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Kassandra D. Viers
University of Montana

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VIOLENCE, CATASTROPHE, AND AGENCY IN NEPAL: A DEEPER
UNDERSTANDING OF THE 2015 EARTHQUAKES AND BORDER BLOCKADE

By

KASSANDRA DIANE VIERS

Bachelors of Arts, University of Rochester, Rochester, NY, 2014

Thesis

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Approved by:

Scott Whittenburg, Dean of The Graduate School
Graduate School

Kimber Haddix McKay, Chair
Department of Anthropology

G.G. Weix
Department of Anthropology

Ranjan Shrestha
Department of Economics

Viers, Kassandra, M.A., Spring 2016   Anthropology

Violence, Catastrophe, and Agency in Nepal: A Deeper Understanding of the 2015
Earthquakes and Border Blockade

Chairperson: Kimber Haddix McKay

In 2015, Nepal was struck by two catastrophes. First, on April 25, a 7.8 magnitude
earthquake, followed by hundreds of aftershocks, struck in Gorkha. Then, in September,
a blockade was formed that prevented goods from passing through trade checkpoints
between India and Nepal. Both of these events highlight social suffering, a form of
suffering that refers to the systems of oppression, unequal distribution of resources, and
broad social structures that serve to keep certain people impoverished and subjugate. The
earthquake caused the most damage to vulnerable people, people already suffering the
effects of structural violence. The blockade was created by Madhesis, an ethnic group in
southern Nepal, as a means of protesting unfairness in the new constitution, namely
unfair citizenship rules and unfair federal state lines. However, despite these hardships,
Nepalis have demonstrated significant resilience. Many Nepalis created their own aid
agencies and relief missions to help their countrymen. The blockade itself was a show of
agency. These events have garnered Nepal significant international attention, leading
many tourists to the country. Volunteer tourists went to make a difference, while disaster
tourists went to take a look at the destruction. This thesis examines the earthquakes,
blockade, and tourism through the lens of social suffering, showing that despite the
numerous catastrophes and setbacks, Nepalis have maintained their agency, refusing to
let the violence and vulnerability determine their futures.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to Nepal and the Concept of Social Suffering

1.1 Introduction to this Thesis and the Ideas to Follow

"The tradition of the oppressed teaches us that the state of emergency in which we live is not the exception but the rule" (Benjamin 1940:257). The way in which a state of emergency is manifested in daily life is highly contingent upon culture and one's place within society, but it almost always results in suffering. There are two very broad types of suffering: personal and social. The former is the result of specific events or circumstances, such as a loved one's death, that affect an individual or a single family. The latter encapsulates the widespread suffering of a population due to structural violence, a specific type of violence that refers to the systems of oppression, unequal distribution of resources, and broad social structures that serve to keep certain people impoverished and subjugated. Social suffering perpetuates oppression and the state of emergency to which Benjamin refers. It can be found throughout time and across different cultures, but just as the way in which it is experienced is dependent upon one's culture, so too is one's response to it. In other words, social suffering is culturally constructed. This thesis is an exploration of the state of emergency in Nepal and how Nepalis have responded to social suffering, as seen through the lens of two very different crises.

In 2015, the Nepali people endured two distinct catastrophes. First, on April 25th, a 7.8 magnitude earthquake struck Gorkha, a village 83 kilometers northwest of Nepal. Then, in September, a blockade between Nepal and India began that caused a massive shortage of fuel and other necessary goods. It lasted for only five months, ending on February 4th, 2016, but was the source of a great deal of pain and hardship. This thesis

will show that despite the structural violence and social suffering entrenched in Nepali society, the people of Nepal have demonstrated remarkable resiliency and maintained their agency in regards to how they responded to these disasters. The blockade and the earthquake showcase social suffering in very different ways, but they both reveal how Nepali people banded together in support of one another to forge a better future.

Studying violence and social suffering is a rather challenging endeavor. The impact of suffering cannot be quantified, nor can it be measured through the usual scientific process (Farmer 1997:262, Sen 1993:155, Quesada 2009:169). Instead, a deep understanding of social suffering comes from listening to the lived experiences of the victims and using specific case studies to illustrate points. The importance of studying social suffering is twofold. First, listening to the victims' narratives is important for redeeming their experiences and returning their voices and agency (Nagappen 2014:26, 64, 72). Second, recognizing their plight, the result of structural violence, is the only way to prevent even more catastrophic acts of violence in the future (Rylko-Bauer 2009:219-220). This paper focuses on Nepal's contemporary social suffering with those goals in mind. By bringing their suffering to the fore, I hope to awaken readers to the reality of the emergency many people face on a regular basis.

1.2 Anthropology of Nepal: An Introduction to Nepal

Tucked between India and China, Nepal consists of a mere 147,181 square kilometers and is home to roughly 29 million people. The country can be divided horizontally into three distinct geographic regions: the Terai (Plains) region, which borders India, the Hill region, and the Mountain region, which borders China. Scattered

throughout are over one hundred singular ethnic groups, many of which have their own

unique cultural and religious practices (Singh 2014). Many of these groups even have

their own language or dialects of Nepali; 123 different languages were reported as mother

tongues in the 2011 national census. The bar chart below shows the twenty largest ethnic

groups in Nepal as of 2011. Chhetris and Brahmans comprise the two largest ethnic

groups in Nepal and are also listed as the two highest castes.

20 Major Ethnic Groups in Nepal by Population (2011)
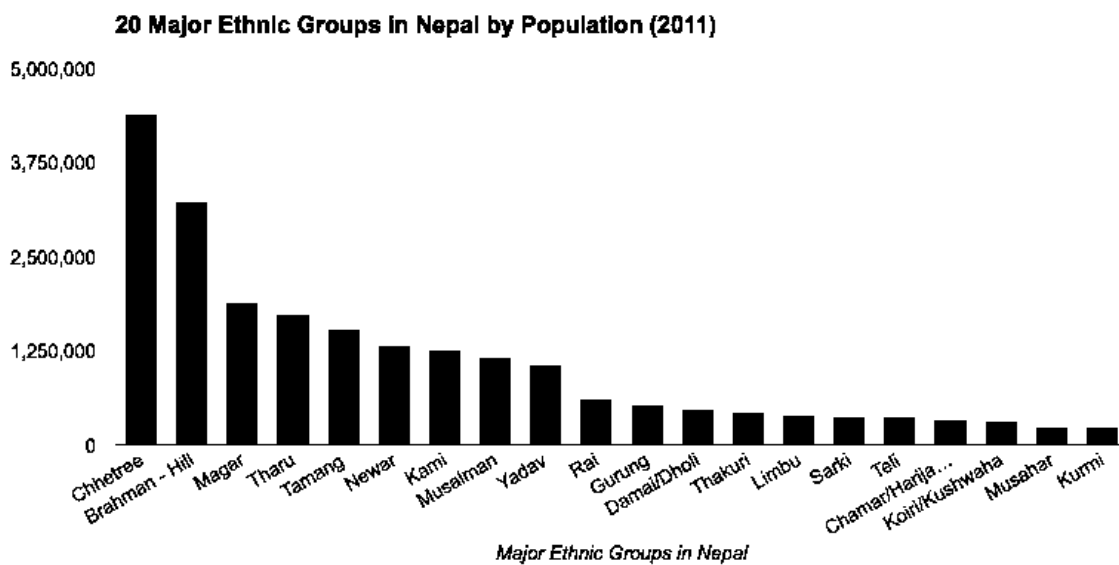
Figure 1.1 The bar chart above depicts the twenty largest ethnic groups in Nepal as of 2011. Borrowed from *MadhesisYouth.Com,* comprised of data from the Nepal 2011 National Census.
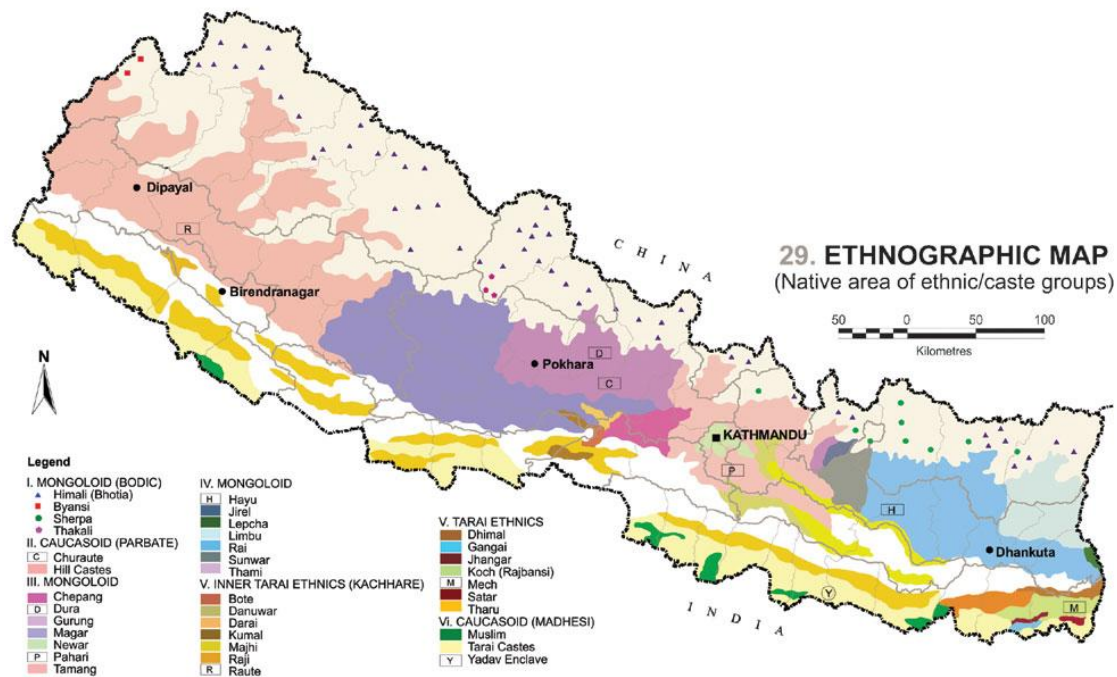
Figure 1.2 The above map of Nepal depicts the geographic layout of some of the larger ethnic groups. Borrowed from Nepali Times article "Harka's Maps" by Mark Turin (2007).

The violence faced by Madhesis is certainly not unique to them: many marginalized communities across Nepal – and even within the Terai – that encounter visible and invisible violence on a regular basis. The Tharus – the forth-largest ethnic group, claiming 6.6% of the population – live alongside the Madhesis and also partook in the protests against the constitution because they felt it did not do them justice. For example, like the Madhesis, Tharus were also promised their own federal state that was not reflected in the new division of Nepal (Thapa, et al. 2015:11). I have chosen to focus specifically on the violence faced by the Madhesis because, due to the blockade, the violence propagated against them yielded a lot of media and scholarly attention, allowing

me to focus not just on the violence but also on the way scholars study, react to, and attempt to understand violence.

1.3 Outline of the Following Chapters

This paper consists of five chapters. In Chapter Two, I offer first a summary of the different types of violence and then a discussion of the major paradigms associated with social suffering, including a brief introduction to anthropological concepts such as personhood, subjectivity, and agency. Then, in Chapter Three, I examine Nepal's earthquake on April 25, 2015 and the impact it had on Nepali people. Specifically, I discuss how poor and vulnerable people - people subject to the effects of structural violence – were disproportionately affected by the quakes. I then explore how Nepalis responded to the quakes, detailing the resiliency and agency many Nepalis showed and highlighting some of the aid agencies they established. Next, in Chapter Four, I detail the blockade between Nepal and India that began on September 23, 2015 and lasted until February 4, 2016. Madhesis, an ethnic group residing in the Terai district of Nepal, created the embargo to protest inequalities in Nepal's constitution. They had two major contentions with the document: unfair citizenship rules and unfairly drawn state lines. These issues are compounded by the fact that Madhesis have been the victims of structural violence for many decades. The blockade is itself an example of agency. In Chapter Five, I discus the benefits and consequences of two types of tourism: voluntourism, a popular phenomenon in which tourists chose to volunteer during their vacation in order to give back to the locals, and disaster tourism, when people travel to sites of disaster to witness the destruction, among other reasons (McGehee 2012:84).

Understanding the effects of tourism is particularly important they can have dramatic consequences for social suffering, including the exacerbation and further perpetuation of oppression or paternalistic attitudes of superiority. Finally, in Chapter Six I analyze the use of media in relation to both disasters and address the country's status in regards to their millennium goals. In order to maintain my focus on social suffering and its effects, I have purposefully neglected other aspects of suffering, such as personal tragedy, stigma, shame, and death. These topics, while intimately connected to social suffering, are too broad to be properly addressed in this thesis.

In this thesis I will draw on the work of numerous anthropologists of Nepal, including David Citrin, Heather Hindman, and Mahendra Lawoti, as well as anthropologists of vulnerability and suffering: Paul Farmer, Elizabeth Povinelli, Amartya Sen, Philippe Bourgois, Nancy Scheper-Hughes, and Joao Biehl. I also cite on-line newspaper articles, blogs, and "gray literature" published by various Nepali institutions, such as the Forum for Women, Land, and Development, the National Planning Commission, and the Department for International Development to enrich my discussion with the latest information available. Taken together, these different academic and practitioner voices bolster and enrich my argument on violence, suffering, and agency in Nepal after two distinct catastrophes.

1.4 The Place of Anthropology in Combating Violence and Suffering

Violence is culturally constructed. The definition of meanings and interpretations of violence vary across societies and throughout time. Therefore, anthropology has the unique position of being able to discuss how violence is defined, enacted, and lived in a

particular society. What does torture look like in the United States of America? How does it differ from and how is it similar to violence in other Western societies? How does torture differ across various subcultures of the US? How was the Holocaust experienced by different peoples? How were those in positions of power able to mobilize soldiers to commit genocide in Kenya? All of these questions can benefit from the lenses and tool kits used by anthropologists. For example, anthropologists utilize participant observation, collect both qualitative and quantitative data, and can collect in depth life histories of people affected by violence. The theories they can use to explain their data include critical medical anthropology, feminism, cultural materialism, functionalism, and post-modernism, or a combination thereof. Anthropologists, as part of their training, are open to seeing where their research takes them, are trained to truly listen to what their participants have to say, and are able to include all facets of a society in their explanations of a single topic. In other words, the importance of anthropology lies in its ability to bring to the fore the subjective and cultural dimensions of violence (Jenkins 1998: 125).

In addition to studying violence, though, anthropologists must ask themselves what they can contribute to anthropology as a discipline (Shakya and KC 2015). The term "field" has two meanings here: anthropology as a discipline and the field site of research. I assert that anthropologists have much to offer both. We can put a face and story to the numbers that prove inequality exists. We can detail what has happened while also providing insight into why. We can draw parallels between historical events and contemporary instances of violence. We can situate personal narratives within the bigger picture. We can bridge the gaps between politics, psychology, economics, history, and

journalism. Finally, anthropologists can highlight the connection between violence and power (Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2004:318). In these ways, anthropologists do their part to contribute to the end of social suffering.

When we, anthropologists, study and write about violence we must remember that violence never happens in a vacuum: violence has a "tomorrow," referring to future consequences, which is usually more violence (Norstrom, quoted in Farmer 2009:42). Writing about violence also has a tomorrow, meaning that publications do not exist in isolation from reality. Because our words can have profound effects on the readers and the people about whom we write, we need to be weary of contributing to a "pornography of violence" (Bourgois 2009:17). In other words, we need to reflect on the impact of the stories and images we share with the public: are they advancing understanding of the situation, or are they going to exacerbate the situation by glamorizing the violence (Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2004:26)?

Anthropologists have a unique relationship to the people they study. They often get very close due to the nature of participant observation, but because they are outsiders they cannot truly understand what it is like to suffering. According to Povinelli, this is a perfect example of the anthropological predicament of those who live (the suffering) versus those who reflect upon it (Povinelli 2011:15). This does not mean that those not suffering are unable to tell these stories, but our obligation is to be aware of our biases and privileges in order to tell their stories appropriately. For example, Biehl allowed his informants' words to shine through *Vita*, his ethnography of a physically ill woman. He was a vessel, through which their heartbreaking stories could be told. We, anthropologists

and other scholars, must not let the victims' voices get lost either in discussions of theory or in the ethnographic endeavor as a whole.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Paradigms of Social Suffering

2.1 Introduction to Social Suffering and Violence

Suffering is a human experience. Across time and space, almost everyone has been the victim of violence and has suffered consequently. Nevertheless, violence and suffering still manage to elude comprehension. Sometimes there are not words to describe the experience of suffering. Sometimes accepting that violence exists is the issue. Sometimes the concepts are too abstract and do not translate well into a meaningful discourse. In this section, I explore some of those issues through the lens of social suffering, a phenomenon in which communities of people suffer due to systems of oppression, unequal distribution of resources, and broad social structures that serve to keep certain people impoverished and oppressed (Farmer 2001:307). I draw on the situation of a particular ethnic group in Nepal, the Madhesis, as a specific example of social suffering. As noted above, they are not the only population suffering in Nepal, but because their protests were happening as I was researching and writing this thesis, the Madhesis' situation seemed like the perfect lens through which to understand social suffering and the anthropology of violence. In September 2015, many Madhesis decided to raise their voices against inequality and structural violence by imposing a blockade between the Nepali and Indian border. Indeed, the embargo had drastic consequences: a severe shortage of fuel prevented people from going to work or school, caused food prices to rise, and inhibited earthquake repairs across the country (Acharya, et al. 2015).

