Intra-gender differences and women's participation in climate change adaptation programs: An intersectional study of gender, caste, and ethnicity in the rural plains of Nepal

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Abstract

Background and research objectives: In social discourses of climate change, women are perceived as vulnerable victims as well as active players in adaptation. This perception of women along with inclusion policies has led climate change adaptation programs to seek women's participation. However, 'women' is not a homogenous category. Intra-gender power differences in terms of castes and ethnicities can play an important role, especially in Nepal with its long history of institutionalized disparities. This study explores the relationships between gender, caste, and ethnicity in shaping women's participation in climate change adaptation programs through intersectional perspectives.

Methods: This study applies qualitative methodology and was conducted in Rajapur municipality in the southern plains of Nepal. 16 men and women who had and had not participated in climate change adaptation programs participated in semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. Participant observation was also conducted. 4 key informants were also interviewed. Of the 20 informants, the focus was on women of specific marginalized groups: Dalit caste and Sonah ethnic group. The data was analyzed using Thematic Network Analysis.

Findings: Gender, caste and ethnicity, and socio-economic factors were important in shaping participation in climate change adaptation programs. The nature of male roles and women's perception of participation had led to a feminization of participation roles in Rajapur which had created spaces for women's involvement in community activities. However, women had difficulty accessing leadership positions. While affirmative actions and shifts in societal norms encouraged marginalized women's participation, elite capture of resources and the legacies of discrimination hindered it. Additionally, socio-economic factors such as social support, social capital and economic capabilities also impacted women's participation.

Conclusion: Gender, caste and ethnicity do shape women's ability to participate in climate change adaptation programs. Women's gender identity generally facilitated their participation. While the power relations associated with caste/ ethnic identity created hinderances for marginalized women's participation, affirmative actions facilitated it.

Keywords: climate change adaptation, gender, caste, ethnicity, participation, Nepal, Tharu, Dalit, Sonah, intersectionality.

List of Acronyms

CCA	Climate Change Adaptation
CFUG	Community Forestry User Group
CSO	Civil Society Organizations
DMC	Disaster Management Committee
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GESI	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
LAPA	Local Adaptation Programme of Action
NAPA	National Adaptation Programme of Action
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NSD	Norwegian Centre for Research Data
TNA	Thematic Network Analysis
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

1. Introduction

Gender has become a dominant topic in social discourses of climate change. Women are often depicted as vulnerable victims, more likely to be harmed by climate change induced disasters, or they are depicted as caretakers of the environment and key actors in climate change adaptation (Arora-Jonsson, 2011). Thus, climate change adaptation (CCA) programs emphasize the need for women's participation. However, gender is not the sole social category that determines adaptability to climate change. This thesis explores how gender interacts with other social categories such caste and ethnicity to shape women's participation in CCA program.

1.1. Background

I begin by establishing the contexts essential to understand and analyze the relationships between gender, caste, ethnicity, and participation in CCA programs in Nepal.

1.1.1. A short history of caste and ethnic disparity in Nepal

Nepal is a relatively small but diverse country. Its 26 million people belong to 125 different castes and ethnicities and speak almost as many languages as their mother tongue (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2011). There is social and economic disparity between these groups. This disparity has been culturally as well as institutionally justified.

After the unification of Nepal in 1768, the ruling dynasties, Shahs and Ranas, exercised a rule which benefited only high-caste Hindus (Bahuns and Chettris) and systematically marginalized other lower castes and ethnic groups (also referred to as indigenous groups) (Adhikari & Samford, 2013). They legalized the stratification of Nepalese societies which ranked Brahmins and Chettris at the top, the ethnic groups in the middle and the Dalits at the lowest level (Tamang, 2009). This gave legitimacy to the social and cultural hierarchy. Additionally, from 1960 to 1990, Nepal was an autocratic monarchy which promoted a highly exclusionary narrative of a single Nepali identity which was comprised of three key characteristics: Hindu, hill-dweller and Nepali-speaking (Tamang, 2009). Through this narrative the state was "deleting the heterogeneous nature of Nepal's population" (Tamang, 2009, p. 64). Nepalis who did not fit these three criteria, for example residents of southern Nepal, who did not speak Nepali as their mother tongue and did not resemble 'hill-dwelling' residents, were seen as not 'real' Nepalis. This narrative was not only exclusionary in terms of Nepali identity but also in terms of access to political and economic spaces. Ethnic groups and lower castes were also subjected to exploitative taxes and labor obligations, and often lost land to high-caste Hindus (Hangen, 2007). This further deepened the inequalities between different castes and ethnic groups.

Centuries of institutionalized oppression provided a charged space for a political revolution in Nepal in 1990. Although this revolution was successful in changing the country to a constitutional monarchy that recognized Nepal as a multi-cultural state, it was not successful in alleviating the longstanding grievances of women and marginalized groups. This resulted in another political insurgency in 1996 which lasted a decade (Adhikari & Samford, 2013; Gurung, 2019). One of the results of this insurgency, followed by regional revolutions led by marginalized groups, has been a political and social move towards inclusion of historically marginalized groups. 'Social inclusion' has been a key term in the 2015 constitution of Nepal and has been expressed in the form of national laws, policies and development programs (Gurung, 2019).

1.1.2. Climate change adaptation policies in Nepal

Despite being one of the most vulnerable countries in terms of climate change (Ojha et al., 2016), strategic climate change adaptation policies are relatively new in Nepal. National Adaptation Program of Action (NAPA), the first policy directly addressing climate change adaptation, was formed in 2010. Local Adaptation Program of Action (LAPA) was developed, also in 2010, in the process of forming NAPA. The 2010s was a politically tumultuous time with emphasis on the social and political inclusion of marginalized groups. LAPA reflects this. While NAPA deals with identifying adaptation risks and mitigation measures at the national level, LAPA aims to address the adaptation needs of local communities and vulnerable communities through involvement of local government bodies and participation from local communities (Nagoda, 2015). Nepal also developed Climate Change Policy in 2011 (Ojha et al., 2016). Climate Change Policy has been seen as an elaboration of NAPA to define concrete actions on adaptation and mitigation (Ojha et al., 2016). NAPA, LAPA, and Climate Change Policy have had an international influence. NAPA was a result of Nepal's commitment to United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change's (UNFCCC) efforts to enable developing countries adapt to climate change in medium and long term (Nagoda, 2015). Additionally, NAPA, LAPA and Climate Change Policy were formed and piloted with the assistance of international donors (Nagoda, 2015; Ojha et al., 2016). Moreover, international donors and organizations have also been conducting numerous CCA programs in Nepal.

1.1.3. Traditional gender roles in agrarian Nepal

Gender roles are well defined in agrarian Nepal. On any given day, women work longer than men (Holmelin, 2019) . Women are responsible for domestic tasks such as preparation of food, cleaning, and laundry. Taking care of children and elderly are considered exclusive to women. Women are also responsible for 'hidden work' such as maintaining social relations and

prestige of the family (Holmelin, 2019).Traditional norms confine women to working in and around the home and restricts women's movement in the public sphere (Chhetri, 2001). In comparison, few agrarian tasks are considered exclusive to men, such as ploughing the fields, chopping firewoods and slaughtering animals (Chhetri, 2001; Holmelin, 2019). Outside of the home and farm, men are responsible for being cash income earners and migrating in search of jobs (Holmelin, 2019).

However, these gender roles are not universal across social groups and geographic regions. For instance, in the Thakali ethnic group, where male migration has a long history, women are also involved in operating the family business (Tamang, 2009). Similarly, in Tamang, Gurung and Magar ethnic groups, women tend to have more decision-making powers and access to properties than other social groups. Meanwhile, high-caste women are less involved in farm work but their movements are often limited to the private sphere (Gurung, Tulachan, & Gauchan, 2005).

1.1.4. Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI)

Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) is a policy to address multidimensional poverty, gender inequality, exclusion, and vulnerability. GESI has been used by the government of Nepal since the 1970s. It encompasses Nepal's various social groups such as different ethnic groups, Dalits, Madhesis and Muslims, among others. GESI often takes form of affirmative action where certain groups are allocated seats for example in community groups and public jobs. The objective of GESI is to emphasize the participation of women and marginalized individuals to foster their inclusion in 'development'. GESI is extensively practiced in Nepal. Government organizations such as the Ministry of Federal Affairs and Local Development, and the Ministry of Education have their own GESI guidelines. It is also mandatory for most development partners and INGOs (International Non-Governmental Organizations) to address GESI. (GESI Working Group, 2017).

1.2. Problem statement and research objectives

GESI and the perceptions regarding women's vulnerablity and roles in climate change adaptation have led many programs that aid adaptation to climate change to seek participation of women. However, 'women' is not a homogenous category. In context of Nepal, there are significant intra-gender differences in terms of caste, ethnicity, religion, income, education etc. Overlooking the differences between women has numerous implications. In terms of research, failure to acknowlege the experiences of marginalized individuals may lead to a skewed study/ research. Thus, the validity of such studies and their claims are questionable. Additionally, if

local power relations are not considered, the very programs designed to aid, might deepen the social disparities and heighten climate change vulnerability (Panday, 2012).

Inspired by the work of scholars such as Kimberlé Crenshaw, I will take an intersectional perspective to study women's participation in CCA programs. Crenshaw highlighted how women of color in the United States of America were overlooked by policies for women (mostly focused on white females) as well as policies for black people (mostly focused on black males) (Cho, Crenshaw, & McCall, 2013). I question whether a similar situation is found in Nepal. GESI seeks to include women **and** marginalized groups but does it overlook women **of** marginalized groups?

Given the social disparity in Nepal and the affirmative actions targeting women and marginalized groups, it is important to explore how women's caste and ethnic idenitities and the power relations associated with them impacts women's participation.

The main research objective of the study is thus the following:

- To explore the relationships between gender, caste, and ethnicity in shaping women's participation in climate change adaptation programs.

The research sub-questions are:

- How is gender related to participation in climate change adaptation programs?
- How do women's caste and ethnicity effect their participation in climate change adaptation programs?
- How are women of marginalized groups impacted by affirmative actions for inclusion?

1.3. Outline of the thesis

This thesis has eight chapters. The first chapter establishes the contexts of this research and introduces the research objectives. In the second chapter, I present the theoretical framework and in the third chapter I present the literature review conducted for this research. The fourth chapter elaborates the research design and methodology of the study. The fifth, sixth and seventh chapters are dedicated to the presentation of findings and discussions of the study. Finally, in chapter eight, I present the conclusions.

2. Conceptual Framework

In this chapter, I present intersectionality as the conceptual framework for this thesis. I introduce the concept of intersectionality and the benefits of using it as a conceptual framework. I also discuss the relevance of intersectionality in climate studies and in the context of Nepal. Lastly, I present my justifications for using the framework and describe how I have employed it my analysis.

2.1. Intersectionality

Intersectionality originated in critical race theory and has been developed in feminist scholarship (Djoudi et al., 2016; Kaijser & Kronsell, 2014). Intersectionality was developed to combat the inadequacies of feminism and anti-racism to fully explain the experiences of marginalized women. According to Crenshaw (1991), who is credited for coining the term 'intersectionality', "the experiences of women of color are frequently the product of intersecting patterns of racism and sexism, and these experiences tend not to be represented within the discourses of either feminism or antiracism" (p. 1243). Davis (2008) defines intersectionality as "the interaction between gender, race and other categories of difference in individual lives, social practices, institutional arrangements, and cultural ideologies and the outcomes of these interactions in terms of power" (p. 68). Instead of focusing on one or two oppressive categories, intersectionality focuses on "the interwoven nature of these categories and how they can mutually strengthen or weaken each-other" (Winker & Degele, 2011, p. 51).

