dibya believes that going against family does not achieve anything, as she is often left alone without any support from other family members, which makes her to accept the family authority. In Dibya's case, family authority belongs to his older brother where mother plays an important role in supporting her brother, while father stays away from discussions on traditional or cultural issues. Arguably, this may be because Dibya's brother is in work and is responsible for providing financial support to the family, which brings back the focus of the patriarchal dominance¹⁴⁰ within the familial environment. The fieldwork discussions established that fathers wait for the time when sons start providing financial support to the family. This is when father takes a back seat and pass the authority to their elder son, who then lead the patriarchal dominance within the family. Dibya's elder brother demonstrates his power and authority in the family by controlling Dibya's exposure to contemporary

¹⁴⁰ See section 7.2

lifestyles experiences and expecting her to maintain family disciplines by sticking to the traditional norms of gender imbalances. The issue of gender discrimination is precisely clear through the conversation as Dibya asserts that none of these rules applies to her twin brother.

Das and Kemp (1997: 27) described, “*sons will always be with them, but their daughters are raised for other families*”. This is how Nepalese families feel about their sons and daughters and therefore the gender discrimination towards females start with the birth of a girl within the Nepalese society. Sons are expected to earn living for families and so are provided with extra freedom whereas daughters are believed to be a responsibility and a temporary member of the family; and so are raised with restrictions to protect the purity of female, which is then handed to other families during the marriage through a ritual called *kanyadaan* (Allen, 2000). Talbani and Hasanali (2000) studied about the gender roles in socialisation between traditional and modernity with 22 south Asian immigrant adolescent females in Canada. The research reported three distinct elements about female socialisation: “*differential treatment of boys and girls at home, less decision-making power for girls, and more control over girl's intermingling with opposite sex*” (Ibid., 2000: 625). The differential treatment of males and females within the South Asian society poses a serious concern. South Asian females find themselves inferior to the men with restricted mobility or decision-making capability, limited access to and control over resources, often under threat of violence from males and are socially, culturally and economically dependent on them (Fikree and Pasha, 2004). Despite the discriminatory measures within the family, young females are less likely to be rebellious and accept greater parental authority and control in most cases.

Young females are often influenced by cultural traditions, religious obligations, family loyalties and community expectations (Hennink, Diamond and Cooper, 1999). Dibya believes that family expectations of protecting *izzat* of their daughters are most important aspect of their daughter’s lives. Parental understanding of *izzat* refers to positive characterisation of daughters in the society. Positive characterisation should be demonstrated through affirmative

mannerism towards traditional and cultural norms, excellent household work capability and responsibilities, and not being involved in a personal relationship or sexual intimacy. During fieldwork and interviews, it was revealed that if a girl starts going clubbing or having night outs then they are considered as “*bigreko chorī*” (spoiled daughter) and the chances of them engaging in sexual intimacy becomes higher bringing shame and disgrace to the family. This is not accepted within the Nepalese families, as young people argue that every parent wants their daughters as “*sapreko chorī*” (well-mannered daughter). The burden for parents to maintain the strictness for daughters come from the society, where women with negative characterisation are not admired and rumours are spread around the community portraying the female and family as malicious.

7.5 ‘A ripple effect’: “*Girls life is very sensitive.. people start spreading rumours.. judging girls by depicting girls character*”

Young females in this research were concerned about any ‘wrongdoing’¹⁴¹ because of the quick spread of rumours within the Nepalese society. These rumours often cause serious concerns creating anxiety and panic for young females and their family. I describe it as a ‘ripple effect’ where rumours about sexual lifestyles of young females create waves of gossips in the societal network. Asha describes the sensitiveness of the Nepalese community towards young females in the society as

Asha (16F): *Society is very attentive about what we do.. so we need to be very careful about what we do.. for example, I don't mind having baby before marriage but I will never do that because I know the society will come to know about it and I am fearful about it.. It's not accepted in our culture and it would affect even my family.. I think our Nepalese society is like if I do something bad then everyone will come to know about it. That's what I don't like about Nepalese society and then they start spreading more bad words and false rumours..*

¹⁴¹ Wrongdoing in this research is understood as any sexual lifestyles and relationships behaviour that goes against the sociocultural and traditional norms of Nepalese society e.g. dating, romantic relationships, nightclubbing, smoking and/or drinking and so on.

Asha believes that young females need to be vigilant about any wrongdoing, as this can create false rumours and could be presented in an exaggerated manner without realisation, which would quickly spread within the Nepalese society to defame young females and their families. Lees (1989) suggests that women's sexuality is central to the way she is judged and seen by herself and others in the everyday social life. The rumours or reality about women's sexual lifestyles and relationships, which is seen beyond the traditional and sociocultural norms, creates a ripple that can intensify and broadens the negativity about women's character at every level. It was found that people in the society tend to add their individual perceptions and judgment to sensitise the information before passing it to the other individual and the process continues until the ripple creates maximum negativity around the female characterisation within the society. Young people's certain lifestyle behaviours may be accepted within the familial environment but there is a continuous concern about how such behaviours would be judged within the wider Nepalese community, and the rumours may be spread quickly to bring negative impact on an individual as well as familial reputation (Hennink, Diamond and Cooper, 1999). Thus, the sexual lives of young females are widely influenced by the closely knitted Nepalese community. In separate conversations, Dibya, Esha and Richa exemplify the snowballing of words and the sensitiveness of young female's sexual lives within the Nepalese community.

Dibya (18F): In our Nepalese society it is very common that if one person knows anything then very quickly it passes to another ear and then another ear and finally everyone will know about it.. If boys and girls walk together then people start spreading rumours.. start judging girls by saying that this girl's character is not good.. many young people are afraid of such things and so they fear from getting into relationship and because of that they have to accept arranged marriage.. some girls are married at very early age because parents fear that she may get into relationship if not married at early age and that could impact family honour.. In Nepalese society there is a thinking that if girls are not into education then they have nothing to do so parents arrange the marriage for them at the age of 19-20.. I don't like this at all...

Esha (19F): Girls life is very sensitive.. people in community just need any indication to start bitching.. once started.. it is spread very quickly within the Nepalese society and that may lead to problems in future.. It would be very bad, as no one would come forward to marry me because my character would be defamed by those gossips... My mom is little strict about it... she does not like my relatives and others in the society to know if I do something wrong because people start bitching about you when they come to know about it.. there are many Nepalese population in London these days.. so wherever you go you would find some known person.. I don't like Nepalese population bitching about girls all the time.. I strongly hate it.. sometimes I am fearful about it because if some Nepalese see you in the market with a boy then they will start bitching about you.. although he would just be your friend.. people will start spreading words like... his/her daughter was walking with boyfriend "phalaono ko chori boyfriend sanga hiddai thiyo"... it makes you feel uncomfortable so I make sure I never walk with any boys in the market where I could be possibly seen... this is the way Nepalese people does and I hate it.. I think people need to change their attitude and leave us alone...

Richa (22F): Once my mom told me that people says such bad things about you.. She did not ordered me like don't do this but she said its better to take care as people might think it in wrong way.. I think the fear of society becomes more and more once you cross your teenage years... Before I used to be like.. its my life why do I need to care about what others think.. even I did not care much about my parents decision but now I feel a bit older.. I think there is a community, society and culture but I think this is a wrong way of thinking still I cant help it and I keep on thinking about society and culture.. I think I must respect the decision of my parents... anyway as I have to live in this society then I must think what people in the society thinks about me.. I think more about having a good impression in the society... I need to be conscious about the consequences of any wrongdoing that may affect my parents and me in the society...

Young females in this research illustrated that the sexual lives of young females in the Nepalese society is sensitive and insecure, where the rumours of any wrongdoing can have potential impact in the search of prospective spouse, future relationships and the marriage. Although Nepalese young people do not like the tradition of rumours, it can spread quickly and they have little or no control over it and therefore they discipline their behaviours through

self-surveillance to secure themselves from falling into the trap of the ripple effect (Harrison, Chadwick and Scales, 1996). Young females believe that even parents are aware of the ripple effect and are worried about the reputations and dignity of the family. Esha and Richa admit that parents, especially mother, sometimes act as a friend to make them aware about the rumours, warning them about the ripple effect within the society. Sociocultural norms and family values play an important role in influencing young Asian women's sexual lifestyle, relationships and marriage, and females are expected to experience their sexual lives by maintaining the "*culture of the community*" (Hennink, Diamond and Cooper, 1999: 877). South Asian females are often influenced by home contexts where religious obligations, cultural traditions, societal expectations and maintaining family honour and faithfulness play a key role in shaping their sexual lifestyle and behaviour (Jayakody *et al.*, 2005). Young females in this research wished to express their lifestyles and sexual freedom, which create conflict with conventional thinking of the Nepalese society, putting young females at higher risks of negative characterisation and making them vulnerable to the risky behaviours. Young females in this research highlighted the fear of society while males were relaxed about the prospect of the ripple effect about their characterisation.

7.6 Conclusion

This chapter investigated parental connectedness by examining relationships between young people and parents, which is shaped by patriarchal dominance and emotional attachment with the mother. In addition, I explained the role of gender norms within the family and explored young people's conversations with parents on sexual matters. The investigation illustrated intersections of various factors affecting young people's conversation at the individual and familial level. The interaction between young people and parents and the depth of conversation on sexual matters are determined by the familial environment as well as the extrafamilial factors present in the wider Nepalese society. The evidence suggests that the sexual lives of young

people, particularly females, were often compromised and controlled due to the lack of effective conversation on sexual matters within the familial environment.

The chapter discussed young people's experience of constraints due parental surveillance and monitoring and found that the control towards limiting young people's leisure and lifestyles are more likely to make young people reveal less about their social interactions diminishing family connectedness, which may become the source of conflict within the family creating issues of trust (Veal, 1989; Stavrinides, 2011). The findings indicated that gender discrimination were widely seen within the Nepalese families where women lives were viewed as sensitive and young females had the responsibilities to discipline themselves to protect from negative characterisation. It was found that young people were expected to maintain the pride and honour of the family, which often meant limited or no engagement with the contemporary lifestyle behaviour, as it gives bad reputation to the females and her family in the society through a 'ripple effect' where people start spreading rumours depicting women's characterisation and mocking their dignity.

Chapter Eight: Young people's perceptions and experiences of changing cultural and/or religious norms

8.1 Introduction:

This chapter explores young people's cultural beliefs and religious practices, which acts as structural factors for sexual health, lifestyles and relationships of the Nepalese young people in the changing society of the UK. Firstly, I describe young people's understandings of the religion, their religious beliefs and its interdependence with the culture. The aim is to investigate and understand young people's changing cultural and religious affiliation in the busy life of contemporary society. Subsequently, I argue that faith is not central to the everyday lives of the young people, especially while experiencing sexual lifestyles and relationships; the focus is on responding to the situation free from the cultural or religious affiliation and satisfy their personal desire within the context.

8.2 Young people's belief towards religion and/or culture "*I don't believe in religion because.. every people think they have got their own God.. Religion is important for family*"

During the ethnography, it was found that young people's opinion about religious affiliation varied, and they often incorporated culture while talking about the religion. For some, religion was an important part of their daily lives while others described themselves as atheist. The understanding and association of culture and religion varies depending on individual's social and family connection and vice versa. In separate conversations, Tilak and Ravi describe their religious affiliation in the context of a family environment as:

Tilak (24M): Religion is very important for us in our family.. by saying that it is not very strict but still we believe very strongly.. I have grown up considering religious beliefs in my family since childhood.. when I was kid I very often used to go to temples.. I used to help in temples with all the rituals.. we had our "ashram" (a spiritual hermitage or a monastery).. I used to go

there and help them with their daily routines. It's not that we have to follow strictly but as we have believed in it for a long time.. we still follow our religion.

Ravi (22M): *I strongly believe in religion.. I have grown up in a very religious environment... My family is very religious... We have our own family temple in Nepal.. its like a private temple.. my grand mom used to worship every morning... if she is not well then my dad used to do that... and if daddy was not present then I used to do that after my "Bratabandha¹⁴²". I have grown up listening to all those mythological stories.. even here.. I go to temples... it does not matter where I live but still I believe... can you imagine I don't eat beef, however I eat pork.. [RKS: Pork is not restricted in Hindu, anyway?]... Yes, in Hindu it is not but in Bahun¹⁴³ it is... I cannot eat beef because we have been worshipping cow from my childhood.. I am grown up seeing this..*

Young people in this research highlight the importance of religion within the familial context but showed low affiliation towards it at the individual level. Tilak and Ravi describe strong religious affiliation within familial surroundings but accept religious flexibility while believing and practicing it at the individual level. Ravi portrays himself as a strong believer of religion but explains the modifications he has made to his life, in the form of changing dietary lifestyle. Tilak explains that religious affiliation does not always mean to follow each and every aspects of the religion but it becomes selective and young people take their own decision to adopt to the beliefs that do not contradict with their new way of living¹⁴⁴. The flexibility towards religious beliefs seen by Nepalese young people is demonstrated by making modifications to constructing their own beliefs depending on the context and resources available within that context.

Religious affiliation plays an important role in shaping sexual attitudes and behaviours of young people at the individual level (Resnick *et al.*, 1997; Lammers *et al.*, 2000). Religious beliefs of the young people need to be

¹⁴² Bratabandha is a Hindu ceremony where boys, aged 8 and 12 years, take the first steps in learning the traditional laws, ceremonial roles and rituals of their caste

¹⁴³ Hindu worships cow and thus they do not eat beef. Although pork is allowed to eat, people belonging to *Bahun* caste are traditionally vegetarian

¹⁴⁴ "New way of living" as discussed in chapter 3

understood in the context of individual factors (biological, cognitive and emotional), socialising factors such as family (parental religious values, beliefs and practices), extra familial influences (neighborhood and peer groups religious beliefs and behaviours) and other influences such as media, cultural values, sociocultural support or intolerance for religious views (Rostosky *et al.*, 2004).

Young people's religious understanding and beliefs are heavily shaped and influenced by families and parental religiosity, which influence adolescent risky sexual behaviour through its impact on authoritative parenting and adolescent religiosity (Mason, Singleton and Webber, 2007; Landor *et al.*, 2011). The foundation of cultural and religious beliefs among young people is built with parental influence, which is then explored and young people subsequently adapt to it, even if they share differences in beliefs (McNamara Barry *et al.*, 2010). Park and Ecklund (2007), in a qualitative study exploring religious socialisation for second-generation Asian Americans, found that young people saw their families has the most significant influence on their religiosity. The understanding of "family" for Asian young people was much broader and it included parents and siblings as well as extended family members such as uncles, aunts and grandparents. Nepalese young people experienced similar pattern where their cultural and religious beliefs are shaped by "family" as well as society. Young people in this study were eager to make their beliefs and values relevant to important contemporary issues, which result in continuous reinterpretation of the culture and tradition (Pedersen, 1995). Tara has constructed her own religious beliefs and shares her experiences as:

Tara (24F): I believe in religion and I believe it in the same way as I used to believe it in Nepal.. its not very specific like I am originally Hindu but even Buddhist like I even pray to Buddha.. What I think is like.. I cannot say that religion is like "andhabiswas" (superstition) but believing in religion makes you happy... anyway we should definitely follow our culture.. I do everything what I used to do in Nepal. Actually in Nepal, mom used to do everything but here I do everything from lighting lamp to praying in the morning, I do everything "bhagwan lai batti balna dekhi liyera bihana sabai garchu".

Tara describes religion as an important part of life in the changing society of the UK and exhibits her flexible religious beliefs through her faith in two different religions. She practices Hinduism and Buddhism to achieve the happiness in her life and associates it with the family attachment and cultural traditions. Tara discusses religious practices as a way of finding happiness by maintaining traditional approach, as she learnt in her family surroundings; but at the same time, interpreting it through her personal expressions by distancing herself from a committed believer of a particular religion. Religious beliefs demonstrated through an increasing involvement in religious practices and not religious affiliation, are associated with self-reported happiness even when controlling for age, sex, race, ethnicity, education, income and family status (Graham and Haidt, 2010; Myers, 2001; Seybold and Hill, 2001). Hausner and Gellner (2012) state that Nepalese populations in the UK are culturally diverse and many associate themselves with multiple religions. Although the majority of Nepalese populations are Hindu, they also believe in Buddhism; there are Buddhists who believe and connect to Hinduism and are often engaged in similar rituals such as daily *puja* (Maslak, 2001). Participants within this research affirmed their affiliations to multiple religions by describing their beliefs mostly in Hinduism and Buddhism and were reflected more often during the separate conversations with Nepalese young males and females.