This section provides a theoretical basis for understanding the Madhesi experience and what led them to such an effective protest against the Nepali government.

2.2 An Anthropological Definition of Violence

Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois have theorized a "continuum of violence" that encompasses the many facets of violence. It is destructive, reproductive, visible, invisible, and exists at the individual, communal, and societal levels. Within the broader category of invisible violence, Bourgois identifies three main typologies of violence: normalized violence, symbolic violence, and structural violence. The first, aligned with Scheper-Hughes' notion of everyday violence, stems from the cultural values, institutional practices, and everyday interactions that lead to "social indifference" and break down the first barrier towards social suffering (Bourgois 2009:19). Normalized violence includes, for example, everyday acts of racism committed by one person against another. Symbolic violence is the internalization and acceptance of social and political domination. This second step renders people complacent, less likely to fight the status quo, because they believe they are worthy of the violence committed against them. Finally, structural violence refers to the political-economic forces that generate unequal access to and unequal distribution of resources needed for survival, including clean water, affordable and nutritious food, basic education, and decent housing (Bourgois 2009:19, Rylko-Bauer and Farmer 2016: 57, 61). Each member of society is complicit in all three of these types of violence, even people who are also victims (Farmer 2004:307). This thesis focuses mainly on the victims of the third type of invisible violence, structural violence.

The above analysis illuminates the way that social, political, and economic oppression is normalized; it happens subtly and acts on so many levels at once that the status quo seems legitimate, and is accepted routinely by almost every member of society (Bourgois 2009:20, Rylko-Bauer and Farmer 2016: 55). Thus, violence is produced and perpetuated through its acceptance. However, the legitimation and normalization of violence is learned, passed to children just like any other aspect of culture (Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2004:15). The ways in which violence is produced and reproduced are also culturally constructed, as is the notion of what is considered violent (Farmer 2005:130, Riches 1986: 1Explicitly, violence is culturally constructed. There might be actions or behaviors that would widely be considered as violent, but there are many others that do not cross boarders and the reactions to violence certainly very from community to community. Violence, and the subsequent reactions to it, are the products of culture. Thus, the manifestations of violence and suffering are different around the world and throughout time.

We must also be cognizant of who is labeling acts or events as violent, paying special attention to the person's social position (Riches 1986: 4). People in positions of power can utilize the notion of violence to further their own political and ideological ends. Ideas of what constitutes violence can also differ depending on one's morals, worldview, or subculture, meaning that what is an act of violence for one person might not be violence for another (think of genital mutilation or abortion, for example) (ibid.).

Many of the victims of oppression belong to the lumpen class, to borrow a term from Marx. They are poor, vulnerable, abused and forgotten by society-at-large, the "historical fallout of structural violence" (Bourgois 2009:38, Bourgois and Schonberg

2009:18, Rylko-Bauer and Farmer 2016: 57, 61). Members of society who belong to the hegemonic culture reduce these vulnerable people into "expendable non-persons," which is one way they rationalize their violence against the lumpen class and "…[assume] the license to kill, maim, or soul-murder" (Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2004:19). While Schepher-Hughes and Bourgois do not define it in their terms, I take the term to refer to the way in which a person's spirit is continually broken by various forces of oppression and acts of visible and invisible violence they face every day. Soul-murder is dangerous because a person can only withstand so much before they are a mere shell of their former self. Unfortunately, soul murder and only makes the lumpen class more vulnerable to violence. The ways in which social suffering is played out in society might differ from culture to culture, but the cycles of oppression and violence are carried across them.

Another aspect of violence which must be considered is what Primo Levi, a brilliant scholar and Auschwitz survivor, deemed the gray zone – a moral space wherein a person cannot be judge as having acted rightly or wrongly, but, rather, her actions must be understood in the context of her need for survival – but he also recognized that humanity exists in a gray zone. We, general citizens, make choices, even if we do not realize it, that perpetuate racism, inequality, and/or oppression because they favor ourselves and our families (Farmer 2004:307, Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2004:7, Bourgois 2009:24, Rylko-Bauer 2009:213). In states of social suffering, the victims of structural, symbolic, and normal violence can turn around and inflict it on someone else, but that does not detract from the effects of violence they feel. Many people feel that their survival is contingent upon their reproduction of violence, even when they know firsthand the effects of violence. Others think that employing violence is the only way to

get respect, advance their social status, or have their voices heard (Bourgois and

Schonberg 2009, Riches 1986: 5).

According to Farmer, there are two types of responses to violence: distal and

proximate (Famer 2009:57). The former refers to the immediate response after an act of

violence has occurred, such as tending to wounds. The latter refers to efforts to prevent

violence and suffering from occurring in the first place. Examples of proximal responses

include ensuring all children get an education, supplying people with affordable social

support programs, and implementing policies and practices to change unequal political

and economic structures. Raising awareness about vulnerability and systems of

oppression is part of the proximal response: it is only through knowledge that positive

change can occur and structural violence can be prevented in the future (Scheper-Hughes

2004:459, Biggs 2015, Rylko-Bauer and Farmer 2016: 57, 61).

2.3 Social Misery and Anthropological Theories of Social Suffering

Theories of social suffering elucidate "social misery" and highlight profound

unequal access to resources and severe domination and oppression (Frost and Hoggett

2008:441). These theories attempt to study the *lived experience* of structural violence and

the physical and emotional pains stemming from these experiences. Paul Farmer and

Pierre Bourdieu both, in different ways, provide the theoretical background from which

this concept has emerged in ethnology. Farmer, as a critical medical anthropologist,

popularized 'structural violence' to describe the overarching political, economic, and

even cultural structures that directly and indirectly subdue certain subpopulations (Farmer

2004:307). Bourdieu's astute insight is that "…using material poverty as the sole measure

of all suffering keeps us from seeing and understanding a whole side of the suffering characteristic of the social order" (Bourdieu 1999, quoted in Frost and Hoggett 2008:440). In other words, considering a person's income is not sufficient evidence of social suffering; suffering is the result of many facets of culture, all of which must be understood.

Farmer also developed the concept of pathologies of power, by which he means people with money and power (re)produce structural inequality and its consequences for their personal benefit (Farmer 2005). Sobrino puts it more explicitly: "The poor of the world are not the causal products of human history. No, poverty results from the action of other human beings" (quoted in Farmer 2005:143). Furthermore, vulnerable, oppressed, marginalized people are the most likely to have their suffering denied or silenced, one way in which the existence of pathologies of power is hidden (Farmer 1997:280, Farmer 2005:50). Obviously, rich and powerful people have a lot at stake, from their money to their reputations; policy and institutional reforms –even widespread knowledge of the situation – can reduce the amount of power, money, and influence they wield (Farmer 2005:144)

In some cases, social suffering can lead to double suffering, where the individual suffers not only as a result of structural violence, but also from reactions to their suffering (Frost and Hoggett 2008:449). For example, some might develop "dysfunctional defenses" such as alcoholism or drug use to cope with the oppression, racism, and both visible and invisible violence (ibid.). The social isolation (in the form of both personal isolation and social abandonment) that often stems from social suffering is also a form of double suffering (ibid.). Additionally, double suffering can refer to how too often victims

of (in)visible violence are blamed for their suffering – if they had done something differently, then they would not be in their situation (Rylko-Bauer, et al 2009:225). Victimizing the victim can also head to dysfunctional defenses and social isolation, further compounding a person's suffering.

Some subpopulations are more likely to suffer than others – and have more members that fall into the umbrella lumpen class. People living in poverty, women and girls, people who identify as LGBTQ+, and ethnic minorities are the prime targets of structural violence and social suffering. These "social factors" can be considered as axes that work together to determine a person's vulnerability (Bowker 1997:377, Farmer 2005:43). For example, a black woman faces more cultural, political, and economic oppression than a man of any race (Farmer 2005, Bourgois and Schonberg 2009). These factors are weighted differently in different cultures, but their existence remains the same.

It is in these subpopulations that Michel Foucault's notion of biopower can be most clearly seen. Biopower is defined as the political management of births, deaths, and illnesses of a population (Povinelli 2011:95, 108). There are three major strategies used to control a population: letting individuals live, letting them die, and making them die (ibid.). Sometimes, the government directly targets certain populations via unequal policies, or outright systematic killing, but other times, the government simply lets these people exhaust themselves, realizing that most of the time the people involved do not have the energy or capability to sustain their social projects for equality (Povinelli 2011:119). Foucault has updated his notion of biopower to fit modernity: his notion of take life/let live has been replaced by "a power to foster life or disallow it to the point of death" (Foucault 2004:80) After deciding which lives are "worth preserving,"

government policies and institutions assist certain subpopulations, while ignoring and abandoning others (Biehl 2005:38, Frost and Hoggett 2008:441, Das and Das 2007:86-87, Povinelli 2011:108,118). Biopower is one way in which structural violence is enacted and maintained in society.

The term 'social suffering' alludes to another facet of suffering that is important to remember: pain and suffering are social activities. While feeling pain is biological, the meaning of pain and the ways in which one expresses it is culturally constructed. Experiences of suffering and recovery take place in certain places, time, and conditions that inevitably shape them (Kleinman and Fitz-Henry 1997:54-55, Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2004:2). We must learn to endure pain in culturally appropriate ways, usually from family and friends. For example, Julie Livingston, in her ethnography, *Improvising Medicine*, states that Batswana patients bear their pain quietly; it is not readily talked about or fawned over and patients rarely take strong pain relievers (Livingston 2012:143,148,153). White patients in Batswana, on the other hand, are expected to anguish loudly and be in need of comforting and analgesics.

Another way in which suffering is social is that pain demands some sort of response from those surrounding the individual(s). Livinston quotes Talal Asad to epitomize how both of these ways of suffering occur at once: "Sufferers are also social persons and their suffering is partly constituted by the way they inhabit, or are constrained to inhabit, their relationship with others," (2012:140). People both learn how to suffer from and suffer in relation to other people (especially other sufferers) in their communities. Notions about what counts as 'suffering' and who the 'victims' are is culturally constructed as well (Bowker 1997:375-376, Farmer 1997:272-273, Lock

1997:236,238). The corollary is that a given response to social suffering – what we, as outsiders recognize as social suffering and if/how we respond to cries of help – is also determined by experiences at home (ibid.).

Because violence is culturally constructed, social suffering can be hard to understand if one is not familiar with a culture. Nepalis living in Kathmandu, for example, might not understand the full extent of the struggle Madhesis go through to get a citizenship certificate. Ethnography then becomes essential as a means through which outsiders can come to understand suffering as a concept and the lived experiences of sufferers.

2.4 The Role of Narrative in Relieving Suffering

To understand social suffering in theoretical and comparative contexts, researchers often draw upon individual experiences and life-stories. Narratives about social structures provide a sense of social reality by describing what it is like to live day after day with those "…structures of oppression" impinging on individuals, or groups (Frost and Hoggett 2008:441, Farmer 1997:272-273). This oppression is too often faceless and nameless, with victims' narratives hidden behind statistics and facts that only tell part of the story (Quesada 2009:165). As Rebecca Chopp writes, "The horror of suffering is not only in its immensity but in the faces of the anonymous victims" (quoted in Farmer 1997:272).

By listening to individual stories, by believing in the power of voice, ethnographers are able to return these people to their places in history and give them back their voices (Nagappan 2005:64,66,92 Biehl 2004:478). Giving victims our full attention

can help them find meaning in their experiences. Additionally, individual stories express the *ordinariness* of the horrors an individual victim faces; in instances of social suffering, one story is an example for which there are usually hundreds of others experiencing the same condition (Farmer 1997:263, Biehl 2005). As mentioned above, anthropologists can help bring an end to suffering by rendering the invisible visible through providing nuanced accounts from survivors of structural violence (Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2004, Farmer 2005:133). Anthropologists can paint a vivid picture for their audience that might help them to understand not only what violence and social suffering are, but also how violence can affect individual people.

One of the challenges of writing about suffering is that it is difficult to find the words to adequately capture the experience in text (Nagappan 2005:75). Writing will never be able to fully capture what it was like to endure torture, to survive when the rest of the family did not, to rebuild a new life after leaving a place ravaged by violence. Nevertheless, scholars cannot eschew the topic in fear of doing it injustice, for writing has the profound ability to "break political silences that veil social calamity" (Nagappan 2005:13). Writing brings the politics and ideologies that cause suffering to the fore. Langer noted "atrocity in the past does not discourage but in fact invites atrocity in the future" (1997:59). If this is true, knowledge of past and previous situations is the first line of defense against future violence.

However, with power comes responsibility. The way a situation is represented has a direct effect on how readers (or other consumers of the story) will react, if they will decide to intervene, if they will shun refugees, if they will acknowledge someone as a victim (Kleinman, Das, and Lock 1997: xi-xiii). It is the writers' job to invoke

compassion and understanding, to tell the whole story, including the social and political context in which the violence and suffering takes place (Nagappan 2005:32, 67, 72). However, the writer must be careful that the way she writes the story neither sensationalizes nor mollifies social suffering (Nagappan 2005:28-29). Turning the story into infotainment can distance the reader from the suffering and trying to downplay the atrocity can hinder the healing process of those who suffered. The storyteller, whether they are an anthropologist, a fiction novel writer, or a filmmaker, has a responsibility first and foremost to both the situation and the sufferers.

Heather Hindman, a scholar of Nepal, holds David Beine's essay "Earthquakes and Culture" on Nepal's April 25, 2015 earthquake as a prime example of what happens when scholars fail to "write good anthropology" (2015). Beine employs negative stereotypes of Nepal, left out important points from Nepal's recent political history, and ignored the impact of social and economic inequalities in the aftermath of the earthquake. Many Nepali scholars were understandably offended and disappointed.

However, Hindman also represented only one part of the story. Beine's essay was written in good faith, as an attempt to do good anthropology and advance an understanding of Nepal's disaster. Beine drew on the work of Dor Bahadur Bista, a respected Nepali anthropologist, as well as his thirty years of experience in Nepal to make his points, many of which were supported, or at least understood, by other anthropologists. His article was an attempt to enlighten the public as well as other anthropologists about the ways culture affects how a disaster is prepared for and then managed after the fact. As anthropologists, we must tell the sufferers' stories correctly, including providing information as accurate as possible about the site of suffering and the

history behind it. We must think before we speak, be aware of who the audience is, and be knowledgeable about how our information might be used. There will always be differing interpretations of evidence, especially when the subjects are humans and their culture. Productive dialogue and constructive criticism between colleagues and the general public is key to creating a holistic understanding of a given situation, especially a crisis situation.

2.5 Subjectivity and Agency: Victims of Social Suffering or Agents?

A person – his/her ideas, values, behaviors, perceptions of the world – is at once created by society and historical circumstances and the creator of society (Biehl, Good, and Kleinman 2007:14). However, one is not merely given subjectivity and personhood. It is actively created and negotiated as a person moves through life and interacts with other people, institutions, and social structures (Good et al 2007:243, Biehl, Good, and Kleinman 2007:7). One of the powers of subjectivity is that it "provides the ground for subjects to think through their circumstances and to feel through their contradictions, and in so doing, to inwardly endure experiences that would otherwise be outwardly unbearable" (Biehl, Good, and Kleinman 2007:14). People are well aware of their circumstances – they know that they are deemed a "social problem" – especially when they face oppression and inequality on a regular basis (Povinelli 2011:179). Subjectivity, whether by helping people to realize they are at the mercy of social structures or by guiding them toward avenues of resistance and change, enables people to endure their situation and continue living despite the constant presence of inequality and oppression.