2.2. Intersectionality as a theoretical and analytical framework

The theory of intersectionality is based upon the ideas of intersecting identities and relational nature of power and is thus, valuable for understanding social inequality and power dynamics in society. Carastathis (2014) examines various intersectional scholars including Crenshaw and observes that there are four analytic benefits to intersectionality as a methodology or a theoretical framework: **simultaneity**, **complexity**, **irreducibility** and **inclusivity**. Since intersectionality is based on the idea of multiple intersecting identities, it enables us to analyze multiple categories **simultaneously**; as opposed to ignoring a category or 'adding' to it. Carastathis (2014) states that "intersectionality captures how oppressions are experienced simultaneously" (p. 307). Thus, "intersectionality can theorize the convergence, co-constitution, imbrication, or interwovenness of systems of oppression" (Carastathis, 2014, p. 307). It can analytically help us to investigate how structures of power form and how they interact to produce critical and constructive insights (Kaijser & Kronsell, 2014). Intersectional theoretical framework also allows one to capture the intricate relationships among different social groups across analytical categories to reveal **complexity** of social structures and lived experiences

(Carastathis, 2014). Intersectional theorists demand that all oppressions be addressed which allows the theory to be **irreducible** meaning that unlike classical Marxism or classical Feminism, intersectionality emphasizes on multiple axes of oppression which helps researchers understand the society as a complete entity. The last theoretical advantage of using intersectionality is **inclusivity**. As a theoretical paradigm, intersectionality can act as a "corrective against the white solipsism, heteronormativity, elitism and ableism of dominant power and hegemonic feminist theory by making social locations and experiences visible that are occluded in essentialist and exclusionary constructions of the category of 'women'" (Carastathis, 2014, p. 309).

2.3.Intersectionality in climate studies

The intersectionality framework is increasingly being used in climate change studies. Literature on intersectionality in climate studies will be further explored in Chapter 3. Many researchers stress that intersectionality is a useful concept for climate change studies as it aids in assessing vulnerability and power dynamics. According to Kaijser and Kronsell (2014) "intersectional analysis goes beyond identifying power patterns to problematizing the underlying social categorizations and see how these are reinforced or challenged in the light of climate change'' (p. 422). Additionally, through intersectional lenses, researchers may be able to escape the usual criticisms of adaptation programs such as shallow understanding of social relations, homogenization of entire social groups, viewing adaptation as existing outside of social power dynamics and viewing women as having no agency (Carr & Thompson, 2014; Djoudi et al., 2016; Iniesta-Arandia et al., 2016; Kaijser & Kronsell, 2014; Nightingale, 2002; Ravera et al., 2016).

2.4. Intersectionality in the context of Nepal

The intersectionality framework is interesting in the context of Nepal with its diverse population and its history of systematic inequality. An intersectional lens is especially interesting regarding Nepal's recent commitment to 'inclusion' of marginalized groups and rise in identity politics. The intersectionality framework can also be used to analyze the extent of inclusion of marginalized groups and groups with intersecting marginalized identities. Although intersectionality framework is widely used in context of intersection between gender and marginalized identity, in context of conflicts based around social identity in Nepal (Hangen, 2007), "intersectionality might be more broadly useful as a way of mediating the tensions between assertions of multiple identity and ongoing necessity of group politics" (Cresnshaw, 1991, p. 1296).

2.5. My application of intersectionality framework

Intersectionality is a central theme in this thesis. I have used the concept of intersectionality in almost all aspects of the research process. For instance, I have built the research objectives and the research design on the concept. Similarly, I have conducted the literature review, the data collection as well as data analysis with intersectional theory as a background for my critical thinking. I believe that the intersectionality framework is especially relevant for this research as it aims to capture multiple axes of oppression namely: gender and caste/ethnicity. I believe that through an intersectional lens, I will be able to study the experiences and perspectives of individuals with multiple intersecting marginalized identities: women of marginalized castes and ethnicities.

Intersectional theory is well developed but intersectional practice and methodology remain vague (Carastathis, 2014; Kaijser & Kronsell, 2014; Valentine, 2007). While the concepts of 'simultaneity' and 'irreducibility' are ideal qualities, it is difficult to study "simultaneous oppressions without reducing them to unitary categories or merely reverting to an additive model" (Carastathis, 2014, p. 308; Bowleg, 2008). Additionally, studying powerful social factors such as gender simultaneously with other categories may make the intersectional aspects unclear (Bowleg, 2008). According to Bowleg (2008), isolating each category is an essential step in intersectional analysis; and researchers must conduct analysis on each category separately as well as simultaneously. I follow Bowleg (2008)'s advice by first analyzing gender, then caste and ethnicity; and finally, both simultaneously. I also follow Lloro-Bidart and Finewood (2018)'s advice on looking inward and outward in practicing intersectional feminism for environmental studies. By looking inward, I practice reflexivity on my own positionality and how it impacts my work. By looking outward, I attempt to consider conditions outside of gender and ethnicities such as socio-economic factors, history of exclusion and contemporary politics.

3. Literature Review

This section is a literature review on gender, intersectionality, and climate change adaptation studies (see appendix, section 10.8 for a map of the literature review). The literature review was conducted before and after the data collection process. I begin by reviewing how the literature has assessed women's vulnerabilities in climate change and women's participation in participatory programs. I then review how the literature views adaptation and participatory programs and analyze how intersectionality has been used in adaptation studies. Lastly, I address the gaps that I have identified in the literature.

As the research is set in Nepal, this literature review focuses mostly on studies in South Asia as they may have similar geographical topographies, environmental challenges, and socio-economic features. Most of the literature is peer-reviewed articles published in journals. The literature was found in Oria and Google Scholar databases using combinations of the following search words: gender, climate change adaptation, participatory programs, caste, ethnicity, climate change, Nepal, agriculture, intersectionality, intersection, power, social capital.

3.1. Assessing vulnerabilities

Much research in climate change adaptation focus on assessing vulnerabilities. It has been widely claimed, through empirical and theoretical studies, that the most vulnerable population in terms of climate change are women and marginalized groups of developing countries. Their vulnerabilities seem to be a result of a combination of economic, technological and social barriers that prevent access to proper adaptation (Jones & Boyd, 2011). Women's vulnerability has been attributed to disadvantages and discriminations that arise from gendered norms, gendered divisions of labor and poverty (Alston, 2013; Ogra & Badola, 2015). It is claimed that more women than men are killed or injured during disasters (Sultana, 2013). This is because survival skills such as swimming is mostly limited to males (Ahmed & Fajber, 2009). Additionally, women's caretaker roles mean that, during disasters, they stay back to take care of the children and elderly. Also, their restricted mobility due to social norms means that they might not move to disaster shelter (Sultana, 2013). Moreover, women's jobs are more reliant on the environment which makes them particularly susceptible to changes in the environment but simultaneously as managers of natural resources, they are considered to be at the frontlines of adaptation (Ahmed & Fajber, 2009; Denton, 2002; Tanjeela & Rutherford, 2018).

On the other hand, some researchers critique the view that women are more vulnerable and that that they are closer to nature. Some of these 'facts' seem to be based on unfounded research (Djoudi et al., 2016). For instance, a commonly cited fact is that in natural disasters, women are 14 times more likely to die than men (Arora-Jonsson, 2011). However, Arora-

Jonsson (2011) investigated the validity of this claim, she found that it was based on a seminar presentation in the mid-1990s and since then the statement has been "picked up and presented as fact in several documents on natural disasters" (p. 747). Moreover, Resurrección (2013) states that women are portrayed as vulnerable and caring for the environment because it is a strategy to get the feminist agenda into climate politics. Portraying women as vulnerable or virtuous has negative consequences as it might deny women agency, render men more vulnerable to climate change, exacerbate gender inequality and increase burden for women (Resurrección, 2013).

3.2. Women's participation in participatory programs

Women's involvement in participatory natural resource management institutions, particularly Community Forestry Users Groups (CFUG) has been well studied. Researchers find that women's representation in CFUGs has increased (Bhattarai, 2020). Women's increased involvement has been linked both to male outmigration and affirmative action (Bhattarai, 2020; Collins, 2017; Giri & Darnhofer, 2010; Lama, Kharel, & Ghale, 2017; Leder, Clement, & Karki, 2017). However, affirmative action also seems to encourage tokenistic participation, which is a symbolic participation without power, mainly to appease the requirements (Lama, Kharel, & Ghale, 2017; Leder, Clement, & Karki, 2017). According to Dahal, Nepal, and Schuett (2012), "actual participation of marginal groups" has barely occurred in community-based conservation institutions in the Himalayan region of Nepal (p. 227). Similarly, Leder, Clement, and Karki (2017), in their study of gender inequality in water security programs in western Nepal, find that participation is particularly tokenistic for Dalit women because they face a "double barrier" as a Dalit as well as a woman (p. 244). Meanwhile, Haug, Aasland, and Dahal (2009), in their quantitative study of multiple areas in Nepal find that rather than social identities like caste and ethnicity, district and cultural values are more strongly related to socio-political participation.

Researchers find that women are unable to access leadership positions in community based institutions (Dahal, Nepal, & Schuett, 2012; Lama, Kharel, & Ghale, 2017). Bhattarai (2020), in a study of gender inequality in CFUGs of Nepal, finds that masculine hegemony is practiced in decision-making and women are usually unable to challenge men's decisions. Similarly, Leone (2019), in a study of women's increased participation in executive committee of CFUGs, finds that women are often neglected during decision-making processes even though their participation has positive impacts on forest conservation. Additionally, according to Regmi, Star, and Filho (2016), who studied the effectiveness of community adaptation programs in reaching vulnerable households in Nepal, almost all the individuals in decision-making positions were male, rich or of high caste. While Bhattarai (2020) finds that women's presence in decision-making positions is rising, research finds that their roles are undermined and their decisions are

heavily influenced by their husbands or local patrons (Dahal, Nepal, & Schuett, 2012; Platteau, 2009). Additionally, not all women are equally able to take on leadership roles. Aruna (2018), in a research based in different parts of India, finds that only Dalit women who can mobilize their social capital are able to take on political leaderships. Furthermore, women's minimal representation in decision-making roles have been linked to their heightened climate vulnerability (Ahmed & Fajber, 2009; Sultana, 2013; Tanjeela & Rutherford, 2018).

3.3. Views on adaptation and participatory programs

Climate change adaptation has the potential to bring positive as well as negative changes in society (Nightingale, 2002). Some development paradigms do not sufficiently address local norms and power structures as a part of adaptation processes. As a result, these paradigms reproduce the patterns of vulnerability and inequality (Bhattarai, Beilin, & Ford, 2015; Eriksen, Nightingale, & Eakin, 2015; Rankin, 2011). The same factors that cause vulnerability might deepen the inter caste and gender divisions (Bhattarai, 2020; Cleaver, 2005; Nagoda & Nightingale, 2017). Rankin (2011) investigates social capital and microfinance in Nepal to find that "common moral frameworks generated by social norms and networks can be implicated in cultural ideologies that justify and perpetuate inequality" (p. 17). Similarly, Onta and Resurreccion (2011), in their study in the Himalayan region of Nepal explore how Dalit and Lama households adapt to climate change. They find that even in disasters, gender boundaries tend to remain intact. Researchers also find evidence of elite capture of resources which tend to reinforce social inequalities (Dahal, Nepal, & Schuett, 2012; Gentle et al., 2013; Leder, Clement, & Karki, 2017; Regmi, Star, & Filho, 2016). Platteau (2009) finds that in unequal heterogeneous societies, elite capture is "almost certain to occur" (p. 26). However, Dasgupta and Beard (2007), who studied elite capture in different Indonesian societies with varying degrees of power distribution and Panda (2015), who studied the relationships between allocation of poverty alleviation benefits and political connections find no evidence of elite capture.

Meanwhile, other studies find that adaptation programs are opportunities for transformative changes. Adaptation strategies such as livelihood diversification can be advantageous to marginalized members of society as they have an opportunity to use these interventions in social norms to embrace changes. Ogra and Badola (2015) specifically focus on how ecotourism can aid women in the Indian Himalayas. Additionally, Sultana (2013) stresses that adaptation measures, if done correctly, can reduce women's vulnerabilities by providing them access to decision-making positions.

3.4. Intersectionality in adaptation

Developed in 1980s, intersectionality has travelled far and wide into different disciplines such as history, philosophy, anthropology and legal studies (Cho, Crenshaw, & McCall, 2013). Intersectionality is gradually being adopted into climate change studies as well. Intersectionality has been used in climate change studies to research how "multiple social identities and forms of oppression, such as class, race, ethnicity, caste, sexuality and age intersect and influence environmental management, livelihood vulnerability and adaptation responses to global environment change" (Iniesta-Arandia et al., 2016, p. 386). In a reflection paper by 16 climate change researchers, intersectionality is deemed as an important theoretical framework to achieve meaningful understanding of vulnerabilities and adaptive capacities as well as a means of achieving tailored transformational changes in society (Iniesta-Arandia et al., 2016). Researchers recommend intersectionality especially in adaptation studies (Osborne, 2015; Sugden et al., 2014) to rethink the notions of vulnerability, resilience and adaptative capacities (Iniesta-Arandia et al., 2016).