Saurav (23M): In our Mongolian society, we believe in Buddhism but we also follow Hindu.. In the UK when we say half Hindu half Buddhist.. People laughs..

Esha (19F): aaa.. Hindu.. Buddhism.. both... aammm.. I believe in Hindu.. but Buddhism as well because we celebrate Lhosar and other Buddhist festivals..

Asha (16F): My dad is Buddhist and mom is Hindu.. I practice any... both.. Actually I don't practice any... none of my family members practice any religion... We don't believe much in God.. I don't think I can even adjust with anyone who is strong believer... A little is fine... we believe and celebrate Dashain and Tihar but besides that nothing else.. my dad practices it.. he sometimes says this story comes from the religious books "adhaya bata

ho" ... this is God's story... but he doesn't believe much either...

Pujan (21M): aammm.. naturally saying.. originally our religion is Hindu.. we are Hindu but mom says sometimes we need to also follow Buddhism... it teaches good things... In Nepal, I always celebrated Dashain.. like every year Dashain Tihar was the best time.. you get money, gifts and enjoyment with family members.. after coming here.. we have reduced celebrations.. because.. we do not have our relatives.. most of our relatives are in Nepal.. My nearest relatives lives in Oxford but we don't know him very well.. we do not have anyone to put "tika"¹⁴⁵ during Dashain.. I don't believe in our culture strongly but I think we should know our culture.. we should use it in a positive way for good thing...

Young people in this research illustrated their beliefs in paired religion and discussed it by using the term 'Hindu' and/or 'Buddhism' interchangeably. Young males and females showed strong association between 'religion' and 'culture' and were puzzled when asked about their religious affiliation. Pujan and Asha were mystified about their religious and cultural identities. They did not want to disconnect themselves from religious affiliation but restricted themselves in demonstrating firm associations with a particular religion. They believed to have maintained their religious affiliation by celebrating Dashain and Tihar, the two most popular cultural festivals for Hindus that is celebrated by every Nepalese population around the world. Religious beliefs of Nepalese young people depend on the intersections of various social and cultural factors such as familial religious beliefs and practices, surroundings in which they grow, family expectations, gender and individual preferences. Most males and females shared similar sentiments and focused on the 'good thing' about the culture rather than abiding with the religious beliefs. Rishi gives an account of the 'good thing' in the transcript below.

Rishi (22M): In Nepal, I was proper Hindu.. I used to go to temples every now and then.. used to do some Hindu rituals sometimes.. even after coming here I was Hindu but now I almost completely do not believe in culture and religion.. that does

¹⁴⁵ a coloured or multicoloured sandalwood symbol applied on forehead, as a part of the Hindu ritual during worshipping.

not mean that I am trying to say that it has no importance.. it is very important.. But there are like.. there are many things with which I am not satisfied.. like we say ourselves as Hindu or others but we never seem try to reading books about it.. what we do is.. we do whatever we know.. ring bells.. chants mantras “ghanti santi bajayo.. mantra santra padhyo”.. we chants many mantras but we do not know the meaning of it... these things irritate me.. but we never try to read or follow and do according to what is written in the book.. what I want to say is that first read books and then follow it or do not follow it.. it may be that many of those books are just like another book which provides us the knowledge.. it may be a book written by the scholars in that period of time about how to live the life in that era and in that society.. to show how people can become happy.. how to form a society and be in a society.. that may be the reason for writing such books... I think it in that way.. As I was growing.. my education level was increasing.. I started reading some of those religious books like Bhagwad Gita and I started to understand.. I have my own interpretations of those books and I read it to gain some knowledge.. I always think about it and it influences me while making decisions about my life.. For example.. most of my values comes from Bhagvad Gita where Lord Krishna has enlightened the values to Arjun.. it is the same even in the Buddhism.. where they talk about similar values.. Everything is not bad about it but there are few things that is bad.. I don't like the way we practice it blindly.. What I want to say is that I am not following all the principles of religion but I try following at least some those principles but by understanding it..

Rishi illustrates the social changes experienced by Nepalese young people in the changing society to adapt to the new way of living in the new environment (Miles, 2000; Furlong and Cartmel, 2007; Nayak and Kehily, 2008). Rishi referred ‘good thing’ in the religion is a way of finding happiness and keeping the family and society together. He believes ‘good thing’ should be the focus while considering religion, rather than engaging in religious practices to highest level and missing the key purpose of making family and society happy. Graham and Haidt (2010: 140) argues “*focusing on religious beliefs is like focusing on the football: it seems to be where the action is, but if you stare too long at it, you miss the deeper purpose of the game, which is the strengthening of the community*”. Emerging adults continue to review their religious beliefs learnt from families to construct their own beliefs and identities depending on their own reflections (Arnett, 2000). Young people

may be willing to acknowledge affiliation to a specific religious community but it does not necessarily imply that the values and beliefs they hold would form their overall identity (Furlong, 2013). Barry and Nelson (2005: 246) characterises “*emerging adulthood as a time during which young people question beliefs in which they were raised, place greater emphasis on individual spirituality than affiliation with religious institutions and pick and choose the aspects of religion that suit them best*”.

Rishi rejects the notion of believing in a particular religion but sees religious literatures as a web of knowledge for the betterment of an individual, family and the society. Rishi believes these literatures need to be understood and interpreted to associate it with the contemporary world rather than following it instinctively. Rishi stresses that the modification to such beliefs is necessary, depending on individual reflections as well as societal context, because of the changing society in the dynamic world. The developed society of the UK plays an important role in shaping young people’s religious beliefs by providing them with an accessibility of wide range of literature that supports as well as rejects their religious beliefs and practices. Dinesh grew up in a religious family in Nepal and now he lives with his mother in the UK, who is extremely religious; but Dinesh never considered himself as a strong believer of the religion and now considers himself as an atheist.

Dinesh (18M): I am Atheist.. I like reading books which talks logical and are against religion.. I remember a quote from Richard Dawkin's book The God Delusion.. it's especially for them who follows blindly ... "I asked God for a bike, but I know God doesn't work that way. So I stole a bike and asked for forgiveness"... there is already enough shit in our life and believing in religion makes it more complex... Even before coming to the UK, I was never a strong believer.. My grand mom is extremely religious but my grand dad was not.. even my mom strongly believe in religion but I have never been forced to follow it or so... I even eat beef and my family knows that and they are fine with it...

Saurav (23M): I don't like to practice any religion.. currently I am atheist for last 2-3 years.. I felt bored with religion so I decided to become myself.. more like freedom man.. I wanna eat what I

want .. I wanna wear what I want.. I wanna go where I want.. I wanna live as fullest as I can.. I believe in atheist ideologies..

Since Dinesh was never a strong believer of the religion, it can be argued whether reading the book was the only reason for his disoriented religious beliefs. However, this definitely was one of the factors in the intersections of various factors that made him self-assure that he was an atheist at an individual level. Graham and Haidt (2010: 141) describe “*thinkers such as Richard Dawkins attempt to convert readers by dismantling the theological arguments and factual claims of religion: if this book (The God delusion) works as I intend, religious readers who open it will be atheist when they put it down*”. Meanwhile, Saurav expressed his beliefs in atheist ideology because he wanted to experience free lifestyle by disconnecting himself from the religion.

Nepalese young people’s diminishing religious beliefs at the individual level make them more likely to experience their sexual agency independently by engaging in risky sexual behaviour (Kirk and Lewis, 2013). Adolescent sexual behaviours have negative relationships with religion, where non-religious adolescents are more likely to engage in risky sexual behaviours compared to their religious peers (Rostosky *et al.*, 2004; Sinha *et al.*, 2007; Landor *et al.*, 2011). Zaleski and Schiaffino (2000) found that religious affiliation might protect young people from initiating sexual activity in an emerging adulthood but it fails to protect sexually active young people from engaging in unsafe sexual practices. The pattern of declining religious practices and beliefs among young people is routine and familiar during adolescent developments, where current generations of emerging adults are renouncing institutional participation and beliefs related activities in favour of individualised and personalised forms of religious self-expressions (Arnett and Jensen, 2002; Stoppa and Lefkowitz, 2010; Kirk and Lewis, 2013). Bishal justifies his self-expression as:

Bishal (17M): Basically I don't believe in religion because you know.. every people think they have got their own God.. whereas I know that if there is a God then.. there should be like only one God.. there should not be like different different God..

Christian people has like Jesus.. Muslim has something else, Nepali has Shivaji.. Ganesh.. people keep on worshipping them and.. they make their own religion things.. cultural things.. we Nepali have many cultural things like Rai, Sunuwar, Manta something like.. in one surname they have got like 5-6 different different surnames.. that's just stupid.. that's why I don't believe in the God.. we got like chandi.. but I really don't believe on that.. I feel like cultural things are old things.. people got different different cultural things.. Gurung people got a different one.. Rai people got a different one.. there are too many variations even within the Nepalese culture... if I see something then I believe in that..

Here, we see young people's understanding about the culture and religion as unsettled due to its complexity within the Nepalese society and young men and women get distracted by the specificity of their religious and cultural beliefs. Although culture and religion are two different concepts with different meanings for different people, Bishal incorporated these concepts together while discussing his religious beliefs (Bonney, 2004). For Bishal, religious beliefs create various cultures and cultures are attached to the religious beliefs. Bishal argues that there are several variations of religion and culture within different ethnic and subethnic groups, and even within a certain ethnic population in a particular religion. These variations often complicate young people's understanding about the religion and diminish their beliefs towards the trustworthiness of the culture and religion.

The religious groups within the Nepalese community are complex and have some distinct cultural features, which make them believe in different forms of God (Dahal, 2003). Bishal believes people created culture and religion for their own benefits in the past. Religious or cultural beliefs in emerging adulthood are highly individualised with little reflections from childhood religious socialisation, as young people are often unconvinced about the traditional beliefs and religious institutions (Arnett and Jensen, 2002). Young people's religious beliefs and cultural values are often connected and are part of their everyday lives (Arnett, 2004). People in various cultures create diverse religious beliefs and cultural features may differentially influence religious beliefs of young people depending on interconnection between ethnic and subethnic identity (Arnett, 2004; McNamara Barry *et al.*, 2010).

Although most young people during the fieldwork expressed different opinions about religious beliefs, they perceived religion as flexible and often discussed it linking with culture, which changes constantly during emerging adulthood.

8.3 Changing sociocultural norms and religious associations in the busy life “*I used to pray more often in Nepal but here I don’t get enough time.. there is no place for God*”

Nepalese young people experiences diverse sociocultural and religious norms after coming to live in the multicultural society of the UK. This presents significant challenges and opportunities to negotiate and identify their individual cultural or religious identity, which affects the sexual lifestyles and relationships of the Nepalese young people in the UK. In conversation below, Dibya frequently laughed while describing and comparing her own cultural and religious practices experienced in the sociocultural context of Nepal and then in the UK.

Dibya (18F): My family is very religious [laughs]... we are Hindu.. we have to worship every morning.. we need to do that.. I used worship before [loud tone].. but when I came from Nepal.. now I don't do it [low pitch, giggling and speaking quickly]

RKS: When did you stop?

Dibya: Don't know.. but I know I have lost the discipline of worshipping now.. In Nepal, it was not possible to worship in hostel but when I used to return home in vacations then I used to do all the rituals at home.. and so my mom always used to say me wise daughter “gyani chorī”.. but here I have left doing it..

RKS: Why?

Dibya: It's like.. firstly, I don't get enough time.. In Nepal, it was mom.. it was everyone in my family who used to worship every morning, even my brothers.. at least one person in a family used to lit the batti (light) everyday.. I think it may be because of different environment.. but later it was like we should not believe in God.. I think even my friends used to say.. there is no God.. even some Nepalese friends used to say that there is nothing like God.. I think their families do not believe in God.. It was just a few days back, we were talking among friends about superstitions.. like three person should not go out from the house together.. if cat crosses the way then it's a bad luck... I don't believe in such things.. but I used to believe it before.. after coming here, I don't believe in such

things.. I started finding it like nonsense.. My friends dad is also Nepali and he used to say like no one has seen God.. but God means parents.. so we should respect parents... After hearing such things my beliefs about worshipping started decreasing and now I believe in God but I do not believe very strongly..

RKS: *Do you think, this may be because of the cultural differences here in the UK?*

Dibya: *It's not because of the culture difference in the UK because in the UK, we can see people from different culture and different religion.. Still here in Plumstead, there are many Nepalese old women wearing "Lungi"¹⁴⁶.. Indians are walking wearing "Sarees"¹⁴⁷ they all show their own culture.. So I don't think that's the real reason.. I think it may be because of the time and thinking.. If we were in Nepal, then everyone will be Nepalese, the surroundings will be full of Nepalese, the environment will clearly demonstrate the Nepalese culture and religion for example, if it is Dashain¹⁴⁸, then everyone will be talking about it.. there will be typical things which we do in Dashain like playing on swings "ping Khelne" but here when its Dashain... it is difficult to even get together in a group to share the same excitement.. Also people are busy with their work so even to see the relatives you have to make an arrangement... so the interest subsides automatically..*

Dibya primarily insists that the decline in religious practices is the result of busy life in the UK, but later associates it with the structural factors such as family relationships, environmental context, peer preference and challenges of developmental changes during emerging adulthood. Dibya explains her religious learning within the family environment in Nepal, which has diminished after coming to the UK and is fading further without self-realisation. Daily *puja* by lighting cotton wicks in the mornings and evenings are common rituals experienced by majority of Nepalese population within the familial environment. The culture of religious practices are often connected to family and their upbringing (Sinha et al., 2007). Young people in Nepal often engage directly or indirectly in daily *puja* or religious ceremonies with their elder siblings, parents, extended families and friends, which becomes major source for religious learning for most young people (Maslak, 2001).

¹⁴⁶ A long piece of clothes used by female

¹⁴⁷ Similar to Lungi

¹⁴⁸ A popular Hindu Festival celebrated in Nepal and Nepalese diaspora communities around the world

Young people like visiting temples or celebrating cultural festivals to get connected with friends and community enjoying cultural and religious services with greater liking and to build trust and cooperation for “moral harmony” (Graham and Haidt, 2010). Dibya rejects the notion of ‘cultural differences’ as the source of changing religious beliefs, but acknowledges that vibrant surroundings and togetherness in Nepal, while celebrating religious and cultural festivals generates attention that maintains high interest to participate in cultural and religious festivals. In contrast, living in a multicultural society often narrows the recognition of a particular religious or cultural celebration within the specific community. Moreover, as shown through the ethnographic observation, busy lifestyles in the UK diminish young people’s interest in participating in such festivals or events. Esha shared similar experiences, and highlighted that accessibility to the temples were another factor that maintained religious connectivity in Nepal, which is lost after coming to the UK.

Esha (19F): In Nepal, I used to go to temples regularly but here I have never gone to temples.. [laughs].. Sometime I do worship at home.. my mom is a strong believer and she prays everyday.. we even have statue of God in our home.. I think I used to pray more often in Nepal but here I don't get enough time.. [Laughs].. It may also be because in Nepal.. it was very easy to get access to the temples as you can find one everywhere.. even next to our home.. so I used to have feelings that I need to go and I used to go there to pray.. Here even if you decide to go to temples then its far from home.. most of the time it does not come across so we don't even think about it.. but still sometimes I do pray... lit the light in home and that's all.. I believe its good to pray but I know I don't do enough here..

Social context and surroundings play an important role in maintaining interests of young people in religious affiliations and practices. Although Esha believes culture and religion is important, it receives less attention due to other commitments that is important for everyday lives in the UK. The reduced involvement with religious practices put young males and females at higher risks of sexual engagement (Burdette *et al.*, 2009). Esha argues that reduced convenience in approaching and accessing religious institutions such as temples or religious gathering and environment diminish emotional

attachment towards religion. Regnerus (2003: 524) described, “*the moral communities thesis not only posits the existence of religious contextual influences on individual’s behaviour – regardless of their own particular commitment to the religion – but also suggests that living with or near a considerable number of religious people will affect how any religious individual will behave*”. Sapna explained the notion of “moral communities” with her experiences as:

Sapna (23F): *In Nepal, I used to pray daily at home [laughs].. I was the main person.. may be because I was close to my grandparents.. reading “swasthani¹⁴⁹” story daily, going to temples, reading chapters from religious books and doing all rituals during Dashain.. mom used to say do like this or this.. I used to help them from my early childhood.. In winter season there used to be a special prayer for ‘Tulsi’.. I used to get up every morning at 4 o’ clock to take bath and do all the rituals.. I used to do everything.. [Loud Laughs] I used to live with my family.. everything would come automatically and sequentially in a proper way “sabai kura aafai mildai aaudai gare huncha”..*

RKS:

Sapna:

*What happened here?
Here.. [laughs... short pause].. here, I have to do everything myself.. I do not get even enough time to complete all my small things.. you come from work at about 1-2 am and by the time you wake up it is already late.. you need to go to college.. and of course if it is late then temples are closed... even temple has its own timetable and it does not match with my timetable.. temples open in afternoon but that’s the time to go back to work again.. I have gone to temples only 2-3 times.. the situation is different here.. it does not suit.. I used to fast every Tuesday in Nepal. I continued the same here for first 5-6 months but left after that. Because when you are working it’s very difficult and it’s not always possible. At work you cannot have much option about what to eat and what not to eat.. it becomes very difficult and so I had to leave fasting..*

RKS:

Sapna:

What about at home?

