THE LABOUR MARKET NEGOTIATION OF BHUTANESE IN THE CANADIAN LABOUR MARKET

by

Raj Kumar Khadka

B. A. Tribhuvan University, 2002
M. A. Pokhara University, 2005
M.S.W. San Francisco State University, 2007

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The following individuals certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies for acceptance, the dissertation entitled:

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submitted by Raj Kumar Khadka in partial fulfillment of the requirements for

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in Social Work

Examinining Committee:

Dr. Frank Tester, Social Work

Supervisor

Dr. Habiba Zaman, Women’s Studies

Supervisory Committee Member

Dr. Brian O’Neill, Social Work

Supervisory Committee Member

Dr. Sara Shneiderman, Anthropology

University Examiner

Dr. Tsering Shakya, Asian Studies

University Examiner

Additional Supervisory Committee Members:

Dr. Miu Chung Yan, Social Work

Supervisory Committee Member

Dr. Gillian Creese, Sociology

Supervisory Committee Member
Abstract

Canada, accepted 6,600 Bhutanese refugees between 2009 and 2015 under its government-assisted refugee (GAR) program. In their new home in the Greater Vancouver area, the Bhutanese refugees struggled to find employment. As a new and small group of refugees admitted in Canada there is a scarcity of studies that could explain the Bhutanese refugees’ participation in the Canadian labour market. Therefore, this study explored the participation of Bhutanese refugees in the Canadian labour market in order to understand their lived labour market experience. In order to do this, I employed a case study research framework and ethnographic field work in British Columbia (BC), Alberta and Nepal. I interviewed 62 Bhutanese refugees and 10 experts on settlement services and the labour market.

Findings from the study indicate that the Bhutanese refugees’ capital resources are based in the agrarian and rural economy of Bhutan and Nepal. The Bhutanese refugees experienced high rate of unemployment and underemployment because they lacked relevant human and linguistic capital and experienced exclusion based on race, gender and class in the Canadian labour market.

A majority of the Bhutanese refugees from BC opted for secondary migration to Alberta to work in the poultry and ham industries in Lethbridge through their ethnic network. However, the Bhutanese workers have suffered physical injuries due to the cold temperatures and the nature of assembly line work in the poultry and meat plants. The Bhutanese refugees in BC are concentrated doing casual work in cleaning, restaurant, thrift shop and food packaging industries in the Greater Vancouver area. Overall, the precarious nature of the work they are involved in carries with it the possibility of marginalization and economic insecurity in the future.
In order to address the labour market challenges of the Bhutanese refugees I recommend the federal and provincial government develop labour market policies tailored to refugees, extend the resettlement assistance period from two to five years, and introduce free English language learning programs for naturalized citizens.
Lay Summary

The Bhutanese refugees came to British Columbia from Nepal, between 2009 and 2015. In BC they experienced challenges in finding jobs. This study examined their employment experience in Canada. The findings show that they lacked work skills relevant to the work in Canada, the English language, and job finding skills. They also experienced discrimination based on race, class and gender in BC.

They learnt about job opportunities in meat processing companies where their friends and relatives worked in Lethbridge, Alberta. A majority of the Bhutanese refugees from BC moved and found work in Lethbridge. However, the jobs in meat plants were difficult and physically demanding. The Bhutanese refugees in BC found work in cleaning, in restaurants and in packaging sectors of the economy, but they did not pay well and were temporary jobs. This study recommends policies and programs that could help Bhutanese refuges succeed in Canada.
Preface

This dissertation is an original intellectual product designed, conducted and written by the author, Raj Kumar Khadka. Ethical approval for this research study was obtained from the University of British Columbia’s Behavioural Research Ethics Board. The certificate number for the study entitled Labour Market of Bhutanese Nepalese is H1300110.

Links to internet pages and documents referenced in this dissertation have been checked for functionality as of January 20, 2020.
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List of Abbreviations

AMDA  Association of Medical Doctors of ASIA
BC    British Columbia
BCEP  British Columbia Employment Program
CAP   Community Assistance Program
CBS   Canadian Bhutanese Society
CCR   Canadian Council for Refugees
CIC   Citizenship and Immigration Canada
CRT   Critical Race Theory
GAR   Government-Assisted Refugee
GRE   Graduate Record Exam
GMAT  Graduate Management Admission Test
IOM   International Organization for Migration
IRCC  Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada
ISS of BC Immigrant Services Society of British Columbia
MFU   Multilateral Framework of Understandings for Resettlement
MSDSI Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation
MSP   Medical Service Plan
PSR   Private Sponsorship of Refugees
PTSD  Post-traumatic Stress Disorder
RAP   Resettlement Assistance Programme
SAT   Scholastic Aptitude Test
TOEFL Test of English as a Foreign Language
U.K.  United Kingdom
UNHCR United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
U.S.A. United States of America
WFP   World Food Programme
# Glossary of Nepali and Dzongkha Terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dzongkha</td>
<td>language of Bhutan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guwa</td>
<td>betel nuts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hune khane</td>
<td>well-to-do</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jayala</td>
<td>wage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khetipati</td>
<td>agricultural work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lhotshampa</td>
<td>people of the South in Dzongkha, Bhutan, referred to as Nepali ethnic groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Majduri</td>
<td>physical labour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masala</td>
<td>concrete basics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mistri</td>
<td>mason</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panchayat</td>
<td>guided democracy in Nepal from 1960 to 1990 under the Monarchy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patsala,</td>
<td>Vaidik Hindu school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sathibhai</td>
<td>buddies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thekedar</td>
<td>contractor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thula kaam</td>
<td>professional jobs</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
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Dedication

To my mother and father for everything they sacrificed for my happiness and future.
Chapter 1: Becoming Refugee

1.1 Refugee resettlement in Canada

Every year, millions of people are displaced because of persecution, conflict, violence, or human rights violations in their regions of residence. In 2016 alone, almost 65.6 million people were forcibly displaced from their homes, and of these people, about 22.5 million were refugees globally (UNHCR, 2017, p. 5). Refugees live in a third country hoping for a return to their countries of origin someday. Unfortunately, about two thirds of refugees live in protracted situations. According to the UNHCR (2004), “A protracted refugee situation is one in which refugees find themselves in a long-lasting and intractable state of limbo” (p. 1). At the end of 2016, world-wide, 11.6 million refugees lived in protracted situations, while 4.1 million of them lived in protracted situations for two decades or more (UNHCR, 2017, p. 22). The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and refugee-supporting countries rely on three policy options to resolve refugee situations: repatriation in the country of origin, local integration in the country where they currently reside, and resettlement in a third country. Though the third country resettlement is a last resort, it is sometimes a long-lasting solution for refugees that allows them to live in peace and stability. In 2016, about 189,300 refugees were resettled through international organizations, government initiatives, and the UNHCR’s assistance (UNHCR, 2017, p. 22).

Canada admits a small to moderate number of refugees each year under two different categories: an “In-Canada Asylum Program” for individuals applying for refugee protection from within Canada, and the “Refugee and Humanitarian Resettlement Program” under which individuals seek protection from outside of Canada. Various referral organizations, such as the UNHCR, other designated referral organizations, state governments, private sponsors, or a mix
of these (blended visa office-referred refugees), refer refugees from outside of the country. In 2016, Canada admitted 62,348 individuals, providing protection under various categories, such as the asylum system, refugee resettlement, humanitarian and compassionate considerations, and under public policies such as family reunification (IRCC, 2017). Refugees from outside of Canada are resettled in Canada through three different programs: i) the Government-Assisted Refugee (GAR) Program, which is comprised of refugees supported by the government; ii) the Private Sponsorship of Refugees (PSR) Program; and iii) the Joint Assistance Sponsorship Program.

Some GARs originate from protracted camp situations. In 2016, 23,523 people resettled as government-assisted refugees, 4,434 resettled as blended visa office-referred refugees, and 18,362 were privately sponsored refugees (IRCC, 2017). That year, Canada accepted the highest number of out-of-the-country refugees for the first time in four decades after 1980, when it had accepted 40,271 Indochinese refugees. The top five refugee-sending countries in 2016 included Syria, Eritrea, Iraq, Congo, and Iran (IRCC, 2017).

The government-assisted refugees receive a transportation loan to come to Canada and one to two years of living and rental assistance. However, the GAR policies have changed several times in terms of providing such assistance. In the past, refugees resettling in Canada were provided cash and land incentives. In recent years, the transportation loan has been a contentious topic for GARs, as their worsening economic fortune in Canada makes it difficult for them to pay back the loan. The loan was, however, waived for the Syrian refugees resettling in Canada starting in 2016. Nevertheless, assistance for the GARs has always been under-funded. After arriving in Canada, the GARs are resettled in the local communities through the IRCC-funded Refugee Assistance Program (RAP), where RAP connects them to local resources and
settlement services. In the following section, I will document the Bhutanese refugee crisis and the protracted camp situation in Nepal.

1.2 The Bhutanese refugee crisis

Who are these Bhutanese refugees and how did they become stateless? The following section highlights the Bhutanese refugee crisis and their resettlement journey to Canada. Bhutanese refugees are the nationals of Bhutan, a South Asian country located at the eastern end of the Himalayas. They are also referred as ‘Lhotshampa’ in Dzongkha language meaning ‘people living in south’. Majority of the Bhutanese from Nepali background refugees lived in the southern Bhutan. Bhutanese refugees identify themselves with Nepali heritage and ancestry. They are often perceived to be a collective Nepali ethnic groups in their resettlement context; however, Nepalis are composed of various ethnic groups mainly Khas, Madhesi, and different Janjatis. Ethnic groups in Nepal are delineated using language, ethnic identity or the caste system. Historically, Nepali labourers migrated to Bhutan to find work in rubber tapping, agriculture, and infrastructure development sectors (Hutt, 2003). It is unclear when some Nepalis from Nepal and some from the Indian regions of Darjeeling and Assam first started to migrate to Bhutan. Several non-academic publications report that the Nepalis started migrating to Bhutan as early as 1620, when Newar sculptors were commissioned to build a stupa, a Buddhist temple, in Bhutan (Chaulaghai, 2013; Morch, 2016; Rijal, 2004). Michael Hutt, a Nepali Studies scholar, claims that the Nepalis from the eastern hills of Nepal might have migrated after the Anglo-Bhutanese war in 1864-5, and continued this movement until 1930. The reasons for this were many, including growing poverty and marginalization in the hill areas of Nepal, a demand for labourers in Bhutan, and fertile land available for agriculture in Bhutan (Hutt 2003, p. 24).
The narratives of Nepali settlers in Bhutan go back to about 100 to 120 years prior to the mass expulsion from Bhutan that took place in the 1990s (Chaulaghai, 2013; Morch, 2016; Rijal, 2004). The first record of Nepali migrants in Bhutan dates to 1903 by Charles Bell, a British settlement officer in Kalimpong, India (Sings, 1988, as cited in Hutt, 2003). The elderly Bhutanese informants said that the British colonial representatives encouraged Nepali workers to settle in the border towns of Bhutan, which were considered unlivable due to the prevalence of malaria and the uncultivated barren lands. Furthermore, in the mid-1900s, the Bhutanese government encouraged the migration of the Nepalis to Bhutan for development projects, such as the Thimphu-Phuntsholing highway, and for agricultural growth in the south. The Bhutanese government claims that since the 1960s and following the start of development projects, it experienced influxes of illegal immigrants (Adhikari & Thapa, 2009). In the 1980s, concerns over demographic changes, mainly the significant growth of the number of Nepalis in Bhutan, and political development in India for Gorkhaland, India’s takeover of Assam (Evans, 2010), and the movement for democracy in Nepal to end the Panchayat\(^1\) rule, alarmed the Bhutanese monarch (Rijal, 2004). The loyalty of the Nepalis in Bhutan was suspected or questioned by the Bhutanese on account of the Nepalis’ trans-border identity and the specific geopolitics of Nepal and India i.e. open borders and people-to-people contacts of kinship, religion and culture (Evans, 2010).

On June 10, 1985, the Druk Gyalpo Wangchuck, the King of Bhutan, introduced the Bhutanese Citizenship Act, which included several provisions permitting the revocation of citizenship. The act, popularly referred to as the One Nation One People Act,\(^2\) promoted

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\(^1\) There was a guided democracy in Nepal from 1960 to 1990, where real power remained in the hands of the monarch.

\(^2\) As the new Citizenship Act appeared to be an exclusionary policy of the government, it is referred to as the One Nation One People Act.
“Bhutanization” and the exclusion of the Lhotshampa Bhutanese (International Organization for Migration (IOM), 2008). As an enforcement of the new Act, the government carried out an exclusive census in 1988 in the southern districts, where the residents were asked to provide government documents proving that they had lived in Bhutan in or before 1958. This was not possible for a majority of the Bhutanese; consequently, many Lhotshampa were deemed illegal migrants. Even those who were able to show their citizenship records had them confiscated. The new act also stipulated a provision where any naturalized citizen could be stripped of their status if they were deemed to be disloyal to the king, country, or people of Bhutan. Following the census, the government concluded that the country had around 125,000 illegal immigrants (Adhikari & Thapa, 2009, p. 58).

In addition to declaring thousands of Lhotshampa as illegal immigrants, the government campaign to revive traditional Bhutanese culture resulted in a ban on traditional Nepali attire and cultural rituals. The Nepali language was scrapped as a second language both in schools and in government offices, while the Lhotshampa were encouraged to intermarry with individuals of Bhutanese ethnicity and were required to wear Bhutanese dress (Rijal, 2004). The outspoken and activist Lhotshampa protested the new discriminatory policy and formed a political party calling for a multi-party democracy. The government suppressed the protesters and banned the new party. During these tensions, some Lhotshampa were accused of being involved in violent activities, such as the burning of schools and attacks on government officials (Human Rights Watch, 2003), and were under heavy surveillance as a result. The army and police were mobilized in the southern districts, where they arbitrarily arrested, imprisoned, and tortured the Nepali-speaking population and raped women presumed to be associated with the demonstrations or living illegally in the country (Adhikari and Thapa, 2009). Schools and health
facilities were closed down and the Lhotshampa were restricted from working in government jobs or their promotions were halted. Over 130,000 Lhotshampa and individuals of Nepali ethnic origin living in Southern Bhutan were stripped of their citizenship rights and expelled from the country in the early 1990s (Adhikari & Thapa, 2009, p. 14). The local Lhotshampa were forced to sign a voluntary migration certificate in the early 1990s (Human Rights Watch, 2003; Rijal, 2004) and were threatened with arrest if they returned to Bhutan. Some were escorted to the border between Bhutan and India and asked to go to Nepal via India.

1.3 A refugee journey: initial settlement in Nepal

Bhutanese refugees started arriving in Nepal from Bhutan in the late 1980s, with most arriving in the early 1990s by travelling through Indian territories. Nepal and Bhutan are not connected by land or water and are instead separated by the Indian border in the east of Nepal. Immediately after reaching the Indian border through various crossing points, the Indian Army trucks transported the majority of the Bhutanese to the Nepali border at the Mechi River (Bird, 2012) so that they could enter Nepal. The Bhutanese refugees who had connections in India and those who found employment stayed in India. It is reported that about 15,000 to 30,000 Bhutanese refugees lived in India (Human Rights Law Network, 2007, p. 9). Upon arrival in Nepal, they were no longer referred to as Lhotshampa; instead, they came to be known as “Bhutanese refugees.” The same terminology will be used to refer to the Lhotshampa in this dissertation. They were typically stranded under an open sky on the banks of the Mechi River adjacent to the Nepali border for several days when they first arrived. The Nepali government was not prepared for the influx, nor did they demonstrate a prompt response to the crisis. The Bhutanese refugees experienced severe shortages of food and accommodation, and many battled against infectious diseases and trauma. Some died. They had no way of making a living to
support themselves in Nepal and lived in situations where they were not safe. Some had cash and jewelry to live off of for a few days, but many had no option other than to survive on the rations provided by the villagers, the government of Nepal, and, later on, by the UNHCR and international donors. At the request of the Nepali government, the UNHCR eventually stepped in with support and seven refugee camps were built in the Jhapa and Morang districts.

The initial settlement period in Nepal had the most debilitating and long-term effects on the Bhutanese refugees. Trauma, illnesses, lack of a proper diet, poor sanitation, inadequate accommodation, and changes in the weather killed hundreds of refugees and disabled thousands. This time of crisis was followed by the establishment of settlements in the form of temporary huts in Eastern Nepal, where the Bhutanese lived for two decades with limited necessities and few opportunities for education and the development of new skills that could have been useful in seeking employment. While the Nepali government refused to provide them with work permits or access to higher education, they did allow a number of international organizations to launch several projects to support the refugee population. As a result, the camps provided free education up to Grade 10, health care facilities, sanitation systems, skill development and social empowerment opportunities, and local leadership positions in the Bhutanese refugee camp management (Human Rights Watch, 2003). However, concerns about the uncertain future and poor living conditions, chronic health problems, and, more importantly, untreated trauma led to a chronic mental health crisis among many Bhutanese refugees. One study shows that five out of every six tortured Bhutanese refugee participants in the study had a lifetime disorder, while 56% of the non-tortured refugees reported a lifetime disorder (Ommeren, 2001). A review of various studies carried out between 2001 and 2005 indicates a higher prevalence of mental health issues,
mostly post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and persistent somatoform pain disorders (Mills, Singh, Roach & Chong, 2008).

At the end of 2004, 105,000 refugees lived in the camps in Nepal, forming one of the largest protracted refugee groups in the 2000 - 2010 period (UNHCR, 2017, p. 22).

1.4 Bhutanese resettlement in Canada

In 2007, the UNHCR intervened in the protracted situation of the Bhutanese refugee crisis through a third country resettlement plan. The seven Western countries—the USA, Canada, Norway, Denmark, the Netherlands, the UK, and Australia—agreed to resettle the Bhutanese refugees in their respective countries. Many refugees in the camps welcomed the resettlement option, while some resented it. Political activists and a number of elderly people refused to resettle, whereas the younger generations and young adults were open to any durable solution that would end their statelessness and ensure their safety (Human Rights Watch, 2007). The announcement of the resettlement plan created both hope and despair. There were many fears and much confusion due to a lack of information about the resettlement process, and with no clear guidelines about the eligibility criteria and choices of countries for resettlement, the Bhutanese refugees faced hardships in making an informed decision.

Canada, the second largest coalition partner of the resettling countries, accepted 6,600 Bhutanese refugees between 2009 and 2015 under its government-assisted refugee program (IRCC, 2018A). Initially, Canada had officially accepted 5,000 Bhutanese refugees under the resettlement assistance program. The first wave of Bhutanese GARs arrived in 2008. Later, the government accepted 500 more during the autumn of 2012, mainly those GARs with relatives in Canada, and an additional 1,000 over the next two-year period. By the end of December 31, 2015, close to 6,600 Bhutanese GARs had arrived and resettled in 21 different communities.
across Canada (IRCC, 2018A). The Alberta town of Lethbridge hosts the highest number of Bhutanese GARs at about 1,200 (interview with the President of the Canadian Bhutanese Society). Bhutanese GAR populations are located in Vancouver, Charlottetown, Fredericton, St. John’s, Saint-Jérôme, Quebec City, Laval, Ottawa, Toronto, London, Windsor, Hamilton, Winnipeg, Saskatoon, Calgary, and Edmonton. Canada’s GAR resettlement quota is allocated to local governments based on their willingness and capacity. The refugee-resettling countries revisited the international resettlement policy in 2003–2004 to ensure the policy met the realities of refugee protection in the 21st century. As a result, in 2004 the international hub of refugee resettling countries, led by Canada and the UNHCR, drafted and agreed to the Multilateral Framework of Understandings for Resettlement (MFU). It emphasized prioritizing the most vulnerable refugees. The Canadian government then shifted its policy to admit refugees from non-traditional regions such as Africa, the Middle East, and Asia, and also prioritized refugees facing multiple barriers, including disabilities and other vulnerabilities (Pressé & Thomson, 2007). The resettlement of Bhutanese refugees reflects the new Canadian refugee resettlement policy under which it accepted the most vulnerable populations. However, the first group of Bhutanese refugee participants in this study did not pick Canada for resettlement. They were not given any choice as to which country they could resettle in, and were simply told that Canada provides a better welfare system than other countries for vulnerable populations like them. The second group of informants who were part of this study, mentioned that they came to Canada because they had relatives who had resettled there.

The government of Canada initially planned to resettle 800 Bhutanese GARs in British Columbia (BC) (Immigrant Service Society (ISS) of BC, 2014, p. 43); however, only 241 landed in BC (ISS of BC, 2013). The first Bhutanese family came to Vancouver in March 2009, and it
comprised of an elderly mother, her adult daughter, and son. They lived in the Welcome House in Downtown Vancouver for two weeks. A settlement worker helped them find a two-bedroom suite in an apartment complex in the Gatensbury neighbourhood in Coquitlam. Two other Bhutanese families with eleven members followed them and lived in the same housing complex. Bhutanese refugees continued to arrive in the following months and years. Some lived in the Gatensbury neighbourhood while others lived in Cottonwood another location in Coquitlam. As soon as they arrived, the Bhutanese immigrants started learning English and about Canadian culture and society. All age groups of the Bhutanese refugees participated in English language classes and accessed settlement and health services.

Bhutanese GARs landed in British Columbia with hope, aspirations, and resilience; from twenty years of a protracted living experience in Nepal, to the sophisticated urban environment of Canada. Unable to translate their skills, the majority of Bhutanese GARs in BC found themselves in an unemployed and underemployed situation. After months of job searching, only youths and individuals with higher English language capacities could find employment. The employed Bhutanese refugees worked in low-paid and physically demanding positions in restaurants, recycling/thrift stores, retail stores, and cleaning and landscaping industries. Due to the lack of a means of livelihood and the instability of jobs, most Bhutanese refugees experienced financial hardships. The majority lived on welfare support. They experienced several barriers in the labour market of BC. Major impediments included the absence of human capital,3 knowledge of the Canadian labour market, and a familiarity with and ability to navigate a complex, North American urban environment. Other contributing factors were the language barrier, exclusion, and discrimination. In order to find a solution to their employment challenges

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3 Refers to a recognized stock of skills and talents, often including education and credentials, of a worker in the labour market.
and given a lack of strong ethnic networks and resources in BC, over 50% of BC-arrived Bhutanese refugees opted for a secondary migration to Alberta. There they found employment in the meat packing industry. By the end of September 2014, 162 of the 200 individuals living in BC had moved to Alberta.

This study found that the labour market crisis experienced by Bhutanese refugees in Canada was primarily a result of structural issues in both receiving and sending countries. In particular, the cultural capital mismatch of sending and receiving countries, the differential capital formulation of the labour markets, and discrimination based on race and gender led Bhutanese refugees to be heavily concentrated in precarious areas of the labour market of Western Canada. Government programs were limited in terms of enhancing the skills the Bhutanese refugees needed for entry into the Canadian labour market. Moreover, existing programs pushed the workers to struggle in dangerous work environments.

This study employed a qualitative case study framework and ethnographic methods to examine and better appreciate the processes through which Bhutanese refugees negotiated the labour market realities they encountered.

### 1.5 Dissertation outline

The chapters in this dissertation deal with the Bhutanese refugee crisis, third country resettlement, various forms of capital in the source and host countries, and labour market practices and processes the Bhutanese refugees encountered while negotiating the structural realities of the Canadian labour market. Chapter 1 provides a detailed overview of the Bhutanese migration history to which the reader has already had some introduction, factors leading to the refugee crisis, eviction from Bhutan, protracted camp living in Nepal for twenty years, resettlement in Canada, and an outline of the dissertation. Chapter 2 presents the theoretical
frameworks that inform this research, which draws on Bourdieu’s theory of multiple capitals. Additionally, in order to supplement Bourdieu’s capital framework, I draw upon additional theoretical concepts and tools: extended versions of Bourdieu’s capital framework by feminist scholars, social capital, critical race theory (CRT), and political economy.

Chapter 3 discusses the methodological framework for this study, which employs a qualitative case study framework and ethnographic methods. It covers strengths and limitations of the research. I also address the complexity of the researcher's fluid positioning when engaging with respondents and the researcher’s multiple hats—those of a student researcher, settlement worker, and a community member. Chapters 4, 5, and 6 present the findings of the study. The data collected from field observations and interviews with Bhutanese informants, settlement service providers, and experts is presented in these chapters. Chapter 4 deals with the various forms of capital of the Bhutanese refugees in Nepal. It mainly illustrates social and cultural, and to some extent symbolic and economic, capital of the Bhutanese refugees in Bhutan, Nepal, and Canada, and under what circumstances the refugees generated and mobilized this capital. Chapter 5 addresses labour market practices and strategies in the Canadian labour market, mainly the Bhutanese refugees’ valuing of one strategy over another and stories of their workplace experiences. Chapter 6 addresses the Bhutanese refugees’ labour market barriers in negotiating with various forms of structural challenges while looking for employment, building networks, skill building, and retaining jobs. Chapter 7 is an analysis and discussion of the findings in light of the theoretical framework of Bourdieu’s capital theory, critical race theory, feminist theory, and a political economy lens. Chapter 8 provides policy recommendations that mainly suggest extending RAP support to multiple years, refugee cohort-specific government-funded vocational training appropriate to the labour market demand, and language training based
in classrooms and language internship at employment sites. I discuss the implications of this research for social work practices and suggest considerations for future research on the Bhutanese refugees’ labour market. This research on the Canadian labour market experience of resettled Bhutanese refugees is an important topic of study, as it enables an analysis of structural factors dealing with how refugees’ labour market trajectories are determined and how they are positioned in the Canadian labour market.
Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework for Understanding the Labour Market of Refugees

The integration of refugees in a new country is the subject of competing ideas, methods, and approaches. Integration is a multifaceted and complex process. It is often difficult to identify successful integration or full integration given debates about what constitutes “success” and the multidimensional elements of the process, some of which may be addressed better than others. The government of Canada relates integration to a two-way process of mutual adjustment and accommodation by both newcomers and host societies (CIC, 2010a). The Multicultural Act and the federal Charter of Rights and Freedoms are also seen as moving Canadian integration policy away from assimilation to institutionalizing diversity and honouring rights of being different (Kymlicka, 2003). Griffith (2017) goes further by acknowledging the evolution of the Canadian integration policy since the 1970s, shifting from merely celebrating difference to the social inclusion policy at present. However, integration is far more complex than a mutual process of adaptation and adjustment. Statistics Canada’s 2013 General Social Survey found that 93% of immigrants had a strong sense of belonging to Canada (Hou, Schellenberg, & Berry, 2018). The sense that immigrants had integrated through adaptation and adjustment was not reflected in the labour market integration of immigrants and refugees, as they have not performed as well as Canadian-born participants in the labour market (Guo, 2013; Wilkinson & Garcea, 2017). In fact, the Canadian labour market program and policy for the integration of refugees and immigrants has been criticized for leaning towards slow assimilation (Li, 2003) through official language and labour market training that stresses learning Canadian values and culture in order for the refugee or immigrant to “fit in” (Guo, 2015). It recognizes only Canadian experience (Chatterjee, 2015).
Settlement in a new context involves adjustment to different spheres of a society—social, economic, cultural, and political (Canadian Council for Refugees (CCR), 1998), and mutual adjustment and accommodation by both newcomers and host societies (Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), 2010a). It is also an ongoing, dynamic process in which values shift or are “enriched” (United Nations Economic and Social Council in Kage, 1962, p. 165) and it can be argued that state policy should focus on social inclusion by removing barriers and recognizing strengths. To understand the multidimensional nature of the settlement of immigrants in Canada, I draw on Bourdieu’s theory of multiple capitals. To supplement Bourdieu’s capital framework, I also draw upon additional theoretical concepts and tools: extended versions of Bourdieu’s capital framework by feminist scholars, social capital, critical race theory (CRT), and political economy.

2.1 Bourdieu’s capital framework

Bourdieu’s notion of capital is quite broad and multi-dimensional: “The set of actually usable resources and powers” (1984, p. 108). He identifies three main forms of capital (1986): cultural—education qualifications, and skills; economic—material assets and property; and social—relationships and networks. Cultural capital is further divided into objectified capital (one’s goods and physical objects that are owned, such as works of art), embodied capital (one’s inherited properties, usually gained through family and socialization), and institutionalized capital (academic credentials or qualifications).

Bourdieu’s theory is useful to analyze the various forms of capital and the acquisition and conversion of new forms of capital in a migration-specific field. Moreover, their interactions reproduce “advantages and disadvantages” (Creese, Dyck, & McLaren, 2011, p. 34) in the context of immigrant settlement in Canada. For Bourdieu (1986), capital is accumulated labour
that requires time to gather, and can generate both material and social profits when used appropriately. Capital is said to be the “immanent structures” of the social world, understood as “the set of constraints, inscribed in the very reality of that world, which governs its functioning in a durable way, determining the chances of success for practices” (p. 242). For immigrants trying to establish new roots in Canada, capital is one of the most significant determinants of positive settlement outcomes.

Traditionally, capital was often equated to assets in the form of bank accounts, cash, stocks, machineries, or valuable goods, which yield income, can be mobilized, and last longer. Among other theorists, Gary Becker (1964) extended the concept of capital to “human capital,” which referred to skills, education, health, and the training of individuals to increase their performance (1964). The Bourdieusian concept of human capital is institutionalized cultural capital, but its reproduction and outcome vary based on the possessor’s position in the social structure. Investment in education and training is seen as key to the success of individuals; a form of capital in which family plays a huge role. Becker argues that “the economic successes of individuals, and also of whole economies, depends on how extensively and effectively people invest in themselves” (2002, p. 1). Becker treats education as a form of capital that not only produces monetary outcomes in terms of income, but is also symbolically relevant for the possessor. Bourdieu (1986) agrees that Becker’s conceptualization of human capital expands the non-monetary value of capital to include the role of family in its development, and briefly discusses the power of education in shaping the agent’s mindset and disposition and human capital’s symbolic value. However, Becker’s conceptualization fails to explain underlying factors, including the role of class differences, that determine the different abilities of people to invest, their human capital stock, and the rate at which they acquire financial benefits and capital.
The acquisition of human capital depends on many structural factors, mainly the fundamental ways that resources are redistributed in any society. The cultural capital stock of family and class has a strong influence on human capital acquisition. Refugees encounter relatively high constraints and low privilege in relation to cultural capital stock and resources in a protracted refugee camp situation, not to mention the economic, psychological, and social tensions in a camp environment and its unfavourable impact on capital acquisition and mobilization.

Bourdieu went a step further and interpreted capital in terms of its various formations, and explained the role of class in the accumulation of cultural capital. Bourdieu goes beyond the Marxist concept of class, which is mainly determined by economic holdings (capital) and relationships (social), and extends it by adding other dimensions, including cultural and social dimensions. According to Bourdieu, culture and monetary capital share common properties, such as the ability to generate profit; cultural habitus and dispositions are resources that are capable of generating profit (Weininger & Lareau, 2007). Bourdieu (1986) states that cultural capital is inherited first from domestic transmissions (family and society) and second from educational institutions. Seen this way, it is obvious how workers from agro-based and smaller-scale local trade-based indigenous economies, which are not structured by an advanced free-market economy, often find it difficult to translate and transmit their embodied cultural capital (see Sarvimäki, Uusitalo, & Jäntti, 2009). This cultural capital is composed of an indigenous knowledge of farming, animal husbandry, and health and healing practices. It does not translate well into their new settlement and labour market domains in the advanced capitalist settings of Canada. To be eligible to enter certain levels of the educational system and the labour market, a formal education evidenced in the form of degrees, diplomas, and professional accreditations
(i.e., institutionalized capital) are required. Institutionalized capital augments and validates embodied capital and in practice both complement each other. However embodied capital is often overlooked in determining and validating qualifications in the labour market, as Bourdieu discusses below:

Because [the proponents of the human capital approach] neglect to relate scholastic investment strategies to the whole set of educational strategies and to the system of reproduction strategies, they inevitably, by a necessary paradox, let slip the best-hidden and socially most determinant educational investment, namely, the domestic transmission of cultural capital. (1986, p. 17)

2.2.1 Cultural capital and settlement

Bourdieu’s capital theory helps to explain the processes behind immigrants’ integration in a new society — “a new field” — and explains the reasons for immigrants’ unemployment and underemployment, income disparity, and over-representation in certain occupational categories and geographic locations in a city. Bourdieu (1990) opines that in a culture such as Canada’s, social formations result from “the degree of objectification of capital” (p. 130). At a practical level, this is “mediated by objective institutionalized mechanisms such as the self-regulating market,’ the educational system or the legal apparatus, where they [referring to the social formations] have the permanence and opacity of things and lie beyond the reach of individual consciousness and power” (p. 130). For instance, the labour market favours individuals with educational capital from domestic institutions, employment experience from Canadian firms, and a knowledge base about Canadian culture and society (Bauder, 2003). These rules and requirements of migration regimes (Canada, in this case), as well as professional regulations and national policies, play major roles in validating institutionalized capital from particular foreign fields (Bauder, 2003).
The Bourdieusian concept of capital has informed a number of migration and integration research studies (Akkaymak 2017; Bauder, 2003; Creese et al., 2011; Huot, 2016; Huot, Cao, Kim, Shajari, & Zimonjic, 2018; Joy, Game, & Toshniwal, 2018). Akkaymak (2017), who studied the job search experiences of Turkish immigrants in Canada, noted that Turkish job seekers were bound by their habitus and capital in the process of searching for jobs. The immigrants with higher educations had trouble in finding employment in their previous professions, whereas immigrants with a high school education, or less, did not experience difficulties learning how to explore the labour market. They obtained jobs through their pre-existing social networks and found jobs in the construction industry by word of mouth, all without having to go through the formal processes of recruitment in Toronto. However, the higher-skilled immigrants noticed the devaluation of their institutional capital, a lack of recognition of their previous employment experience in Turkey, and a lack of social capital, mobilizable connections, and resources in order to facilitate entry into professional jobs. They had no knowledge of a hidden job market due to being in a new labour market field. However, they adopted strategies to fit into the new labour market by expanding their social capital to connect with professional people, and by upgrading their qualifications with new training and further education. Huot (2016) found that immigrants lose the symbolic value or recognition of their capital due to their credentials and experience being misunderstood and interpreted in fields of work that are defined differently in Canada. This resulted in many participants “starting from scratch” following immigration to Canada and New Zealand. In another study, Huot et al. (2018) examined how the dominance and requirement of linguistic capital, (i.e., the requirement that the immigrant must be fluent in the official language), can pose barriers to engagement in “needed and wanted occupations” (p. 1).
2.2.2 Symbolic capital

Unlike other forms of capital, symbolic capital often comes in disguise. Its value is assumed in relation to the recognition of another form of capital; for instance, titles offered through the possession of institutionalized capital, as well as positions and status that actors hold in different societies and bureaucracies, are known to have or to imply social, economic, or cultural capital. In Bourdieusian terms, symbolic capital is “the form that the various species of capital assume when they are perceived and recognized as legitimate” (1989, p. 17; see also Bourdieu 1986). Symbolic capital is often referred to as recognition, prestige, authority, or charisma,\(^4\) which often comes by virtue of possessing it and having it recognized by other groups holding the power to validate social capital. Social classification and categorization are “the instruments of symbolic domination” (Wacquant, 2006, p. 11). I will further discuss symbolic violence in the critical race theory section of this chapter, where I will use it to explain the dominance over and marginalization of immigrants and new refugees in the various social and economic fields of Canada.

2.2.3 Social Capital

Bourdieu is credited with the “first systemic contemporary analysis” and “theoretically refined” concept of social capital (Portes, 1998, p. 3). In the Bourdieusian definition, social capital is a sum of “the actual and potential resources” generated through “institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintances and recognition” (1986, p. 21). Social capital consists of social networks and the mutual relationships of families and groups that provide resources or credibility, which members of these networks and relationships can utilize in the form of social credit. Social capital is convertible, in certain conditions, to economic capital and symbolic

\(^4\) Bourdieu borrows Weberian language.
capital, or vice versa. The volume of social capital one possesses depends on the size of the network of connections one can effectively mobilize, and the volume of capital of those to whom one is connected. Social capital in the form of usable resources requires continuous effort to yield material or symbolic profit. It requires investment and various strategies that are consciously or unconsciously aimed at reproducing lasting and productive relationships (Bourdieu, 1986).

I use social capital to refer to the bonds, trust, and mutual cooperation present in the mobilization of resources within families and groups, as well as in the extension and bridging of relationships with networks beyond immediate groups, such as the family and ethnic community. For Coleman (1988), social capital is not “a single entity but a variety of different entities having two characteristics in common: They all consist of some aspect of a social structure, and they facilitate certain actions of individuals who are within the structure” (p. 98). Family is a principal source of social capital inherent to the structure of intergenerational relationships, which has its “origins in the relationships established by childbirth” (Coleman, 1991, p. 1). Parents invest in their children’s well-being and human capital, which allows them to build strong ties and connections. It is often reciprocated in terms of affection and care from children. The family social capital, however, is not limited to its own closed structure. Families build ties outside to capture resources “where parents and children are embedded in close, local relationships” (Edwards, Franklin & Holland, 2003, p. 4). New ties between the family and others outside of the family evolve to form “a dense social structure of norms, extensive trust and obligations” (Edwards et al., 2003, p. 4). Coleman (1988) refers to this as “intergenerational closure” (98).
Bourdieu (1997) argues that people derive social capital by virtue of being a member of a group, such as a family or clan, which may result in material or symbolic exchanges within such relationships. These exchanges produce obligations and mutual recognition of group membership, and may “be socially instituted and guaranteed by the application of a common name (the name of a family, a class, or a tribe or of a school, a party, etc.)” (p. 51). Bourdieu’s work focuses on families, but not as exclusively as Coleman’s work (Edwards et al., 2003, p. 4).

Social capital is becoming a key theoretical framework in exploring immigrants’ and refugees’ integration (Bauder, 2005; Danso, 2001; Healey, 2009; Hiebert, 1999; Koh, Walker, Wollersheim, & Liampittong, 2018; Lamba, 2003, 2008; Simich, Hamilton, Baya, & Neuwirth, 2004; Nawyn, Gjokaj, Agbényiga, & Grace, 2012), and labour market integration in host countries (Akkaymak 2017; Gericke, Burmeister, Löwe, Deller, & Pundt, 2018; Lamba, 2008; Yan, Lauer, & Saurita, 2008). The social capital that exists among immigrant and refugee families and groups is essential in facilitating their settlement and integration in new countries. The resources within immigrants’ families and ethnic communities play a significant role in improving chances of upward mobility and mitigating social isolation. As such, immigrants and refugees primarily utilize bonding capital. “Bonding” social capital refers to people’s relationships within their family and within their ethnic community, whereas “bridging” social capital builds new relationships beyond their familial or ethnic group (Putnam, 2000). Bonding capital can protect community members from discrimination and the threat of vanishing mobility ladders (Portes & Zhou, 1993). They are an important resource in reducing social isolation and economic challenges, and in improving labour market opportunities (Akkaymak 2017; Giorgas, 2000).
The distinction between bonding and bridging social capitals is used to differentiate between relationships among people who are similar and relationships among people who are different (in terms of ethnicity, socio-economic status, cultural capital, etc.). The mainstream idea is that bonding social capital confines people’s relationships within their family’s boundaries, whereas bridging social capital fosters new relationships (Putnam, 2000). While social capital has been used effectively by immigrants and refugees to mobilize support and resources, it can also have counterproductive effects in cases of immigrant and refugee enclaves. Bauder (2005) cautions that networks limited to ethnic communities may lead to low-skill and low-paid jobs. This could be true if immigrant networks are limited to their own classes or to ethnic communities who are engaged in non-standard forms of employment and/or informal job-seeking strategies. Kim (2018) found that immigrant women utilizing informal networks, such as personal contacts, ended up in low-paying jobs. Further, a tight co-ethnic solidarity and bond can exclude other ethnic groups from accessing the best jobs, which are secured for the in-group’s own ethnic community or class (Portes, 2014). In order to understand the trajectories of immigrants in various spheres of settlement, it is important to understand how different capital resources can be mobilized and transformed into useful resources and power.

### 2.2.4 Conversion of capital in a new field

The different forms of capital—economic, social, cultural, and symbolic—are mutually convertible (Bourdieu, 1986). Bourdieu stresses that the “convertibility of the different types of capital is the basis of the strategies aimed at ensuring the reproduction of capital (and the position occupied in social space)” (p. 25). This is important for immigrants whose linear production of capital has been disrupted because of migration to a new place (Erel, 2010). The conversion of capital is an effective strategy for reproducing their capital. Bourdieu’s (1984)
concept of capital conversion helps explain how immigrants adopt different strategies to “maintain or increase their assets” and subsequently to “maintain or improve their position in the class structure” (pp. 119-20). However, like the production of capital, which is conditioned by the objective structure, capital conversion or transmission strategies are not free from the “group’s objective chances of reproduction” (p. 125) within the given field. A field is a social space in which agents and their positions are located. The social position of the agent in the field is influenced by the interaction between the specific rules of the field, the habitus of the agent, and the capital stock of the agent (Bourdieu, 1984). The value of capital is often tied to its own field. Furthermore, the capital generated in one field and habitus, such as in an indigenous economy, may not translate to any dissimilar field and habitus, such as the industrial economy of Canada. Bourdieu (1990) argues this is because habitus entails “various conditions of production” which may not be “homologous to its conditions of functioning” in another context (as cited in Bourdieu & Wacquant, 2007, pp. 131–2). As a result, the “rules of the game” in reproducing capital for the primacy of social exchange found in indigenous societies do not match those in advanced societies, which predominantly function on the economic logic of profit maximization without any cultural implications.

Several factors that affect conversion need to be considered in this formulation. According to Bourdieu (1984), the foremost strategies of conversion rest on the “volume and composition of the capital to be reproduced,” which are conditioned by “the state of the instruments of reproduction (inheritance law and custom, the labour market, the education system, etc.)” (p. 125). Therefore, conversion strategies often vary among individuals and classes depending on the rules of the field. Other variables that influence convertibility are time, ease of transferability, and cost associated with the conversion in “a given state of the social
power relations” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 25). Investment of time is considered an important resource, but the social location of actors and associated barriers influence conversion from one capital to another form. GARs are more likely to be under pressure for faster convertibility of their assets to employment because the monthly financial assistance which comes from RAP ends after one year in most Canadian provinces. Nevertheless, the ease and speed of transferability are also associated with the different forms of capital. As Bourdieu states:

    The different types of capital can be distinguished according to their reproducibility or, more precisely, according to how easily they are transmitted, i.e., with more or less loss and with more or less concealment; the rate of loss and the degree of concealment tend to vary in inverse ratio. (p.25)

    Economic capital is “at the root of all capital” (p. 24) given its faster transferability rate and its efficacy in the acquisition of other capital. The diverse economic backgrounds of immigrants will be associated with different degrees of transferability. But generally, most immigrants experience transferability challenges. The hard currency of those coming from the global South drastically loses its value due to different exchange rates in Canada. Economic capital, despite being important and having a faster conversion rate, is not something that all immigrants possess. In the early settlement years, many immigrants are left with mainly cultural and social capital for conversion. However, not all new immigrants possess similar or equal stock of social capital; for instance, initial cohorts of immigrants may lack social capital within their new social and geographical milieu (Adamuti-Trache, 2010).

    Cultural capital is validated through different strategies, one of which is updating or accumulating additional cultural capital through academic or training institutions. However, the requirement of standardized tests (including GRE, GMAT, TOEFL, and SAT) and high grades to enter college is an institutional barrier for many immigrants and other disadvantaged individuals (Horn, 2005). Similar requirements may also determine whether students can enroll in respected
programs and institutions, which in turn determines earnings and chances in the job market. Low academic performance is usually related to a lower social class (Bourdieu, 1984; Horn, 2005) in terms of means, opportunities, and values. As discussed earlier, embodied cultural capital can be inculcated from life experience, family, and society. The rich experience and practical knowledge possessed by most immigrants equips them with strong abilities to handle problems related to work or life, but these are often neglected because they do not count as institutionalized cultural capital.

Despite having cultural capital stock, most immigrants experience devaluation of foreign university degrees and credentials (Bauder, 2003), which jeopardizes their chances of translating institutionalized capital and other forms of human capital into economic resources. Canada’s institutions and labour market delegitimize many foreign degrees and work experience, especially those from non-European countries, through the standardized evaluation and licensing policies formed to suit Canada’s own production. Thus, the education system becomes a tool of legitimizing the power and privileges of dominant groups, as it becomes evident in Bourdieu’s (1986) argument below:

As the educational qualification, invested with the specific force of the official, becomes the condition for legitimate access to a growing number of positions, particularly the dominant ones, the educational system tends increasingly to dispossess the domestic group of the monopoly of the transmission of power and privileges—and, among other things, of the choice of its legitimate heirs from among children of different sex and birth rank. (p. 26)

Among the different immigrants to Canada, those of European descent experience differential settlement and labour market outcomes in comparison with those of non-European backgrounds (Block & Galabuzi, 2011; Branker, 2017; Dechief & Oreopoulos, 2012; Lightman & Gingrich, 2012; Oreopoulos, 2009). One reason for this is that they enjoy higher recognition of capital and a comparatively easy conversion of cultural capital to economic and symbolic
capital. Recognition of their cultural capital facilitates their placement within the topmost segments of a stratified labour market, fostering upward mobility to the bourgeois class (Bourdieu, 1986). Again, Bourdieu’s capital framework is helpful in explaining the divisions between European and non-European immigrants. Bourdieu (1986) says that recognition of cultural capital is socially mediated on the basis of the social status of its possessor. As in the favouring of the English language, some people from lower social classes are “perceived to be less competent (or indeed, incompetent)” (Creese et al., 2011, p. 296), and their skills and credentials are also perceived as of lower value.