A growing number of studies have directly or indirectly indicated the importance of intersectionality. Most of these studies have been theoretical (Carr & Thompson, 2014; Djoudi et al., 2016; Iniesta-Arandia et al., 2016; Kaijser & Kronsell, 2014; Osborne, 2015). Some empirical climate change researches have used intersectionality. For instance, Ravera et al. (2016) use intersectionality to explain how men and women of different castes and localities in rural India use different adaptation measures. Onta and Resurreccion (2011) also focus on the intersectionality of caste and gender to research how social identities create social barriers which shape an individual's adaptive or mal-adaptive capacities. Similarly, Sugden et al. (2014) study intersectionality of gender and class in Nepal and India to find policies that climate change together with male outmigration has increased marginalized women's vulnerability.

3.5. Gaps in literature review

Based on this literature review, I have identified several gaps. A large body of literature is dedicated to gender in climate change adaptation. There are also studies covering women's participation in participatory programs such as CFUG and poverty alleviation programs. However, there is a limited number of researches on women's participation in participatory climate change adaptation program specifically. I also find that intersectionality is a growing trend in climate change studies. However, there is an underrepresentation of empirical research on climate change adaptation that employ intersectional theoretical framework. Moreover, as can be seen, there is a lack of research regarding unrecognized groups in climate change or natural resource management studies in Nepal. My study attempts to make a small contribution to bridge this gap in literature.

4. Methodology

In this chapter, I describe and reflect on the research design and methodology of this research project. I begin by explaining the research design and the site where this study was conducted. I also describe the informants of the study. I then describe the methods I have used for data collection, my role as a researcher, ethical considerations, and steps I took to ensure the quality of this research. Finally, I reflect on the challenges that I faced during this research.

4.1. Research Design

The objective of this research was to explore the relationships between gender, caste, and ethnicity in shaping women's participation in climate change adaptation programs. I have chosen to pursue this objective through an interpretivist approach to science (Neuman, 2011) and a qualitative methodology. Interpretivism, with its emphasis on understanding social phenomena in their context and as well as the subjective realities of those being studied, provided me with an epistemological framework for exploring the objective of this study.

Qualitative methodology has allowed me to explore and understand people's intersectional experiences in an in-depth manner. Rather than establishing co-relations and generalizable statements that quantitative methods aim to do, I wanted to employ the strengths of qualitative methodology for my research. I wanted to capture the experiences of living in stratified communities and the meaning of different women's involvement in CCA programs. Additionally, I use intersectional framework which is more suited for qualitative rather than quantitative methodology. Some researchers have found it "virtually impossible" to conduct a truly intersectional research with quantitative methodologies (Carastathis, 2014, p. 308).

4.2. Study Site

The study was conducted in Rajapur municipality; Province 5 of Nepal. Rajapur is situated in the southern plains of Nepal known as *Terai*. Bordering India on its southern side, Rajapur is a primarily agricultural municipality of 127.08 sq. km. area. Surrounded by two big rivers, Karnali and Geruwa on its eastern and western borders, Rajapur frequently faces floods during the monsoon. Rajapur is home to 55,584 people of different caste and ethnicity. The largest caste/ ethnic group are the Tharus (79.6%) followed by Brahmins/ Chhetris (10.5 %). Dalits form the third largest caste/ ethnic group (4.14%). (Rajapur Municipality Office, 2019). Many minority groups such as the Badi ethnic group, Muslims, landless former bonded labors reside in Rajpur. My study is limited to two marginalized groups: Sonahs (who do not appear in the census) and Dalits. I chose Rajapur as my study site because of its heterogeneous population and its susceptibility to climate change given its dependence on natural resources and the frequency of floods during the monsoon season.

4.3. Climate Change Adaptation (CCA) Programs

During the initial phase of the data collection, I intended to study marginalized women's participation in two CCA programs. Both these programs were being conducted by an INGO which I have chosen to anonymize due to confidentiality concerns. Given that Rajapur experiences flood every year, the INGO has been conducting a flood resilience program since 2014 and a climate change project since January 2019. The INGO's local partner organization in Rajapur (also anonymized) has been implementing these programs which include activities such as trainings on safety and survival during floods, trainings on operation of early warning systems for floods and courses on swimming. They also provide livelihood diversification trainings such as hospitality management, sewing and hair dressing.

However, during the data collection, I realized that when asked about participation in CCA programs, my informants would often talk not only about these two programs but also participation in other activities such as Community Forestry User Groups (CFUG) and Disaster Management Committees (DMC). CFUGs are legal entities formed to manage and utilize community forests. Among other functions, CFUG committees hold meetings and make decisions on how forest resources are to be used. Similarly, DMCs are committees that conduct trainings and are active as first responders during natural disasters like floods or earthquakes. INGO programs programs are often conducted through these committees and it understandable why my informants would talk about these when asked about CCA programs. This thesis reflects my informants' perspective on these programs as I have chosen to incorporate research on CCA programs, CFUGs and DMCs in the literature review as well as the presentation and discussions of the findings.

4.4. Informants:

Three groups of people have participated in this research: women of minority groups, elite group, and key informants. A table of informants can be found in appendix, section 10.1.

4.4.1. Women of marginalized group

The focus of this project has been women of marginalized groups: Dalit caste and Sonah ethnic group. I interacted with 13 women of marginalized groups. I conducted individual interviews with two women of minority groups (one Dalit woman and one Sonah woman) who had participated in CCA programs. I conducted a group interview with six Dalit women who had not participated in CCA programs and a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) with two Dalit women and three Sonah women who had not participated in CCA programs and one Dalit woman who had participated in CCA programs.

Most of my informants had not participated in CCA programs as I wanted to understand their perspectives behind their non-participation. Also, following an intersectional perspective, I wanted to explore their positionality as women and as members of marginalized groups; and its impact on their experiences and their lack of access to participation in CCA programs. However, most of my informants did have some experience participating in other participatory programs such as Community Forestry User Groups (CFUG) and microfinance organizations.

a. Sonah ethnic group:

The Sonah ethnic group has not been officially recognized by the government of Nepal. They do not appear in the national census or documents produced by the Rajapur municipality. Perhaps, this is the reason why the Sonahs do not know their total population. The Sonahs guess that it is around 1,200; living in Rajapur and a few other places in the southern plains of Nepal.

Officially, the Sonahs have been grouped together with the Tharu ethnic group. However, they hold distinct identities based on culture, language, profession, and religion. Interestingly, the Sonahs in Rajapur represent a pocket of Christianity in the dominantly Hindu country of Nepal. Additionally, unlike the surrounding castes and ethnic groups, most Sonah men have not migrated outside of the village for work but are still involved in their traditional profession (see below). Many also work around the village area as truck drivers or other local jobs.

The most distinct of the Sonahs' characteristics is perhaps their profession. Living at the banks of the Karnali river, the Sonahs pan for gold in the river islands. Aside from panning for gold, the Sonahs are also known for fishing. Unlike other caste and ethnic groups, who might fish as well, the Sonahs do not own lands and do not farm (beside what they can cultivate in their backyards). For the Sonahs, the Karnali river is a vital part of life. Most Sonahs are extremely strong swimmers; able to swim across the entire breadth of the Karnali river against its strong currents. In this thesis, I have anonymized my Sonah informants by giving them pseudonyms starting with the letter 'S': Sunehna, Sonali, Sunmaya and Sunkesari.

b. Dalit caste:

Although caste-based discrimination has been illegal in Nepal since 1954, Dalits continue to be socially excluded due to the cultural and religious connotations associated with the Dalit identity. A study conducted in 2002 found that 205 different forms of discriminations against Dalits were being practiced (Tamang, 2011). Extreme forms of discrimination such as untouchability and prohibition from entering public spaces seem to continue in many parts of Nepal. This has exacerbated the inequality between Dalits and higher castes and ethnic groups. Dalits have been classified as a 'historically marginalized group' and are eligible for affirmative

actions from the Constituent Assembly for various community-based institutions. There have also been socio-political movements based around Dalit identity in Nepal.

In Rajapur, most of the Dalit families are involved in farming. While most of them do not own enough land for farming, they follow a system of *Bataiya*[1]. As Rajapur borders India, seasonal migration to India is common for Dalit men. They usually work in India during agriculturally non-intensive months and return to Rajapur during the cultivation and harvesting seasons. Some Dalit women and some Dalit families may also migrate to India. In this thesis, I have anonymized my Dalit informants by giving them pseudonyms starting with the letter 'D': Drishti, Devi, Dikshya, Deepa, Dhanmaya and Dayakumari.

4.4.2. Elite group

I have conducted in-depth interviews with one man and two women of Tharu ethnic group who have participated in CCA programs. Although the elite group, the Tharus, have not been the focus of this study, I have sought to include them. This is because I have attempted to obtain a broader view of the society. As interpretivism puts emphasis on understanding how people interact with each other and how meanings are created, I believe that the omission of the elite members of the society would have resulted in an incomplete picture of my informants' world. The inclusion of elite class has also allowed me to contrast their experience with that of non-elite informants.

The Tharus have inhabited the southern plains of Nepal for more than 600 years. Even when the area was a thick sub-tropical jungle infested with malaria, the Tharus were thriving for they are genetically immune to the disease (Acharya & Acharya, 2009). Tharus are not the majority group in Nepal. Only 6.8 per cent of the total Nepali population are Tharus (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2011). In the context of Nepal, Tharus would also not be considered an elite group. Historically, even in Rajapur, despite being the majority group, Tharus were not an elite group. They were landless and worked as *Kamaiyas* (bonded labourers). Many Tharus still live as landless *Mukta-Kamiyas* (freed ex-*Kamaiyas*). However, based on my experiences during the fieldwork, in the present context of Rajapur, they can be considered the elite group, for they hold most of the economic and political power. In this thesis, I have anonymized my Tharu informants by giving them pseudonyms starting with the letter 'T': Trishna, Tripti and Tilak.

[1] *Batiya* is a system where landless household, particularly in southern plains of Nepal, cultivate the lands for its owners. In exchange, they receive half of the land's production.

4.4.3. Key Informants

I conducted individual interviews with four key informants working with Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) in different organizations (for interview guides see appendix, section 10.3). I recruited the key informants through emails. Two of the interviews took place at the key informants' offices and one took place at the informant's home. One of the key informants also participated in the FGD.

4.5. Recruitment of informants

I was able to conduct this research and recruit informants through the INGO's local partner organization in Rajapur. The staff of the local organization, who were my gatekeepers to the community, were local persons with knowledge regarding the informants' participation in the different programs, their home address, caste/ ethnicity, economic class, and other details. My gatekeepers used their professional and personal connections to help me recruit informants.

4.6. Methods of Data Collection

The process of data collection took place in a period of two weeks in mid-November 2019. Two main methods were used: in-depth semi-structured interviews and focus group discussion (FGD). Participant observation was also conducted.

4.6.1. In-depth semi-structured interviews

The interviews were designed to understand the informants' perspectives, their difficulties, and the reasons for their participation or non-participation (see appendix, section 10.2. for the interview guide). The in-depth nature of the interviews allowed me to understand the informants and their environment in detail; while the semi-structured nature allowed the informants to drive the conversation into the areas of their concern and importance.

My gatekeepers introduced me to informants who had participated in their projects. As residents of Rajapur, my gatekeepers also knew people who had not participated in their projects. Thus, my gatekeepers introduced me to informants had and had not participated in CCA programs. For informants who had not participated in CCA projects, recruitment was done through opportunistic sampling (Punch, 2014).

My gatekeepers personally took me to the informants' homes and introduced me. After the introductions with my informants, I explained the purpose of my visit to their homes. If they were willing and able to, I started the interview process. The interviews were conducted in the informants' natural settings, in the front yard of their homes, taking their comfortability into account. All the interviews were carried out in the Nepali language and were around 30 minutes to 1 hour each. Even though most of my interviewees' first language was not Nepali, they were able to express themselves clearly and I was able to understand them well. While the participants

were reserved in the beginning, I felt that they grew more comfortable and expressive as the interview carried on.