It’s like.. if we keep God at home.. I had it when I came here initially as we had rented a big house and had enough space but afterwards we started renting a single room or shared a room and then there was no place for God in a small room [laughs].. Landlords have their own rules and they were like.. no nails¹⁵⁰.. no damages.. Even Nepalese landlords have same rules.. I have not seen Nepalese families practicing religion very well, even if they have their own home.. they

¹⁴⁹ Swasthani is a religious book incorporating stories of life of various gods and goddesses.

¹⁵⁰ Normally people use nails to hang images of God on the wall

don't keep god in their house and it does affect people like us who rent just a room.. If they would have God then at least we would be inclined towards praying there.. But if you don't see it in the house.. you don't have in the room.. then you don't think about it.. There is no place for god... here we don't have place for ourselves, where can we get place for god but I do go to temples 2-3 times a year... [she continuously laughed while talking]

Religiosity in Nepal starts from home where every family dedicate at least a small corner of the home for worshipping, which will have at least some photographs or statues of God; but this is not always possible in the UK. Sapna argues that an overall impact of the culture and religion is diminishing within the Nepalese families and community in the UK, and that weakens the religious beliefs and affiliations of young people. Sapna stated that she rarely talks about culture or religion with her family members in Nepal, which further diminishes her engagement with cultural or religious rituals. Regnerus (2003: 525) refers this phenomenon as the “*light switch*” effect. Regnerus described that religiosity of an individual is often “turned on” if he comes in contact with religious individual, community or environment that has an essence of religiosity within it. Without this stimulus, the influence of religion on individual lifestylea diminishes. Sapna illustrates this with her personal experience and elaborated that busy life together with the environmental context play a significant role in shaping her attitudes and beliefs towards the religion and cultural beliefs. Sapna explains this with an example when she tried to follow Nepalese cultural norms by ‘fasting every Tuesday’, in the same way as she did in Nepal. However, the circumstances within the UK context forced her to negotiate her cultural/religious beliefs to take a decision that suited within the context of the contemporary society.

Richa (22F): I am not very religious [Laughs].. If I really say the truth then I remember god only when I am in crisis.. in pain.. when I came to the UK.. I did not even remember god for 2-3 months.. then one day I was very curious to go to the temple.. I was missing my visits to the temples form Nepal.. my father took me to the Southall temple¹⁵¹.. but here in the temple God did not even

¹⁵¹ Southall temple is the ‘Vishwa Hindu Temple’ in Lady Margaret Road in Southall, which is popular among Nepalese and Indian Hindu populations

look like God “bhagwan ni bhagwan jasto na lagney yeha ko ta”.. May be because.. in Nepal after praying we used to put on tika even our God statue used to be of stone.. smell of “agarbatti” (incense sticks) would be all over the places around the surroundings.. but here the statue of God looked like souvenirs.. it did not even give the feeling of God... and also the atmosphere was not vibrant like in Nepal...

The excitement of coming to the UK ceased Richa's initial thoughts of loneliness, as she was well received by her father and 'his friends'. She felt isolated when she realised the social disconnection of not having her mother and her own friends from Nepal, and suddenly she remembered 'God' after the transition of few months in the UK. Richa rushed to identify a way to maintain religious connectedness to find happiness but spiritual ambience of the temple in the UK was unable to persuade her to accept the religious sensitiveness. Religious beliefs may compensate lack of social connections with other people in the surroundings and assure a sense of security to minimise distress by making attachment relationships with God (Epley *et al.*, 2008; Granqvist, Mikulincer and Shaver, 2010). Participation in public or private religious activities allow individuals to contribute to enhance self-efficacy and pro-social values among young people making them feel better by boosting self-esteem, which may reduce their susceptibility to negative peer influences (Rostosky *et al.*, 2004; Sedikides and Gebauer, 2010). Young females with strong religious views are less likely to engage in premarital sex; whereas young male's religious associations have little impact on their sexual engagement (Jayakody, 2005).

Young females in this research showed higher religious involvement compared to their male counterparts (Walter and Davie, 1998; Miller and Stark, 2002; Smith *et al.*, 2002). However, Mason, Singleton and Webber (2007), in their research among Australian youth, reported that females are no more religious than males. The gender differences in religiosity are associated with the differences in risk taking behaviour, where males are considered non-religious if they involve themselves with risky behaviours such as drinking, smoking, drug use or adultery (Miller and Hoffman, 1995). Most male participants in this research supported the above discussions of changing sociocultural norms

and ‘busy life’ as an important factor towards shaping the religious and cultural attachment depending on their individual preferences.

Tilak (24M): After growing in such (religious) environment has definitely led me to believe in my religion strongly and even now I believe in it. Even after coming to the UK, I believe to certain extent but it is not like before. Although, it comes into my mind but still its not possible to express it freely here.. The lifestyle is busy here.. we need to give importance to ourselves first and thus the priority has changed... Although I do think about religion.. because of the life here, I cannot do many things that I think I should do...

Young people in this research balanced their emotions while discussing religious affiliations and practices, where they do not want to disconnect themselves from the religious and cultural beliefs, but at the same time they did not want to show strong associations. Young people showed diminishing patterns of religious practices because of the various interrelated factors such as busy lifestyles, peer influences, education, family relationships and environmental context. Young people experienced the freedom to express their social and sexual lives depending on the intersections of these factors at different levels, which influenced the sexual attitudes and behaviours of young men and women. Young people in this research demonstrated the need to consider religion and culture in an idealistic way to ensure to adapt to the sociocultural environment of the UK. Culture and religion have become a private aspect of the life where an individual decide from various alternatives to select a personal system of beliefs (Luckman, 1990).

When young people move from one cultural context to the other, they experience and follow a complex pattern of continuity to live their life in the new society (Berry, 2005). Okazaki (2002), in his research about influences of culture on Asian American sexuality, described that as Asian Americans become more connected to the mainstream American culture, their attitudes and behaviour would become more consistent with the White American norms. Nepalese community in the UK is one of the new communities and it could presumably take several years, decades, or centuries involving many generations to understand the indication towards the cultural or religious

changes within this population (Dasgupta, 1998; Berry, 2005). Although young people in this research did not demonstrate complete transformation of the sociocultural norms, the initial evidence was observed during the fieldwork through a new way of living¹⁵² and through the events of nightclubbing¹⁵³. Nepalese young people's construction of identities, including their religious involvement after coming to the UK, remains ongoing where they constantly contests between two cultures (Baumann, 1996). Young people's experience of traditional culture and religion during the childhood and adolescence in Nepal becomes part their life long experiences. However, after moving to the new western society, young people get opportunities to construct individualised beliefs within the multicultural society to adapt to the new environment but that does not completely erase the childhood beliefs but the culture is also not part of the everyday lives.

8.4 Faith is not central feature of everyday life “*Religious and cultural thoughts start vanishing and is completely overtaken by the thoughts of romance and sex*”

The fieldwork suggest that the Nepalese young people living in the UK spent their early childhood and adolescence within the traditional sociocultural norms and religious surroundings of Nepal. Although Nepalese young people showed religious affiliations, there are significant changes in experiencing sociocultural norms in the contemporary society of the UK. The manifestation of the culture and religion in everyday sexual lives of the young people are limited. Sapna illustrates this with an example demonstrating faith is not a central feature of everyday life.

Sapna (23F): It (culture/religion) automatically comes to our mind.. It comes even if you don't think about it.. like I don't feel wearing short dresses but I don't have any problem if someone is wearing it.. I am adapted to such environment where people can wear anything and I don't have any problem but that does not mean that I will also follow them. Even I wear short pants and it depends on what I like to wear rather than anything.. In our

¹⁵² See Chapter 3

¹⁵³ See Chapter 4

culture we should not wear even half pants but we wear that.. in limitation because of our culture and we think about it before wearing. if we would have lived here since childhood then it would not have been any problem. You also need confidence in wearing such dresses and I don't think as Nepalese we have that confidence to wear everything.. In the back of our mind we always think about our culture.

Nepalese young people grow up in a social environment that restrict certain lifestyle characteristics, which are not acceptable to the traditional culture. Sapna believes young people need to have self-confidence as well as the sociocultural acceptance to overcome such restricted features of the lifestyle. Young people learn to negotiate with such circumstances and construct their identity with balanced freedom that is acceptable to the traditional as well as the contemporary cultures, which helps them to adapt to the new sociocultural environment of the UK. Culture today is less localised than it used to be in the past (Geertz, 1973). 'Culture' in the modern society has changed significantly and is understood as '*global culture*' (Pedersen, 1995: 272) or '*culture of cultures*' (Sahlins, 1993: 21). Culture has become globalised and is recreated with global flow of ideas, people, capital and information. Young people's attitude towards sex and sexuality have been traditionally guided by sociocultural norms peculiar to different societies but the outburst of digitalisation and globalisation are removing the barriers between different cultures and young men and women are moving towards creating a more uniform culture (Wood, 2012). Culture plays a central role in the everyday lives of the population but the cultural creativity these days rely on available resources and supply of resources within the given context. Rishi explains this as:

Rishi (22M): Our upbringing is mostly in the religious environment... it is in a cultural environment.. our religion teaches us that these casual sex or sex before marriage are 'paap' (immoral/sin).. However, as an educated person... I don't really believe in religion.. but even though I don't believe.. these things always remain on the back of your mind... and yes because of that sometimes I do feel guilty about it and regret thinking what have I done.. it does not matter how much I would console myself.. still I would think why did I do it.. I would try to think that this has nothing to do with religion or 'paap' but still I

would have little impressions on the back of my mind... somewhere in my brain it suggests that this is not acceptable in my culture and religion.. Even my conscious brain knows that these views are present on the back of my mind all the time but still when the time comes to make myself understand.. It becomes very difficult.

RKS:

Why?

Rishi:

emmm... what happens there is that you get all sorts of thoughts.. including thoughts about culture and religion but we are so much into it (sexual thinking).. at that time you are being horny... and because of increased lustful thinking "teti khera utejit hunthyo haina... utejna ko thinking dherai bhayera haina".. religious and cultural thoughts starts vanishing and is completely overtaken by the thoughts of romance and sex... like after drinking, especially when you are in nightclubbing or in house parties, it (alcohol) temporarily stops us thinking about our cultural and religious values.. at that moment we just think about our desire.. Sex ... [Loud Laughs]...

For Nepalese young people in this research, cultural beliefs are interconnected to their religiosity, which include expression of religious beliefs and practices. Young people in this research believe that the cultural values or religious beliefs are part of their life and always operate in the background however, young males and females decide to take individual decisions based on other factors around them that satisfy their individual needs (Smith and Denton, 2005). Rishi believes that most young people always think about the society, culture and religion but sexual intimacies also depends on other factors such as individual desire, space and context. Rishi described this with an example of the context of nightclubbing and house parties where young people are partially or fully intoxicated. In these private spaces, the ambience is fully set for expressing sexual desires. The alcohol intoxication eases the decision-making process by suppressing the collective thoughts of culture and religion with individualised thoughts of romance and sex. Although risky behaviour is a key characteristic of emerging adulthood, personal desire and space or context overrides sociocultural values and beliefs allowing young people to proceed with desired sexual lifestyles (Arnett, 2000). Although Rishi understood cultural and religious values, expressing sexual desire was an important aspect of his emerging adulthood and therefore this takes priority over other thoughts. Pearce and Denton (2009: 415) writes "*for many of these youth, faith operates in the background, not as a central feature of their*

everyday lives" and explains how young people enacts their religious practices and cultural beliefs differently. In the conversation below, young males argue that the willingness of the young people to engage in sexual relationships is not affected by their attitudes or beliefs towards the culture or religion.

Pujan (21M): I don't think it has much impact.. I think love is bigger than the religion.. religion is just a belief but love is something you feel.. so if you are in love with some one and you both agree to have sex then I don't think religion or culture will play any role in stopping to express your feeling..

Dinesh (18M): Definitely not.. until now it has not influenced me and I am sure it cannot influence me in future.. I don't even care about society or culture.. its none of their business.. I take independent decisions, which is suitable for me..

Bishnu (17M): We know that sex before marriage is not allowed in our Hindu religion or in our Nepalese culture.. but I had sex [laughs].. I am not interested in religion.. I knew that after 16 I could really have sex.. so I did not care.. I didn't think about religion when I had sex.. you don't remember such things like culture and religion when you are going to have sex..

Some young people in this research described that personal willingness is the key to sexual intimacies, which is part of their youth development, regardless of their religious and cultural beliefs (Arnett, 2000). Pujan describes sexual intimacies as a part of the love relationship and argues that the love relationship is not affected by the beliefs towards culture or religion. Pujan asserts that mutual understanding plays an important role in determining consensual sexual relationships, and religious or cultural values have little influence over it. Dinesh asserts that individualism overpowers collectivism while making decisions towards everyday life of young people (Arnett, 2004). Similarly, Bishnu highlights that sexual behaviour of young people has little association with religious beliefs (Burdette *et al.*, 2009). From the fieldwork, it was clear that young people may well understand the religious and cultural values but it remains stored quietly in the back of their mind, and young men and women wish to keep it private rather than demonstrate it through the everyday social and sexual life activities.

8.5 Conclusion

Nepalese Young males and females acknowledge the importance of religion and culture within the familial context but showed low affiliations towards it at the individual level. Nepalese young people see themselves between the traditional sociocultural Nepalese society at the home environment and western or postmodern society at the private spaces of leisure lifestyles. The religious beliefs of the Nepalese young people are fluid and are often interconnected with their cultural values. The flexibility in the cultural values or religious beliefs are associated with the desire for experiencing free lifestyle in the modern society. Young people in this research demonstrated this by making modifications to constructing their own beliefs depending on the situation and resources available within that context. Culture and religion have become a private aspect of the life where the individual decide from various alternatives and constructs personal system of beliefs considering enjoyment and fulfillment towards sexual lifestyles and relationships (Luckman, 1990).

Young people in this research illustrated their beliefs in paired religion and referred ‘good thing’ within the religious and cultural practices as a way of finding happiness and keeping family and society together. However, busy lifestyles in the UK diminish young people’s ability to engage within the wider religious and cultural practices, which is compounded by the limited availability and accessibility of the Nepalese social surroundings and cultural context within the UK environment. Nepalese young people grow up in a social environment that restricts certain lifestyle characteristics, which is not accepted in the traditional Nepalese culture. Young people learn to negotiate with such circumstances and construct their identity with balanced freedom that is acceptable to both traditional and contemporary cultures, which helps them to adapt to the new way of living in the sociocultural environment of the UK. The evidence from the study points towards the idea that individualism overpowers collectivism while making decisions towards the everyday social and sexual lives of the young people. Although religious practices and cultural beliefs shape young people’s attitudes and behaviour toward sexual lifestyles and relationships, personal willingness is the key to sexual intimacies or

contemporary lifestyles, which is part of their youth development, regardless of their religious and cultural beliefs.

Chapter Nine: Young people's sexual health education and knowledge

9.1 Introduction

This chapter explores young people's sexual health education and knowledge that shapes their attitude and experiences towards sexual lifestyles and relationships. The lack of formal sex education at younger age in Nepal limits young people's understanding and awareness about the positive sexual health. Young people's engagement and participation in sex and relationship education (SRE) in the UK remains limited due to the sensitiveness towards the sexual health topics. Young people depend on alternative sources of information to receive an adequate knowledge to support their understanding on sexual matters. Following this, I attempt to describe Nepalese young people's insufficient knowledge and education towards sexual health through the idea of '*an aerosol effect*'.