Subjectivity is linked to the notion of agency, the idea that people have the ability to make their own decisions and determine their own lives. Povinelli employs the term "autological subject" to refer to these people (Povinelli 2011:26-27). Do people who suffer have agency? Many scholars agree that people who live in "zones of abandonment" – and victims of oppression in general – are able to exercise a degree of agency, but their actions are both "predetermined and contingent" (Biehl 2005, Farmer 2005, Rylko-Bauer 2009:216). Violence leads to a situation in which a person's options are limited. Life choices are often contingent on multiple factors at once: racism, sexism, political violence, and poverty (Farmer 1997:263). According to Farmer, "…the degree to which agency is constrained is correlated inversely with the ability to resist marginalization and other forms of oppression" (Farmer 2004:307). In other words, when a person's ability to make their own choices is severely limited, they are less likely to be able to resist oppression. For example, oppression often limits one's job options, which can keep people in poverty. Poor people are often forced to take the cheapest, fastest, or easiest option available, even if it is not in their best interests. Nevertheless, sufferers can retain their agency by refusing to see themselves as victims and then projecting that image into the greater public. In this way, they preserve at least a sliver of power control over their lives.

There are numerous other ways in which people enact agency in the face of violence and suffering. Biehl studied agency and suffering through the story of a single woman, Catarina; her story can shed a great deal of light on how structural violence actually plays out in a person's life and how resistance is not always futile. Biehl first met Catarina in Vita, an institution in in Porto Alegre, Brazil, where the sick and elderly are

brought and left to die. Vita, one of over 200 of these institutions, offers a place for sick, indigent, elderly, and/or dejected people to stay in exchange for their welfare pensions or government funding, thus making it profitable for the owners (Biehl 2004:482). Vita is dirty, run downed, and poorly staffed by people ill equipped to take care of the residents (Biehl 2004:1). Catarina survived the desolation by writing a "dictionary" up until she died: according to Biehl, "Writing helped her to draw out the best of herself and made 'this' endurable" (Biehl 2005:1,315). Catarina's dictionary consisted of any and all words she could remember. She wrote them down so she would not forget them as she got older and sicker, but the ways she connects her words is revealing of her inner world. Her story is told through her dictionary and when we read those words we remember her. By creating her dictionary, she resists abandonment by forcing us to recall what happened to her. Throughout this paper, I will show how many Nepali people also resisted abandonment and maintained their agency, by creating or joining relief organizations or engaging in protests to enact change, for example.

2.6 Nepal as a Zone of Abandonment

One of the words Catarina's created in her dictionary is "ex-human," which she used to describe herself in relation to her family (she is an ex-wife, an ex-mom, an ex-daughter-in-law, an ex-sister, an ex-patient). Seeing someone as an ex-human allows both her family and larger institutions (such as hospitals and the government) to "justify" his/her abandonment (Biehl 2005). The category of ex-human reflects the family's "activity of valuing and deciding which [lives are] worth living" and which lives can be left to die; labeling people as ex-humans is one way biopower is enacted in everyday

lives (Biehl 2005:22). According to Povinelli and Biehl, abandonment can take many

forms: legal, economic, medical, and familial, to a name a few. Unfortunately, these

zones of abandonment frequently overlap, such that a person feels neglect from multiple,

if not all, of these areas at once. This section discusses a few specific examples of

abandonment, the result of forces of invisible violence discussed above.

Biehl first met Catarina in 1997 during one of his first few visits to Vita. Her

husband, the doctors and nurses, her children, her in-laws, and almost everyone else had

labeled Catarina as mentally ill while her biological deterioration was repeatedly ignored.

The doctors at the mental institutions she frequented plied her with various medications

at varying dosages, never following up to see how the "treatment" was progressing.

When she was deemed healthy again, she was shipped back to Vita where she was given

whatever medication they had access to at whatever doses they fancied. Catarina's

thoughts and wishes were routinely ignored; she was essentially kept sedated so she

would not cause the staff or her family any problems. It was a vicious cycle that only led

to the worsening of Catarina's condition, to the point that it was hard to separate which

ailments were the actually due to her physiological and psychological issues and which

were side-effects from the medication (Biehl 2004:486). Despite the hardships she faced,

she refused to internalize and accept the violence. Through acts such as writing her

dictionary and fighting the doctors about her mental capacity, she routinely employed her

agency.

Biehl categorizes Catarina's life as a social death (Biehl 2005). Her family hardly

ever visited, refused to take care of her, and tried their hardest to forget about her.

Urbano, a central employee at Vita, suggested that her family left her not just because she

was sick but because of her lack of resources and inability to contribute to the family.

Biehl describes the situation as follows: "It is more likely that nothing was ever done for

Catarina because she was a poor mental patient in the public health system. As one local

physician put it, 'They are simply perceived as not worth examining'" (2005:220). This

doctor shows how Foucault's biopower is played out in real life; patients are "stripped of

their humanity," ignored, and allowed to suffer until they die (Biehl 2004:476). The

social deaths suffered by Catarina and other residents serve an additional purpose: it is a

warning to others (newer residents and outsiders alike) that unless they clean up their act

this will be their fate (Biehl 2004:485).

Biehl explores Catarina's case because she is one of hundreds of abandoned

individuals in Vita/Porto Alegre/Brazil/the Global South/the world. Her story is

fascinating, heart wrenching, and horrific, but it is also completely ordinary. One hospital

worker with whom Biehl talked said that Catarina was literally one of hundreds poor,

incredibly ill patients who were not given adequate treatement (Biehl 2004). Catarina's

individual story is a window into how structural violence is played out in one society.

The next example further explores the idea of quotidian suffering from a very different

lens.

Elizabeth Povinelli's discussion of abandonment in *Economies of Abandonment*

explores how governmental policies and attitudes influence not just the political lives of

the Aboriginals but their reception in society as well by forming deep personal

connections with a few families and inquiring about their lives. As people with a different

"social order" than colonial Australians (meaning their ideologies, behavior, and culture

differ from the hegemonic idea), they are pushed into the margins of society and their

existence is ignored for as long as possible. Consequently, Aboriginals are not faring

well; "all goods are generated in a system of distributed misery" (Povinelli 2011:162).

Rather than focusing on any particular story, as Biehl did, Povinelli's discussion is

focused around the larger forces that facilitate inequality and suffering.

One of the most interesting facets of suffering she delves into is quasi-events, the

idea that suffering is the accumulation of a series of small events that make a person feel

like they just cannot catch a break. She hauntingly refers to this life as "the everyday drift

toward death" (Povinelli 2011:145). Povinelli is careful to remind readers not to trivialize

these comparatively minor instances of suffering. The point is not to solve or deal with

each of these issues individually, but to recognize that these events all lead up to the

feeling of (societal and governmental) abandonment. Julie Livingston offers another

poignant example of quasi-events in her ethnography (Livingston 2012:18,34,101,144-

145). Princess Marina Hospital, located in Botswana, houses the only public oncology

ward, but there are a myriad of problems that prevent doctors from administering

sufficient care. Examples of the barriers include the facts the pharmacy is often out of

pain medicine, machines are usually broken, and the ward is understaffed meaning

patients have long wait times and the doctors are overworked. All of these events, in

combination with other complications of life in a poor, AIDS stricken country, lead to

inadequate care and the continuation of suffering. Furthermore, these can all be seen as

examples of governmental and institutional abandonment; the government could put

more money towards public hospitals instead of private hospitals, for example (ibid.).

Unfortunately, scholars and humanitarians often leave these quasi-events untouched alike

in lieu of major traumatic events such as the Holocaust. It is easy to gloss over examples

of quasi-events as not worth mentioning because when taken alone they do not make much of a difference. It is only when coupled with other quasi-events and other forms of violence that they do real damage do a person's psyche, but even still they are not often the subject of scholarship. Furthermore, it is hard to study quasi-events because they are so ordinary; events like Nepal's blockade or Cambodia's genocide can be easily studied as examples of suffering and structural violence. When studying a society or individual, events such as a person's car or washing machine breaking down do register as events of importance. To again quote Povinelli, for her words are so powerful in conveying the experience of the Aboriginals with whom she worked, "The cruddy, cumulative, and corrosive aspects of life have spread so deep into the everyday" that there is nothing more to say (Povinelli 2011:154).

Is Nepal a "zone of abandonment?" As noted above, both 2015 disasters highlighted the profound nature of vulnerability in Nepal. The most affected groups were already marginalized and suffering before the earthquake. Madhesis experienced the effects of continual structural violence. Many Nepalis are faced every day with quasi events and trenchant inequality is highly visible. However, many Nepalis refuse to resign themselves to the status of ex-human. Whether it is by participating in earthquake relief efforts, community reconstruction, or protests, many Nepalis resist communal and governmental abandonment. Furthermore, on a broader level, Nepal is making strides to prove it can hold its own in our fast paced, globalized world.

2.7 Final Remarks About Social Suffering and Violence

One of the most interesting aspects of social suffering that needs to be more widely publicized is the quotidian nature of suffering. Indeed, social suffering can stem from major events such as the Partition between India and Pakistan or the blockade between India and Nepal, but the catalyst is not always so apparent. Structural violence is the quieter side of social suffering, the kind borne out of systematic oppression, and rampant inequalities. Furthermore, quasi-events can exacerbate social suffering: they are insignificant alone, but as a sequence of cumulative steps, groups of people cannot pull themselves out of the state of emergency in which they live.

People already poor, vulnerable, and oppressed are the most likely to feel the effects of quasi-events. Those very people are also bound to "die in the silence of history," in the words of Pablo Richard, a theologian, because people do not like to burden themselves with knowledge of others' suffering (quoted in Famer 2005:50, see also: Bowker 1997:376). Biehl would agree, citing familial and governmental abandonment as the primary reason they suffer and die in silence, forgotten or ignored by the rest of the world. It is important to tell these stories in order to prevent suffering and also bring the suffering out of the darkness.

Farmer, Scheper-Hughes, and Bourgois provide the framework with which we can conceptualize abandonment: it is made possible through invisible violence. Everyday acts of violence contribute to an individual's abandonment via the family and community. Coupled with symbolic violence, feelings of unworthiness and acceptance of oppression is internalized, leading abandoned people to feel hopeless. Finally, structural violence enforces domination and discrimination. Taken together, these three types of violence establish and perpetuate vulnerability, marginalization, and oppression. Further,

invisible violence allows community members to blame the victims for their

circumstances. In these ways, abandonment happens at various levels in a person's life

and is sustained over lifetimes. Many vulnerable and marginalized Nepali people face

these three types of violence on a daily basis. However, through community support,

strikes, and other acts of agency, they refuse to succumb to it. The next chapter will detail

the 2015 earthquakes, which highlights vulnerability as a consequence of structural

violence and relief efforts as examples of resiliency and agency.

Chapter 3: Nepal's Natural Disaster: The 2015 Earthquakes

> "Three months have now passed since massive twin earthquakes hit Nepal. With the pace of time many of us are rapidly moving towards normalcy whereas hundreds of residents have still been struggling desperately for the safe shelter. There are still unstoppable tears, there are screams and so are the non-ending sorrows and terror deeply embedded in heart and soul of many people. Nangle Bhare the district of Kathmandu and border to Sindhupalchok is one of the Quake affected areas which is still reeling from its tragedy (of quake) and habitants are till date deprived from safe shelter." ---NGO working in Nepal post on FaceBook on September 9, 2015

3.1 Introduction to the First Disaster Nepalis had to face in 2015

On April 25th, 2015, disaster struck Nepal: a 7.8 magnitude earthquake hit Gorkha, 83

kilometers northwest of Kathmandu at 06:11 UTC. There were over three hundred aftershocks

greater than magnitude 4.0, the biggest and deadliest of which, magnitude 7.3, occurred on May

12. The last aftershock was a month after the initial quake, on May 26, 2015. 31 of Nepal's 75

districts were affected; Gorkha, Dhading, Nuwakot, Rasuwa, Sindhupalchowk, Dolkha, and

Ramechhap suffered the most damage (National Planning Commission 2015:xi). Between the

April 25th quake and the one on May 12th, at least 8,669 people died, 384 were missing, and over

17,800 people were injured (USGS 2015). More than 2.2 million people lost their homes (Biggs

2015). The earthquakes also caused massive landslides and avalanches, including one at the

Mount Everest Base Camp that killed twenty people and injured at least 120 more. To make the

situation worse, monsoon season began shortly after the quakes and did not end until September,

causing even more landslides, flashfloods, and block rivers (Manandhar 2015). The quakes were

so severe that they were felt as far as Bhutan and Pakastan, with India, China, and Bangladesh

also suffering innumerable casualties and devastating structural damage (USGS 2015).

A few months afterwards, the National Planning Commission reported that the estimated

total value of the disaster, including damages and losses, is NPR 706 billion (approximately

US$7 billion), equating to about one third of Nepal's Gross Domestic Product from the 2013-

2014 fiscal year (2015:xiv). These disasters have brought widespread suffering, impacting

almost everyone in Nepal. However, the quakes pertain to this discussion of social suffering

because the people most affected by them were predominately poor and marginalized

individuals, people who were already suffering due to preexisting structural inequalities and the

inability to access necessary resources (Holthaus 2015, McGranahan 2015, National Planning

Commission 2015, Billingsley 2016). Anthropologist Carol McGranahan quoted a Nepali

journalist who described the April 25 earthquake as follows: "This was a very class-conscious

earthquake, in town and country it targeted underprivileged households" (ibid.).

Vulnerability and structural violence played themselves out in various ways after the

disasters. The ways that they manifest in communities is directly related to Nepali culture. When

the earthquake first hit, the poor were overly affected because their houses were not as sturdy

(Ghale 2015, Billingsly 2016). For example, in Badeguan, a village in Sindupalchowk district,

houses made of mud and stone were no match for the earthquakes: 160 people were killed (Ghale

2015). Furthermore, many villages affected by the earthquake were located in regions without

roads and with "weak communication infrastructure," making rescue and relief operations very

difficult to complete (McGranahan 2015). Women and girls were also disproportionately affected by Nepal's earthquake because gender roles kept them closer to their homes, therefore more likely to be hurt by falling buildings (Asian Development Bank 2015, Manandhar 2015). After the earthquake, women were subjected to more violence: they suffered mental and physical harassment, health degradation, and human trafficking ("One Year Later" 2016). The above examples are ways in which social suffering is culturally constructed in Nepal. Nepal, however, is by no means the only country to suffer a natural disaster that targeted the already vulnerable.

3.2 Disasters Around the World Through the Lens of Structural Violence

According to Geohazards International, 26 of 99 earthquakes with magnitude of 7.0 or higher in recorded history have caused over 1,000 deaths; only five of those 26 occurred in rich or middle-income countries (Geohazards International 2015, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies). Other disasters follow the same pattern, including New Orleans' 2005 Hurricane Katrina and Indonesia's 2004 tsunami (Sen 2006, Donner and Rodriguez 2008). Famines, a disaster in which weather conditions prevent countries from growing enough food to feed everyone, are the product of poor, politically unstable governments (Sen 1993:43). Just as the poor within a country are more likely to be affected, so too do poor countries suffer more from natural disasters than richer countries.