4.6.2. Group interview

While recruiting informants for individual interviews, I found a group of women who had not participated in CCA programs. In that situation, instead of asking one person for an interview, I chose to conduct a group interview as all the women were willing and able to participate. The group interview followed the same interview guide as the individual interview (see appendix, section 10.2). I conducted the interview in one of my informants' front-yard and it was 45 minutes long. Even though only two or three women were actively participating in the group interview, I felt that the informants were comfortable in telling their stories and explaining their perspective from the beginning of the group interview.

4.6.3. Focus Group Discussion (FGD)

The objective of the FGD was to observe the group interactions of different social groups and elicit information on their norms (Punch, 2014). I wanted to create an atmosphere where my informants would be comfortable with each other and in voicing out controversial opinions. I attempted do this by inviting informants of same social groups together with another social group of similar social level. I invited six women: three women of Dalit caste and three women of Sonah ethnicity. Only one of them had participated in CCA programs before. I observed that the Sonah and Dalit women were comfortable speaking with and in front of each other. The FGD was based on the FGD guide (see appendix, section 10.4) and was 2 hours long. It took place in the office of the local organization mentioned above. This was an ideal place for the FGD as it was in the central area of Rajapur which was accessible to all the participants.

In order to cover their expenses of travelling to the NGO office, I reimbursed my informants' cost of transportation. Additionally, because the office belonged to the organization conducting the CCA programs, I believe some informants felt unable to speak as freely as they might have wanted to. However, towards the end of the focus group, the participants and I had lunch together, in a restaurant outside of the office where we continued the FGD. I believe this gave the participants the opportunity to speak more freely.

4.6.4. Participant observation

During the FGD, my Sonah informants invited me to stay at the homestay (a form of lodging for tourists where they share the residence of a local person) run by their community. I used this opportunity to conduct participant observation. Through participant observation, I wanted to understand the community's life in their natural settings. I stayed in the home a Sonah woman for two nights, where I observed the daily activities of the community and informally

asked questions regarding their livelihood, social transformations, environmental changes, and culture among other things. All the observations were noted down in a field diary.

4.7. Data management and data analysis model

I have attempted to manage the data as ethically as possible. All interviews and FGD were conducted in Nepali, audio-recorded and translated to English by me. The hard copies of signed consent forms were kept safe with me. Only the audio-files contained the personal information. They were accessible to me alone and was deleted after anonymized transcription.

I used Attride-Stirling (2001)'s model of Thematic Network Analysis (TNA) for data analysis. The TNA table for this study is available at appendix, section 10.7. Thematic analysis is a method of qualitative data analysis that aims to "unearth the themes salient in a text at different levels" (Attride-Stirling, 2001, p. 387). TNA facilitates this process by structuring these themes into web-like networks (Attride-Stirling, 2001). I chose TNA as it a rigorous, transparent and systematic data interpretation technique. I used Nvivo 12 program as well as manual notes for data management. I followed the six steps that Attride-Stirling (2001) prescribes for TNA: code materials, identify themes, construct thematic networks, summarize thematic networks, and interpret patterns. This process was iterative rather than linear. Following the rationalizations presented by Attride-Stirling (2001), I first coded the data in Nvivo 12 program by devising a framework and then dissected each text into text segments using the framework. Then, I abstracted themes from the codes.

4.8. Trustworthiness of Research

I built my study on the four pillars of a trustworthy research: **credibility**, **dependability**, **transferability**, and **confirmability**. **Credibility** is the when participants, not only the researcher, find the study findings accurate or true (Yilmaz, 2013). To ensure credibility, I employed two methods: verbal verification strategy and triangulation of research methods. During data collection, I made concise statements of informants' accounts and asked them if I had understood them correctly. I also gave them opportunities to correct me if I had misunderstood. Additionally, I used three different methods of data collection which according to Yilmaz (2013) increases the credibility of a research by reducing the mistakes linked to one particular method. A credible research also has meaningful coherence with the existing literature. In order to achieve this, I ensured that research questions are grounded in literature and my findings and conclusion are linked up with scholarly discussions in literature (Tracy, 2010).

Dependability means that the different processes of the research is explained thoroughly and can be confirmed (Yilmaz, 2013). In a dependable research, "the process of study is consistent over time and across different researchers and different methods or projects" (Yilmaz,

2013, p. 319). In order to ensure dependability in my research, I attempted to give detailed information regarding the research process and give sufficient justifications for my choices.

A research is considered **transferable** if its findings can be applicable to a different but similar contexts and populations (Yilmaz, 2013). In order to make research transferable, I have given a thick description of the setting, context and people. The thick description is also meant to aid the readers' decision on the extent of applicability of this study in terms of other researches.

Lastly, **confirmability** means that research findings are logical and are grounded in data (Yilmaz, 2013). I attempted to make this research confirmable by practicing reflexivity. I examined and cross-examined my own choices and decisions on the research topic, research design, methods, analysis, and the conclusions I drew from the whole process. Through reflexivity, I attempted to ensure that the results are indeed based on the data and not on my personal characteristics and preferences (Shenton, 2004). Furthermore, through thematic networks created through my method of analysis, readers are also able to view my interpretation and summary of the data to judge its confirmability (Attride-Stirling, 2001).

4.9. My role as a researcher

The researcher's background, perspective and position are bound to impact a qualitative study; the question is not whether it happens or how to prevent it but to turn it into a methodological strategy of reflexivity (Malterud, 2001). I present some of the reflections in the coming chapters. Here, I address some key reflections.

Although I am Nepali, I felt that my informants might have viewed me as an outsider. I am from a different ethnic group, from a different part of the country, and my Nepali is different from theirs. I believe this initially caused them to be hesitant with me. I attempted to make them comfortable by emphasizing on mutual issues such as lack of confidence when talking in Nepali and similar age group. Additionally, as my informants grew more comfortable, I felt that they took it upon themselves to explain their world to me, an unacquainted 'outsider'.

I have also recognized that there is a hierarchical relation between me as researchers and the informants. Participants often tend to view researchers as having power over them (Karnieli-Miller, Strier, & Pessach, 2009). I have attempted to level this hierarchy through language. In Nepali language there are various forms of the pronoun 'you'. I addressed my participants as 'tapai', which a respectable form of 'you', and they did the same to me.

4.10. Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are vital in research throughout the research processes from the conception of research questions to after the completion of research project (Punch, 2014). Researchers must consider ethics from the choice of their topics to data storage after the

completion of the research process. I have attempted to do the same. For instance, during data collection, I have tried not to cause conflict due to existing animosity between different castes and ethnic groups. For the FGD, I intentionally invited members of Sonah and Dalit groups as they are both considered minority groups.

Two principle pillars of research ethics are informed consent and confidentiality (Punch, 2014). Informed consent guards the right of research participants to not be forced, persuaded or induced into research processes against their will and that they are informed about the study they participate in (Green & Thorogood, 2014). To ensure that the informants in the study have given their informed consent, I explained the research project in detail. I also explained how their responses is going to be used and assured them of their anonymity. I translated the informed consent form (available in appendix, section 10.6) in Nepali language, so the informants were able to sign the consent knowing what it entailed. In cases where informants were unable to sign their consent form, I received their verbal consent after informing them of their rights before and after the interview. Similarly, confidentiality protects a research participant's privacy and identity (Green & Thorogood, 2014). To achieve this, I have anonymized all the participants involved in this research and their related organizations. The personal information was stored in a password protected laptop during the research process and has been deleted.

This project was approved by the Norwegian Center for Research Data (NSD) prior to data collection (see appendix, section 10.5). I was unable to identify a national body handling the ethical issues relevant to this study area in Nepal. However, I shared the project proposal of this research with the INGO conducting the CCA programs and it been approved by them.

4.11. Challenges and limitations of the research

One of the limitations of this study is that that my informants (who had experiences with CCA programs) were recruited through my gatekeepers (the staff of the local NGO). It is possible that my gatekeepers introduced me only to informants with positive experiences of the programs. This might have skewed the study findings. Additionally, my informants might have associated me with the NGO (despite me stating the opposite) rather than as a researcher. This might have led some informants to exaggerate certain points and undermine others.

Additionally, my visit to Rajapur was only 2 weeks long. This duration is shorter than desired because "qualitative research is conducted through an intense and/or prolonged contact" (Punch, 2014, p. 119). I believe that my short visit has limited my understanding of the meanings and nuances which are considered strengths of a qualitative study. The short duration was also constraining in building rapport with my informants which might have impacted the quality and quantity of the information I received from them. I reflect on this further in the coming chapters.

5. Gender Roles

"Whenever people face issues of allocation - who is to do what, get what, plan or execute action, direct or be directed, incumbency in significant social categories such as "female" and "male" seems to be pointedly relevant." (West & Zimmerman, 1987, p. 143). In this chapter, I discuss, as West and Zimmerman (1987) state, how categories of male and female are pointedly relevant in allocation of participation in CCA programs.

5.1. Male Roles

The objectives of this research revolve around women of marginalized groups. However, I begin this chapter by presenting my findings on male roles. I find that male roles play an important part in women's ability to participate in CCA programs.

5.1.1. Absence of males

Soon after reaching Rajapur, I realized that most of the participants in CCA programs were women. There seemed to be an absence of males because of two reasons: migration and the nature of male work.

I asked my informants the reasons behind men's absence in CCA programs. They informed me that most of the men in Rajapur were involved in seasonal migration. As one my informants, Deepa, a Dalit woman, stated during the group interview, "*There are no men here. They have gone to India*".

The proximity to and open borders with India as well as lack of local job opportunities had pushed men to migrate for work. According to Devi whose husband and sons worked in India, generations of men have worked and lived away from home. Some men seem to migrate to bigger cities in Nepal such as Nepalgunj or Kathmandu. When I asked Trishna, a Tharu woman working as a leader in her Disaster Management Committee (DMC) as well as a previous local politician, about the reason why participation in CCA programs were overwhelmingly female, she said:

> *"Some of them [men] work here, some of them go outside. Some who work in Rajapur also go abroad sometimes, that is why there are more women participating".*

Here, Trishna linked increase in women's participation in CCA programs as a direct consequence of male absence. During the FGD, Dikshya highlighted the importance of male migration when she told me that without migrating for work, they would not able to survive.

> *"If we [Dalits] don't go abroad then we do not have any work. There is nothing here, they [the men] go abroad to earn and send us money, that is how we take care of the children. There is nothing here. What do we have here? Only our home. Even that, it is uncertain when the floods will come and take it away."*

Other informants at the FGD agreed with Dikshya. Similar sentiments were also relayed to me by several other of my informants in separate conversations. This indicates that men's roles in Rajapur society is bound with providing for their families by working outside of the village.

However, not all men migrated for work. Some groups of men such as the Sonahs, tended not to follow the culture of migration but were involved in traditional occupation of fishing and panning for gold; or had found work around the village such as *tuk-tuk* drivers. During my short homestay in her area, one of my Sonah informants, Sunmaya, told me that her husband worked as a truck driver around Rajapur area. These jobs, like male migration, placed them away from their community which had created space for women to take up community roles such as participation in CCA programs.

During an individual interview, when I asked Sunehna, another Sonah informant, if organizations were actively seeking female participants, she said:

> *"The men go outside to work, the women stay at home, they [the women] can go participate in the organizations works, the cooperative groups are mostly made of women, if there is a training or meeting, women are the ones who participate the most."*

As Sunehna explained, it seems that men's unavailability had resulted in increment in women's participation. Similarly, when I asked Tripti, a Tharu woman, why men were not participating in CCA programs. She replied that it was because the men were busy.

> "*In my house, I am the daughter, I am able to manage time. Mom and dad work. In case of men, they are the ones who work around, so they unable to manage*."

Tripti, also the secretary of her local DMC, further explained how her father used to be a participant. However, he was unable to go to meetings because of his work and she would go in his place. She gradually became a regular member replacing her father.

5.1.2. Men in decision-making roles

Interestingly, even though men were mostly not involved as participants in these programs, they still held the leadership and decision-making roles. During a conversation with Tilak, a Tharu man who was the chairperson of his local Community Forestry User Group (CFUG) himself, shared his views regarding women's leadership capacities.