9.2 Young people's sex education in Nepal "Whenever there used to be a topic related to sex, they always used to skip it"

Young people in this research were born outside the UK, mostly in Nepal, where they completed some or all parts of their schooling. Young people's perceptions and experiences of sex education in schools of Nepal were mixed and diverse.

Esha (19F): Yes, I studied it in Nepal in a subject called health and environment.. They used to teach about safe sex, using contraception, sexually transmitted diseases and that's all.. They did not teach anything other than that..

Sapna (23F): Yes there was a subject called health and environment.. population and environment [laughs].. there used to be some education about sexual health.. I don't remember much but sexual health education was like.. when boys and girls grow then what are the changes they experience.. what happens after marriage.. it was mostly like that [laughs]..

Rishi (22M): It was about sexual health.. like physical education.. family planning.. like from temporary to permanent.. like condoms.. pills.. like using it..

Although young people in this research accepted the limited nature of discussions on contraception, STDs and reproductive system, young males and females expressed the lack of appropriate SRE in the schools of Nepal. Following the review of the first National Reproductive Health Strategy in 1998, Nepal developed the National Adolescent Health and Development Strategy in 2000, which highlighted adolescent reproductive health as a critical component for an integrated sexual health and therefore an important indicator of Nation's overall health status (MOH, 2000; Campbell *et al.*, 2003). Based on this strategy, the concept of basic sex education was introduced into the secondary school syllabus in Nepal for class 9 and 10 students (aged 14-16 years) through a compulsory subject called *Health, population and environment* (Pokharel, Kulczycki and Shakya, 2006). A chapter *Reproductive health* within this book discussed the facts related to safe motherhood, reproductive rights, family planning, contraception, infertility and STDs. (*Ibid.*, 2006). A report by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation in Nepal (UNESCO, 2009) stated that this curriculum for sexual health education in schools at secondary levels were inadequate, ineffective and inconsistent to promote the sexual health of the young people. Comprehensive sex education is gaining acceptance globally and there is a need for such education to be age appropriate, begin as early as possible and take place both in schools and community to ensure mature sexual decision-making from young people (Haberland and Rogow, 2015). The provisions of formal sex education in schools of Nepal are limited. Young people in this research agreed studying the textbook *Health, population and environment* as part of their curriculum but raised concerns about the contents related to sexual and reproductive health information and the delivery of the curriculum in the classroom. Bishnu and Tulsi highlight the gaps in the sexual knowledge and understanding within the curriculum.

*Bishnu (17M): Yes, we were taught about general health but not about sexual health.. We had a book called *Health Education*, there*

used to be a chapter about reproductive health where they used to teach us very little about organs and health but whenever there used to be a topic related to sex, they always used to skip it... They don't teach such things.

Tulsi (24F): It was not about sexual health but it was more about how we can keep ourselves healthy.. it was more related to environment.. how does our body develop... how are the hormonal changes and like that...

Young people in this research asserted that the health information they received as part of the compulsory subject focused on biomedical contents, related to body, organs, physiological changes and contraception. It was understood that the curriculum lacked comprehensive discussions on sociocultural aspects of the sexual health, lifestyles and relationships or sexual attitudes and behaviour. UNESCO (2009) reported that the emerging issues such as sexuality, sexual harassment, gender inequalities, stigma and discrimination in expressing lifestyles and relationships were not addressed within the existing syllabus of presumed sex education. Stone, Ingham and Simkhada (2003) highlighted the need for developing the teaching materials that shifts away from the biomedical focus of the sexual health to ensure the inclusive contents incorporating social and cultural aspects related to the sexual lifestyles and relationships. In addition to the course contents and teaching materials, young people in this research insisted that the teacher felt uncomfortable about delivering the sexual health education programme in schools and this limited their learning opportunities. Saurav, Rishi and Sapna shared their sex education learning experiences as

Saurav (23M): The teacher used to be really ashamed.. its like teacher used to come.. we friends used to talk.. it used to be like a comedy scene.. everyone knew that this chapter (reproductive system) was going to be taught today but the lecture method of the teacher was like.. he used to come.. write on blackboard.. draw the reproductive parts.. read the book and gone.. so we were like what is he teaching.. it was like there were not much interaction with students...

Rishi (22M): It was very difficult.. it was like.. although it (reproductive system chapter) was in the textbook.. it was very challenging in delivering lectures.. Explaining it was difficult.. teacher used

to explain it but with difficulties... they used to use scientific words.. I think many of us did not even understand those words.. sometimes they used to discuss very advanced things but we were not taught about basic things which is necessary in everyday life.. we discussed very little about such things.. I don't know the reasons but I think it may be because of embarrassment [Laughs].. but any way it was very clear that even teacher faced quite a difficult situation in delivering the lecture.. and even for students.. we were not interested and we did not cooperate but anyway students are like kids... we used to laugh even if there were slight discussion about organs or sex..

Sapna (23F): *The teacher always used to try not to make it uncomfortable.. he used to try to avoid bringing awkward situation in the class.. In an attempt to make us understand and feel comfortable, he used to complicate the issue and confuse us (laughs)...*

Young people in this research believed shyness and embarrassment were major concerns while discussing the sexual health topics, which restricted interactions between teachers and students limiting the discussions within the classroom settings. It was seen that the didactic approach to the teaching where teachers attempt to discuss key sexual health concepts without interaction creates further confusion in understanding the topic. The attempt to make the topic comfortable entangles the meaning and makes it more complex to understand the key sexual health concepts. The delivery of sexual health education in Nepal remains poor due to the lack of appropriate training for teachers coupled with limited knowledge and poor teaching techniques on such sensitive topics (Acharya, van Teijlingen and Simkhada, 2009; Acharya, 2014; WHO, 2017). Pound, Langford and Campbell (2016: 4) describes, “*sex is a potent subject that can arouse strong emotions, reactions and feelings – of anxiety, embarrassment and vulnerability among others*”. The success of delivering effective sex education depends largely upon the sex educator delivering them (*Ibid.*, 2016). Young people in this research described their learning experiences of sexual health topic as robotic, with limited or no effective interactions.

Tara (24F): *Our teacher for that subject was very strict.. he used to teach nicely.. some boys used to joke by asking funny questions but*

our teacher was good and he did not used to skip the chapter.. I have heard from my friends that in their schools if they know that they will be taught that chapter (reproductive system) then they miss the school or do not attend that class but our was different.. may be because our teacher was strict so we were afraid of missing lectures. He used to have surprise test every week and used to ask questions to students, if we did not answer then we were punished. So everyone used to be scared and we used to study and be prepared for the test. But we did not ask any question.. even I did not ask any [laughs]. May be because the class environment was like that.. Also when in class 8, we were small, we were not very matured.. we were not even knowing or never felt that we need to know all this.. even if someone will ask questions, they were boys who will ask 1-2 questions for fun.. besides them, there were no other students who will ask such questions.. It used to be little difficult.. we friends were very close but still when it came to that chapter.. it used to be a little uncomfortable..

Bishnu (17M): Like we were shy. If sir was asking questions.. like even me.. I was not able to answer.. I mean.. I was not willing to answer.. even if I knew the answer.. I was not willing to speak.. It was like feeling little uncomfortable.

Saurav (23M): Students used to feel shy to ask questions and teachers used to feel shy to answer questions.. Normally on that specific topic, boys used to interact with boys and girls with girls.. boys and girls do not come together to discuss such topics..

Esha (19F): Even if students are given information, students are not interested in such education. Even if they sit in the class they don't pay attention to it.. that's how I think.. this may be because of lack of awareness about the importance of this information..

The strictness in the delivery of sexual health education and lack of inclusive environment to discuss sexual health matters limits the knowledge and understanding on the topic. The lack of mixed gender discussions further restricted the opportunities for interactive learning on sexual health topics. Pound, Langford and Campbell (2016) in the synthesis of qualitative studies of young people's views of their school-based SRE reported that embarrassment and discomfort, particularly in mixed sex SRE groups, diminish sexual discussions and impede engagement. The diminished

interactions make young people defiant and reluctant towards enngaging in any form of discussions. Young people believe this create an awkward and distressing situation where the classroom environment becomes hostile and even close friends find it difficult to start or continue discussions on sexual health topics. Furthermore, the lack of awareness about the importance of sex education diminishes young people's engagement during sex education, especially young females believe they do not need sex education, as they are not sexually active at an early age. Limited discussions on sexual health topics within the classroom due to shyness and awkwardness created diminished opportunities for young males and females to explore the subject matter in details and therefore restraining their knowledge and understanding on the topic (Pokharel, Kulczycki and Shakya, 2006).

9.3 Sex education for Nepalese young people in the UK “*I did not feel that it (SRE) was important for me*”:

Nepalese young people in the UK, who gets opportunity to attend the SRE in the UK schools, gain legitimate experience of the formal sex education. The learning experiences from SRE play an important role in changing attitudes and perceptions of Nepalese young men and women towards sexual health, lifestyles and relationships in the contemporary society of the UK. Asha, a 16-year-old female and youngest participant in this research arrived in the UK at the age of seven, shares her experiences as:

Asha (16F): Yes, I received it (SRE) in school here from year 7.. Even in primary school year 3 to 6 they used to teach us about animal reproduction.

RKS: What did they teach after year 7?

Asha: aaww.. protections, diseases you get by sleeping with people suffering from disease.. like sexual disease

RKS: Anything else?

Asha: Yes, about teenage pregnancy, using contraception, many in this country have abortion. Condom is not 100%. There are other forms of contraception like pills to protect.. positive and negative things related to it.

RKS: How did you feel about learning these things?

Asha: It was good.. I did understand.. I was interested but.. (long Pause)... that's it..

RKS: *But..*
Asha: *I did not ask any questions... My friends did ask...*
RKS: *What type of questions?*
Asha: *Like.. where can be bought (contraception).. Teachers used to say where it could be bought.. Even where to get for free.. such questions..*

Asha looked enthusiastic while sharing her learning experiences of SRE, as she had opportunity to attend schools in the UK from early years, which supported her to accept SRE as part of her continuous learning process. However, she indicates the focus remained on STDs, teenage pregnancy and contraception with limited or no education around lifestyle and relationship issues. Although Asha is keen towards receiving sexual health information, she expressed reluctance in open conversations during SRE sessions and used intermediary channel to justify her interactions towards discussing sexual matters. The issue of interactive discussions during SRE persist for Nepalese young people, even though they receive the SRE at the UK schools from professional and experienced sex educators (Coleman and Testa, 2007). Dibya, 18-year-old female did not receive any form of sex education before coming to the UK at the age of 12, highlights that awkwardness and shyness play an important role in restricting her engagement during SRE sessions.

Dibya (18F): *We were allowed to ask questions.. if they (teacher) were showing demonstrations then they use to show us one by one.. if someone does not want to do it or if someone does not feel comfortable doing it then they could skip it or just say I don't want to do it.*
RKS: *Did you participate?*
Dibya: *aaaaaaaa.. [making her faces]... I was small at that time.. it was like nothing but I felt it was distressing for me because I had never experienced such things.. they showed us how to do it (put condom) and if someone wanted to demonstrate then they used to give a model to practice but I did not do it.. I did not participate.. because I thought I would not need such things in my life.. and so I did not use it.. I did not try it..*
RKS: *Why did you think that you would not need it?*
Dibya: *Here the young people.. like from the teenage they quickly start using it (condoms) [laughs].. but I did not feel that it was important for me.. I thought it was not very necessary for me.. may be also because our culture is different and that may be the reason [Laughs].. Like.. I also think because there were people around me, it also felt like awkward and*

embarrassing.. but others were like.. I think most of them who participated and were trying to demonstrate were boys.. Girls were not participating that much.. I and some of my friends did not participate as it felt difficult... it was awkward and we were feeling shy..

Although SRE sessions in the UK create opportunities for young people towards interactive learning, Nepalese young people are hesitant to participate, as they feel self-conscious to engage in discussions around sexual matters. Dibya's perceptions about the need of SRE is integrated with the sociocultural disapproval towards premarital sex and concerns about the female virginity¹⁵⁴. Young people in this research were responsive to SRE; however, the sociocultural transition from the environment of Nepal to the UK have confined their ability to engage in discussions due to an embarrassment and taboo attached to the sexual health topics (French *et al.*, 2005). Young males in this research were equally hesitant to engage or participate during the SRE in the UK schools. Rishi and Bishnu share their learning experiences as:

Rishi (22M): Yes, here it was like separate workshops.. it was more open here... Most Nepalese are shy while discussing such things (sexual topics).. boys and girls.. they do discuss in their groups but boys and girls do not come together to discuss on such topics.. it is not very open in our society to discuss such topics.. these sorts of things (sexual health) are important to be discussed openly so that people can understand it well.. eemmm... for example how to put on condoms.. in what type of physical relationships we should not be in.. like what we should do and should not do in sexual intercourse... how it is risky for STDs... all these things were discussed very openly.. They used to talk about family planning measures.. they used to provide condoms for free.. there used to be both boys and girls... if there is any problem then we used to go and ask about it.. they used to give helpline numbers to contact later if there are any issues.. the culture here is like very quickly they will integrate with you making you comfortable.. they become open.. they are well experienced too.. they create a very friendly environment very quickly.. and because of that it was not a problem at all.. you can ask any questions very openly... people in the workshops were very friendly.

¹⁵⁴ See section 5.3.2 "Premarital sex and female virginity..."

Bishnu (17M): I used to attend lessons and used to learn whatever they taught.

RKS: Did you ask questions?

Bishnu: No.. Never..

RKS: Why?

Bishnu: emmmmm... I don't know.. but I just used to sit and listen.. after finishing.. come out of the lesson and that's all...

RKS: Was it interesting to sit and listen?

Bishnu: like we used to sit and listen.. used to be fun.. there used to be chitchat with friends.. it was like.. the lesson was like not about the sex education but it was like fun class for 15-20 minutes.. It was short and sweet compared to other subjects..

Nepalese young people in this research had praise for SRE in the UK. However, it was perceived that there was lack of inclusivity during the delivery of the SRE to the minority ethnic population. This restrict interactive learning opportunities for the Nepalese young people limiting their knowledge and understanding towards sexual health, lifestyle and relationships. Bishnu enjoyed SRE sessions but preferred to stay quiet and limit his interactions, especially with teachers (Haywood, 1996). The fieldwork discussions showed that young people who arrived in the UK at an early age were inclined to accept SRE as a part of their learning process and found it was easier to engage compared to those who have less time to settle in the UK schools. Young males and females in this research were equally shy towards communicating sexual matters during SRE sessions and beyond. It has become a challenge to ensure Nepalese young people are engaged in SRE sessions and their interest towards learning about sexual health is maintained.

9.4 Sources for sexual health knowledge and information

The limited sexual health education for Nepalese young people in the UK suggests that young men and women have to rely upon other sources of information to create sexual health knowledge and understanding. Saurav and Tara explain

Saurav (23M): Well in Nepal.. Normally it was from friends.. most of the things we learn are from the friend circle.. Another was from

TV serials.. there used to be some sex education awareness serials on TV.. xxx movies.. Also from leaflets or from clinics, pharmacy.. If I needed some information then I used to go and ask them.. Obviously, I used to feel hesitant but still I used to go if I needed some information.. After coming to the UK, I guess internet is the main source for information.. I think it answers lots of questions..

Tara (24F): If I have to say the main source of sex education except schools then it will be television and newspaper.. sometimes my mom, especially during periods.. In Nepal, we got maximum information from television.. here we get information from leaflets or posters too.. I also used to go to awareness day or open day about health with my friends in groups. We used to collect all the leaflets and brochures but actually we used to go there to have get together with friends to have fun [laughs].. we used to bring bag full of leaflets and brochures and used to keep in a corner of house and sometimes use it for time pass.

Young people in this research emphasised they occasionally rely on family, friends, internet and media as alternative sources for sexual health information. Young people use these sources to obtain basic information on sexual matters; however, it provides limited support towards the sexual development and decision-making. Kehily and Nayak (2017: 22) state “*sexual learning involves a ‘sticking together’ of different experiences, practices, knowledge and understanding. It is then contingently assembled in diverse ways through bodily practices, including first-hand experiences, peer-group interactions, formal and informal sexuality education, popular culture representations, as well as social media networks and technologies*”. As indicated in the above conversations, Nepalese young people lack these experiences and rely mostly on an individual exploration of the information, which limit the accessibility and depth of the adequate information. The approach taken by young people towards accessing and engaging with sexual health information is gender dependent (Measor, 2004). Males stressed the importance of friends, peer groups, internet and media as sources of information; whereas, females relied on family, magazine and television to gain sexual health information.