Richer countries are more resilient in the face of natural disasters for a couple of significant reasons. First, they usually have a better, more efficient and effective preparedness system in place. For example, if one compares Haiti's earthquake to the Chile earthquake the same year, eleven percent of the "strongly shaken" in Haiti died

compared to a mere 0.1 percent in Chile (Geohazards International 2015). Unlike Haiti,

Chile has had a strong safety and preparedness program since 1960 (ibid.).
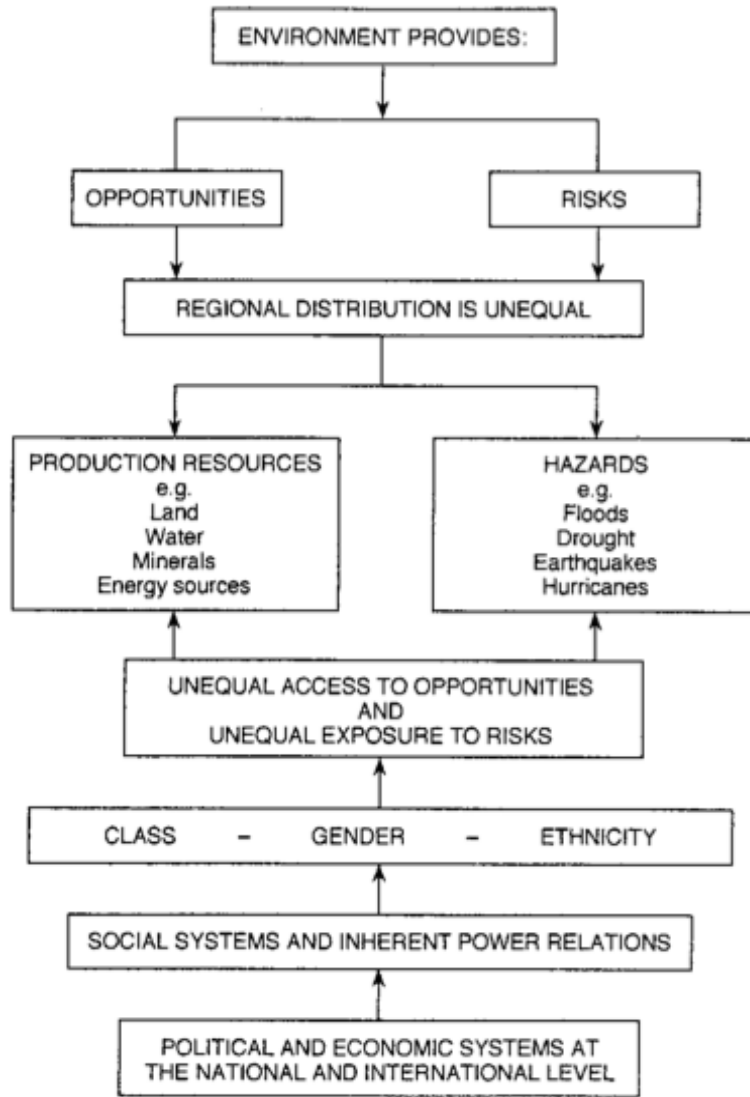
Second, citizens of these countries tend have higher incomes and more secure livelihoods, meaning that they are able to afford better homes and then any necessary

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     │        Land            │       │        Floods          │
     │        Water           │       │        Drought         │
     │        Minerals        │       │        Earthquakes     │
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          │  SOCIAL SYSTEMS AND INHERENT POWER        │
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          │  POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC SYSTEMS AT        │
          │  THE NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LEVEL     │
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Figure 3.1 This chart shows how both the environment and political, economic, and social systems work together to influence access to resources and natural disasters. Taken from Cannon 1994:15.

healthcare needed after the disaster (International Federation of Red Cross and Red

Crescent). For poor communities and countries, structural, economic, and cultural

systems in place in a country negatively influence the impact of a disaster; if those

systems had been different, perhaps the disaster might have had a weaker effect (Conner 1994:16). On a global level, the results such structures are profound: "in a world that's getting better at preventing disasters, Nepal and other poor countries continue to bear the brunt of tragedy" (Holthaus 2015).

Clearly, the degree of vulnerability a population (or country) faces is a much more significant factor for determining the impact of a disaster than the level of intensity of that disaster (Cannon 1994:20). While there are many different definitions of vulnerability, most of them incorporate the idea that vulnerability refers to the degree to which a person at risk to a hazard to due their social, economic, and/or political position (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Cannon 1994:16, Donner and Rodriguez 2008:1091). Donner and Rodriguez characterize vulnerable groups as having a lack of capital in one or many areas, including cultural, social, and/or linguistic capital as well as economic capital (Donner and Rodriguez 2008:1091). They also say there is an ecological dimension to vulnerability because the natural environment in which one lives can be more or less resistant to disasters (ibid.). Figure two depicts how vulnerability can be influenced by both the physical environment and broader social, cultural, and political systems.

It is important to recognize that while many poor people are vulnerable, not all people living in poverty are vulnerable and one does have to be poor to be vulnerable. Other factors that influence vulnerability are one's gender, physical condition, their social status within the community and the political situation of both one's country and the region in which one lives (ibid). Sen details how even the global economy serves to value some lives over others and produces vulnerability. Poor countries that are in debt to the

World Bank and IMF are required to make loan payments at the expense of its

"constitutional obligations" to its citizens (Sen 2006:32). In Nepal specifically, causes of

vulnerability include: "low awareness of risks, lack of training of artisans, engineers, and

builders in safe construction practices, lax enforcement of building standards, and lack of

high

technical

capacities in

the

engineering

practice"

(National

Planning

Commission

2015:5).

Type of Vulnerability	Components	Determinants
Livelihood Vulnerability	Income Opportunities Livelihood Type Entry Qualifications Assets and Savings Health Status	Class Position Gender Ethnicity Age Action of State
Self-Protection	Building Quality Hazard Protection Location of Home/Work	Above Determinants Intensity/Magnitude of Hazard
Social Protection	Above Components Building Regulations Technical Interventions	Above Determinants Level of Technical Practices Type of Science and Engineering Used by the State

Table 3.1 Table 1 lists the components and determinants of Cannon's three aspects of
vulnerability. Taken from Cannon 1994:21.

Cannon notes three aspects of vulnerability in regards to environmental disasters:

one's capacity to resist the impact of the disaster, one's ability to seek decent healthcare

in the event of injury, and the degree to which one is prepared for the disaster beforehand

(Cannon 1994:19). These three types of vulnerability and their determinants are listed in

Table 1. Included in the capacity to resist disaster is decent housing, a major barrier faced

by many poor and vulnerable people around the world (Cannon 1994:17, Geohazards

International 2015).

Geohazards International calculated that during Haiti's 7.0 magnitude earthquake

in 2010, "unsafe buildings caused the deaths of an estimated 130,000-300,000 people and

accounted for most earthquake deaths that year" (Geohazards International 2015). Unsafe

buildings were a major source of injuries and mortality after Nepal's earthquake, too

(Cross 2015). Additionally, many vulnerable people live in urban areas, which have a

unique set of disadvantages, including limited escape routes, dense infrastructure and

populations, and high levels of poverty (Donner and Rodriguez 2008:1093). Rapid

urbanization has necessitated that homes and buildings be built quickly, resulting in

buildings that do not always meet codes and therefore easily crumble in the face of

disaster (Donner and Rodriguez 2008:1093, Cross 2015). Natural disasters are definitely

inevitable, but the level of their impact is intrinsically linked to historical, economic,

cultural, and other man-made processes and institutions (Citrin 2015, also: Cannon 1994,

Donner and Rodriguez 2008:1093, Smith 2015, Billingsley 2016).

Nepal's earthquakes were incredibly devastating, but many scholars have

speculated that the effect of the initial earthquake could have been a lot worse. April 25,

2015 was a Saturday, a holy day in Nepal, so schools and other buildings were mostly

empty, which is significant because public schools accounted for 92 percent of the total

damages (Citrin 2015, National Planning Commission 2015:xvi, 11). Further, as noted

above, many women were working in their fields, away from crumbling homes and

buildings. If the quake had happened on a weekday or during the night, the number of

lives lost could have been significantly higher. Additionally, Bill Berger, USAID's

Disaster Assistance Response Team leader, who has been in Nepal for eighteen years,

said that many relief teams were even prepared for the quakes. For example, there were

already water wells in open spaces in Kathmandu and a storage unit for relief goods was

in place at the airport that allowed efficient use of the tarmac (Streep 2015). Nevertheless, Nepal was devastated and in dire need to relief aid. The next section details these efforts.

3.3 Relief Efforts by Both Nepalis and Non-Nepalis

In the words of Nepal's National Planning Commission, "poverty, inequalities, exclusion, and discrimination not only shape vulnerabilities of people to disasters, but also have a direct bearing on how survivors respond to disasters" (2015:61). Members of these groups consistently have limited opportunities and agency, limited access to economic and cultural resources, and limited influence in public and community decision-making. Consequently, these groups ability to recover from disaster is significantly impeded. In order to ensure that the most vulnerable people receive the support and supplies they need to recover both immediately and in the long-term, it is important that relief workers pay special attention as they describe their needs (ibid.). It is pivotal that the rebuilding process does not reinforce inequalities and structural violence.

One of the most important issues with aid distribution is ensuring that it is allocated equally, fairly, and to those truly in need – a problem many countries face after hardships, not just Nepal. Preexisting inequalities are already prone to exacerbation after disasters; it is therefore imperative that the government and relief agencies pay close attention to how they are divvying aid (Shneiderman and Turin 2015, see also Citrin 2015, Asian Development Bank 2015, Billingsley 2016). For example, some of the affected villages located in remote areas received less aid and had to wait longer periods for it to trickle in (National Planning Committee 2015). The more easily accessible villages benefited disproportionately and even received duplicates of relief supplies

(ibid.). According to Amnesty International's Asia Pacific Director Richard Bennett, relief efforts after Nepal's earthquake was not based solely on need: not only were vulnerable communities having trouble accessing aid, people with political connections received more aid more quickly (Bennett 2015).

During the process of recovery and reconstruction, the national planners and relief agencies need to remember that most of the victims they are assisting were already poor to begin with and are now faced with an even more grim future. Because the demographics of each district tend to be different in terms of socioeconomic status, relief efforts need to be tailored to fit the specific needs of each sector (National Planning Commission 2015:xvii). It is imperative that Nepalis own the reconstruction of their homes and communities and feel empowered to make decisions in that regard. (National Planning Commission 2015:4). Incorporating members of vulnerable communities, and locals in general, in the aid distribution process will help to guarantee that they are getting the goods and services they need (Charles 2015, Asian Development Bank 2015, Shneiderman and Turin 2015, Billingsley 2016).

Furthermore, it is important that people running relief missions understand the cultural backgrounds of the disaster victims to ensure the success of their relief programs. Members of minority communities often operate under different understandings of risk than the majority (Donner and Rodriguez 2008:1098,1101). For example, most people who stayed in New Orleans before Hurricane Katrina, despite numerous evacuation warnings, were poor and African American (Donner and Rodriguez 2008:1098). There are multiple reasons that they did not evacuate, including lack of money to pay for gas, food, and lodging, obligations to stay with older relatives who did not or could not

evacuate, and failure to comprehend the severity of this earthquake compared to others they had survived without too much issue (Eisenman, et al. 2007:109,112). Other people did not evacuate because they did not trust the government to provide them with information in their best interests, including whether or not they should actually leave New Orleans – which is understandable in light of the many examples of institutional racism and discrimination (ibid.). Thus, to shield as many people as possible against the impact of the disaster and better prepare for any future hazards, it is necessary to thoroughly understand the different ways various subpopulations in a country respond to and prepare for natural disasters.

Another means through which workers can ensure that recovery is done in the quickest, most effective manner possible is to clearly assign jobs to the "key sector actors" (National Planning Commission 2015:46). Nepal plans to tackle reconstruction with a holistic approach in mind, meaning that they will not limit their focus to the damaged areas, but instead work to reduce risk and vulnerability in all hazard prone areas (National Planning Commission 2015:51). The government, in conjunction with other committees on reconstruction and recovery, have developed areas of special focus to guide their efforts: expanding the skill pool for recovery through the training and skills development programs, recovery and restoration of cultural heritage sites, and disaster risk reduction (National Planning Commission 2015:91). Nepal will need as much structure and sustained assistance as possible. According to the Nepali government, total recovery needs amount of NPR 669 billion (approximately US$ 6.7 billion) (ibid.).

Many scholars and volunteers have sought to learn as much as possible about aid distribution and relief efforts in a poor country by drawing parallels between Nepal's

situation and Haiti's after the January 12, 2010 earthquake. Gina Athena Ulysse, an anthropologist of Haiti, has written extensively about Haiti's massive earthquake. One essay, written shortly after the disaster, reads like it could have been written about Nepal. She mentions, for instance, Haiti's "unbeatable spirit of creative survivalism," despite being the poorest country in the hemisphere (Ulysse 2010). Nepalis, too, have found ways to live amidst hardship and poverty, which I will detail below. Ulysse is also worried about "…when we are no longer front-page news," if people will still care enough to provide time and money for rebuilding. This is also an issue for Nepal: as stated above, the country will need continual assistance and support.

Citrin, an anthropologist of Nepal, makes explicit connections to Haiti, writing, "…we need to make sure the international communities' response to Nepal does not end up looking like Haiti," referring to that fact that billions of dollars of aid were donated, but even now we do not know how the money was spent, and Haiti has still not significantly improved (Citrin 2015). For these reasons, he implores donors and relief agencies alike to operate under complete transparency, letting the public know where and how their donated money and goods are being spent (ibid.). A final lesson to learn from Haiti is that relief agencies need to work with the government instead of around it, a topic touched upon above (Charles 2015, Citrin 2015, Sanders et al. 2015).

Many news articles portray the Nepali government in a poor light, writing that it is corrupt and operating too slowly and inefficiently. This negative commentary on the ineffectiveness of the government, however, is mostly stemming from the Global North (Sanders, et al. 2015). Sanders and colleagues argue that the "outsider narratives contrast sharply with most of the insider narratives" they have come across (ibid.). The latter are

often characterized by images of strength and hope, lauding Nepali citizens for the work

they have done and differences they have made. The former, the outsider narratives, on

the other hand, focus on criticizing the government and pointing out its flaws and

mistakes. The authors of these articles seem to forget that any government would struggle

to respond to such a devastating catastrophe, especially in a country with such a harsh

physical terrain (Bell 2015, Sanders et al. 2015).

The government of Nepal has done its best to serve its citizens by making

calculated decisions to coordinate the distribution of goods and money and ensure that

people in need were helped. Nevertheless, critics have still found fault, leading NGOs

and other relief agencies to endeavor to subvert the government and distribute aid by

themselves without the government's knowledge or input. Consequently, the relationship

between the government of Nepal and international donors is fraught with tension: donors

are distrustful and weary of corruption in the government, while officials feel defensive

as donors continuously undermine their role in the country (Bell 2015, Sanders et al.

2015). Working around the government actually worsens the situation; coordinating relief

efforts would probably increase the efficiency of aid distribution missions (Bell 2015,

Sanders, et al. 2015). Donors and outsiders must bear in mind that ultimately the Nepali

government is responsible for its people and deserves respect to make its own decisions

on how best to help its citizens.

Studies of natural disaster tend to focus on the disaster itself and then relief

afterwards, leading to the development of technical interventions to predict the hazards or

reduce their impact. Unfortunately, this focus is at the expense of programs to reduce

people's vulnerability to disasters (Cannon 1994:13). These interventions, however, are

not "neutral," and in fact can sometimes benefit only certain subpopulations; they must therefore be implemented with a special attention to how they affect different groups (Cannon 1994:14, see also: Citrin 2015, Billingsley 2016). In order to truly reduce the losses felt, we need to realize that "if people can be made less vulnerable, or non-vulnerable, then a hazard may still occur, but need not produce a disaster" (Cannon 1994:20, see also: Billingsley 2016). In other words, the only way to minimize the impact of disasters is to address the root cause of vulnerability: structural inequality.

Tackling the underlying issues of structural inequality that perpetuate vulnerability is not an easy feat and cannot be accomplished in a few weeks. In fact, it will probably never be completed. However, there are things that can be accomplished in the short term to reduce vulnerability, such as building the country back better (Shneiderman and Turin 2015, Citrin 2015, National Planning Commission 2015:xx). Simple things, such as ensuring that buildings are built according to and kept to code, can help minimize the scale of natural disasters. Even before the earthquake struck, Nepal was already working to incorporate disaster preparedness into its development planning – one way through which Nepal is working to "build back better" (National Planning Commission 2015). However, the government must also "manage public expectations" with regards to what can be done now. Nepal requires that certain sectors be reconstructed immediately in order to sustain the economy. The country is also working with a limited budget, so projects that are too ambitious could deplete the resources and limit other necessary endeavors (National Planning Commission 2015:307). Rebuilding missions must be prioritized to ensure that the country can get back on its feet as quickly as possible.

Furthermore, reducing the vulnerability of a population will help to lower the number of "stupid deaths" (Farmer 2009:56). Stupid deaths are those that are tragic and unnecessary, like when people die from afflictions that are easily cured or from lack of clean water or sanitary hygiene – or when people die because they could not afford decent housing. The conditions of vulnerability are the result of structural inequalities that could be changed if people in power wanted to change them – recall from the first chapter that poverty is the result of pathologies of power, that it is directly the result of the actions of other, wealthier human beings. The numerous deaths after natural disasters that can be directly related to vulnerability are most certainly stupid deaths.

3.4 Surviving, Resiliency, Agency, and Hope for the Future

The picture of painted above of Nepal after the earthquakes is grim. However, the devastation wrought by vulnerability and the disaster is only one part of the story. The other part to be shared is how Nepali people responded to these catastrophes. This section will detail some of that response.

One means through which Nepalis rose to action was through the creation of their own aid collection and distribution organizations. For example, a small bed and breakfast in Kathmandu, the Yellow House, became the home base for a "vibrant guerilla aid operation" ran by a few young Nepalis wanting to help (Streep 2015). They were able to quickly and effectively deliver aid to some of the most affected areas. Their success in their endeavors quickly garnered the attention of larger relief agencies and NGOs; Team Rubicon, a prominent NGO, began to work with Yellow House volunteers, and the

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees delivered supplies to help them expand

their capabilities (ibid.).

Another successful organization that got its start from a Nepali man is Quakemap.