> *"…Even among women, in many places, they are not in leadership position as much. For instance, they participate in the CFUG committee, they accept the leadership positions but they unable to make decisions, independent decisions. Only some women can. All the women come, they also participate and talk, however there are few at the decision-making level."*

In Tilak's experience, even though almost all the participants were females, the decision-making roles were reserved for men. My female informants also gave me a similar picture. During the FGD, Sonali, a 24-year-old Sonah woman, explained how it works in her community.

> *"In our community, men are the ones who do it [take up decision-making positions]. Even if men are making decisions, women participate in the similar level."*

Although men had the decision-making roles, my female informants explained that the decisions were jointly taken. When I asked if women's suggestions and ideas were taken seriously, my informants replied positively, without hesitation. Thus, the male leadership seemed to be accepted by the women while simultaneously believing that they could influence decisions.

5.2. Women's perceptions of participation roles

Women's perception of participation roles seems to frame their ability to participate in CCA programs. In this section, I present my findings on women's perception on CCA programs and how they have used their participation roles as a platform to develop their capacities.

5.2.1. Is participation role a burden for women?

Tilak, who had prolifically worked with different NGOs and INGOs in the past decades, shared a concern which is widespread in within the development community. He indicated towards women's 'triple burden' of participating in community groups.

> *"… it is difficult for them [women]. Their workload has increased. On top of being a nuclear family, farm work must be done by women, housework must be done by women, other works must also be done by women, women must also come to committees and handle certain positions. Their workload has increased. They must go cut grass [for cattle fodder], they must look after the kids, they must do the farm work, they must go participate in the committees as well which has increased the work load and made it burdensome. In fact, it was better for them before. The men used to work before. But now, women have started doing it…"*

In addition to male migration, participation in CCA or other programs could mean that their share of household burden has increased.

Interestingly, women themselves denied feeling increase in work due to participation roles nor due to male migration. Trishna, who lived separate from her in-laws' which is counter to the traditional norms in Rajapur, explained how women navigate different responsibilities:

> *"Everybody has understood the importance of going to different places. They [women] say, 'Today I have a training'. They do not feel difficulty, otherwise, they could say, 'No I*

cannot go, I have work at home'. They could just stay at home. Now, they say, 'Today I have to go out, I am not going to do housework' and they go (laugh)"

Trishna explained that women, including herself, enjoyed participating in meetings and trainings. She clarified that the participation roles did not interfere with their household responsibilities. In fact, she told me that in such cases many women prioritized participating in program events above their household work. This also indicates that women's mobility was not limited to the private sphere. This view was shared by all my female informants, whether or not they had participated in CCA programs before. Thus, individuals looking in from the outside might assume that male migration coupled with participation roles must have made women's workload heavier. On the contrary, I find that the women themselves did not perceive it as so.

5.2.2. Increasing women's capabilities

Far from being a burden, my findings indicate that participation in different programs such as CCA programs are sought-after activities for women. My informants discussed how exposure to different NGOs, INGOs and even journalists had increased their capabilities. During the FGD, Devi, who had not participated in CCA programs, but had experience with activities such as women's cooperative groups and attending trainings shared her experience.

"We [the women] are the ones at home, if we are called, for example here [at the FGD I was conducting], we go, we learn things, right? If we go there [an event], then we know that it is, if we go there [another event], we know what we can get from there, we know that now. They [the men] say 'when you go out, you know things, things important for the family. So, they say we must go out, 'you must go out and learn things.' Otherwise, what do we have? Nothing, we cannot go and work, it is not enough to just stay at home, there is no other work here, what can we do? It is important for women to be active. Even if men are there, women are the ones that must participate, this is how it is now".

I found that almost all my female informants, regardless of their castes and ethnicities, held similar perspectives as Devi. Participating in activities outside of home provided them with opportunities to learn about available resources, gain knowledge about various topics and build their networks. Tripti, who had participated in CCA programs, demonstrated this when she said:

"… I saw others who were doing it, getting trainings. I also wanted to go to trainings. I wanted to go to places like that, I wanted to do something as well, that is why I joined".

My informants believed that participating in different programs was helpful beyond adapting to climate change. They found different programs helped them sharpen their abilities such as speaking skills, decision-making powers and their self-confidence. For instance, Sunmaya, who

speaks Sonah as her mother tongue, explained how her contact with journalists helped her develop her understanding of the outside world and Nepali language proficiency.

> *"…now I get….the opportunity to understand and know things, people come from afar, journalists come, they ask me things, they learn, they teach me things I do not know, I ask them things I do not know. I did not know anything at all, I was not able to talk in Nepali like this before, there are many who still cannot, I am not fluent still, I speak even if it is broken*.".

Furthermore, participation in livelihood diversification programs such as hospitality training or seamstress training could be the key to brining changes in lifestyle for women. Even when projects are not as lucrative as training programs, women preferred to participate rather than staying at home. My informants seemed to cherish their interactions outside of their homes, as Dikshya, who had experience participating in programs other than the CCA programs, explained in jest, *"…otherwise, we would have to either talk to the house or the buffaloes"*.

5.2. Feminization of participation roles

The idea of who is supposed to be involved in participating in different programs seems to have shifted in Rajapur. Affirmative actions for women in combination with shifts in gender roles seems to have caused feminization of participation roles.

5.2.1. Affirmative action for women

Introduction of affirmative action for women have made it mandatory for women to participate in different committees and programs. When affirmative action was first introduced, women were hesitant and were forced to participate but gradually, they proliferated in participation roles. Tilak, leader of CFUG, explained the different requirements for committees like CFUGs.

> *"…even in the Government of Nepal…only 1/3 are women… among the 11 members, it is deemed enough to have 3 women. However, in the committee, women should account for at least 50% of the participation…Regarding GESI, for example, … if the committee has 11 members, it is mandatory that the positions of either the president or the vice-president should be woman."*

As Tilak explained, in community groups at least half of the participants must be women. Additionally, one of the two leadership positions (either chairperson or the vice-chairperson) must belong to a woman. When I asked Trishna about this, she shared her personal experience with joy.

> *"Before, women were busy in the housework, they only used to do housework. Gradually, they [NGOs and CSOs] started insisting that there has to be participation of women as*

well, women must come, they must attend meetings, they must get trainings, there were many kinds of trainings, women should also learn and do something, then slowly women started participating, now women are 'fast', they have gone way far ahead".

Some of my other informants also explained that initially, women felt compelled to participate. However, through this obligatory participation, my informants realized that these programs can be beneficial to them by opening new avenues. 'Now', Trishna said, 'women are fast'; meaning that women had become able to grab opportunities that were beneficial for them.

5.2.2. Transformation in gender norms

My informants often discussed changes in gender norms and talked about these changes by contrasting their past experiences with the present. During the FGD, I asked my participants to explain how women had become the majority of the participants in CCA programs when it used to be men in the past. In response, Sonali explained the gender norms among the Sonahs in terms of restriction of movement in the public sphere.

> *"Before, especially in our Sonah ethnic group, they [the men] didn't allow women to go out of the house. They used to say 'why should women go to places where men go? Women don't have any work there'. They do not say things such now"*.

Here, Sonali stated that now, women's participation outside of the household was acceptable. This perspective was agreed upon all women in the FGD. Dikshya added, *"it has been the same for everybody"*; indicating that Sonali's statement was applicable for other caste and ethnicities.

I further asked my informants about their opinions on the causes of this change in gender norms. Devi, mother-in law to Dikshya, talked about how 'awareness' and education had enabled the men to expand their horizons regarding the extent of women's role in the society.

> *"Before, men had not known much as well, so it was harder for women to go to places. If women went anywhere, the men would wonder where they were going, the men used to be afraid that they would leave. But now, men are more aware as well, so they let women be in the front as well"*.

Devi also talked about how women could be in the 'front as well', hinting at changes in gender norms, where a woman, like a man, may involve herself in activities that benefit her.

During an interview with Sunehna, we discussed the gender roles in the society. I asked her if there were specific jobs for men or women, to which I got this enthusiastic reply:

> *"Now, women do everything! They drive tractors, they drive autos, they drive jeeps, they drive bikes, they drive scooters. If you look at agricultural works, there is no need for men. They* halo *[plough] once, whether they are in India or wherever. There are hand machines now. I see, they [the women] do irrigation and fertilizer works themselves, when*

it is season to harvest wheat, it is the time for women. They call once for the machine and the work is over easily, it is no big thing. The women are doing very well these days."

Sunehna's comment mirrored the discussions I had with my other informants. This led me to believe that changes in gender norms had been well received by the women of Rajapur.

5.2.3. Now, participation is women's job

Over the years, participation in programs seems to have shifted from being men's roles to women's roles. Absence of males, women's work being community-based, affirmative action for women and transformation in gender norms seems to have led to a feminization of participation roles. Women of different castes and ethnicities, in different conversations, explained their experience of shifts in gender norms in their communities.

"Now, it is not the time of men. Everywhere, it is women", Sunehna.

"Going to the committee meetings, if there is a training then going to the training, usually it is the women who go", Sunkesari.

"… before only men used to participate, now slowly we have learnt, women have learnt from others, so women have started. Otherwise, no. It was just men before", Drishti.

"*… there are some places where you can take money out, right? It does not work if the men go; women must go and take the money out. So, there are women in all the places, in meetings, in any trainings or in any programs, if men are in the house, they would not want to go there at all. 'Its' women's work, women are the ones who are there, if women go if it is good' this is the kind of things that men say. Usually in our villages, women are the one who are ahead of the men. The person who is speaking, whether it is a* badhghar *(village chief) or leader or any chairperson, there are, indeed, one or two males but the participants are all females. This is what happens*", Sunkesari.

Previously, mostly men participated in different programs. Now, both women and men seem to view participation in participatory programs as a female role. One of my informants, Trishna, told me that she would like there to be trainings for women in traditionally male domain such as mechanic training and driving training. This statement signals that feminization of a traditionally male role of participation had encouraged women's confidence to the extent that some felt confident in their ability to subvert traditional gender roles.

5.3. Discussion

My findings indicate that that an absence of men had created space for women to participate in CCA programs. The idea that male labor migration would result in women taking on their abandoned roles in not a novel one. Boserup (1970) advocated it as early as the 1970s. Boserup's theory is relevant in the Nepali context. The subject of male migration and the women

who remain behind has been a topic of interest in Nepal. Studies conducted in different areas and different contexts have found that male outmigration has led to women participating in traditionally masculine domains. For instance, in their research on women empowerment in water security programs in western Nepal, Leder, Clement, and Karki (2017) find that male out-migration has changed women's traditional roles of being wives and mothers. They find that male outmigration has resulted in women's visibility and ability to participate in traditionally male activities such as representing their household in water user groups. Similarly, Collins (2017) also finds that male outmigration has resulted in women's participation in diverse economic activities in many areas of Nepal. Additionally, male migration has had a long history in Nepal (Pandey, 2019). In the recent years, male migration for the purpose of remittance earning has been increasingly prevalent (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2011). Similar trend can be also observed in Rajapur. Since male migration has been occurring in Rajapur for generations, I reflect that feminization of participation roles cannot be attributed solely to absence of males, but also to transformations in gender norms and affirmative action for women.

My findings also indicate that most of the participants in CCA programs were women. Studies conducted in Nepal both support and contest my findings. For instance, Pandey (2019), and Bhattarai (2020) find that women were more likely to participate in environmental organizations. On the other hand, Dahal, Nepal, and Schuett (2012); Lama, Kharel, and Ghale (2017); Regmi, Star, and Filho (2016), find that women have minimal participation in community groups. These conflicting findings underscore the importance of considering intersectionality in studying gender. While women in certain areas and communities may be able to participate in CCA programs, not all Nepali women may be able to. These also indicate how blanket approaches to climate change adaptation are not suitable in a diverse country like Nepal.

I also find that women were able to participate in CCA programs because they worked in the community (home/ farm) as opposed to the men who usually worked outside of the community (outside of the village). Contrary to my finding, many existing literatures such as Regmi, Star, and Filho (2016) and Ravera et al. (2016) find that women are unable to participate in CCA and other programs because their roles in the home and the farm prevent them. Similarly, Tanjeela and Rutherford (2018)'s study based in Bangladesh, indicated that to participate in CCA programs, women "have to accept a double or triple burden" on top of their domestic responsibilities (Tanjeela & Rutherford, 2018, p. 7). The concept of triple roles was by developed by Moser in the 1980s. Moser's Triple Roles Framework aims to analyze the gendered division of labor. Moser's framework demonstrates how women in developing countries are responsible for multiple roles simultaneously: the reproductive, productive and community roles (Fonjong

& Athanasia, 2008). Many studies find that gender mainstreaming of community roles such as participation in CCA, community forestry and water user group program has increased the women’s responsibilities (Bhattarai, 2020; Lama, Kharel, & Ghale, 2017). Resurrección (2013) and Arora-Jonsson (2011) even argue that the focus on women for adaptation to climate change pushes women to be responsible for adaptation while letting the “men off the hook” (Resurrección, 2013, p. 41).