On the other hand, institutionalized capital that has lost its trade-in value in the dominant society may find its value in the ethnic economy (Erel, 2010). This phenomenon cannot be generalized though, as it often depends on the size of the ethnic network and the bond among its members. Other strategies of conversion include conversion from social capital to economic capital, where immigrants opt for secondary migration and find employment (Creese et al., 2011). It must be emphasised that transferability of capital most often requires a frustratingly long time and a great deal of labour for most non-European immigrants. This is especially so with regard to the conversion of economic capital to social capital, or vice versa, as it,

presupposes a specific labo[u]r, i.e., an apparently gratuitous expenditure of time, attention, care, [or] concern, which, as is seen in the endeavor to personalize a gift, has the effect of transfiguring the purely monetary import of the exchange and, by the same token, the very meaning of the exchange. (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 25)

Bourdieu further argues that such investment is considered a waste of time in the narrow interpretation of economic logic.

Despite having the time and willingness to expand their social network, immigrants may face obstacles in networking with middle-class individuals due to their class habitus and disposition. During attempts to develop links and bonds, the class dispositions, habitus, tastes,
and lifestyles of these two groups may conflict. Immigrants’ networks might thus be limited to their own classes or ethnic communities, resulting in the perpetuation of their class positions. In these cases, they may not necessarily have access to upper-class networks that could provide the required information or resources to facilitate entrance into standard forms of employment and educational institutions, or to find places to rent or buy in better neighbourhoods. This is a further reason as to why networks limited to ethnic communities can, as Bauder (2005) notes, lead to low-skill and low-paid jobs.

However, this is not to say that the social capital of immigrants, particularly capital that is rooted in family and ethnic community, is irrelevant. On the contrary, the extended family culture of immigrants can help convert family-based capital into economic capital. For instance, in South Asian cultures, families provide capital in the form of particular kinds of support (Das Gupta, 1994). This allows them to “adopt flexible strategies to deal with precarious circumstances” (Creese et al., 2011, p. 269) regarding their employment. As social capital is also a potential resource (Bourdieu, 1986), the investment in children in South Asian cultures—both social obligations of children towards parents and parents’ expectations of children—can be categorized as a sub-type of social capital within the families of these immigrants. Such social capital contributes to resiliency for parents during early settlement and in the future, despite the painful experience of capital devaluation and downward mobility. This is because investment in children is paid back as economic and symbolic capital. It is the kartavya (moral obligation established as a strong tradition) of children to look after their retired parents in South Asian families (Dharmalingam, 1994).
2.2.5 Limitations of Bourdieu’s capital framework

Bourdieu’s capital framework is very useful to understand the structural positions of new immigrants, which are mediated by the mobilization of capital, structural barriers and inequality, and the strategies employed by immigrants to overcome impediments. However, Bourdieu’s capital framework does not directly deal with gender and race, nor how these variables affect the structural positions and capital of women and racialized populations (Creese et al., 2011; Silvia & Edwards, 2004; Weininger, 2005). Though Bourdieu views the marginalization of women as symbolic violence\(^5\) resulting from social classification (Weininger, 2005), he fails to connect it with his much-acclaimed concept of capital. Neither does he adequately explain how women produce and use capital instead of simply being “repositories and transmitters of cultural capital” (Lovell, 2000, as cited in Erel, 2010). He does not even clarify whether capital refers to “household or individual resources” (Silvia & Edwards, 2004, p. 6). Likewise, Bourdieu’s “unsatisfactory engagement” in his theoretical work with race and ethnicity, as noted by Garrett (2007, p. 363), can contribute to blind spots in understanding the settlement trajectories of racialized immigrants. Bourdieu addresses race in a few of his works,\(^6\) but provides no theorized understanding of race as a conceptual category (Jenkins, 2002). This inadequate treatment of race in Bourdieu’s capital framework means that attention to the differential possession of capital is not sufficient to understand racialized immigrants’ settlement outcomes. As race is embedded in the structural and daily experiences of racialized immigrants in a complicated way, immigrants’ positions cannot be understood without an analysis of the historical, socio-cultural, and political and policy contexts within which race is constructed and reproduced.

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\(^5\) The treatment of women as the object of exchange in Kabyle society.
\(^6\) For instance, *The Weight of the World.*
In order to overcome these shortcomings and to properly study the settlement of immigrants in Canada, we need complementary theoretical and conceptual tools. Given this, the next section discusses extensions of Bourdieu’s capital framework that are informed by feminist scholarship, critical race theory (CRT), and political economies of immigration in global cities.

2.3 Feminist extensions of Bourdieu’s capital theory

Reay’s (2004) conceptualization of emotional capital and the role of women in families’ emotional well-being asserts that women are not simply possessors of capital but creators and converters of one type of capital to another. Reay defines emotional capital as “the stock of emotional resources built up over time within families and which children could draw upon” (p. 61). Emotional capital plays an important role in augmenting other forms of capital, such as cultural capital. As a relational concept, cultural capital exists in “conjunction with other forms of capital” (p. 59). Reay has shown how mothers’ “labour in support of their children’s learning” generates cultural capital (1998, p. 207). In her study, Reay (1998) found that mothers heavily invested their time and mental and emotional labour into their children’s education and were able to generate positive results (p. 198). However, working-class mothers were “not able to generate cultural capital from their time and effort to anything like the extent that middle-class mothers were able to” despite spending equivalent amounts of time and energy due to a “combination of diminished resources and less social power” (p. 198).

Creese et al. (2011) have shown that in negotiating their settlement trajectories, immigrant family households are involved in a “complex process of developing and transforming multiple capitals” (p. 146) within which women play important roles. In her study, Creese and her colleagues found that mothers’ emotional capital, care, and support of their children remained valuable while children “settled into the new school system and made friends” (p. 147).
During the settlement period, the emotional capital of wives was also a source of support for husbands as they “struggled to find work and to re-establish a valued self and social identity following deskilling and downward social mobility” (p. 147). This reaffirms the roles of gendered labour in facilitating the labour market transition of family members as well as directly transmitting one form of capital to another.

2.4 Settlement and racialized women

The settlement of racialized women is highly gendered. They are often seen as having “no agency of their own” (Mackey, 2002). They experience culturalism, or cultural racism, and have differential access to socio-economic resources. Racialized women’s unequal position within power relations in Canadian society is set by numerous problematic discourses (Agnew, 2009; Bannerji, 2000). Racialized women are given various labels such as immigrant women, refugee women, women of colour, and third world women (Agnew, 2009); are stigmatized for their different cultural attire and symbols, such as the Muslim hijab (Bunting & Mokhtari, 2009); and are treated with racist comments or assumptions about their sexuality, as in the stereotype of Asian women being exotic and obedient (Essed, as cited in Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women, 2002). This illustrates how racialized women’s social identity is often distorted, with their position in society defined and legitimized by dominant discourses.

Racialized women are often seen as “homogenous and without agency” (Mackey, 2002, p. 22). Instead of examining the gendered immigration policy, which favours the marketable skills of men, the prevailing gender ideology sees women immigrants to Canada as dependent on their spouses and as having no ability of their own to migrate (Agnew, 2009). In many countries, men are also more likely to have privileged access to formal education relative to women, and that
makes it hard for women to qualify as independent immigrants for migration to Canada (Agnew, 2005).

The socially constructed positions and identities of racialized women leads to the “entrenchment of structures of oppression” (Galabuzi, 2006, p. 34). Racial identity, along with gender roles, creates barriers to resources that could facilitate their settlement process. Racialized women often lack access to standard forms of employment and are consequently highly concentrated in precarious employment conditions with low pay (Galabuzi, 2006). Their economic vulnerability negatively influences their social well-being, health, access to housing, and education. For example, poverty and insecure job conditions (characterized by the fear of losing jobs or wages) could prevent a racialized woman from seeing her physician (Agnew, 2009). Similarly, women with children who receive social assistance face serious discrimination when looking for rental housing (Murdie, Chambon, Hulchanski, & Teixeira 1995). The long-term consequences of racism lead women to entrenched poverty and keep them at the margins of society.

2.5 Critical race theory and settlement

Since the 1970s, the composition of immigrants in Canada has been increasingly non-European. Majority of these new immigrants come to Canada from Asian, African, and South American countries (Galabuzi, 2006; IRCC, 2018; Milan, 2011). In 2017, India, the Philippines, China, and Syria remained the top four source countries of new permanent residents in Canada (IRCC, 2018). This also tells us that many of the new immigrants are members of racialized groups. The Ontario Human Rights Commission characterizes racialized groups as those who have experienced marginalization and discrimination. Agnew (2007) refers to racialized groups as “subordinate and disadvantaged groups such as black people, those of Chinese and Arab
origins, and so on” (p. 10). Here, “racialized group” refers to a population that experiences systemic discrimination in accessing social resources, faces stereotypes and stigmatizations, and experiences social and economic exclusion from society for not being white or members of the ruling collective. Racialized immigrants settling in Canadian society generally experience sociocultural exclusion and disadvantages. Canada has a long history of racial discrimination, which has affected indigenous peoples (Valentine, 1980), Asian immigrants (Boyd & Vickers, 2000; Das Gupta, 1994), and African immigrants (Aylward, 1999) in one form or another, from mistreatment to exclusion from mainstream institutions. Some critics argue that overtly racist attitudes towards racialized people and race-based practices of the Canadian state were changed after World War II (Agnew, 2009; Reitz, 1988). Racism in Canadian society, however, continues to change its nature and form. Racism experienced by new immigrants not only makes settlement frustratingly difficult, but also results in differential outcomes in economic and social spheres, as manifested in diminished employment and income levels, housing and living standards, and participation in politics.

Given this racialized demographic makeup and the disadvantaged position of new immigrants to Canada, critical race theory (CRT) is an effective theoretical lens with which to examine the ways race and racism implicitly and explicitly impact the settlement of these new immigrants.7

“Critical race theory” refers to a constellation of theories and scholarships from a wide range of disciplines that seek to understand and transform the relationships among race, racism, and power (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). With its focus on race and racism, CRT views race as a socially constructed phenomenon having no correspondence to genetic or biological reality.

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7 Immigrants and refugees are two broad groups in terms of their migration decisions, settlement experience, and stigmatization.
CRT scholars embrace a structural understanding of racism as deeply embedded in the social fabric of society, rather than attributing it to abnormal and individual reactions. They utilize a social justice framework to understand and eliminate social and economic disparities between white people (or the dominant group) and racialized immigrants, which are the result of the interactivity of institutions and actors in racialized structures. In the following section, I will discuss how the dominant group (or white people in Canada) developed racialized ideologies and discourses about immigrants—ideologies that in turn define the subjectivity and identity of immigrants and their position in Canadian society. This is enacted through symbolic capital, domination, and institutional apparatus. It is revealed through differences in access to valued resources and adverse impacts on immigrants’ long-term settlement outcomes in Canada.

2.5.1 Symbolic capital in the settlement context

Bourdieu defines symbolic violence as “an uncoercive form of violence perpetuated through cultural mechanisms, like education systems, to legitimate the power of dominant groups so that the least advantaged comply with the socio-economic rules” (Lange, Chovanc, Cardinal, Kajner, & Acuña, 2015, p. 88). The dominated immigrant group maintains the status quo as it accepts the new norms, values, logic, and interpretation of the host culture, whereas the dominant groups see these social formations as normal. Symbolic violence is therefore considered a less coercive form of domination, where the dominant groups exercise minimal power. However, symbolic violence is still effective in “inflicting suffering and misery among dominated segments of the population” (Schubert, 2008, p. 184).

Often immigrants from non-Western countries lose symbolic capital in Canada. The misrecognition of capital is not the loss of capital. Rather, it is a reduction in the efficacy of the capital. Therefore, the notion of symbolic capital is key to exploring how the marginalization of
immigrants is reproduced and legitimized symbolically. Though economic capital is “the most efficient form of capital” (Postone, Calhoun, & Lipuma, 1993, p. 5), symbolic capital “functions to mask the economic domination” in the labour market (p.5). According to Bourdieu (1990), regulatory policies and mechanisms, such as the “legal apparatus” (p. 130) of accreditation and validating cultural capital, are the strategic rules of dominant groups. They are “created in favour of the class interest of dominant groups” (p. 130) to perpetuate the social divide and legitimize the dominant groups’ symbolic power or influence. The outcomes of these rules and exclusions create advantages and disadvantages that lead to social inequality between the dominant groups and immigrants.

The recognition and misrecognition of linguistic capital is one contested subject for immigrants. In this case, linguistic capital is the ability to speak English—a form of embodied cultural capital that is “unrecognized as capital and recognized as legitimate competence” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 245). Linguistic capital is an important resource that facilitates immigrants’ settlement in Canada. It plays an essential role in attributing power and distinction in the labour market. For Bourdieu (1977), language competence has less to do with the structure of the grammar and more with the ability to command—the right to speak and the power to be heard (p. 648). The respective position of speakers in the field or social location always shapes the responses to language, as “speech always owes a major part of its value to the value of the person who utters it” (p. 652). Racialized groups “have more difficulty being heard or having their speech taken seriously” (Creese et al., 2011, p. 296). In the context of the labour market, workers and job seekers are discriminated against in terms of their (non-standard English) accents, which, according to Bourdieu, is the exercise of power and social influence (Bourdieu, 1977). Though embodied cultural capital (in the forms of language, shared values, and taste)
often loses value in the market economy and other contexts, it is a powerful force in binding and bonding the immigrant community—sometimes in the form of ethnic enclaves. Immigrants from non-English or French-speaking countries often encounter language barriers in the Canadian labour market and society in general, despite having fluency in more than one language. Conceptualized as capital, their language loses value and social recognition. They feel it necessary to improve their proficiency and accent in the English language. This is because communication is mediated through social power relations (Bourdieu, 1991). The misrecognition of newcomers’ language and accent, and the imposition of the dominant language via indirect and subtle mechanisms, is the symbolic violence which reproduces dominant symbolic systems (Bourdieu, 1984). Huot, Cao, Kim, Shajari, & Zimonjics’ (2018) findings illustrate that the dominance of the English language limited those immigrants who did not possess this valued linguistic capital in “needed and wanted occupations” (p. 1).

Immigrants may experience class subordination due to the fact that their capital is incompatible with that of the dominant groups’. The domination is further perpetuated and often legitimized by doubly distorting the vision of the dominated, as Bourdieu (1987) explains, “First because the categories of perception that they use are imposed upon them by the objective structures of the world, and hence tend to foster a form of doxic acceptance of its given order” (p. 16). Doxic acceptance is the belief held by an actor that the social world is as true and real as it appears. Consequently, doxic acceptance leads immigrants to accept their social trajectories as the consequences of the migration process and poor human capital, instead of the social conditions of class exploitation. Secondly, the doxic acceptance of immigrants is reproduced as “the dominant strives to impose their own vision and to develop representations” which offer a “theodicy of their privilege” (p. 16). In Canada, settlement agencies suggest that new
immigrants accept any survival jobs irrespective of whether or not they fit with their academic or professional qualifications; this “helps to channel immigrants into low-wage work” (Creese et al., 2011, p. 66). Immigrants therefore come to accept the reality of the new field, as they believe they do not have the linguistic ability and credentials to compete in the Canadian labour market. For instance, new immigrants in Ontario accepted the loss of their symbolic capital in the hopes that, having migrated, they and their children will have better lives (Huot, 2017). However, this is not to say all immigrants tend toward doxic acceptance. Immigrants engage in a wide range of occupations, shifts, and part-time, casual, and full-time work while continuing to increase their symbolic capital by attending English classes or by attending school (Hout, 2017).

In terms of both social and economic rewards, there are prestigious jobs and survival jobs. Immigrants’ decisions to seek so-called “esteemed” jobs or to upgrade their education instead of accepting certain types of employment are symbolically mediated based on the source country’s or ethnic group’s attribution of symbolic importance. For example, South Asian immigrants may try to find jobs that correspond to their social status in India not only for monetary reasons, but for their self-esteem and social position (Bauder, 2003). In addition, symbolic capital “can be used as a collective strategy to conserve or to increase power or as an individual strategy to join groups which possess symbolic capital” (Adamuti-Trache, 2010, p. 38). This is evident in attempts to form ethnic organizations or neighbourhoods, or to make individual conversion decisions to become part of the dominant religious community.

2.5.2 The social construction of race

Ideology is a set of ideas with some conscious or subconscious purposive intent. The ideology of race and ethnic identity plays a key role in reproducing the logic of differentiation, and aims to justify racial inequality (Galabuzi, 2006). It does this through public discourse and
ideological state apparatuses, which, according to Althusser, are the social systems constituted by—but not limited to—family, school, and mass media, as well as the political and legal systems in their non-repressive modes (Mann, 2008, p. 74).

First, we should look at the social meaning attached to race (Garner, 2009). Race is a marker of social categorization or hierarchy in Canadian society, which has been predominantly a white settler society since the time of European colonization (Razack, 2002). Immigrants who are not of dominant European white ancestry are perceived differently—as deviants from the norm (Bannerji, 2000). The “notion of race” (Aiken, 2007, p. 58) is used as a means of maintaining social order (Aiken, 2007) by differentiating “us” from “them.” Negative meanings were ascribed to people with darker skins. For instance, “blackness” was “associated with whatever was evil, ugly, filthy, and depraved, while ‘whiteness’ became associated with whatever was pure, clean, virtuous, and beautiful” (Vizkelety, 1987, p. 67 as cited in Aiken, 2007, pp. 59–60). The differences are constructed to show the “inferiority or negativity” (Bannerji, 2000, p. 107) of racialized people. Such stereotypes or stigmas push immigrants from the non-Western world to think that they are inferior and outsiders in a white settler society, because white settler society defines the public discourse of who belongs and who does not belong to the community and nation (Razack, 2002). Furthermore, these social meanings are powerful in constructing immigrants’ identities. For example, an immigrant with a racialized background is always seen as an “immigrant,” irrespective of citizenship status, whereas a white immigrant is seen as a “Canadian” (Bannerji, 2000). These racist ideologies and dynamics of racialization continue to shape the relationships between white people and the racialized immigrant, i.e., citizens vs. immigrants.

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8 A process of constructing, categorizing, and defining members of certain ethnic groups in ways that marginalize them (Aiken, 2007; Agnew, 2007; Small, 1999).
Racialization is enacted and articulated in different forms and languages, depending on racialized power relationships with the dominant white people. According to Michel Foucault (1972), power relationships are “controlled in terms of objects (what can be spoken of), ritual (where and how one may speak), and the privileged or exclusive right to speak of certain subjects (who may speak)” (p. 216). In the past, racism was more overt and explicit, with legal systems that perpetuated it or were too weak to control it, and immigrants possessed very little power to retaliate. Therefore, immigrants were often excluded from key social institutions (Aylward, 1999), civil services, and certain occupations, and they rarely received equal wages (Agnew, 2007, p. 16). However, in today’s liberal democracies, racialization is articulated in “racial syntax” and “coded language” (Li, 2007, p. 37). It is expressed in disguise, with covert invocations of patriotism, national security, and the social well-being of Canadians. For example, “Canadians are concerned that the country is in danger of losing a sense of national identity” (Employment and Immigration 1989, pp. 8–9 as cited in Li, 2007, p. 44). The negative image and the essentialization of new immigrants are reinforced by media, with headlines such as “Immigrants Fuel Soaring TB Rate” (Employment and Immigration 1989, pp. 8–9 as cited in Li, 2007, p. 44). Racist language thus “creates social meaning, has power relations embedded in it, and defines others” (Agnew, 2009, p. 7). Racism does not have to be overt and direct to impact the settlement of immigrants, as these expressions are easily coded and decoded by the dominant race (Agnew, 2009) to degrade the human value of immigrants and to exclude them from the community.

Discourses about immigrants are embedded in social structures through dominant institutions and their policies and “material resources” (Mann, 2008, p. 73). The rituals and systems created by the social institutions function as ideas or as forms of standard rules of the
institutions (Mann, 2008). These rules control distribution of resources considered important for the settlement success of immigrants. According to Small’s (1999) argument, “The racialized structures are the institutional pillars of society” which shape the settlement of immigrants in fundamental ways, in the form of “routine, recurrent, and organized features” (p. 50). The unfair distribution of valuable resources (such as employment, education, and housing) keeps racialized immigrants at the margins of society. The policies and practices of these educational, economic, and social institutions in Canada shape and determine the allocation of social goods and chances of success (Galabuzi, 2006; Small, 1999). Spitzer (2009) adds that “policies formulated in a politically charged atmosphere and imbued with dominant values and ideologies, influence access to the social and material goods of the state” (p. 154). The social apparatus constrains immigrant settlement in Canada—whether it is credential evaluation policies that prevent immigrants from accessing university education and finding jobs commensurate to their qualifications (Adamuti-Trache, 2010), or racism and discrimination that makes it difficult for an immigrant to find rental apartments and buy houses (Dion, 2001; Murdie et. al., 1995; Teixeira, 2007). The barriers to success in the labour market and Canadian society thus cause immigrants to feel excluded and alienated from mainstream society (Wang & Lo, 2007) and, in some cases, to return to their home country (Simich, 2004).

2.5.3 Multiculturalism and the exclusion of immigrants and refugees

Immigrants in the labour market are often excluded for not having “Canadian experience,” or Canadian degrees or licenses, despite having work experience and academic or professional training in their countries of origin (Bhuyan, Jeyapal, Ku, Sakamoto, & Chou, 2017; Galabuzi, 2006; Krahn, Derwing, Mulder, & Wilkinson, 2000; Sakamoto, Jeyapal, & Bhuyan, 2013). What is the reasoning for such exclusion? Are experience and knowledge gained in other
cultures not regarded as equivalent to that of Canadians’ in absence of an Anglo element? Bannerji (2000) argues that Canada’s multiculturalism policy preserves the Anglo element by separating Canadian culture as a core culture from other cultures of visible minorities, which are considered “culture[s] of the peripheries” (p. 51) and “fragments of cultures, constructed from folkloric and culinary remains” (Simoilicz, 1985 as cited in Mackey, 2002, p. 66). Immigrants are thus expected to assimilate into the culture of the dominant group “the language of the hegemonic front” (Bannerji, 2000, p. 108), which is encouraged by the government through subsidized official language programs. Immigrants’ linguistic capital is not validated in Canada and is rendered valueless. Without capability in an official language, the elites believe that immigrants cannot fully participate in Canadian society, as reflected in then-Immigration Minister Jason Kenny’s speech: “Immigration needs an overhaul and an effort must be made to ensure immigrants and those who want to become citizens speak French or English competently” (“Immigrants Needs,” 2009). Kenny emphasized that immigrants cannot be granted Canadian citizenship without proficiency in English or French. Furthermore, the policy of multiculturalism has been criticized for “promoting multiculturalism within a bilingual framework” (Mackey, 2002, p. 66), giving primacy only to the languages of dominant groups.

The Canadian policy of settling immigrants for the functional purpose of nation-building leads to a systemic marginalization of immigrants. Government support for the settlement of immigrants is primarily geared towards helping them to overcome “cultural barriers” (Mackey, 2002, p. 66) in order “to participate in and contribute to Canadian society and Canadian unity”; therefore, they can be “mobilized as picturesque and colourful helpmates and allies in the nation-building project” (emphasis in original; p. 66). The overemphasis of settlement programs on the acquisition of Canadian culture (as exemplified in the Host and LINC programs (CIC, 2010b))
not only focuses on assimilation into dominant cultures, but also undermines the location of immigrants in power relations (Bannerji, 2000; Mackey, 2002). These programs simply treat immigrants as “fragments” in liberal political discourses of pluralism and colorblindness (Bannerji, 2000; Mackey, 2002). The colorblindness, or so-called neutrality of liberal political discourse, fails to make “a distinction between racist stereotypes and ordinary historical/cultural differences of everyday life and practices of people from different parts of the world” (Bannerji, 2000, p. 37). As a result, immigrants are discouraged from reading stereotypes and racism in relation to “the symbolic forms of power” (p. 37). Such apolitical observations are an “uncritical, de-materialized, seemingly de-politicized reading of culture through which culture becomes a political tool, an ideology of power” (p. 37). In this regard, state multiculturalism is seen as the “management of geopolitical diversity” (Gunew, 2004, p. 15) to make racism invisible (Bannerji, 2000).

As in institutional racism, state multiculturalism is utilized to take away the political power of racialized groups by obscuring their class, gender, and race distinctions. Thus, racialized communities as groups lack political rights, which are reserved for the two dominant groups—namely, the English and French. The lack of group political power also means that minority cultures “cannot authorise political changes to dominant culture, they can only request them” (Mackey, 2002, p. 66). The system, in a way, maintains a client-patron relationship (Bannerji, 2000).

2.6 Political economy of global cities and immigrant workers

The previous sections have utilized Bourdieus’s capital framework, feminist theory, and critical race theory to discuss the settlement experiences of immigrants from non-European and
racialized backgrounds. However, the complexity of immigrant settlement is coupled with the intersectionality of race, gender, class, and the political economy of the hosting nation.

Immigrants coming to Canada represent different ethnicities, religions, genders, classes, and experiences that shape their lived experience in Canada. Therefore, in this final section I will address the political economy of the new labour market regime of global cities. Borrowing Saskia Sassen’s key ideas from *Globalization and its Discontents* (1998), I will explore the settlement experiences of immigrants from a political economy perspective. Understanding the political economy of the labour market regime is important for two reasons: first, employment is an essential dimension of the settlement of immigrants, as it is an influencing factor for their economic independence, general well-being, and planning for the future (Ager & Strang, 2008). Second, global cities such as Vancouver are strategic sites of capital accumulation for immigrants as well as capitalists, or the owners of the means of production (Sassen, 1998). By and large, new immigrants to Canada choose to live in major metropolitan areas. In 2016, more than half of all the immigrants (56%) landing in Canada resided in large Canadian cities, and over half of the population (61.4%) of newcomers live in Toronto, Montréal, and Vancouver (Statistics Canada, 2017).

Immigrants who live and work in global cities experience commodification of their labour—a process that signals the dehumanization of labour as market goods (Zaman, 2006), and employment-centred poverty (Sassen, 1998). The increasing poverty among immigrants in the last two decades has been well-documented in Canadian literature (for example, CIC, 2010c; Gilmore, 2009; Zaman, 2006; Teelucksingh, & Galabuzi, 2005).

Global cities produce certain advantages and disadvantages for immigrants, particularly in the labour market. Immigrants provide a ready supply of low-waged labour (Hiebert & Ley,
2006; Sassen, 1998) for the urban centres of the Western world. Sassen (1998) argues that despite being disadvantaged in global cities, immigrants, women, racialized groups, and oppressed minorities are enabled by its economic system to “gain presence to emerge as subjects, even when they do not gain direct power” (p. xxi). This is because small towns lack the new economic structures of global cities. According to Sassen’s views (1998), the new economic regime is made possible by the supply of immigrant labour, globalization of the economy, growth of the specialized service-led industry, and the innovation of new telecommunications and computer networks. These changes have polarized the urban economy (between high profit-making firms and relatively modest profit-making firms) and have transformed manufacturing and the staple economy into a service and knowledge economy. Sassen (1998) also points out that the key outcomes of these structural changes are the polarization of service industry employment into high-skill and low-skill jobs, and the casualization of the employment relations (pp. 142–45).

How does this transformation of employment regimes in global cities relate to immigrants? First, immigrants have difficulty adjusting to the high-end service industry when their experience does not match the knowledge, and technology-specific skills, that the service industry requires (Lamb, 1997; Sherrell, Hyndman, & Preniqi, 2005). The growth of services in terms of jobs and organizations requires a new set of skills that, “in principle, vary considerably, and contain distinct mobility paths for workers” (Sassen, 1998, p. 142). Skilled workers enjoy easy mobility chances due to their educational credentials and the technological knowledge required for global-level firms. The “service industry, which can be described as information and knowledge intensive” (p. 145), requires college degrees; such a requirement poses another challenge for immigrants, given that their foreign credentials and university degrees go
unrecognized in Canada (as I have described). Those jobs that do not require college degrees or specific knowledge are considered low-wage service jobs, which have seen sharp growth in many global cities (Sassen, 1998).

Second, “a tendency toward a greater casualization of the employment relations” in global cities is generally understood as “casual and unsheltered jobs,” but it is also a transformation of a “growing array of high-paying professional jobs” (pp. 145–46). At the other end of the spectrum, the low-skill service sector pays meagre wages and usually employs more immigrants. Sassen adds that casual employment has generated many precarious job conditions—part-time, gendered, and racialized work relations—under flexible conditions. Another dimension of the employment regime of the global city is that employment is becoming more informal, or is sub-contracted to informal entities for higher profit, which is beneficial for big or specific agencies. Such job trends put job security at high risk and create miserable job conditions.

Sassen provides the example of a real estate firm, which illustrates “another order of magnitude” of the imbalanced profit-making of the market economy and how it is “engendering massive distortions in the operations” of housing markets and low-skill staff (p. xxv). Sassen further argues that the high starting salaries that university graduates receive in top firms lower the earnings of manual and clerical workers at the same firms. The same effect can be observed in the “vast overpricing of the housing supply” (p. xxv). These typologies of employment have significant implications for the earnings of immigrants and create employment-induced inequality and poverty. These developments in global cities, according to Sassen (1997), are “the sites for the over-valorization of corporate capital and the devalorization of disadvantaged workers” (p.2). This also gives rise to class formation: on the one hand, a high-level corporate-
earning class, and on the other, a manual and clerical worker class possibly constituted of mostly racialized immigrants, whose earnings are barely enough for daily subsistence in global cities. Thus, immigrants continue to be a part of “a narrative rooted in an earlier historical period” (p. 6) but in a different economic regime.

2.7 Conclusion

This study employs Bourdieu’s capital framework as the main theoretical lens to examine how immigrants mobilize their capital in order to strengthen their social position. The constraints that immigrants experience while mobilizing and transforming their capital are contingent on the unequal social structures of Canadian society. The constraints imposed by the dominant white groups devalue capital possessed by the racialized immigrants, and furthermore, control their access to resources that could potentially facilitate transformation of their capital into valuable tools to aid settlement. However, Bourdieu’s work does not directly discuss immigrants and settlement, and therefore the capital framework does not clarify how the role of gender, race, and the political economy of the global city (which accommodates the immigrant workforce) affects immigrants’ agency for mobilizing and transforming capital resources. This study has sought to fill the gap by utilizing “emotional capital”—the extended notion of Bourdieu’s capital conceptualized by Reay (2004) and extended by Cresse et al. (2011) in the settlement context. Reay and Creese et al. show that women are not just possessors of capital but occupy a major role in generating capital, as transformation of capital (for example, mothers’ care and time) facilitates children’s success in education and socialization. Similarly, critical race theory—together with the Bourdieusian concept of symbolic violence—helps us understand that race is an important variable affecting immigrants’ settlement, as it becomes a marker of the distribution of socio-economic resources and a perpetrator of social inequalities. In addition, the
political economy of the global city (Sassen, 1998) contributes to our understanding of poverty and inequality as induced by new employment regimes and as the product of the neoliberal economy (a free-market economy and the monopoly of the private sector), which creates high-earning and low-earning households. As a whole, these theories are vital to understanding social disparity, which is the outcome of unequal power relations in Canadian society along lines of class, race, and gender. Consequently, these theories form a critical and comprehensive conceptual framework to understand the inequality, injustice, and othering experienced by immigrants in their settlement processes.
Chapter 3: Research Design and Methods

My research aimed to address the following questions: What forms of capital (cultural, social, and economic) do the resettled Bhutanese refugees employ? How successful are forms of capital employed in negotiating the structural realities of the capitalist economy of Canada, characterized by a racialized, gendered, and class-based Canadian labour market?

3.1. Qualitative case study framework and ethnographic methods

My study employed a qualitative case study framework and ethnographic methods to uncover and better understand how the Bhutanese refugees in Canada negotiated their current labour market realities. Before I begin to explain the design of my research, I want to analyze some relevant literature on ethnography, case study research, and the rationale behind choosing qualitative case study and ethnographic frameworks for the study.

Ethnography is “the in-depth study of naturally occurring behavior within a culture or social group” (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, & Sorensen, 2009, p. 459). It attempts to understand “the relationship between culture and behavior, with culture referring to the shared beliefs, values, concepts, practices, and attitudes of a specific group of people” (Ary, et al. 2009, p. 459). Ethnography provides an opportunity to understand how the language, values, and attitudes of a group shape their day-to-day practices. It does so through participant observation, “in which the researcher is immersed in the day-to-day lives of the people and observes and interviews the group participants” (Creswell, 2007, p. 68). It attempts to describe and interpret how “the culture-sharing group works, the essence of its functions, the group’s way of life” (Creswell, 2012, p. 92).
The ethnographic method shares some similarities with the case study in that both methods look for a holistic understanding of a particular case, context, or culture. Qualitative case study research is defined by Creswell as:

A qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (i.e., observation, interviews, audiovisual material, and documents and reports) and reports a case description and case-based themes. (2008, p. 73)

Creswell’s definition is in line with Denzin and Lincoln (2005), Merriam (1998), and Yin (2003), as they all agree that the case study is a strategy of inquiry or a methodology.

Case study design can be classified into four types of objectives: exploratory, explanatory, descriptive, and evaluative. This dissertation utilizes the explanatory category. According to Hancock and Algozzonce (2006), “Explanatory research designs seek to establish cause-and-effect relationships. Their primary purpose is to determine how events occur and which ones may influence particular outcomes” (p. 33). What I am doing is not, however, absolute. I am interested in plausible relationships and explanations and make no claim to having established the (only) cause and effect relationship among the variables I examine. There are generally three types of case studies: single instrumental, intrinsic, and multiple or collective (Creswell, 2007; Stake, 1995). According to Stake, in a single instrumental case study, the focus is on an issue or concern, followed by the researcher selecting a bounded case to illustrate it. Intrinsic case study design focuses on the case itself, which may be an evaluation of a policy or program, or of an individual’s progress. In a collective case study, the focus is still on a single issue or concern, but the researcher chooses two or more cases to illustrate it. According to Yin (2003), multiple case designs are preferred over single case designs because they are more likely to produce better and more robust analytical results.
The qualitative research and case study methodologies are often used to study the settlement issues of immigrants and refugees (CERIS,\textsuperscript{10} n.d.), as they allow the researcher to see the world of immigrants and refugees “in the context of their past and the situations in which they find themselves” (p. 11). I chose a qualitative research methodology as the process of inquiry because it suits the nature and purpose of my study. The qualitative research methodology “consists of a set of interpretive, material practices” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 3) that can potentially elucidate an understanding of the labour market barriers and strategies of Bhutanese refugees in Canada, as well as interpret their labour market situation as they experience and narrate it in a real-life scenario. A qualitative researcher as a “bricoleur” (p. 5) enjoys the flexibility to creatively utilize various interpretive tools and methods to collect different perspectives, which gives the researcher an opportunity to collect an unrestricted flow and depth of information that is relevant throughout the study. Such flexibility and the multi-method focus of a qualitative methodology would add “rigor, breadth, complexity, richness, and depth” (Flick, 2002, p. 19, as cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 5) to my research. Similarly, the idea of using the case study as a strategy of inquiry (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Yin, 2003) is congruent with my research objective to explore how Bhutanese refugees negotiate their labour market reality in their resettlement “context” (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 223).

My study explored the specific case of Bhutanese refugees in Greater Vancouver. The results of my study may be relevant to the experiences of Bhutanese refugees elsewhere in Canada and around the world. However, the primary scope of my study and the methods espoused do not include replicability and generalizability. Instead, the qualitative case study I undertook explained the specific lived labour market realities of the Bhutanese refugees in

\textsuperscript{10} CERIS—The Ontario Metropolis Centre is a research knowledge creation and transfer network that focuses on the resettlement and integration of immigrants and refugees in Ontario
Greater Vancouver; it operated as a case study of their realities and lived experiences.

Methodologically, a sample of 25 Bhutanese households was chosen for an in-depth exploration. The context of their labour market experiences is bound by the social, economic, and political realities of Canada—their new home; Bhutan—their country of birth and originator of their refugee situation; and Nepal—the country where they had lived in a protracted situation for two decades. In order to develop “a nuanced view” (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 223) of the Bhutanese refugees’ labour market realities, the case study method provided “real-life situations and its multiple wealth of details” (p. 223) through “multiple sources of information” (Creswell, 2008, p. 75), such as observations, interviews, and documents.

I also utilized ethnographic methods to capture the lived reality of the Bhutanese refugees’ labour market. I attempted to understand how and why the Bhutanese refugees made certain choices and decisions—example, how they chose certain strategies and jobs in the labour market. Through non-participant observation of the Bhutanese refugees’ individual and family strategies for job searching, preparation for interviews, and the mobilization of their capital, I immersed myself in their “day-to-day lives” (Creswell, 2007, p. 68), which also included non-participant observation and informal interviews. These observations and conversations allowed me to describe and interpret their experiences and realities on the basis of “thick description” (Geertz, 1973). Thick description is possible when the ethnographer observes the informants’ activity patterns in a particular context, detailing all micro and macro details, even nonverbal messages.
3.2 Selection of the households

The Bhutanese refugees’ households were studied to understand the specific strategies that enabled the family members to mobilize different forms of capital (Bourdieu, 1986) in order to participate in the labour market. The participants were recruited via the technique of snowball referral. Through my various roles—interpreter, community worker, and settlement case worker—I became familiar with all the Bhutanese GARs who arrived in Canada between 2009 and 2016. Gaining entry into the community was not a challenge, but introducing myself as a researcher was not easy. I started my conversation with one of the community leaders, who then facilitated my new identity as a researcher. He introduced me to the Bhutanese families as a student researcher trying to understand the Bhutanese refugees’ employment issues. Some of the participants also connected me with their friends and relatives in the Bhutanese refugee camp at Pathri in Nepal. The first point of contact in the camp connected me to the camp teacher and management committee.

The households consisted of GARs who resettled in Canada and who lived together in British Columbia (BC). These households ranged from one to 12 members, both male and female, youth, adults, and the elderly, and had households led by different genders. Of the 25 households situated in Greater Vancouver, the family members aged 15 or over were interviewed. The secondary migration of the Bhutanese families to Alberta impacted my participants’ retention for the study. Initially, 15 households were selected; however, as they moved out of the province I was required to recruit an additional 10 households. The purposeful sampling of these 25 households was based on my refugee settlement work with the Bhutanese community during the past four years. My settlement work had familiarized me with all the households and their issues with the labour market. As there was great variation among the
households in terms of employment status and labour market strategies, each family was unique. Therefore, the study employed multiple households to increase this variation and incorporated critical households, such as households of both small and large families that included children, seniors, and individuals with disabilities, family members experiencing chronic health problems, and those possessing varying levels of employable and livelihood skills and literacy/education levels.

3.3 Research sites

The Greater Vancouver metropolitan area was the major research site for the study; however, data was also collected from Lethbridge, Alberta, and the Bhutanese refugee camps at Pathari, Morang in Nepal. Ten out of 25 household study participants moved to and settled in Lethbridge for work. I visited Lethbridge in December 2013 for a week to understand the employment experiences of the Bhutanese refugees in Alberta. In October 2013, I visited a Bhutanese refugee camp to observe the resources and capital stock of refugees living in a protracted camp situation in Nepal.

There was no difficulty locating research sites both in Canada and in Nepal. My previous work experience with Bhutanese people allowed me to communicate with Bhutanese refugees without any issues; however, I was also aware of my dual relationship with the Bhutanese informants, which I discuss in one of the subsequent sections.

3.4 Data collection

Data was collected from multiple sources, such as participant observation of sampled Bhutanese families and interviews with household participants. Additional data was incorporated from interviews with experts and from important documents and secondary research. My purpose in securing data from multiple sources was to “clarify meaning, [through]
verifying the repeatability of an observation or interpretation” (Stake, 2005, p. 241), and “to clarify meaning by identifying different ways the phenomenon is being seen” (p. 241). I also provided participants with opportunities to review data materials and offered further responses to the research questions. However, only one man and one woman participated in reading their transcripts. All the information from the participants or documents was collected with explicit permission from the participants and the owners of the documents, and in full compliance with the Behavioural Research Ethics Board of UBC.

### 3.4.1 Participant observation

My role as a non-participant observer in the field involved observation of the labour market activities of the 56 individuals comprising the 25 Bhutanese households in Greater Vancouver. As previously stated in the household sampling section, the households were selected prior to the start of my fieldwork based on my familiarity with the community, and were chosen using the criteria of family composition (nuclear and extended family), education level (multiple years of education and no formal literacy), gender variation (mixed gender and single gender family), and employment status (employed and unemployed). The participant observations of households included, but were not necessarily limited to, examining the family strategies for job searching, preparation for interviews, and the mobilization of the social, cultural, and economic capitals they possessed and that were available in their community. I used Spradley’s (1980) nine-dimension framework to guide the participant observation, as it provided a complete observation of the phenomena under study. The nine dimensions include: space, actors, activities, objects, acts, events, time, goals, and feelings. However, not all of these dimensions applied in all contexts. For example, I observed household members who were active in both the labour market and household work in their different settings. Additionally, my
participant observation was not limited to research alone. Through my work as their settlement case worker, I observed their daily processes in the community when I supported them at my office as well as while I accompanied them to their appointments and during home visitations. These accounts of observation noticed in my role of settlement case worker were not recorded nor were they used for this study. Through non-participant observation, I came to know how a family, as a household, involved itself in planning and executing labour market strategies, how they understood their labour market challenges, and how other agents involved in their labour market processes interacted with them by either facilitating or impeding their labour market participation. I believe that the data from my observations has supplemented my interview data in order to understand my research topic and has added a new dimension to the phenomena I have observed (Yin, 1994), particularly by verifying whether or not the observational data would corroborate the data or information gathered through interviews and the examination of relevant documents. The observation template that I had designed ahead of time had little implication in recording information from the observations. It had two columns: one to describe the event and situation, and the other to note my reflections. However, it was not always practical to write systematic notes in the field. After each observation, I often sat down to write notes and reflections or to expand on the brief notes I wrote during the observation, doing so sometimes in the community and sometimes in my home office. After each observation was complete, I kept special logs and summaries (Creswell, 2007) of the most striking incidents or information in the form of a reflective journal.

The participant observation was extended to both Nepal and Lethbridge. I visited the Bhutanese refugee camps in Nepal to obtain firsthand experience of what types of capital resources refugees in these camps possessed and how they mobilized these resources.
Connecting the narratives and stories heard from the Bhutanese families in BC to a real-life situation of a refugee camp provided a holistic picture and triangulation of data from two different instruments. Similarly, the field observation in Lethbridge, Alberta, of the Bhutanese refugee households that migrated from Coquitlam, BC, helped to understand different labour market contexts and resource mobilizations.

### 3.4.2 Documents

I have utilized various documents (secondary research, the history of immigrant labour, memos, reports, government policies, and newspaper clippings that had relevance to the Bhutanese refugees and their labour market activities) mostly from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, Metropolis Canada, CIC, Statistics Canada, CBS, IOM, UNHCR, and Bhutanese informants. I gained critical and insightful information (Jennings, 2006) to make sense of the Bhutanese refugees’ labour history primarily in Canada, but also in their previous countries of residence—Nepal and Bhutan. In addition, I looked at the history of the Canadian labour market and its relation to the immigrant and refugee labour force. In particular, I gathered information from literature on the Bhutanese and their labour market history, information about the Canadian labour market, and policy documentation on settlement and integration.

### 3.4.3 Interviews

I interviewed 72 informants for the study: 56 Bhutanese family members from 25 different households in BC, six individuals (including two camp management members) in the Bhutanese refugee camps in Nepal, and 10 experts on settlement services and the labour market who voluntarily participated in the study. I interviewed informants (family members over 15 years of age) from the 25 Bhutanese households and refugees at the Bhutanese refugee camps opting for resettlement in Canada and the USA in order to obtain their insider or emic
perspectives on the issues being studied (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Yin, 1994). Among the 60 Bhutanese community members, 56 individuals were interviewed in Canada and four were interviewed at the Bhutanese refugee camps in Nepal.