Nama Budhathoki, a Nepali who was already running Kathmandu Living Labs, launched

the site immediately after the first quake as an "open source map of Nepal using satellite

imagery" (Streep 2016). The aim of the organization is twofold. The first goal was to

detail Nepal's landscape so that volunteers could plan relief missions on the easiest

and/or fastest route (because the terrain can be quite rough, the fastest and easiest routes

are not always the same). The second goal of Quakemaps was to provide a public site

where reports could be sent that noted not only where the aftershocks hit, but also where

volunteers had gone and what villages still needed supplies (Streep 2015,

"QuakeMap.Org" 2015).

Nepali women also came together to establish relief organizations that could meet

the needs particular to women, children, and elderly adults ("One Year Later: Women

Rebuilding Nepal" 2016). Tewa, Nepal's only women's fund, collaborated with Nagarik

Aawaz, a women's group, to reach 23,000 households and 7,000 postnatal and pregnant

women, elderly people, and children (ibid.). In doing so, they talked directly to women

about their needs, the needs of their communities, and about how the earthquake

produced special challenges for women and children (ibid.). Other groups distributed

hygiene products, maternal and newborn medicine, soap, undergarments, nutritious food,

and even psychosocial counseling. Finally, because so many women lost their livelihoods

(businesses they ran from their now destroyed homes), many organizations provided

literacy training and vocational training to assist women in acquiring more sustainable

livelihoods. Reflecting on the efficacy of these programs and how women are doing one year later, one woman said, "the disaster was inevitable, but I really feel proud to see the way that women have responded. Women are really coming together, pulling together, rebuilding – we see women's leadership and women's resilience are very strong throughout Nepal" (ibid.).

The Yellow House, QuakeMap, and the various women's organizations are just a few of the many organizations that Nepalis created to help their fellow countrymen. Establishing these aid agencies is just one way in which Nepali people refused to internalize their vulnerability and helplessness after the earthquakes. Much like Catarina's dictionary, these organizations can be seen as Nepalis' efforts to reclaim their subjectivity and agency.

Agency and resiliency come in different forms, though. As stated above, Nepalis already suffering at the hands of structural violence were the most affected by the earthquakes. These victims can be likened to the Australian Aboriginals in Povinelli's work; they live in a different social order than other, higher caste Nepalis and are therefore relegated to the margins of society and ignored. The way they adjust their lives after the quakes then is going to be different than the ways others do (Leve 2015). Leve, an anthropologist who was in Kathmandu at the time of the April 25 earthquake, witnessed first hand the various responses different social groups had. She saw how homeless villagers in Gorkhali went to work in their field less than two days after the first quake hit. Literate villagers recorded the losses of each household. Able-bodied people walked to the markets and carried home as much as they could (ibid.). They did not

create grassroots organizations or mobilize the Internet to raise funds and volunteers, but they did what they could.

Of course, they did not really have a choice – they had to pick up and move on to support their families. In that light, their resiliency can be seen as a way of "living suffering, rather than a sign of transcendent inner strength" (Leve 2015). However, here again we can draw on Catarina's story and the plight of Australian Aboriginals. Catarina survived despite the familial and institutional violence and abandonment thrown at her, as did the Aboriginals. They could have resigned themselves to helplessness; Catarina could have ended up like some of the other people at Vita, withering away with each passing day. The Aboriginals could have assimilated to make their lives easier. Poor Nepalis could have mourned their losses and waited around for others to come help them. Indeed, they are "living suffering," but they still made the choices to start improving their lives, to help others in need, to get back to work. They did not allow the earthquakes to render them hopeless.

3.5 The Impact of the Blockade on Nepal's Future

Natural disasters have a tendency to highlight inequalities very clearly and can even end up worsening them. According to Sen, "there is a global system that values the profits of a few over the dignity and lives of the many, and that is structurally incapable of treating all human lives equally" (2006:33). For some Nepalis, the immense loss and/or destruction destroyed their livelihoods so they can no longer earn money (or as much money) (National Planning Commission 2015). More explicitly, "The earthquakes will end up pushing an additional 2.5 to 3.5 percent of Nepalis into poverty in 2015-2016,

which translates into at least 700,000 people" (National Planning Commission 2015:xvi). Because of this increase in poverty levels, Nepal's Economic Vulnerability Index, which had previously been improving, is likely to be set back this upcoming year (National Planning Commission 2015:74).

Sen noted in 1993 that a major problem U.S. citizens (and presumably members of other rich countries) face is that we do not fully appreciate the nature of extreme economic deprivation (1993:45). Of course, it is very challenging to understand the crippling nature of poverty and vulnerability until one sees it for one's self, but, as has been reiterated throughout this thesis, knowledge is the first step to solving the problem.

To ensure that changes are made to reduce the vulnerability of subpopulations to natural hazards, people need to first need to know it is an issue. Furthermore, because many of the victims are poor and vulnerable to begin with, the impact of the disaster is amplified, leaving victims utterly devastated (Sen 2006:32). Nepalis everywhere will

Figure 3.2 Figure 2 depicts a map of Nepal with the Birgunj trade point noted.
*Birganj is an alternate spelling.
Taken from HotelNepal.com 2014.

certainly need sustained, long-term support throughout the process of rebuilding (Shneiderman and Turin 2015).

Unfortunately, the suffering of earthquake victims was compounded months later when another disaster stuck Nepal, this time man-made. The next chapter examines the blockade between Nepal and India that prevented many Nepalis from accessing valuable

goods, such as fuel necessary to cook and get to work/school. While certainly not a natural disaster, the embargo was another overwhelming blow to Nepalis.

Chapter 4: Nepal's Man-Made Crisis: The 2015 Blockade

4.1 Introduction to Nepal's 2015 Economic Blockade: What Happened?

On September 20, 2015, despite threats of violence and social unrest from various groups, Nepali congress released its official constitution. A mere three days later, another disaster struck Nepal, this time manmade (Biggs 2015). Madhesis, an ethnic group of southern Nepal, shut down trade checkpoints between India and Nepal and Nepal's third trade blockade began (Acharya, et al. 2015, Biggs 2015, Koirala and Macdonald 2015, Peterson 2015). While a number of points were blocked, the Birgunj point is the "heart" of the conflict, as 70 percent of Indian imports pass through it (Plesch 2015). It is estimated that 4,200 cargo trucks were stranded as these various points (Prasain 2015).

Nepal relies heavily on its trade relationship with India (approximately sixty percent of Nepal's trade is with India) so preventing goods from passing through to Nepal has had a devastating effect on the lives of millions of Nepalis (Acharya, et al. 2015, Biggs 2015, Dixit 2015, Lamichhane 2015, Plesch 2015). One of the most significant shortages has been fuel: without Indian fuel, Nepalis have not been able to get to work or school and people have had to resort to illegal logging for fires to heat their houses and cook their food (Acharya, et al. 2015). Some schools were reduced to two days a week whiles others were forced to briefly close down completely because the fuel rations prevented the buses from going; Biggs reports that close to two million Nepali children were out of school (2015). In terms of work, Nepalis who depended on daily wages for

their livelihood suffered the most, but because places ranging from banks to shops to government offices were shut down, the strike affected everyone (Jha 2015).

Additionally, there was a severe shortage of medicines and medical equipment. The blockade prevented the production of many types of medicines because ninety percent of the materials used to produce and package them are passed through the Birgunj border ("Shortage of Medicines" 2015). Consequently, Nepalis had a hard time finding even basic, decent quality health services, increasing the risks of morbidity and mortality for Nepalis in affected areas (Lamichhane 2015). Supplies of oxygen, blood, and vaccines were also hit by the blockade. The high prices of available medicines coupled with the shortage of fuel made accessing necessary medical care an impossible hurdle. In addition, clean water and food were hard to come by, even in the urban areas, further affecting Nepali health.

Furthermore, people are still trying to rebuild their homes and communities after the April 25th earthquake, but the fuel crises put their work on hold as most of the necessarily supplies (both raw materials and construction materials) were across the boarder. Nearly 600,000 houses were damaged due to the earthquake; the blockade compounded the homeowners suffering by preventing them from being able to literally rebuild their lives (Acharya, et al. 2015). The building of business and hospitals was also put on hold during the blockade (Lamichhane 2015). Nongovernmental organizations were also forced to adjust, and even suspend, their aid efforts. For example, Adara Development Group, an NGO working in Ghangfedi, was unable to get supplies to this remote location, and was therefore unable to help (Biggs 2015). Furthermore, it was almost forced to cancel one of their mobile medical camps in a district unaffected directly

by the earthquake because they were again unable to obtain the necessary supplies. Fortunately, they were able to team up with another camp to get supplies (Biggs 2015). The inhibition of relief efforts is a significant way in which the blockade caused or perpetuated previous suffering.

Finally, the blockade has dealt a devastating blow to the economy on a number of levels. First, the Nepali government initially estimated that the country would see an economic growth rate of six percent this fiscal year, but that projection was reduced to a mere two percent after taking into consideration both the April 25 earthquake and the blockade. Specifically, the earthquake lowered the estimated growth rate to three percent; the blockade caused the projection to drop to the last percentage (Paudel 2015). Second, total trade for this fiscal year has declined by 31 percent (Paudel 2015). Third, Nepal had to pay "detention charges" and other penalties for the stranded cargo, which, according to Ranjan Sharma, president of Nepal Freight Forwarders Association, alone amounted to a Rs14 billion (Prasain 2015). These three examples are just a few of the myriad of economic problems Nepal is facing due to the blockade.

On February 4, 2016, Madhesis finally agreed to life the blockade. News outlets reported the official reason was that Madhesis wanted to alleviate some of the suffering it was causing their countrymen. Another reason for the end of the blockade is that protesters were exhausted and disappointed with its ineffectiveness ("Front Regrets Failed Blockade" 2016, Jha 2016). According to Mahato, one of the leaders of the United Democratic Madhesi Front, "We failed to create pressure on the government by blocking border points…We only caused suffering to ordinary people" ("Front Regrets Failed Blockade" 2016). Finally, a third factor is that local businessmen and officials forcibly

worked to remove the protesters by burning their tents and personally removing barriers (Jha 2016). However, the end of the blockade does not mean that Madhesis have finally come to accept their constitution. On the contrary, they are still very much in opposition and intend on continuing with other, less obstructive forms of protests, stating that they will reinstate the blockade if they deem it necessary (Pokharel 2016).

The next section will provide a contemporary political analysis of the recent history of Nepal, including a discussion of the relationship between India and Nepal and background information on the Madhesis as a whole, addressing their main points of contention with the new constitution.

4.2 Contemporary Political Analysis of Nepal

4.2.1 The Relationship Between Nepal, India, and China, and How that Affected/Was Affected By the Blockade

As harsh as this method of protest may seem, it was effective in garnering the attention of the government. In fact, this is not the first blockade Nepal and India have seen. In September 1962, India prevented all goods from crossing into Nepal at Raxaul, the Indian side of the Birgunj checkpoint, in an attempt to bully Nepal because of political tensions regarding trade treaties (Rana 1971:649). A second blockade occurred in March 1989, also as a result of treaty disagreements between the two countries, when India shut down thirteen out of fifteen of the major trade points in order to force Nepal to sign certain trade treaties (Garver 1991:959).

Because Nepal and India have a history of strained relations, it is not surprising many Nepalis have blamed India for the blockade. Some argued that India was behind the

"unofficial economic blockade" as a means of forcing Nepal to amend the constitution in line with Madhesi demands (Peterson, Panda 2016). Many people reason that if Madhesis have a louder, more representative voice in the government, India will be able to maintain its influence over Nepal because Madhesis are socially and culturally aligned with India. The widespread belief that India was at least in support fueled anger and even "anti-Indian" sentiments across Nepal. We will most likely never know the exact extent of India's participation in the blockade compared to how much the Madhesis were responsible for. The most important thing now is that the blockade is over and Nepal and India must work towards strengthening their relationship.

Towards that end, Nepalese Prime Minister Khadga Prasad Sharma Oli visited India to meet with Prime Minister Narendra Modi in late February as the first step in repairing the countries' relationship (Pandey 2016). While this meeting was merely the first step is restoring good will between Nepal and India, the trip was "fruitful," to quote PM Oli. They both signed a seven point deal that encompasses a range of issues, including energy trade, transit facilities, road construction, and post-earthquake reconstruction support (Pandey 2016). For example, India donated US$250 million to assist with rebuilding and repairing in four sectors: housing, health, education, and cultural heritage.

In the meantime, however, the blockade pushed Nepal to become closer allies with China, who supplied them with 1.2 million liters of fuel in October (Bell 2015, "With Blockade Lifted" 2016). A month after his visit to India, Prime Minister Oli visited China and signed a "memorandum of understanding" for future trade and made a few other agreements, including Nepal's use of Chinese ports and the building of Pokhara

Regional International Airport ("Nepal Gains Access" 2016). The construction of rail

links to connect the two countries is also in the works (Iyengar 2016). Together, these

agreements will bring India's monopoly on Nepali oil imports and Nepal's overwhelming

dependence on Indian trade to an end. China is pushing for other trade opportunities, and

while Nepal wants to keep the peace with India, a widespread anti-Indian sentiment

might bolster China's success (Iyengar 2016, "With Blockade Lifted, India Can Influence

Nepal" 2016).

Nevertheless, Nepal cannot afford to alienate India, as they are still responsible

for the majority of Nepal's imports. Because Nepal is landlocked, their options are fairly

limited. Alka Acharya, director of the Institute of Chinese studies in New Delhi, India,

told Iyengar that Nepal must exorcise "deft diplomacy" and maintain cordial

relationships with both countries or risk ending up in the middle and "feel[ing] stifled

rather than liberated" (Iyengar 2016).

4.2.2 Abridged History of the Madhesi People

As noted in the introduction, Nepal can be horizontally divided into three

geographical regions: Mountain, Hill, and Terai (Plains). The Terai region is the
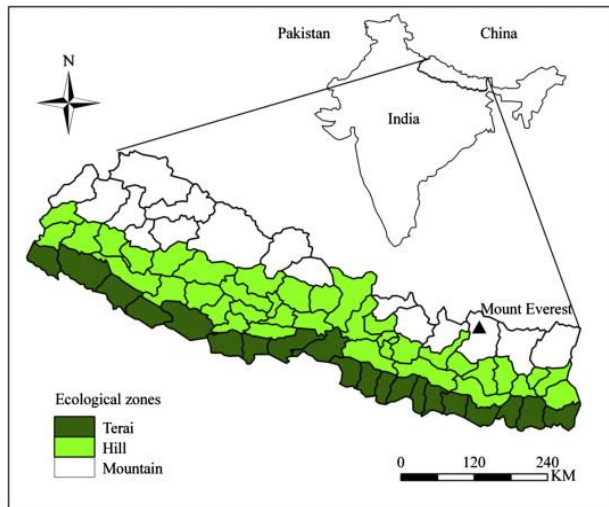

southernmost of these regions and hugs the Indian border. The eastern and central regions of Terai constitute Madhes; the official boundaries of Madhes are the Mahakali River on the west and the Mechi River on the east (Shah 2015:2). According to the 2011 Population Census, 50.3 percent of Nepal's total population is living in the Terai region, with Eastern and Central Terai having the highest population density (CSB 2011). The

Figure 4.1 This map of Nepal illustrates the three geographical regions. The dark green is the Terai district, the home of the Madhesis. The bright green is the hill region and the white is the mountain district. Taken from Chhetri, et al. 2012:146.

Madhesis, taking their name from their homeland, are Nepalis native to the region. The

term Madhes encompasses many different ethnic groups, and together they make up

about thirty percent of the total population of Nepal (Singh 2014). Furthermore, the term

can be employed in both a cultural and geographical sense: Nepali people of Indian origin

are culturally and geographically Madhesi, while there are indigenous groups that inhabit

the region but are not Indo-Nepali (the Tharus ethnic group, for example) (ibid.). Singh

notes that Madhesi International, an organization devoted to Madhesi rights, defines

Madhesi as someone from the Terai Nepal, who is of Indian origin (Singh 2014:98).

Unfortunately, because of their connections to India, Madhesis are looked down upon as

non-Nepali and therefore discriminated against (Singh 2014, Shah 2015). One result of

this discrimination is that Madhesis fare worse than hill people in regards to certain

socio-economic indicators: Terai districts are poorer, less educated, have less ownership

of land, are negatively portrayed in the media, and are underrepresented in government

and positions of power (ibid.). Despite these hardships they face, Madhesis have claimed

their Indo-Nepalese identity as their own and have resisted assimilation to the culture of

the Nepali elites in the hills (Singh 2014, Shah 2015, Jha 2015). In this way, not only are

they claiming their identity as ethnic Nepali, they are also claiming power and rights.