On the contrary, my findings indicate that women did not perceive their participation roles as a burden. In fact, I find that women viewed participation roles positively; as a platform to expand their skills, knowledge, and confidence. Other researchers also find that participatory programs have been beneficial to women in building their self-confidence, public speaking skills and increasing men’s respect towards women (Bhattarai, 2020; Franworth et al., 2018; Giri & Darnhofer, 2010; Tanjeela & Rutherford, 2018). This could indicate that CCA programs has led to women empowerment in Rajapur. Following the concept of empowerment by Naila Kabeer, ‘power within’, which stresses that power is not given but is generated from within, it can be reasoned that women in Rajapur experienced some level of empowerment. Galie and Franworth (2019) define ‘power within’ as transformational change in consciousness which leads to a new self-confidence to act (p. 13). My findings reflects Kabeer’s theory of empowerment which “emphasized the importance of such elements such as self-respect, the sense of agency, in empowerment processes, and also the building of organizational capacity through conscious processes, support for leadership development, and the strengthening of network” (Rowlands, 1997, p. 22).

Agency is central to the concept of empowerment. Kabeer (2005) explains, “agency represents the processes by which choices are made and put into effect” (p. 14). My findings indicate that participation in CCA programs was a desirable activity for women rather than an obligation or a burden. Thus, women actively choosing to participate in CCA programs demonstrates a degree of agency. Agency is also important to the concept of intersectionality. One of the main critiques of gender mainstreaming from intersectional perspective is that it essentializes women into a homogenous group devoid of agency (Sultana, 2013). The finding that participation in CCA programs is desirable for women and a limited resource subject to competition raises yet another central concern of intersectionality: are women of all castes, ethnicities, and other intra-gender differences able to access to participation equally? I discuss this question in the next chapter.

My findings also indicate that affirmative actions had been successful in encouraging women’s participation in CCA and other programs. Affirmative actions for women, specifically

in CFUGs has been in place since 1993 (Bhattarai, 2020). This has been crucial for encouraging women to enter in the largely male dominated field (Bhattarai, 2020). Existing literature on women's participation in committees like CFUG find that affirmative action has been successful on some accounts but not on others. For instance, Leder, Clement, and Karki (2017) Bhattarai (2020) and Lama, Kharel, and Ghale (2017) raise the issue of 'token participation', meaning that women's participation has occurred but the participation was not meaningful and only served to appease the quota system.

I also find that there had been a transformation in gender roles Rajapur. In context of Nepal, contemporary literatures provide evidence of both social transformation and lack thereof. Lama, Kharel, and Ghale (2017) and Leder, Clement, and Karki (2017) find that women's ability to take on male responsibilities does not translate to real changes in gender roles. Male migration gives women opportunity to become household managers, but they are not able to hold decision-making powers (Lama, Kharel, & Ghale, 2017). Similarly, Bhattarai (2020), in her study of gender inequality in community forestry management in Kaski district of Nepal, finds that men's migration in combination with increment in female education has caused changes in gender roles but not necessarily in the traditional gender power hierarchy.

In a more optimistic view, similar to my findings, Giri and Darnhofer (2010) also find that women's tokenistic participation in CFUGs, in mid-hill region of Nepal, does not necessarily mean that women are passive victims of male domination. Rather, some women used CFUG as a platform and "actively shaped their social word by renegotiating their rights" to create "subtle changes" (Giri & Darnhofer, 2010, p. 1126). Women's agency in social transformation is also evidenced by marginalized women's presence in identity politics of Nepal. This is illustrated by Yadav (2016)'s study on widowhood in Nepal. In her research, Yadav (2016) finds that women widowed by the 'People's Revolution II' organized themselves against the historical norm of wearing white *saris* (traditional garment) as well as the discriminations it entailed. Women "liberated" themselves and "women of other castes and ethnicities who might not have worn a white *sari* but had faced other kinds of discrimination due to their widowhood" (p. 17).

I find that there had been a feminization of participation roles in Rajapur. By feminization of participation roles, I mean that women and men perceive that it is a woman's job to participate in CCA and other programs. I find that this has encouraged women to participate in CCA programs. On the flip side, as reported by my female informants, men seem uninterested in participating in CCA programs because it was assigned as job for the other gender. It might be that men fear stigmatization and a "challenge to their masculinity both through working alongside women, and from performing a role which is regarded by society as one which

women normally undertake" (Lupton, 2000, p. 35). I was unable to find evidence regarding feminization of participation roles in Nepal in the existing literature. Considering that other researchers also find that women are increasingly participating in CCA and other programs, it could indicate a novel trend in rural South Asia.

My findings indicate that while there had been a feminization of participation roles, the leadership positions remained reserved for the men. There is an abundance of literature across Nepal confirming this finding (Lama, Kharel, & Ghale, 2017; Leone, 2019; Regmi, Star, & Filho, 2016; Tanjeela & Rutherford, 2018). Existing literature such as Dahal, Nepal, and Schuett (2012) indicate that leadership positions are mostly held by men, most often by men of elite class. Women who were in leadership positions were limited to groups exclusive to women. They further find that women in leadership positions was only tokenistic. For instance, a woman who was in leadership position depended on her husband for she was not educated and was not able to keep finances for the committee. "Her title as the treasurer was merely to fill a position" (Dahal, Nepal, & Schuett, 2012, p. 224). Similarly, Bhattarai (2020) also finds that more women are securing decision-making positions however, it was merely to fill up the quotas. Moreover, Bhattarai (2020) finds that men tended to select women through whom the village elite could exercise power.

According to my findings, women accepted male leadership while simultaneously believing that they had influence over the final decisions. I reflect on the possibility whether the short duration of my visit to Rajapur (as discussed in Chapter 4) in which my informants viewed me as an outsider has led my informants to give me socially acceptable responses regarding women's roles in decision-making. Moreover, multiple research across Nepal and across time find that leadership roles are reserved for men which indicate towards continuity and tenacity of gender roles even in the face of turbulence such as climate change and male outmigration, and interventions such as affirmative actions. On the other hand, feminization of participation roles indicates the opposite. However, the resilience of these norms should not be viewed as diminishing the achievements of the subtle transformations. As Gidwanu and Ramamurthy (2018) state "'minor liberations' can be extraordinary achievements from the situated perspective of patriarchal, caste, generational, and gender subordination" (p. 1016).

6. Caste and Ethnicity

Chapter 5 indicated that women had the opportunity and motivations to participate in CCA programs. However as argued by Arora-Jonsson (2011), "Gender is important but needs to be seen in particular context…women are not a homogenous category. Women can be rich or poor, urban or rural, from different ethnicities, nationalities, households and families all of which produce specific results" (p. 749). In this chapter, I focus particularly on women's caste and ethnicity and what it means for their participation in CCA programs.

6.1. Membership of marginalized groups

The power relations associated with caste and ethnic identity seems to create opportunities as well as barriers for marginalized women in accessing participation in CCA programs.

6.1.1. Affirmative actions for marginalized groups

Affirmative actions for minority groups guarantees spaces for them in CCA programs. Drishti, a Dalit woman and a mother to a three-year-old girl, who had been involved in CCA programs captured the essence of this section when she said, *"Whatever programs they do, Dalit participants are mandatory"*. These reservations are not limited to Dalits but are applicable to all castes and ethnic groups. According to my informants, all programs are required to have representations proportional to the diversity of the local populations.

If participants are sought after according to castes and ethnic groups, it raises questions about the inclusion of unrecognized social groups. During the FGD, I asked my informants about their experience of being categorized a disadvantaged group (I assumed all my informants were in that category because I had asked my gatekeepers to help me identify groups that are considered 'marginalized' in Rajapur). Sonali corrected my misunderstanding about the official status of the Sonahs.

> *"Our ethnic group, actually, rather than 'disadvantaged', the government does not recognize our ethnic group*".

The three Sonah women in the FGD further explained that despite having different identity markers such as language and culture, they had officially been labeled as Tharus. Through my observations, I realized that the Tharus did not consider the Sonahs as Tharus either. For instance, in the homestay I visited, the Sonahs and Tharus shared the village. However, there was a clear border where the Sonah area ended and Tharu area started. Additionally, when I spoke about Sonahs with the Tharus, I noticed a clear 'us' and 'them' when they talked about each other. Moreover, Tharus are the majority group in the area. This meant that Sonahs might be considered the majority group but might not share the benefits associated with it. They are also not considered a minority group either and might not receive the affirmative actions reserved

for these groups.

6.1.2. Perceived Discrimination

There were cases when marginalized groups might perceive discriminations against their group. During the FGD, Sunehna, recalled an act of discrimination she observed between a Dalit boy and a high-caste woman who sold milk from her home.

> *"There was one person in our village, a boy called Manish [name changed]. When he went to buy milk, he would put his pot down in the yard, stand away and wait. After she [the high-caste woman] reached inside the house, she would turn around and say, 'take it' [the lowest form of verb], only then he would go and get his pot".*

In this story, Sunehna explained how a high-caste woman would not allow Manish to come in her home or be in the same space as him, even for business purposes. Another interesting point in the quote is the use of lowest form of the verb indicating the lack of respect that the high-caste person felt towards the Dalit boy.

My Dalit informants also shared similar accounts of discriminations. Explicit acts of discriminations such as restriction of public spaces like temples and preventing Dalit children from enrolling in school seems to have been rampant in Rajapur. As one of my Dalit informants, Dikshya, said, *"they used to hate us a lot"*. I noted that my informants used past tense to describe such experiences. When I commented about it in a group interview with only Dalit women, Dhanmaya exclaimed with confidence, *"there is no such discriminations anymore"*.

Even though my informants assured me that discrimination between different castes and ethnic groups is no longer practiced, I find evidences of lingering implicit discriminations. During the FGD, I asked whether Drishti, as a Dalit woman, had faced discrimination in the CCA programs. Drishti hesitated to answer when we were in the NGO office, where the NGO staff could overhear us. However, after leaving the office space, Drishti opened up.

> *"I was a member before, so they used to call me [for meetings], as soon as they found out I went to India, they replaced me with somebody else. Now, they do not even call me for the meetings or anything, it must be because of discrimination".*

Here she described how she was replaced in the leadership position while she was in India, for a month, visiting her husband. She was not consulted about the change in the position and felt that it was unwarranted for she was not in India for long. Moreover, she was disappointed that the person replacing her was not from Dalit or other marginalized communities, as she believed that it should have been. She felt additionally discriminated against since the committee had stopped informing her about meetings and other events.

6.1.3. Transformation in inter-caste and ethnic relations

During discussions regarding discrimination, one of my informants, Devi, a Dalit woman said, *"There has been a change in the way of thinking"*. I believe Devi captured the essence of this section. Following the lead of my informants, I asked them about the changes that had taken place in Rajapur. Devi, mother-in-law to Drishti, shared her experience with education.

> "*Before, big people would hate us a lot, the educated would not let kids from lower castes study, they would say 'if they study, they can move forward', even if they do not let our children study, the government has allowed us. They [the government] give books, notebooks to the children of Dalits, right? Now, our children are studying as well. Before, we did not even get to study. If we study, then what would the bigger castes eat? Thinking that way, nobody let us study. Now, there is no big or small, everybody is studying and teaching. It is good now. Compared to before, it is a lot better now*".

She talked about the struggle to educate Dalit children because the elite group (who, interestingly, she calls 'big people') would restrict them from schools fearing a disruption in status quo. However, recently, with the state's efforts to educate all children, Dalit children, as historically marginalized group, receive positive discrimination. She believed that this had made education attainment easier. She also hinted at reduction of caste-based discrimination.

As caste-based discrimination is a big topic in Nepal, it was an inevitable part of my interviews. Surprisingly, all my informants, Dalits included, stated that there were no more caste-based discriminations in Rajapur. In this quote, Devi contrasted her experience of discrimination between the past and the present.