Table 1.0 Demographics of Interview Informants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bhutanese Refugees in Canada from 25 Households</th>
<th>Bhutanese Refugees in Nepal</th>
<th>Experts on Refugee Settlement</th>
<th>Bhutanese Refugee Camp Management Committee Members</th>
<th>Total # of Individuals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Out of 56 Bhutanese participants interviewed in Canada, 25 were female and 31 were male. Among them, 18 participants were youth between 15 and 27 years old. The formal education level of the Bhutanese refugee informants at the time of leaving Bhutan was very low. Only two Bhutanese refugees had completed high school at the time of leaving Bhutan in the late 1980s and 1990s. Though 60 Bhutanese refugee informants participated in this study, 41 respondents are excluded because they were minors in the 1980s and 1990s, and therefore would not be relevant for this statistical analysis.

Table 2.0 Education Attainment in Bhutan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individuals 18 Years or Older at the Time of Leaving Bhutan</th>
<th>19</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level of Education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Literacy/Pre-Literate</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic Literacy in Nepali/No Formal Education</td>
<td>07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School or Over</td>
<td>02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Bhutanese refugee informants had spent two decades in Nepal, where some of them pursued formal education up to a college diploma. Out of the 51 adult respondents (18 years or older) of this study, 42 (82.3%) possessed basic literacy or no formal literacy at all in Nepal.

Table 3.0 Formal Education in Percentages Among 51 Bhutanese Refugees in Nepal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Basic Literacy or No Literacy</th>
<th>Grade 10</th>
<th>Grade 12</th>
<th>College Diploma</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>82.3%</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the research informants, I found out their labour market challenges, strategies, expectations, and success stories and failures. In other words, I collected information about the mobilization of their social, cultural, and economic capital and resources; the support they received from family, the community, networks, and government and non-government agencies; the challenges they experienced in the process of understanding the labour market, job searching and interviews, retention and advancement in jobs, and coping strategies for labour market changes. I collected information about what they valued as success and how they conceived their future participation in the labour market; their attitudes and motives in the labour market; and, finally, ideas and suggestions on ways to improve employment chances for the Bhutanese refugees in Canada. In addition to the interviews with the Bhutanese households, I interviewed 10 settlement service and labour market experts to understand their views on labour market barriers and the participation of the Bhutanese refugees in the labour market, together with their views and suggestions on methods of improving the Bhutanese refugees’ employment prospects in Canada.

I had planned to audiotape all the semi-structured interviews based on an interview schedule with suggested key themes or questions. However, only 30 interviews were audio recorded one at a time while the rest were composed of informal conversations and note-taking.
I noticed discomfort and a lack of spontaneity in a number of informants and this made me switch to informal conversations and paper-based recording rather than audio recording. Informal conversations with the household members facilitated greater dialogue and exchanges than the audio-recorded version of the semi-structured interviews. The interviews with the ten experts were audiotaped, including one Skype (audio only) interview, and one of the experts chose to respond to the interview questions via email.

The interview questions and the procedures (presented in appendices) were refined twice based on pilot tests of the questions and methods (Maxwell, 2005) conducted with social work classmates. The times and locations of the interviews were set according to the convenience of the participants, but a local context or environment was desired to provide insight into the research (Willis, 2006). Though each interview comprised approximately two to three 1-hour semi-structured sessions, further interviews were conducted when information remained inadequate or insufficient to address the research questions. Interviews took place over a period of three years. Each interview added depth and richness to the information obtained previously. The informal interviews and communications were vital in receiving rich data. I believe that the interaction between the researcher and the participants through the interview is “the establishment of human-to-human relations with the respondent and the desire to understand rather than to explain” (Fontana & Frey, 1994, p. 366). This dissertation has attempted to “maintain the chain of evidence” (Yin, 1994, p. 98) as well. The logical relationships between the research questions, research procedures, raw data, and results were considered as evidence for the conclusion of the study in order to help any external party understand the study from the initial research questions to the conclusion. This ensures and reflects the construct validity of this case study research.
3.4.4 Analysis and interpretation

Simon (2009) makes a distinction between analysis and interpretation. By analysis she refers to “the procedures—like coding, categorizing, concept mapping, theme generation—which enable you to organize and make sense of data in order to produce findings and an overall understanding (or theory) of the case” (p. 117). On the other hand, interpretation is an “understanding and insight” that the researcher reveals from a set of “holistic and intuitive data” (p. 117). Some researchers do not necessarily make the distinction between analysis and interpretation and instead incorporate both simultaneously in their work. I too prefer not to make any distinction between analysis and interpretation in this report.

All the audiotaped interviews were transcribed and those in Nepali were later translated into English. The cultural translation of the informal conversations to English posed some difficulties. I referred to expert and online resources to find the most accurate versions of Nepali words in English. I was also aware of my biases and my interpretation in the process of translating the interviews and conversations. A majority of my informants answered in a simple version of the Nepali language with some form of accent and regional dialect. I translated these answers into a simple version of English.

I started reflecting on the audiotaped information, observations, and notes from day one of data collection. According to Stake (2005, p. 242), it is important that the researcher reflects, ponders, and continuously interprets the data. After reviewing all the sources of the collected data, all the materials, including interview transcripts, follow-up notes, and observation notes, were manually coded and preliminary meanings were generated. Some of the codes were prefigured, based on the refugee settlement and theoretical literature, but I also remained receptive to “emerging codes” (Creswell, 2007, p. 152). This ensured more openness and less
theoretical bias in reading and analyzing the data. Finally, the data was interpreted using Bourdieu’s theory of capital, critical race theory, and political economy, as discussed in the theoretical framework section.

3.5 Building narratives and reflective notes as “evidence”

In order to ensure the high quality of ethnographic narratives, I have personally attended to multiple experts on the topic of refugees’ settlement and employment and have collected narratives from informants of different ages, genders, castes, life experiences, occupations, and educational backgrounds. I have reflected on the data collection processes and my analytical notes, addressed all major rival interpretations and the most significant aspects of the case study, and applied “the researcher’s prior expert knowledge” (Yin, 2003, p. 137). As the researcher, I utilized my own knowledge and experience working with Bhutanese GARs living in Greater Vancouver in various capacities—interpreter, community mobilizer, and settlement worker. In addition, I possess the cultural and linguistic ability to apprehend their reality. These elements were also considered and built into the research strategies, analyses, and reporting of the data; all of these ensured a high standard and rich quality. As data collection is central to assessing the reliability of the study (Kirk and Miller, 1986), the interview questionnaires were semi-structured and tested with doctoral students and modified (i.e., simplified) based on initial responses. The data was coded and interpreted through reflexive exchanges. The findings were checked with similar studies for consistencies and deviations for the purpose of increasing the trustworthiness of the study. Qualitative study is likely to be influenced by the researcher’s positionality, biases, and values, which can greatly impact the outcome of a study (Merriam, 1998). According to Wolf (1996), power differences surface in research due to the two different power positions any researcher holds. The researcher’s power is exerted during the research process, such as data
collection, and post-fieldwork, such as data interpretation. In order to minimize my biases and acknowledge the power differences, I engaged in a reflexive process through critical reflection—from developing research questions to interpreting data, recognizing dilemmas and negotiating my dual status as insider/outsider along with my status’s pros and cons, and acknowledging differences as contextually, socially, relationally, and historically specific.

As a settlement service provider for Bhutanese GARs and a university-educated Nepali adult, I was aware of my institutional and individual power that could create power imbalances due to the importance and value attributed to the social position and education of individuals in Nepali society. I feared that the Bhutanese GARs may feel a certain obligation to cooperate and participate in my study. This was minimized through my ongoing reflexivity on “self-analysis and political awareness” (Callaway, 1992, p. 33). I engaged in self-questioning of my research processes—from recruiting participants to data analysis—and my interpersonal relationships with the research participants. I also initiated an open dialogue with the community members about their willful participation in the research, their rights to withdraw or to not participate, consent forms, and the purpose and format of the research. In addition, I took a reflexive stance on other aspects of intersectionality, such as considering my feelings and biases on class, gender, and age during the field interactions. I acknowledged my biases as they reflected onto the processes of observation and reflection, and feeding reflexive insights into the next steps. Overall, I believe the researcher’s reflexivity comes from his or her ability to recognize power differences inherent to the positions held by both the researcher and the participants, and to acknowledge how those differences can shape the researcher’s relationships and findings.
3.6 Challenges in data collection

Out of the 25 households that agreed to participate in the study, one household member declined later without citing any reason. Consent forms in Nepali were provided to Bhutanese community members, but not everyone felt comfortable signing the document. For the participants not literate in Nepali, it was read out to them for oral consent. Moreover, those who did not want to be recorded preferred to participate with unrecorded oral consent. The reason for some participants’ hesitation to sign the consent form may be because signing the paper reminded them of their forced eviction from Bhutan. Ten participants referred to the eviction. The Bhutanese government and security forces had forced the Bhutanese Lhotshampa to sign a document that contained voluntary renouncement of Bhutanese citizenship and agreement to leave Bhutan. With the approval of the ethics board, the written consent form requirement was changed to oral consent. I tried to record the consenting statement, but some informants even had concerns over recording this aspect. One older adult with limited literacy said, “What if I’m kicked out of the country for what I’ve told you? Let’s not do any recording at all.” Prior to the recruitment and prior to the interviews, anonymity was discussed, subjects were reminded, or the concept was reinforced, and the decision about recording was left up to the participant. Many of the informants who provided consent for recordings became nervous and uncomfortable at having the interview recorded. I had to stop the recording several times and cancelled the recording process twice. Apart from the fear and hesitation at being recorded, the informants had difficulty responding to semi-structured questions. I simplified the questions and modified the interview script to make it an informal conversation. This significantly improved the responses later. Prior to this process, the respondent would often limit their responses to two or three words, or a few sentences at best. The next informants spoke more freely, but I still felt that they
were not very comfortable engaging with me while sharing their labour market experiences in research settings as opposed to communicating with me in non-research settings. Therefore, in the absence of thick descriptions, the qualitative portion of this study would not have adequately answered my research questions.

During the first six months of fieldwork, data collection was limited both in terms of quantity and quality, and this often made me frustrated at the end of the day after finishing field visits. My expectation of the quality of data was higher, based on my familiarity, engagement, and informal knowledge of the everyday strengths and challenges of the Bhutanese refugees. Over the period of two years, I had built a rapport with the majority of the participants and I was familiar with their communication style and knowledge of the labour market situation, yet these aspects were not reflected in the data. I continued to think through the underlying causes and barriers that prevented them from openly engaging with me as the researcher. I asked my informants about their challenges in answering my questions in depth or elaborately. I received several responses, such as, “What should I say! I know you already know the answer!”; “You know everything about us!”; “Aama ko agadi mama ko kay bakhan garnu (what is the point of describing a maternal uncle in front of a mother)?”; “I don’t quite understand why you are interviewing us; you should just write about us, as you know everything about us from day one.”

Initially, I was overcome and confused by such responses. However, as I started to process the responses, I gradually found that they provided important clarification. I explained to my informants in Nepali about the research and ethical parameters of collecting and using information. Additionally, in order to solicit rich data from families, I focused more on informal and casual conversation and observation of family dynamics of work. Finally, I started to generate richer data, but that created difficulties in setting boundaries. The family members
started to ask multiple questions about work and life in Canada, and neighbours started coming to participate in the conversation and sometimes it would not end. I noticed that I was spending an extended number of hours in the field with the Bhutanese refugee informants in Coquitlam, which affected my work-life balance. Therefore, I continued to establish boundaries in my role as a researcher, but often it was difficult to convince the family members that it was not my role to make their resumes or to help with their job searches. The frustration, pain, and hardship experienced by Bhutanese refugees often overwhelmed me and I ended up referring them to different resources. Another complication I encountered was that by the end of the first year of my fieldwork, about 30% of the research informants moved to Lethbridge. The dissatisfaction among Bhutanese refugees at not finding work was reaching its peak in the beginning of the second year, and so many Bhutanese families left B.C. This added challenge forced me to find more informants or to expand my fieldwork to Alberta.

In the Bhutanese refugee camps in Nepal, I was connected with two family members through their relatives in Canada. Both family members were waiting to be reunited with their families in Canada and the USA, but encountered challenges for several years. Other families in the refugee camp with similar issues joined them when I was listening to their stories. I struggled to maintain the focus of my conversation on my research objectives, but it was also important to be sensitive to the stories they wanted to share.

Throughout my fieldwork, I approached Bhutanese refugees from strength-based perspectives. My interactions with them sometimes might have aggravated their anxieties about their employment prospects; overall, however, I highlighted their assets as capital from multiple spheres of life, employment, livelihood, and everyday lived experience during my fieldwork. My interactions might have played a positive role in facilitating the transformation of their
capital assets, such as connecting with their existing network and learning new skills. Some Bhutanese refugees also found conversation with me to act as a stimulus in thinking about the prospects of a secondary migration to Alberta, where 100% of the job seekers found employment.
Chapter 4: Multiple Forms of Capital in Bhutan, Nepal, and Canada

This chapter discusses multiple forms of capital held by the Bhutanese refugees in Bhutan and Nepal, and the struggles they encountered in adapting and changing these forms of capital to fit with the realities of Canadian social and cultural contexts and the demands of the labour market in Canada. The focus of this chapter is on the skill sets held by refugees and the origin of these skill sets. It also addresses the challenges these skill sets posed for the integration of Bhutanese refugees into a Canadian labour market. There are two sectors of the Canadian labour market that are of relevance: the industrial sector and the service sector. Bhutanese refugees attempted to integrate themselves into both sectors, and the efforts of those assisting them were also focused on these sectors.

Their cultural capital, as Bourdieu defines the term, and which the Bhutanese refugees acquired prior to immigrating to Canada, constitutes a barrier to this integration, their capital being the skills, values, and norms associated with a primarily subsistence agricultural economy. This set of skills includes the educational background, personal capacities, and traditional knowledge possessed by Bhutanese refugees relevant to producing the material, as well as the social, cultural, and symbolic, means of supporting their lives in Bhutan, Nepal, and subsequently in Canada. The capital stock of the Bhutanese refugees participating in this study was found to be heavily dependent on the mode of economy and the socio-cultural structure of Bhutan prior to the 1990s. The capital accumulated by Bhutanese refugees—social, cultural, economic, and symbolic—was also grounded in the socio-cultural and economic structures in Nepal, under which Bhutanese refugees lived for about twenty years. The strategies and processes used by the Bhutanese refugees in mobilizing their resources in the Canadian labour market—the primary focus of this study—are presented in this chapter.
A background and introduction to Bhutanese history as migrants and refugees has been provided in Chapter 1. This chapter includes a focus on an element of this history and material circumstances: the characteristics of and the means by which the Bhutanese traditionally supported themselves, both materially and economically. The living strategies and occupations of the Bhutanese are located in economic, political, and social structures and in processes at local, regional, and national levels. Bhutan is traditionally an agrarian society, with 80% of its working-age population involved in agricultural work in 1990 (Ura, 1994). The government statistics available in the 1980s reveal an even higher proportion, that is, 87% were agricultural workers in Bhutan (Savada, 1993, p. 306). In addition to agricultural work, the Bhutanese were involved in government services (3.4%), businesses (0.9%), and “other” occupations (2%) in the 1980s (p. 306).

4.1 Embodied cultural capital in Bhutan

The Bhutanese refugees’ agricultural work included farming, animal husbandry, and fishing, and these three sectors accounted for 44% of economic production (Savada, 1993 p. 306). According to the Bhutanese Planning Commission in 1989, the majority of people owned farms and thus were self-employed (p. 306). The agriculture systems in Bhutan can be divided into three sub-systems: “Pastoral-transhumance system; subsistence-level crop and animal husbandry; and early commercial farming” (Upadhay, 1995, p. 9). In a pastoral-transhumance system, peasants and cattle herders migrate with their livestock from one permanent habitation to another pasture for cattle grazing. In Bhutan, transhumance communities in winter migrate to lower altitudes, where they trade cattle and buy the necessary substances for everyday living. In summer, they return to their original habitat and cultivate food crops. Similarly, a subsistence-level crop and animal husbandry system involves farmers producing for their direct
consumption. Surplus grains, vegetables, seasonal fruits, and dairy products are sold in the market for cash. Households are involved in direct production and utilize indigenous farming resources from seeds to tools, with little use of modern tools and practices. The commercial farming in southern Bhutan builds on modern farming practices often introduced as part of development efforts. Such farming practices consist of improved seeds, fertilization, better irrigation facilities, and a focus on cash crops, such as potatoes, chilies, cardamom, oranges, apples, and vegetables. In general, the occupational knowledge and skills of the Bhutanese were dominated by an agrarian and pastoral way of life.

The Bhutanese refugees have a long history of peasantry practices. Given that agriculture was the primary means of livelihood in Bhutan, the Bhutanese of Nepali origin living in the south of Bhutan, often referred to as the Lhotshampa, derived livelihoods from subsistence farming and animal husbandry. Out of 25 families who participated in the study, 17 were farmers and thus lived by agricultural subsistence in Bhutan. Amrita and her husband worked on their farms and sometimes for villagers for both reciprocity and wages. She stated:

[In Bhutan] we lived in Dhanabari, which is 4 hours of walking from Gelafhu. We owned a house and three bigha\textsuperscript{11} of land, where we cultivated paddy, millet, corn, yams, taro, ginger, green beans, and greens. Some years, when the paddy would not turn out very well, we depended more on millet and corn for a staple diet. We also raised chickens and goats. We had about 20 banana trees and a couple of lemon trees. When we needed cash to buy noontel (salt and oil), we sold chickens, goats, rice, bananas, lemons, and green beans in the haat bazar (farmers’ market). When we had a shortage of cash, we worked for wages as khetala (a farm labourer), but other times we went to our villagers’ parama (reciprocal labour) and they came to ours. (Amrita, 2013)

In addition to agriculture, Lhotshampa Bhutanese labour in Bhutan can be located in the national building construction sector. Their labour was frequently used in the construction of the physical

\textsuperscript{11} Bigha is a unit of measurement of area of land, commonly used in Nepal. The precise size of a bigha appears to vary considerably. Sources have given measurements ranging from 1,500 to 6,771 square metres (16,150 to 72,880 sq ft), but in several smaller pockets it can be as high as 12,400 square metres (133,000 sq ft).
infrastructure in Bhutan, from the construction of highways and hydropower dams to building the royal government’s houses. In the 1960s, they worked on the Phutsholing-Thimpu and the Samdrup-Tashingang roads. The entire adult population worked a month each year as part of a national program of remunerated compulsory labour known as Druk Dom and Sum Dom (Hutt, 2003). In addition to the hereditary transmission of embodied cultural capital, access to institutionalized cultural capital was minimal for the Bhutanese refugees in Bhutan.

4.2 Institutionalized (human) cultural capital in Bhutan

Among the Bhutanese refugee informants, professional job holders in Bhutan were minimal. Two respondents stated that they were government employees in Bhutan. Prior to their forcible eviction from Bhutan to Nepal, Hari was a senior government administrator and Bindira was a school teacher:

First, I got a job at the development ministry, but later I had to switch to finance. The finance minister said, “I need foreign-educated youths.” After some time, I was sent to southern Bhutan. The government made a policy to send educated people to the Southern Belt. The minister said, “Hey, you, go to southern Bhutan, go to Samdrup Jongkhar as an SDO [sub-divisional officer] and Dungpa.” Overall, Dungpa used to be in charge of the district and was one position higher than SDO. He said, “You will be a civil administrator as well as vice-chair of the municipality.” I accepted the offer. After a year, I got promoted.

The promotion is reflected on our scarp with stripes [insignia]. I got first stripe, second stripe, and, finally, third stripe [the number of stripes on the insignia denotes the seniority and rank of a government officer] one after another. Three stripes is the most senior of our position. The fourth stripe on the red scarf is an insignia of DC, district commissioner. I was close to getting promoted [to DC], but I got transferred to the interior region, which I did not accept. Later, I was transferred to [different] deputy director positions but was never allowed to assume those positions by the government [due to political interference]. (Hari, 2014)

Bindira was a dance and music teacher in an elementary school in southern Bhutan for 5 years. She was one of the few Bhutanese women who worked in a government job. In addition to raising two children, she managed to teach full-time. A small number of Bhutanese with higher
education assumed political positions at the local and national levels and worked in all sectors of government (Hutt, 2003).

Educational attainment played a major role in determining occupational choice and status for the Lhotshampa Bhutanese in Bhutan. Due to slow development of public and free education, many Lhotshampa were unable to access formal education. Prior to the 1950s, formal education was available to Bhutanese students through Buddhist monasteries as well as private schools in Ha and Bumthang. In the 1950s, several secular primary and elementary schools were established with government support, and several others were established in the major towns with government backing. Modern education with a free and universal primary education system started only in 1961 with the inception of the first 5-year development plan. As a result, the adult literacy rate of Bhutan was only 25% in 1985 (UNDP, 1990), which is believed to be the lowest among developing countries. Formal education attainment was very low among the Lhotshampa Bhutanese in the 1990s. As presented in Table 1.0 in Chapter 3, only two out of 19 adult respondents\textsuperscript{12} of this study had completed high school at the time of leaving Bhutan in the late 1980s and early 1990s. This lack of what Bourdieu identifies as “institutionalized capital” was clearly an impediment to the acquisition of traditional capital in the Canadian labour market. Examples of how and why access to institutionalized capital—the qualifications associated with a formal education—was limited for many of those participating in this study are provided in what follows. They learned how to read and write from elders in the community, and some of them had one to five years of primary education in government schools or in pathsalas (Vaidik Hindu School).

\textsuperscript{12} Though the total respondents from the Bhutanese community for this study is 60, other respondents are excluded as they were minors in the 1980s and 1990s and therefore would not be relevant for this statistical analysis.
The geographical distance to commute and corporal punishment in schools deterred many Bhutanese students from educational opportunities from early adolescence. Due to the lack of schools in local villages, many students had to walk long distances to and from school, often through precarious terrain. Similarly, the introduction of Dzongkha, the national language of Bhutan, in schools frightened students from a Nepali background. The students who failed to meet expectations of teachers in Dzongkha class were subjected to harsh emotional and physical punishment. Deepak is one of many Bhutanese refugees who received no schooling and was not literate in either language, Nepali or Dzongkha. He experienced two barriers to starting school: first, the school was very far from his home, and second, he was not interested in learning Dzongkha:

DEEPAK: Padna ta maile bndai napdeko (I have no education at all). The school was far from where I lived. In addition, at the time when I was to start school, the government started evicting us [Lhotshampa] and they [the government] discontinued teaching in Nepali, so everyone had to learn in Dzongkha. I did not want to learn in Dzongkha.  
RK: Why didn’t you want to learn in Dzongkha?  
DEEPAK: It was very difficult to learn Dzongkha it was very difficult. It is a very complicated language; it is very complicated to read and write. I just knew a few Dzongkha words. The teachers would beat us to death with a stick if we could not learn Dzongkha. (2014)

In the early 1960s, Lhotshampa Bhutanese children only started school as adolescents or as teenagers. This barred many of the Bhutanese refugees from the opportunity to receive a formal education. Ram did not know how to read or write in either Nepali or Dzongkha. His father sent him to school when he was 15 years old, but he was declared ineligible. He was considered too old to start Grade 1 at the age of 15. His father did not go to formal school, but he had an opportunity to learn at pathsala from the pundits (Hindu priests). Overall, the majority of the Lhotshampa Bhutanese had no formal education and most of them did not know how to read or write at the time of leaving Bhutan in the late 1980s and early 1990s.
Som Nath dropped out of school due to his family responsibilities and economic hardship. His family lived by subsistence farming, where all the family members, from children to adults, were required to contribute to farming and domestic chores in one way or another. Further, his mother passed away when he was young, adding more family responsibilities onto him. Therefore, Som Nath could not advance his education beyond Grade 1, which he repeated twice (Som Nath, 2014):

RK: Did you go to school in Bhutan?
SOM NATH: Yes, I was enrolled in school in Bhutan; I spent 2 years in Grade 1.
RK: What happened after that?
SOM NATH: My mother passed away early. Therefore, we did not have enough family members to work on our farm. There was a lot of farm work to be taken care of. I was the only one who could do the work because my siblings were very young. Therefore, I dropped out of school to carry out these farming responsibilities. Afterwards, I could never manage to go back to school.

Family responsibility weighing on the shoulders of school-age children was a barrier to pursuing education for members of low socio-economic status and marginalized groups. Som Nath, Indu, and Amrita were members of the Dalit caste\textsuperscript{13} and women of low economic status. The Dalit groups are more likely to experience barriers to accessing education, as they are socially and economically marginalized in the Indian subcontinent. Amrita gave up her dreams of going to school for the sake of her family duties:

My village girlfriends used to go to school wearing nice clothes and holding books in their hands. I always envied them. One day, I told my father that I would like to go to school like my village girlfriends. My father said, “If you go to school, who is going take the cattle and goats for forest grazing?” (Amrita, 2014)

Unlike many Bhutanese, Hari was one of the two fortunate respondents with higher education. He received preschool education in his village at the school established by his grandfather, who was a respected village man. For further studies he went to India with support

\textsuperscript{13} Dalits are members of the lowest social group in the Hindu caste system and are also known as “untouchable” and historically oppressed, both socially and economically.
from his family and the government of Bhutan, and to the United Kingdom under the UNDP scholarship. Hari said:

We [I] went through a selection process for government jobs. I got my first job at the development ministry. There, months after, they asked me, “As you are too young, would you be interested in further studies?” I said, “Sure.” They asked me, “Where?” I knew about a college in Bombay, and therefore I showed interest in the LLB [Bachelor of Law] program. But they said, ‘You cannot pursue an LLB degree.” During that time in Bhutan, common citizens were not allowed to study law. They told me, “You can study for an MA, taking law as one of the subjects.” The government gave me a scholarship. I’ve always received government scholarships since the sixth grade. At the same time, I saw a call for me at my office in the finance ministry for abroad-study opportunities in the UK. I completed the application and got selected. (Hari, 2014)

4.3 Strategies for economic capital accumulation in exile (Nepal and India)

After arriving in Nepal in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the Bhutanese refugees looked for options for economic capital accumulation in order to survive or to cover unmet needs in exile. The government of Nepal\textsuperscript{14} did not permit the Bhutanese refugees to work in the country, but that did not deter them from working:

> Although not officially recognised, many refugees find some work opportunities outside the camp environment. Generally, women tend [to] go to nearby villages for agricultural work, men and youths find work as casual construction labourers and a few families are engaged in business. (UNHCR and WFP, 2006, p. 10)

Apart from a work permit restriction, the Bhutanese refugees’ opportunity for economic capital accumulation in Nepal was constrained by their human capital and supply of labour in local labour markets. The Bhutanese refugees looking for economic opportunities can be classified into three broad groups: peasants with no formal literacy and informally trained semi-skilled workers, small business entrepreneurs, and entry-level semi-professional workers with high school educations. Majority of the Bhutanese refugees utilized their farming and construction skills in the local labour market of Eastern Nepal to generate economic capital. They worked in

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\textsuperscript{14} Nepal is not a signatory to either the 1951 Refugee Convention or its 1967 Protocol (UNHCR and WFP, 2006).
villages close to their camp areas—Pathari, Kudhnabari, Beldangi, and Timai. Both men and women participated in agricultural work. Depending on the demand for work in the local villages and the time of farming, the Bhutanese refugees worked at ploughing, digging, composting and fertilizing, seeding, planting, harvesting, and post-harvest handling:

I worked in Basti (village nearby the Bhutanese refugee camp), mostly in agriculture. The work varied from ploughing the field to post-harvesting. I ploughed the field after the harvest of wheat, maize, and rice was over. Sometimes, I worked on the plantations with dozens of other people from our camp and local villages. I also fertilized the crops. The nature of work would change from one employer to another depending on what their needs were. (Deepak, 2014)

Women preferred working in the agricultural sector in nearby villages, but it was not always available. As Amrita, a mother of four children, recalls:

I have done a lot of work. In the initial months of settlement, I broke stones into gravel for construction work. Later, I did whatever work I found, like dhan katne, bita bokne, aali tasne, makai godne, baas bokne (harvesting rice, bundling the rice stalks, improvising farm land, managing the growing crops, carrying bamboo). It was hard to find jobs close by because of the high number of camp people wanting to work, so sometimes I walked 2 hours to reach Jayapur and Budhabare to work. When I had no work at all I crushed stones to make some money. (Amrita, 2013)

In order to address unmet needs, Bhutanese refugee women accepted construction and general labourer work, as in the case of Amrita, who crushed stones out of desperation for money:

On a blazing sunny or a rainy monsoon day, I crushed stones to sell to a local contractor, Mrs. Rai. I made 2 rupees per blue bucket. I used to make 2,000 to 3,000 per season. It would help me pay back the money that I used to borrow from her to buy new clothes for my children during the Dashain festival. (Amrita, 2013)

The UNHCR supported “a number of relief substitution projects, managed through refugee groups such as the Bhutanese Women’s Forum” (Women’s Refugee Commission, 2009, p. 103). For instance:

In participating, refugees producing goods are paid on a piece-rate basis, rather than UNHCR paying to import the same items from outside of the camp. Sanitary materials for women are produced by refugees, in which they dye, dry, weave and cut material for women’s sanitary cloth, which is purchased by UNHCR and distributed to all females.
between the ages of 15 and 49. Other goods produced for in-camp distribution include chalk for schools and laundry soap for refugee households. (p. 103)

Many women found opportunities in producing handlooms, sewing, and weaving, which fitted within their routine household chores and was a good alternative source of income:

I worked in handloom production in the camp’s factory to make Nepali topis [hats]. It was tough and time-consuming work. In the beginning, it took me 2 days to make a single topi, but later I was able to make one topi in one day. It was just 30 rupees per topi, but it was like something is better than nothing. After a couple of years, I started sewing in my hut at the refugee camp. I would take orders from the neighbours and Bhutanese living in the camp. (Renuka, 2013)

Refugee women living in the camps also worked in nearby villages in non-agricultural work, such as weaving and tailoring:

After finishing morning chores of cooking, cleaning, and sending kids off to school, I went to work. I worked in the afternoon for about three years at the wool processing factory in the nearby village, where I processed lambswool to make yarns. I got paid from 75 to 120 rupees per kilogram of processed wool. In fact, I started at 75, but it continued to increase to 80, 90, and later to 120. I processed half a kilo in a day and earned 25 to 26 rupees monthly. (Manisha, 2014)

Bhutanese refugee children started working at an early age in Nepal. In particular, families engaged in agriculture required all family members to contribute to either household maintenance or agricultural production. Therefore, children started to work at a tender age of 5 or 6. The responsibilities for Bhutanese children included carrying lunch or snacks for family members working at the farm, cooking, cleaning, collecting fodder and firewood, working on the farm, and taking the cattle to graze. Mahesh started working on the farm in Bhutan at the age of 7. He supported his parents on the farm, and delivered lunch and snacks from home to the farm. After coming to Nepal at the age of 13, he ran away from home with his peers to work in the western district of Nepal. Similarly, his brother, Naresh, started working on the farm while he was continuing secondary school in Nepal:
We were a well-to-do family in Bhutan. My uncles are still in Bhutan and they are doing well. But we came to Nepal as refugees. Due to our financial situation, it was even difficult to get time to attend school regularly. When I could not manage to get to school, I asked for class notes from my friends and prepared for the final exams until Grade 10. I worked on the farms—cutting the rice stalks and tying/bundling them up. I only made 15 rupees per hajera (attendance) at work. (Naresh, 2013)

Some refugee children experienced difficulties fitting into jobs due to misperceptions about their physical ability and sometimes their gender:

When I was in Grade 9 [17 years old] in Nepal, I worked in the rice fields to cut the rice stalks…. Once I got a job of processing harvested guwa (betel nuts). I used to clean the outer part of the boiled betel nuts and dry them under the sun. I worked four to five hours during the weekend. For about a week, I also worked as a labourer in a house construction site just before coming to Canada. I carried the masala (concrete basics) and passed it to the masons at the construction site. They used to tell me, “Saani chas” (you are so tiny), which led them to think that I cannot work in construction. Probably they meant that I was too young to be working at the construction site. Maybe that is why sometimes they used to make me cook food at the site’s kitchen for the labourers instead of making me carry masala. (Basanti, 2013)

In addition to agricultural work, Bhutanese refugee men worked in tea estates, furniture industries, and in the construction of houses, roads, and bridges. Construction jobs were available in the nearby local villages:

I started working as a labourer in constructing brick walls of houses. Then the pay was 15 rupees a day. Later, the wages increased to 20 a day. But I switched to a different work, which was the construction of RCC toilets, and finally to the construction of rings for the water wells. I was already a mistri (a mason) by then. I made a minimum of 200 rupees in a day. My work became my livelihood. (Ashok, 2013)

Work outside of agriculture provided opportunities for the Bhutanese refugees to accumulate new cultural capital in the form of new skills. Newly gained skills in construction, carpentry, and small industries broadened the scope of their work. The Bhutanese refugees gradually expanded their employment from around the camp sites to different parts of Nepal, and a few grabbed opportunities in India. Mahesh started work in road construction in Baglung, a district
in western Nepal. He worked there for 6 months and returned to Jhapa, but occasionally he went to Kathmandu and other parts of the country for house construction work:

When I was 13, I ran away from my home with other boys to work in Baglung. I worked for about six months in road construction, where we got 60 rupees a day and food was provided. It was a good wage for that time. Then afterwards, I returned home [the camp] and worked in Damak, which was close to my home. But they only paid 25 rupees for 8 hours. I used to go everywhere for work, sometimes to the western parts of Nepal and other times to Kathmandu. (Mahesh, 2013)

Wages were very low for the work available in the camps and nearby villages. Ashok preferred working outside of the village camp. Inside the camp he worked for an organization developing a sanitation system for the camp residents. He found more profitable work elsewhere:

I was paid minimally when I worked for an organization developing a sanitation system in the camp village. Outside the camp, I made from 4,000 to 5,000 rupees, whereas in the camp village it was barely 1,500 rupees. After getting some experience, I quit the job and started working elsewhere. (Ashok, 2013)

There were two major reasons for looking for jobs outside the camps, nearby villages, and districts. First, the influx of 100,000 refugees started to dry up jobs, and it became very challenging to find work. Due to the fierce competition, the wages paid were very low. Therefore, the male members of the household went to other parts of the country to work, whereas the female members mostly stayed in the camps with other family members. Additionally, the refugees would get opportunities to utilize their skill sets and get employment that was more profitable outside of the camps.

Similarly, India was a popular destination compared to Nepal for both short and long-term employment because of the better wages in India and the flexibility of crossing borders. The open border between Nepal and India facilitates transmigration for economic and social purposes. The Bhutanese refugees took advantage of the open border between India and Nepal to find work and to maintain connections with friends and families living in India and Bhutan.
The respondents in this study found work as security guards, drivers, and restaurant workers, and in construction, farming, administration, and teaching sectors. Some worked in the areas inhabited by Nepali language speakers, such as Darjeeling and Assam, while others worked in major Indian cities, such as New Delhi, Madras, Calcutta, and Mumbai. Sashi worked in Sikkim during his summer school breaks. He went to India for work with his peers for two to three months and returned to Nepal afterwards:

I went to Sikkim during my breaks from school for about two to three months with other friends from the camp. It used to be construction work; it would involve working as a general labourer in road construction and irrigation channel development for agriculture. The pay was much better there than it used to be in Jhapa. (Sashi, 2014)

Bhadra worked in the construction sector in Nepal for several years. He was a security guard in a textile company in Madras, India, for 4 years, while his wife and children lived in the Bhutanese refugee camp in Beldangi, Nepal. His work experience in Bhutan with the national army for 3 years qualified him to become a security guard in a reputable company without any difficulty:

Money would be so little in construction jobs that it would not even be worth working eight to ten hours a day. So, I left my family in Nepal and worked in India as a security guard for about four years. A security guard’s job is much easier as compared to that of a construction labourer. I also saved sufficient money to support my family in Nepal. (Bhadra, 2014)

After fleeing Bhutan, some Bhutanese refugees stayed in India with the support of their relatives and friends, while the majority came to Nepal. Within a short period of time, a few refugees returned to India for better employment and quality of living, especially those with some connections in India and with higher education. For instance, Arvind and his parents lived in India, and he went to school there. After completing a diploma, he found a job at a call centre. Similarly, Bindira worked in a teaching position in an elementary school in India for about ten years. She says, “I taught in a school in India because I found a respectable job that could help
me support my family. Especially my kids, who were getting a quality education, which was very important for my family” (2014).

Bhutanese refugee families with some start-up funds managed to run small businesses in and outside of the camps. They managed small businesses such as small restaurants, tea stalls, grocery stores, or salons. WFP and UNHCR provided small loans to support women interested in small businesses like grocery stores, cosmetics, furniture shops, and dairy (UNHCR and WFP, 2006, p. 21). Family members worked together and contributed to running the restaurants, tea stalls, and grocery stores.

The third but small group of refugees with higher education and employable skills worked as teachers in private schools and in supervisory positions in construction sectors. Naresh taught in private schools in Sindhuli and Birgunj for 5 years, and for about a year, he worked as a team leader of general labourers at the hydropower construction site:

After I finished high school, Mohan Sir offered me an opportunity to teach in the Bright Future Boarding school in Sindhuli, which he was managing at that time. I taught there for 21 months. But due to the insurgency, I found it difficult to live there, so I went to teach in Birgunj’s Budhi Shanti School. I worked there for 4 years. The uprising in Terai made it difficult to work there too, so I returned to camp, but we had lost our monthly ration privilege. Therefore, again my brother and I went to Parbat Kushma to teach in a local school. (Naresh, 2013)

Naresh’s wife and his brother joined him in Birgunj. Later, both of them found teaching jobs in the same school. According to Naresh, private schools in rural parts of Nepal often employed Bhutanese teachers, but they were paid below the government’s pay scale; however, the Bhutanese refugees accepted these positions as a survival mechanism.

The Bhutanese refugees managed to supplement their income through hard and often low-wage manual and agricultural work in Nepal. The agricultural and semi-urban economy composed of agrarian and construction work occupied Bhutanese labour. A small fraction of
Bhutanese refugees with English language skills, high school education, or college degrees found jobs teaching in private schools, but the majority of the refugee population lacked higher education or advanced labour market skills.

4.4 Human capital advancement in exile

Bhutanese refugees in Nepal had limited opportunities to advance their human capital through formal education and skill-based training. First, refugees were restricted from accessing government services—adult education programs, schools, colleges, and universities—in Nepal. Second, the low literacy and schooling among the majority of Bhutanese refugees barred them from accessing private and community resources for skill advancement. Third, accessing education in the community and in private schools was not feasible for everyone due to a lack of affordability. In 1990, when refugees started coming to Jhapa, the refugee camp in Nepal, en masse, the camp was still being set up. There were no schools in the camp. Some refugees with previous teaching backgrounds began to teach under the shade of trees in the community forest.

As one of the early students of that school, Naresh recalls the following:

The refugee camp was not set up completely in 1991 when we had just arrived in Jhapa. Therefore, there was no school for the refugee children. There was an ex-teacher from Bhutan who took the initiative with another refugee … they collected a few writing slates and chalk so that we could use them to practice writing. We sat on the grass under trees in the forest. After 6 months, Caritas Nepal, an NGO, undertook the responsibility of managing schools in the refugee camps … Caritas built schools with bamboo, and the classes ran up to Grade 8. After I finished Grade 8, I went to the Nepali [government] school, but it was half an hour walk from where I was living. (Naresh, 2013)

In 1992, Caritas Nepal, a partner of UNHCR, assumed the responsibility of managing the schools in the camps for Bhutanese refugees. The school infrastructure in the camps was poor. The classrooms were built with woven bamboo walls and there was no electricity or running water. However, when compared with Nepali students, Bhutanese refugee students benefitted from free education in the English language. Schools in Bhutanese refugee camps:
Taught English, math and science in English and met the national education curriculum standard for board exams for the School Leaving Certificate. Initially the school provided education until grade 8, but gradually education was upgraded to grade ten. The total student enrollment in 2007 was 33,200. (Bhutanese News Services, n.d., para. 11)

Higher education was not within the reach of all the refugees due to their poor economic circumstances; still, many pursued a university education, either in Nepal or India or abroad (Bhutanese News Services, n.d., para. 13). However, motivation for higher education is usually not high among refugee students in Nepal on account of the lack of employment prospects that honour their educational qualifications. For example, Naresh was qualified to compete for an assistant sub-inspector position (junior officer) in the Nepal Police, but he was deemed ineligible for that position for not possessing Nepali citizenship. He says, “I was determined to become a police officer, but it did not materialize. I completed the application for the post of assistant sub-inspector, but I was asked to show my Nepali citizenship, which was not possible for me to furnish.”

In comparison to Bhutanese adults 18 and over at the time of coming to Nepal, Bhutanese refugees’ children raised or born in Nepal and India had greater opportunities for formal education and training. As shown in Table 3.0 in Chapter 3, out of 51 adult respondents (18 years or older) of this study, 42 possessed basic literacy or no formal literacy at all. Similarly, nine respondents had completed Grade 10, five Grade 12, and two had a college diploma or a bachelor’s degree. Individuals with Grade 10 or over had moderate fluency in English, which gave them an advantage in navigating resources and integrating into the labour market.

With the start of third country resettlement processes in 2007, the students were no longer serious about pursuing education in Nepal. According to school principal Amalraj, the students were very excited about their resettlement:
Resettlement is also distracting the students. Instead of paying attention to studies, they’re antsy about heading to their new homes. Some parents pull their children out of school as soon as they sign up for resettlement, even though the delay before moving to the US can be 2 years. (Amalraj, as cited in Davlin, 2011)

Girls in the refugee camps fail to continue their school and college education due to the tradition of early marriages. The traditional Nepali cultural system expects girls to get married in their teens, and then start a family and run the house. As a result, girls in refugee camps drop out of school before completing their education. Aasha, now a mother of two children, discontinued her school when she was in Grade 6:

I had just started school before we were forced to leave the country. In Nepal, I continued my education in the camp school until Grade 6, but I got married and it was not possible for me to continue school. I stayed home and became a mother, and raised my two children. (Aasha, 2014)

A small number of the refugee youth with the privilege of pursuing higher education also accessed education in private and urban schools in Nepal or India. They were mostly the children of refugees who had earned a respectable living in Nepal through employment, businesses, and social connections despite being refugees. Arvind was studying in India even before his family fled from Bhutan. His parents worked for the government in Bhutan and later worked in India and Nepal. He continued his school and college education in India. Similarly, Ayush comes from a family with political connections. He received support from his mother and brothers to further his education:

I completed Class 10 in Nepal, and later I went to Kallingpong, India, for Grade 11 and 12. I completed my Bachelor of Computer Application at Pune University in Maharashtra, India. It is a 3-year university degree. Until Grade 12 in India, I did not work; I was solely dependent on my family. They would send money to cover my expenses. While I was doing my bachelor’s degree, I received some help from the family, but I also worked a little bit. (Ayush, 2012)

Only a small group of refugee families who had relatively better material assets or strong political and social capital with elites in Nepal and India had opportunities for career
development. The majority of refugees struggled for survival; consequently, the production of human capital heavily depended on the availability of local camp or community resources. Adult literacy and short-term vocational education was provided in the camps to empower refugees with no formal education. The UNHCR, Nepal Red Cross Society, Caritas Nepal, Lutheran World Federation, Bhutanese Refugees Aiding the Victims of Violence, and the Bhutanese Refugee Women Forum are some of the major agencies who run informal education and short-term skill-based trainings:

WFP and UNHCR manage a loan scheme project supporting women interested in small businesses like grocery, cosmetic and furniture shops, dairy, etc. Similarly, since 1998, a vocational training project, with technical assistance from Caritas, has been operational and provides skill training to school dropouts, both from the refugee community and the host communities adjacent to the camps (50% respectively). Medically-oriented vocational training activities are supported by WFP and implemented by AMDA. WFP also has been supporting a home gardening project. The project focuses on empowering refugees to manage the home and pot-gardening program on their own. This was achieved through a series of trainings and workshops on seed preservation and self-sustainable management. The home gardening programme was handed over to the refugee community in July 2004. (UNHCR and WFP, 2006, p. 21)

Tailoring, knitting, producing garments, handicrafts, and chalks, training on welding, driving, typing, and computers are some of the vocational programs offered in the camps on a short-term basis. Through these projects, some 200 refugees benefited annually (Bhutanese News Services, n.d., para. 18). Similarly, many Bhutanese refugees who never received any formal literacy training in Bhutan got an opportunity to learn to read and write in Nepali. Renuka (2013), who is now in her fifties, learned to read and write in Nepali in the camps. The recipients of vocational training were able to engage in small trades and run stalls in the camps. Indu (2014) learned sewing at the Beldangi-I refugee camp. After her training, she set up a tailoring stall in her hut for 10 years until she left for Canada in 2009.
New skill development was also dependent on access and engagement opportunities in informal work settings. Many learned new work skills on the job with their colleagues or relatives in the community. The majority of Bhutanese refugees with an agricultural background had to re-skill themselves in order to find work in construction, carpentry, and weaving. New skills allowed them to earn higher wages and become strong candidates in the competitive local labour markets of Jhapa and Morang. Ashok did not have any noticeable special skills other than those required to work as a general labourer. He wanted to have a better-paying job to meet his family’s needs, but lacked the skills required in the construction industry. With the help of a senior mentor, he started at ground level as a construction labourer, and quickly learned skills to become a mistri (cement and brick mason):

I needed to find work [that would pay higher], but I only had some experience of helping a brick mason. I began from there—slowly, I started learning brick work to construct a wall. I gained some experience and confidence so that now I can survive. The wages were 15 rupees a day for a labourer in the building construction. Later, the wages increased to 20. You work hard all day and make just 20! Slowly, I learned from a senior cement and brick mason to construct houses. He taught me how to build a wall and how to prepare the cement paste. I became as good as him. In 4 months, I worked as fast as him—he and I took equal time to add 100 bricks onto the wall. After I finished learning both how to construct the wall and how to mix the water, cement, and sand, he said, “Now you are a good mistri; you worked with me for about a year and made not even a single mistake. You passed it and you are as good as I am.” Thereafter, I started working as a mistri. (Ashok, 2013)

Similarly, Som Nath made a good living through carpentry, which he learned on the job by observing his co-workers’ carpentry work:

In the beginning years, I carried bricks and cement at construction sites for about six months. I always wanted to become a carpenter, and, luckily, I met a friend in construction work who worked in a furniture company as well. He found a furniture painting job for me, which I did for four to five years. However, the paint damaged the skin of my hand. I had skin itch and skin was peeling off. Then I started to work as a carpenter; I learned it from observing how other people at work did it. I got some ideas from my co-workers and started making chairs, tables, and beds. I was a carpenter for fifteen to sixteen years, until I left for Canada. (Somnath, 2014)
Despite the lack of formal education, employment skills, and familiarity with the Nepali society and labour market, the Bhutanese refugees found jobs and travelled without difficulty almost anywhere in Nepal. They had the advantage of shared linguistic capital, the Nepali language, which connected the people of the two nations and facilitated the refugees’ settlement and labour market integration in exile. Amrita had no formal education, nor did she have any specific construction work experience, but she always found work to support her family—“There [in Nepal] we spoke the Nepali language so we would find work easily.” Mostly, refugees found jobs through their social connections, including friends, neighbours, and relatives. Narendra found work though relatives of his wife. His wife approached her relatives to give him an opportunity to embark in construction work:

I was naïve about construction work ... my wife introduced me to her distant uncle, who was a mistri (mason). She told him, “Uncle, please find some work for my husband too, as we’re having a rough time finding good work.” He then called me to come to work with him and taught me mistri kaam (masonry). He patiently taught me how to build a house. After some time, I went to Sikkim and constructed two houses. Later, I returned to Pattheri [a village in Jhapa, Nepal, where a refugee camp is located] and made two or three houses. I then became a sub-contractor for house building until coming to Canada. (Narendra, 2013)

However, despite the comfort of living in an ancestral and linguistically similar country, some Bhutanese experienced stigmatization, discrimination, and harassment in Nepal (UNHCR & WFP, 2014, p. 18). Narendra’s uncle was stigmatized when he went to the village to find work:

My uncle-in-law told me, “Son-in-law, it’s not going to work here; local people are very insensitive, as they verbally hurt us. It’s hard to survive here. Let’s go to western Nepal so that people won’t even recognize that we are refugees and where there is plenty of work too.” (Narendra, 2013)

The formation of human capital through formal training was limited in Nepal. The camp schools provided children and youth with education up to Grade 10, and short-term vocational and life-skill training was available for adults. In the informal sectors, the Bhutanese refugees continued
to grow in agricultural and construction sectors, which provided them with some new skills. However, the Bhutanese refugees lacked economic assets and their social capital was primarily limited to their own group of refugees and nearby villages. They capitalized on linguistic capital and shared cultural heritage, and utilized previous agrarian skills and capabilities.