Even before the Maoist Revolution, the Madhesis were engaged in a political

struggle to have their voices heard. In the 1950s, the Nepali government took notice of

the "Madhesi movement" when the Nepali Terai Congress began advocating for an

autonomous Madhesh, the recognition of Hindu as an official language, and a Madhesi

presence in the civil service (Lecours 2014). Fifty years later, the Madhesi voice is still

loud, lobbying for constitutional reform and a Madhesi state that would are to the end of

Madhesi discrimination.

To end the People's War in 2006, Nepal's political leaders signed the

Comprehensive Peace Agreement that included a provision for the creation of a new

constitution. It was specified that this new document would be drafted through a

Constituent Assembly (CA) and would create a new, federal Nepal (Thapa, et al. 2015).

In 2007, an interim constitution was created, declaring Nepal a "secular, inclusive, and

fully democratic State" (the Interim Constitution, quoted in Lecours 2014). The following

year, Nepal elected their first CA, a body of 601 members of various political parties, to

draft their official constitution (Lecours 2014, Lawoti 2005). (240 of the 601 seats are

selected through "First Past the Post" voting, which selects one candidate for each of the

240 geographical constituencies in Nepal. In this system, each Nepali votes for one

person and the person with the most votes is selected to be on the CA. 335 of the seats are

voted in through "Proportional Representation," wherein voters vote only for the political

party. The parties themselves then chose who would fill their seats; the number of seats

they are allowed is proportional to the number of votes their party received. In order to

ensure equality and fair representation, parties must ensure that their candidates meet the

quota requirements for the representation of women, Dalits, oppressed castes/indigenous

ethnic groups, backward regions, and Madhesis (Bylesjo, et al. 2010:1-2). Specifically,

fifty percent of a party's candidates must be women, 31.2 percent must be Madhesi, and

37.8% candidates must come from oppressed caste/indigenous groups (ibid.).

Unfortunately, the CA could not agree to a constitution and in 2012 it was dissolved to

allow Nepali citizens to elect a second CA through the same process. The new CA was

also unable to come to any agreements until after the 2015 earthquakes.

Politicians were finally able to agree upon a new constitution on because of

complications with the April 25th earthquake: "As earthquake recovery was negatively

affected by political instability, the earthquake served as an accelerator in national

political consensus building" (Billingsley 2015). Four of Nepal's major political parties,

including the Madhesi People's Rights Forum – Democratic (MPRFD), signed an

agreement to a "fast-track process" on June 8, 2015. This process "…reduced the period

of discussions in parliament from a week to three days;" public feedback was also

reduced to a mere week. The result was that many issues were hastily agreed upon and

many Nepalis were unable to provide their feedback (Yacav 2016). On September 8,

2015, due to growing Madhesi protests, however, the MPRFD formally left the fast-track

alliance. A couple of weeks later, on September 20th, 2015, Nepal ratified their new constitution.

During the six years it took to create the constitution, the Madhesis were vocal about what they wanted out of it. After the Maoist Revolution, Madhesi leaders expected Nepal to become a federalist state that would great them "territorial autonomy" (Lecours 2014). The elected CA officials, however, could not come to an agreement about how to implement such a system and draw district lines. Why? Three of the major political parties in Nepal (the Unified Communist Party of Nepal- Maoist, Nepali Congress, Communist Party of Nepal- Unified Marxist-Leninist, and Madhesi Parties) are controlled by Hindu elites from the hill region, who enjoy their control over the country and who tend to have "little specific concern for the country's excluded and disadvantaged minorities" (Lecours 2014). While these political leaders have different ideas about how to turn Nepal into a federalist state, they agree that granting Madhesis their own province is not a good idea out of concern over Madhesis' loyalty to Nepal (Jha 2015, Lecours 2014, Shah 2015). This disagreement over whether to allow indigenous groups the "regional self-governance" they desired prevented the CA from creating a constitution that was acceptable to all parties involved.

It is with this history of conflict and identity politics in mind that one can begin to understand the Madhesi protest of the 2015 constitution. They have two main points of contention: lack of Madhesi territory and discriminatory rules for citizenship. The next section will explore these issues.

4.3 Madhesi Agitation: Build Up the to the Blockade

Madhesi uprisings in the name of constitutional fairness did not begin with the blockade. Madhesis had been protesting and lobbying for equality since August 2015; since then, over one hundred people have been killed or injured (Thapa, et al. 2015:41). I noted above that there are many communities of marginalized peoples across Nepal that are dealing with invisible violence and frustration with the government, including the Tharus, an ethnic group that also resides in the Terai. To reiterate, I have chosen to narrow my focus to only the Madhesi movement because their protests were the loudest at the time of my research. This focus also allows me to explore the Madhesis people in more depth and to provide a thorough discussion about their situation. According to the Human Rights Watch, the first act of serious violence occurred on August 24th, when Tharu protesters murdered police officers in a western Terai district. When the violence spread to the Madhes, most of the deaths were due to police brutality against protesters and innocent villagers (Thapa, et al. 2015:13). One witness to police violence in the Mahottari district, shared this story with Human Rights Watch reporters:

> "They beat up people inhumanely saying things like, 'You want rights for Madhesi?' They entered the houses and beat up women…scared the children. Everyone is scared, scared of the police…We are being treated inhumanely, like second-class citizens. Like we are not Nepalis, like we're criminals or terrorists" ("Like We Are Not Nepali" 2015:33).

One of the main examples of discrimination that the Madhesis point to is access to citizenship: they claim that the constitution only affords them "second-class citizenship status" (Thapa, et al. 2015). In Nepal, there are two types of citizenship: naturalized citizenship and citizenship by decent. The biggest difference between the two is that only citizens who have citizenship by decent are able to run for government offices such as president, vice-president, or prime minister. Citizenship by decent can be transferred to a child if the father is Nepali. If a child's mother is Nepali but the father is foreign, the

child only has naturalized citizenship. If the mother does not know who the father is, the child may receive citizenship by decent. Naturalized citizenship is also granted to women who marry Nepali men. If a woman marries a foreign man, however, it is a much longer, harder process for him to receive citizenship. For example, he must continuously live in Nepal for fifteen years before being granted citizenship. Because the Terai is geographically close to India and the border is open, meaning that Nepalis and Indians can easily cross the boarder, many Nepalis marry Indians. While all Nepali women should be upset about the discriminatory nature of the rules for citizenship, Madhesi women are particularly upset. Given the open border between Nepal and India and Madhesh's close proximity to India, many Madhesi women marry Indian men. Due to the process for citizenship, their husbands have an exhausting road ahead of them, but worse that that, if a Nepali women and her Indian have a child born in Nepal, their baby still does not get to enjoy all the rights as her peers. Madhesis see this as an act of discrimination against them because they practice exogamy at such high rates.

The most significant complaint Madhesis have with the new constitution is that it does not afford them the political autonomy they wanted and actually "disadvantages their already marginalized community"

Figure 4.2 Figure 4 shows the current boundaries of the federal states as they currently are. Eight of the Terai's districts lie in State 2, which is colored pink.

(Thapa, et al. 2015:11-12). The document demarcates seven federal provinces, only one

of which belongs solely to the Terai people. The Plains Region is composed of 22 districts; eight of them belong to State Two, while the other fourteen were lumped in with hills districts. Madhesis believe that this was a specific political maneuver. As the minority group in the region (politically and culturally), their voice would be diminished and the hill region people's agenda will be played out (Biggs 2015, Lawoti 2005, Shah 2006, Yadav 2016). Consequently, they are demanding the creation of two Terai states, as well as proportional representation in government offices (Biggs 2015).

One of the largest hurdles for the CA to overcome was where to draw the federal boundaries. Maoists and Madhesis politicians wanted to use this opportunity as a platform for addressing "ethnic grievances about persistent historical inequalities" (Shakya and KC 2015). Nepali Congress and the Communist Party of Nepal – United Marxist Leninist, on the other hand, argued for federal states based on economic reasons (ibid.). The fast-track process allowed for the constitution to be passed with majority vote. After the earthquake, the four parties came to a 16-point deal, which included federal state lines, to pass the constitution quickly. The Madhesi faction changed its mind and walked out of the deal over disagreements. The other three parties went ahead anyways and passed the constitution (ibid.).

The initial constitution called for only six provinces, but was amended to include a seventh on August 21. This seventh is the result of demands by Nepalis from the hill districts of Surkhet and Jumla (Thapa, et al. 2015:12). When political leaders did not cede to the Madhesis demands for their own provinces, Madhesis saw it as purposefully denying them autonomy and power, and was cited as further proof of discrimination against them (ibid.).

A second reason for wanting to redraw the boundaries is so that Madhesis can have better access to natural resources (Yadav 2016). In the eastern Terai, there are industrial complexes and irrigation potential. In the west, the forests, Mahakali River, and business entry points to India offer additional assets that would help improve the lives and livelihoods of Madhesis and other Terai inhabitants (ibid.).

Although these two issues were the main catalysts of the blockade, there are larger problems of discrimination and structural violence that Madhesis face on a regular basis that contributed to the feelings that led to the blockade. The next section explores the trenchant inequality Madhesis face and offers an analysis of the blockade as the end result of social suffering.

4.4 Analysis of the Blockade as the Result of Violence

The first section of this chapter clearly showed that the blockade had significant ramifications for Nepalis across the country. The lack of fuel, supplies, and medicines, among other things, caused major problems that resulted in widespread suffering. However, above that, the 2015 blockade is a prime example of social suffering. In the first chapter I discussed two types of invisible violence that contribute to this phenomenon: structural and symbolic. To reiterate, the former refers to political-economic forces that lead to unequal access to resources while the latter is defined as "domination, hierarchies, and internalized insult that are legitimized as natural" (Bourgois 2009:19). Madhesis rejected both of these types of violence, refusing to internalize it, because they knew that they deserve equal rights. They felt abandoned by

their government and resorted to somewhat drastic measures, in the form of an economic blockade, in order to facilitate structural and social change.

As noted above, upper-caste Hindus from the hill region have had political and cultural control of the country since its beginning (Lawoti 2007, Lawoti 2005, Lecours 2014). One of the significant effects of their domination is that more than two-thirds of the Nepali population is silenced in favor of the agenda of the few (Lawoti 2007:9, World Bank and DID 2006). Furthermore, the new constitution created a parliament of 165 members, one hundred of whom belong to the hill and mountain regions, despite the fact that they make up less than fifty percent of Nepal's total population (Jha 2015). Part of social suffering – a consequence of structural violence – is having one's voice consistently muted. The Madhesis, as a minority group, have faced trenchant inequality and hardships as the result of the government's failure to hear their voices. The affects of structural violence on the Madhesis are profound: they have a harder time reaching higher education, less access to decent, affordable healthcare, their rate of unemployment is highest, and Madhesis are routinely blocked from access to common government benefits, such as social security (CBS 2011:53, Nayak 2011, Thapa, et al. 2015:8). Additionally, Madhesi representation in the government is disproportional to their population size. Finally, Four million Madhesis are de facto stateless because they are unable to get citizenship certificates due to discrimination from both their peers and the government, making them the largest group of Nepalis without citizenship certificates (Bansal 2015, Shah 2006). Statelessness has dire consequences for Nepali people; the citizenship certificate ensures social inclusion as well as access to social, economic, and political rights for citizens (FWLD 2014). Without this certificate, people are not able

register births, vote, buy or sell land, open bank accounts, or obtain credit (FWLD 2014, UNHCR 2015). Obtaining a certificate is a very complicated process. First, a person must obtain a citizenship certificate recommendation from their Village Development Committee (VDC). The second step is to actually submit the application, which (for citizenship by decent) must also include his/her birth certificate and the citizenship certificate of her mother, father, or other family member within three generations. Both of these steps are not mere formalities – at either point the person can be denied, meaning she is not eligible for the certificate (FWLD 2014:7). 16.2% of Nepalis without a citizenship certificate do not have the necessary supporting documents while 1.8%of the population is unsure of how to apply (FWLD 2014:9). Furthermore, 4.6% of those without a certificate noted that the distance to the VDC is too far (ibid). Other hindrances include language difficulties, cultural factors (such as a nomadic lifestyle) or prohibitions that require women to have their husbands do it for them. It is the already marginalized communities that are most likely to lack a citizenship certificate, which can lead to further social, economic, and political exclusion (ibid.). Clearly, Madhesis have numerous reasons to be upset with their situation. When the protests did not work, they initiated the blockade and got the attention of the world. While the government has still not created the federal states the Madhesis are arguing for, they have made their voices loud enough to fight back against the structural and symbolic violence.

In 2015, the United Nation's Human Rights Council conducted Nepal's Universal Periodic Review. This process, which only happens once every four years, is designed to ensure that every country in the United Nations is complying with human rights laws and to suggest areas of improvement toward that aim. In recognition of the problem of

statelessness in Nepal, the UNHRC suggested that the government of Nepal work towards making it easier for women, people living in rural areas, and marginalized communities to obtain a citizenship certificate and register births (UNHCR 2015). Furthermore, the UNHRC was concerned about women's ability to pass down their citizenship. The Review seems to confirm what the Department for International Development and World Bank asserted in "Unequal Citizens:" While the government has laws and regulations that are supposed to engender equality, it is the enforcement of these laws that is the issue (2006). Particular subpopulations of Nepal face discrimination that is "…deeply rooted in the societal structures and will require well- funded multidisciplinary initiative, that focuses on changing behaviors and attitudes, over a period of years to uproot" (UNHRC 2015:7). This systematic discrimination and structural violence laid the foundation for the Madhesis uprising.

Because the Constituent Assembly members and other politicians were not hearing their pleas for equality and fairness, Madhesis took to the streets. While the constitution has not yet been amended to satisfy Madhesi demands, they have at least succeeded in garnering the attention of both public officials and the general public. Many people around the world have raised their voices in solidarity with the Madhesis and their cause. It is this author's personal hope that these pleas will be loud enough to finally work dismantle structural violence.

4.5 Amendments to the New Constitution

On January 7, 2016, 24 amendment proposals to Nepal's four-month-old constitution were registered (Acharya 2016). A little over two weeks later, on January 23,

2016, the first amendment to Nepal's constitution was passed by parliament for Articles 42 and 286. Article 42, on the right to social justice, was updated to include "the principle of proportional inclusion" (Koirala 2016). State structures and public service institutions must now reserve a certain number of jobs for women, minorities, and "socially backwards groups" based on the percentage they make up of Nepal's total population. For example, women will now get 33% of the jobs reserved for them. This amendment aims to ensure that each of these marginalized groups are afforded the same opportunities and do not have to compete with each other for access to them.

While this amendment seems beneficial, Madhesi leaders are not fully endorsing it. One issue of contention is how a person can prove that she is a member of a marginalized community. Disability or identification as Muslim might be easier to prove, but Madhesi or Khas-Arya identity is harder. A second issue is that the amendment employs different criteria for the groups in question. For example, many of the groups are long marginalized and are labeled "economically, socially, or educationally backward," while other groups, namely the Khas Arya, are merely "economically weak" (Jha, quoted in Yadav 2016). Accordingly, many Madhesi leaders do not feel that they should be entitled to the same governmental reservations as the other groups protected in Article 42.

Article 286, on constituency delimitation commission, was amended to read that "the Constituency Delimitation Commission shall consider population the first priority and geography the second" (Koirala 2016). Dipendra Jha, a constitutional lawyer working in Nepal's Supreme Court, says that this amendment does not satisfy Madhesi demands because it does not detail what the proportion will be between population and geography, nor does it say how geographic boundaries will be drawn (Jha 2015).

According to Jha, Madhesi-based political parties wanted to amend the article to allow for only the population to determine the constituency (ibid).

Some of the Madhesi lawmakers walked out of the House in protest of the proposed amendments before the vote was taken. They felt that the amendments did not adequately address their issues with the constitution; the amendments completely ignored their chief demand for better, fairer province boundaries. There have not yet been any reports on additional amendments.

Chapter 5: Tourism to Sites of Crisis

5.1 Introduction: What are Voluntourism and Disaster Tourism?

According to the World Tourism and Travel Council, in 2014, travel and tourism contributed 8.9 percent of Nepal's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (Peterson 2015). Tourism also accounted for 7.5 percent of employment (directly and indirectly). These numbers are only projected to increase over time: by 2025, tourism is expected to account for ten percent of Nepal's GDP and 8.5 percent of employment. Unfortunately, the disasters that have struck Nepal this past year (the earthquake and the blockade) have had negative ramifications on the tourism industry (ibid.). For example, Mount Everest is one of the wealthiest areas in Nepal due to tourist income, but after the earthquake, the mountain was closed to visitors for the second time in as many years, leaving many local people without incomes.