9.4.1 “We used to have discussions with our friends but it used to be brief.. even with mother, the discussion was very restricted”

Young people in this research admit that they occasionally depend on friends and families to receive information on sexual health issues. However, young people's conversation on sexual matters with parents are restricted¹⁵⁵ and with friends are considered uncertain. Asha and Richa believe that knowledge and information gained from friends and families towards sexual health are limited.

Asha (16F): We talk few bits about it (sexual topic) in friends circle.. about how to use protection.. such things.. not very serious conversation.. just what we have been taught in the class.. but nothing serious and not in very detail.. once out of class.. we speak among friends, mostly in group of girls..

Richa (22F): We used to have discussions with our friends but it used to be brief and very much about periods, who had their periods and who is having and so. Even with mother, the discussion was very restricted and she used to say what to do what not to do. She also used to say when you have periods, you should not walk with boys.. The thing about sexual engagement, I came to understand when I was studying my bachelor degree.

Young females in this research claim conversations about sexual health among friends largely focus on continued discussions on the topics from SRE. Monthly menstrual cycle is another major topic that features in most sexual health conversations among friends and families. However, the conversation on menstrual cycle remain brief and young people have poor and little understanding about their bodily changes (Sah, Ghimire and Parajuli, 2012). South Asian young people are less likely to discuss their sexual lifestyle experiences and behaviours to their peers or in their family due to the sociocultural taboo associated with the sexual health topics, which further restrict sharing of knowledge or guidance on sexual health matters (Testa and Coleman, 2006; Sinha *et al.*, 2005). The discussions around positive sexual health remain unexplored or limited. Sapna and Esha shared their menarcheal experience as a bad dream.

¹⁵⁵ See chapter 7

Esha (19F): I was 13-14 years old when I bleed for the first time.. I felt very weird that time, thinking that such things happen..

RKS: did you know about this (menstruation)?

Esha: Yes, I knew that but I had not experienced it before. The first time I experienced, I felt very different.

RKS: what did you do then?

Esha: eeee... I cried (smiles with feeling of sadness).. I cried because I was really shocked..

Young females in this research reveal that they have little understanding about the physical or physiological changes to their body during adolescent development due to the taboo attached to the conversations around sexual health topics (Adhikari and Tamang, 2009). Young females were frightened and fearful with the experience of the menarche, which prompted them to bring the discussion to their mothers to address the embarrassment and shame (Khanna, Goyal and Bhawsar, 2005). However, young people often received unsupportive information from the family towards female sexual development. Tara and dibya explain that the discouraging communication within families around sexual topics further marginalise Nepalese young females towards their understanding and experience of sexual lifestyles and relationships.

Tara (24F): From early years, my mom used to tell me after certain age I will have periods.. she used to speak about such things.. With mom, we discuss very little.. like I am going through this.. I have stomach pain and that's all.. even I have never spoken about it with my elder sister.. I am a little closer to my brother so sometime I do tell him.. like if sometimes we need to go to temple and if I am having period then I will tell him that I can't go because I am having period.. We don't speak about it in details..

Dibya (18F): I think I realised about it (period) when I was 12-13 years old.. In my family, I had only brothers, my mom was the only lady.. My sister was already married so she was not living with us.. So at that time I used to find it very difficult.. because if I had a sister of similar age or may be even my elder sister would have been there then it would have been more comfortable to share and discuss private talks (periods).. But I had only my mom.. and I could not say such things to my mom.. When I first had it (period).. I think I told my mom and she said you have become adult "taruni bhayis".. Mom used to make me understand after I had periods.. now you have become adult..

you should feel shame in front of your brothers.. mom used to teach me like what I should do, how I should behave, what I should not do in front of brothers.. sometimes I used to make silly mistakes in front of them [laughs].. so mom used to chase me and guide me to do it or behave correctly as she was the only female.. sometimes my sister used to call me to make me understand about what to do and what not to do [Laughs]..

Young females in this research highlight that conversation on sexual matters with mothers are focused on persuading young people to accept sociocultural norms attached to the sexual health, lifestyles and relationships. Young females in this research failed to receive good or supportive information within the family making them vulnerable towards sexual risks. The aim of the conversation within family is to clarify what young females should not to do during their menstruation periods rather than to support women with their physical and physiological changes (Adhikari et al., 2007). There is no or limited discussions within the family around supporting young females to contemplate their sexual lifestyles and behaviour. Young males often have limited or no conversation within the family and they rely on their peers to discuss sexual matters.

Saurav (23M): Normally it was from friends.. We used to talk about this (sexual topic) to our peers, friends.. most of us were of similar age.. During teenage it's like whatever your friends say, you trust them and its more trustworthy what elders say.. they get it from their elder brothers or their seniors.. that time and situation is like that... After getting a bit older or matured, we started understanding what elders are saying.. We used to talk about such things normally when we were going to play or while hanging out..

Bishnu (17M): We used to speak among friends.. about girls, sex.. you know how boys are like.. I don't know about girls but we had like group or gang of boys.. going out.. wandering around.. making girl friends.. talking about girls, condom, sex....

Young males mostly rely on friends or their senior colleagues to gain knowledge and understanding about the sexual health, lifestyles and relationships. Young males in this research highlight that the conversation on sexual matters among friends focused on physical appearances of girls,

condoms and passage to sexual engagement. The discussions around relationship issues or the positive sexual health were limited. It appeared that the Nepalese young people have a strong desire for improved SRE both in and out of the school (Griffiths *et al.*, 2008). However, lack of appropriate information during such conversations leave young people with scattered information, which is similar to '*an aerosol effect*'. An aerosol effect in the context of this research study is understood as a situation where young men and women presumably are aware about the sexual health topics; however, their understandings are limited and incomplete. They do not have a broad or an adequate knowledge about the issues that would support young people to make an informed decision to address their sexual health and relationship concerns.

9.4.2 “We learn many things from Internet and television... both good and bad things”

Young people in this research argued that internet and television are major sources of sexual health information in the contemporary society of the UK, which affect young people's decision-making towards sexual health, lifestyles and relationships. In the conversation below, Richa and Sapna explain the importance of digital media in their sexual lives.

Richa (22F): I have learnt all these things from internet media.. mom dad never taught us about it.. even in school they did not teach us such thing.. everything I guess I have learnt slowly from this media.. I think we learn a lot from media.. [RKS: such as..]. such as boys girls relationship.. sexual.. physical.. emotional.. I use internet to look for information.. sometimes to look for certain words.. I was not even knowing the word “Fuck”.. so I looked on the internet.. things can be learnt from TV as well.. it plays important and positive role in most cases.. but it also depends on individual.. whether they want to learn from it and take it positively or negatively..

Sapna (23F): I really don't know [laughs]...we learn many things from internet and television.. movies and music videos.. we learn both good and bad things .. but I think people follow the things they are inspired from.. For me, I am influenced positively..

The use of internet and various forms of media among Nepalese young people are widespread. Internet and media can be perceived in a positive or negative way depending on young people's negotiations with their everyday lifestyle activities (Coleman, Hendry and Kloep, 2007). Young people value the internet and media as accessible sources to gain information around the sexual health matters (Buckingham and Bragg, 2004). Internet is one of the major source of sexual health information for many Nepalese young people because they receive no or limited sex education in schools and the conversations on sexual health matters at home or in public spaces or with people from intergenerational difference is still a taboo within the South Asian culture (French *et al.*, 2005). Besides finding the sexual health information, young people use internet and media to reconceptualise their leisure time activites by watching internet videos, movies and music videos, which has the potential to shape the sexual lives of young people positively or negatively (Abbott-Chapman and Robertson, 2009). Dibya believes that the internet and media is an inspirational choice for receiving sexual health information.

Dibya (18F): I found internet very useful as there are many information related to any issues.. I use internet to find information about my body changes.. like about periods and others.. I used to follow some of the tips from the internet and it used to help me to recover from many issues.. if I had a partner then I could have even looked for information regarding protection and other things ..

RKS: What about television?

Dibya: I think.. obviously it influences.. like if I watch only British channels then I will definitely start thinking like them.. similarly if I watch Indian channels then I will think like the way it is shown there.. this is what happens with my mom she watches Indian serials and so she thinks like that but our thinking is different.. in many cases, I don't believe in what is shown in Indian serials.. I think media definitely has an impact on us..

RKS: So do you follow everything you see in Media?

Dibya: No.. its not like that.. these days many music videos are very sexual but I take it normally.. there is nothing abnormal in it.. Sometimes I read such things even in magazines and that's fine.. it gives some information.. I think there are other things I need to consider too.. like our culture is stronger and I need to think about my family.. Also my friends.. I think they have higher influence on me than media.. it depends on environment and many other things..

A number of young people in this research perceive internet and media in a positive way, which provide information and create awareness about various issues around sex and relationship. Dibya highlights that the sexual lives of young people is influenced by a combination of complex factors where internet and media play its part to construct young people's sexual identity. This constructed identity determines the selection of leisure lifestyles based on the social changes experienced by an individual. However, the key is to comply with the pressure of certain lifestyles and remain connected with the ethnic subgroups (Miles, 2000). Young women's engagement with the online resources is a new mode of activism and political subjectivity, which provides a safer channel and is often used to create an unregulated private space within a regulatory Nepalese traditional culture (Harris, 2008). For Dibya, it is important to adhere to the sociocultural norms of Nepalese society and transforms her understanding of the media in such a way that it is accepted within this society. Young males and females in this research have contrasting views towards the impact of media on their sexual lives. Young females in this research dismiss the influence of media on their sexual lifestyles.

Asha (16F): It does not influence me. If they (celebrities) wear like revealing clothes then it's not good.. but yes I like when they wear some good dress which is not revealing and which I think I can wear.. also, there is influence when selecting brands, games.. selecting which games to play.. so, ya they have little influence on fashion, brands, games but with what is acceptable for me.. but like.. nothing like that sexual type.. not like that..

Esha (19F): I do watch music videos.. but I don't think it influences me as I am grown up now.. I can make an independent decision of what is wrong and what is right.. I know what to learn from it and what to ignore.. [RKS: How do you decide about what to learn and what to ignore?]. It comes automatically.. I think myself as let's say if I am watching a dance video and if I like it then I say it's very good but if I see like dirty dances then I say it's not good.. and then I think why they make such videos and I get worried about the younger ones but I can differentiate.. I think its not good but it does not affect me... It depends very much on yourself..

Tulsi (24F): I don't think music videos or movies has any influence on me.. every person is different.. they (celebrities) are in different

level and I am on different level and I know that.. they are acting.. so I can't take it as real and have influence on my life.. I don't think media has any influence on me.... I think social media is completely rubbish.. it is their just to impose on people mind.. but it doesn't affect me...

Young females in this research asserted that media have little or no impact on their sexual lifestyles and argued that it depends on an individual to reflect upon the contents of the internet and media. Asha believes the most imminent way of getting influenced from the music videos are towards the fashion; but she asserts that the perceptions of what is seen does not always reflect on an individual wearing style. Steele and Brown (1995) suggest that young people's identification of who they are plays a central role in perceiving the media. Most young people today are born in a digital age where usage of personalised digital devices are common. The use of social media or internet is important aspect of young people's self-expression, which opens new ways of conversations and interactions related to their sexual matters (Batchelor, Kitzinger and Burtney, 2004). Miles (2000) argues that young people interpret the media according to the actualities of their own everyday life experiences. Young people do not consume media according to their affiliation to a particular subculture but they negotiate it every day through the lifestyle (Ibid., 2000). Young males in this research were receptive towards the media and Rishi expresses

Rishi: *Definitely.. definitely it does influence towards sex... like when you watch horror movies.. It used to be 18+ movies. I used to watch with my girlfriend.. and I don't know the exact reason and I don't know whether it has impact on us or not but when we were watching horror movies, we used to be more sexually excited... I have also heard this from my friends.. after watching horror movies people like to get involved in sexual activities...*

Internet and media play an important role in the life of young people to shape their attitudes and behaviour towards sex and relationships with everyday negotiations of their sexual lifestyles. Media have played a significant role in shaping attitudes and behaviours of young people towards sexual health; however, the explicit portrayals of sex and sexuality in media through films,

videos, printed media and now through the internet have increased the sexual health risks/vulnerability (Batchelor, Kitzinger and Burtney, 2004). Sexual content on media affect young people's sexual behaviour and encourage young people to initiate all types of sexual activity, including sexual intercourse (Acharya *et al.*, 2015). The sexual activity of young people largely depend on the intersections of the availability and accessibility of the internet and media and the social reality around them in the given environment.

9.5 Conclusion

This chapter discussed Nepalese young people's understanding about SRE in schools of Nepal and the UK. The lack of formal sex education at younger age in Nepal diminishes young people's participation and engagement in SRE in the UK due to the sensitiveness of the sexual health topics. Shyness and embarrassment were seen as major concerns, which restricted interactions between teachers and students limiting the discussions on sexual topics within the classroom settings. It was found that there is a need for comprehensive SRE with an adequate training for teachers to deliver sex education in Nepalese schools. Similarly, it was indicated that UK schools lack inclusivity that limits Nepalese young people interactive learning experiences towards SRE.

The PhD indicates that Nepalese young people depend on family and friends or internet and media to get information on sexual health to support their knowledge and understanding about sexual lifestyles and relationships. Young males rely on friends and colleagues or internet and media; whereas, females depend on family, magazines and television for sexual health information. It was noted that young females fail to receive appropriate information around basic sexual health topics such as menstrual cycle, which makes them vulnerable towards sexual health risks. The lack of supportive infomartion around sexual matters persuade women to accept family values and sociocultural norms, which burdens them with the familial expectations

and traditional norms, while ceases the opportunities to understand their sexual freedom and rights.

The scattered sexual health information and unawareness about sexual rights create a situation where young people lack an understanding of the positive sexual health. I see this as '*an aerosol effect*' where young people generate awareness about sexual health topics but fail to receive appropriate sex education in such a way that their knowledge and understanding on the sexual health topics remain scattered. As a result, young people fails to experience their positive sexual health.

Chapter Ten: Conclusions

Throughout the thesis I have selectively used quotations from research participants, which feature as sub-headings within the chapters. The aim has been to capture the participatory basis and rationale of thick description through the inclusion of their voices. In this concluding chapter, I tend to summarise young people's perceptions of their sexual lifestyles while experiencing relationships and marriage within the constraints of familial expectations, traditional sociocultural norms and lack of sexual health education. I seek to explore a tentative social ecological model of positive sexual health which is derived from the data collected during the fieldwork of this PhD. I summarise the opportunities and challenges identified during the use of ethnographic methods for this study. I then conclude the overall findings of the thesis by discussing positive sexual health and the contextual factors that affects the sexual lives of Nepalese young people. Following this, I discuss the importance of gender norms to understanding the concerns of gender discrimination within the Nepalese patriarchal society. I also encapsulate the intersections of the key social and cultural factors at multiple levels that explain the understanding of the positive sexual health of young people in the UK. Lastly, I will highlight key areas for future research.

10.1 Towards the Social Ecological Model of positive sexual health

The Social Ecological Model of Positive Sexual Health is derived from the ethnographic findings and has been constructed as a means to understanding and interpreting the data. The key aim of the model is to enable young people's voices to be put forward. Theoretically, the ethnographic data advances young people's agency by seeking to engage on a positive basis with their feelings; emotions and thoughts on sexual behaviour and attitudes. In this sense positive sexual health is based on recognition of young people's experiences and situation. While the findings also describes negative encounters that young people experienced in the form of parental surveillance or control whereby the young people in the study felt frustrated, ignored or

shamed. However, through all this the focus of the study remains on young people's creativity in advancing their own sexual development; even if this results in secret sexual relationships and contact, which may be seen as in contradiction to upholding parent's views about relationships and tradition.

Young people's sexual health is influenced by a complex web of interrelated social and cultural factors present within the environment in which they live (Shoveller *et al.*, 2004; Rao *et al.*, 2012). Bronfenbrenner's ecological model (1977, 1979, 1995) supports to examine the interactions of these factors at multiple levels, which shapes the social and sexual lives of young people. The social ecological paradigm provides a guiding framework to understanding young people and social change through the interactions between an individual and their social context (Revenson, 2002; Bronfenbrenner, 2009). I believe that every category of the sociocultural context is equally important and that their intersectional positions do not necessarily follow a particular hierarchical pattern (Hancock, 2007; Hankivsky *et al.*, 2010). Since the different dimensions of the social and sexual life cannot be separated into discrete or pure strands, the intersectionality helps to recognise the multidimensional nature and several levels of difference between the social identity categories (Brah, 1996). The model also attempts to unpack those factors at multiple levels in order to understand what is created and experienced at the intersections of the two or more axes of oppression. I follow the understanding of the Bronfenbrenner's ecological model to come up with a tentative model to investigate the individualised perceptions of the young people; as well as the wider sociocultural factors and their interactions that affect the sexual experiences and expressions of the Nepalese young men and women in the modern society of the UK.