4.5 Capital stock of the Bhutanese refugees in Canada

Bhutanese GARs landed in BC with their embodied cultural capital based on the local economies of Nepal and Bhutan. They migrated with some forms of human capital that they accumulated in the exile and source countries. They also came with strong ethnic social capital, which proved to be stronger than other forms of capital.

4.5.1 Ethnic social capital

The Bhutanese refugees arrived in Canada with strong social relationship, ethnic ties, and cultural capital stock earned in Bhutan and Nepal. While they lived with their extended and close-knit families at the camps in Nepal, they actively sought to live close to one another in the resettled countries as well. Therefore, they resettled in Canada with their families who had been living in the camps. Each hut in the camps contained extended family members of a given household, usually grandparents, parents, and children. The refugee huts are built of mud, bamboo, and grass roofs. Floor size is roughly 2.5 x 6.0 metres on average, and large families usually live in double-sized huts (UNHCR and WFP, 2003). Apart from extended and close-knit families, Bhutanese families had shared experiences with one another from being refugees and living together in exile, which played a strong role in bonding them together. After Bhutanese families fled from Bhutan en masse, they travelled several days in exodus and lived together in the camps in Nepal for 20 years on average, and opted to be resettled together in a third country under the UNHCR-facilitated resettlement program.
Social capital among the Bhutanese refugees was noticeable from day 1 of their arrival in BC. The Bhutanese refugees’ settlement in BC started with the first family that came to Vancouver in March 2009, which was comprised of an elderly mother, her daughter and son. In the next 2 years, two of her other sons along with their families, as well as three of her other daughters and their families, followed, and all of them lived in the same apartment complex in the Gatensbury neighbourhood in Coquitlam. The Bhutanese GARs that had arrived earlier helped the new Bhutanese GARs settle in. Their shared lived experience bonded them together quickly. The younger generation, who spoke English, helped their families and friends to access various resources, both locally and regionally. In 2013, several extended family members sent one family member to Lethbridge to explore employment opportunities. Upon their return after 2 weeks, all extended families left for Lethbridge. What is clear from this movement is that the Bhutanese refugees are closely attached to their extended families and to their Bhutanese community. In the course of their settlement in a new country, the Bhutanese immigrants preferred to live in the same location whenever possible. When it was not possible, they preferred to live at least in the same city or town.

The Bhutanese refugees mobilized their primary asset, their ethnic social capital, throughout the period of their social and labour market integration in Canada. Family members with education and knowledge of local resources helped new members to become familiarized with the local resources. For instance, the already employed Bhutanese refugees connected their new community members to their workplaces. Looking for jobs with limited English and limited knowledge of the labour market in Canada was a big challenge for many of the Bhutanese refugees, but the community members voluntarily connected new members to their current workplaces. Shanka found a job right after he landed in Vancouver through the reference of
Ayush, a member of the Bhutanese community in BC. After working for a few months, Shanka connected his father with his workplace. Before quitting the job to relocate to Alberta, Shanka helped his father to learn the tasks and how to communicate with his co-workers. Through his connection with the recruiter, Shanka helped three of his neighbours to secure jobs. Bhadra (2015) said, “I asked the recruiting lady if she wanted additional workers, as my neighbours would like to come and work. Because she likes my work, she said, ‘If they work like you, bring them to office.’ I introduced them to the recruiter and now they work for the same company.”

Family remained a primary core of Bhutanese social capital, which provided social and emotional support in different settlement contexts. The dense family network remained an important resource for the Bhutanese refugees in order to retain employment and confront the challenges of joblessness. Bhadra, a general worker, was required to be flexible with his time to fit into the work schedule of the employing companies. When he got hired through a recruiter, he did not have a fixed work schedule and location. He generally received his schedule and information about the work location on a daily basis over the phone at the beginning, on a weekly basis for a few months, and then every three to six months later on. When he started work, he was living with a new-born child, a 10-year-old son with a mild developmental disability, and his spouse, who had some chronic health issues. His wife and his in-laws assumed the entire responsibility for the family, which included taking the 10-year-old to and from school, taking the children to medical appointments, paying the bills, shopping, and running the household errands. Between November 2013 and February 2015, his wife went into emergency care at the Royal Columbian Hospital seven times and to BC Children’s Hospital twice for her daughter’s eczema and pneumonia. During the 4 days their daughter was
hospitalized, Bhadra was unable to come and see her. His wife and sister-in-law made
themselves available to attend and take care of the 10-year-old not in hospital:

My work schedule is not fixed. Sometimes, I have to start work in the morning at 9:00
a.m., sometimes at noon, and currently I start at 4:00 p.m., get off work at 12:00 a.m., and
reach home around 1:00 a.m. My wife does all the household work and also supports me
by doing my laundry and packing my meals. (Bhadra, 2015)

Extended family capital proved to be a big resource for many Bhutanese refugees in BC
in order to cope with financial crises and family emergencies. Naresh and his family shared their
two-bedroom apartment for 2 years until they moved to Alberta. They shared the apartment and
kitchen, where meals were prepared and served together. Naresh benefitted tremendously by
living together with his brother’s family while he and his wife were unemployed,
underemployed, or sick. “It was a big support as unanticipated things happened. Because of my
brother and his family, we did not have to worry about being evicted from the apartment,
preparing meals, or looking after our son when we were sick” (Naresh, 2013). Similarly, Asha’s
family shared their kitchen with her father-in-law’s family in order to live under budget. They
prepared meals together to save on some of the grocery costs. In addition, when both Asha and
her partner found jobs, her father-in-law looked after the children until one parent returned.
Reena, a single mother, could not start work until she started living with her parents. After her
parents moved to Vancouver, they lived together. Reena accepted two part-time jobs after she
could leave her son under her mother’s supervision:

My son, who is 11 years old, does not need anyone to look after him when I’m away, but
Canadian law does not allow parents to leave their children unattended. I could not work
until my parents and I lived together. Because of them, I could work in Vancouver and
North Vancouver. (Reena, 2014)

The sacrifices that Bhutanese refugee women make to support their partners allows their partners
to maintain their employment, but sometimes these sacrifices are also setbacks for the women’s
own careers and freedom. Reena immigrated to Canada in 2009 with her partner and their extended families, but she could not enter the labour market due to family responsibilities and a lack of support. Her husband did not allow her to go out and accept paid jobs:

I wanted to work as well, but my husband always delayed my plan to work. I asked him several times to find work for me, but he always postponed it. Everyone in my family worked except me. I could work and make money as they do, but my husband was never supportive of me working. Once I found a job on my own and he said, “Why do you need to work while I’m working and making enough money?” I realized at that point that I’m not permitted to work outside the home. Only after I separated from him did I move to Vancouver from Coquitlam and start working. (Reena, 2014)

Most Bhutanese refugee women used to work in Nepal, both at home and outside, for wages. However, some family members have strong patriarchal views which limit women to the traditional role of homemaker. Mira, a mother of two children, is a homemaker. She is overwhelmed with her own medical needs while supporting her husband and two children. Her personal needs are secondary to her family’s needs, as was evident in February 2015, when she accidently cut her wrist in the kitchen and underwent surgery to repair her tendon injury. Two days after the surgery, she had to perform all the household work with her single working hand while she still experienced pain in the other hand. She received some help from her mother and sister, who lived nearby, but not from her spouse, as usual. Her spouse thinks he does enough work to earn money for the family and, therefore, he should not be working at home:

I have no choice. Even with a single hand I have to cook, clean, and prepare my son for school. My husband hardly does any work at home. He comes home at midnight and sometimes at 1:00 a.m. and sleeps until 10:00–11:00 a.m. He goes to work at 3:00 p.m., but before that he is either busy chatting with his neighbours or just resting at home. He would rather go and play cards with the neighbours when he is free than help me or give time to the children. If I ask him to do something, he will either find a reason to avoid it or not do it properly. He says, “I’m tired because I work so hard every day. You are sitting at home and you can’t even cook and take care of the children.” He thinks his job is over when he comes home from work. The other day he asked me why I always have so many medical appointments when I look healthy. He does not have any awareness of my health situation. I just had one surgery a few days back, took both my children to the
emergency room at Royal Columbian Hospital, and now I’m waiting for another surgery to have my tonsils removed to put an end to a recurring throat infection. (Mira, 2015)

4.5.2 Emotional capital in settlement

In addition to offering household support, family members provided emotional support to each other, especially those looking for or struggling to retain employment. Bhutanese refugee women provided emotional support to their partners and lifted their morale and confidence while they were depressed about the unemployment situation. When she found him frustrated with the labour market situation, Manisha encouraged her husband to look for a job while she also supported him:

I used to say to him, “We can’t afford to be idle, but must be productive. We’ve already wasted our life [in the refugee camp], but if we do something to find a job or even work a few hours, that can help improve our lives.” But later he got a little frustrated with not finding a job. I helped him by saying, “Don’t be discouraged, we have to be positive, we’ll get it. Slowly we will learn about finding jobs; we will have a better understanding [of Canada]. We will look for a job again. We should not get discouraged so soon.” This is what I tell him. (Manisha, 2013)

Both Sita and her husband became seriously ill; she was diagnosed with a kidney infection and diabetes, while her husband developed some nerve-related complication. Due to his health condition he was unable to go to work, and after a few days he was dismissed from the job. He was worried and depressed. Sita recalls the way her husband expressed his frustration, “Even during the period of illness one could be fired! It is not like in a home country. In Nepal, it would have been possible to convince [the boss]” (Sita, 2013). In the evenings, Sita’s husband would say, “We should not have come here; it was not worthwhile. Both of us developed health problems after coming here [Canada]. I never ever imagined in my wildest dreams that this would happen to us” (Sita, 2013). But Sita counselled him:

“Don’t think about it too much; it is hard on you. We have children and it is not good to be depressed in front of them. It will psychologically affect them. At least we’ve some
higher education to become hopeful.” He would feel good after I talk to him, but he would still look anxious. (2013)

The social and emotional capital stock among resettled Bhutanese refugees in BC eased their settlement processes. In addition, the ethnic community and household members mobilized their social and emotional capital to facilitate their settlement processes.

To summarize, Bhutanese refugees’ capital assets, in terms of skills and labour market participation, was predominately based on a rural and agrarian economy and which found its relevancy in Nepal, which had a similar labour market and economy to Bhutan. The linguistic capital and shared cultural heritage facilitated their labour market participation in Nepal. The refugees worked in khetipati (agriculture) and jayala majduri (waged labour) in construction in the nearby bastis (communities). Their human capital accumulation was limited to some cottage industry and vocational training offered in refugee camps and schools, which mostly offered education until Grade 10. However, the Bhutanese refugees seem to have dense ethnic social capital in Bhutan, Nepal, and Canada. The solidarity for human rights in Bhutan and the formation of strong communities in all the refugee camps in Nepal are evidences of their ties, bonds, and strong social capital formation. The same is reflected in Nepal and Canada in their settlement choices, patterns, and in their employment searches, advocacy, and retention.
Chapter 5: Labour Market Strategies, Life, and Workplace Challenges

The previous chapter examined the different capital stock of the Bhutanese refugees in British Columbia and Alberta and the source countries of Bhutan and Nepal. This chapter highlights the Bhutanese refugees’ capital mobilization in the labour market, including life and workplace challenges after they arrived in Canada. The first section highlights the strategies and processes used by the refugees for cultural and human capital accumulation, including employment and settlement, English language programs and life skill training, vocational school, and continuing education, all of which are offered through government and local organizations. In addition, the first section looks at the patterns of the refugees’ utilization of capital (skills) in navigating the labour market, from searching to retention and mobility in jobs. The second section discusses their experiences in a “precarious” labour market—the difficulties of living on minimum wage jobs, the challenges of casual and part-time work, involvement in dangerous jobs, and exploitation in the labour market. It further discusses the dilemma of living on low wages and on income assistance from the Ministry of Social Development and Social Innovation (MSDSI). The qualitative data highlighted in this chapter draws on my fieldwork, mainly from participant observations and interactions with the Bhutanese refugees, key informants involved with the refugees, and other refugee resettlement sectors in Greater Vancouver and Lethbridge.

5.1 Access to formal institutions: opening doors to multiple forms of capital

The Bhutanese refugees’ access to formal institutions was key to their accumulation of social, cultural, human, and linguistic capital. Settlement organizations, which operate as a first point of contact for GARs, connected the Bhutanese refugees with larger community resources and facilitated their accumulation of new cultural capital in Canada in the form of life skills and an understanding of the unspoken and unwritten rules of Canadian culture. These formal
institutions also contributed to the refugees’ access to linguistic capital and human capital accumulation, as well as provided a bridge with resources outside of their ethnic social capital.

The institutional trust that the Bhutanese refugees quickly bestowed on settlement agencies facilitated their learning and adjustment to a new language, culture, and society. They actively accessed settlement services, English language training, and skill development programs. They accessed services from the Immigrant Services Society of British Columbia (ISS of BC), SUCCESS, Share Family and Community Service, Coquitlam Continuing Education, Fraser Health, Vancouver Coastal Health, School District 43, Vancouver Community College, and MSDSI. As one of the settlement workers, Angelina, said, “Various organizations contributed their resources to educating the Bhutanese about life skills. In the first few years, [the] Bhutanese welcomed any life skills help that was available.”

ISS of BC, which is responsible for the resettlement of all GARs to BC under the Resettlement and Assistance Program (RAP) of IRCC, facilitated most of the Bhutanese refugees’ access to community resources and government services. The Bhutanese refugees have maintained close connections with this service agency in order to access various programs since their first arrival as GARs in Vancouver in 2009. Upon first arriving, they lived in the “Welcome House” as new GARs and attended a 2-week-long orientation on social, cultural, political, and legal systems and resources of Canada. In addition, they were referred to numerous social, health, educational, and legal services in local communities, which played a vital role in enhancing their settlement and entry into the labour market. Bhutanese youths were referred to youth programs, where they received opportunities to learn about youth resources, English language and computer training, and career exploration, including volunteer work.

Forty Bhutanese adults who landed in BC between 2009 and 2013 also accessed a community development project, “Finding our Voices,” from 2011 to March of 2013; the project conducted skill inventories with Bhutanese adults to help them identify their assets and capacities, and to develop realistic education and/or career plans. These adults actively accessed individual and group settlement programs, which included topics on navigating local resources as well as the Canadian social services system. Career exploration and skills training programs were also accessed. These Bhutanese refugees started their new lives in BC with minimal cash and other personal resources. As members of a different social, cultural, and economic system, they were required to learn a new set of rules and regulations and new language, life, and employment skills. They experienced various challenges but were also able to minimize and mitigate those challenges by utilizing the available settlement and local resources. This is evident in the experience of Devendra (2013), who immigrated to BC in 2010:

Hami sabai kura sunya bata suru gardai chau, kashgari sunya bata pani hoina, minus po bannu parla baru (We are starting everything from scratch—actually—from pre-scratch). Nothing about our culture, our language, our skills, our life experience, our knowledge of the soil is relevant here. We are like a child who has to learn from the beginning. But we are adults and do not have the capacity to absorb like a child and grow. That is why we have to go to the settlement office and English classes to learn the alphabet. We get letters in English and do not understand anything. Where do we go? We go to see our settlement worker. When I was new here, I took all the papers from my mailbox to my settlement worker. Later, I came to know that only one of them was an important letter, I mean a letter from the bank; everything else was just junk. It was embarrassing! I made my first resume with the help of a community worker. I had no idea that I needed a resume to work in Canada. Also, when you do not know anything, as a lato sidho (a naive person), you can be manipulated by anyone. Once, several of our community members, including me, received phone calls saying that we can visit Toronto for $100, and it covered 1 week of hotel accommodation, food, and a plane ticket. That person asked for our credit card numbers and our addresses. He knew all our names and spoke good Nepali and sounded friendly. We trusted him, but, afterwards, we found out that he
was a scammer. Our worker told us to report it to the police and Vancity [Credit Union]. Our host families helped us too. The money was returned later. (Devendra, 2013)

The Bhutanese refugees accessed English language training through SUCCESS, ISS of BC, VCC, Coquitlam Continuing Education, public libraries, and school districts. Majority of the Bhutanese refugees used English Language Services for Adults (ELSA), a government-funded program that provided basic- and intermediate-level English training for adult newcomers to Canada, and Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada (LINC) classes at the North Road location of SUCCESS. From 2009 to 2013, an overwhelming number of Bhutanese refugees enrolled in English language programs. According to Angelina (2015), the Bhutanese refugees clearly realized the need for English language skills in order to participate in the community and enter the labour market, and they prioritized English language training accordingly.

The realization of the importance of new linguistic capital occurred to all groups of Bhutanese refugees, including the elderly and women, who were homemakers and had already retired. The Bhutanese refugees started English classes at different levels depending on their literacy and their English language assessment results from ESL testing centres. Individuals with no literacy obviously scored low and therefore started at pre-literacy or literacy levels, whereas those with some background in English started at higher levels. Reena, who was in her late thirties, made very quick progress in learning English. She started at Level 1, but with the advantage of her former primary school education and her young age, she completed Level 4 of LINC within two years. On the other hand, Deepak started ELSA literacy training in his early fifties in August 2011 at the North Road location of SUCCESS. He made slow progress. In 2 years, he completed literacy Level 0 and progressed to Level 1:
I never went to school in Bhutan or Nepal; therefore, I didn’t know how to read and write. Two years ago, I started learning English at Level 0 and now I’m at Level 1. I’ve been coming to school every day. The only day I miss is when I have a medical appointment. It’s extremely difficult for me to learn a new language at this age. (Deepak, 2013)

Bhutanese adults invested their time in the accumulation of linguistic capital. They generally dedicated their time to learning English, completing their assignments at home and taking time out of their household chores. I will share my observation of and interaction with Kushum to highlight her dedication to learning English:

It was the morning of August 21, 2013. I had a meeting with Kushum and her family. The buzzer did not seem to work. Unfortunately, I did not have my cell phone. I walked towards her patio’s sliding glass door, which was accessible from her back garden. As the curtains were open, I could see Kushum concentrating on her notebook. I knocked on the small patio fence twice, but she did not notice it. On my third attempt she noticed me and let me in. She went back to continue her studies and I felt she might not have time to interact with me today. “Looks like you are busy with your studies,” I said while she was pondering her notebook. “Is it for school?” I asked again. “Ho nee (Yes, it is),” she replied without even looking at me, and was back to her work again. There was silence, until she asked, “Yo sabda maile bujhina? (I did not quite understand this word.)” I felt quite relieved, as I was feeling uncomfortable being there.

“Which word?”
She said, “I will tell you,” and then was silent yet again. It took a lot of courage for me to ask her, “Ke bho? (What’s the problem?)”

I noticed her having difficulty pronouncing the word. I went closer to her and she pointed to the word “serious.” I helped her pronounce it and then she asked me dozens more. “I think I will go insane learning English,” she added while she was preparing for the test later in the afternoon. She had a late afternoon English class while she worked at home in the morning and afternoon.

One English language teacher praised the dedication of her Bhutanese students to learning English:

Well, when they come to class, as I said before, they are very attentive. It is not like they are coming here to waste their time. They really like to learn. They want to and they try so hard. They have children, they have many challenges, but [they try] as much as they can. I know if they can, they won’t miss one class. There are some students, you can tell they like to find an opportunity not to come to the classroom. This is not the case for Bhutanese students. They really want to be here. (Nina, 2015)
However, the lack of consistency in language training policies impacted the Bhutanese refugees’ access to ELSA. Despite their strong desire to learn the English language, Bhutanese adults faced a particular problem prior to the introduction of the LINC program in 2014: they were taking a long time to complete ELSA levels and were facing risks of dropping out of the program in BC. This was because the ELSA program was largely time-based, and the Bhutanese refugees were taking a longer time than the allocated hours to complete each level. Under ELSA, the allocation of hours for “Literacy was 1100 hours, Level 1—900 hours, Level 2—700 hours, and Level 3—350 hours. In certain circumstances, an extension of 200 hours may be granted to enhance competency levels” (Tavis & Simces, 2004, p. 32). Asha was worried when she learned from her teacher that she had used up all her ELSA hours. She was concerned about not being able to meet the English requirement for Canadian citizenship. “The allocated hours for ELSA are not enough. I’ve used all my hours and now I’ve no school, which means that I will not have enough English to apply for citizenship. ELSA Level 4 is required for Canadian citizenship” (Asha, 2014).

The Bhutanese refugees felt that the system imposed English language learning on them even in circumstances when it was not easily available for them to learn. For some refugees, not being able to continue ELSA meant a possibility of losing income assistance from the MSDSI. Prior to the introduction of the LINC program in 2014 in BC, those refugees who required longer than the allocated hours to learn English for their level experienced a high drop-out rate from the program. They had the option of starting English classes in a continuing education school or in community colleges, but that required longer commutes, transportation fares, and/or some fees. In this situation, the families receiving income assistance from the MSDSI felt pressure to find a
language program in order to comply with the requirements of the Employment and Assistance Act:

Clients with employment-related obligations who do not agree to enter into an EP or who do not comply with its conditions are not eligible for assistance. Where one member of a family unit is non-compliant with the conditions of their EP, the entire family unit is ineligible. If a client fails to sign an amended EP, they are ineligible for assistance. (MSDSI, 2012, p. 4) [Bolded for emphasis]

As part of the employment plan signed with the MSDSI, the Bhutanese refugees were expected to pursue learning the English language to be ready for the labour market. Only single parents with children under the age of 3, or persons with a disability or persistent multiple barriers, are exempt from compliance (MSDSI, 2013).

A higher level of linguistic capital facilitated the accumulation of additional human capital. The Bhutanese refugees with higher English language abilities pursued vocational training. In 2014, Reena’s friend, Samjana, was the only youth to complete Health Care Assistant (HCA) training, also known as Residential Care Attendant (RCA) training in BC. Her high school credentials from Nepal and English language upgrading in Canada helped her to meet the prerequisites for HCA training in BC. Reena also wanted to pursue HCA training, but she was not qualified to apply for the program due to her low level of English language proficiency. HCA training requires the completion of Grade 10 English from Canada or equivalent English language training or Standardized English language test results. Reena noted:

I am interested in care aide training, but I found that it requires LINC Level 8, which I don’t have. I’ve just completed Level 4, which means I have to wait another two to three years to complete LINC Level 8. It is a very long time. Maybe I can never make it. (2014)

Individuals with lower English language abilities pursued alternative short-term training to prepare for the job market. Reena and several of her neighbours completed WHMIS cleaning and support services courses, as well as forklift training. “I knew a Nepali guy who owned a
cleaning company. I worked in his company for a while. He recommended that I take the workplace hazardous materials information system (WHIMS) training. I paid $200 to take the training” (Reena, 2013). Similarly, adults with some high school education or a college diploma from Nepal find it challenging to access vocational courses due to the higher level of English language requirements and non-recognition of their high school credentials from Nepal.

Mostly youth with prior human capital in the form of formal schooling and English upgrading were able to qualify for vocational training, but they lacked the economic means to do so and were discouraged after hearing about an unemployment situation of another youth, who had completed RCA but was unable to find a job. Deepika spent 3 years in BC upgrading her English language proficiency, as she wanted to enter the health care profession. In the end, she abandoned that dream for financial reasons. As she shared:

I heard from both ISS and SUCCESS about the Care Aide program, and I was determined to pursue it. A few weeks ago, our family doctor’s wife had come to our home with another Nepali woman, who actually told me to contact her if I decide to register for the program. But I did not! I found out that it costs about $10,000 to complete the course, which I can’t afford. We [her family members] don’t have jobs. When you don’t have a job, how can you have money to pay for the course? I might not get a loan either. I’m also afraid of borrowing money or loans. (Deepika, 2015)

In the fall of 2013, Deepika moved to Lethbridge with her family members; in 2014, she became chronically depressed, requiring hospitalization and long-term treatment. Sashidhar, on the other hand, returned to BC from Alberta after failing to cope with the extreme winter weather. In order to reskill himself, he enrolled in Vancouver Community College for a building service worker course, but dropped out before the classes started due to a lack of funds:

I did not see any chance of getting a scholarship for the course, and there was no way I could afford $1,500 for an 8-week course. I understand it is a good course for a person like me wanting to enter the building service industry, but I cannot invest my savings when I have to pay my bills and have no job. (Sashidhar, 2015)
The Bhutanese youths who graduated from a high school in Canada generally pursued higher education in college and university. Three of the youths, who completed high school from local schools and continuing education programs, started college education (December, 2014). One of the youths, who came to BC in 2009, was enrolled in a college in Edmonton, and another youth, who arrived in 2010, was enrolled in a college in Calgary. But these Bhutanese youths have experienced difficulties entering higher education. Financial challenges are a major hurdle for Bhutanese refugees seeking college education or long-term vocational training. For example, Bhanubhakta completed high school in the spring of 2015 but had to delay his college education due to financial constraints. “I have no financial backup nor can I work and support myself for the education I would like to pursue in university. I do not want to borrow money with a student loan because what if I do not get a job after graduation?” (Bhanubhakta, 2018). Instead, he tried to get admission into the UA Piping Industry College of BC under the immigrants’ trade program. Bhanubhakta’s friend, Govind, graduated from high school in the spring of 2014, but he did not qualify for the trade program at BCIT in BC because of his low grades in English. He arrived in Canada in 2009 as a teen and graduated from Port Moody Secondary School. He was the first in his family to receive a high school diploma.

The Bhutanese refugees accessed settlement and employment programs, joined English language classes, and youths participated in youth programs, educational attainment, and volunteering opportunities. They often got frustrated when they found themselves struggling in the labour market despite their active participation in learning and skill upgrading programs.
5.2 Job searching: the mobilization of institutional and bonding capital

Bhutanese refugees have utilized formal institutional and ethnic social capital to find jobs in BC and Alberta. As stated in the preceding section, Bhutanese accumulated formal institutional capital through settlement and employment organizations and schools available in their local communities. More importantly, the Bhutanese refugees mobilized their ethnic social capital, primarily by utilizing their own dense network of family and ethnic community connections and resources. Bhutanese tried to bridge their network with non-Bhutanese ethnic and religious groups, with which they encountered challenges. Bhutanese youths of the first and second cohort of arrivals found their first Canadian jobs through their relationships with formal institutions, which helped them bridge their social network with employers and build much needed cultural capital for labour market navigation and job retention. In the Youth Connexion Program, Bhutanese youths attended 18 weeks of group training for ESL upgrading and career exploration, including volunteer and work experience placement. Under these placements, they built their network with employers—the Salvation Army and other clothing stores in Greater Vancouver. Roma is one of the Bhutanese youths who utilized Youth Connexion to find a job. She joined a youth program a few weeks after landing in Vancouver in 2011:

First, I joined the youth programme run by Purpose [the Lower Mainland Purpose Society for Youth and Families], where two of my Bhutanese friends had been going. Later, I met a female friend who was going to the Youth Connexion Program in New Westminster. I switched to the Youth Connexion, where I was lucky to find an opportunity to see various places in the Lower Mainland, practice English, and get some orientation about Canadian life and culture. I completed my Serving It Right certification, World Host certification, First Aid certification, and Food Safety certification. These courses were very new to me. I also learned about finding jobs in Canada [Foodsafe]. My youth worker also helped me find a volunteer position as a store helper at Urban Planet, Burnaby, BC, for 15 days. Later, I was asked if I wanted to work, which I gladly accepted. It was a part-time job, but I was happy because it was my first job. (Roma, 2014)
Roma leveraged her newly earned human capital (various certifications) and embodied cultural capital in the form of labour market knowledge and enhanced linguistic capital in order to successfully transition from a volunteer position to paid work. Similarly, Ayush also utilized his embodied capital—formal job searching methods and linguistic capital that he polished at the Job Options Program in 2011. His former human capital and embodied cultural capital (college education and urban labour market experience in an Indian metropolitan area) augmented his job searching skills at the Job Option Program:

I attended the Job Option Program for about three months. I learned a lot of things—how to look for jobs in Canada and what strategies to use, how to face job interviews. After coming to Canada, I did not work for a few months. Since I was new and exploring Canada, I did not think much about work; I thought I should discover Canada a little bit more. Then I started looking for jobs. I saw an advertisement on the metro [SkyTrain] and then called them [the company]. I was invited [to their office] and was asked to fill out a few forms. Once I handed it over to them, they asked me to provide them with my resume and PR [Permanent Residency] card. They photocopied the required documents and also gave me some additional forms. I filled in the SIN [Social Insurance Number] number and other stuff. After filling up all required paperwork, they interviewed me and hired [me]. (Ayush, 2013)

Ayush continued to use his labour market knowledge to search for jobs, using formal job searching methods to get better paying and more stable jobs:

I started looking for other jobs, applied online for several positions, completed online applications, sent resumes, developed a network. I became a little bit more active. I also realized that there are jobs, but it depends on us and how actively we are looking for jobs. I used job search engines, Craigslist, the job bank, and Job Canada. Likewise, I opened accounts with prospective companies to submit web applications, from Sears to Shoppers Drug Mart. (Ayush, 2013)

When the Bhutanese refugees were forced to bridge with a formal institution, it was not always productive. Adult Bhutanese refugees receiving income assistance from the MSDSI accessed services from AVIA, a subcontractor of WorkBC, to search for jobs and to prepare for future employability. It was mandatory for the Bhutanese refugees receiving income assistance from the ministry to access AVIA services, even though they did not find it very useful due to
their low English language skills. Bhadra was referred to AVIA in Coquitlam and he went there for two initial appointments, but never returned again:

I don’t understand English, and even with the use of an interpreter I did not find it helpful. I needed a job immediately because I cannot tolerate the hassle of welfare. AVIA did not help me find a job now. They wanted to teach me how to look for a job. I do not think I can do it on my own. I am not sure how this will work out for me. (Bhadra, 2013)

Bhadra avoided the formal processes of job searching and interviews because he was not confident about his ability in the English language to have a meaningful interaction. However, in November 2013, he utilized a semi-formal method to find a job. He had found a phone number of a recruiting company in Burnaby, where he and his son visited in early 2013. He was in the office only once for the paperwork, and was referred to work at a different location, where he worked for a month. Therefore, he could not locate the recruiter’s office in 2013. However, he provided the contact information to his settlement worker to have him inquire about possible job opportunities. The settlement worker organized a same-day appointment with the recruiter to complete the rehiring process. Bhadra continued working in the same position after getting hired. “It would not have been possible to get a job without the help of my settlement worker. It would be extremely difficult for me to get there, talk to the recruiter, complete the application, understand the instruction, etc.” (Bhadra, 2014).

Access to formal employment institutions did not translate into jobs quickly for adult Bhutanese refugees, but it enriched their cultural capital by enhancing their knowledge of the labour market and formal job searching processes. Reena was referred by MSDSI to AVIA in February 2014 and started accessing the program (2014). While she participated in various job searches and job searching skills-building workshops, she had yet to find a job. She attended an onsite hiring interview at AVIA but was not successful. She also accessed the Moving Ahead
Program (MAP), through which she attended job searching workshops and sometimes received accompaniment to interviews or meetings with potential employers. Participating in AVIA, MAP, and accessing English language classes, Reena was able to search for jobs online and to apply with some assistance:

I have learned to find jobs online, usually on Craigslist, and apply through email. Recently, I’ve learned to attach my resume and send it to the employers, but I get stuck in writing cover letters. I have a template which I use, but I still need someone to review it to make sure it does not have any mistakes. (Reena, 2014)

Reena came to Canada in 2009 and continued her ELSA from Level 2, which enabled her to access local employment organizations and learn online job searching.

Bhutanese refugees with some linguistic capital—i.e., English language proficiency—used both formal and informal methods of job searching and interchangeably used formal institutions and social capital formed at those sites. They utilized computer skills to search for jobs online and to access services from settlement, educational, and employment agencies to find jobs. Prakash received help from his friends at Youth Connexion to find a job, but he also got support from his youth workers:

I had a Chinese friend in my ELSA class in Coquitlam. He helped me find the first job. Due to transportation issues I quit that job. I joined Youth Connexion for 3 months and met new friends, who helped me a lot. They took me to different places in their car hoping to find a job for me. I dropped off my resume and got interviewed but didn’t get hired. My youth and settlement workers helped me apply for jobs online. Sometimes, I was invited for interviews as well, but those didn’t translate into job offers. So, I went back to the ELSA program. (Prakash, 2013)

The Bhutanese refugees in Lethbridge, Alberta have also utilized the help of employment counsellors at Flexibility, a language and employment service agency. The demand for labour in Lethbridge and the goodwill and trust that Bhutanese workers had built up with local employers in a short time proved to be helpful in finding jobs. Majority of the Bhutanese refugees searched for jobs with the help of employment counsellors. For example, Mahesh went from Vancouver
to Lethbridge to search for a job. He met an employment counsellor at Flexibility and received help to prepare a resume and to apply for a job:

I went to a school there [in Lethbridge] that is similar to our SUCCESS [in BC] and they helped me with making a resume and applying for a job. After 5 days, I was called for an interview. My neighbour, who was working for the same employer, informed me that I was asked to start work in 2 days. (Mahesh, 2013)

5.2.1 Use of ethnic social capital

On the other hand, as discussed in previous sections, youths equipped with knowledge of Canadian recruiting processes submitted resumes directly for available job opportunities. Naresh dropped off his resume at Sunrise Poultry Farms, where a number of his friends had already been hired:

I knew many Nepali workers at Sunrise because my uncle worked there. Since I had my old resume from here [BC], I asked the hiring manager if I could submit it. He accepted my old resume and spoke with me in English. He did not formally interview me but handed me a document to take to the orientation session. (Naresh, 2013).

Bhutanese youth with limited linguistic capital and labour market knowledge in English built relationships with formal institutions, attended culturally tailored employment workshops, and met settlement and employment counsellors to make a resume, but they refrained from searching for jobs through formal methods of applying online and attending interviews except when they had a job developer or outreach worker to facilitate the process. Therefore, these Bhutanese youths preferred mobilizing their dense ethnic social capital and employing informal job searching methods, such as contacting potential employers and reaching out through referrals and recommendations. Sinja found her first job through her “cousin-sister” in December 2012, 6 months after she landed in Vancouver; her cousin worked at a Church’s Chicken. Interestingly, five Bhutanese refugees—three females and two males—worked in the same fast-food restaurant. They had all helped each other to find jobs in the same restaurant. Among the three
females, two were siblings and one a cousin; the males were brothers-in-law to each other. It was Sinja’s eldest cousin who found a job first through a Nepalese-Canadian:

I work in [a] Church’s Chicken’s kitchen. I found it through my brother-in-law, who once introduced me to the manager, who happens to be from Nepal too. He actually asked me if I would like to work. I was not quite sure because I had no experience, but I gave it a try and the manager liked my work. There are a lot of Bhutanese working here together. If one of us is a loyal and good worker, that trust will help other people find jobs. (Mahesh, 2014).

Similarly, a number of Bhutanese youth and young adults found jobs in various local stores of the Salvation Army (thrift shops), a pharmaceutical company, and a cleaning business in the Lower Mainland of Vancouver. They work in the North Vancouver, Vancouver, and Port-Coquitlam Salvation Army stores. Initially, Bhutanese youths found jobs through volunteer placements in their respective stores, but, later on, new workers found jobs through a personal connection with the previously employed workers. Roma was unemployed for 2 years after she had lost her first job. Finally, in 2013, she found a job through the connection to and recommendation of her Bhutanese neighbour in the Salvation Army’s thrift store:

I might have applied for more than 100 jobs through Craigslist and emails, but no one called me; I don’t know why. Then a friend of mine informed me that his store is hiring new workers. I submitted an application, and he helped me to set up an interview with the manager. I succeeded in the interview and I am currently working there. (Roma, 2014)

In addition to the Salvation Army, Bhutanese community members have found jobs in a pharmaceutical company in Coquitlam. Initially, one member from the Bhutanese community of Coquitlam found a job, and then gradually five members from the same community joined the company.
5.3 Reliance on networks and informal job searching

In comparison to youth and young adults from the community, Bhutanese adult men and women struggled more to enter into the labour market. The non-recognition of their linguistic capital and lack of human capital complicated job searching processes in the first 3 years of their resettlement. Bhutanese adult women, for example, had low levels of literacy or no formal literacy even in their native language, and had no English language proficiency. They continued to learn English, maintained close relationships with settlement agencies, and mobilized ethnic networks to find jobs. Despite her limited English language capacity, Gayatri secured a packaging job by working closely with her settlement worker and employment facilitator at ISS of BC. Similarly, Kalyani found a job for herself in January/February of 2015, and she connected four other community members with work. Her supervisor and human resources team liked her work and dedication, and thereafter started hiring other people from her community. A few months after she was hired, the company announced a new recruitment campaign. She encouraged her family members and Bhutanese neighbours to apply. As a result, four Bhutanese refugees were recruited by the end of May, and one in July 2015. Additional individuals from the community were also looking for opportunities to work in the same company during the time when my fieldwork was ongoing.

Similarly, Bhutanese men with little or no literacy and proficiency in English bridged their connection with a Nepali-speaking employer in Greater Vancouver to find jobs by word of mouth. The more challenges they experienced in the mainstream labour market, the more they mobilized their bonding social capital and relied on informal job searching. Commonalities between Bhutanese and the Nepali language and a shared ethnic heritage facilitated their bridging with Nepali refugees. Eight Bhutanese refugees in Vancouver worked for a cleaning
company at different times. Narendra was the first person among the eight to find a job through his network with the Nepali community in Surrey:

I was attending a Nepali program in Surrey, where I met many Nepalis. It was nice to find so many people to exchange news, settlement experiences, and contact information with. I told them about the difficulties in finding jobs in British Columbia. I was told that someone will contact me whenever there is any vacancy. Luckily, one day someone called me to see if I’m interested in working for his cleaning company. He asked, “Are you looking for a job?” He called me for a meeting and after a few days my family members and I started working for his company. (Narendra, 2013)

A small number of adult Bhutanese refugees networked out of their ethnic group with local churches to find jobs. Som Nath found all of his jobs through the friends his wife met at the local church in Coquitlam:

During the orientation in Nepal, we were told to network with people, to visit local churches, and to distribute resumes for jobs. My wife and I went to a church near Blue Mountain in Coquitlam. My wife met a lady whose husband worked in construction. She asked for her help to find a job for me. The lady talked to her husband and was told that he would check with his boss. In two to three days he told me that he would pick me up to introduce me to his boss. On Tuesday morning, someone knocked on my door early in the morning when I was still in bed. It was the same person. He said, “You have to start work today, let’s go.” I did not know that I was starting work on Tuesday; I might have misunderstood. But I had already bought my work boots, so I went to work with my friend and worked all day. My boss liked my work. I worked there [at Granville] for 7 months. (Som Nath, 2014)

But the Bhutanese refugees encountered challenges in bridging relationships outside of their ethnic group. Majority of the adult Bhutanese refugees utilized their dense family and ethnic capital to advocate for job opportunities. In Lethbridge, Bhutanese workers at Sunrise Poultry Farms and Maple Leaf Foods requested the human resources managers to hire their newly arrived friends and family members for jobs:

Definitely, definitely, a lot of them find work through family and friends. I was speaking earlier this week with a human resources manager in one of the plants here in Lethbridge. She hires a lot of people because they bring their friends, you know, so we are seeing lots of people that are coming from other parts of Canada, from British Columbia, of course, from Quebec. We have people who come from Newfoundland that are coming to Lethbridge. (Employment Counselor, 2014)
5.4 Building on cultural capital accumulated in Canada

The Bhutanese refugees who were excluded from opportunities for lacking embodied Canadian cultural capital in terms of employment experience gained new cultural capital in the form of job experience and secured new jobs. In BC, many Bhutanese refugees have started to utilize their Canadian experience to find new jobs. Individuals with some work experience in Canada have used their previous experience to find new jobs that are closer to families, and jobs in companies that are unionized and offer stability and benefit packages. Two youths who returned from Alberta after working several months at Sunrise Poultry Farms were able to find the same type of job in Surrey, BC. Sashidar had applied for the same position before moving to Alberta, but he was not shortlisted for an interview:

After my friend, who returned from Lethbridge, found a job in a local poultry processing and packing company, I was encouraged too. I prepared a new resume by adding my experience of working at the chicken company in Lethbridge and applied for the same position that I had applied for 2 years ago. I never heard back from them then, but this time, after a month, they called me for an interview, and I was hired. Now I’m working full-time. (Sashidar, 2014)

Similarly, Kalyani and Bhadra worked in a production company for about two years, but were not satisfied with their casual work conditions and low wages. Kalyani secured a job in a pharmaceutical company for herself and four other community members despite having poor English language skills and no formal schooling. Kalyani, who was in her mid-forties at the time of the interview, is a grandmother of two children and mother of four adults and one teenager. She credited finding her current job to her previous work experience with a local food company and to her outreach efforts:

I never went to school except for some English language training in Canada. I think I completed ELSA Level 1, but you know very well it is not enough to find jobs here in Canada. My settlement worker, [name omitted], from ISS referred me to a person who helps new immigrants find jobs. She found a job posting online and asked if I would like to apply for a pharmaceutical company, where I will have to pack medicines. I said okay
but I was not sure if I could get that job. She prepared my resume and a cover letter and faxed it to the company. She also helped me practice interview questionnaires several times for about three weeks. After a few days, someone from the company called me for an interview. I went for an interview and was told to contact WorkBC for some sort of money that employers get when they hire new workers. Unfortunately, it did not work for me; I don’t know why. But immediately in a day or two, I was hired [by the same company] and asked to begin work starting the next day. (Kalyani, 2015)

Bhadra did not join the pharmaceutical company at the same time as his co-worker Kalyani did.