> *"Now, there is not much of it now. They do not follow* chuwachut[2]*, the government does not allow it either. So, it is not practiced as much in the villages as well. There was a lot of harassment before"*.

6.2. Elite capture

Unequal distribution of power in the society meant that some groups could manipulate scarce resources in way that benefitted one group more than the other. In this section, I explore how elite members of society could influence participation selection process through elite capture of resources and control over information.

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[2] *Chuwachut* is a practice of discrimination against members of low castes. It includes practices such as barring low-caste individuals from entering one's house, not eating food touched by a low-caste individual, purifying oneself by bathing or spraying water after contact with a low-caste individual etc.

6.2.1. Unfair selection process

The elite group might create situations where the marginalized groups face an unfair participation selection process. During the FGD, Sonah women brought up an incident which exemplifies this. In this particular incident, the NGO was conducting a training program (which was active during the time of the FGD). While the village leaders had guaranteed the Sonahs at least one place out of three, my informants told me that all three seats were given to Tharu women. Sonali, who had applied for and had hoped to receive the training, felt great injustice given the blatant nepotism she felt was at play. She expressed her frustration:

> *"Decisions were already made but it was just written with a pen, it was possible to cross out names and change it, but they did not want to, because one person was the daughter of the chairperson, another was the daughter of the vice-chair person, one was the sister-in-law of the secretary."*

The unfairness of the selection process seemed to be well-known in the community. The decision-makers had the opportunity to reconsider. Sonali explained that the decision-makers declined because the chosen candidates were their family members. Sonali continued the conversation by concisely stating the cycle of deprivation faced by marginalized communities.

> *"Because those who have people in the bigger positions, they put their own people in it, the ones who are behind, remain behind. This is what has happened".*

Although my informants, time and again, stated that discrimination was no longer practiced. The deprivation still seemed to reproduce itself. The elite group seemed to continue to maintain the status quo because they had the power. Additionally, as illustrated by quote above, the Sonahs felt ignored in their community. Sonali continued the conversation about unfair candidate selection process by explaining how the voices of the Sonahs have not been listened to.

> *"Regarding this, there has been a lot of debates, I said it earlier as well, if there is a big person ahead then they don't listen to small people. Even when we raised the issues, we were not listened to."*

Despite multiple protests and discussions regarding the choice of candidates for the training, Sonali told me that the decision remained unchanged. As this FGD was being conducted in the NGO's office space, one of the employees and a member of the elite group, Navin, overheard the conversation and joined in the FGD[3]. Navin explained how selection of participation occurs from the perspective of the NGO.

[3] My informants were aware that the NGO employees were able to hear them, and I have received consent from Navin to record and study the conversation with him.

> *"Okay, I can explain. It is not that we do not want to give you trainings. The selection responsibility has been given to your community. We have told them to select people who are underprivileged, people with poor economic conditions, vulnerable… The fact that certain people have been selected and not others is the weakness of your own community."*

Navin further explained how participants were selected based not on caste or ethnicity but based on vulnerability. He also listed the selection criteria for the training program in question.

> *"Should be highly impacted by flood, houses impacted by flooding, family economic conditions should be weak, should be located inside the area that the project is working on, should have received recommendations from the community, should have application signed from related persons, able to give time for the training, should be interested in the program, should be able to organize after the completion of the training, should not have received any training or other trainings from the program, age from 16 to 40 years old, not more than two person from one community are to be selected."*.

Navin, by listing the criteria of training program, indirectly explained the operationalization of 'vulnerability'. Sonali further commented that the selected Tharu participants did not qualify according to these selection criteria as they were not "economically weak" and had received trainings before. This points to practice of elite capture of resources. After discussion with Navin, my Sonah informants seemed to come to a consensus that the NGO was not practicing discriminatory selection processes, but the weakness was that of the community leaders. Both Navin and the Sonah women also agreed that the Sonahs were not able to get their voices heard.

My Sonah informants discussed another incident where they felt their voices were not heard. This incident was brought up by Sunkesari, who had remained relatively quiet up till the end of the FGD. She started talking about it when I asked if they would want to add anything. Thus, the issue must have been bothering her to bring it up unprompted. My Sonah informants explained that a reporter had published an article about the Sonahs in a national daily newspaper. Apparently, the article stated some false information about the Sonahs that they get an exuberant amount of gold in a daily basis. My Sonah informants were frustrated in their powerlessness to hold this reporter accountable for spreading false information about their ethnic group.

6.2.2. Control over information and resources

The elite group might also control over knowledge and resources. There were cases when people were unable to participate in programs because they were simply unaware of the programs. During the FGD, Sonali continued the topic of unfair candidate selection process and linked it the issue of control over information.

"If there is a training, only people in the front know about it. We don't get the information; how can we participate?"

Sonali stated that 'only people in the front' were privy to such information. By 'people in the front' she meant people who were able to procure the information first. Thus, it meant the community leaders, who were most likely to be the men of elite group. My informants felt that such control of information was also applicable to endeavors by the state. During the group interview, Dayakumari shared similar experiences of lack of access to information.

"Even if the government does give anything, we never know about it. They [the elite group] do not tell us. Finally, this house has been possible for some people, for some people it has not even possible, it hasn't been possible for me".

Dayakumari explained how the house I was conducting the group interview in was provided by the state. She further explained that the state provided them housing because Dalits are 'historically disadvantaged and backward group'. Apparently, many Dalits in her community, including Dayakuri herself, had not been able to receive the state housing because of complications with documentation and other bureaucratic problems. Dhanmaya added, "*They [the elite group] do not let us know, they take it from within",* suggesting that she believed there to be manipulation of information by elite group.

While Chapter 5 indicated that women were able to acquire information as required, conversations with marginalized women indicated a feeling of general lack of information. The phrase *"I do not know"* was uttered multiple times by many different women in many different contexts. Talking about access to CCA programs, Dayakumari, said, *"we did not know… we don't know anything, such is our lives"* and went on to compare her life to that of a frog living in a well, unaware about the world around it.

In addition to lack of access to information, my informants felt that there was a manipulation in access to resources. Dayakumari explained her experience:

"When it floods… when there are any jobs from above, the Tharus take it, they do not look after our children at all… anything happens, they do not look after us [Dalits] at all, we are just here and live here"

Dayakumari clearly claimed that the Tharus monopolize the job market. She also claimed that most of the flood relief materials intended for all was appropriated by the Tharus.

6.3. Discussion

My findings indicate that women of marginalized groups perceived there to be discrimination based on their caste and ethnic identity which hinders their participation in CCA programs. Caste-based discrimination is well documented in different areas such as education

(Khanal, 2017), employment (Mainali, Jafarey, & Montes-Rojas, 2017), and everyday social life (Jodhka & Shah, 2010; Onta & Resurreccion, 2011). Existing literatures also indicate that the marginalized groups have been excluded from community-based natural resource management due to discrimination and unequal power structures (Gentle et al., 2013; Nagoda & Nightingale, 2017; Tanjeela & Rutherford, 2018). Similarly, women have been excluded from these activities due to gender discriminations (Buchy & Rai, 2012; Regmi, Star, & Filho, 2016). This indicates that marginalized women, due to their intersectional identity might face “double discrimination” (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 149) and thus greater barriers to participation in CCA programs.

On the other hand, in a quantitative study regarding social inclusion conducted in four different districts of Nepal, Haug, Aasland, and Dahal (2009) find that cultural values and educational background have a greater impact on civil society organizations and political participation than caste and ethnicity. They find that levels and patterns of participation differ according to districts. While Haug, Aasland, and Dahal (2009) present this as a challenge to the claim that participation is dependent on an individual’s caste and ethnicity, this also points to the importance of considering local contexts for participatory programs. Similarly, Dahal, Nepal, and Schuett (2012) find that in Annapurna Conservation Area of Nepal, Dalit participation is low in community-based adaptation programs. They find that this is not a result of discrimination but lack of information and interest which is “heavily affected by historic and contemporary social, economic, cultural, and political structures” (Dahal, Nepal, & Schuett, 2012, p. 229).

Similar to affirmative action for women, I find that affirmative action had partly been successful for encouraging participation of marginalized groups in different community activities. My finding contests the existing literature. The existing literature indicates a failure of affirmative action to include marginalized groups. For instance, Dahal, Nepal, and Schuett (2012) recognize that there is a mechanism in place to encourage the participation of “Dalit and women” but find that it has not resulted in resulted in “actual” participation of marginal groups (p. 228). Similarly, Nagoda and Nightingale (2017) find that despite goals of inclusion, trained facilitators and participatory methods, marginalized members of their study area were unable to influence decision-making processes. Nagoda and Nightingale (2017) conclude that “pre-existing relationships undermine inclusive policy goals” (p. 89). Furthermore, Leder, Clement, and Karki (2017), in their study of water security programs, find that the programs’ intention to include Dalit women was counterproductive as Dalit women’s participation was only tokenistic, because of “the lack of consideration of the subtleties and complexities of intersectional power relations” (Leder, Clement, & Karki, 2017, p. 244).

Nagoda and Nightingale (2017) and Leder, Clement, and Karki (2017) (above) raise issues central to the concept of intersectionality. They discuss the importance of considering local power relations for the success of affirmative actions. This is especially relevant in the case of Gender Equality and Social inclusion (GESI) which aims for inclusion of marginalized groups. Additionally, affirmative action for women and marginalized groups raises an issue central to the concept of intersectionality: the implications for individuals with intersecting marginalized identities. For this research, such individuals are women of marginalized groups. My findings indicate that affirmative action had been partly successful in encouraging participation of marginalized women. However, the extent to which this has been impacted by absence of males is unknown. It is possible that absence of males of marginalized groups had opened possibilities for women of marginalized groups to access benefits of affirmative actions.

Affirmative action is designed for inclusion of historically excluded group. However, lack of accountability and susceptibility to elite capture was found to endanger the goals of affirmative action. This again highlights the tensions between the social transformation and resistance to changes in society. The resistance to changes and inability to participate in CCA programs may justify the disparities and further exacerbate the vulnerability of the most marginalized to climate change. However, the subtle transformations in gender and inter-caste norms indicates that the government actions for inclusion of marginalized groups represents a move in the right direction. Amidst the existing literatures that highlight the failure of affirmative actions in inclusion of women and marginalized groups, this thesis can add a glint of positivity that affirmative actions may encourage some positive social transformations to occur.

Caste-based discrimination has been a persistent problem in different areas of Nepal. Considering social transformations, a reflection on my contradictory findings regarding caste and ethnicity-based discrimination in Rajapur is necessary. Multiple individuals, of marginalized communities, in various settings informed me that discrimination was no longer practiced. However, the same individuals also reported instances of perceived discriminations. I reflect that the difference here is the degree of discrimination. According to my informants, the historical custom of explicit discrimination called *chuwachut* is not practiced in Rajapur anymore. I reflect on the terms used for discrimination. The terms '*chuwachut*' and '*bhedbhau*' were used. Both words could mean the historical practice of explicit caste-based discrimination. In hindsight, I realize that the terms could have culture-specific meanings which I, as an outsider with limited time to immerse myself in the culture, may not have been able to grasp.

My findings also indicate that the participant selection process for CCA programs were unfair to the women of marginalized groups. There seems to be an elite capture and manipulation

of CCA programs in Rajapur. Elite capture is well documented in the existing literature in the context of Nepal. For instance, Resurrección et al. (2019) finds that there is a pattern of exclusion based on gender, caste, class and ethnicity for access to hydropower development benefits (Resurrección et al., 2019). Similarly, extensive research has pointed out that the benefits of community forestry are limited for a large group of women, the poor, excluded castes and ethnic groups (Dahal, Nepal, & Schuett, 2012; Gentle et al., 2013; Leder, Clement, & Karki, 2017; Nagoda & Nightingale, 2017; Regmi, Star, & Filho, 2016). Moreover, participatory approaches are often criticized for their risk of elite capture (Platteau, 2009).