Tourism in other regions also suffered due to the blockade. The increase in prices of goods such as foods and fuel has limited Nepali citizens' ability to run their businesses. After the earthquake, monsoon season brought landslides, and then the blockade hit: one Nepali man said, "The salary I make is just not enough. If tourists

come, then yes it's enough. But now, it's very hard. It's been a year of very bad things"

(quoted in Peterson 2015). If tourists did go to Nepal, they were stuck, unable to get

around the country because the gas prices were too high for drivers (Biggs 2015).

On the other hand, voluntourists spend quite a bit of money in the host country

and therefore boost the economy, which tend to suffer after a disaster (Rucinska and

Lechowicz 2014:23). In 2014, Nepal was ranked fourth – following the Philippines,

India, and Thailand – in terms of the number of volunteering opportunities: around the

world, there were over 2,500 online searches each month. After the April 25th earthquake

alone, over 7,900 volunteers flocked to Nepal to help – they purchased souvenirs and

toiletry amenities, food, lodging, and transportation from local businesses on a daily basis

(McLennan 2014:172).

The above is just a small snapshot of the benefits and consequences of tourism in

a disaster stricken areas. This section further explores two major areas of contemporary

tourism. The first is "voluntourism" (volunteer tourism), when people travel abroad for

short periods of time to help those in need, usually women, children, or animals

(Hindman 2014:49, McGehee and Andereck 2009:40). The second type of tourism is

disaster tourism, when people seek out destinations affected by mass destruction, usually

due to natural disasters (Kelman and Dodds 2009:277). Nepal is home to both of these

types of tourists. In a discussion of violence and social suffering, we must ask if

voluntourism and disaster tourism ameliorate the situation, or if they in fact make it

worse, and perpetuate suffering and oppression.

5.2 Voluntourism: Benefits and Consequences

Voluntourism has numerous advantages and disadvantages. For the volunteers themselves, positive outcomes of volunteer tourism experiences include personal empowerment, increased attention to civic attitudes (responsibility towards society), and reflexivity (paying attention to one's thoughts and actions and their implications) (Bailey and Fernando 2011:408-409). Voluntourism can also lead to increased participation in social movements and activist causes, as well as a more nuanced awareness of social issues in the host country (McGehee and Santos 2005:771-772). In these ways voluntourism contributes to the creation of global citizens, people who are aware of the rest of the world and the ways their actions affect people in other areas (McGehee and Santos 2005:772-773, Butcher and Smith: 14).

Butcher and Smith suggest that volunteers are examples of 'diminished subjects', people who are "disillusioned" with politics and prefer to sidestep the political discussion in favor of helping people directly (2005:124). They write that to characterize global volunteers as neocolonialists, or imperialists, over analyzes their position. In other words, Butcher and Smith suggest that characterizing voluntourists as anything other than good-hearted people looking to help gives them too much credit and political forethought. In stead, they see volunteers want to sidestep discussions of policy and institutional changes and instead donate their time and money to bring positive change to people in need (ibid.).

Indeed, there are some clear benefits of voluntouring: host countries receive able-bodied people ready to invest time and, more importantly, money. The additional income gained by hosting voluntourists can be very helpful to families in poor communities. Though few studies have measured the impact of voluntourism from the perspective of

the host communities, the few available have shown that residents of the host community

often report they enjoy having voluntourists and perceive them to bring "significant

benefits" (McGehee and Andereck 2009: 44). For example, McGehee and Andereck

conducted a study in Tijuana, Mexico wherein they sent surveys to Tijuanans who had

either direct or indirect contact with volunteer tourists. They collected 134 surveys and

found that 67% of local people felt that they benefited either "quite a bit" or "a great

deal" from volunteer tourism" (McGehee and Andereck 2009: 44). Emmanuel, a Ghanian

man speaking on the benefits of voluntourists says:

> "We do not just gain economically or from volunteers bringing insight home. Ghanaian
> schools get lessons from native English speakers that helps improve their knowledge of
> the language that helps them advance in our society. Hospitals get helping hands to assist
> in jobs that other people are too busy to do. Orphanages get people who give them love
> and attention that our regular staff do not always have the luxury of being able to do.
> Ghana does benefit. Yes, yes problems I see. I see the problems. But we do have
> goodness from volunteers, even if they don't help in the way they think they help, it helps
> us" (Kass 2013).

While these few examples seem telling of the positive benefit of voluntour projects, more

empirical research from the hosts' point of view is needed.

   Nevertheless, while volunteers may not intentionally engage in negative activity,

some scholars question their aims and supposed impact. Heather Hindman, an

anthropologist who studies expatriates in Nepal, notes that most scholars who study

voluntourism have negative opinions of it because their activities often do visit many

problems upon their host communities, and the ethical issues associated with those

problems should not be ignored (Hindman 2014:56). Hindman argues that these issues

overshadow the benefits that volunteers could bring.

   First, many voluntourists lack the technical abilities or language skills to do the

core work of the organization, limiting their usefulness in the field (Hindman 2014:55,

Guttentag 2011:70). Volunteers with no specific skill set and no knowledge of the area can actually be a burden and even get in the way (McGehee 2012:86, Bennett 2015). For example, Michelle Grocke, a PhD student at the University of Montana, in Nepal conducting fieldwork at the time of the earthquake, created a grassroots, non-profit organization with two Nepali friends that raised money through social networks of family and friends to buy and to deliver tarps to families in need (personal communication). By contrast, Grocke recalled anecdotes of volunteers who were well-intentioned but newcomers to the country and culture had to be rescued themselves, diverting services and attention away from Nepali victims (personal communication 2016).

Second, the voluntourists can dictate development priorities in the host country by focusing their attention on select projects (Hindman 2014:56, Guttentag 2011:70-71, Butcher and Smith 2015:7). By engaging in volunteer work that aligns with causes they find interesting, they are determining for the hosts which issues and areas of development will be addressed. As noted above, the most popular volunteer sites are in hospitals, orphanages, and wildlife centers, and these groups are often in need of the assistance volunteers can provide. However, this cycle can cause "real needs [to be] bypassed in favor of services the team is willing and able to supply" (McLennan 2014:171). In some cases, the host country can feel like the volunteers are not providing any "meaningful" help (ibid.).

Third, reliance upon volunteers can foster dependence upon the countries sending volunteers (Sin 2010:990, Guttentag 2011:69-70, McGeehee 2012:86). Tourists directly assist in this dependency by depressing the wage market by taking jobs for free that would otherwise go to a local in need of money, leaving local peoples in poverty and

(ironically) requiring assistance from the government and/or voluntourists (Guttentag 2011:69-70, Hindman 2014:51). Furthermore, indirectly, volunteerism perpetuates neocolonialism: when people from wealthy countries fly into poor countries to provide their assistance (and then fly out after only a brief stay), the existing power structure of Western domination – and the belief that 'we' need to help 'them' – is reinforced (McLennan 2014:174, Sin 2010: 990). Host countries already have limited power in dictating when the volunteers come, to where they are sent, and what they are going to do when they get there (Sin 2010:989). If the volunteers are not careful and mindful of their actions, an unintended consequence could be the perpetuation of the popular trope that people living in these communities are marginalized and helpless, even if that is not the case (Sin 2010: 990). In these ways, the cycles of poverty and dependency are kept alive.

In the above ways, voluntourism can serve to perpetuate the suffering felt by the very people the volunteers seek to help. Voluntourism can also divert attention away from the structural violence that many of the citizens of the host countries face. On the other hand, though, voluntourists can also help to alleviate the immediate suffering that some people face. There are never definitive answers for these types of questions, especially because different countries are likely to respond to voluntourism differently. Therefore, it is best to study the phenomenon in terms of a particular country.

5.3 Disaster Tourism: Benefits and Consequences

Voluntourism, despite some of the outcomes, is the result of people's desire to

help people and effect change. Disaster and death tourism are very different beasts; when

people participate in these

types of tourism, they seek

out the same places of

disaster that voluntourists go

to, but instead of wanting to

help, they want to ogle the

destruction. This weird type

of tourism reflects

Figure 5.1 This picture shows six people participating in disaster tourism in Nepal. Taken from NepalB2B.com

humanity's widespread fascination of bloody history and acts of profound terror. Death

and disaster tourism is when people travel far and wide to experience a wide array of sites

associate with death, torture, suffering, and massive catastrophe (Sion 2014:1). After the

destruction 2015 brought, Nepal is a popular destination for disaster tourists.

Travelers are called for a variety of reasons to visit these places: education,

mourning, healing, activism, and connections with the dead. Baldwin and Sharpley

suggest that there are three main types of visitors to these sites: immediate family

members of victims looking for solace, later generation family members searching for

connections and understanding, and people taking part in public symbols of grief

(2009:192-194). Kelman and Dodds, drawing on the work of Fritz and Mathewson, note

five types visitors: "the returnees, the anxious, the helpers, the curious, and the

exploiters" (2009:275). With the spread of globalization, the desire to travel to these sites

is amplified and the ability to do so is made easier (Sharpley 2009:6, Sion 2014). It is

especially important to study dark destinations in light of these three groups of visitors so

that the sites can be appropriately developed, maintained, and promoted (Sharpley

2009:7).

    Much like voluntourism, however, death tourism has both positive and negative

consequences. On the one hand, it can trivialize the suffering that occurred at the site or

 can turn it into a thrill-seeking adventure. This type of

infotainment can distract people from understanding the

history of the site and remembering the victims of the

atrocity. Victims of the natural disaster can feel like they

are spectacles, causing feelings of embarrassment and

Figure 5.2 Depicts a local person's reaction to disaster tourism. Taken from Cossart 2015.

frustrations (Kelman and Dodds 2009:278). In response

to an article on Disaster Tourism after Hurricane

Katrina, one woman wrote:

> "I was a local, I was there, I helped clean these homes and pull down drywall and
> clean to the very studs of homes of friends. We watched the vans and then buses
> roll through. Whether you personally took photos or stopped and let people steal
> what was left of these homes, you were part of the problem… You gave tours
> instead of helping us rebuild. It doesn't matter that you were hit by the storm, too,
> because you used the people around you as a flotation device in uncertain
> economic waters" (Response to Cossart 2015).

    Another problem with disaster tourism is that it can disseminate a particular

version or interpretation of history, which can have a myriad of effects, depending on

who is in charge and what their political agenda is (Sharpley 2009:8). Ashworth describes

this process, when history is "distorted, displaced, or disinherited," as dissonant heritage

(Sharpley 2009:12). The number of people, with their competing interests, involved in

the development of sites of death tourism often yields conflict. Dissonant heritage is

complicated because the people affected by the death tourism site and the context in

which the site is visited and interpreted change over time, thereby changing the meaning of the site itself (Sharpley 2009:150). It is important that the host country ensure that the victims' stories and the suffering that took place there are not forgotten or diluted. The repetition of the violence and suffering that drew tourists to these sites to begin with is one detrimental side effect of dissonant heritage (Rylko-Bauer 2009:219-220). Further, I assert that by allowing the public to forget or ignore the violence and suffering, tourism can contribute to the creation of zones of abandonment. As stated above, disaster tourism can cause victims to feel like they are merely attractions, like people are using their pain for profit and entertainment value. Like Catarina, they can feel like ex-humans, like their lives are less important than other people's need for entertainment.

On the other hand, death tourism provides the consumers of these sites with a "productive way to engage with history," helping us to connect with history and learn about what happened with hopes of avoiding such atrocities (Clark 2014:12). Postmemory (or inherited memory) is one way in which some people engage with their family's history of tragic events (Hirsch 2008:106). Children of trauma victims, such as Holocaust or torture survivors, often grow up with so many stories that they feel as if they, too, experienced the trauma. Postmemory is so strong because the "effects [of the traumatic event] continue into the present" (Hirsch 2008:107). Hirsch suggests that there are two types of postmemory: familial and afflictive (Hirsch 2008:114). The former refers to the vertical transmission of memories and experiences from parents to children, while the latter refers to the horizontal transmission of memory amongst members of the same generation. Sites of death tourism provide a means of further connecting and identifying with one's postmemories.

Disaster tourism can also boost the economy, a significant benefit after a natural hazard. After the 2004 tsunami, the number of tourists rose from 10,082,000 in 2003 to 11,737,000 in 2004 (Rucinska and Lechowicz 2014:18). There was a slight decrease to 11,567,000 tourists in 2005, but then skyrocketed to 13,822,000 in 2006. After New Orlean's 2005 Hurricane Katrina, the number of tourists rose each year from 41,218,000 in 2003, to 46,086,000 in 2004, 49,206,000 in 2005. Similar trends can be found for other countries that experienced natural disasters (ibid.). By spending money in the affected areas, these tourists actually contribute to the country's repairs. In fact, it has been suggested that the lack of tourists after a major disaster multiplies its destruction by further impeding the economy (Rucinska and Lechowicz 2014:23, see also: Kelman and Dodds 2009:277). This is the exact situation in which Nepal now finds itself.

Tourism is a significant source of revenue for many Nepalis. Between the earthquake, subsequent landslides, and blockade, the industry has suffered. Not only does Nepal welcome tourists on vacation, it is home to a large voluntourist community. Unfortunately, the multiple catastrophes Nepal has faced have deterred tourists from coming, leaving many Nepalis vulnerable once again. However, given the amazing destruction wrought by the earthquakes, however, Nepal is a prime location for both disaster tourists and volunteer tourists. For example, the Global Volunteer Network recruited volunteers to help in specific sectors after the earthquake, especially rebuilding schools and repairing water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) facilities. As part of their mission, volunteers are asked to raise US$500 to assist with these endeavors (Global Volunteer Network 2016). Kripasur Sherpa, Nepal's Tourism Minister, even told the New York Times, "We are urging people to come to Nepal for holiday to help Nepal

rebuild," (Wenting 2015). In this context, voluntourism has a positive effect on Nepalis at the individual and national level.

Finally, disaster tourism needs to be studied from an ethical position to address any limitations and/or rules that should be followed (Sharpley 2009:7). Buzzfeed, a site of news and entertainment popular amongst young people, published an article on disaster tourism in 2015 that offers a window into such questions. While Buzzfeed is certainly not a reputable scholarly source, the platform has a large following that was used to introduce thousands of followers to the world of disaster tourism. I read Isabelle Cossart's story as a native's narrative about her personal experience with disaster tourism; her story is an important part of my anthropological data. Cossart owned her own tour company in New Orleans, but after the hurricane she had to shut down her business due to lack of customers. A mere two months later, she was back in business; people were requesting to see the destruction and she was desperate for work. She got mixed responses from outsiders. On the one hand, people were furious she was charging customers to "gawk at others' misery" (Cossart 2015). On the other, people were grateful for the economic boost and the education she was providing people about the disaster (ibid.). The public's reaction to her article was equally mixed, requiring us to question whether the ethical nature of disaster tourism will never be definitely answered.

Kelman and Dodds propose a code of ethics to ensure that disaster tourists stay safe and act respectfully, while also acknowledging the economic benefits they can have (2009:285). Their guidelines have four main guidelines. Frist, their proposed code prioritizes the safety of the affected communities and the relief responders. Encompassed in this guideline is discouraging people from visiting dangerous places that would

impeded the rescue of and aid distribution to affect communities. Second, they discourage individuals from taking a risk just because someone else is. Namely, untrained people should not try to assist in rescue missions. Third, tourists must obey rules, including government rules as cultural rules, and be respectful to grieving people. Fourth, donations must be considered within the local context (ibid.). For example, cash is often the most useful donation, but donors must be weary of how their donation will affect local people's livelihoods.

5.4 The Future of Voluntourism

Reactions to voluntourism can be positive, negative, or a mixture of both. Volunteers do a lot of good in the communities in which they work, but they can also cause significant damage if they are not aware of their actions and consequences.

Claire Bennett, an expatriate living in Kathmandu and author of a new book on tourism, offers advice for potential volunteers to ensure that they do not end up hindering their projects (Bennett 2012). First, she suggests that people wait to see what is specifically requested before donating either goods or time. Monetary donations are often more helpful that donating items because the recipients can then spend it in ways that they think is best – but she implores potential donors to take the time to find out how their money will be used so that they donate to relief efforts. Second, Bennett advises that people learn about both the group they will be volunteering for and the country to which they are planning to go (ibid.). Citrin, drawing on the work of Paul Farmer, warns that if volunteers do not learn about the language, politics, economics, and culture of their

intended destination place embarking on their volunteer trip, they risk benefiting from the systems of oppression at work in the country (Citrin 2012:119).