In hopes of finding a permanent position in his current workplace, a food production company, he did not look for other options. However, despite waiting more than a year to be transferred to a permanent position, his hopes were not realized. He looked for better jobs through his community members and settlement workers. Five months after Kalyani was hired, Bhadra submitted his resume to the same company and was hired due to his solid work experience in the food production sector and his forklift license. However, he was disappointed when the company did not offer him a guaranteed full-time job. He joined the team, but after realizing that he might not always get full-time hours, he tried to quit the job. The manager, who was highly impressed with his work, promised to provide full-time work in a month:

After I submitted my resume, they called me for an interview and gave me a work schedule for 2 days a week. I worked 2 days and realized that it would not help me pay rent and buy groceries for my family, and I was not interested in going back to welfare for my unmet needs. I clearly told them [the company’s HR staff] that I cannot work if they would not give me full-time hours. The manager assured me that he would give me full hours in a month. He said, “You are such a fast and hard worker with such great experience that we cannot let you go from here. I will find some way to increase your hours, even if I have to reduce someone else’s hours.” Later, they called me and gave me full-time. It seems to me that they like my work, previous work experience, and skills. My previous work in the food company gave me lot of experience and confidence. (Bhadra, 2015)

Unfortunately, not all Bhutanese refugees had the same level of success in the conversion of their newly acquired cultural capital to employment. For instance, Devendra worked in Lethbridge for about two months and moved back to BC in 2013, but he was unable to find a job until June
2015. Devendra limited his job search to only those requiring light physical work to suit his disability. This is because the accumulation of cultural capital is not enough in itself to determines its value in the labour market; the actor’s capacity to mobilize accumulated cultural capital is equally important.

5.5 Unemployment and precarious work environments

From 2009 to 2012, the Bhutanese participants in this study experienced serious unemployment and underemployment in the first 3 years of their resettlement in BC. In 2012, only one fourth of the total Bhutanese work force (N=104) was employed, and only twelve of those were full-time employees (Khadka, 2012). In Greater Vancouver, out of the adult population of 88 in the entire Bhutanese community, 34 held full-time jobs, eight held part-time jobs, 26 were unemployed, four were mothers of new-borns, and 16 were seniors or individuals with a physical disability. However, quantitatively, the Bhutanese refugees’ labour market participation has improved gradually since 2013 with the number of years they have lived and spent in Canada.

5.6 Casual work relationship challenges in BC

In the Lower Mainland, Bhutanese refugees have been heavily concentrated in casual employment relationships—temporary employment, part-time, on call, odd time, and low-paid work without any job security. Roma found her first job in Canada in a clothing store in Metrotown, Burnaby. She worked as a part-time worker (15 hours for 3 days a week). Her job at the store was to organize, hang, and fold clothes. She started the job in March 2011; from April her workdays were reduced to 2 days a week, and gradually her hours were reduced every week. She received her work schedule every 2 weeks, but in August she did not receive a new schedule, nor did she get a layoff notice:
Malai kaam ma bolaunai chodi diyo [They stopped calling me to work]. They never called me after the manager quit. The store hired a new manager and business was normal. I waited for them to call me, but for some reason I was never called to work. I just felt that they did not have work for me. (Roma, 2013)

Roma remained unemployed after she lost her job for about two years. She applied for more than 100 jobs online and in-person. Finally, in 2013, she found a job through a neighbour in a thrift store, where she started as a part-time cashier.

Som Nath lost his construction job after working for 2 years. It was his first job, found through his religious network:

I worked a few days after returning from a week of medical leave. At the end of the day, the boss said, “Work is finished, don’t come to work, stay home.” So, there was no work for me, but I received unemployment insurance. After a few months, I found a job in a small noodle company owned by a Korean guy. The job did not last more than six or seven months because the boss told me that the company was being relocated to somewhere else. It was a very small factory, only two of us worked there. I hope he did not make up the story to fire me. (Som Nath, 2013)

Narendra worked as a cleaner from 2012 to 2013, 6 days a week from 7 o’clock in the morning to midnight. He travelled from Coquitlam, where he lived, to various locations in Vancouver. His family members, usually his eldest daughter and sometimes his wife, joined him to do the work. However, going to various places took most of his time:

I like to work at one place, not bits and pieces here and there. It just tires me out and wastes time. For example, if I’m going for 3 hours of work, it takes me 2 hours to commute between work and home, but I don’t get paid for those 2 hours. It’s worse on the weekends. I work 7 hours on Saturday and Sunday and spend three to four hours in commuting each day. Sometimes my commute time is the same as the duration of work time. It is better to work in one place and come home. Fare-wise, it is expensive to travel when you do not have enough work hours. A few months back, I only worked a few hours over 2 days of work, and every time I commuted from home or one place to another place for cleaning, I spent $4 on tickets. I don’t have this problem currently, as I have full-time work and a monthly transit pass. (Narendra, 2013)

Over the course of a year, Narendra went from place to place when his supervisor’s cleaning contract work with the employer changed. They operated a small cleaning company that paid
Narendra minimum wage with no benefits. He lost his job in the fall of 2013, and that compelled him to move to Lethbridge, where he and his family members worked in a meat processing plant.

Bhadra, who worked as an ex-soldier in Bhutan, a security guard in India, and a construction labourer in Nepal, waited 1 year to find a secure job in a single location in BC. He found the first job at a car cleaning company in Burnaby, where he cleaned cars for a month. But within a month the owner decided to lay him off:

I worked for a month, 5 days a week, cleaning cars. My schedule varied depending on the schedule that my boss provided to me. Business was running very slowly. Not many cars were coming for cleaning. On the last day of the month, my boss said, “You stay home, I will call you if needed.” He never called [me] again. (Bhadra, 2013)

After losing the job in September 2013, Bhadra found general labourer work through a manpower recruiting company in Burnaby; the recruiter sent him to various locations to work from November 2013 to August 2014. He found it frustrating to work at different locations with a frequently changing work schedule:

On the first day, the supervisor picked me up from the Edmond SkyTrain station’s parking lot and took me to work at Golden Boy Food Company. I performed different tasks. Sometimes it would be packaging, other times lifting heavy boxes and handling garbage. After 2 weeks, I was dropped off at the port in North Vancouver at a fish company, where I helped offload fish. I was very cold inside despite wearing very thick and warm clothes. I did not have any special clothes, except the boots, required for such work. I got off from work at 5 in the evening, but I did not know how to return home. It took me an hour to reach the SeaBus location. It was not only 1 day [that this happened]; it keeps on changing. I get a phone call from the office with a new schedule. It changes every week, and sometimes they just give me the address. I have to go on my own. My work hours are not fixed, nor do I have one fixed work location. For several months, I worked weekdays and weekends a couple of hours a day. It was not enough for me to pay the rent and other expenses. When I have to work in different places, it has taken a longer time to commute. One day, I worked in Richmond in a furniture warehouse, another day in Burnaby. I spend a lot of hours commuting to these places. Sometimes it takes about two hours to reach work. It is very tiring when I have to make a long trip and do lots of physical work involving carrying and lifting goods. (Bhadra, 2013)

Bhadra found a fixed schedule job at Golden Boy Foods in October 2014, but he did not have full-time hours for the first 6 months. He received reduced hours because the labourers from the
recruiters are minimally used. In other words, he was not an employee of the company, but worked there as an employee of the recruiting firm. He was paid the minimum wage of BC at the time and was not entitled to any employment benefits, such as extended health coverage or paid sick and vacation leave. He wanted to find his “dream job,” preferably as a forklift operator, for higher wages, better stability, a benefits package, and improved working conditions.

Having worked on part-time and on-call jobs for several months, Ayush found a full-time night shift job at a Walmart, but he could not continue after a few months. He was very excited to have found the job in the beginning. However, he found it physically demanding and very isolating from his social life. He quit the job and moved to Alberta in the fall of 2013:

I quit the Walmart job because it was very physically demanding. I was in a binning department at the back of the store where I had to restock the merchandise that came from the floor, which was heavy. I had to scan the bar codes and put on the price stickers and bin them. The boxes were heavy. It was a difficult job. Another reason was that I found the night job to be very hectic; it is really hard to work at night. I worked at night there for six to seven months. After working that long, I found it was affecting my mental health. I’ve never experienced that. I started to feel very sick. It was very strange to work all night when people go to sleep and to start work when people are going to bed. I felt really isolated. (Ayush, 2013)

The desperate need for work sometimes led Bhutanese refugees not only to hold short-term jobs, but to accept difficult and risky jobs. Naresh found his first job in a glass company, where he and his co-worker lifted heavy glass panels that weighed about 150 pounds. He could not continue to work after a few days due to health issues affecting his nerves. Later, he found a painting job on Craigslist, a job he considered comparatively easier than the construction and glass company jobs. “It’s an easy job. You carry some paint and from a tray you paint the wall. The more you paint the lighter it becomes. It does not require a lot of lifting. In fact, I was thinking of making it my career” (Naresh, 2013). Unfortunately, while at work he fell off a ladder and was injured:
I am going to be honest with you. I’ve never heard about or seen using a ladder to paint a house in Canada. But the company I was employed with made me use a ladder because they did not have any lifting vehicles. I painted houses up to three or four storeys holding ladders against the wall. Sometimes, the ladders had to be connected to reach the higher areas of the walls. One day, while I was painting the wall at the level of the third storey, I fell down and injured my left leg. I can show you the scar. [He rolled up the pant of his left leg, and the scar was visible just below his knee.] I rested for 15 days, and I did not show it or tell anyone about it [outside of his family members]. (Naresh, 2013)

Between the summer of 2012 and the fall of 2013, he changed jobs five times. At the time of my fieldwork (February 2015), he was working at a meat plant in Lethbridge. He quit the same job in the fall of 2012 due to the cold temperatures of the work environment and immediately returned to BC. In the fall of 2013, he moved back to Lethbridge with his immediate and extended families.

Similarly, Narendra, another member of the Bhutanese community, was injured at work, and his employer punished him by reducing his work hours instead of allowing him to take sick leave:

I was at work near Commercial Drive, where I accidentally hit my face against some object. I bled a lot and my daughter got scared. She called the employer and he showed up in a few minutes and took me to a walk-in clinic. After that he started decreasing my work hours, and I was compelled to quit the job and travel to Alberta to look for a job. (Narendra, 2013)

5.7 Risk and challenges in meat plant work in Alberta

Workers at the meat plant in Lethbridge endured cold, repetitive motion tasks, and long hours of standing. As a result, some have experienced permanent health problems. After working for about a year in a meat plant, Narendra experienced body aches. He complained about pain in different areas of his body and difficulty grabbing small things with his fingers due to pain. The slippery floors are another hazard at work. For instance, Shankha worked in the cooler section, which was very slippery:
I slipped at least once every day. Recently, the company has stopped giving us cotton gloves, which makes it hard to work in the 15-degree Celsius temperature. I sometimes find it hard to move my fingers due to pain and my toes have all turned black due to cold and injury. (Shankha, 2014)

Devendra returned to BC in the fall of 2013 after being fired from Sunrise Poultry Farms. He experienced difficulties performing tasks due to backache and swelling and pain in his right arm. Similarly, Shankha returned in the fall of 2014, having been unable to cope with the cold weather and deteriorating working conditions in the plant.

The workers are expected to stand at one place for two to four hours at a stretch. Further, the workers are required to catch up with the speed of the production line, which is a challenge in itself. From meat packing to boxing, the plant requires the workers to keep pace with the speed of the machines. For example, one of my respondents, Ram, wraps meat products in plastic bags at Maple Leaf Foods. As soon as the meat products arrive at his station, he has to wrap and put them back on a tray:

It’s even impossible to remember how many meat pieces I wrap in a day. I just know that I do that all day—from 6 in the morning to 3 in the afternoon—standing in one place. It’s more difficult and tedious than berry picking in BC. I’ve developed pain in my armpits, chest, and back. I don’t expect any work would be easier either. That is why I’m not going to quit it; I will continue the same job for the next 5 years until my kids grow up. I can’t quit it now. How will I feed my kids and pay the rent? I will endure pain and even illnesses to keep this job. (Ram, 2014)

Deepak makes carton boxes in Sunrise Poultry Farms to box the chicken products. He picks up a box from the stack of folded carton boxes. “I make up to 2,000 boxes in a day. I’ve got to supply carton boxes from my station to box the meat products coming from another station. It is very demanding work,” said Deepak. Similarly, Sapana makes boxes in Maple Leaf Foods. She gets overwhelmed when the machine runs faster:

Because the machine was running quite fast, I was having quite a hard time to catch up with it. My co-workers were busy too; they have to catch up with their own work. Eventually, the receiving tray got filled much faster and I was unable to handle it. I got
afraid and nervous. I wanted to quit the job right away and go home because I did not want my supervisor to get mad at me. Luckily, my friends came and helped me out. (Sapna, 2014)

Injuries are also common at the meat production and processing plants. Narendra debones chicken at Sunrise. “It takes time to remove small bones from the meat,” he notes. He explains how tiring it is to stand in a cold room for 10 hours, 4 days a week, such that the workers experience permanent injuries to their health. “Different areas of my body hurt. My fingers are so bad now that I can’t even grab small things with my fingers,” noted Narendra.

In addition to the physical challenges, the Bhutanese workers in this study also noted the psychological impact of their precarious jobs, especially when they were harassed for failure to perform correctly or to meet the pace required by the work, such as matching the speed of the machines at the meat plant. Asha worked in the kitchen of a restaurant in Port Moody, a small neighbouring city of Coquitlam. She performed the assigned duties without any problems but quit the job, having been unable to bear the harassment of her employer:

The restaurant owner always used profanities. Whenever he did not like anything at work he started cursing and calling me the F word. It is very intimidating to work in his restaurant. A day before quitting the job, I accidently broke a plate, and he used profanities and called me the F word several times. I felt very bad and worked with teary eyes until I finished the shift. It was more embarrassing for me to be scolded and harassed in front of my brother-in-law, who was also working on that day. Maybe I would not have felt so bad if my brother-in-law was not [present] there. I did not return to work from the next day on because I could take no more. (Asha, 2014)

Shanka witnessed harassment of his Bhutanese co-workers at the poultry plant:

I worked with an adult, a black hat [a new worker is called a “black hat”], who moved from British Columbia in the spring of 2014. He was a little slow and did not understand English, which made his team leader, a yellow hat, mad. The yellow hat screamed at him, saying, “This guy is stupid. He does not know how to work.” He was upset when I quit the job because I used to help him at work. (Shankha, 2014)

In addition to harassment, Bhutanese workers have also experienced economic exploitation in the form of delayed or no payment and underpayment. Basanti, a single mother, worked from a home
office and never received a salary. She was shocked when she kept calling her employer for payment but received no answer from the other end. As she explained:

> I worked for about twenty to twenty-five days, but he did not give me money. Kich kich garyo (He bugged me). He told me, “Why did you send the wrong information?” He told me to take the two chickens that were in the refrigerator and said that he would mail my paycheque to my home, but I never received any money. I called him a couple of times, but he did not pick up the phone. Once, I went to his house and buzzed, but he did not open the door. I gave it up later. (Basanti, 2012)

Instead of getting compensation for the injury he endured, Naresh experienced difficulty even getting his paycheque. He called his manager for his remaining pay, but his manager ignored his phone calls. “After I recovered, I called the owner for my cheque and he tried to avoid my call. Often no one answered my calls, and other times an unknown person answered the phone. They were taking advantage of my situation because I was new to Canada” (Naresh, 2013). Another community member, Som Nath, did not receive his final cheque from the noodle factory job and formally lodged a complaint with the Workers’ Compensation Board to claim his pay:

> I was laid off after the factory was closed. However, the boss did not give me my final cheque. In the beginning, he used to give me a cheque every 2 weeks. After a month, he started paying monthly. When the factory got closed, he owed me for 2 weeks, which he never paid to me. Later, I filed a written complaint with the Workers’ Compensation Board through my settlement worker and got paid. (Som Nath, 2014)

### 5.8 Wage exploitation and negotiation in precarious work environments

Many Bhutanese refugees also experienced difficulties receiving wages for seasonal blueberry picking jobs in summer. They were employed to pick blueberries through a subcontractor, who provided bus rides from their homes to the farm and back every day until the end of the blueberry season. Blueberry picking is not a favourite job for many, but it is the only job that many can find to earn extra income. An individual earns $2,000 to $5,000 in each summer season, and such a lucrative amount motivates many community members to take the job despite extreme heat and long hours. The income often helps them offset some family expenses. Asha,
who picked blueberries in the summers of 2013 and 2014, said, “It’s hard to leave home early in the morning and pick berries all day under the sun, but we do it for money, which helps us pay our family expenses often not covered by welfare or RAP benefits” (Asha, 2014).

Some Bhutanese blueberry pickers received payments after a long battle but at a rate below the one written in the contract. A blueberry picker’s pay depends on the total pounds of blueberries picked. Every time a bucket with berries is weighed, a card is punched for credits. In 2012, the Bhutanese workers did not receive their cheques for about six months after the season was over. Some Bhutanese families moved to Lethbridge without getting their cheques. In addition, they were intimidated for repeatedly asking for their pay. Finally, when they received their cheques, it did not include the full amount owed to them under the contract:

But in 2012, we were all cheated. Our thekedar [contractor] delayed our cheques for several months. Whenever we called him, he said he had yet to receive the cheques from his company. Each family picking berries called him several times, but he always made excuses. Sometimes he would say, “Oh, don’t worry, next week,” and other times, “I will come see you tomorrow,” but weeks passed and months passed and he did not pay us. After getting frustrated, we told him that we were going to report him to the Worker’s Compensation Board [of British Columbia]. He threatened us by saying that “I don’t owe you any money, you can go anywhere you want. I know how to deal with them.” But finally, in December 2012, he paid us at a .40 cents per pound rate, which was lower than the contracted rate of .50 cents per pound. We had no choice but to accept it. (Tejendra, 2014)

The Bhutanese refugees involved in restaurant work also received a monthly salary, which translates into a lower wage per hour than BC’s minimum hourly rate of $10.25 as of 2019. Jeevan, a 57-year-old widower, worked 6 days a week, 10 hours a day in a restaurant, and received $1,800 a month. He does not receive any other benefits, such as paid sick or vacation leave. He has developed arthritis working on the job, but he sees no other alternatives to his current work. “Do I have a choice? I can’t get a job anywhere because I’m not educated. I will have to continue this
job until my body does not allow me to work” (Jeevan, 2015). His wages were increased in early 2015 from $1,600 to $1,800 when he told the owner that he would quit if his pay is not increased.

In contrast to those who stayed in BC, the Bhutanese refugees that migrated from BC to Lethbridge, Alberta, enjoyed full-time employment in the local meat plants. Among the 27 adult study participants who moved to Lethbridge, 23 individuals were employed in Sunrise Poultry Farms’ and Maple Leaf Foods’ poultry and ham processing companies (as of March 2015). Out of the 23 individuals, 22 worked in full-time jobs. Though the Bhutanese refugees that migrated from BC to Alberta enjoyed the higher employment rate than their friends and relatives in BC, majority of the Bhutanese refugees in both provinces were highly segregated in a precarious labour market, which is an employment characterized by insecure, unprotected, and poorly paid work. Most jobs were found in meat or food packaging companies, thrift stores, restaurants, cleaning sectors, and construction. Although the meat packaging companies provided an annual vacation as well as extended healthcare benefits, the working nature and conditions affected the health of their workers. The working conditions and challenges experienced by the Bhutanese refugees tell the stories of their everyday struggles in the labour market. They suffered physical and mental difficulties due to the nature of assembly line work and the cold temperatures. They struggled to keep their jobs in the meat processing and packaging plants. As a result, five individuals working in the meat plants returned to BC in 2014. The non-standard and temporary nature of employment, job insecurity, and differential treatment at work have made Bhutanese workers extremely vulnerable in BC.
5.9 Precarious work or welfare for survival

In this thesis, I have examined the various kinds of capital that Bhutanese refugees mobilized in order to survive in Canada. To cope with financial hardships resulting from their unemployment and underemployment situations, the Bhutanese refugees in BC had to choose between precarious work relationships or a nagging welfare system. The precarious labour market and nagging transportation loan collection and welfare policy have not only degraded their economic wellbeing, but have lowered their self-esteem. Despite actively searching for jobs for months, learning English language skills, and living in Canada for several years, the Bhutanese refugees have faced challenges in earning wages decent enough to make a living. In 2012, about 80% of the Bhutanese refugees in BC lived on income assistance and RAP benefits (Khadka, 2012). Dependency on welfare decreased significantly in 2015, but precarious and unstable work situations did little to lessen their difficulties. The following section highlights the difficulties the Bhutanese experienced in navigating the welfare system and the MSDI in BC, as well as the challenge of making ends meet under limited monthly income assistance while they were expected to pay the instalments of their transportation loans.

The Bhutanese refugees on income assistance from the MSDSI have not only struggled to meet the most basic needs of shelter and food, but they have experienced unnecessary barriers from administrators in receiving support. Renuka and Devendra arrived in Canada in September 2010 and received resettlement assistance for the first year. In September 2011, they started receiving income assistance. After their first year of RAP support had ended, the family struggled to meet their needs. The ministry’s monthly assistance was $248 less than the RAP assistance for a family of two. In 2014, a couple without a dependent child received a maximum of $877.22 monthly from the ministry for support and shelter, whereas RAP benefits included an
additional $248 as a transportation allowance, totalling $1,125 monthly. Since the family did not have any dependent children, they were not eligible for Canadian child tax and national child benefit supplements. The family moved from one city to another to find liveable and affordable housing, as well as better employment opportunities.

In May 2015, Renuka and Devendra moved back to Coquitlam after failing to find jobs. They made this decision to cope with their economic plight, but it added additional difficulties due to the indifference that the ministry staff showed to their unique situation. In addition, their inability to understand the welfare regulations contributed to their predicament to some extent. The couple ran out of money needed to afford monthly bus passes in order to continue their English classes, which is mandatory for receiving income assistance. The English language school in Delta was about nine kilometers from their residence. In order to continue going to their English classes, the couple received cash from their daughter until she lost her part-time job. Following this, they used their earnings from berry picking for the few remaining months of 2014 and early 2015. The family then decided to return to Coquitlam where they could walk to school. Two months after moving back to Coquitlam, they did not receive their income assistance cheque. The rental office attempted to withdraw rent on June 1 from Renuka and Devendra’s pre-authorized bank account. As the withdrawal failed, the bank charged overdraft fees and the rental company fined them for the failed transaction. Devendra went to the MSDSI’s local office twice to find out why their cheque was not sent. Devendra, who was accompanied by his daughter, was instructed to submit the bank statements from the last 6 months, but he failed to understand why the ministry worker was holding the cheque. They submitted the bank statements to the MSDSI office, but the case worker asked them to explain all the major transactions. Devendra failed to do this because of his inability to read and
I asked my settlement worker to help me sort out this problem. He then called the bank and the bank explained those transactions. The two debit entries were from a bounced transaction when the rental company tried to withdraw from our account, and two others were cheques deposited from berry picking. We got a monthly paycheque, but we also received a consolidated single cheque for 3 months of work that my wife and I did. The case worker then released our cheque, but in a week we received a letter from welfare saying that we needed to pay the money back to welfare. (Devendra, 2015)

Devendra received two separate letters dated June 10, 2015 from the MSDSI. The first letter stated that the MSDSI completed the review of their file for MSDSI’s assistance between October 1, 2004 and June 10, 2015 and determined an overpayment in the amount of $1,219.93 on his account. The letter stated:

The Employment and Assistance Act, section 27, sections 27 and 28, states that if assistance is provided to a person who is not eligible for it, the amount of the assistance is a debt that the person is liable to repay and that the government may recover the amount owed by making deductions from future assistance or through the civil court process. You are required to accurately and completely report your income, assets and circumstances when you apply for assistance and to report any changes to that information. In addition to recovering overpayments, the ministry may impose a sanction (a further reduction in assistance) if an overpayment occurs as a result of incomplete or inaccurate reporting. If a sanction is applied to your file, you will be advised of this in a separate a letter. (MSDSI, 2015,, p. 1)

Devendra was terribly shocked and scared after receiving the letters. He does not have enough literacy to be able to comprehend welfare policies and report any changes. In addition, he assumed that the MSDSI would exempt such small earnings from the berry picking season that his family invested into continuing their English language training:

Hamilai ke tahaha bhai? Sadai jastai garera faram bhare ra patayekai ho [We know nothing, brother. We completed the reporting form as we used to do before]. We did not expect that welfare would be so harsh on us for such a small amount we earned in 2 months. We used it for our bus tickets. I have saved all the invoices if they are ever needed for the purpose of an audit. Now that we have received these letters to pay the money back with a penalty, I don’t know how we can survive. It’s a government order, which I’m very afraid of not complying with. In fact, I’ve not slept well for a week now.
and for the first time I’ve noticed that my blood pressure is high. I will see if I can borrow money from someone to pay this back. (Devendra, 2015)

The second letter stated that a sanction would be applied to Devendra’s file, causing a reduction of the monthly payment by $20 for 3 consecutive months. The letter explained:

As this is the first occurrence on your file, a monthly reduction of $20 each month will be imposed for the next three months in accordance with section 31.1 of the Employment and Assistance Regulation. This reduction to your assistance rate will begin on your July 1, 2015 assistance payment. (MSDSI (A), 2015, p. 1)

The actions of the MSDSI inflicted unbearable stress on Devendra. Given that he is a person with a history of PTSD, it was emotionally distressing for him. Devendra (2015) said, “Malai tamarna leayeko jasto lagacha bhai (I think I was brought here to be killed).” Despite his unstable health situation, he felt forced to work. “The money I receive will not be enough for my family, and on top of that I have to pay the money back. I don’t want to live on debts, and having government debt is not healthy. I would do any work I can find” (Devendra, 2015).

Another couple, Asha and Prakash, also found income assistance support to be insufficient. Income assistance support was just enough to pay their two-bedroom unit’s rent, utilities, and laundry:

It was very tough when we were unemployed. We did not have enough to eat; that’s why we shared our kitchen with our father [in-law]. Under the thulo Sarkar’s [federal government’s] RAP program we had no problem. The benefit was sufficient to live with. But later, when we were transferred to the sano Sarkar [provincial government], we received $1,050. This would just cover the rent, but nothing would remain for food. We were short $200 each month. (Asha, 2014)

Prakash lost his part-time job within two months after finding it. He got worried about not having enough money for groceries. Therefore, he went to income assistance for support, but he was told to use up the $200 balance in his bank account:

After I lost my job, it was very hard for me. I only had a part-time job one or two days a week. I found that I’d not have enough money to purchase food. Therefore, I went to welfare, but they did not give me any support. Instead, they told me to first use up the
$200 remaining balance in my account and then come to the welfare office. Then I went back, but still I did not get money. Luckily, I got more work, 4 days a week. (Prakash, 2014)

The income assistance procedure is intimidating to many Bhutanese refugees, as it involves bureaucratic interactions with the workers and requires much compliance to complicated rules in order to receive support. Bhutanese refugees have found the MSDSI workers to be harsh and apathetic. Living on welfare was the last resort for Manisha and her family: “Life is very hard here. If we could find a job, it would relieve some of our burden. It is much better to work and live. We would not have to be intimidated and hear complaints [from the MSDSI workers]” (Manisha, 2014).

On the other hand, the Bhutanese refugees not living on income assistance experienced poverty, as it was very difficult to meet their monthly expenses with the little money they were making. Narendra worked 6 days a week but did not make enough to live without worrying about how to pay the rent and buy groceries:

I work six to seven hours a day but still I’m having hardships. It is because we are not on welfare anymore, and only my son gets child tax credits … my daughter and I work in the cleaning profession and we make between $1,800 and $2,000 monthly. If we divide this, each of us gets $1,000. My rent is $945. How do I pay utilities? What about food? It is very difficult to meet household expenses. (Narendra, 2013)

Naresh found it difficult to live in BC as a single earner. His wife could not work due to her illness. The three-member family depended on his income, which he found very challenging. “My income cannot meet my household expenses. I’ve got to provide snacks and other needs for my child … rent is very expensive … a single person’s income cannot support a family. Both husband and wife have to work to survive here” (Naresh, 2013).

In addition to difficulties meeting household needs, many Bhutanese refugees also experienced challenges paying back transportation loans. The income received from work or
support from welfare cannot be spared to pay the instalments on the loans. Mira (2015) expressed her difficulties in having to pay the transportation loan: “Tension bai sakyo, khile teeree saknu? [I’m already tense, not sure when I can pay off the loan].” Mira’s facial expression suddenly changed as she opened the recent letter received from Citizenship and Immigration Canada about the repayment. She paid $80 in a monthly instalment, but this time it was $201, which was a bit of a shock for her. She missed the last instalment due to a financial crunch. “Sabji khane paisa utai reen tirnai jancha [Money saved to buy vegetables goes to pay the monthly instalment].” She cut down her household budget to save money to pay off the loan.

It was a big challenge for her to find the resources to pay monthly instalments. She missed the last payment because she moved to a new place, which required her to pay the damage deposit and about $25 in additional rent. The previous ground floor suite was a little cheaper, but it was a poorly managed building and heavily infested with cockroaches and bedbugs:

When the monthly loan instalment comes with the doubled amount, where should I pay it from? Should I be paying rent or the loan’s instalment? [My husband has] no full-time job either! Three years ago, when we came, the total amount of the loan was $5,777 and still I have about $3,600 to pay back. How does the government expect us to pay back the money? Doesn't the government know that we came from a refugee camp, where we lived in a thatched hut for 20 years on rations provided by the camp’s office? We are refugees with no assets. I have two children; one is 14 months old and another has a disability. My husband barely makes $1,200 to $1,400 dollars. Because we do not have enough money, we get a little support from the Rental Program [Rental Assistance Program] so that we can pay the rent. (Mira, 2015)

Mira also found other essential materials unaffordable with the little money that her husband made. Transportation and pharmaceutical costs were two big concerns for her family. “I go to Vancouver, Surrey, Port Coquitlam, or New Westminster to keep appointments for myself and my kids two to three times a week. The public transportation fare is high too” (Mira, 2015). Her family had an annual deduction of $300 in 2015 under the PharmaCare plan before it paid the remainder of the eligible costs for the rest of the year. One fourth of her family’s total
prescriptions was not covered under the plan. Mira was even unable to afford physiotherapy fees, which are not covered under the Medical Service Plan (MSP). Thus, medical expenses are a burden for her family, as well as for many other Bhutanese families.

Bhutanese families’ labour market strategies included the mobilization of institutional and ethnic social capital to bridge with formal institutions and potential employers. Their formal relationships with settlement service providers and government agencies helped them accumulate cultural capital in the form of language training, Canadian work experience and information pertinent to local resources, labour market information, and some short-term training. Despite such efforts, the Bhutanese refugees continued to be marginalized in the labour market. They were heavily concentrated in precarious jobs and lived in poverty. The burden of paying the instalments of the transportation loan and the high cost of living in BC impacted their wellbeing. To cope with financial hardships resulting from their unemployment and underemployment situation, the Bhutanese refugees in BC had to choose between precarious work relationships and a nagging welfare system. Either option led them to financial hardships and difficulties. The next chapter will highlight the Bhutanese refugees’ barriers surrounding unemployment and underemployment situations in the labour market.
Chapter 6: Barriers to Labour Market Participation of Bhutanese Refugees in Canada

The Bhutanese refugees living in British Columbia have experienced systemic and structural barriers in the Canadian labour market. The major barriers include non-recognition of their linguistic and embodied cultural capital, unfamiliar labour market practices, inadequacy of job training and skill enhancement support, lack of strong social capital outside their own ethnic community, diminished health and caregiving responsibilities, and exclusion based on gender, race, age, and class. Some of the Bhutanese refugees experienced one or two barriers, whereas the majority experienced multiple intersecting barriers. Experience of these barriers varies by the refugees’ literacy, education and English language capacity, health, age, resiliency level, and length of stay in Canada.

6.1 Linguistic capital: boli bikdaina

The English language is a major barrier for the Bhutanese refugees’ success in the labour market. As Nepali is the native language of most Bhutanese refugees of Nepali origin, many had no exposure to the English language before coming to Canada. Furthermore, majority of the adult population lacked formal literacy in their native language because they either never had an opportunity for formal schooling or they dropped out from school at an early age. Therefore, the language skills of majority of the Bhutanese refugees in Canada are limited to oral communication in Nepali. Bhutanese youths born or raised in Nepal, and a very small number of Bhutanese adults with a privilege of schooling in Bhutan or India, possess some English language skills. All respondents stated that English language barriers caused them significant challenges in finding jobs in BC.

15 A few smaller ethnic groups may have a different mother language.
Damanta’s family had three adult members who could work when they were living in BC, but none of them could find jobs. She attributed the major barrier behind this to her boli (language), which did not sell in the Canadian labour market,

… hamro, kura bikena (our language did not sell). The language is quite different here from ours. We have not been able to comprehend the language. That is why we are struggling to find jobs. … Canada is fantastic for everything. We are very happy that the Canadian government sponsored us to come here. I was sad before because we had nothing there [in the refugee camp]. The government [here] has provided us with food and clothing, and the kids are going to school for now; we will have to see what happens in the future. … But in order to search for jobs [we must acknowledge that] our boli bikdaina (language does not sell). (Damanta, 2013)

Bhutanese refugees felt that they lost sabaithok (everything) except their Nepali language or culture after their eviction from Bhutan. They struggled to live from hand to mouth in that situation. Many found some sort of casual work in their 20 years of exile in Nepal. Some were fortunate to find full-time or part-time work, whereas majority of them worked in seasonal or on-call jobs. However, in Canada they struggled more because of the official language barrier. It was noticed that some of their frustrations and desperation was caused by a lack of competence in the English language. Kausal, a father of three children, was depressed after coming to Canada. He found himself in a helpless situation when he was not able to communicate in English and had to depend on welfare to survive, as he could not find jobs and was compelled to rely on his friends for accessing basic services, such as going to any type of appointment. He said:

Language was not a problem in Nepal, so wherever we went we could communicate without any challenges, and despite not having any education or training, we could still find some work. We could survive. But here [in Vancouver], I have lost my boli ani haath [language and working hand]. Actually, I never got a chance to experience what it is like to be a refugee in Nepal because I could work and socialize with people freely, but here everything feels strange without the language and it feels like I’m actually a refugee here. (Kausal, 2013)
Bhutanese families showed a desperation to participate in the local community and work, but they found themselves helpless due to the language barrier. An elderly person in his nineties was very frustrated with his limited social connections in the community and with the joblessness of his family members. His daughter-in-law, Damanta, shared his frustration:

My father-in-law was really frustrated at not being able to chat with the local people in Coquitlam. He liked engaging with community members, but in Canada he noticed a huge barrier, which was the English language requirement. He also saw that our family members and all our relatives were struggling to find jobs because of English. He thought our folk will not be able to learn English and therefore he wished that “maybe it will be faster for local Canadians to learn the Nepali language.” It sounds funny, but it was his desperate call before he passed away a few weeks later. (Damanta, 2013)

A lack of confidence in the English language and in workplace lingo and terminologies resulted in Bhutanese job seekers failing to convince employers to hire them. Asha had a basic proficiency in the English language before coming to Canada. She polished her English in ELSA and LINC classes. While she applied for several positions with the help of settlement service providers and friends, she failed to demonstrate her confidence in English in interviews. She thought she had good English skills for the work she applied to, but she failed to assure the employer in the interview that she possessed sufficient English to perform the required tasks:

I went to New Westminster for a job interview. I faxed them my application and resume and I was invited for an interview the next day. The interviewer mentioned that in the work that I had applied to, I will be expected to work with Filipino workers and other people, which required communicating in English. He asked if I could communicate well in English. I told him, “Yes, I can speak some English.” He said, “Okay then, I will call you in a day or two.” He did not call me. My English was okay, that is why I said, “Some English.” Now I understand that I should have said confidently, “I’m good in English”; he would have hired me. (Asha, 2013)

The Bhutanese refugees with minimal language capacity in English failed to compete with other applicants in the labour market. Ashok, a skilled construction mason and barber, applied for several jobs online and through his network, but he could not secure any jobs in BC. Through his ethnic connections, he was invited for a job interview to work at a deli section of a
department store in Vancouver. He could not compete for the position because there were 15 other candidates with longer histories of work experience and higher English language abilities:

I gave him [the supervisor] my resume. He described the work of the store to me, which included a lot of food preparation tasks. He asked me if I can do the work. I said I could easily do it. He asked me for my phone number and told me that he will call me later. He did not give me his number. I waited but did not receive any call from him. Later, I found out that there were 10 to 15 other candidates applying for the same position. He was hiring only one person. Maybe he found someone who was better qualified than me. Ma ta perfect pani thiyena (I was not really perfect). My English makes people perceive that I am not a strong candidate. (Ashok, 2013)

The work at the department store involved working with a Nepali co-worker, but the supervisor interviewing Ashok was skeptical of his English language ability to interact with other employees in the store.

For Bhutanese refugees, the lack of adequate linguistic capital in English delayed their entry into the labour market. It increased their dependency on income assistance and forced them to look for jobs requiring no English. Devendra looked for jobs for 3 years in BC, but he was unable to find any stable work. He found his first casual job in a Nepali restaurant in Downtown Vancouver, where he worked with Nepali-speaking kitchen staff. Similarly, Renuka spent 5 years attempting to find her first job. Prior to coming to Nepal, Devendra and Renuka were subsistence farmers and grew daily consumption food—paddies, wheat, corn, grains, pulses, and vegetables—in their fields. In Nepal, Renuka was a daily farm labourer for the first few years, and then a tailor for a decade. She sewed clothes in her stall. Unable to utilize any of her skills in Canada, she felt she was worthless from an earning point of view, attributing this to her lack of English:

Since I came to Canada, I am only doing gharbitra ko kaam [household work]. I can sew clothes and work in farms, but here in Canada I cannot get jobs in the sewing industry and I do not have a farm to grow crops and veggies. When one has no English, how can one find ghar bahirako kaa (a job outside home)? You need English for everything you do in Canada. If you do not have English, everything becomes difficult. I would not
have had any trouble finding jobs if Nepali was understood here. In the absence of English language ability, bolne aant pani chaina (I cannot even dare to talk to anyone). Sabai thokh thehi ho, English nabaypachi garo ta baihalyo ne (It is everything; if you do not have English it is difficult, naturally). (Renuka, 2013)

Narendra, an experienced and highly skilled construction mason, struggled to find a job to survive on due to his lack of English language proficiency. He is actually impressed with several aspects of Canada—rom social safety nets to the enforcement of law and order. However, his only frustration is not being able to communicate in English and to fully express himself when needed:

I have noticed there is law and order in Canada. There are also many facilities and everything is available, but the only problem is the English language. It is very difficult! It is our biggest challenge. Whether it is at a welfare office or at work, I can neither express what I wanted to say, nor can I understand them well. I cannot really say what I have deep down in my heart. It is very painful. I usually have a lot to say, but what can I do when I have no English? We share our pain of not being able to fully communicate in English among us (the Bhutanese community)… sometimes we communicate using an interpreter, but it is not like speaking or writing by myself. We might be saying something, but it gets interpreted as something else. That is why our message never gets communicated and it is a very uncomfortable situation. (Narendra, 2013)

Similarly, Reena, a single mother, struggled to find a job for several months. She started looking for jobs about three years after coming to Canada. In order to avoid the language barrier, she started her first job in a Nepali restaurant:

All Bhutanese in Canada have English language barriers. They cannot look for a job because they cannot communicate. They feel very embarrassed. Two years after coming to Canada, I moved to Vancouver and lived on my own with my son. I really struggled to find jobs even though I spoke some English. I gave up searching for jobs in the market and explored opportunities within Nepali businesses [restaurants]. I found a dishwasher position, but it was only part-time and sometimes on call. Luckily, I found my first job where I am not required to speak a lot of English. I worked in the kitchen, where the requirement of English was minimal. As my earnings were not sufficient to pay rent and buy food, I looked for jobs again. And this time I found one in a cleaning company. I have to travel to North Vancouver and work at odd hours, but this is only what I can find at this point. It does not require a lot of English conversation, just basic English. (Reena, 2013)
Limitations in the English language pushed Bhutanese refugees to take on precarious employment situations. Narendra finds that his lack of language ability in English limited him in the labour market and pushed him to a casual and low-paid work sector:

Jati janne pani Vasha nabhayepachi ke garnu (No matter how skilled you are, it is worthless in the absence of the language). I looked for jobs for several months, made resumes and dropped them to several places, but I guess they go into the garbage. No one called me and I could not go and inquire either. Many times, when I handed my resume to them, they probably figured out that they are going to trash it because I was not able to initiate any communication with them. I would not be able to face an interview if they had called me. … After a very long time, I found a job through Nepali people. I communicated with them in Nepali about the difficulties of not being able to find jobs and about our suffering. They connected me with someone who speaks Nepali. In fact, he employed me in his cleaning business. I went to clean several offices and I probably did a very good job [he continued to employ me]. But when I saw someone at work, I tried not to face them; I hid myself from them. If I see them, I need to speak with them, at least say something, which I was not able to do in English. But now with the same people I can speak a few words in English, say hi, hello, etc., and also answer back. (Narendra, 2013)

Narendra worked in several locations, until midnight, for about a year, and one day he had a work-related accident, which led his employer to reduce his work hours. It compelled him to look for an alternative job to support his family. Unable to survive on part-time work and find a new job, he and his family moved to Alberta in 2013 and he found a job in a chicken processing and packaging company, Sunrise Poultry Farms, with other Nepali speakers.

Bhutanese women encountered greater challenges in finding jobs due to the English language barrier. In order to be able to work, they needed to find a specific shift that would fit their schedule. However, for those Bhutanese women with a low level of English language proficiency, finding a specific shift would entail competition with more candidates and decreased chances of securing a job. Amrita tried to find a part-time job for a day shift to utilize the free time she had while her children were in school. She desperately wanted to work to earn some
money in order to supplement her only source of income from the MSDSI. She lived and looked for a job in Coquitlam, Vancouver, and Surrey, but she failed to secure a job:

I do not get enough money from welfare to support my family. That is why I wanted to work when I am free, but I have not found any jobs. I think it is because my English is not good. Sometimes, I find jobs that are very far from where I live but nothing around [where she lives]… In Nepal, it was easier to find jobs because everyone spoke Nepali, but here I cannot reply in English. I asked people who come to teach the Bible to help me find a job, but they said, “There are no jobs, it is even difficult to find jobs for us.” (Amrita, 2013)

Bhutanese refugees with basic proficiency in English successfully performed tasks at work when they were given opportunities. Som Nath lacked any English language knowledge before coming to Canada. In his forties, he started learning the English alphabet for the first time in life. He started at a pre-literacy level of ELSA and progressed to the next level only after 1 year instead of 5 months. He experienced a language barrier in his everyday life in Canada: “Language has created a lot of challenges. When I’m communicating in English, people do not understand me because my English is not so perfect. It creates a lot of problems in communication” (Som Nath, 2015). In spite of the language barrier, he was able to find a job on the basis of his family’s social network and his ability to complete the given tasks at work. As a result, 1 year after coming to Canada, he found his first job in the construction sector and the second in a tofu company:

I worked fine. It took me a little more time to work at a tofu-producing company because it involved various tasks, from making tofu to packaging it. In the first week, they showed me how to do the work, which I learned quickly—though I had some difficulty understanding in English. But when they showed me manually, I understood it and did not encounter any problems performing the assigned duties. My bosses were very happy with my work. (Som Nath, 2015)

Majority of the Bhutanese refugees had a very practical suggestion to overcome the language barrier, which came long after their failure to overcome the English language hurdle in entering the Canadian labour market. They suggested a group entry (hiring) of Bhutanese refugees into a
company that can use their labour. They expected that under the leadership of one Bhutanese worker with a high English language capacity, other non-English speakers could perform the assigned tasks. The recommendation they made was their last ray of hope that came after battling in the labour market for several months or even years:

Our people are ready to work eight to ten hours a day. Bhutanese can work harder than the local people, but there are no opportunities to find work. Poor Bhutanese! What else can they do when they cannot find a job to do? This is a reality of Bhutanese here [in BC]. We have a few youths who can speak English. If someone can initiate a group hiring in a company under the leadership of one of our youths, everyone could be working. When someone does not understand English, he can translate in Nepali or instruct them on what to do. In a few days, everyone will know their work. Animals do not speak like humans, but when they get training they learn. If animals can learn, why can we humans not? The English language has created numerous problems here, problems everywhere. (Mahesh, 2013)

6.2 Requirement of human capital in the labour market

The lack or low level of literacy and formal schooling among many Bhutanese refugees hindered their labour market entry in BC. Low literacy and lack of formal education created barriers for Bhutanese refugees around learning the English language, building skills, pursuing education, and participating in the community—all of which are essential to settlement and involvement with labour market processes. Finding a job in the knowledge- and trade-oriented labour market of Canada required a combination of education and job-related experience, which proved to be an obstacle for those Bhutanese refugees who lacked literacy in their first language.