I make an attempt to present an analytical framework in order to bring a coherent understanding of the social and cultural factors at the individual, familial and extrafamilial levels that would provide enough space to adapt to the nature of the social and sexual realities of the young people in the given environment (Hart, 2010). The tentative social ecological model of positive

sexual health (fig. 6) is derived from the analysis of the different aspects of the ethnographic data.

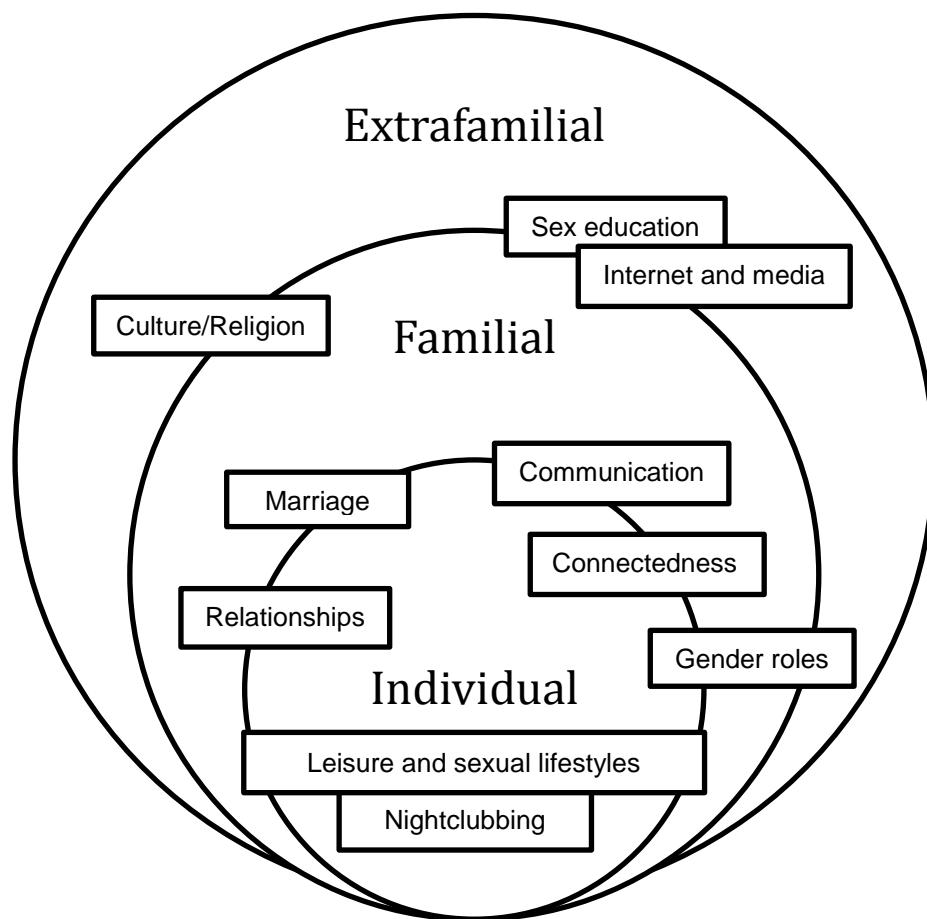


Figure 6: Towards the Social Ecological Model of positive sexual health

The model discusses various factors within different categories that converge at multiple levels to shape the sexual health, lifestyles and relationships of Nepalese young people in the UK. It is important to highlight that these factors are not explicit and the model does not discuss all of the factors that would presumably affect the young people towards their positive sexual health. The key factors in this tentative social ecological model of positive sexual health are identified from the data collected during the fieldwork and in-depth interviewing of the Nepalese young people for the purpose of this research.

These factors may vary depending on the researcher, research participants, research design, research context and the spatial context of the research.

The fieldwork and in-depth ethnographic interviewing demonstrated that the positive sexual health of the Nepalese young people is affected by a complex web of factors (Aggleton and Campbell, 2000; Russel, 2005b). The factors - such as sex education, internet and media, culture/religion, parental connectedness, communication within the family and gender roles- play an important role in shaping leisure, sexual lifestyles, relationships and marriages of Nepalese young people. I attempt to organise these factors at the three interactive levels: individual, familial and extrafamilial. Each of these key factors are presented at one or the other level and discussed independently or in combination within the chapters of this PhD thesis. Regardless of whether these factors are discussed independently or in combination, the determinants are interdependent and young people experience this at the multiple levels of intersections.

At the **individual level**, I attempt to understand the leisure, sexual lifestyles and relationships of Nepalese young people in the contemporary society of the UK. The changing lifestyles of Nepalese young people in the western world provide accessibility to new ways of living; in experiencing sexual freedom through transforming leisure activities and creating multiple opportunities for sexual intimacies and relationships. The increasing participation of Nepalese young people in nightclubbing events is a new way of experiencing changing lifestyles, which creates a private and confidential space within the leisure context to experience their sexual lives and discover opportunities for romantic or sexual relationships in warm and loving surroundings. The normalisation of alcohol consumption in modern society and the sociocultural acceptance of alcohol within the Nepalese community has created a distinct culture of intoxication that presumably pursue young people towards the contemporary sexual lifestyles.

Within the PhD, young men see sexual engagement as a part of their leisure lifestyle and experience it in the form of casual sex or by visiting sex workers;

whereas females consider sexual intimacy within a romantic relationship to sustain the affection and proximity. Young females within Nepalese society are considered as the upholders of the morality and are expected to secure the reputation and dignity of the family within the society. Females in a romantic relationship expect feelings or expressions of love and emotional attachment and prefer sex at the later stage within the context of an ongoing committed relationship; whereas men anticipate sex at an earlier stage within a caring and trusting relationship in order to maintain the quality of a relationship. Although the expectations of young people towards love and arranged marriages vary, the intention of Nepalese young males and female are clear. Nepalese young people wish to experience their sexual agency by selecting a partner for love marriage or have their say in selecting a bride or a groom before making an informed decision towards an arranged marriage. Young people's connectedness with their parents plays an important role in facilitating conversations on sexual matters within the family; which includes discussions on the selection of leisure and lifestyles, dating and romantic relationships and the approach and process towards the marriage relationship.

At the **familial level**, I attempt to explain Nepalese young people's understanding of the role of families towards shaping their sexual lifestyles, relationships and marriages in the contemporary society of the UK. I investigate the relationship between young people's gender and parental connectedness that determines the family expectations and the conversations on sexual health and lifestyle topics within the familial environment that eventually affects the sexual lives of the Nepalese young people in the dynamic modern society. Nepalese young people are constrained in experiencing leisure and lifestyles with regulations set by parents that restrict their movements during evenings and nights. Young people are presented with various challenges and concerns due to the family expectations, while attempting to experience their sexual agency in modern society. This prompts the secret nature of the leisure lifestyle, dating and romantic relationships amongst the young people; which occurs beyond the eyes of Nepalese parents, creating trust issues between young people and parents. The limited

conversation on sexual matters within the familial environment further disconnects the relationships between young people and their parents. Nevertheless, young people's attitudes towards premarital sex, female virginity and marriage relationships are shaped by family values and traditional sociocultural norms. Young people's decision making towards a love or arranged marriage is constrained by caste issues and familial expectations, which creates a struggle for Nepalese young people to balance their sexual agency against the structural factors.

At the **extrafamilial level**, I discuss Nepalese young people's understanding of culture and religion -as well as the role of sex education, internet and media- towards influencing their positive sexual health in the contemporary society of the UK. The religious beliefs of Nepalese young people are fluid and are often interconnected with their cultural values. The flexibility in the cultural values and/or religious beliefs of young Nepalese are associated with the desire for experiencing free lifestyles within modern society. Culture and religion have become a private aspect the social lives, where individuals decide -from various alternatives and constructs- on their own personal system of beliefs, depending on the context and resources available within that context and considering enjoyment and fulfillment towards sexual lifestyles and relationships. Young people's familial expectations are linked to the sociocultural norms and religious practices experienced within the family; which puts young people in a situation where they identify themselves differently, while expressing their sexual lifestyles at the individual and familial level. The dual identity allows young people to shift and modify their attitudes and beliefs towards the culture/religion and practice it, depending on the space and context. The restricted conversations on sexual matters between friends and within the family circle and the lack of engagement during formal or informal sex education limit young people's sexual health knowledge and understanding. This acts as a barrier to young people negotiating their sexual lives against the family values and sociocultural norms of Nepalese society.

10.2 Ethnographic methods: challenges and opportunities

This study seeks to contribute to the evidence base in order to understand the sexual health, lifestyles and relationships of Nepalese young people in the contemporary multicultural society of the UK and the diasporic Nepalese community in the western world. I began the fieldwork for this PhD study on the streets of Plumstead in the Royal Borough of Greenwich and made the journey to the nightclubs to collect the *thick descriptions* (Geertz, 1973) of the place and the people in order to understand the sexual lives of Nepalese young people through the expressions of their lifestyle experiences. In addition, I conducted 16 in-depth ethnographic interviews in order to explore the hidden or conflicting emotions and perceptions about the sexual lifestyles and relationships of the Nepalese young people in their own words; with a friendly conversation and reflective understanding to create an account of their past, present and future actions, experiences, thoughts and feelings in the wider context of the positive sexual health (Marvasti, 2004).

Deciding on and contextualising the ethnographic site(s) was the first challenge of my ethnographic journey. The movement of Nepalese young people in and around the 'Nepalese Hub'¹⁵⁶ demonstrated the need for an ethnographic observation at various sites. The sense of cultural connectedness to the different sites was maintained by organising the 'Nepalese' nightclubbing and the cultural or popular events in all parts of London and England, in an attempt to bring the Nepalese population together to experience the shared culture. The leisure and sexual lifestyles of young people is not confined to a specific location but the private and confidential space of nightclubbing provided an opportunity to observe the changing lifestyle of the Nepalese young people who were individualistic, comfortable and free towards expressing their sexual intimacies; willing to explore their hidden sexual identities where they chilled, consumed alcohol, smoked cigarette, used drugs, danced to the music, met new people and socialised with friends that shared common interests in expressing their sexual agency

¹⁵⁶ See section 2.2

away from the constraints of structural factors (Jackson, 2004; Northcote, 2006).

Access to the research participants through the gatekeepers, while researching a sensitive issue, was another challenge. Although I was overwhelmed with the positive responses received from the key people within the local Nepalese community; I struggled, was discouraged, became frustrated and spent 3 months constantly negotiating with the gatekeepers and the young people to conduct my first in-depth interview. Although building rapport and trust with the young people took time, it was a major tool in uncovering the sexual lives of the young men and women without causing any misgivings; while collecting emotional and sensitive data on their sexual health, lifestyles and relationships (Lee, 1993; Blackman, 2007). As a male researcher, access to female participants in order to discuss the sensitive issues was always going to be difficult because of the emotional sensitivity attached to the topic. This was seen, as a number of female participants cancelled their interviews hours before the scheduled time without giving constructive reasoning (Blackman, 2007).

The combination of ethnography and biography constituted a distinct methodology; which shared common concerns with communicating lived experiences by writing, narrating and representing the lives of common people in society through life stories, rapport and voice (Blackman, 2010). Moreover, it helped me to bring out my experiences about the research topic during the fieldwork in order to enhance the use of reflexivity in exploring the sexual health experiences of the informants. I found that the majority of young people felt uneasy in having conversations on sexual matters. However, responding to participant's calls and building rapport using a reflexive approach assisted in unfolding the sexual experiences of Nepalese young people. Young people in this research often showed initial reluctance in sharing their sexual experiences and were selective in choosing what information to share. In most cases- during the research fieldwork and interviews- I always had to make an extra effort to create an environment where young people were able to discuss their dating, relationships and

sexual experiences. My status as a doctor often played a role during interviews and informal conversations in building rapport, creating a trustful environment and assisting research participants to overcome their anxiety; while speaking about sexual health topics, as the participants felt like speaking to a medical doctor. However, a number of young men and women chose to report sexual perceptions and experiences in a more general way or by using an intermediary channel; citing an example of a friend or colleague. Interestingly, young people looked relaxed while talking about the sexual experiences of their friends.

10.3 Positive sexual health: An approach to young people's sexual lives

This PhD research explored positive sexual health through Nepalese young people's reflections and experiences of their sexual lifestyles and relationships; which are embedded in the sociocultural norms and patterns of the society and their interactions with the families, community and broader social structures at the individual; familial and extrafamilial level. The evidence from this study suggests that young people see leisure as a way to balance freedom and control by creating opportunities to experience changing lifestyles in order to enhance their social and sexual lives. The changing lifestyles of Nepalese young people in the western world provide accessibility to the new ways of living towards experiencing their sexual lives through transforming the leisure activities and creating multiple opportunities for sexual intimacies and relationships, emphasising the need to understand positive sexual health among this population. From the wider experience of the fieldwork, it was clear that an appropriate public space away from the Nepalese sociocultural norms acted as a private space for the young people to experience sexual lifestyles and relationships.

The findings suggested that young males are able to select from a wide range of outdoor and indoor leisure activities that suited their individual preferences and personality; whereas the leisure activities of young females mostly revolved around the home and local neighborhood and any activities away

from the home were constrained by family values and the traditional sociocultural norms. A number of young males and females in this research preferred to stay indoors; experiencing private leisure through a family gathering involving: friends and relatives, watching television, listening to music, using the internet on digital devices or playing games and interacting with friends in the virtual world (Abbott-Chapman and Robertson, 2009; Kelly, 2012). It appeared that although young people feel that their leisure and lifestyle experiences are often constrained by parental strictness, young men and women still manage to defy those constraints in order to experience their lifestyle choices. The lifestyle choices such as evening outs, nightclubbing, dance clubs and other leisure activities -that were not supported by the parents- occurred beyond the watchful eyes of their parents (Tirone and Pedlar, 2000). The PhD suggest that Nepalese young men and women have a good understanding of parental expectations and concerns, which makes them to develop negotiation skills and degrees of independence to create opportunities with an agreement that convinces their parents. This includes making excuses for not disclosing their actual whereabouts and lying creating trust issues, if young people perceive that the agreement with parents would not be reached.

The data found that young people created their own private and secret spaces within the crowd of the cultural events or festivals; to initiate friendships and to widen their circle by networking with relatives, friends and peer networks -with the use of social media- later resulting in romantic or intimate relationships. I presented a detailed account of an ethnographic observation of the nightclubbing event through the development of the thick description of the place and the people, as an example of the leisure activity, to demonstrate its popularity amongst Nepalese young people. It was found that young men and women see this confined space of the nightclub as a private and confidential environment within which they interact with each other in order to build friendships, romantic affairs to experience loving and affectionate relationships, sexual intimacies, rituals of intoxication and drug use. Although the nightclubbing events are gaining popularity amongst Nepalese young people as part of their sexual lifestyle, the data suggest that young men and

women experienced various challenges and constraints -due to their migration status, financial conditions, working patterns, sociocultural considerations and gender norms- that limit their experience of sexual agency.

The study supports the idea that globalisation, western consumer culture and economic liberalisation have resulted in the normalisation of alcohol usage within the wider Nepalese society, regardless of the castes, which presumably have persuaded young people towards experiencing contemporary sexual lifestyles (Parajuli, Macdonald and Jimba, 2015; Blackman, 2017). Despite the legal position that alcohol should be consumed only after the age of 16 or 17 years, most young people in this research had tried and experienced a state of intoxication before that legal age. Cultural practices were an important indicator for young people's alcohol consumption and it was important to understand the risks and issues around it, rather than demonising young people and perceiving 'youth as a trouble' (Blackman, 2017). I argue that this idea of normalisation could be considered in the context of young people's sexual lifestyles and relationships to understand the positive sexual health in the globalised free world.