Citrin also suggests some other areas of improvements. First and foremost, NGOs, and other volunteer groups must communicate and coordinate with one another (Citrin 2012:249). In Nepal, it is common for several medical volunteer programs to overlap in terms of project goals, intended locations, and necessary resources (Citrin 2012:121). The same can be said for other types of volunteer organizations. Furthermore, volunteers should be in constant communication with the local people who will be affected by the volunteer work. As the experts on their communities, let them tell you where they need the help, and how they think the help would be best delivered. For example, after a major tsunami in December 2014 destroyed the tourist destination of Arugam Bay, Sri Lanka, the government formed a Community Development Task Force that spoke to donors and decision makers on behalf of the community (Robinson et al 2008:642). Composed of members from various subpopulations in the community, they were able to identify priorities for aid and ensure that it was actually being given to those in need, establishing very effective channels of communication. To reiterate Bennett's first point from above, let the local people tell you what they need.

Finally, the root causes of poverty and illness – such as political and economic reasons – need to be understood and addressed in order to prevent people future ailments. As stated above, the poorest people are also the sickest, usually suffering from hunger and preventable diseases (Farmer 2005). Why? What resources are they lacking? What kind of healthcare (if any) do they have access to? Where are the sickest people living and what are they suffering from? Unfortunately, volunteering endeavors compound the

situation by too often ignoring and obscuring the historical and structural reasons why people in this region experience sickness and hunger to begin with (Citrin 2012:6). By failing to recognize and address these underlying issues, structural violence is perpetuated and people are unable to fully heal.

The aim of this chapter is not to make a value statement about the practice of voluntourism. Rather, as the trend is picking up steam, it is important that we continue to ask questions that allow us to evaluate the impact of the practice on the communities and people it directly impacts. As of right now, there is surprisingly little research done on volunteer tourism from the perspective of the host communities (Sin 2010:984). Sin encourages readers to interrogate the trope that the rich and privileged are responsible for the poor and less privileged: why do we care for these other communities? Is it because we are responsible for them, or because we are responsible for how their communities came to be impoverished (Sin 2010:985)? Is voluntourism, "caring at a distance," truly out of the goodness of the volunteers' hearts, or is it a way to cover up the fact that the privileged lives they lead is at the expense of those communities (Sin 2010:985)? There are no black and white answers to any of these questions. Therefore, it is imperative that we continue to interrogate voluntourism and research both the subject itself and the communities volunteers flock to.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

6.1 Introduction: A Review of the Ideas and Events Discussed Above

I outlined the different types of violence and the distinction between visible and invisible violence. The former can be clearly witnessed or recognized as physical or verbal abuse. The latter is often harder to characterize in anthropological analysis. Bourgois describes

three subtypes of invisible violence: normalized violence, symbolic violence, and structural violence (Bourgois 2009:19). Normalized violence is the result of "social indifference," and stems from cultural values, institutional practices, and everyday interactions. Everyday acts of racism, including rudeness, are examples of normalized violence. Symbolic violence is the internalization of social and political domination that leads victims to accept physical or normalized violence thrust upon them. Finally, structural violence, the result of politico-economic forces that generate unequal access to and unequal distribution of resources, including clean water, affordable and nutritious food, basic education, and decent housing (ibid.).

The level of vulnerability a person feels is directly related to the degree of violence to which he or she is subjected (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Cannon 1994:16, Donner and Rodriguez 2008:1091). In this context, vulnerability refers to the degree of risk to which a person is subjected in the event of a disaster (manmade or natural) due to their marginal or subordinated social, economic, and/or political position. The most vulnerable people, that is, the ones who suffer the most from violence, will also be the most affected by crises and disasters (ibid.). Social suffering is experienced by these people as the direct result of structural violence and systematic oppression. To illustrate this point, I have drawn on contemporary accounts of the two most recent catastrophes from Nepal's recent history.

The first disaster occurred on April 25, 2015, when a 7.8 magnitude earthquake struck Nepal. Over the subsequent months, more than three hundred aftershocks exacerbated the initial destruction. As stated in Chapter Four, "This was a very class conscious earthquake, in town and country it targeted underprivileged households with

mud-mortar construction" (Nepali journalist quoted in McGranahan 2015). Even the relief efforts were "targeted:" people living in easily accessible villages benefited disproportionately and even received duplicates of relief supplies (ibid.). According to Amnesty International's Asia Pacific Director Richard Bennett, relief efforts after Nepal's earthquake was not based solely on need and they flowed first to those with privilege: vulnerable communities had trouble accessing aid, and people with political connections received more aid more quickly. This empirical observation heightens the theoretical argument about social suffering, since a person's degree of vulnerability affects responses to the disaster because (NPC 2015:61). Vulnerable groups are limited in their opportunities and agency, limited access to economic and cultural resources, and limited influence in public and community decision-making.

The second disaster began on September 23, 2015, three days after Nepal ratified its new constitution. Members of the Madhesi community, a subpopulation in the Terai district of Nepal, shut down trade checkpoints between India and Nepal, preventing vital goods from crossing into Nepal. One of the most significant shortages was fuel. Indian fuel is essential, because without it many Nepalis were not able to get to work or school and were unable to heat their homes and cook their foods (Acharya, et al. 2015).

Madhesis initiated the blockade as a form of political protest of the constitution's ratification, which they viewed as unjust. For years, they have been suffering the effects of structural violence as a political minority. Many Madhesis had viewed the new constitution as an opportunity to gain social and political respect, and improve their situation. Unfortunately, the ratification of the constitution was perceived as perpetuating their oppression. They have two main issues with the document: "second-class

citizenship" and the definition of district provinces in which they remain a minority voice. Thus, the temporary economic blockade was the result of previous normalized violence and social suffering. Following the conclusion of the blockade in February 2016, while the constitution has not been amended to satisfy Madhesi demands, they have succeeded in garnering the attention of government officials and the general public in Nepal and northern India.

In the final section of the thesis, I addressed the unintended consequences of symbolic violence that can accompany disasters such as the earthquake of 2015, specifically, voluntourism, or volunteer tourism, and disaster tourism, which can exacerbate social suffering of local peoples. Voluntourists seek vacation destinations that afford them the opportunity to relax and play tourist, even as they attempt to participate in relief efforts and to give back to the host communities. While their intentions are good, the practice tends to have negative consequences because volunteers with no specific skill set typically arrive with no relevant knowledge of the region, culture, or local languages; thus, they can burden the community and volunteer projects already in motion (McGehee 2012:86, Bennett 2015). When disaster tourists visit sites of physical destruction, local people report a sense of injustice, even though some ethnographers have demonstrated how tourism can also have a positive effect, boosting the local economy, which is usually weakened in demand and productive capacity, post-disaster. An analysis of structural violence and social suffering must consider both positive and negative aspects of tourism.

4.4 The Role of Media During and After Catastrophes

The media plays a pivotal role throughout a catastrophe. First, newscasters keep potential victims current on facts on the levels of destruction, and potential aftereffects.

Suffering individuals also used social media to share their stories about how they were affected by the disaster. The internet has allowed friends and family to communicate, especially in an increasingly global world. Naturally, many Nepalis took to the Internet to shares news regarding both the earthquake and the blockade (McGranahan 2015).

Furthermore, social media played a pivotal role in relief efforts (Shneiderman and Turin 2015). Links to reputable aid agencies and donation websites were shared across extended social networks around the world. Relief organizations had their own social media pages to provide current and relevant information on their endeavors, to show pictures of the disaster and their success in helping people. Facebook was even used to arrange a private helicopter medical evacuation for seriously injured villagers in Sindhupalchowk (Streep 2015). Finally, social media played a pivotal role in providing transparency as to how the aid money and goods were being distributed. For example, the Prime Minister's Disaster Relief Fund has a twitter account which offers clarification about the earthquake and its aftershocks, where and how to donate, and the various relief missions. It also provides contact information for the Relief Fund and official spreadsheets for who needs what (Glencorse and Shakya 2015). It was a wealth of useful, accurate, and easily accessibly information in a convenient location. The National Police and National Emergency Operations Center also set up twitter accounts (ibid.). These accounts were also productive channels for citizens to communicate problems with relief efforts to government.

Finally, hashtags (#) have been used on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram for multiple purposes. The hashtag #NepalHopes was used to "apply international pressure" on both the Nepali and Indian government and force an intervention. The tag was used to

link victims' stories and photos to show the government was a significant impact the

blockade had on their lives (Biggs 2015). Nepalis employed #BackOffIndia, as a tag on

social media and as a graffiti tag, for the same purposes. A third hashtag,

#NepalPhotoProject, was used to provide information about affected villages, including

whether or not they had received aid yet (Streep 2015). The photographer, Sumit Dayal,

also wanted to use his photo series as a platform to educate people on how various

aspects of life in Nepal, such as the terrain, ethnicity, and politics, served as hindrances to

aid distribution (ibid).

Clearly, various media outlets can be very useful and beneficial. However, readers

must pay careful attention to what they are reading; new articles, blogs, and online social

media can be biased or only feature part of the story. For example, there has been very

little international coverage of the blockade, despite the face that "the impact of the

Indian blockade on Nepal's economy has now far outstripped damage from the

earthquake" (Dixit 2015). Misleading information or outdated tropes can deter people

from donating, but more importantly, they give people the wrong perception of the

situation. The Internet can be an important tool for educating people, but only if the

correct information is disseminated. Thus, it is crucial that scholars especially are not

employing outdated tropes or giving the wrong impression of a country when they share

or write posts or articles.

6.2 Setbacks in Nepal's Millennium Goals

There are seven major "millennium development goals" towards which Nepal is

working: 1) Eradication of extreme poverty and hunger, 2) Achievement of universal

primary education, 3) Promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women, 4)

Reduction in child mortality, 5) Improvement in maternal health, 6) Combat of

HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases, and 7) Environmental sustainability (National

Planning Commission 2015: 69). Nepal had previously been making remarkable progress

towards these goals. Health indicators, such as and child and mother mortality, had been

decreasing, as had overall levels of poverty according to the National Planning

Commission (National Planning Commission 2015:293). Unfortunately, the earthquake

and blockade have set back this progress.

  The 2015 earthquake left thousands of Nepali people completely devastated after

the loss of friends, family, homes, and livelihoods (National Planning Commission 2015).

The Nepali government suggests "The earthquakes will end up pushing an additional 2.5

to 3.5 percent of Nepalis into poverty in 2015-2016, which translates into at least 700,000

people" (National Planning Commission 2015:xvi). This increase of impoverishment will

in turn be reflected in Nepal's Economic Vulnerability Index and Human Asset Index,

both of which have significant ramifications for meeting the millennium goals (NPC

2015:74, 293). In late March 2016, the Committee for Development Policy at the United

Nations announced that Nepal might graduate from being a Least Developed Country by

2022, a milestone they hit for the first time in 2015. The earthquake definitely "slowed

down the momentum of progress" in these programs. In order to maintain their

graduation date, Nepal's government must be vigilant and address immediate concerns,

such as restoring livelihoods for agriculturalists that lost their land, and encouraging

Nepali "resilience in the face of growing vulnerabilities" (National Planning Commission

2015:295).

Together, damages and losses attributed to both disasters total NPR 706 billion (approximately seven billion US dollars), approximately one third of Nepal's Gross Domestic Product in 2013-2014 (National Planning Commission 2015:xiv). The Nepali government has estimated that it will cost about NPR 669 billion to rebuild the country. Many economic sectors have suffered income losses. Those most impacted, such as the tourism and agricultural sectors, need "a package of support aimed at early recovery" to help boost the economy (NPC 2015:306). Nepal is working with a limited budget, so it must carefully plan to recover both infrastructure and the economy across multiple sectors.

6.3 Concluding Remarks

Many countries are making great strides in the name of progress. Unfortunately, though, rich countries are safer and more technologically advanced while poorer countries are unable to make significant progress (Farmer 2005). According to Sen, "The degree of accumulated wealth in the world today is altogether unprecedented, but this accumulation has occurred in tandem with growing inequality" (2005:172). In other words, one of the problems in our world today is the profound unequal distribution of wealth and subsequent unequal access to resources (Farmer 2005). This thesis has delved into the consequences of this reality for a small group of Nepalis, but this conversation is merely the tip of the iceberg. Of course, there is not a simple remedy for the situation, but, in her ethnography on leprosy in Brazil, anthropologist Cassandra White speculated on what is necessary to eradicate structural violence. First, she suggests that Brazilians must adopt a new "national consciousness" that recognizes and rejects the current

unequal class structure that perpetuates violence (White 2009:186). White also says that this type of "shift" needs to take on the global level as well, pointing specifically to a change in the consumer based capitalism found around the world, a model which "attributes personal success primarily to hard work and ingenuity rather than to preexisting opportunity and advantage on a broader scale" (ibid.). Finally, in recognizing that those transformations will occur over generations, White suggests that the first changes can work to alleviate immediate problems faced by those battling structural violence. In theoretical terms, this can be understood as proximal interventions versus distal interventions. The former address the immediate, direct consequences of violence while the latter addresses the more complex factors that are "farther back in the causal chain," such as entrenched racism in the justice system, healthcare practices, and the educational system (WHO 2002). In order to bring about peace and health, both proximal and distal factors must be considered. While we work to brainstorm or implement distal interventions, proximal interventions can help bring about more immediate relief and change.

Structural violence is destructive because it is accepted as the status quo. Victims are poor and/or minority groups, and their suffering is likely to be ignored (Farmer 1997:280, Farmer 2005:50). The only way to break down the pathologies of power that sustain structural violence is through widespread knowledge and public activism. In order to accomplish this goal, however, social suffering must continually be acknowledged by the countries in which suffering takes place as well as by academic observers. Simply reporting suffering, victimization, and violence is not enough; they will persist unless the underlying issues that sustain these acts are addressed (Ghale 2015,

see also: Farmer 1997:280). It is not enough to alleviate the effects of suffering; the oppression, discrimination, unequal power relations and distribution of resources that stem from structural violence must also be changed.

This thesis analyzes how structural violence "…operates in real lives – including how victims become victimizers and how that hides local understandings of structural power relations" (Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2004:318). What should be done with this information? Should we use our research, or our position as researchers, to incite change? There are some anthropologists who believe that given their education, privilege, and/or access to resources they should do what they can to help those they research to enact changes as they see fit. Other anthropologists prefer to remain objective and act only as researchers. We become friends with our subjects and genuinely care about their plights, but at the end of the day we are still outsiders. Our words have a profound effect – on the readers and those about whom we write. While we can never be sure that we, as anthropologists, are making the right choices with our research and volunteering endeavors, for many people grieving and healing, the ability to share their stories, to have people acknowledge the pain and suffering they have gone through is crucial to their recovery (Cavell 1997: 95). While this is an incredibly important end, when writing our ethnographies, we must ensure that we are making both our position and the position of those about whom we write explicitly clear from the beginning (Jenkins 1998: 129).

As this thesis has shown, catastrophes have a way of disrupting and even destroying structural violence. This thesis has discussed at length how people who have faced both natural and man-made disasters have refused to let their agency be taken away or their voices be silenced. Rather, marginalized people forced people to acknowledge

their issues and situations. Women took control and created their own relief agencies. Madhesis created a blockade that made national and international news, compelling outsiders to become a part of their fight. People have been finding creative ways to resist violence and suffering because there is no other way to survive, and contrary to popular belief, this is the norm: rather than allowing their society to break down, "…most people will actively dedicate themselves to rebuilding their lives and societies, to working with others to find solutions to the deprivations of war, and to instituting conflict resolution measures at the local level" (Nordstrom 1998: 105).

However, it is not simply through catastrophes that violence is disrupted. James Scott details how as a combat to everyday violence, people commit acts of everyday resistance by doing small things to resist the status quo (Scott 1985). In his discussion of peasant and slave societies, he notes that slaves often walk or work slow, do things wrong on purpose, or feign ignorance (ibid.). Madhesis and other discriminated people commit their own acts of everyday resistance. The biggest act is the use Facebook and Twitter as political platforms to post live updates about their lives and their situation to spread awareness. They create special programs to celebrate their culture instead of hiding who they are or where they come from. Madhesis also continue working and going to school, bettering their lives so they can make a difference in the future. These forms of everyday resistence are certainly different that Scott's examples from 1700-1800s, but as times change so does violence and its opposition. The examples provided here are updated versions of everyday resistance.

Finally, to reiterate a point stressed above, anthropologists have an important, essential position in the discussion about violence and social suffering. Violence is

culturally constructed, meaning that the ways violence is enacted and understood are

created and maintained by individual societies. Anthropologists are able to detail this

relationship, including how and why a community transforms violence and how violence

transforms a community through time (Shakya 2015). Anthropologists are also able to

discuss the subjective, lived experience of sufferers – and perpetrators – of violence to

develop a thorough description of violence. Finally, anthropologists are especially well-

positioned to connect individual communities with a national phenomenon (ibid.). For

these reasons, anthropologists are in a prime position to continue writing about violence,

suffering, the everyday experiences of the people enduing these situations, and the ways

in which people are overcoming them.

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