A small number of Bhutanese refugees had a few years of formal education in school or had college diplomas, which proved to be inadequate in the Canadian labour market. Hari, who had completed a diploma from the UK, could not find any jobs relevant to his education. He searched for jobs for 3 years but later quit. It was a frustrating experience for him:

We went to many places to drop resumes, but we did not get phone calls from them. We did not even get shortlisted.
much do we beg for jobs? We have been dropping resumes). We are so tired of dropping resumes. (Hari, 2013)

Naresh, who had completed Grade 12 and 1 year of college education, was hopeful that he would find a job. His uncle had assured him that young people with some education are finding jobs:

There was a big buzz in the camp that “kaam pauna nikai garo cha re (it is hard to find a job)” We had heard that “napadeko lai kaam pauna sarai garo cha re (those who have no education have more challenges).” However, my uncle told me that “yes, it’s hard for people with no literacy in English and education, but youths with some English and education are finding jobs.” … There are many challenges and the most important factor is education, brother. One who has an education or can study here finds a better job, but if no education, then no good jobs. (Naresh, 2013)

Despite coming to Canada in his late twenties with some college education, Naresh struggled to find an office job. He ended up working in various jobs that required much physical strength. Due to a nerve-related health issue, he quit such a job and moved to Alberta in 2013. Unlike Hari and Naresh, majority of the Bhutanese population lacked formal education.

Many Bhutanese adults and youths also faced similar challenges in upgrading their skills to fit in the Canadian labour market. Bhutanese adults with no formal education and literacy were not qualified for employment agencies and market-offered short- and long term-training and courses. Ashok was not qualified for any vocational training or short-term cashier training because he had no formal education. He heard about a possible job at a grocery store in Surrey in 2012 and contacted the owner to find out if he could be hired for the position of cashier and be trained on the job. He was considered disqualified for the job in the absence of cashier training or job-related experience:

As you know, I was struggling to find a job; in fact, I had not found any in the last 2 years. Maybe because of that I really got excited when someone told me about a possible hiring in a store in Surrey. Because I speak Hindi as well, I thought I may get the job. When I reached there, I gave my resume to the owner and he asked me, “Can you work as a cashier?” I said, “If you could train me on the job.” He did not have any other positions, like a store helper to take care of merchandise. It was very frustrating. I have no experience and training to do such jobs. (Ashok, 2013)
Although Som Nath found jobs after 1 year of landing in Canada, he was laid off in 2013, and he remained unemployed until the summer of 2015. He was a highly experienced carpenter but unable to use or upgrade those skills in Canada. He lacked the literacy and education to be able to attend any schools or to join training programs in order to upgrade his carpentry skills:

I did not study before and now I am suffering. I have skills, I can make all this furniture that you see in this room, but in this country, I need to be retrained. I understand I might have difficulty communicating or reading the order. I am still in English 2 [LINC] 5 years after starting the English class. No one will give me a job in my occupation. The jobs that I did are not fixed jobs; I worked for one or two in general labour and they are finished. I have to find a secured job and it must be in my own occupation, otherwise I will continue to struggle to find a new job. I might have found such jobs if I had some lekhpadi (education). (Som Nath, 2015)

Bhutanese youth may have had higher levels of literacy and formal education than adults and older adults, but their experiences were no different. They struggled to find jobs and upgrade to higher education and training. Deepika and Madhavi wanted to pursue some vocational programs, but one of the barriers they encountered was the lack of a qualification that was recognized in Canada. Despite completing Grade 10 in Nepal, they were required to get some form of education under the Canadian system. In order to meet the requirement, they joined adult education classes but made slow progress. They joined English classes to expedite the process, but they could not progress to the desired levels:

I dropped out from school a few years prior to coming to Canada and now it is very hard to return to school and focus on studies. My educational foundation is not strong, but the education in Canada is very demanding. It is really hard to complete Level 7 to get qualified for care aide training. (Deepika, 2013)

Similarly, finding jobs in the labour market also involves the requirement of secondary skills; for instance, driving. However, Bhutanese youths and adults with limited education and English capabilities faced difficulties passing the knowledge test for driving licenses. The test requires candidates to have a comprehensive knowledge of the driving rules and regulations, and
they are evaluated on the basis of a written knowledge test. The lack of ability to read and understand the manual in English led a number of Bhutanese refugees to fail the test several times. Reena failed the test three times despite taking several preparation classes, while Ashok failed five times and eventually stopped taking tests in BC. He felt confident to drive a car despite having never driven one in his life, but he faced a barrier in overcoming the driving test, as it was administered in English:

I took the test the day before yesterday, but I could not pass. The test asks you various types of questions, which I could not answer correctly. If I am tested for driving a car, I can pass it. I can drive it without any problem. I have driven a motorcycle; I have tried many things and have succeeded. The only thing that I have not tried is a car. I am already familiar with driving a car. It is a lot easier to drive a car here than in Nepal. I should know that I am driving in my lane, should be aware of whether I am in a right lane or a wrong lane. It is easier to navigate, as everything is shown on the dashboard. I will also not get lost because I will use a GPS. I am already familiar with GPS too. (Ashok, 2013).

In 2015 in Alberta, Ashok finally passed the written exam with the help of an interpreter and received his learning permit. However, in BC his inability to pass the knowledge test and drive a car affected his job search and employment opportunities. He revealed that not possessing a driving license limited his options for the jobs he could have accepted—jobs that required a long-distance commute from his area of residence:

If I had a car, I could have searched for a job and accepted jobs that are far away from my place. I could have been able to commute to those places. Jobs that require a 2-hour commute in public transportation could be accessed easily though a private vehicle, but it cannot be manageable through the public bus system because the timing does not work well. I might have to reach work at a time when the bus does not run. Also, I might have to wait for a bus for a very long time. It is very inconvenient when you do not have a license. That is why I say that not having a car [a driving license] is my number one barrier, number two is language, and number three is not being able to find work. (Ashok, 2013)
Not having human capital in the form of formal literacy, secondary skills, and schooling, Bhutanese refugees struggled in the labour market, from accessing training programs to finding jobs.

### 6.3 Bridging social capital

The Bhutanese refugees experienced difficulties bridging social capital with non-Bhutanese communities in order to succeed in the labour market of BC. The lack of relationships and networks outside of their immediate family and ethnic community limited the size and quality of their social capital. They primarily utilized institutionalized and ethnic social capital in BC, but these forms of capital were insufficient for success in the labour market for the multi-barriered Bhutanese refugees. The Bhutanese refugees in Alberta were able to mobilize their pre-existing connections in the labour market to get hired in the local industries, which was not the case in BC. Deepak pointed out how he experienced a double barrier—a combination of a lack of education and an inadequate network in BC. Having never learned English or been exposed to an adequate level of formal education, Deepak struggled to find a job and support his family of eight. “In order to find a job, the first requirement is education and the second is sathibhai (friends). If you know sathibhai and you tell them that you are looking for a job, you will get one. As it is said, if you go fishing, you are likely to catch a fish one day. But I do not have the right friends who could hook me up to work here in Vancouver,” said Deepak (2012).

Bhutanese refugees were new and few in BC, which limited them from taking advantage of pre-existing social capital. The newly settled Bhutanese refugees were themselves struggling in the labour market and working in precarious work environments.

In terms of bridging relationships with a larger community for employment, Bhutanese refugees struggled to network. In the orientation sessions in Nepal prior to leaving for Canada,
the Bhutanese refugees were encouraged to conduct outreach and to expand their networks in order to find jobs in their new community, but, in reality, they experienced multiple barriers. Language is one of the biggest barriers for the Bhutanese refugees in expanding their social networks. Since the Bhutanese community in BC is very small, they failed to expand their networks with other communities in the absence of a common bridging language. Reena was able to find a part-time job through her networks with both the Nepali and the South Asian communities, but she ranked her lack of proficiency in English as the number one issue, and her lack of a larger network as the second biggest barrier to finding a full-time, fulfilling job.

Interestingly, networking opportunities and abilities were influenced by the level of proficiency and fluency in English:

Yes, it is the language that connects you with people. If you do not have any [bridging] language to communicate with, it is impossible to network with other people who are already working. I think many Bhutanese have not been able to find a job because they do not know other people who could help find them jobs where they are working. (Reena, 2014)

Bridging social capital is crucial for low-skilled individuals to ensure a sustainable support system. Prakash understood the importance of expanding his network and he found his first job through an English language classmate, an immigrant from China. After he lost that job, he could not find another one for a couple of months. He struggled to make friends and to communicate with those outside his own community in the absence of a common language, which, in this case, is English: “It is really hard to find jobs without making new friends. As I do not speak English or other languages that other people speak, it is getting very hard to make friends” (Prakash, 2013). However, Mahesh rejects the idea that the English language is the sole determinant of the unemployment problem among the Bhutanese refugees. He thinks Bhutanese refugees are not finding jobs because they confine themselves within the walls of their houses:
It is not just English. The main reason is that you cannot find jobs just staying inside the four walls of your house. No one will find a job if they do not come out of their houses. Our folks are only in their houses and complain about not finding jobs—jobs can’t be found in this place. No one is going to call us for work. There are many places where there is a shortage of workers—we need to explore. Yes, we have a language barrier, but we should still try. (Mahesh, 2013)

Bridging with members of new communities is even more challenging for most Bhutanese women. Many Bhutanese women are homemakers and spend a large portion of their time at home or carrying out household and childrearing responsibilities. They are out in the community mostly to drop off and pick up their children from school, attend English language classes, attend medical appointments, and purchase groceries. Due to a lack of engagement with the broader community, their network is limited to their neighbours, who are most often fellow Bhutanese refugees. Renuka hardly gets free time to network with people in the community; majority of her acquaintances and friends are her Nepali-speaking Bhutanese neighbours. In addition to a lack of time due to family responsibilities, she encountered language barriers, which isolated her and limited her interactions to only her own ethnic community:

I am busy with garkai kaam (household work) from morning to evening. I do not know other people. Bahirako manche sanaga bolna garo lagcha, basha bujidaina (It is hard for me to communicate with outsiders because I do not understand their language). In order to find jobs, I need to know people, for which I need to speak the language. It is very difficult. (Renuka, 2013)

Bhutanese refugees also encountered exploitation in the jobs they secured through bridging relationships with groups outside their own ethnic community, which created some mistrust surrounding social capital outside their own ethnic community. Since Greater Vancouver is home to a sizeable number of people with South Asian backgrounds, Bhutanese refugees tried a regional language, Hindi, in order to bridge relationships.
Jeevan worked in a restaurant but was underpaid for his work. He was reluctant to reach out to other ethnic groups to find any other job opportunities because of his experience of being underpaid. “You can find jobs when you reach out to other ethnic communities, but you have to be careful about exploitation. My employer is wonderful but does not compensate me for all my hours” (Jeevan, 2015). Bhutanese refugees also worked in berry farms in the summer, but they experienced financial exploitation and differential treatment. These experiences of exploitation made Bhutanese refugees cautious of bridging a relationship with those outside of their group.

A small group of Bhutanese refugees tried to foster relationships with fellow Nepali-speaking immigrants in Greater Vancouver but did not succeed as much as they had hoped to. Bhutanese refugees who are Nepali migrants share linguistic and cultural heritage, and a few Bhutanese refugees found jobs through the Nepali community living in the Lower Mainland in cleaning and restaurant sectors. However, many found it difficult to network with Nepali immigrants despite living in Nepal for about twenty years. Basanti moved to Surrey in 2012, where a sizeable Nepali population resides. In fact, she rented the basement of a Nepali landlord but did not feel comfortable to network with the mainstream Nepali group:

Khoi kena ho garo garo lagcha (Don’t know why I am not so comfortable). I see many Nepali people and sometimes I get to chat with them as well. But for some reason, I find it uncomfortable to connect with them. I can’t say what it is. Maybe I am conscious of their social status; they drive nice cars, wear nice clothes, have an education and nice houses, but I do not have all those things. I am embarrassed to make them my friends. (Basanti, 2013)

Jeevan moved to Surrey in 2012 from Coquitlam but maintained close connections with the Punjabi community since he first came to Canada in 2009. He also maintained close contact with a few Nepali immigrants but found himself excluded from the network of a wider Nepali community despite living in Surrey:

I know a few Nepalis in Surrey. In fact, my neighbour next door is a Nepali too. I socialize with a Nepali friend of mine. It is nice when you see someone who speaks your
language, practices the same religion, and follows the same culture. However, it is hard to bond with some Nepalis. I try to connect with Nepalis here, but only a few of them are interested in keeping in touch and some even show disinterest to socialize. It may be because they do not want to identify with us because we have the tag of “refugee.” We lived in Nepal as refugees and came to Canada as refugees. It is not a nice feeling when you find yourself as an outsider within your own ethnic group just because you are a refugee. We have the same heritage and same identity as other fellow Nepalis. The only difference is that our ancestor went to Bhutan from Nepal and we were born there. However, not all Nepalis are so close-minded. I cannot generalize all, but the attitude of a few Nepalis toward us makes us feel down. (Jeevan, 2015)

Despite having some shared identity and cultural affinity with Nepali immigrants, majority of the Bhutanese refugees were reluctant to facilitate the initial social connection. The perceived class hierarchy seemed to have played a role in the formation of social capital between Bhutanese refugees and Nepali immigrants in Greater Vancouver. Building networks with non-cultural groups was even harder in BC. However, once trust was established, Bhutanese refugees would then introduce their families, relatives, and community members for job prospects. Bhutanese refugees encountered multiple barriers in bridging social capital with non-Bhutanese groups and therefore stayed within their traditional forms of social capital, i.e., family, relatives, and co-ethnic groups.

6.4 Different job-finding cultures

The job search culture of Canada was a barrier to many Bhutanese refugees because of their previous labour market experience. The labour market of Nepal in which the Bhutanese refugees were immersed was informal, traditional, and low tech; consequently, the culture of finding jobs and hiring employees in Canada was formal and unfamiliar to them. Job seekers in Nepal did not require technical skill sets, such as strategic job searching, resume writing and targeted resumes, interview preparation, dress codes, and follow-up after job interviews. This, in fact, shocked many Bhutanese refugees searching for jobs in BC. Ashok compared the job
search culture of the two countries, Nepal and Canada, as polar opposites—aakash ra pataal (heaven and hell):

The job search method is different here. It is different because it is a different country, a different place, therefore there will be differences. What makes it different here? There [in Nepal] we found a job by talking, simply asking, “Do you have any work? I would like to start from tomorrow.” That would be sufficient there. But here, it does not work that way—you need to approach someone with your resume. You need to submit an application. (Ashok, 2013)

Bhutanese refugees are unfamiliar with the conventions and practices of the Canadian labour market. They lack knowledge about searching for jobs, the concept and use of resumes, preparation for an interview, job training, and skill-building. The lack of such knowledge and practices makes them less competitive in the labour market.

6.4.1 Job search: unfamiliar terrain

The Canadian job search strategy was a new concept and practice to Bhutanese refugees. They approached job search in a conventional manner of personal relationships and casual conversation, which proved to be inappropriate and sometimes irrelevant. Since she came to BC in 2010, Amrita wanted to find part-time work. However, she did not have any ideas about finding jobs in Canada. The information she received in the pre-departure orientation in Nepal and a few post-arrival workshops on settlement in Coquitlam hardly helped her to understand the culture of job searching in Canada. Like many Bhutanese refugees born and raised in Bhutan, she never had an opportunity to go to school and never looked for a job to make her living. As her family possessed enough land to till, she never sought out work except for parima (reciprocal labour) or to work in the farms of the villagers, who sometimes paid when it was not a reciprocal labour exchange. After coming to Nepal, she worked as a waged labourer in the informal sector, mainly in farming and general labourer work. She found work in Nepal on bolchal ra chinchanko bharam (on the basis of conversation and knowing people). It was a different
experience for her in Canada. In 2012, she approached someone she knew in a Nepali community to find domestic work:

Khoi malalai taha chaina kasrare kaam kojne bhanera, teita hola ne chinechaneko manche sanga sodpuch gare ra? (I do not know how to find jobs. Isn’t it that you ask the people you know?) I looked for a job in Nepal through friends or by contacting the neighbours or thekedar (the contractor). It seems that here it is not easy to find a job in that way. That is why I feel completely lost. Everything is different here than what I was used to [in Bhutan and Nepal]. (Amrita, 2013)

Since Amrita was only familiar with the Nepali lingua-franca of interpersonal communication, she addressed her potential employer as “uncle” in the first meeting. It is a respectful way of addressing someone for Amrita, but she was shocked when her Nepali friend told her that it might be inappropriate and even offensive in Canada to address a potential employer with such a kinship term:

So far, I have had only one job search experience. I went to an Indian’s house in Vancouver with a Nepali friend. They knew each other. Since she knew that I am looking for a job, she introduced me to him. The work was simple, very easy, cleaning and cooking for a single person. But he did not hire me. I do not know what he did not like about me, but he did not sound very friendly. He spoke with me both in Hindi and in English and I replied in Hindi and English too. My Nepali friend told me that he might have got a little offended because I addressed him as “uncle jee.” I do not see anything wrong with that. We address an older person as “uncle” out of respect. It is not bad. (Amrita, 2013)

Mahesh did not have any literacy, but he never ran out of work in Nepal. As a construction worker, he found jobs easily without going through any formal processes of job applications or interviews in Nepal. His relationship with his employer remained casual:

Resumes are not required in Nepal. If I wanted to work, I would contact a home builder. I used to work with a contractor. . . . His name was Kamal. I used to call him Kamal dai (brother). Sometimes, he used to be too fussy. He used to get mad with someone and start fussing around me. One day, I could not control myself and left work, but he brought me back to work after a long plea. He used to be fussy, but he was nice to me. He listened to me. If I told him my tools are broken, he would joke, “Why the hell did you break it? Yeah, go beg for it.” But he would buy me the tools and not charge a single penny. (Mahesh, 2013)
Most Bhutanese refugees are more comfortable and are usually successful in navigating the labour market in conventional manners. Conventional logic and processes of finding employment in Canada have worked better for Bhutanese refugees in comparison to formal processes. For example, Narendra struggled to find a job despite several outreach attempts to drop off resumes in many stores, but when he networked with fellow ethnic Nepali immigrants, the employer contacted him for a potential job:

If you ask me about work, I’ve not found any work directly; it is all through some connection, through a Nepali guy. I did not know anything about Nepalis in the beginning; I did not know where they lived. I met someone and asked him, where do the Nepalis live? As we continued to chat, he gave me numbers of several people and I continued to maintain contact with them. I was invited to a Nepali program in Surrey. I attended the program. There was another Nepali program and I went there as well. There were only Nepali people there. We were all Nepalis there; gaf garna paiyo [got a chance to chat]. Nepali ma dukka suka aadhan pradhan garna paiyo (We exchanged our good and bad experiences in Nepali). I told them how we came to Canada and the challenges that we were facing—the difficulty of finding a job and English language barriers, etc. They told us, “There are many people who are working and we will connect you with them. Give me your number. If they know about hiring or they need workers in their workplace, they will contact you.” After a few days, someone actually called me, saying, “I got your number and I understand you are a Nepali looking for a job. Can you work?” I replied, “Yes, I can do any work,” and then he said, “[He] has some cleaning jobs” and “Come meet me.” He asked me if I had a car. I told him I can come to any place if you provide me the address. He asked me to come at 3:00 p.m. at Burrard near the SkyTrain station. Since I did not have a [cell] phone and I had never seen him, I did not know how to locate him. I asked him what clothes he will be wearing? He said he will come in a white car and will be in a pair of jeans and a black jacket. Since it was a rainy month, I told him I will wear jeans and a raincoat. I called him before leaving home. I kept looking around to identify him, as I had no phone. Someone looked similar, but he happened to be an Indian guy. As I was wondering around, someone came closer to me and asked me if I was a Nepali guy. I said yes. He hired me for his work, and I am still working in two to three different locations for his company. (Narendra, 2012)

For most Bhutanese refugees, searching for jobs through an informal manner was a familiar and conventional process as opposed to the formal process of online tools and technology, which imposed major barriers for them. The use of technology (i.e., the internet, newspapers, social
media, and job banks) was not only impersonal, but it was a complicated process for Bhutanese refugees due to their lack of literacy, English language skills, computer and internet literacy, and unfamiliarity with a resume and interview culture.

6.4.2 Resume culture: only needed for “thula kaam”

The Canadian labour market appeared as a sharp contrast to the experience of most Bhutanese refugees during the first few years of settlement. Among different labour market practices, resume culture was a totally new practice for them. Deepak made his resume for the first time in Canada. He always thought resumes were job applications and only needed for “thula kaam” (professional jobs). “There is a big difference between finding work in Canada and Nepal. In Nepal, you really do not need English. A resume was not required. Um, if I think about it, resumes are like letters and people send them only for thula kaam” (Deepak, 2012).

Som Nath also made his first resume in Canada. He was a skilled carpenter in Nepal and worked in various places without having to submit a resume or apply for a job. After coming to Canada, he made his first resume at a local office in Coquitlam. He photocopied the same original resume and distributed it to all the different types of jobs he was looking for, from carpentry to construction. He was not invited to any interviews, but he found a job through a church’s network and was asked to bring the resume after he met his potential employer:

I had no idea about resumes before. I had never heard about resumes in Nepal or interviews for jobs. I went to a workshop in Coquitlam and came to know that resumes are required to find jobs. There was a white lady working in the office; she helped me make a resume. She asked me about my previous work in Nepal. She gave me a copy of the resume. After many days, she again sent me a few more resumes with my neighbour. I still have the same resume, which I photocopy and distribute here and there. But I found work without submitting a resume. After I met a potential employer, he asked me to bring my resume. The next day I gave him the same resume. (Som Nath, 2013)

Similarly, Ashok compared a resume to a job application:
The major difference is that the hiring in office[hiring process] in Nepal required a job application; here, it is called a resume. Afterwards, the candidates were called for interviews. … If I think about resumes now, it is the same as job applications. That is the only difference, otherwise it is the same. The purpose is the same—we submit them to find a specific job. (Ashok, 2013)

Bhutanese refugees with high school or some college education also struggled because they had very little or no previous experience drafting resumes. Hari holds a diploma from a reputed European university and worked several years for the Bhutanese government before fleeing Bhutan in the early 1990s. Job searching, the requirement of a resume, and the interviewing process were all parts of a procedure that were very difficult for him to conceptualize as well as to put into action:

Initially, we found the process of finding a job very perplexing. First, dropping a resume, waiting to be called for an interview, and then facing an interview are very complicated processes for us. We did not have a similar tradition back home like the one we have here—submitting a resume and facing an interview. The government used to select us according to our qualifications and talk to us about assigning roles and responsibilities accordingly. Bhutan is a very small country and thus had a very small administrative system. They had no time to interview before hiring. In Nepal and India, we worked in various businesses and never required any resumes. (Hari, 2014)

Naresh worked in Nepal until he left for Canada in 2010. He too struggled to understand the culture of submitting resumes. Furthermore, he was upset that he did not know how to write a resume despite having worked in Nepal in a teaching profession and having completed some college education. “Resumes are not required in Nepal and maybe that is why I never had one. I really do not know how to make a resume. I got my first resume through a community worker when I was looking for a job” (Naresh, 2013). Similarly, Basanti, a young woman in her twenties who came to Canada in 2010, did not find a job (as of December 2015). Basanti did not give much attention to making a powerful resume despite the support offered from her settlement service team. She did not take it seriously until her case worker strongly stressed the need for a well-written resume in order to get shortlisted for an interview:
I thought my neighbour or friend would be able to make a resume for me to find a job. It is just a resume, I thought, until my case worker emphasised that I need a strong resume. For the first time, I had my resume made by an employment counsellor. I never heard about a resume before coming to Canada and therefore I am still learning about it. (Basanti, 2015)

Thus, many Bhutanese refugees built their resumes in Canada for the first time in 2011 when they were new to BC between 2009 and 2011. The community workers of the Community Capacity Building program made several resumes for all the household members looking for employment. The resumes were made specifically for cleaning, landscaping, customer service, thrift shop, restaurant, and agricultural work. Almost all the Bhutanese community members lacked the knowledge and skill of building their own resumes, with many adults encountering or hearing about resumes for the first time in Canada. Many made their resumes and dropped off the same resume for any job openings they came across. Even adults and youths with some high school and college education faced challenges in understanding the idea of a targeted resume:

Just to make a resume we had a number of difficulties. I do not recall any such tradition [back in Bhutan]. Only after coming here did I have to make resumes. What I included in my resume is my academic qualifications, my BA and diploma on DDA [Diploma in Development Administration] from the UK. I added that to all my resumes. Even for the small positions that I was applying for I would add all of my [work] experiences, but I still did not get any job. Later, I understood that resumes should be targeted according to the job. For instance, for the position of security guard it is important to have qualifications relevant to a security guard. It is important to show that you are not overqualified. I noticed my errors in the resume. I used to add all my qualifications and job experiences thinking that I would secure the job. Similarly, one had to prepare for the interview according to how one has presented himself on the resume. (Hari, 2013)

6.4.3 Interview preparation and etiquette

Similarly, most Bhutanese refugees experienced impediments to success in job interviews. This is because the interview culture of BC was not an integral part of a job search for many Bhutanese refugees in Nepal and Bhutan. There was a lack of knowledge and experience in preparing for interviews, such as researching the company or industry, preparing answers for
interview questions, paying attention to body language and making eye contact, planning tactics and strategies for responding to questions, and following up after interviews. All of these and some other issues, such as a lack of knowledge about formal attire and arriving on time, remained major hurdles for the Bhutanese refugees.

Bhutanese youths with some English language knowledge and exposure to the labour market in Canada also had challenges in clearly understanding the concept of interview preparation in advance, the importance of formal attire, and punctuality. Sashidar went for a job interview without good preparation. It was for an assistant cook position in Vancouver in a popular African-Indian restaurant. Sashidar was connected with the employer of this job through his community worker, who assumed that Sashidar was prepared for the interview because he was attending a youth program in a local agency in New Westminster. However, the community worker reminded him to wear formal clothing for the interview and oriented him about the nature of work in the restaurant 2 days prior to the interview. On the interview day, both met at the SkyTrain station in Vancouver and walked to the restaurant. Sashidar came for the interview in casual dress. He was wearing a t-shirt, military-style green combat pants, and a pair of leather boots. In the interview he barely spoke anything. The manager tried to speak in Hindi to make Sashidar feel comfortable and to overcome his language barrier. However, Sashidar was not able to respond to the questions in more than a few words:

My first interview was tough for me. I never faced any job interview before; it was not required in my previous jobs in India and Nepal. I was very nervous in my first interview. I gave them my resume, but I was not expecting them to interview me. Thaha tiyea na ne [I did not know], that is why I was not prepared at all. I was with someone who helped me connect with the owner and manager of the restaurant. I was asked many questions and I replied as much as I could. I replied in short sentences; actually, in a few words. I did not know how to answer. I was not well prepared. The experience made me realize that it is important to prepare for the interview in advance. Now I am also a little used to giving interviews. (Sashidar, 2012)
Similarly, Ashok arrived 1 hour late for his job interview, while Basanti was 30 minutes late for her scheduled group job interview. Ashok never got a second opportunity and Basanti missed the first part of the presentation. The Safeway hiring fair she was attending in Surrey was three kilometres away from her residence. She missed the group information session that was scheduled before the interview session in order to provide information on the fair, hiring numbers, the nature of employment, and the hiring policy. Basanti said, “I intended to arrive on time, but I missed the bus and the next bus did not arrive on time. I then walked all the way” (2015).

Some Bhutanese refugees perceive an interview as a casual meeting. Sandhilya did not consider his interview to be a serious matter and did not prepare accordingly. It was more of a formality for him. His friend had already forwarded a resume to the human resources manager, and when he was invited for the interview he attended without any preparation. Luckily, they did not ask him any complicated questions and were eager to hire him due to the recommendation of a staff member, who happened to be Sandhilya’s close friend:

I did not prepare anything for the interview because I assumed they might ask me a few questions about my knowledge of their company and the advertised work. Thus, I did not prepare at all. My friend was working there, so I did not have to apply for the job. He forwarded my resume to his boss and I was invited for an interview. They asked me one or two questions and offered me a job and asked to be present at work the next day. I told them that I will decide and let them know by the next day. I was in school and I could not start the job right away. I had to wait one or two months. (Sandhilya, 2013)

Cultural barriers also often created hurdles for some Bhutanese refugees that complicated their ability to succeed in a job interview. Sashidar experienced such a communication barrier in his interviews. He had great difficulty in making eye contact during interviews and he also found it very difficult to unlearn. He explained, “You know that in Bhutan and Nepal, people say that you should never look directly into thula manche ko aankhma [eyes of high-profile people]. But here you are expected to make direct eye contact” (2013).
The interview culture is not an alien concept to those Bhutanese refugees who were involved in professional or semi-professional employment in Nepal. However, it proved to be a daunting experience for Naresh, who was only exposed to a simple interview process. He was never exposed to a formal job interview culture, one with situational and behavioural questions, before coming to Canada. In his teaching job interviews in Nepal, he was asked a few questions by the school principal and administrator about his teaching style and handling of the classroom. He was also asked to teach in class in order to demonstrate his teaching skills and ability:

We were required to participate in interviews in Nepal but never had a formal interview where I had to refer to what I have already stated in the resume. It used to be panel interviews, where four to five teachers sat and asked questions about our teaching style. We also had a teaching demonstration after the interview in the class where teachers, the principal, and founders sat in the class behind the student rows to observe our teaching skills and classroom management. They keenly observed the teaching style and how the teacher helps the students’ learning. They gave us a topic, such as a poem, one and a half hours before the teaching demonstration. The interview questions were more practical questions about teaching, not scenario and behavioural questions. (Naresh, 2012)

Naresh also experienced a formal interview culture in the private sector, which adheres to a formal and modern hiring system. He is among the handful of Bhutanese refugees who had the opportunity to have a good education in Nepal and to work in a private sector. Refugees were often excluded from the standard labour market in Nepal due to their unstable situations and lack of work permit from the government. The majority of Bhutanese adults lacked literacy and higher education that barred their entry into the standard labour market, which more or less required an interview culture. In addition to their unfamiliarity with the formal hiring process in BC some Bhutanese refugees found challenges to enter the labour market due to their family responsibility and health issues.
6.5 Poor health, disability, and caring responsibilities

Poor health and disability remained large barriers that limited the trajectories of the Bhutanese refugees’ involvement in the Canadian labour market. The protracted camp living experience of 20 years with a lack of proper sanitation, poor housing conditions, lack of health care and proper nutrition, and trauma and impaired mental health contributed to the deterioration of the health and wellbeing of many Bhutanese refugees. As a matter of fact, a sizeable number of Bhutanese refugees in BC were unable to work due to some form of physical disability or mental health condition. Some family members who probably could have found jobs spent their time providing care to their sick family members.

Health adversities prevented some Bhutanese refugees from working and upgrading their skills for occupations within their interests. A number of Bhutanese refugees found themselves diagnosed with one or multiple major health issues. They were diagnosed with diabetes, high blood pressure, nerve-related issues, heart diseases, chronic hearing and vision impairments, back pain, undiagnosed chronic headaches, PTSD, and mental illness. Devendra (2014) is in his fifties and wanted to work despite his trauma. During the conflict in Bhutan, he was abducted and tortured for several months, undergoing physical and mental abuse. He was housed in a confined area without any contact with the public, where he was physically beaten almost to death. He did not expect to return home alive. While he managed to escape the horrendous sentencing, he could not overcome his PTSD. He suffers from body pain, anxiety, depression, and sleep disorders in addition to chronic backache. He tried several jobs in the last 5 years and experienced difficulties continuing them due to his poor health condition. In 2013, he left his family in BC and went to work in Alberta, but he could not continue the work for more than a few months due to his physical trauma. He was laid off from work:
I went to Alberta for work, submitted my resume, and got a job too, but I was fired from work. That is why I am back in British Columbia now, but if I feel better, I will go back. Everything was good there – the job was good; if I had no health issues, I would be working. They told me if I get better and become able to work, they will refer me to work in British Columbia [to the main company in BC]. I could work here in British Columbia. But in Alberta, they laid me off from the job and gave me a termination letter. (Devendra, 2014)

He tried to find jobs after returning to BC, but he was unable to find one that fit his ability, that is, a less physically demanding job. In 2014, he completed an application for government support for a Person with Disability (PWD), but it was rejected by the adjustor. He saw a psychologist for therapy at the Bridge Clinic in 2011 because he was experiencing sleep, anger, and anxiety disorders, which were related to his past trauma and partly exacerbated by the settlement challenges of not finding jobs. Devendra thinks his application was rejected because his doctor did not cooperate with him. The physician he saw thought he could work because he looked physically fit. He told Devendra, “Nothing has happened to you, you can work.” He was very upset to hear that from his doctor:

I am a victim of torture and have been getting medical care for the past one and a half years. I get pain relief through an IV periodically. … My body hurts, that is why I get the injections. My left hand aches badly, and it is aching now as well. My hand hurts, but not as much as it used to. My fingers hurt too. These are the fingers that experienced a lot of trauma. It is very tough to survive in Canada. Sometimes, I feel it is better to die. Sometimes, I feel if I find some poison, I would take it. (Devendra, 2014)

Devendra’s wife and son have chronic health problems too. His wife has issues with chronic leg swelling and therefore cannot stand for an extended period of time. Devendra wants his son, Sashidar, to work and be independent; however, Sashidar has his own problems. He has sleep apnea and thus cannot work, and was fired from his last two jobs because of his sleep disorder. Sashidar did not want to make an excuse in front of his parents, who were unemployed because of their health and English language barriers. In order to save face, he lived in Coquitlam with other extended family members:
I have not worked a lot in Canada because of my poor health. Wherever I worked, I got fired. I think I have been fired at three places so far. So, currently, I am not doing anything other than getting some medical care. I am not going to start any work until I get better. (Sashidar, 2013)

Similarly, Chandra has epilepsy and is hard of hearing. His epilepsy and hearing impairment started about twenty years ago. After coming to Nepal as a Bhutanese refugee, he stayed there for a few years and then went to work in Punjab, India. He worked in a company where there was a high level of noise pollution, and he thinks that this might have triggered his epilepsy. After he started taking medicine for epilepsy, his hearing slowly worsened. As a result of his epilepsy, he often experiences seizures. Subsequent to his arrival in Canada, he has experienced at least four episodes of seizures in the last 3 years. Once, he had a seizure on the train on his way from Downtown Vancouver to Coquitlam. When he regained consciousness, he found he had missed his stop and ended up at a different destination. He is in his thirties and a father of two children but is unable to work due to his health conditions:

Who wouldn’t like to work? I want to work and support my family. It is vastly different when you have your own earnings versus when you have to depend on welfare. I have worked before and I hope I will be able to work again, but at present it is not possible for me to work. I cannot lift anything heavier than a couple of pounds due to the dislocation of my arm, which happened after my last seizure. Also, my walking is not stable because of the medicine I am taking. It makes me drugged all the time, and in the morning it is worse, as I feel like puking. I have been going to English classes, but now I have not even been able to continue that. My hearing has improved slightly with the hearing aid, but my epilepsy is not under control yet. After my doctor changed the medicine that I was taking in Nepal, I am having seizures. It seems that the new medicine is not working well for me. My hearing is problematic too; some days I hear better and other days not. I have been referred to St. Paul’s Hospital for a cochlear implant to fix the permanent hearing loss of my left ear. (Chandra, 2015)

Despite physical and mental disabilities and limited health, Bhutanese refugees have been working toward overcoming barriers. After 2 years of unemployment, Devendra started a new job in August 2015—a job that was relatively easy compared to his previous jobs, but he is
skeptical about how long he can continue to work: “Only time can tell whether I can thrive in this new job” (Devendra, 2015).

Some Bhutanese family members in BC did not find time to prepare themselves for the job market or paid work because they were the primary caregivers of family members needing high levels of care and attention. Naresh, who was in his 20s when he came to Canada with his wife and son, found it difficult to manage time between providing family care and undertaking work and school. Naresh had to prioritize work, but he was unable to further his education in Canada. He aspired to be in the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) but was short of time to upgrade his English skills and complete his college education, which were the two key qualifications required to be eligible for RCMP positions. His wife was diagnosed with a deadly kidney infection and hospitalized for several weeks. He was lucky to have extended family members who were around and living with him. They took care of his child and his work went undisrupted. However, he abandoned his dream for the sake of family. Naresh shared his challenges:

Actually, I did not do much. I attended English classes, but I did not have time to do any training or go to college. It was because my family member was sick and I played the role of primary caregiver for my wife and young child. I joined school, but I had been going to the hospital every day. The amount of time and care she needed from me left me with no choice but to drop out of the program. (Naresh, 2012)

Some families in BC had multiple family members with physical or intellectual disabilities or a combination of the two. One to two family members had to provide care to the rest of the family at the expense of their own future. Roma came to Canada in her mid-twenties and lived with her elderly mother and two elderly aunts, who required full attention and support. All of them had a speech impairment and one of them had a mobility issue. Roma was the only family member with the ability to provide care to those family members and to communicate in
English. She provided all the necessary support to them. Being new in Canada required her to provide more support to her family, which would generally range from having to complete a lot of paperwork to attending several medical appointments in a week:

Saani dheki ma nai herdai aayeke chu [Since I was very young, I have been providing care to my family members], as my father passed away a long time ago. I had no other siblings in Canada until 2012. My aunts and mom do not have any other siblings in Canada to provide any sort of care for them. In Nepal it was easier, as I used to get support from my sisters, who lived close by, and also from my other extended family members, relatives, and neighbours. Here everyone is busy. In the first years, doctors from the Bridge Clinic referred my aunts and mother to several doctors. Our RAP [Resettlement Assistant Programme] worker referred us to other service providers, and I was the only one who accompanied them and dealt with their situation. I got lost so many times and was overwhelmed. I did not like being in Canada in my first year. It was very stressful. Our family doctor is in Surrey and going to Surrey from Coquitlam on public transportation is hard. It is even harder to take my aunt, who cannot walk. I could not afford a taxi all the time. It is a pretty long commute, which requires changing two trains and two buses. (Roma, 2013)

At a young age, Roma shouldered her family responsibilities, which limited her prospects in many ways, including career development. She enjoys working and learning. She wants to pursue her dream job to become a nurse, but she lacks the time to upgrade her education:

Aba kaam garau bhane padai chutcha, padai garau bhane kaam chutcha [If I work, I cannot continue my studies; if I study, I cannot work]. I stopped going to English classes after I started a part-time job. I can only do a part-time job. My manager at work asks me to do full-time work, which I do only when things are going smoothly in my family and I have no English classes. If I do full-time work, I will be left behind. I am already behind. I have been in Canada for 5 years now and at the time of applying for citizenship I was unable to meet the English language requirement. I spoke English before coming to Canada, not perfectly though. I should have finished Level 5 a long time ago if I had got a chance to study without any pauses. Ke garna sakincha cha ra? (What can I do?) I will have to wait a few more years to be able to apply for nursing related-courses, as upgrading my English is taking way longer than I expected. (Roma, 2013)

Som Nath dropped out of school and stopped searching for jobs for about a year after his parents arrived from Nepal. His mother was diagnosed with multiple chronic illnesses, including breast cancer, diabetes, asthma, a severe stomach ulcer, and arthritis. She was transferred to the hospital directly from the airport upon her arrival in Vancouver. His father, who lacked any
English-speaking skills, was totally dependent on Som Nath’s support in order to access health care, travel around, coordinate with various agencies, and become oriented with the Canadian system. Som Nath spent several weeks taking care of his mother at the hospital, pushing her wheelchair to take her from one place to another. In addition, he had to provide mental support to assure his parents, who were overwhelmed by the new changes. His wife provided immense social support in addition to preparing and delivering food to the hospital and taking care of her mother-in-law’s hygiene, but she was limited due to her pregnancy at the time of her in-laws’ arrival in BC. Therefore, most of the responsibility was shouldered onto Som Nath, who ultimately dropped out of school to support his family:

When my mother arrived at the airport, my father thought that she was not going to land in Vancouver alive from the long journey of 40 hours. She was already really sick. She had a big wound on her breast which was infected and leaking and was barely stopped by bandages. When she arrived, she stunk so bad that she was immediately transferred to Vancouver General Hospital. I started getting busier from that point. She was referred to several health care providers and later we came to the British Columbia Cancer Agency for therapy and appointments 4 times a week from Coquitlam. My parents stayed with my family for about two to three months and during the stay we provided services around the clock. But later we found a place for them, which was about thirty minutes’ walking distance from my place. One day, I had to take her [his mother] for a medical appointment to a Home Health Clinic in Coquitlam, where I had never been before. I got lost on the way. The bus that I took to reach the clinic dropped me off by the highway and I had to push the wheelchair for 30 minutes on the street that did not have a sidewalk and the cars were really moving very fast. After completing the main road, I had to push her wheelchair uphill for about ten minutes. I was pushing the wheelchair, but it was rolling back, which was very scary. Later, a pedestrian helped us. My father needed a lot of emotional support because he was new and did not speak English. He was overwhelmed. He was burned-out and frustrated. He wanted to go back to Nepal right away! But in order to help my parents, I stopped going to school, as I thought I can always go to school again, but if anything happens to my parents here, that will be very unfortunate. I was already very slow in making progress in English, but not going to school for a long time had a backlash for me and for my future. I was laid off from my work about a couple of months ago and was trying to find a job as well, but how can you do a job when you are working around the clock to support your parents? I decided not to go back to school for some time and not to look for job for about a year. (Som Nath, 2014)
Similarly, Madan was not able to look for work and go to an English language class because he was the sole care provider for all his family members, who were diagnosed with developmental and intellectual disabilities:

I came to Canada in 2013 and my role has been greatly changed. In Nepal, I worked—I taught in a private school, and I worked in India. But here it is not the same. I work 18 hours a day to take care of my family. My three kids have developmental disabilities and my wife has an intellectual disability. I prepare my kids for school in the morning and drop them off to three different places. Because I walk and take buses everywhere, my entire morning is gone, and the same thing in the afternoon when they [the children] are ready to come home. They need a lot of care at home too. I have stopped going to English language classes at SUCCESS and I have not worked since I came to Canada. It is hard to work and to not be able to upgrade myself. In the future, my kids will grow up and be independent; maybe they will move somewhere else like everyone does here, but I will not have any work experience or skills at that point. I might be considered a useless person. (Madan, 2015)

The health and employment status of the resettled refugees, particularly those from a protracted refugee camp background, was a two-way relationship—ill health of family members impacted job prospects, and lack of employment also created stress and poor mental health for some.

6.5 Experiences of exclusion based on race and gender

The Bhutanese refugees experienced systemic exclusion and discrimination based on their race and gender in BC. They encountered differential treatment based on their racial or ethnic identity through the process of job searching and hiring, as well as at work. Entering into the labour force outside of the domestic domain is not a common phenomenon for most Bhutanese women. However, the refugee crisis detached Bhutanese refugees from their traditional means of production i.e., agriculture. Refugee women in Nepal engaged in paid employment in order to fulfill their unmet needs. After coming to Canada, Bhutanese women became more active in the labour market in order to minimize their families’ dependency on welfare and to accumulate more capital in order to meet their growing needs.
Bhutanese refugees experienced exclusion in the labour market based on their race and accent. They would hardly get invited for an interview for the jobs applied for online. Prakash applied for a job online, but he did not receive any phone calls for an interview. With some feedback from his employment counsellor, he changed his name on his resume, which helped him receive phone calls. However, after hearing his English conversation and mainly his accent over the phone, he would not get invited for an interview. He applied for entry-level work needing only basic language skills, but he was not able to secure any job:

Do not ask how many jobs I applied for! But I did not get any response to the resumes that I submitted online. Once, my counsellor suggested that I change my name on my resume and I did it. I started getting calls immediately, but once they heard my voice, they would again figure out that I was not a native speaker and would not invite me for a job or interview. (Prakash, 2013)

A youth worker working with the Bhutanese refugees since 2009 witnessed firsthand discrimination against a Bhutanese youth in the labour market. In the process of helping the youth to gain volunteer work experience in a clothing store, she was shocked by the response of the store manager, who decided to put the Bhutanese youth in the back of the store in the stocking room because of her accent and appearance. The store manager also claimed that the Bhutanese girl did not match the image of the store that they were trying to sell:

The person that I took [to a clothing store] had good English. When we got to the store, they [the Bhutanese youth] were like, “I think they will do better at the back of the store because of their English”—but the person had good English. Their accent might have been difficult to understand … the manager sees that as a barrier for other people buying clothes, as they would not be able to understand accents—not the English, but the accent. They thought maybe the back will be better. Also, it was shocking to hear that even the manager would say things like “the person does not fit with the image of the store that we are trying to sell.” (Sophia, 2013)

Additionally, some Bhutanese refugees worked for berry picking on a farm in summer, where they noticed discrimination in assigning tasks. Usually, they were assigned to those areas
of the farm that had fewer berries on the bushes, which would take them a longer period of time
to pick with fewer berries to find:

Ramro ramro bheri bhayeko thauma ta thkekedar haruko afnai manche lagaunca [The contractor will send the people he favours to the part of the farm with good fruiting]. Our thekedar does not have much power to allocate the areas, so we had no other choice than to follow the order of the person with an authority in the farm. They send us to the areas which are more difficult to pick berries from and which have small berries and less fruiting. We get paid by the bucket of berries we pick, not by hours or by day, so at the end of the day we do not get enough berries to get compensated for our long day of work. (Tejendra, 2015)

Bhutanese adults with an elderly appearance or those close to retiring age also experienced overt discrimination. Hari held a senior administrative position in the government before fleeing from Bhutan. He felt rejected in the Canadian labour market because of his age and elderly appearance:

Incidents! I have an interesting one to share with you. One day, I was out searching for a job. I have heard that there is equality in Canada and there is no discrimination. Both of us [Hari and his partner] went to the Safeway after finding out that they were hiring. We asked a person there if they were hiring, he said, “Yes,” but he also asked us if we were above seventy. That shocked me. In fact, he himself looked elderly and had a hunchback. I got a little more frustrated thinking that at the time when I have not found a job, my elderly appearance will be an additional problem. (Hari, 2013).