It appeared that despite the increasing popularity and acceptance of dating and romantic relationships among Nepalese young people, many preferred to remain quiet and keep the relationship private and confidential in order to maintain the dignity and reputation of the family within the wider Nepalese society (Regmi *et al.*, 2011). Although the traditional roles of men as initiators may not be important today, due to the decreasing gender disparities, the research findings suggest that young females wait for boys to confess and make the first move within a dating and romantic relationship; even when females were infatuated towards the men (Meston, Trapnell and Gorzalka, 1998). Nepalese young females saw their body as culturally constructed, were cautious about sexual intimacy within a relationship and preferred to delay sexual intercourse (Thornham, 2000). It was found that women view love as a precondition for sexual intercourse and looked keen to invest more time in building romantic relationships before initiating sexual engagement. Females expected romance in the form of feelings, expressions of love, support and

emotional attachment and preferred sex at the later stage within the context of an ongoing committed romantic relationship; to strengthen the bonding that will eventually lead to marriage (Meston and Buss, 2007). On the contrary, young men in this research looked for sexual intimacies from the beginning of a romantic relationship, were less serious in pursuing a long-term committed relationship and were more likely to seek sexual intercourse with the females they do not intend to marry. The data indicate that breakup among females were often caused due to family or social pressure, whereas individual circumstances overpowered parental influence as a reason for men's breakup.

The research findings suggest that young males see premarital sex as part of their recreation or leisure activity and were willing to express their sexual freedom through casual sex or by visiting female sex workers; whereas young females were divided and reluctant in associating leisure with sexual engagement. Despite the varied perceptions of sexual engagement, the fieldwork discussions and observations indicate that there is an increasing prevalence of premarital sex amongst Nepalese young males and females. It appeared that young females were critical about the '*double standard*' expectations towards female virginity and therefore were thoughtful in engaging in casual or premarital sex. Young males demonstrated their masculinity through actively seeking short term sexual relationships without commitments in order to increase their number of sexual partners, while females were expected not to engage in sexual activity and behave as passive defenders. Those permitting sexual intercourse were labelled as '*easy or slut*' and were not considered to be eligible for marriage (Schmitt, 2003; Kelly, 2012: 465). The PhD indicate that young females and males would benefit from understanding and expressing positive sexual health, with an idea of normalisation, in the context of young people's sexual lifestyles and relationships (Blackman, 2009).

10.4 Contextual factors affecting young people's sexual health

The contextual factors play an important role in shaping sexual attitudes and behaviour of young people. The study indicates that parental control, traditional sociocultural norms and inadequate sex education control the sexual experiences of Nepalese young people. The findings suggest that Nepalese young people perceive that parents intend to maintain parental control to the highest possible level and therefore continuously seek to interfere with independent lifestyle choices of young people. This makes young people reluctant to discuss their sexual lifestyle choices with parents because of the fear that family values and parental strictness would not allow for their individual choices. Young people in this research claimed that hiding truth and lying to their parents about their social or sexual lifestyles and relationships is common practice within the Nepalese family.

The PhD suggest that the family values and traditional sociocultural norms associated with a marriage relationship makes it difficult for Nepalese young people to decide between a love and an arranged marriage. Nepalese young people often fail to initiate negotiation of their marriage proposal within the family, which makes them feel unwelcomed towards the system of arranged marriage. Moreover, young people are usually not consulted about their choice of a potential spouse or about their existing romantic relationship before the commencement of the marriage process. Young people's conformity towards parental consent coupled with the importance of caste for marriage in the collectivist family create an erratic space between consent and coercion for the young people. Although young people's marriage relationships are part of their individual sexual lifestyle, families play an important role in decision-making about the marriage of young people; which is shaped by the family values and sociocultural norms of the wider Nepalese community. Young people in this research seem eager to experience their sexual agency in contributing towards the selection of a prospective spouse through an alternative form of marriage - '*love arranged marriage*' - which is a transformation of love relationship into an arranged marriage and is presumably preferable to the young people as well as parents.

Young people in this research highlighted that caste issues were one of the major concerns that made it difficult for young people to gain parental consent for marriage. Young people describe that the degree of control about their marriage depends on the parental expectations. This is initially set at the highest possible level, where parents want young people to marry within their own castes. However, some parents were willing to compromise and accept spouse belonging to the same cultural or religious groups while others were flexible enough to accept if they come from the same ethnic groups or the same country. The research findings indicate Nepalese young people in contemporary society see the process of marriage on a continuum rather than the dichotomous variable of love and arranged marriage. Young people wish to play an active role in the decision-making process within the arranged marriage rather than going against it. The increasing involvement of young people in a spouse selection and family conversations to identify common expectations in terms of looking for a *good boy* or a *beautiful girl from the same caste* bring young people and parents to the consensus for the marriage in the form of ‘love arrange marriage’ or ‘arranged love marriage’

The data suggest that young people’s conversations on sexual matters with their parents are restricted due to the lack of parental connectedness and the sociocultural taboos associated with the sensitivity of the sexual health topics. Young people in this research believe that parental expectations and strictness are related to wider trust issues within the family, which plays a significant role in reducing parental connectedness and limits the conversation on sexual matters. It was found that young people get limited time and opportunity to have interactive discussions or informal conversations that would build or strengthen parental bonding and therefore many young people did not get a favourable environment in which to discuss sexual health topics with their parents. Young males and females in this research claimed their conversations with parents on sexual matters were relatively infrequent and they did not have detailed conversation about sexual health, lifestyles or relationship issues. The discussions remained limited to general conversations and in most cases, young people confined themselves by

merely responding to the parent's questions. This may be because young people were expected to show good behaviour and respect towards their elders rather than openly asking questions that involve interactive discussions on sensitive topics (Chung *et al.*, 2005). It was found that young people's conversation on sexual matters within a familial environment were often indirect or through nonverbal means, where male family members were less engaged in the sexual socialisation process and females often discussed restrictive sexual messages; protecting sexual values of the family and the community (Kim and Ward, 2007).

Young people in this research faced significant family restrictions and expectations but these varied depending on gender, dependency on family and family structure. These restrictions are associated with pride and the honour of the family and maintain influence and power on the social and sexual lives of the young people. Family expectations and strictness have both positive and negative impacts on the sexual lives of young people (Wisnieski, Sieving and Garwick, 2015). They may prevent young people from experiencing risky sexual lifestyles and relationships but may also create a situation where young people are fearful and reluctant to have any form of communication with their parents. The findings suggested that young people's conversations about personal relationships and sexual lifestyles in Nepalese families often creates an unfriendly environment with family rejections and negativity around girls' reputations. Young people fear about their privacy and assume Nepalese parents make false assumptions about their sexual activity if young men and women attempt to have a conversation on sexual matters (Eastman *et al.*, 2005).

The Nepalese community in the UK is one of the new communities and it would presumably take several years before understanding any indication of the cultural or religious changes within this population. Although young people in this research did not demonstrate complete transformation of sociocultural norms, since they are first generation immigrants to the UK, the next generation of Nepalese immigrants would possibly demonstrate consistent British sociocultural values towards sexuality and sexual behaviours. Young

people's construction of identities, including their religious involvement after coming to the UK, remains ongoing between the two cultures (Bauman, 1996). The initial evidence of this transformation was observed during the fieldwork -especially during the observations of the nightclubbing- and young people expressed their lifestyles with a new way of living, which has led to changes in their attitudes and behaviours towards sexual lifestyles and relationships.

The research findings suggest that Nepalese young people depend on family and friends or internet and media to get information on sexual health, in order to support their knowledge and understanding about sexual lifestyles and relationships. Young males stressed the importance of friends, peer groups, internet and media as sources of information; whereas females relied on family, especially mothers, magazines and television to gain sexual health information. It was found that a lack of formal sex education at a younger age in Nepal and limited engagement or participation in sex and relationship education (SRE) in the UK -due to the sensitivity of the sexual health topics- restrict young people's understanding and awareness about positive sexual health. The PhD indicates that young people's limited participation in discussing sexual health information is associated with shyness and embarrassment, which restricts interactive conversation on sexual health topics. The scattered sexual health information and unawareness about sexual rights create a situation where young people lack an understanding of the positive sexual health. I described this as '*an aerosol effect*' where young people generate awareness about sexual health topics but fail to receive appropriate sex education in such a way that their knowledge and understanding on the sexual health topics remain scattered. As a result, young people fails to experience their positive sexual health.

Nepalese young people in the study see themselves between traditional sociocultural Nepalese society within the home environment and western or postmodern society within the private spaces of their leisure lifestyles. The research findings demonstrate that Nepalese young people believed in paired religion and rejected a firm association with any particular religion. The data

suggest that Nepalese young people's understanding about culture and religion is unsettled, due to its complexity within the Nepalese society. Young men and women often get distracted from the specificity of their religious and cultural beliefs and therefore consider it together with an interdependent understanding. Young males and females continue to review their cultural and religious beliefs, learnt from families, in order to construct their personal beliefs and identities depending on the context, resources available within that context and their own reflections; which shapes their attitudes and behaviour towards their sexual health, lifestyle and relationships (Arnett, 2000). It was found that although young people believed culture and religion to be important aspects of their lives, they received less attention due to other important commitments and got overlooked in the everyday social and sexual lives of the young people. Culture and religion have become a private aspect of the life where the individual decide from various alternatives and constructs personal system of beliefs considering enjoyment and fulfillment towards sexual lifestyles and relationships (Luckman, 1990). Young people in this research believe that cultural values or religious beliefs are part of their life and always operate in the background. However, young males and females decide and take individual decisions based on other factors around them that satisfy their individual needs. Young people asserted that personal willingness is the key to sexual intimacies; which is part of their youth development, regardless of their religious and cultural beliefs.

10.5 Gender Norms

The research found that gender discrimination within a family is a traditional feature of the wider Nepalese society and it is challenging to make changes towards this sociocultural norm. Young people believe that males and females within the Nepalese family are viewed differently: females were seen as temporary members and a responsibility for the family who has to leave the parent after the marriage; whereas males were expected to provide social and financial support to the parents in their old age, which means the parents needed to be on good terms with their sons and be supportive of the decision

they have made (Das and Kemp, 1997). The research findings indicate that females within the Nepalese society are considered as upholders of morality and are urged to follow the traditional sociocultural norms in order to secure the reputation and dignity of the family within the society (Dasgupta, 1998). Young females are expected to demonstrate positive characterisation through affirmative mannerism towards traditional and cultural norms, to be excellent with household work and responsibility and not to be involved in personal relationships or sexual intimacy. It was found that young females experience a higher degree of parental monitoring and control, which limits their sexual agency towards experiencing contemporary lifestyles in the western society and affects morale and confidence in decision-making towards their sexual lives.

The PhD suggests that young females experienced the sexual double standard at several instances. Young females described that they were often communicated to about the responsibilities of maintaining family pride and honour by not engaging in premarital sexual activity; whereas young males were not bound by such responsibilities and were permitted to explore their sexual experiences. Young females were concerned about their virginity and believed that if they end up having multiple sexual partners then they will be labeled as *sluts*, while men with similar behaviour will be seen as *studs* (Lees, 1993). Young females in this research illustrated that the sexual lives of young women in the Nepalese society were sensitive and insecure, where the rumours of any wrongdoing could have a potential impact in the search for a prospective spouse, future relationships and marriage.

Traditional sociocultural norms and families play an important role in influencing young women's sexual lifestyles, relationships and marriage and females are expected to experience their sexual lives by maintaining the culture of the wider Nepalese society. It was revealed that if women start visiting nightclubs or having night outs then they are considered as "*bigreko chorī*" (spoiled daughter) and the chances of them getting involved in sexual intimacy becomes higher, bringing shame and disgrace to the family. This is not accepted within Nepalese families, as every parent wants their daughter

as “*sapreko chorī*” (well-behaved daughter). The evidence suggests that young females fear negative characterisation and as such rumours are spread around the community, portraying the girl and family as malicious. I described the spreading of these rumours as ‘*a ripple effect*’ where rumours depicting women’s characterisation and mocking their dignity create waves of gossips in the societal network. It was found that people in the society tends to add their individual perceptions and judgment to sensitise the information before passing it to other individuals and the process continues until it creates maximum negativity around female characterisation within the society.

Young females were cautious and thoughtful in discussing personal relationships and private issues with their mothers because of possible consequences related to the disclosure of relationships, yet many favoured developing maternal bonding as early as possible by enacting closeness or discussing lifestyles and relationships. It was perceived that the attempted maternal bonding and honest discussions with mothers were crucial to secure their backing and support within the familial environment, which was necessary to make an attempt at experiencing sexual freedom. Young women’s conversations within the family environment are usually linked to the marriage and they start talking about marriage and expectations from marriage from an early age of 6 or 7 years (Ghimire and Samuels, 2014). It was found that the cultural practices of arranged marriage reflect similar choices to the perceptions of young females; which is finding a ‘good boy’ who is rich, educated, employed, has the ability to create a financial safety net with love and support to secure the future of the family and is capable of leading the family socially and economically without hardships.

The data suggested that for married females, their husband replaces their parents as a guardian and women’s leisure, lifestyle choices and decision-making occurs in accordance with the lifestyle experiences of the husband. It was found that there are marked gender differences in experiencing leisure and lifestyles where females are seen involved in unpaid household or domestic activities and rely on their husbands for fragmented leisure pursuits; whereas males tend to have pure leisure experiences with an individualised

and independent leisure time (Bittman and Wajcman, 2000). The collective leisure activities within marriage relationships apply only to Nepalese females, whereby males have the power for decision-making and females abide by their decisions. Although Nepalese young females showed greater concerns compared to their male counterparts, all young people have parental concerns over experiencing their lifestyles in the changing world. This research study stressed that social changes are making inroads into the cultural values of Nepalese families in western society but the changes are slow and limited that make young people struggle to balance their sexual lives between the traditional Nepalese culture and the contemporary, free society of the UK.

10.6 Intersections at multiple levels

The intersectionality theory in this thesis was used to explore the complex structural determinants that influence sexual health, lifestyles and relationships of Nepalese young people. Intersectionality as an analytical tool in this research is used to understand and explore a range of issues and social problems in relation to sexual health, lifestyles and relationships of Nepalese young people in the UK (Collins and Bilge, 2016). It helped to understand the interconnectedness between sexual agency and structural factors and to provide clear understanding of the everyday sexual lives of Nepalese young people at multiple levels of intersections, in order to construct the ideas of discrimination or oppression. Moreover, it examined the intersections of individual, familial and extrafamilial factors that affect the sexual lives of young people at multiple levels; within the wider sociocultural context of the western society of the UK.

Intersectionality in this research adopted existing analytical categories to examine social categories and demonstrate relationships of social inequalities at multiple and neglected points of intersection in order to reveal the complexity of lived experiences within different social positions (Crenshaw, 1989). This research deconstructed the analytical categories that operates with race, gender and social positions to explain the complex social life

experiences towards sexual health, lifestyles and relationships that simplified the social fictions to highlight the differences leading to marginalisation in the contemporary world (Yuval-Davis, 2011b; Hancock, 2016). The social and political belonging of the people in the globalised world relates to the identifications and emotional attachments towards the various collectivities and grouping within the social locations that shapes people's ethical and political value towards judging their own and other's belongings (Yuval Davis, 2011a). Intersectionality theory was used to explore the similarities and differences between young people's perceptions and experiences.

The factors affecting the sexual health, lifestyles and relationships of young people cannot be pre-determined but differ by nation, culture, religion, political, socioeconomic context and geographical setting (Yuval-Davis, 2006). Young people in this research experienced various forms of oppression; depending on demographic features¹⁵⁷, socioeconomic situation, space and association with family values; culture and religion. While there were clear gendered differences; age, young people's migration status in the UK, the caste hierarchies, parental connectedness, conversation on sexual matters and length of stay in the UK played important role in the expression of sexual lifestyle and relationships of Nepalese young people. Young people's familial background such as parental education, their working patterns and marital status played an important role in shaping the sexual health of the young people. This research suggests that the structural constraints such as time, money, work, study, migration, culture, religion and family obligations together with the interpersonal constraints of not having suitable friends, partners or groups for private leisure activity, ethnicity, gender are at play collectively to make sexual life challenging with the feeling of isolation and lack of acceptance within the new environment (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1992; Yuval-Davis, 2006). The complex interactions between various social structures at multiple levels contribute towards young people's experiences of multiple identities in their everyday lives (Yuval-Davis, 1997).

¹⁵⁷ Age, gender, marital status, education and migration status

The evidence from this research suggests that sexual intimacies and engagement within a relationship depend on individual characteristics; as well as various associated factors such as successfully locating or accessing private spaces, preparedness through sexual intimacies, length or timing of relationships and contextual factors. Young people asserted that the initiation of physical intimacies in a relationship was often unplanned and spontaneous and depended on various contextual factors around them. It was found that the religious beliefs of Nepalese young people depended on the intersections of various social and cultural factors such as: familial religious beliefs and practices, surroundings in which they grow, family expectations, gender and individual preferences. However, culture and/or religion was not seen as the central feature of Nepalese young people's sexual lives.