Again, Hari experienced a similar incident when he went to a Target retail store for a job interview:

There was a job interview for a sales position at Target. They had a different system where they provided information in a group setting. I noticed I was the only elderly person in the group. The rest of them were young people, white girls, and young girls. I realized that that’s the type of employee they were looking for. Despite knowing that, I still waited for an interview for the sales position. But I sensed that I was already disqualified. I was still a little hopeful after the interview, but later I received a call saying, “Sorry, you were not successful.” I had so much experience and enough qualification for any entry-level job in a business, but I am not qualified for any job; I am just puzzled. (Hari, 2013)

Several Bhutanese men and women experienced economic exploitation. Basanti, Shanka, and Asha did not receive their wages for their work and Jeevan did not receive his full wages for
his work. Basanti, a single mother, did not receive her pay for her twenty to twenty-five days of work. The employer ignored her request for the pay and took advantage of her being unfamiliar with the system and a woman of a marginalized group. Jeevan was underpaid; his manager took advantage of his loyalty and did not pay the minimum wage rate of BC at the time.

Bhutanese women experienced double the jeopardy in the labour market. As members of a racialized group and as women, they were treated unfairly and as sex objects. Reena started networking for jobs outside her own ethnic community but experienced sexual harassment in the process of job searching. Her potential employer, who managed a housekeeping business, wanted to interview her in a local café in Surrey, but she realized that he was manipulating her for sexual favours. He planned to come to her house in Surrey at 6:00 p.m. and go to a café to discuss potential opportunities, but he did not show up at the preplanned time. She called him and they decided to meet at her house at 7:00 p.m. and go to the café for a meeting, but he did not show up again even at 8:00 p.m. She called him again to inquire about his no-show, but he offered to pick her up at 8:30 p.m. and take her to his place. She realized that she was being manipulated and scolded him for demeaning her:

I waited until 8:00 p.m. and called him saying that he wasted my 2 hours again. He said he is coming at 8:30 p.m. to pick me up and would pay for 2 hours of my lost time in addition to the time I will spend with him. It shocked me as well as made me angry. I lost my temper and scolded him, saying, “What is your intention? Why do you always ask me to meet with you in the evening and why do you have to pay me when I am only meeting you to talk about employment opportunities?” I told him that he does not need to judge me, as I am a person who believes in hard work, and because of that I can find work somewhere. I then hung up the phone. (Reena, 2013)

Reena’s experience of sexual manipulation in the course of searching for jobs did not end there. The next day, she received a call from another person who tried to manipulate her as well:

Another day, I received a call from another person for a similar work-related opportunity and I quickly realized that he had a similar intention behind calling me, so I asked him not to call me anymore. It might also be that the same person gave my number to another
person. At this point, I am really stressed out because of my experience with some bad people in the course of looking for work. (Reena, 2013)

Similarly, as discussed in the previous chapter, Asha’s restaurant manager harassed her at her workplace, cursing and calling her lewd and profane words whenever he did not like anything at work. He scolded her for minor mistakes to the point where she quit her job.

6.6 Lack of employment training and targeted job programs

Bhutanese refugees’ capacity to thrive in the Canadian labour market was limited by the government’s labour market policy. Bhutanese refugees struggled to find skills training to enhance their human capital in order to match the demand of the labour market. They were not eligible for mainstream training because of higher language benchmarks and formal schooling requirements. Those Bhutanese refugees with certain occupational experience and skills gained from Nepal or Bhutan wanted to upgrade their skills to make them relevant to the Canadian labour market’s needs, such as Tejendra. Tejendra was a highly skilled carpenter in Nepal. He was busy all year round. With his income, he supported himself and his extended family in Nepal. However, after coming to Canada, his skills were totally irrelevant from a livelihood perspective. He goes to Home Depot on public transportation and buys small-sized lumber and makes furniture (beds, chairs, baby furniture) for his Bhutanese neighbours. He uses traditional tools to make that furniture, but he lacks the knowledge and skills to operate the tools used in Canada to design and carve patterns on furniture. He said, “I can make cupboards and tables or anything that can be used in a home or office, but I have no Canadian experience of using tools. I do not know how to use sophisticated machines, nor can I drive from one place to another place. I am stuck here” (2014). Similarly, many other Bhutanese refugees had agricultural skills, but they were not finding agricultural jobs because they lack experience using
technologically advanced modern machinery. Despite having multiple skill sets, Ashok failed to transfer his skills in Canada:

If you ask about the people in my community, we were all farmers in Bhutan and in Nepal. A few did other jobs, a few managed small stores in the camp. Khete ko lagi ho bhane hamilai talim diny pardaina [For the work in agriculture, we do not need training]. Instead, I can train the local people here about agriculture. I can also paint houses if I get a little experience. Same with construction, I can do work that requires the use of cement; I am perfect! But what I think is that when we are to be retrained, our older skill sets or livelihood skills should be assessed. My greatest skill is building [brick and cement] houses, but I cannot utilize my skills here because buildings are constructed differently here; they use a lot of equipment and I have no experience in those areas. (Ashok, 2013)

The Bhutanese refugees clearly experienced systemic barriers in the Canadian labour market. They encountered linguistic barriers and a lack of recognition of their human and cultural capital in Canada. These barriers are compounded by the exclusionary practices based on race and gender in the labour market. Furthermore, the experience of protracted refugee camp living has added another layer of challenges for the Bhutanese refugees with regards to participating in the Canadian labour market. The poor health of some refugees and the need for care-giving for some family members stopped many refugees from working and developing new labour market-relevant skills. The lack of skills training to upgrade their previously accumulated human capital to match the demand of the labour market further limited their labour market prospects.
Chapter 7: Analysis and Discussion: Bhutanese Refugees and their Negotiated Outcomes in BC’s Labour Market

This thesis examines the lived labour market experience of Bhutanese refugees in BC. In Chapter 4, I described multiple forms of capital in Bhutan, Nepal, and Canada. Chapter 5 explored their labour market strategies and workplace challenges, and Chapter 6 identified barriers to their labour market participation in Canada. The thesis makes the following contribution to understanding Bhutanese refugees’ labour market participation in BC: Bhutanese refugees who were subsistent farmers in Bhutan and general labourers in the traditional agricultural and semi-modern construction sector in Nepal found a sharp contrast in terms of the recognition of their human capital, job-finding practices, and employment relationships in the urban labour market of Greater Vancouver.

7.1 Embodied indigenous and informal labour market habitus versus advanced labour market expectations

Bhutanese refugees entered the Canadian labour market with their indigenous habitus, which proved to be a barrier in the Canadian labour market. I have analysed this in light of the Bhutanese refugees’ source countries’ habitus, as well as how this habitus, along with their cultural/human capital, intersected with the Canadian labour market. Labour market regulation and practices also played a major role in determining the Bhutanese refugees’ labour market trajectories in Canada.

As illustrated in Chapter 6, Bhutanese refugees in Greater Vancouver struggled to understand Canadian labour market regulations and practices, including (i) the concept and processes of job searching, resumes, job applications, and interviews; (ii) how to demonstrate soft skills pertinent to the labour market and urban life—for instance, wearing interview-appropriate attire and being on time for the interview; and (iii) understanding job types, mobility,
and flexibility (such as part-time, on-call, and casual) in the labour market. In relationship to Bourdieu’s theorization of embodied cultural capital, challenges in navigating the processes of securing and retaining jobs are often centred in cultural differences and are a result of the dispositions of Bhutanese immigrants. Dispositions are “embodied ways of being, valuing, doing and communicating” (Zotzmann, 2013, p. 252) generated from the habitus of the person or group in question. Habitus provides the subject with a particular orientation to actions in the field. The labour market habitus of the Bhutanese refugees was bound up with their previous experience with informal labour markets and the norms and practices characteristic of a specific peasant culture. The disposition and mental schemas (the doxas or rules) present in the fields of Bhutan and Nepal contrast with those expected within the Canadian labour market. The disposition and mental schemas that one poses are also embodied cultural capital that can generate profit when that capital finds a context where it is applicable. Furthermore, the Bhutanese refugees encountered devaluation of their human capital—skill sets based on informal, practical wisdom—in the Canadian labour market, which contributed to their labour market trajectories.

7.1.2 Formal academic credentials versus informal, practical wisdom

The Bhutanese refugees in BC had insufficient human capital in terms of literacy and education. This proved to be a major barrier for them in competing in the Canadian labour market. In the cases of Manisha and Som Nath, they had no formal literacy and learned the alphabet for the first time in Canada. To give a larger picture of their low level of human capital, only two out of 19 respondents in this study (among those 18 years or over) had completed high school at the time of leaving Bhutan in the late 1980s and early 1990s. As illustrated in Chapter 4, the human capital expected of the employment seeking Bhutanese refugees in the Canadian
market is related to their limited access to formal education and the development of professional skills, both in Bhutan and in their exile in Nepal. However, the Bhutanese refugees possessed sufficient cultural capital, reproduced by inter-generational hereditary transmission of farming and horticulture skills and knowledge in Bhutan and based on the practice of subsistence agriculture. Unfortunately, the Bhutanese refugees’ resettlement in Canada changed the linear reproduction of this cultural capital, as they could not engage in a similar livelihood and work in BC.

The value of capital is often tied to its own field. The Bhutanese refugees’ capital, generated in an indigenous economy, did not translate to a different field and the habitus of an industrial economy and labour market built around capitalist systems of production in Canada. The requirement of formal qualifications and credentials in this labour market meant that their informal and practical wisdom was unrecognized. The logic of working in a highly organized, capitalist labour market differs considerably from that of the rural or indigenous labour market characteristic of a peasant economy operating within an informal and relatively unorganized market system. Capitalist markets have different objectives; for instance, profit and competition versus subsistence and self-fulfillment. Because their human capital was not recognized in the BC labour market, the Bhutanese refugees were deemed ineligible or less suitable for employment opportunities that were theoretically available to them.

The labour market to which the Bhutanese refugees were trying to gain access required a workforce with forms of human capital that categorically excluded the refugees. This reality pushed them into precarious work environments, or those environments where their labour was not well-paid and where the demand for their labour was variable—particularly cleaning, meat processing and packing, and seasonal agricultural work. In Canada, the “legitimate culture” for
labour is one where educational qualifications have been acquired as a result of participation in formal and highly organized processes, being a highly structured and formal education system. This is regarded as the desired and “legitimate culture,” or doxa (Bourdieu, 1985, p. 56). Anyone who has been part of this legitimate culture belongs to a labour market characterized by valued forms of capital. Anyone without this experience or these qualifications belongs to a portion of the labour market defined by those who have devalued capital. Therefore, a labour market grounded in capitalist logic distinguishes its players primarily in terms of the extent to which their human capital has been derived from formal institutional educational settings and institutions. Human capital acquired by any other means (and this would also apply to the wisdom of Indigenous Elders in Canada) is devalued, regardless of how relevant and valuable that capital might be. Unless it is ‘degreed’ or certified, it is not seen as valuable. Creese et al. (2011) note, “Human capital theory rests on value-laden, Western-market definitions of workers’ skills and credentials as formally obtained, institutionally recognized and instrumental to the goal of economic self-sufficiency” (p. 143). In addition to the structural barrier of having forms of cultural and human capital not recognized in the Canadian labour market, Bhutanese refugees experienced discrimination and exclusion based on race and ethnicity.

7.2 Discrimination and labour market exclusion

Bhutanese refugees seeking jobs and those working in BC experienced labour market exclusion and racist assumptions and stereotypes based on their ethnicity, caste, and class. These exclusionary dynamics had gatekeeping consequences, preventing those with informal education from entering the workforce. This was true whether or not the insights and skills acquired from formal educational settings were at all relevant to the particular job for which someone was hired. Those who were already recruited experienced marginalization in the workplace.
Discrimination was not limited to racial or cultural discrimination but was also apparent along the lines of class and caste. In addition to discriminatory treatment from fellow members of the Nepali community, dalit Bhutanese refugees experienced caste-based discrimination. Race also intersected with gender, as I will discuss in the section on gender relationships. Below, I will analyze each of these three categories using critical race theory.

7.2.1 Gatekeeping: Bhutanese refugees barred from entering the labour market

Racialized identity meant that the Bhutanese refugees faced different patterns of racism and discrimination. Those applying for a job through online application platforms, or through on-site resume drop-off, most often did not get invited for interviews. Rakesh, a Bhutanese youth, was called for an interview but, when he went, was told that someone was already hired. Similarly, Prakash, another Bhutanese youth, was called for an interview after changing his name to an Anglo-sounding name on his resume. He received a call the day after his new resume submission, but the employer only engaged him in a short phone conversation regarding the position. The employer told him that he would be contacted for an in-person job interview, but this never happened. Employers’ labour market practices of exclusion—based on their discriminatory attitudes and perceptions of race, colour, and accent—function as barriers for racialized individuals entering the labour market. Those who secured jobs encountered favouritism in the assignment of work, while others continued to be marginalized in their workplaces.

7.2.2 Favouritism and marginalization in the workplace

Once hired, Bhutanese workers experienced marginalization in their workplaces. One Bhutanese youth was given a job at the back of the store instead of the front; when asked for a reason, the employer simply told the youth worker that “the person does not fit with the image of
the store that we were trying to sell” (Sophia, 2013). The response of the employer simply reinforced the dominant discourse and stereotype that one must look a certain way (white, European female) to work in the store. The youth may have been Othered as a brown refugee girl with a non-standard English accent. Such difference is often constructed to confirm the inferiority or negativity of racialized people (Bannerji, 2000, p. 107). Chandra and Tejendra, seasonal berry pickers, noticed the unfair assignment of more difficult and less productive sites to the Bhutanese workers picking berries on farms. Chandra waited several months to get his pay, and when he received his pay it was not the full amount. In 2012, Chandra and Tejendra’s fellow Bhutanese workers had experienced the same treatment. The workers did not receive their cheques until about six months after the season was over. In addition, they were subject to intimidation for repeatedly asking for their pay. The exclusion and differential treatment were not limited to interracial groups. It was also evident within the ethnic community in the form of caste and class discrimination.

7.2.3 Discrimination based on class and caste

Discrimination and social exclusion were not only prevalent in interracial contexts, but also manifested within the Bhutanese and Nepali communities. Basanti and Jeevan found themselves lacking the necessary class status to foster strong relationships, which might translate to employment opportunities. The Bhutanese refugees lacked the economic means and educational privilege to adopt the lifestyles of Nepali immigrants in the Lower Mainland. They also felt stigmatized for their refugee backgrounds. Their class position, taste, and lifestyle were incompatible with the development of links and bonds with larger ethnic and outside their ethnic groups. They had also experienced backlash for being refugees in Nepal. As a result, the Bhutanese refugees faced obstacles in networking with middle-class Nepali people.
Similarly, the Bhutanese dalits struggled to foster relationships with non-dalits within the Nepali community. As dalits, Basanti and Harka were discriminated against based on their caste. For instance, Harka, a dalit member of the Nepali community, could not find a basement apartment to rent despite several Nepali immigrants advertising their rental units. Basanti felt isolated within the Bhutanese community and lived far away from the mainstream Bhutanese refugee community as a result. Harka and Basanti did not necessarily have access to upper-class networks that could provide vital information and resources to facilitate their entrance into standard forms of employment, or to find places to rent in better neighbourhoods for easier access to work.

The Bhutanese refugees’ experience of discriminatory behavior or ill treatment can be looked at from the perspective of the social meaning attached to race (Garner, 2009) in the Canadian labour market. Race is a marker of social categorization or hierarchy in Canadian society, which has been predominantly white-dominated and often inscribed with white supremacism since the time of European colonization (Razack, 2002). Bhutanese refugees are not of the dominant European white ancestry, and thus the dominant group perceives them differently—as deviants from the “normal” (Bannerji, 2000). As I’ve noted in Chapter 2, society has also ascribed meanings to the colour of races; for instance, “Associating ‘blackness’ with depravity and ‘whiteness’ with virtue” (Vizkelety, 1987, as cited in Aiken, 2007). The “notion of race” (Aiken, 2007, p. 58) is a way of maintaining social order (Aiken, 2007) by differentiating “us” from “them,” “white” from “non-white,” and “legitimate” from “illegitimate.” The linguistic capital of Bhutanese refugees is not recognized in Canada because the majority culture believes such distinctions are important and those who fail by those norms are devalued. The same notion is reinforced in the labour market, where Bhutanese refugees and
their capital are devalued. Furthermore, Bhutanese refugees’ experiences of exclusion and discriminatory treatment, based on race, class, and caste, in the labour market and community shed light on how exclusionary and discriminatory practices are reproduced and maintained in Canada. Exclusion and discrimination based on gender is even greater. Bhutanese women were doubly marginalized in the Canadian labour market, first by being of a racialized minority and secondly for being women.

7.3 Gender relations and labour market practices in BC

Bhutanese men and women experienced similar challenges in the labour market, but women faced added barriers. Their racialized selves and gender made them more vulnerable. They experienced sexual harassment, marginalization, and financial abuse. Bhutanese women’s labour market negotiation within the gendered division of household work was also noticeable. Despite these challenges, Bhutanese women continued to search for jobs, built their skills, entered into jobs, and supported their families and community members.

7.3.1 Interactions between gendered and racialized working selves

As racialized individuals, Bhutanese women experienced exploitative power structures in the process of finding work. One potential employer tried to lure Reena, potentially for sexual purposes, in the course of a hiring appointment. Once she realized this, Reena confronted the employer. Asha’s manager verbally harassed and humiliated her at her workplace because of a minor error. Unable to bear this treatment, she left her job. Roma was tactfully, but unfairly, dismissed from her job. Her employer took advantage of the fact that she was new to the Canadian labour market; he gradually decreased her hours and then did not call her back to work. Basanti was never paid for her work; she was humiliated and dismissed without notice or apparent cause. The employer did not offer her an opportunity to return to work and did not
respond to her calls regarding her pay. These cases reinforce how racialized women are defined and positioned in the labour market and Canadian society at large. The use of profanity, luring for sexual purposes under the guise of hiring, and dismissal without proper notice or payment point to the inferior place of Bhutanese women in Canada, a belief that is defined and legitimized by dominant discourses (see Chapter 2).

The exploitation and exclusion of Bhutanese women in the labour market pushed them into precarious employment conditions with low pay and job insecurity. This pattern is apparent in Reena’s attempt to secure a cleaning job, in Basanti’s work at her employer’s house, and Asha’s part time work in a restaurant as a dishwasher and kitchen support staff. The socially constructed positions and identities of these Bhutanese women led to the “entrenchment of structures of oppression” (Galabuzi, 2006, p. 34). Their racial identity became a barrier to their labour market participation, which could facilitate their economic independence. The gender dynamics of Bhutanese refugees within the realm of their households was also noticeable.

**7.3.2 Gender relationships within households**

As previously discussed, Bhutanese refugees’ labour market experiences during their first years in BC were bleak and frustrating. Bhutanese women provided emotional support for their male counterparts and their children’s wellbeing. They transformed one type of capital to another. Sita provided emotional capital to her husband, which ultimately helped him find employment and converted this capital to economic capital. When she noticed he was frustrated with his labour market situation, she encouraged her husband to continue looking for jobs. Both Sita and her husband became seriously ill; she was diagnosed with a kidney infection and diabetes, while her husband developed a nerve-related complication. Due to his health condition, he was unable to go to work, and after a few days he was dismissed from his job. He was
worried and depressed, but she counselled and encouraged him to look for a job in Alberta, which ultimately led him to find a full-time job. Similarly, Bhadra was required to be flexible with his time to accommodate the work schedules of his employers. When he was hired through a recruiter, he did not have a fixed work schedule and location. Meanwhile, he had a newborn baby and another child with developmental challenges; both children were cared for by Bhandra’s wife, Mira, so that he could focus on his work. Bhutanese women’s role in providing emotional capital, care, and support to their children remained valuable while their children went through a range of medical diagnoses, treatments and follow ups, 24 hours of care, and supervision. Their contribution is even greater when understood in the complex context of their attempts to navigate settlement and a complicated health care system.

While Bhutanese men and women engaged in employment, they had to negotiate managing domestic chores. Mira provided full care to her two children and later acquired a part-time job to support her family’s financial woes, which added additional hardships. In order to manage the workload at home, she expected some support from her husband in the evenings after his work or when he was off from work; Mira, however, was unable to get any help from her husband, as he continued to refuse domestic chores as his responsibility. He also did not interfere with her in the making of other decisions, simply because she had a higher capacity in negotiating the social and health care system than him. As such, Bhutanese women continued to experience gendered divisions of labour within the domestic realm. They continued to shoulder family obligations of cooking, cleaning, and childrearing while they attempted to maintain full-time work. These accounts of double responsibility illustrate other ways in which women are marginalized, not only in the workplace but within their homes and their culture.
7.3.3 Resilience, work, and independence

Bhutanese women’s resilience throughout the process of settling in Greater Vancouver was also apparent as they challenged traditional roles and assumptions and took advantage of new opportunities. Shiva and Indu continued to pursue English classes and progressed to Levels 3 and 4, whereas their spouses struggled to complete Level 1. Indu found full-time temporary work for her husband and for herself. Reena found a job for herself and her neighbours in a cleaning company. Attachment to employment strengthened these Bhutanese women’s self-esteem and decision-making power in the family sphere. For instance, Reena left an exploitative marital relationship, and a young Bhutanese woman working in nursing invested her income into learning how to drive. She became the first Bhutanese woman and first family member to hold a driver’s license in BC. These new roles provided additional power to women which, as far as decision-making is concerned, was traditionally exercised only by men. Bhutanese women became a bridge between home and community resources, schools, health care and income assistance systems, and controlling household resources. These Bhutanese women exemplify how traditional roles and position are not set in stone, and that the migration context can enable shifts in these roles when women draw on their resilience. Though the Bhutanese women encountered differential treatment based on assumptions about race and gender embedded in both Canadian society and their own culture, they challenged these assumptions. It may have been that the example set by Canadian women, challenging these values and assumptions within their own culture, was noted by Bhutanese women and provided them with the confidence to act in their own interests. What is interesting is that the difficulties Bhutanese refugees encountered trying to position themselves in the Canadian labour market was overcome to some degree.
through a mobilization of social capital. Bhutanese women played a key role in this mobilization, as discussed in the next section.

7.4 Ethnic social capital: the bridge to employment

The ethnic social capital of Bhutanese refugees was the most effective avenue through which to access jobs. With the help of ethnic networks composed of Bhutanese families, relatives, friends, and community members, the refugees navigated the labour market. Frustration and hopelessness were translated into opportunity when refugees found jobs through a secondary migration to Alberta. Bridging social capital in the host country was difficult, but they successfully built networks with settlement service providers to navigate the social system and labour market in Canada. Their efforts to bridge weak ties with other communities and bonding with the local Nepali community, however, did not necessarily improve their labour market outcomes.

7.4.1 Bhutanese refugees’ social capital: strong bonds and mobilizability issues

The Bhutanese refugees’ social capital that helped address the employment difficulties they experienced was based on ethno-cultural and kinship networks. Ethnic contacts of the Bhutanese refugees included their immediate and extended family members, as well as other Bhutanese sathi bhai (friends and relatives). It did not require much effort to bond with their own family members and relatives given that they all knew each other and that the resettlement plan to Canada was mutually coordinated. The Bhutanese refugees in Canada with no families or relatives had to make more of an effort in order to connect with each other, but it did not take considerable time or effort given that they all had shared refugee experience, language, and socio-cultural backgrounds. Resettlement to Canada actually provided a context within which to realize these social ties and to bond strongly as a result of recognizing shared values, interests,
history and, in Canada, a lived settlement and labour market experience. What they shared in Canada was the experience of being “the Other.”

In the first 3 years of their resettlement in BC, Bhutanese social capital was not particularly useful in helping the Bhutanese refugees find work in the Canadian labour market. Their labour market situation improved after 5 years and their secondary migration to Alberta, discussed in the next sub-section. Despite having strong ties and bonds among themselves, Bhutanese refugees could not succeed in finding jobs. They couldn’t help fellow Bhutanese refugees connect to employers. Except for a small number of youth, adults and older adults could not find any jobs. The Bhutanese refugees were not in positions of power and status in the labour market where they could influence the employment outcomes for other Bhutanese refugees. This reduced their chances of getting into the labour market.

Bhutanese refugees’ weak ties with other individuals and groups holding positions of power and status affected their chances of finding employment. They augmented their social capital by building relationships with settlement and employment workers from the settlement organizations in their communities. This slowly strengthened their cultural knowledge and ability to navigate the social and employment system in Canada. Bhutanese youth got their first jobs through volunteering opportunities. However, the nature of the jobs they were connected to and the discrimination they experienced did not help them to hold on to these jobs. The Bhutanese refugees experienced structural barriers created by the ways in which the majority culture regarded their language, race, gender, and class. They attempted to build bridges to others using their social capital with a linguistically and culturally proximate group (i.e., the Nepali-speaking community residing in Greater Vancouver), but experienced discomfort due to the different class hierarchies. The Nepali-speaking community looked down upon the
Bhutanese refugees as a lower class of people that they didn’t want to associate with, despite sharing the same language and having some similar cultural experiences. A few Bhutanese refugees developed some relationships that augmented their social capital, but these were limited to other Bhutanese refugees with multiple forms of capital and a higher capacity to mobilize their capital. The reproduction of social capital entails considerable investment of time, resources, and energy (Bourdieu, 1986). Bhutanese refugees had neither time, energy, nor the resources necessary to make an investment in the development of their social capital. Would competence in the English language facilitate building bridges with dominant language groups, and help them accumulate social capital useful to their entry into the labour market? Bourdieu (1991) believes that the command of one’s ability to use language is an important form of cultural capital and one that is a means to power. To some extent, the lack of official linguistic capital impeded Bhutanese refugees in bridging with dominant groups of people, and who, because of the refugees’ relationships with them, could have further enhanced their social capital. But even with proficiency in English, Bhutanese refugees were likely to experience class barriers to their employment prospects. This is because capital is contingent on its class, as is evident in the Bhutanese refugees’ attempt to bridge with the Nepali-speaking population in Greater Vancouver. The migration context forces refugees to become creative in solving problems. In this case, the Bhutanese refugees discovered that their social capital was more relevant to employment in Alberta in an industry where finding labour was a problem for the employer, and where, as a result of this context, knowing other Bhutanese refugees who were already employed proved to be the key to finding similar employment.
7.4.2 Success in the conversion of social capital to employment

The Bhutanese refugees were able to use their ethnic social capital in Alberta to acquire employment opportunities and to restore the cultural and human capital they had lost, or that was of little value, in BC. The secondary migration began in 2013. By the end of September 2014, 162 out of the 200 Bhutanese individuals living in BC had moved to Alberta. Five Bhutanese refugees working in the meat plants in Alberta returned to BC in 2014, which is a small number in comparison to the Bhutanese refugees who stayed in Alberta due to their employment and ethnic community. The friends and extended family members in Alberta welcomed the secondary wave of migrants from BC and helped them to connect to their workplaces. They provided logistical support until they settled down. The value of capital also depends on the agent’s capacity to mobilize it. Had fewer Bhutanese refugees in BC not taken the initiative to connect with friends and relatives in Alberta and to explore options of job opportunities and moving plans to Alberta, they would have had to stay unemployed in BC for a longer period of time. In 2013, Narendra, Kaushal, Rakesh, and Ashok explored the possibility of work through their relatives and friends. They utilized their pre-existing nata gota (family ties/relatives) and sathibhai (friends) from Bhutan and Nepal. The shared history of refugee experiences facilitated the bonding between the Bhutanese refugees in BC and Alberta.

The demand for workers in the meat plant in Lethbridge had resulted in the employment of hundreds of Bhutanese workers resettled from Nepal. Bhutanese refugees in BC had no direct contact with the employer in Alberta. They mobilized their ethnic capital in Lethbridge, which facilitated their negotiation with employers. On the other hand, the Bhutanese workers in Lethbridge had also built social capital with employers and settlement service providers. This provided valuable information to the new Bhutanese refugees and secondary migrants. The same
relationship proved to be a bridging capital for the secondary migrants from BC, allowing them to transition and to enter the labour market. This suggests that refugees from ethnic groups with strong ties are constantly working to improve not only their own economic positions, but those of their fellow ethnic community members.

7.4.3 Regaining social capital in BC

The Bhutanese refugees in BC continued to gain cultural capital pertinent to urban life skills, the labour market, and linguistic capital through their personal investments and their relationships with settlement organizations. It took about five years of capital accumulation, mobilization, and negotiation in the labour market for majority of the Bhutanese refugees in BC to find employment. A number of studies on the labour market and refugees have stated that it takes significant time for refugees to find employment. The Bhutanese refugees in BC went through a process of modifying what Bourdieu defines as their habitus. The long-term socialization process in relation to family life and the environment of BC altered their habitus, making it more relevant to the local labour market. As a result, Reena found employment for herself and several Bhutanese women in the cleaning industry in Vancouver, and Kalyani connected her fellow Bhutanese refugees to her workplace, a pharmaceutical company. The positions that Reena and Kalyani had occupied in the labour market facilitated the entry of several Bhutanese refugees to the labour market. As Bourdieu contends, the value of social capital is connected to the structure of the field and the position of the bearer of capital (Bourdieu, 1986).

However, it cannot be emphasized enough that the development and the transferability of capital often requires a frustratingly long process for refugees resettling from protracted refugee camp situations. This was noticed both in job seekers in BC and among the strategies of the
secondary migrants. Bhutanese refugees in BC invested about five years of their time and energy before stepping into the local labour market. Others from BC made several trips to Alberta to learn about the possibility of moving. They had to deal with new paperwork and renew and rebuild relationships with the community members with whom they had lost contact. The mobilization of their social capital eventually led them to find jobs in meat plants and cleaning industries. Social capital, however, can also reproduce class hierarchies. Majority of the jobs that the Bhutanese refugees found in Alberta were in precarious work environments. Those already employed helped others to enter into the same type of job—a temporary solution to their unemployment and growing poverty but one that also reinforced class marginalization.

7.5 Concentration of Bhutanese refugees in precarious work environments

The Bhutanese refugees were vulnerable workers in the precarious labour markets of BC and Alberta. As described in Chapter 5, the Bhutanese workers experienced short-term to long-term physical injuries, experienced psychological issues, engaged in difficult and dangerous tasks, were laid off without compensation, and engaged in work that was unsuitable to their health and physical capacity. The temporary nature of their employment, as well as job insecurity and financial exploitation, affected workers who did not have the option to move to jobs with better conditions. These Bhutanese workers had no choice but to work in low-paid, casual, and high-risk work environments. In the following section, I will discuss how Bhutanese refugees are trapped in casual work roles, something that has increasingly become a norm in the Canadian labour market for low-skilled refugees.
7.5.1 Casual work roles and employment insecurity

The Bhutanese refugees in BC worked in low-skill, casual, seasonal, and often racialized work environments in the Lower Mainland, such as berry farms, fruit packing or cleaning industries, restaurants, and thrift stores. In fact, labour markets in urban areas of Canada characteristically feature such work roles. For example, a lack of benefits and few employment standard protections did not deter Jeevan from working in a restaurant. Instead, he continued to work despite his health problems, taking painkillers to minimize the arthritis pain in his hand. Som Nath and Narendra worked daily under sub-contractors at one to three sites. From 2012 to 2013, Narendra worked as a cleaner for 6 days a week, from 7 o’clock in the morning to midnight. He travelled from Coquitlam, where he lived, to various locations in Vancouver. After losing his job in September 2013, Bhadra found work as a general labourer through a manpower recruiting company in Burnaby. The recruiter sent him to various locations to work. This continued from November 2013 to August 2014. He found it frustrating to work at different locations with a frequently changing work schedule. Because he was in a casual work arrangement, Naresh had no formal documentation of his pay, and no means to make a Worker’s Compensation Board claim for his injuries. When there was not enough work, Bhadra was short of money for rental payments. Understood collectively, these narratives highlight how the Bhutanese workers were trapped in casual work environments that are characteristic of the Canadian labour market with its increasing emphasis on the service sector of the economy.

As I have noted in Chapter 2, Sassen has highlighted the increasing casualization of employment in global cities, with a low-skill service sector that pays meagre wages and usually employs more immigrants (Sassen, 1998). Sassen adds that casual employment has generated many precarious job conditions, such as part-time, gendered, and racialized work relations under
flexible conditions. The restructuring of work in the post-industrial, information-based labour market, characterized by a flexible workforce (part time, sub-contracted, temporary, and adaptable), is well documented by Harvey (1990) and by a number of empirical researchers in Canada (Galarneau & Morissette, 2008; Krahn, 1995; Lamba, 2003, 2008; Lipsett & Reesor, 1997; Vosko, 2000). Changes in the labour market in Canada have meant a deterioration in standard employment relationship since the mid-1970s (Krahn, 1995; Lipsett & Reesor, 1997; Vosko, 2000). A “standard employment relationship” is generally accepted as work done full-time that continues indefinitely and is usually performed at the employer’s place of business under the employer’s direction (Fudge, 1997; Rogers, 1989; Schellenberg & Clark, 1996).

Bhutanese refugees working in cleaning jobs were working under conditions that put workers in a vulnerable position, with low pay and no benefits. This increasing informalization of the employment regime within global cities generates higher profits through subcontracting to informal entities. Such a process benefits only big or specific corporate agencies, but it also puts job security at risk and creates miserable job conditions for the working-class poor. Vulnerable workers like the Bhutanese refugees are likely to be concentrated in precarious work environments, such as the meat plant, in the absence of any other better option in the labour market.

7.5.2 Injuries and long-term impacts of meat processing work

The Bhutanese refugees who migrated from BC to Lethbridge were heavily concentrated in meat processing companies in Lethbridge. These provided them with full-time jobs and benefits but posed health risks. As of March 2013, among the 27 adult study participants who moved from BC to Lethbridge, 23 individuals were employed in Sunrise Poultry Farms’ and Maple Leaf Foods’ poultry and ham processing companies. The Bhutanese workers have
suffered physical injuries due to the cold temperatures and the nature of assembly line work. As a result, five individuals working in the meat plants returned to BC in 2014. Ram, who was a meat packer at Maple Leaf Foods, developed chronic pain in his armpits, chest, and back. Narendra, who deboned chicken (requiring him to stand in one place for four 10-hour shifts per week) developed problems with his fine motor functioning; he is now unable to grab objects with his fingers. Shanka worked in minus 15-degree temperatures and developed pain in his fingers. He slipped at least once in a day. Later, his toes turned black due to cold and injury.

In addition to these physical challenges, Bhutanese workers also described the psychological impacts of night shift work and performance-related pressure. Ayush, who worked night shifts at a Walmart in BC, realized that it had started to affect his mental wellbeing. He felt socially isolated as he slept all day and worked nights. Sapana, who boxed chicken at Maple Leaf Foods, became overwhelmed when she was unable to complete tasks at the required pace and developed a fear of her supervisor’s potential reaction. She was expected to pack all the chicken on her tray before another lot arrived; otherwise, the chicken would spill on the floor. Similarly, Shanka’s co-worker, who had limited English language proficiency and was slow at his work, was harassed at his workplace.

The desperation to find jobs—spurred by pressure from income assistance programs—and the lack of adequate support has concentrated the Bhutanese refugees in casual, janitorial, and meatpacking industries characterized by high risk and low pay. These companies recruited large numbers of Bhutanese newcomers, who would have struggled to find jobs in other sectors characterized by high skill and a technical and/or formal knowledge-based labour market. The high demand for workers in low-skill industries typified by high turnover rates, along with the strong social capital of the Bhutanese community, facilitated their labour market entry.
Currently, many are employed and have accumulated sufficient capital to make a livelihood and to end their reliance on income assistance. However, their dependency on cleaning and meat plant companies and other manufacturing industries also reveals the stratified labour market in Canada. This is a class defined by historical experiences, race, gender, and a lack of social capital, as well as by traditional considerations of poor working conditions and pay.

Disassembly line work at meat plants is detrimental to workers’ health. This is well recorded in literature (Public Justice Center, n.d.; Linder, 1995; Linder & Nygaard, 1998; Stuesse & Helton, 2013; Stevenson, 2018; Zamperin, 2017). Poultry and meat packing workers sustain a high incidence of repetitive motion problems and cumulative trauma disorder (Gorsche, Wiley, Renger, Brant, Gemer, & Sasyniuk, 1999; Johnson & Etokidem, 2019; Kelloway, 2019; Linder, 1995; Linder & Nygaard, 1998; Stuesse & Helton, 2013). An American study reports that:

Between 1980 and 1993, repetitive trauma disorders as a proportion of all newly reported occupational illnesses rose from 18 to 60 percent. The poultry processing industry recorded the second highest incidence of repetitive trauma disorders in 1990—696 per 10,000 full-time workers; the highest incidence was recorded in the related meat packing industry. (Linder, 1995, p. 634)

Pressures related to the speed of meat packing machines—a challenge reported by the Bhutanese refugees—is likewise a concern for many workers in the meat processing industry:

Speed of work—including line speed and an adequate number of staff on the line—was the biggest concern among workers surveyed and the most common issue cited in responses to open-ended questions. 73% of workers surveyed stated that the speed of the line had increased in the past year. At the same time, 94% said that the number of staff had decreased or stayed the same. (Appleseed, 2009, p. 3)

The speed of the poultry processing line is measured in bird per minute. Historically, in the US lines used to run at 70 birds per minute, but after the implementation of new rules under the Trump administration, it is up to 175 birds per minute (Kelloway, 2019). Despite the fact that
there have been significant advances in reducing the risk and incidence of workplace injuries in the meat processing and packing industries, the meat processing workers have the highest probability of a disabling injury or disease among all manufacturing employees. In 2011, the Meat, Hides, and Pelt Products sub-sector represented “the highest disabling injury rates of all the sub-sectors in Manufacturing, Processing and Packaging, and also one of the highest provincially” (Alberta Human Resources and Employment, 2012, p.5). However, workers tend to overlook these injuries. An American study, *The Speed Kills You*, reports:

Many workers did not view repetitive motion injuries as “injuries,” perhaps because they are less obvious than acute injuries and the crippling impact accrues slowly over time. Many who reported that they had not been injured in the past year then went on to describe pain and missed work from joint/repetitive motion problems. (Appleseed, 2009, p. 4)

As argued in this section, the engagement of Bhutanese workers in cleaning and meat packing industries poses high health risks and makes them vulnerable to economic fluctuations. Furthermore, entrapment within precarious jobs creates marginalization and perpetuates the lower-class status of Bhutanese refugees in Canada.

### 7.6 The economic insecurity of working in meat plants

The Bhutanese refugee influx to Lethbridge was mainly influenced by the availability of jobs in meat plants and prospects of home ownership. By December 2017, 15 families who had moved from BC to Alberta owned houses. By the same time period in BC, four families owned single family homes; one family owned a two-bedroom unit in a high-rise apartment in New Westminster; two families owned two-storey houses; and one family owned a town house in Maple Ridge.

Bhutanese families efficiently used their social and cultural capital in order to enter into Lethbridge’s labour market (primarily in the meat industry) and to become eligible for mortgages
with which to achieve home ownership. However, does this ensure their job stability, job mobility, socio-economic status, and social wellbeing? This question requires analysis of the extent to which Bhutanese newcomers can mobilize their capital in the future within the existing structure of the labour market and economy.

The performance of Lethbridge’s labour market, like any other Canadian labour market, depends on the political economy of a global market. The demand for labour is contingent on the demand for the product produced by the meat processing industry. It is also affected by technology and innovations that replace labour with machines. Low demand for product could negatively affect the labour market, resulting in a closure of the plant or a cut in the labour force, mainly affecting the immigrants, women, and visible minorities in the workforce. According to the Alberta Treasury Branch, the current GDP growth rate of Alberta was less than 1% in 2019, which is less than Alberta’s growth of 2.3% and 4.6% in 2018 and 2017, respectively (Stephenson, 2019). The meat sector in which the Bhutanese refugees are employed is characterized by high job turnover rates, and during the period of their secondary migration from BC to Alberta, 81% of processing companies were facing labour turnover rates that ranged from 1% to as high as 49% (Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development and Alberta Livestock and Meat Agency, 2012, p. 6). Bhutanese refugees accept jobs in theses meat plants because they are desperate for jobs, and partly because they do not fully understand the working conditions they will encounter and the reasons for the high turnover of labour in the industry. Bhutanese refugee numbers in both Maple Leaf and Sunrise Farms have increased dramatically, and opportunities for new hires are getting tighter. The employment opportunities are also looking tighter, according to Sony, an employment facilitator supporting Bhutanese refugees, who said, “That’s a big concern, I would say so. I get a little nervous when my client says, ‘My family is coming
from Vancouver.’ [I think to myself] oh boy, they might have a bit of a wait, or they might not get a job in the factory and then what?” In the past, Bhutanese workers accepted the jobs not taken by many Canadians. However, the tighter job market signals more labour market challenges in the future.

Historically, Lethbridge’s industrial economy, centred on meat processing and packing plants, has been very unstable. Swift Canadian, Canadian Dressed Meats, Burns Foods, and Canada Packers—the latter once known as the largest plant in the nation—do not exist in Lethbridge anymore. The stability of Maple Leaf and Sunrise Farms will determine the futures of the Bhutanese refugees to a large extent, as they are the largest employers of Bhutanese workers.

Will Bhutanese refugees be able to retain their jobs? This question is difficult to answer, as it depends on many considerations that are hard to predict. It also depends on the physical health status of Bhutanese workers. According to Sony, the human resources teams are already feeling pressure from their managers to recruit people with the skills required to work in the industry:

Management there have told human resources that people need to have certain skills, certain language benchmarks. The HR manager told me that she gets lot of pressure about hiring people who don’t have the essential skills that they need to work [in the factory]. She [is] supposed to be doing language skills. (Sony, 2013)

Will Maple Leaf and Sunrise Farms lay off Bhutanese workers when they find other workers with more desirable skills? If that ever happens, a large number of Bhutanese workers may lose their jobs. Sunrise Farms is a non-unionized workplace and employs over 300 Bhutanese people. Working extended periods of time on an assembly and disassembly line does not necessarily help develop the skills needed for employability in other fields. Their current employment opportunities have dissuaded many Bhutanese refugees from taking English courses and thus
gaining a crucial competency in which many Bhutanese refugees lack proficiency. Some of them try to take English classes despite their busy schedules; however, they have difficulty with continuity and concentration due to tiredness and a lack of previous school experience. Working several years in the repetitive roles of assembly and disassembly work in the meat cutting and packing plants, the Bhutanese workers are unlikely to gain any transferable skills that could lead to employment in other industries.

The Bhutanese workers’ job security has been associated with their ability to last in the demanding, repetitive, high-risk, and cold environments of the meat packing plants. Among the Bhutanese refugees who migrated from BC, Devendra could not continue working due to his severe back pain and swelling in his hands. He was fired from his job in the fourth month, whereas Ram continues to work despite back pain. These Bhutanese workers, who are heavily dependent on the meat processing and packaging industry because of their economic positions, have limited bargaining power to advocate for their welfare. From the perspectives of employers, this makes Bhutanese workers ideal meat plant labourers. According to Harvey (1996), companies prefer to recruit workers that cannot organize and that lack class-based political power, so that, in this case, they are not able to protect themselves against the interests of the meat processing and packing industries. Harvey illustrates how industrial politics are practiced in the US by situating the plants in remote and isolated areas (as in this case in Lethbridge) to exploit labour:

US industry has long used spatial dispersal and the geographic isolation of employees as one of its prime mechanisms of labor control (in industries like chicken processing and meatpacking the equation is obvious ….) But recent transformations in industrial organization, flexible locational choices, and deregulation have here been turned into a totally unsubtle form of coercive exploitation which is pre- rather than post-Fordist in its organizational form. (Harvey, 1996, pp. 336-37)
The experiences of Bhutanese workers in isolated sites of the meat industry provide a compelling illustration of the current state of labour relations and industry restructuring that serves to control labour in the face of globalization, capital accumulation, and profit maximization. In 2012, Alberta had the lowest unionization rate in Canada at 22% (Galarneau & Sohn, 2013). As argued in this section, the engagement of Bhutanese refugees in meat processing and packing industries makes them vulnerable to economic fluctuations that could thrust them into financial crisis. Better employment training opportunities and knowledge of how labour markets function could have helped the Bhutanese migrants make informed decisions.