10.7 Policy implications and future areas for research

The sexual health of Nepalese young people in the UK has largely been unexplored. This is one of the first research studies to explore the sexual lifestyles and relationships of Nepalese young people in order to understand the positive dimension of sexual health. This research fills the knowledge gap that would support the policy makers to understand cultural differences within the South Asian population and wider BAME community, which will improve the provision for sexual health education towards the marginalised community. This is also new research about sexual health of Nepalese young people in the Western world. With the increasing number of Nepalese ethnic population born, living or residing into the Western countries, this study will contribute towards the understanding of sexual health, lifestyles and relationships of Nepalese young people in the contemporary society (Adhikari, 2012; IOM, 2012). In addition, the study could also contribute towards the sexual health policy making in the changing Nepalese society where young people are increasingly experiencing contemporary sexual lifestyles and relationships issues (Adhikari and Tamang, 2009; Regmi, Simkhada and van Teijlingen, 2010b; Regmi et al., 2011). This study would prompt researchers to conduct further studies that would make policy makers vigilant towards

safeguarding Nepalese young people from sexual health risks and vulnerability. I suggest the following areas of study for future research projects:

1. As a male researcher, I had limited opportunity to explore the sexual lives of the young females from an insider's perspectives or using a feminist lens. Research by a female scholar, particularly if they were Nepalese, to unfold the positive sexual health of young women would hold the emotions and sensitivity of the topic effectively and would contribute to the wider understanding of their sexual lives.
2. Although this research focussed on the lives of young people, it was clear that Nepalese parents play an important role in the sexual lives of young people. A research project exploring parental expectations and perceptions towards the sexual lives of their sons or daughters will provide an understanding about the social change among parents towards their young children.
3. The fieldwork observations and discussions revealed that drug use was one of the major concerns amongst Nepalese young people in the local community of Plumstead. However, young people were unwilling to share their experiences about drug use (Simkhada *et al.*, 2015). Exploring social and cultural issues affecting drug use or abuse amongst the Nepalese population in the UK would provide an understanding about the issues in Nepalese society.
4. None of my research participants were homosexual. This may be possibly because young people were unwilling to disclose their identity about homosexuality. Homosexuality amongst the Nepalese population is an important exploration, as was indicated during the nightclubbing event. Additional research is required to understand perceptions of the Nepalese LGBT population towards positive sexual health.
5. Nepalese young people are expected to understand the traditional norms and sociocultural values of the family and to adopt parental expectations, as well as strictness enforced on them, while expressing their leisure and lifestyle. Failure to do so risks them experiencing violence as punishment; which can vary from shouting, slapping or

whacking hard with soft objects. The use of violence within Nepalese families as a tool for parental surveillance and control remains unexplored.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Posters advertising Nepalese nightclubbing events





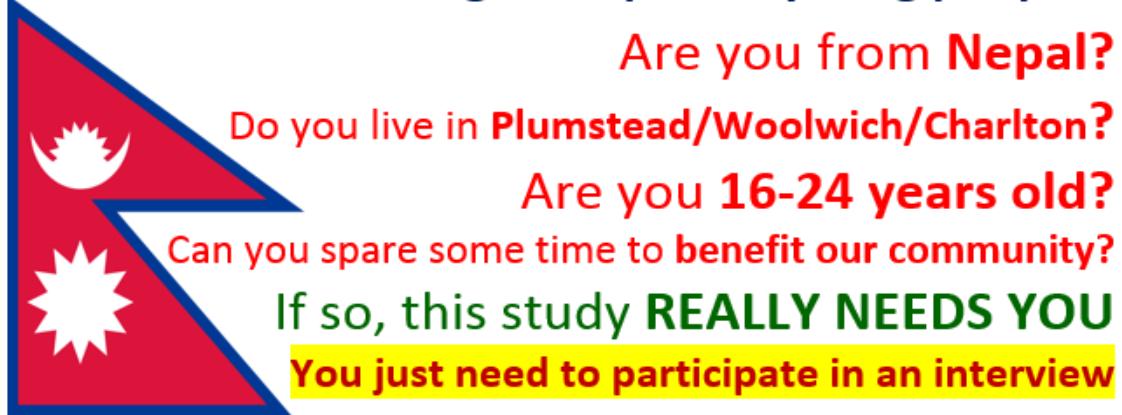


Appendix 2: Research leaflet



CONFIDENTIAL Research Study

A study about social and cultural issues affecting health and wellbeing of Nepalese young people



A **CONFIDENTIAL** PhD study is being conducted to explore social and cultural factors which shape healthy lifestyle and relationship of Nepalese young people. This study will create awareness about health and wellbeing and promote positive health changes in our Nepalese community. Your participation in this research study is for good cause and is highly appreciated.

No personal details will be asked. No one will ever find out that you were interviewed, not even your friends or family.

This is a perfect opportunity to share your experiences about lifestyle and relationship issues **CONFIDENTIALLY**, which sometimes is very difficult to share even with your friends and families. The information you provide would help in understanding and planning sexual and reproductive health education and services for Nepalese young people in the UK.

Please support this research and our Nepalese community in the UK by participating into it or informing your friends and families about it.

For any queries or detailed information about this research study, please feel free to contact me through an Email/SMS/Call (it will remain confidential).

Contact Details: Dr. Rajeeb Kumar Sah

Email: r.k.sah420@canterbury.ac.uk Or rajeebsah@hotmail.com Mobile: [07412514192](tel:07412514192)

Facebook: www.facebook.com/rajeeb.sah.3

*****In return for your time and effort, you will be paid £20 worth gift vouchers for taking part in this study*****

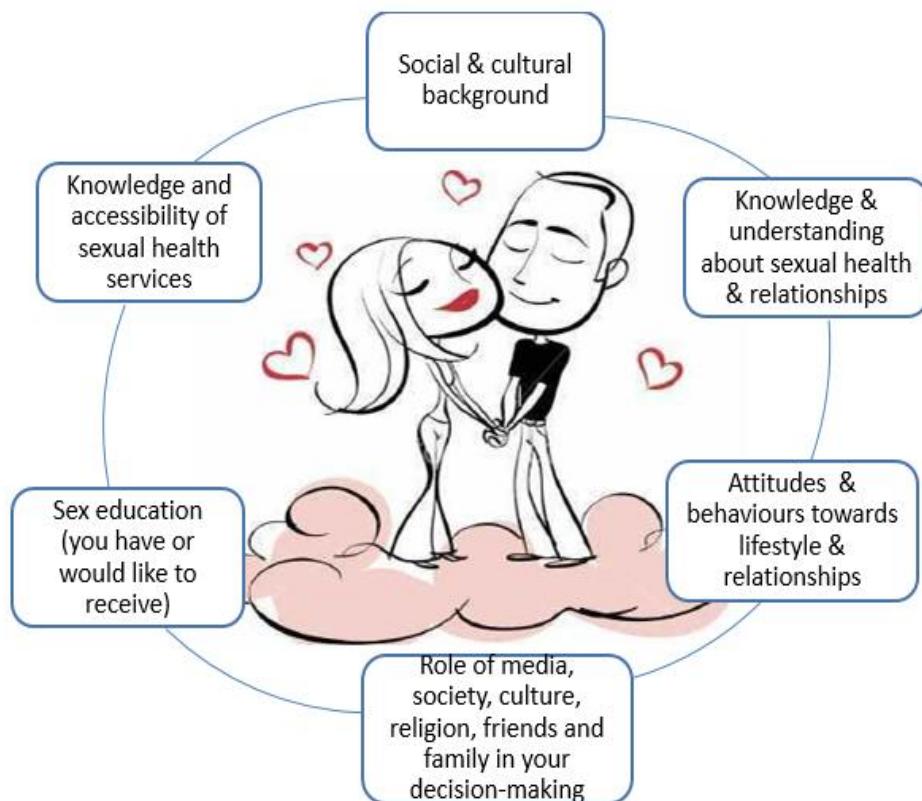
*** Thank you for your interest and time ***

Appendix 3: Advertising materials



A study about healthy lifestyle and relationship issues of Nepalese young people

A **confidential** PhD study is being conducted to raise the voice of Nepalese young people about their lifestyle, health and wellbeing and to bring positive changes in the community. The study intends to explore social and cultural factors affecting health and relationship issues of Nepalese young people. To participate in this study you will need to be **Young people aged 16-24 years** and from **Nepalese ethnic background**.



Note: Your participation in this research study is voluntary. Even after you decide to participate, you will be free to withdraw at any time without having to give any reason. Your participation in this research study will be highly appreciated. The information you provide would be very helpful in understanding and planning sexual and reproductive health education and services for Nepalese young people. If you have any questions or concerns about the study or requirements for participation, please do not hesitate to contact me or my supervisor.

Our details are:

Dr. Rajeeb Kumar Sah (Researcher)
Email: r.k.sah420@canterbury.ac.uk
Or rajeebsah@hotmail.com
Phone: +44 (0) 7412514192

Prof. Shane Blackman (Supervisor)
Email: shane.blackman@canterbury.ac.uk
Phone: +44 (0) 1227782558

***** Thank you for your interest and time *****

Appendix 4: Interview guidelines

Introduction

- Background to the project
- Reassurance about embarrassment and giggling
- Demographic information:
 - Length of stay in the UK
 - Age, sex and sexuality
 - Place of birth
 - Living with or away from family
 - Parents and grandparents residential status
 - Bread winner/ family head
 - Languages (Written and spoken)
 - Ethnicity and religion
 - relationship status
 - Education status
 - current occupational status;
 - parental occupational status,
 - offspring/siblings,
 - Typical evening, weekend activities
 - Who with? Do people ever pair off? How? Who asks who?

Individual and social factors:

- Family expectation
- Parental communication
- Peer influence
- Society and culture
- Religious beliefs (attending temples, religious ceremonies, etc.)
- Alcohol and sex
- Day, evening and weekend activities
- Social Networking
- Media (Internet, films, magazines, popular music videos)

Sexual behaviour:

- Beliefs about Marriage (arranged and love marriage)
- Beliefs about pre-marital sex and one night stand
- Discussing sex and sharing information about sexual health
- Knowledge/Awareness about teenage pregnancy
- How do you define sex and virginity?
- Importance of virginity and sexual relationship
- Past and present relationship

Sex education/Sources of information:

- Respondents' knowledge and sources of information regarding Relationships, Sex, STDs and Contraception.
- Role of parents, elderly, peers, educational system, media in informing young people about sexual matters.
- Sex education Where – school, college, community services
- When – at what age?
- Were you/your educator embarrassed or upset?
- What did they cover (subject matter)?
- Did you ask any questions?
- How did you perceive sex education – positive/negative - was it needed at an early/late age or not needed at all

Appendix 5: Ethical approval letter



27 October 2013

Ref: 13/FHSC/013

Dr Rajeeb Kumar Sah
Department of Media, Art and Design (Media and Cultural Studies)
Faculty of Arts and Humanities

Dear Rajeeb

Project Title: *"Impact of social and cultural determinants of sexual health affecting attitudes and behaviour of Nepalese young people living in the United Kingdom."*

Your application was reviewed by the Faculty of Health and Social Care Research Ethics Committee on 25 September 2013. The Committee agreed that final approval could be given once certain conditions – as set out in the letter of 7 October 2013 – were met.

The Chair of the Committee is content that these conditions have now been met in full, and I am writing to give formal confirmation that you can commence your research. Any significant change in the question, design or conduct of the study over its course should be notified to the Research Office, and may require a new application for ethics approval. You are also required to inform me once your research has been completed and any qualification awarded.

With best wishes for a successful project.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Roger Bone". A short horizontal line is drawn below the signature.

Roger Bone
Research Governance Manager
Research Office, Eg21
Tel: 01227 782940 ext 3272 (enter at prompt)
Email: roger.bone@canterbury.ac.uk

cc: Professor Shane Blackman

Research Office
Research and Enterprise Development Centre

Canterbury Christ Church University
North Holmes Campus, Canterbury, Kent, CT1 1QU
Tel +44 (0)1227 767700 Fax +44 (0)1227 470442
www.canterbury.ac.uk

Professor Rama Thirunamachandran, Vice Chancellor and Principal

Registered Company No: 4793659
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Registered Charity No: 1098136

Appendix 6: Consent Form



CONSENT FORM (Interviews)

Title of Project: A study about social and cultural issues affecting sexual health and wellbeing of Nepalese young people in the United Kingdom

Name of Researcher: Dr. Rajeeb Kumar Sah

Contact details:

Address:

Graduate School
North Holmes Campus
North Holmes Road
Canterbury
Kent, CT1 1QU

Tel:

+44 (0) 1227782701

Email:

r.k.sah420@canterbury.ac.uk

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.
3. I understand that any personal information that I provide to the researchers will be kept strictly confidential
4. I understand that the interview will be audio recorded
5. I agree to take part in the above study

Name of Participant

Date

Signature

Name of Person taking consent
(if different from researcher)

Date

Signature

Researcher

Date

Signature

Copies:
1 for participant
1 for researcher

Appendix 7: Participant Information Sheet



PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

A study about social and cultural issues affecting sexual health and wellbeing of Nepalese young people in the UK

This PhD research study is conducted by **Dr. Rajeeb Kumar Sah** in the **Department of Health and Social care** under the supervision of **Prof. Shane Blackman** and **Dr. Douglas MacInnes** at **Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU)**.

The Nepalese population, including young people, in the UK has increased significantly in the last decade. This is mostly due to an increasing number of Ghurkhas, students, professionals and their dependants. Social and cultural issues such as gender, migration status, education and media strongly affect young people's lifestyle and relationships. Within the Nepalese community, most young people live with their families however they are embarrassed to discuss about their lifestyle, relationships and sexual health issues with them. Society and cultural values of family influence young peoples' decision-making about their lifestyle and relationships. After coming to the UK, these young people often struggle to adapt to the new western culture because of their traditional beliefs. Media such as radio, television and internet are popular among Nepalese young people and it directly influences their attitudes and behaviour towards sexual health, which makes them see world differently from their parents. The study intends to explore the social and cultural factors that affect the sexual health and wellbeing of Nepalese young people.

Your participation in this research study is highly appreciated. The information you provide will be very helpful in understanding and planning sexual health education and services for Nepalese young people in the UK. Your participation will contribute the researcher to deeply understand sexual health, lifestyle and relationship issues among Nepalese young people and their cultural adaptation in the new modern society of United Kingdom. To participate in this study, you need to be from **Nepalese ethnic background and aged between 16-24 years**.

Participants in this study will be required to:

- Read this information sheet
- Ask the researcher for explanations of any questions
- Sign the consent form
- Take part in an one to one interview

The interview will last for 45 to 60 minutes and will be tape-recorded. The language used in an interview can be English/Nepali or both. It will be transcribed, translated, analysed and stored securely and confidentially. During interview, you will be asked to share your experiences and perceptions of:

- Social and cultural background (living with family in society, influence of culture, religion and beliefs)
- Knowledge and understanding about sexual health, lifestyle and relationship
- Attitudes and behaviours towards alcohol, sex, teenage pregnancy, relationships
- Role of media, society, culture, religion, friends and family in your sexual behaviour decision-making
- Beliefs about marriage and premarital sex
- Sex education (you have or would like to receive)
- Knowledge and accessibility of sexual health services

The approval for the research study has been obtained from **Ethics Committee at CCCU**. The research will follow strict ethical procedures of maintaining **anonymity and confidentiality** throughout the research process. The informed consent will be signed by every participant prior to the interview. The researcher will only have the access to the collected data. After completion of the study, all data will be stored securely within CCCU premises in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and the University's own data protection requirements.

The results of this study will be disseminated through **University thesis, Journal article or book publication, Conference paper/poster presentation.**

Although your participation in this research study is voluntary, you will be given a gift voucher as a goodwill gesture for your time and effort. Even after you decide to participate, you will be free to withdraw at any time without having to give a reason. If you have any questions or concerns about the nature, procedures or requirements for participation, please do not hesitate to contact my supervisor or me. **Our details are:**

Dr. Rajeeb Kumar Sah(Researcher)

Email: r.k.sah420@canterbury.ac.uk

Or rajeebsah@hotmail.com

Phone: +44 (0) 7412514192

Prof. Shane Blackman (Supervisor)

Email: shane.blackman@canterbury.ac.uk

Phone: +44 (0) 1227782558