To summarize, the Bhutanese refugees’ interaction in the Canadian labour market with the harsh realities of structural challenges posed significant barriers to their labour market participation. The ability and effectiveness of their various forms of capital were limited by a labour market with unfamiliar norms and regulations, as well as exclusion and marginalization based on gender, race, and class. The Bhutanese refugees showed their resiliency in looking for employment. They continued to restore the lost value of their social and cultural capital, which was evident in their entry into jobs. However, the precarious nature of the work they were involved in carries with it the possibility of marginalization and economic insecurity in the future.

In the following section, I connect the major findings and discussion with studies on the Bhutanese refugees resettled in the US and in Canada and empirical studies on refugee groups similar to the Bhutanese.
7.7 Resettled Bhutanese refugees face similar structural barriers

There is paucity of studies on Bhutanese refugees in Canada\textsuperscript{16}. The US studies on Bhutanese refugees are growing, but with the focus on health and mental health, culture, and settlement experience. The structural barriers I have identified in the experiences of Bhutanese refugees in Canada corroborates the available studies on the Bhutanese in Canada and the US. Sherrell, et al. (2011), in their study of Bhutanese refugees’ early settlement experiences in the Greater Vancouver area, stated that the youth had some early success in finding jobs and volunteering opportunities, but, overall, Bhutanese individuals experienced language barriers in their search for employment. Their study does not focus on labour market experiences. Findings are based on the refugees’ first 2 years of settlement. The studies based in the US demonstrated that the Bhutanese refugees had strong ethnic bonds, trust, and cultural solidarity and resiliency (Anderson, 2019; Bhatta, Shakya, Assad, & Zullo, 2015; Minkow, 2011; Roka, 2017). However, they experienced language barriers. Adults and elderly people struggled with a lack of literacy and English proficiency (Anderson, 2019; Bhatta et al., 2015; Roka, 2017). Additionally, in their communities in Laconia, New Hampshire, they experienced high rates of hate crime (Minkow, 2011). Caste-related tension among the Bhutanese refugees was observed in Virginia (Anderson, 2019). Employment and income outcomes based on caste were noted in studies conducted in Pittsburgh (Ott, 2013). Students’ experiences of cultural stereotyping in a school in Coquitlam, BC, was reported in a town hall meeting (Sherrell et al., 2011). These studies do not discuss race as a determining factor in the hiring of Bhutanese refugees. I have addressed this issue in my research. Majority of these studies do not probe into labour market experiences and negotiations.

\textsuperscript{16} Towards the final stage of my dissertation, I have noticed Béatrice Halsouet’s work on Bhutanese refugees in Canada which is entitled as “The School Socialization of Young Nepali Women Refugees in a Medium-Sized Town in Québec, Canada” in \textit{The Crux of Refugee Resettlement: Rebuilding Social Networks}. 

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Bhutanese refugees\textsuperscript{17} employment opportunities were greatly different from one place to another, which is similar to what I found in my study. Bhutanese refugees in Lethbridge were able to enter into jobs much easier than in BC. Diane Griffiths and Christopher Loy (2018) report that nearly 50\% of their interview participants reported being unemployed in a coastal region of Virginia. Similarly, Bhutanese refugees experienced difficulties finding employment in Laconia, New Hampshire (Minkow, 2011). Bhutanese refugees in Boston had a higher rate of employment, but they were concentrated in low-paid and precarious employment situations (Anderson, 2019; Minkow, 2011). Assembly line work, where workers perform repetitive tasks, has been identified as an example of what is characteristic of low-paid and precarious employment (Anderson, 2019). This was also true of the work experiences of the subjects of my study. The precarious employment situation led some Bhutanese refugees in the US to commit suicide (Hagaman, Sivilli, Ao, Blanton, Ellis, Lopes & Shetty, 2016). Studies have highlighted that the unemployment rate was higher among women and the elderly population (Anderson, 2019; Griffiths & Loy, 2018). Older generation Bhutanese refugees were unable to continue their old profession of farming and animal husbandry in the US (Anderson, 2019; Ott, 2013). Similar to the participants in my study, desperate job seekers in the US often opted for secondary migration (Griffiths & Loy, 2018; Ott, 2013; Anderson, 2019). Unemployment, alongside other social and cultural issues, have severely affected the Bhutanese refugees in the US. This dismal situation can also be sensed from the Bhutanese refugees’ suicide rates in the US, which is

\textsuperscript{17} The European Bulletin of Himalayan Research - Digital Himalaya dedicated its 43rd volume to Bhutanese refugees’ early resettlement experience. The volume entitled “The Bhutanese Refugee Resettlement Experience” was not reviewed for the dissertation as the author only became aware of it after the dissertation had been submitted.
double the rate of the general population in America (CDC, 2013 in Hagaman et al., 2016) and is the highest among the 26-59 age group, which is the working age population (Hagaman et al., 2016, p. 821). The Bhutanese refugee population is over 100,000 in the US. This explains the higher degree of settlement and labour market complexities in comparison to the Bhutanese refugees in Canada. Overall, there are similarities among Bhutanese refugees’ settlement and labour market experiences in both Canada and the US. They experience linguistic barriers and dismissal of their human capital based on agriculture and informal employment sector misrecognition. Additionally, they are concentrated in precarious employment situations. However, the studies referred to in this section on Bhutanese refugees in the US lack holistic labour market analysis, mainly regarding the examination of structural variables affecting labour market outcomes.

7.7.1 Refugees experience similar settlement and employment trends

My findings on the marginalization of Bhutanese refugees in the Canadian labour market are consistent with several studies on refugees from different source countries and ethnic groups (Bevelander & Pendakur, 2014; DeVoritz & Pivnenko, 2004; Lewis, 2017; Pendakur, 2017). Similar to the Bhutanese refugees, various groups of refugees encountered structural barriers—language, human capital, and exclusion based on their racial and gender identity—in the Canadian labour market and Canadian society. The Bhutanese refugees’ lived experiences in Bhutan, and in exile, made them a unique immigrant population. This is also true of other refugees. The nature of refugees’ lived experiences and circumstances make them a unique immigrant class entering Canada, with significant disadvantages and complex needs (Ghumman, McCord, & Chang, 2016; Jackson & Bauder, 2013; Statistics Canada, 2017; Yu, Oulette, & Warmington, 2007; Zhang & Hou, 2019). These disadvantages put refugees below all other
immigrant groups in the labour market. Studies have demonstrated the low labour market performance of refugees in the Canadian labour market (O’Connor, 2010; Picot, Zhang, & Hou, 2019; Wilkinson & Garcea, 2017) and, in terms of gender variation, that male refugees tend to have a higher chance of being employed (Lamba, 2003; Wilkinson & Garcea, 2017). These findings are consistent with the Bhutanese refugees’ labour market outcomes, except regarding gender relationships. Bhutanese women had difficulty finding jobs in the first three to four years, but, after that, Bhutanese women’s labour market rate was nearly the same as Bhutanese men.

As in the Bhutanese refugees’ case, refugees to Canada come with a low ability to speak the country’s official languages. Only 30% of GARs in Canada speak either English or French, and some lack literacy in their own language (Renaud & Godin, 2002). A recent study on the resettled Syrian GARs shows that only 20% of them spoke either English or French (Houle, 2019). Apart from a language barrier, the GARs in Canada tend to have lower levels of formal education. Among Syrian GARs, 71.5% of women and 70.6% of men did not have a high school diploma (Houle, 2019), and similar findings were noticed with refugees from other countries as well (Picot, Zhang & Hou, 2019).

In terms of challenges, including understanding labour market norms, the experiences of other groups of refugees matched those of the Bhutanese refugees. Bauder’s study highlights Canadian labour market conventions and practices as the major barriers for some South Asian and former Yugoslavian refugees in Greater Vancouver (2005, p. 88). Some participants were surprised to find that they were expected to attend job-finding groups to learn about the soft skills required in the labour market. Bhutanese refugees’ experiences were similar to the shock Acehnese refugees encountered in the labour market. An Acehnese refugee shared his
unexpected experience of getting paid by the hour in Canada as opposed to getting a monthly salary in Aceh (Brunner, Hyndman, & Friesen, 2010). These differences were accounted for because of the informal labour market practices in source countries, compared to the formal practices in Canada. Afghan and Syrian refugees in Austria with informal labour market skills encountered difficulty finding jobs (Eggenhofer-Rehart, Latzke, Pernkopf, Zellhofer, Mayrhofer & Steyrer, 2018). However, these studies do not adequately address the formation of various types of capital in the source countries, protracted camp situations, and their interaction in the host countries.

Apart from the human capital recognition factor, refugees in the Canadian labour market have experienced exclusion and discrimination. Racism and discrimination are well documented in refugee literature. However, intra-ethnic discrimination, such as caste-based discrimination, is rarely reflected in research studies in Canada. Bhutanese refugees’ experiences of discrimination within their community shed new light on the understanding of the mobilization of ethnic social capital, which is often vital for labour market entry. This said, the Bhutanese refugees’ experiences of exclusion and discrimination in the labour market are also experienced by different refugee groups. Studies have revealed that Somali, Ethiopian, Ghanaian, and South Asian refugees encountered significant discrimination in finding and maintaining jobs in the Canadian labour market (Beiser, Noh, Hou, Kaspar, & Rummens, 2001; Danso, 2002; Ellis, MacDonald, Klunk-Gillis, Lincoln, Strunin, & Cabral, 2010). Differential treatment due to accent or poor English language skills has been experienced by other newcomers (Access Alliance, 2011; Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2007; Creese, 2011). African refugees in Vancouver frequently cited accent as a barrier to their labour market participation (Creese, 2011). Furthermore, two studies have shown that interview shortlisting is based on non-Western names.
and foreign education/experience (Oreopoulos & Dechief, 2012; Oreopoulos, 2009). Black African youths in Alberta experienced systemic racism and marginalization in the labour market (Zaami, 2017). A study of Karen refugees in BC also refers to the discrimination experienced in labour markets (Marchbank, Sherrell, Friesen, & Hyndman, 2014). Recent surveys and studies have highlighted a sizeable public resentment toward the acceptance of Syrian refugees in Canada. A 2017 survey of Canadians found that only 40% were accepting of Syrian refugees resettling in Canada, whereas 24% wanted an outright ban (Donnelly, 2017).

Despite these labour market realities, the Bhutanese refugees and various other refugee groups tend to improve their labour market situation with the passing of time spent in Canada. Studies have revealed that refugees’ employment situations improve after 5 years in Canada (Picot, Zhang & Hou, 2019; Wilkinson & Garcea, 2017). The employment rate of government-assisted refugees improved from 12% in the first year to 54% in the fifth year, which is similar in the Bhutanese refugees’ case in BC and Alberta (Immigration, Refugee and Citizenship Canada, 2016). Some of these improvements are credited to ethnic social capital, where refugees were able to mobilize their ethnic ties and bonds to gain access to employment (Hein, 1993; Hou, 2017; Lamba, 2008). The Bhutanese refugees opted for a secondary migration to Alberta, where their relatives facilitated their entry into full-time jobs in meat plants. Similarly, the Bhutanese refugees who were employed helped their community members find jobs in BC’s local labour market. However, the quality of ethnic social capital plays a role in determining the labour market position of refugees. Lamba (2003) found that refugees’ jobs matched with the job types in their network, and living close to their relatives added additional responsibilities, thereby further limiting their chances of finding higher quality jobs. In the case of the Bhutanese refugees, they felt more comfortable working with fellow Bhutanese refugees because of the ease
of language, chances of working together to overcome work performance issues, and potential
dconnections with employers. At the same time, this constrained their social connection with
other ethnic groups, as well as their job mobility.

This brief comparative review reveals the strong connection of my findings to other
studies on refugees in Canada. Many challenges faced by refugees in Canada are structural in
nature and interconnected. They experience linguistic barriers, lack of human capital relevant to
the labour market in Canada, limited social capital stock, and exclusions based on race and
gender. Refugees in Canada encounter difficulties translating their capital and habitus generated
in an indigenous economy and informal labour market, as the labour market of Canada is built
around capitalist systems of production. The requirement of formal qualifications and
credentials in this labour market meant that refugees’ informal and practical wisdom goes
unrecognized. These structural barriers push refugees to precarious work situations
characterized by low pay and casual work relationships, which tend to perpetuate refugees class
situations.
Chapter 8: Policy Recommendation, Implication, and Conclusion

In this thesis, I have examined the capital mobilization and labour market trajectories of Bhutanese refugees who come from non-Western labour markets. I have analyzed how refugees accumulate and mobilize capital in the advanced labour market economy characterized by service industries, a focus on human capital, supply and demand, casual work environments, and marginalization based on race, gender, and class. Subsequently, I analyzed how workers negotiate the structural realities—i.e., race, gender, and class relations—of Canadian society. I have argued that while the refugees are resilient, ultimately the structural barriers exclude and marginalize them. In particular, I have examined the lived labour market experiences of Bhutanese government-assisted refugees in the Lower Mainland of Vancouver during their transition from informal and rural work to the advanced labour market. Drawing on 15 months of ethnographic fieldwork that involved semi-structured interviews and casual, but in-depth conversation with 72 individuals in Greater Vancouver, Lethbridge, and Beldangi in Nepal, I argue that the lived labour market experience of Bhutanese refugees entailed enormous structural barriers. The linguistic barrier, the lack of human capital relevant to the labour market in Canada, limited social capital stock, and exclusions based on race and gender forced Bhutanese refugees to concentrate on insecure employment sectors and on casual work relationships—often in industries with high turnover and lower skills requirements.

8.1 Policy recommendation

In order to address the labour market barriers of the Bhutanese refugees presented in Chapter 6, I propose the following policy recommendations.
8.1.1 Extend the resettlement assistance period to two to five years

The Canadian government provided resettlement assistance for 1 year. However, 1 year of support does not provide enough time for refugees from a protracted camp-living background to gain enough knowledge and experience in order to become independent, especially for refugees lacking urban-living experience, adequate formal education, and official language competency. Learning about the social and cultural processes of a new society and rebuilding their capital stock often requires a longer time and guided settlement support. Transition to income assistance was not a complicated process. However, as stated in Chapter 5, there was a strong push to look for employment, learn English, or engage in short-term training. Refugees struggling to make sense of the resettlement process, who are experiencing an identity crisis, or who are dealing with health issues, including PTSD, mental illness, and chronic health issues, require more time to prepare themselves for job-related or educational engagements. All aspects of this process are further complicated by a lack of training opportunities, which will be elaborated on later. The Bhutanese refugees also felt under pressure to repay the travel loan provided under resettlement support that allowed them to come to Canada. Travel loans should be fully waived, or the government should offer an interest-free, long-term repayment plan.

8.1.2 Free English language learning programs for naturalized citizens

Bhutanese adults faced accessibility issues under the ELSA program. The ELSA program is largely time-based, and the Bhutanese refugees took longer than the allocated hours to complete each level. Under the ELSA program, the allocation of hours for the Literacy level was 1,100 hours, Level 1 was 900 hours, Level 2 was 700 hours, and Level 3 was 350 hours. In certain circumstances, an extension of 200 hours was granted to enhance competency levels. Bhutanese refugees who used up those hours after having to repeat levels a number of times were
barred from these free English language programs. LINC, which was introduced in BC in 2014, eliminated the hours allocation policy. However, it did not allow naturalized citizens to access LINC. The eligibility barrier excluded naturalized citizens from English language learning opportunities where it should be open to all. Additionally, the Bhutanese refugees could have benefitted from an English for specific purposes program for example language practicum to provide them with the opportunity to improve their language skills through a mixed method of classroom and workplace assignments (SRDC, 2002), which results in better language and labour market outcomes.

8.1.3 Labour market policy tailored to refugees

During the first years of the Bhutanese refugees’ arrival, there was the issue of the paucity of employment programs. The labour market training program during the period of 2009 to 2016 did not necessarily support the Bhutanese refugees, especially those with low levels of formal education and a lack of familiarity with the urban labour market. The Bhutanese refugees wanted to learn industry-specific skills, preferably through on-the-job training, to overcome the formal schooling requirement. However, informal learning is not supported by government loans or most of the employment programs. The eligibility requirement for vocational or pre-employment training often demanded a higher level of English and formal education, which excluded the majority of the Bhutanese refugees. For instance, the Canada Job Grant (CJG) program focused on retraining refugees for the labour market. It is an employer-driven, cost-sharing program that helps employers invest in training for their current or future employees. Out of each $10,000 grant, a maximum of $5,000 is available for the job readiness portion of the training, and $5,000 can be used for job-specific training. CJG covers training fees, transportation, childcare expenses, and specialized English language training. The grant can
enable refugees with high literacy and a high number of formal school years, those with strong networking skills, and those needing limited employment training to enter the labour market. However, the CJG is not sufficient to help refugees coming from protracted refugee camp experiences, those with low literacy and few formal schooling years, and those who have faced traumatic life experiences to overcome labour market barriers and access training. This is because the duration and the funding for training are limited. The training must be completed within 52 weeks and the grant funds up to $5,000 maximum for job-specific training, with one third of this training cost expected to come from the employer (Work BC, 2016). This implies that most job training will cost less than $7,500, which is not a reality. The majority of training programs offered by private vocational colleges are longer than 52 weeks and cost over $10,000. Out of the total allocated fund (i.e., $1 million to cover the government contributions), $879,206 was already spent to cover the training for only 89 participants as of August 2016 (Ministry of Jobs, Tourism and Skills Training, 2016). The budget can only support a fraction of the refugees in BC. The number of sponsored refugees arriving annually (including private, government, and blended sponsorships) in BC was 4,095 in 2016 and 1,984 in 2017 (ISS of BC, 2018). The current short-term employment training program does not meet the re-skilling need for refugees in order to enable their access to the labour market.

Affordability and finding an appropriate mid-range (duration) level of vocational training relevant to the labour market’s demands are challenges for Bhutanese refugees. Canada’s alternative funding regime for the mid duration of employment training was employment insurance (EI), for which the Bhutanese refugees were not eligible because they lacked the prerequisite number of qualifying hours and their first work, which could have consisted of informal job contracts in Canada, might not be covered. Therefore, an alternative and suitable
training program should be customized based on each group of refugees’ capabilities. It should place emphasis on building the transferable skills of refugees instead of retraining the refugees for completely new areas of trade or occupation.

Taking all of these factors into account, a strong labour market training policy geared towards refugees is required. These programs should focus on both language learning through internships and vocational training through up-skilling and re-skilling based on their previous occupation if these skills are relevant in the labour market. For instance, Bhutanese refugees could benefit from agricultural job training or an agricultural entrepreneurship program targeted toward them. The program should place emphasis on agricultural skill-building training with a specific focus on farming systems in Canada, farm management, and marketing produce and livestock. Additionally, free land leasing, start-up funds, and subsidies would encourage and enable the refugees to pursue their farming occupations in Canada.

Similarly, the Bhutanese refugees could benefit from a strong group apprenticeship program where they are placed with mentors and interpreters for the duration of the apprenticeship. The Bhutanese workers with minimum proficiency in English, working at meat plants in Lethbridge, were successful in learning work and safety requirements from their mentors (also Bhutanese workers) and later performed work independently. This development is a good indication that not all work will require higher fluency in English and that an initial orientation in the refugees’ first language can facilitate their success as workers. Similarly, training programs on tailoring, and weaving could empower Bhutanese women, who have had several years of experience in these occupations at refugee camps in Nepal.

The Canadian labour market seeks a strong human capital stock for higher productivity. The eligibility requirements for pre-employment training excluded Bhutanese refugees on the
grounds of limited English language skills and insufficient formal education. A refugee training project should therefore focus on eliminating such eligibility barriers. Refugees often lack human, cultural, and linguistic capital relevant to the local labour market. As a result, the Bhutanese refugees could not benefit from past government-funded labour market initiatives that were not designed to meet the unique challenges experienced by the Bhutanese refugees coming from protracted camp experiences and agrarian backgrounds.

8.2 Implications for social work

This study demonstrates Bhutanese refugees’ lived experiences in the Canadian labour market. Despite having rich cultural capital and great resilience, Bhutanese refugees struggled to transform their capital stock due to personal and structural barriers, which put them in a vulnerable position. Because of their strong motivation to find jobs, to become independent, and to end the cycle of poverty and their reliance on the welfare system, Bhutanese refugees entered into dangerous employment roles, which have potential physical health risks. Similarly, the casual and precarious nature of the labour market added another layer of vulnerability and job insecurity to their efforts. As agents of social change and social justice, social workers require better understanding of refugee populations in order to assist them in their resettlement processes. This study provides an overview of one of the most vulnerable groups of refugees who require specialized support, and highlights the strengths of Bhutanese refugees in order to help social workers understand these strengths. It also describes the context of their expulsion from Bhutan, the implications of 20 years of refugee camp living in Nepal, and consequent resettlement complications (including employment issues) to provide insight into refugees’ journeys to resettlement and integration in a new country and its labour market. Most importantly, this study raises a social justice issue. The Bhutanese refugees’ right to live in their
own country was denied and further, their right to live as dignified citizens in their new country remains unaddressed. The Bhutanese refugees in BC did not receive customized employment training to transform their existing skills and to learn new skills. They also experienced discrimination based on race, gender, and class in larger society, and particularly in the labour market. Therefore, social workers should advocate for targeted micro- and macro-level policies to intervene in the labour market participation of refugees who have come from protracted refugee camp situations. Additionally, in general, a labour market assessment and action plan should entail a holistic understanding of refugees’ lived experiences, employment readiness, strengths, resilience, and structural barriers to employment in Canada.

8.3 Limitations and further study

This is the first study to examine resettled Bhutanese refugees’ labour market experiences in the first 5 years of resettlement in Canada. However, the study has limitations. The Bhutanese resettlement processes involved the relocation of more than 100,000 refugees from Nepal to seven western countries. Though Canada accepted the second highest number of refugees—a total of 6,700—it is only a fraction of the refugee population. The USA accepted more than 80,000 Bhutanese refugees, while other Western countries accepted refugees in small numbers. As such, this study cannot be taken to represent Bhutanese refugees’ labour market experiences around the world or even throughout Canada. Within resettled Bhutanese people there is great diversity based on the generation and based on various contextual variables—including class, caste, ethnic divisions, social and human capital, and geographical location of the settlement. Additional examination of the intersections between these factors could provide a more nuanced understanding of the influences of different characteristics in resettlement and labour market integration. Further, a higher concentration of Bhutanese refugees in vulnerable
employment roles is reported in all the resettled countries. This makes an important case for understanding the impact of such work on their health. As the resettlement of more than 50% of Bhutanese refugees is surpassing 10 years, it is good timing for an examination of the early impact of work on their health. To understand how the Bhutanese refugees are faring in global labour markets, and the associated interactions with socio-economic and contextual variables, it is important to explore the labour market experiences of Bhutanese refugees globally.

This study also examines the labour market participation of resettled refugees who have formerly lived in refugee camps for an extended period, and who have come from semi-urban societies with informal labour market experience and limited (if any) formal literacy. It focuses only on a Bhutanese cohort and thus does not provide an opportunity to compare the cohort with other refugee groups coming from similar contexts. Separate studies on Karen and Kosovan GARs in Canada have been conducted, but they do not necessarily focus on labour market experiences. The Rohingyas from Burma, some Syrians, Acehnese, Afghan refugees, and other groups coming from similar contexts could be included in a study to comparatively examine their lived labour market experiences in post-resettlement contexts. However, this study only looks at the early employment experiences of resettled Bhutanese refugees. It is important to follow up over a longer period to understand the processes of their economic integration into Canadian society.

8.4 Conclusion

To conclude, my findings on the labour market of the Bhutanese refugees raise important issues about their labour situation and their quality of life in Canada. Early employment experience is a key determinant of long-term settlement outcomes. This study raises some serious issues regarding structural barriers that the Bhutanese experienced in the process of
navigating labour markets, particularly utilization of their human capital potential, their understanding of the job-finding culture, and their labour market engagement. These issues are intertwined with the structural realities of race, gender, and class, which function only to exclude and marginalize Bhutanese refugees in the labour market.

Existing employment training is inadequate for the Bhutanese refugees and Canada’s short-term training policy does not meet their re-skilling needs. Instead, it forces them to enter casual and precarious jobs that can lead to further exclusion from formal and well-paying jobs.

The shortcomings in addressing labour market experiences of low-skilled refugees are apparent throughout Western labour markets (OECD, 2017). A 2017 OECD report illustrates the example of Sweden, where the experiences of low-skilled refugees indicate that “an integration of the many very low-educated refugees is a key long-term challenge, and building up the basic skills to be functional in the labour market will require some time” as well as investment (OECD, 2017, p. 13). Several studies both in Canada and in other OECD countries suggest that refugees are more likely to be economically marginalized than any other group of immigrants or native-born populations (OECD, 2012; Wilkinson, et al., 2015 as cited in Wilkinson & Garcea, 2017). There is a growing demand and need for holistic, long-term, and tailor-made programs to support refugees’ labour market success.
References


APPENDIX A: Recruitment Poster in English

The University of British Columbia
School of Social Work, Vancouver BC

Participants needed for research in Labour Market of Bhutanese-Nepalese

We are looking for volunteers from Bhutanese-Nepali community to take part in a study of the Bhutanese-Nepalese families’ labour market experience in Canada. The project explores Bhutanese-Nepalese community’s challenges, coping strategies, opportunities, resources, and the ability to mobilize their resources (skills, knowledge, family and network) in the Canadian labour market.

As a participant in this study, you would be asked to participate in interview and allow observe informal conversations on labour market.

Your participation would involve three interview sessions each of which is approximately sixty minutes. It will also involve two to four observations of informal conversations each of which is roughly fifteen to sixty minutes.

Also, please pass along this information to friends and/or family members who may also be interested in learning about this research study.

For more information about this study, or to volunteer for this study, please contact:

**Raj Khadka**

School of Social Work
The University of British Columbia (UBC)
2080 West Mall, Vancouver BC V6T 1Z2
Phone: *** **** ****
Email: ********@hotmail.com
पूर्वी ब्रिटिश कोलम्बिया (यु.बि.सि.)
स्कूल अफ सोसेल वर्क, भ्यानकुभर, बि.सि.

"भूटानी-नेपाली क्यानडमा, रोजगारी अवस्थाको
अनुसन्धानमा सहभागिताका लागि स्वयंसेवकहरू चाहियो"

ग्रेटर म्यानकुभरमा वसोवास गरिरहेका भूटानी-नेपाली समुदायका रोजगारीका अवसर, चुनौती,
खोज शाधन परिचालन क्षमता, सिप र रोजगार उद्देश्यहरू वुभनका लागि भूटानी-नेपाली
समुदायका स्वयंसेवकहरू खोजिदेखि रहेका छौ।

अध्ययनमा सहभागीसंग रोजगारको अनुभवको कुराकानी बारेमा कुरा कानी गर्नका साथै
रोजगारसंग सम्बन्धित परिवारिक वार्तालापको पनि अवलोकन गरिने छ। नौ महिनाको
अवधिमा चार घण्टा अन्तराँतर्न र तिन चार घटा परिवारिक वार्तालाप अवलोकन गरिने छ।

तपाईको अरु सार्थीहरूलाई पनि यस बारे यो मृत्यु बादी सहयोग गाँव दिनु होला/ तपाईलाई
यस अध्ययन बारे कुनै प्रश्न भए वा सहभागी हुनु का लागि तल उल्लिखित फोन र ठेगानामा
सम्पर्क राख्नु होला।

राज खड्का
पूर्वी ब्रिटिश कोलम्बिया (यु.बि.सि.)
स्कूल अफ सोसेल वर्क, म्यानकुभर, बि.सि.
फोन नं.******-*****
ई-मेल: *********@hotmail.com
The University of British Columbia
School of social work, Vancouver BC

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH
A research-study of the Bhutanese-Nepalese’ labour market experience in Canada

STUDY TEAM

Professor Frank Tester, School of Social Work at the University of British Columbia (UBC), 2080 West Mall, Vancouver, BC V6T 1Z2, phone number ***.***.****, is the Principal Investigator of the study.

Raj Khadka, (phone number ***.***.**** co-investigator, is conducting the research as part of his Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degree in Social Work, at UBC, to understand labour market experience of Bhutanese-Nepalese in Canada.

Please read the information below and ask questions about anything you do not understand, before deciding whether or not to participate.

INVITATION AND STUDY PURPOSE

You are being invited to take part in this research study because you are a member of the Bhutanese-Nepalese community whose labour market experience in Canada we are trying to learn about.

The project explores the labour market experience of Bhutanese-Nepalese in Greater Vancouver. Specifically, we plan to explore Bhutanese-Nepalese community’s challenges, coping strategies, opportunities, resources, and the ability to mobilize their resources (skills, knowledge, family and network) in the Canadian labour market.

In addition, the study looks at how gender and age/generation within household affects the use of capital resources in the labour market. In doing so we will better understand your strategies and experience in trying to find employment.

We hope the study will assist policy makers, practitioners and researchers to better understand resettled refugees’ employment realities in Canada.
PROCEDURES
1) I will spend time with you and talk to you about your employment experience in relation to migration and resettlement in Canada. If you agree, some of these conversations (interviews) will be tape-recorded. The interviews will comprise approximately three one-hour sessions over a nine-month period. I may carry out further interviews if I feel that I need to spend more time with you to better understand the information you are giving me. I will also be taking photos of your living situation but you will not be identifiable in any of the pictures.
2) I will also sometimes visit your home, community or accompany you (to job fair) with prior communication and permission to learn individual or family strategies of job searches, preparation for interviews, and the mobilization of the resources that the community posseses. The observation of job searches and preparation for job interviews will not be intrusive.

All data for this project will be kept in a secure place and protected so that only I and my thesis supervisor, Frank Tester, will have access to it.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS
This study will not bring you specific benefits outside of an opportunity to share your views and opinions. Your participation, however, will be of considerable benefit for educational purposes, for it will give students of social science and policy makers a critical opportunity to develop professional skills and settlement policies to help the resettlement process of newcomers. Unfortunately we are not able to pay you for the time you take to be in this study.

POTENTIAL RISKS
This project is not intended to provoke any physical or emotional discomfort. Some of the questions we ask may be sensitive or personal. You do not have to answer any question if you do not want to. If you experience increased emotional stress as a result of the interview, questionnaire, or other research procedure the list of free resources and counseling services that you can access is attached with the consent form. I will help you contact these resources if you wish me to do so.

CONFIDENTIALITY
You will not be identified by name in any reports of the completed study. A pseudonym/code instead of your name will be used. All documents will be kept in a locked filing cabinet and data in hard drive will be password protected.

CONTACT FOR COMPLAINTS
If you have any concerns about your rights as a research subject and/or your experiences while participating in this study, you may contact the Research Subject Information Line in the UBC Office of Research Services at ***-***-**** or if long distance e-mail RSIL@ors.ubc.ca or call toll free ***-***-****.
SIGNATURE

Taking part in this study is entirely up to you. You have the right to refuse to participate in this study. If you decide to take part, you may choose to pull out of the study at any time without giving a reason and without consequences of any kind or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

If you have any questions or concerns about what we are asking of you, please contact me.

• Your signature below indicates that you have received a copy of this consent form for your own records.

• Your signature indicates that you consent to participate in this study.

____________________________________________________
Participant Signature

____________________________________________________
Printed Name of the Participant signing above

____________________________________________________
Signature of Witness

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APPENDIX D: Participant consent letter in Nepali

दि युनिभिसिटी अफ ब्रिटिश कोलम्बिया (यु.बि.सि.) स्कूल अफ सोसेल बंक, भ्यानकुभर, बि.सि.

अनुसंधानमा सहभागिताका लागि सहमति पत्र

भूटानी-नेपालीको क्यानडामा रोजगारीको अवस्था

अध्ययनका टोली

यु.बि.सि, स्कूल अफ सोसेल बंकका प्राध्यापक फ्याड टेप्सर यस अध्ययनका प्रमुख अनुसंधानदाता हुनेछ । उहाँको ठेगाना २०८० वेषट मल,भ्यानकुभर बि.सि.र फोन न***-***-**** हो । त्यसै गरी राज खेङका अध्ययनका सह-अनुसंधानदाता हुनेछ । उहाँ पि.एच.डि को शोधपत्रका लागि भूटानी-नेपालीको रोजगारहरू वुभन खोज्दै हुनेछ । उहाँको सम्पर्क फोन न.***-***-**** हो ।

कृपया यस पत्रमा उलेखित सवै कुराहरू पढ्नुस र नवुभेनको कुरा मलाई सोझौ हो स । नवुभिकान सहभागिता हुने नहुने कुरा सहमती नजनाउनु होला ।

नियमन्त्रण तथा अध्ययनको उद्देश्य

यस अध्ययनको विषय तपाईंको समुदायसङ्ग समन्वित भएकोले म तपाईलाई सहभागिताको लागि अनुरोध गर्दछु ।

यस अध्ययन परियोजनाले ग्रेटर भ्यानकुभरमा वसोवास गरिरहेका भूटानी-नेपाली समुदायका रोजगारीका अवस्था, चुनौती, स्रोत शाधन परिचालन क्षमता, सिप र रोजगार उद्देश्यहरू बुभने उद्देश्य लिएको ह। साथै परिवारका सदस्यहरू-महिला, पुरुष, वयस्क, युवा, बुढा-कसरी आैै नो सिप, स्रोत शाधन परिचालन गर्दैन भने विषयमा पनि जान्न जमको गरिनेछ ।

म यस अध्ययनले निति निर्माता, सामाजिक कार्यकारी तथा अनुसंधानकारीहरूलाई पुनःथापित गरिएका शरणार्थि समुदायको रोजगारीको अवस्थालाई वास्तविकता वुभन मद्दै पुनर्न आशा लिएको छ ।

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कार्यविधि
यति तपाईं यस अध्ययनमा सहभागी हुनु भयो भने:

(१) तपाईंको रोजगारको अनुभव जानकारी लागि म तपाईंलाई शोध्येर तिन पटक सम्म नौ महिनाको अवधिमा एक घण्टाका दरैले तपाईंको अन्तर्वार्ता लिने छौ। म तपाईंलाई समुहमा पनि कुरा गर्न सक्छौ यदि तपाईं प्रक्षेप एकु वर हुनु भयो भने जुन एक घण्टा देखि दुई घण्टा सम्म हुन सक्छौ।

tपाईको मंजुरीमा उत्कृष्ट बार्तालाप रेकर्ड पनि गर्न सक्छौ। यस जानकारी आवश्यक भएमा म तपाईंसंग पनु: कुराकारी गर्नको लागि सम्पर्क पनि गर्न सक्छौ।

(२) तपाईंको मंजुरीमा म तपाईंसंग रोजगार मेलामा पनि सहभागी हुन सक्छौ। साथै रोजगारसंग सम्बन्धित तपाईंको परिवारिक बार्तालापको पनि अवलोक गर्न सक्छौ।

संभावित लाभ
यस अध्ययनमा तपाईंको सहभागिताले तपाईंलाई रोजगारसङ्ग सम्बन्धित आना विचार, अनुभव र अनुभूति अभिव्यक्ति गर्न अवसर मिले पनि अरु व्यक्तिगत फाईडा नमिल सक्छौ।
तर तपाईंको सहभागिताले निति निर्माण कर्ता तथा अध्ययनरत व्यक्तिहरूलाई रोजगारका क्षेत्रमा थप ज्ञान प्रदान गर्न सक्छौ।

यस अध्ययनमा सहभागिता भए वापात कुनै पारिश्रमिक प्रदान गरिएको छैन।

संभावित लाभ
तपाईंको सहभागिताका कारण तपाईंलाई कुनै भौतिक वा भावनात्मक असर पुढै उने अध्ययनको अभिप्रय रहेको छैन। केही प्रश्नहरु व्यक्तिगत तथा भावोलेजक हुन सक्छौ। तर तपाईंले जवाब दिनु पनि बाध्यता छैन। कुनै भावनात्मक असर अनुभव गर्नु भएमा तपाईं कागज संग संलग्न सम्बन्धित ख्याता तथा उपचार केन्द्रमा सम्पर्क गर्न सक्नु हुनेछ। यि सुविधाहरु निशुल्क वा शुल्क रुपमा प्रदान गरिएको हो। तपाईंलाई त्यहाँ सम्पर्क गर्न म सहयोग गर्न सक्छौ।

गोपनियता
यस अध्ययनको कुनै पनि रिपोर्टमा तपाईंको नाम प्रयोग गरिएको छैन। नाम सदामा उपनाम प्रयोग गरिएको हुन सक्छ। सबै कागजातहरु सुरक्षित राखिएका छन्।
गुनासोका लागि सम्पर्क तपाई।
तपाईको अध्ययनमा सहभागिता वा अध्ययनको विषयमा वा तपाईको अधिकारका बारेमा कुनै प्रश्न, गुनासो वा टिप्पणी भएमा तपाई रिसंच इनफोरमेशन लाईनमा सम्पर्क राख सक्नु हुन्छ। सम्पर्क फोन न.***-***-**** टोलफोन न.***-***-**** र ई-मेल RSIL@ors.ubc.ca हो।

हस्ताक्षर
अध्ययनमा भाग लिने नलिने पाईको इच्छा हो। यो तपाईको अधिकार हो। अहिले भाग लिए पनि पर्छ तपाई अध्ययनबाट वाहिर रहेको वैसैलु। यस वापत तपाईले कुनै मूल्य चुकाउनु पर्दैन।

तपाई केही प्रश्न छन भने मलाई सम्पर्क राखू होला

तपाई यो “सहभागिता” अनुमति पत्रको प्रतिलिपी प्राप्त गरे भनेर तल दस्तखत गर्नु हुनुहुन्छ।

तपाईको सहिले तपाई अध्ययनमा सहभागी हुन मंजुर हुनुहुन्छ, भन्ने दर्शाउनै।

..........................
सहभागिको दस्तखत मिति :-

..........................
सहभागिको नाम

..........................
साक्षीवालको नाम कमिति :-

नोट : यदि तपाई अध्ययनमा सहभागी हुने इच्छा हुँदा हुँदै लिखित रूपमा सहभाति जनाउन सक्नु हुँदै वा इङ्कुक हुन्छ हुन भने तपाई मौँखिक रूपमा रेकर्ड गराउन पनि सक्नु हुन्छ /
APPENDIX E: Expert Interview consent letter

The University of British Columbia
School of Social Work, Vancouver BC

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH
A research-study of the Bhutanese-Nepalese’ labour market experience in Canada

STUDY TEAM

Professor Frank Tester, School of Social Work at the University of British Columbia (UBC), 2080 West Mall, Vancouver, BC V6T 1Z2, phone number ***.***.****, is the Principal Investigator of the study.

Raj Khadka, (phone number ***.***.****), co-investigator, is conducting the research as part of his Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degree in Social Work, at UBC, to understand labour market experience of Bhutanese-Nepalese in Canada.

Please read the information below and ask questions about anything you do not understand, before deciding whether or not to participate.

INVITATION AND STUDY PURPOSE

You are being invited to take part in this research study because you have some knowledge of labour market experience of government assisted refugees (GARs) in Canada which we are trying to learn about.

The project explores the labour market experience of Bhutanese-Nepalese in Greater Vancouver. Specifically, we plan to explore Bhutanese-Nepalese community’s challenges, coping strategies, opportunities, resources, and the ability to mobilize their resources (skills, knowledge, family and network) in the Canadian labour market.

In addition, the study looks at how gender and age/generation within household affects the use of capital resources in the labour market. In doing so we will better understand your strategies and experience in trying to find employment.

We hope the study will assist policy makers, practitioners and researchers to better understand resettled refugees’ employment realities in Canada.
PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, I will interview you to learn about your understanding of the labour market barriers and participation of GARs in the Canadian labour market and ways of improving Bhutanese employment prospects in Canada.

If you agree, some of these conversations (interviews) will be tape-recorded. The interviews will comprise approximately three one-hour sessions over a nine-month period. I may carry out further interviews if I feel that I need to spend more time with you to better understand the information you are giving me.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS

This study will not bring you specific benefits outside of an opportunity to share your views and opinions. Your participation, however, will be of considerable benefit for educational purposes, for it will give students of social science and policy makers a critical opportunity to develop professional skills and settlement policies to help the resettlement process of newcomers. Unfortunately we are not able to pay you for the time you take to be in this study.

POTENTIAL RISKS

This project is not intended to provoke any physical or emotional discomfort. Some of the questions we ask may be sensitive or personal. You do not have to answer any question if you do not want to. If you experience increased emotional stress as a result of the interview, questionnaire, or other research procedure the list of free resources and counseling services that you can access is attached with the consent form. I will help you contact these resources if you wish me to do so.

CONFIDENTIALITY

You will not be identified by name in any reports of the completed study. A pseudonym/code instead of your name will be used. All documents will be kept in a locked filing cabinet and data in hard drive will be password protected.

CONTACT FOR COMPLAINTS

If you have any concerns about your rights as a research subject and/or your experiences while participating in this study, you may contact the Research Subject Information Line in the UBC Office of Research Services at ***.***.**** or if long distance e-mail RSIL@ors.ubc.ca or call toll free ***.***.****.
SIGNATURE

Taking part in this study is entirely up to you. You have the right to refuse to participate in this study. If you decide to take part, you may choose to pull out of the study at any time without giving a reason and without consequences of any kind or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

If you have any questions or concerns about what we are asking of you, please contact me.

• Your signature below indicates that you have received a copy of this consent form for your own records.

• Your signature indicates that you consent to participate in this study.

____________________________________________________
Participant Signature  Date

____________________________________________________
Printed Name of the Participant

____________________________________________________
Signature of Witness  Date
APPENDIX F: Initial Interview Guide

Semi-Structured Interview Guide

1) Demographic Questions
   a) When did you leave Bhutan?
   b) Where did you live in Nepal or India and how long?
   c) How did you end up coming to Canada? And When?
   d) What is your highest level of education and from where?
   e) What job skills do you possess and where did you cultivate or learn them from?

2) What is your previous labour market/livelihood experience in Bhutan/Nepal/India?
   a) Where did you work?
   b) If you had to find job how did you go about it?
   c) What kind of qualifications did you require?
   d) How hard or easy was it to find jobs?

3) What is your job finding experience in Canada?
   a) Are you working? Do you want to work? (Probe)
   b) How many jobs have you applied for so far?
   c) How many jobs have you done so far?
   d) Why do you think you did not get the jobs that you applied for?
   e) What jobs did you acquire first in Canada?
   f) How long did you continue?
   g) Why did it end
   h) What did you do after that?
i) What strategies do you employ to search for jobs? How many jobs have you applied so far?

j) How do you prepare yourself for the job interview?

k) How do you feel about the job interview?

l) What are some challenges you face in the labour market?

m) How hard or easy is it to find jobs?

4) What is your understanding of the labour market in Vancouver?

a) What types of jobs are easy to find?

b) What is your work schedule like if you are working?

c) How do you commute to work?

d) How far is your work from your residence?

5) Where do you get support to help you find jobs?

a) How will you describe your family/friends role in finding a job or helping you to continue your current or previous job? Explain.

b) What kind of work do you do at home?

c) What kind of support do you provide to your spouse or family members while they are new to the labour market?

d) Do you ask family members for any support?

e) Do you ask settlement workers for support?

6) What support do you get from the settlement services?

a) What kind of support do you get from settlement and other community organizations in finding or retaining jobs?
b) Has the settlement system or any training program you have participated in been helpful in preparing you for the labour market?

7) What have you done so far in Canada to prepare yourself for the labour market or to advance in the Canadian labour market?

   a) What kinds of strategies have you adopted?

   b) What training, certification, language classes, and schooling have you had?

   c) Did you learn any job search skills that you found useful?

   d) If yes, did it enhance your knowledge of the labour market?

   e) If not, why not. Please describe.

   f) Have you done any job related to volunteering? Internship?

   g) Are you planning to move to any other place because you could not find jobs (or better paying jobs) here? (Probe)

8) What do you think the settlement/ training program could have done differently to address your employment prospects?

   a) What in your opinion, do you see as barriers or facilitators in your experience of looking for a job?

   b) What in your view can make job searches easier for you or the members of your community?

   c) Do you have any views, ideas and suggestions on ways of improving Bhutanese employment in your community?

9) How do you conceive your future participation in the Canadian labour market or economy?

   a) What do you want to do for your future livelihood?
b) Do you have any plans to become re-skilled, or learn new skills? Describe?

c) Do you have any plans to return to Bhutan, Nepal or India, or migrate to any other country? If yes, why?

9) How are other members of your family doing in labour market?

a) Is anyone in the family finding it easier or more difficulty in finding jobs?

b) Why is it so?

Expert Interview Guide

a) What are the strategies that Bhutanese refugees deploy in their labour market participation in Canada?

b) What are the Bhutanese refugees’ labour market strengths?

c) What are the Bhutanese refugees’ labour market challenges?

d) How do the Bhutanese refugees’ skills, opportunities, and constraints interact with the structural realities of the Canadian labour market?