I find marginalized women were unable act against elite capture as they were unable to get their voices heard. I found this to be resulting from unequal power relations. Existing literature supports my finding. Nagoda and Nightingale (2017) find that climate change policy implementation and actions are "spaces where pre-existing power relations influence whose knowledge concerns count and whose are ignored" (p. 89). Similarly, Dahal, Nepal, and Schuett (2012) find that Dalit women have been included in community-based adaptation group "but they do not have the power to be heard by the powerful" (p. 226). Additionally, according to Bhattarai (2020), women "sometimes recognize their voices have not been heard, but they have not been able to oppose decisions and practices have led to the loss of the products … they must rely on" (p. 9). Moreover, my findings contribute to the existing literature that even in contexts where marginalized groups perceive there to be an absence of discrimination, elite capture is practiced. My findings also add to the literature that caste and ethnicity-based barriers persist even in communities where participation is managed by the community themselves. Furthermore, researchers argue that CCA programs may exacerbate patterns of disparity and vulnerability to climate change (Bhattarai, Beilin, & Ford, 2015; Eriksen, Nightingale, & Eakin, 2015). In context of Rajapur, inability to access to flood survival trainings and livelihood diversification programs might mean that marginalized women would be even more suspectable to floods and other impacts of climate change. Feminization of participation roles raises the issue of male vulnerability (Resurrección, 2013) as it could be harder for them to access participation to these CCA programs.

Furthermore, I find that in addition to being marginalized, the Sonahs are not recognized by the state. In context of Nepal's inclusion policies and rise in identity politics, this entails multiple disadvantages. I illustrate this by contrasting the Sonahs with the Dalits, a recognized disadvantaged group. Following the inclusion strategy in Nepal, "a series of measures of positive discrimination have been enacted targeting Dalits, which include reservations in public jobs, old-age allowances, children's nutritional allowances, etc." (Gellner & Adhikari, 2019, p. 5).

However, Sonahs are not entitled to such reservations or positive discriminations, which could result in their relative marginalization. Additionally, The National Park Act and Animal Protection Act 2029 which aims to protect wildlife, restricts Sonahs from practicing their traditional way of life: fishing and gold panning (Chaudhary, 2016). While the constitution does protect indigenous peoples' right to practice their traditional occupation, this is not applicable for the Sonahs as they are not recognized as an ethnic group (Chaudhary, 2016). The restrictions to their way of life, their increasing marginalization and lack of recognition from the state could result in an erasure of the Sonah ethnic group from the 'diversity' that the Nepalis have come to celebrate. However, this does not mean that the Sonahs are a passive, agency-less group. Sonahs are active in their own identity politics to get official recognition amongst other objectives (Chaudhary, 2016).

I find that access to information was important in women's possibility of participation in CCA programs. I also find that elite control over knowledge framed women's participation in the programs. Other researchers have also found evidence that local elites use manipulation and control of information. According to Platteau (2009), local elites may distort information they relay to NGOs by representing their own agenda as the interests of the community to access and appropriate development aids. Similarly, Panda (2015) observes in context of elite capture that in low income countries, limiting the sources of flow of information is a form of political corruption. Similarly, according Dasgupta and Beard (2007) in their study of community driven development in Indonesia, communities were attempting to break out of the pattern of elite capture by extending participation and information to everyone. Furthermore, Colclough and Sitaraman (2005) in their research to distinguish between community and social capital, find how men could prevent women from forming social capital network by withholding information. As will be shown in Chapter 7, social capital network, as raised by Colclough and Sitaraman (2005), is an important factor in women's ability to participate in CCA programs.

Additionally, Jones et al. (2009) finds that "being kept out of the loop is a subtle yet powerful form of stigmatization and marginalization" (p. 171). One of the situations that Jones et al. (2009) lists as 'being out of the loop' is "having information actively shared with some people and specifically withheld from other individuals" (p. 171). I find evidence of information (such as specifics of training programs and government relief) being withheld from marginalized women. Jones et al. (2009)'s connection between information and marginalization further supports my finding of implicit discrimination being practiced in Rajapur.

7. Socio-Economy

We saw in Chapters 5 and 6 how gender, caste, and ethnic identity shapes women's ability to participate in CCA programs. In this chapter, I add depth to the discussions of gender, caste, and ethnicity by exploring them simultaneously with the social and economic factors.

7.1. Social Factors

Informants who had social support and social capital seemed better able to participate in CCA programs. In this section, I explore what these mean for my informants.

7.1.1. Social Support

Considering the gender inequality in decision-making roles in Nepali societies, I was interested in learning about the role my informants' male family members played in their participation in CCA programs. When I talked to my informants about the factors that had made their participation easier, they spoke, often unprompted, about support from their husbands, family, and community. In an individual interview with Trishna, a leader in Disaster Management Committee (DMC) and a mother of two children, she explained how family support is important. She participated in the interview while holding her infant son, as she explained how she managed different roles.

> *"I manage both, it is not that difficult. I was alone before, now my daughter has grown up, I have a small son, but my husband helps out. It is not difficult as my husband helps…"*

Here she explained how support from her family was facilitating her participation and leadership. She further explained how her daughter and her husband was supportive of her committee works. When I questioned if household responsibilities were clashing with her committee duties, she told me that it was not because her mother-in-law was supportive as well.

> *"My mother-in-law also helps me out. We have separate houses, even then, she comes here to help out".*

When I asked Trishna, also a former local politician and a community worker, more about the process of acquiring the leadership position in DMC. She explained,

> *"…They [the community] wanted to choose somebody who would be able to speak up and be capable of doing things, so everybody pointed at me, I said that I am alone at home, I said couldn't do it, but everybody insisted that I must. They said 'You put yourself out there, you talk to people, you daughter is older too, your household is manageable, your husband helps you too, you must do it, you must do it,' everybody insisted and helped me. So, I had to do it, for the village. I said yes, okay, I will be the chairperson."*

She said that encouragement from the community and her acceptance of that encouragement had led her to become the leader for the DMC. Similarly, in conversation with Sunehna, a Sonah woman active in her community, explained how she handles different responsibilities.

> *"Before, I was able to do it even when there were no people to do housework. My sons were good. They encouraged me to participate in programs which increased knowledge and understanding saying these are the opportunities to learn, my husband also encouraged me saying that you should do it since we live in a community, nobody stopped me from doing it. Even if I am home alone, I can go to trainings and other things",*

Trishna and Sunehna both highlighted the importance of support from close family members for participating in CCA programs. They also discussed how they would be able to participate even if they were home alone, meaning that domestic chores would be left unattended. This also indicates women's agency (discussed in Chapter 5) to participate in CCA programs. In another interview, I asked Tripti, who is the secretary of her local DMC, how she achieved the position.

> *"I wanted to participate. Also, when I went to the committee, they asked me to stay as well. I stayed and now I am the secretary".*

She further explained how she gradually replaced her father as a member because the committee and her father encouraged her to do so. Eventually, she became the secretary. Additionally, she told me that she has been more enthusiastic about the committee as being in a leadership position made her more involved in the DMC activities.

7.1.2. Social Capital

This section reflects on the importance of social capital. Social capital refers to systems in which individuals can use their group affiliation and networks to obtain benefits (Sobel, 2002). Bourdieu (1986) defines social capital as "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition-or in other words, to membership in a group" (p. 248).

During the group interview, Dhanmaya, one of my Dalit informants, illustrated the Dalit group's weak social capital by saying, *"Because we are Dalits, they [the elite group] are bigger persons, they are the politicians, they are everything, if we say anything, they tell us to go away".* She highlighted the lack of access to influential professions for the Dalit caste. In a different conversation during the FGD, Drishti, also tried to explain her views on this issue.

> *"If there was one Dalit person [in influential positions], we would get facilities as well, we do not have people at the top , no matter how much Dalits do, we do not get anything, we do not have a person at the top, so we do not get anything. They [the elite group] have*

their people at the top, they are all educated so if anything comes, they are aware, they get it distributed among themselves, nobody thinks or asks about Dalits".

Drishti explained elite capture of resources and information as a consequence of lack of access to influential positions in the society. She further connected education to the cycle of weak social capital and lack of resources. Drishti's views were agreed upon by other Dalit informants at the FGD. My Dalit informants also stressed on their inability as a caste to push for their welfare as the Tharus were able to.

However, Dalits, Sonahs as well as Tharus did acknowledge their social network in facilitating participation in CCA programs. In an individual interview, I asked Drishti, how she got the opportunity to participate in the programs. She replied:

"*For things like flooding and warning for flooding, Navin sir, gave me information, they involved all people from all castes and ethnicities, I participated from Dalit group*".

Drishti added that she had personal motivation for participating as well, "*For me, I did it hoping that it would improve things in my community*". Similarly, Sunehna told me how she heard about the CCA programs through her social network.

"I live near the river…I was active in doing things, so, there is a Tharu man in the village, he called me for the training, so I went."

Sunehna as well as Drishti were able to participate in the CCA programs because of their social connection with a member of an elite group. Similarly, Tilak, who had the most extensive experience with working in development programs among my informants, explained how he had built his network over the years.

"About these programs…Before that, I used to work as facilitator in a program conducted by CARE Nepal with USAID fund and WWF with FECOFUN, that is how I have been working with the climate change programs."

Tilak further explained how he started with local level programs and ended up working with several INGOs in varying capacities. When I asked him how he got the opportunity to work with these INGOS, he told me that his connections through working with other organizations made it possible. Hinting at the role of individual interests, skills and agency, Tilak added,

"*Also, if you work diligently, hiring organizations, they will feel that this person works well, he should be given the work again. This is another reason why I think I might have gotten these opportunities. Because of my abilities.*"

However, when I asked him if this would be possible if he were a Dalit or a female, he said, without hesitation or doubt, *"no, it would not have been possible"*.

7.2. Economic Factors

My informants told me that participation in CCA programs did not require capital investment. However, some of my informants discussed opportunity costs of participation. Opportunity cost is an economic concept denoting the "evaluation placed on the most highly valued of the rejected alternatives or opportunities" (Buchanan, 1991). In this case, the opportunity cost of participating in CCA programs would be wages earned from daily work. Similarly, weak economic conditions had indirect impacts on the ability to participate in CCA programs.

7.2.1. The Opportunity Cost of Participation

I was interested in learning whether economic conditions limited participation in CCA programs. All my informants who had participated in CCA programs stated that there were no capital investment requirements. When I further asked whether economic level could prevent other people from participating in the programs, Tilak explained:

> *"…otherwise, people would have to choose between their own work and…for example a person from Sonah group would think my daily income depends on me going to the river and panning for gold, I have no reason to stay in these committees, I do not benefit from it, it is a volunteer job, I sit in the meetings the whole day and I will not earn anything that day, how do I feed my kids, how do I clothe my kids. They cannot come because of their poverty, so focus should be on their income and they can come to participate in our committees, that is it. Otherwise, if it hard to survive as it is, how can they come here…"*

Tilak captured the dilemma of the opportunity cost of participation. Similarly, Sunehna, gave me her views on why other women might not want to participate.

> "*Now-a-days, people find it difficult to work without money. They think that they should be paid. For example, there is a program for a few days, if it is not paid, they do not agree to go there. One labors all day and earns NRs. 500, if one has to stay in training all day, if they do not have work at all that day, then they can participate. But sometimes, they [the NGOs] come suddenly when one has work, then they find it very difficult, they have to do many things, only then are they able to do it. If they are paid to come then it is easier for them, that is what works these days. They are happy with the programs if they get paid, if they are just asked to come and just discuss and talk, they are not that interested. They understand now, I think. Maybe that it why, they do not give that much interest.*"

Chapter 5 indicated that women, in general, were able to access to participation in CCA programs. However, here, it seems that economic status might create an exclusionary criterion.

It should also be noted that both Tilak and Sunehna, here, were not discussing their own experiences but their perceptions of other people's reasons for non-participation.

7.2.2. Weak Economic Capabilities

To understand if caste and ethnicity were related with economic conditions, I asked my FGD informants if membership to certain a caste meant that a person would be poor. Rather than caste or ethnicity, my informants told me that ability to secure a job with regular income determines if a person has good economic conditions. Sonali explained this in detail:

> *"The person who has a job, of course, has money because they get monthly salary. If a person has no education, then their economic conditions is even poorer. Because the person who works as a laborer does not receive as much money or as much work. And other than a salary job, if person has a skill of some sort like a mechanic, then their economic condition would be better than that of a laborer. If person works as a laborer and they have no skills, then their economic conditions would be poorer."*

Sonali further connected economic conditions and the ability to get a job to the ability of attaining education. Similarly, Sunmaya explained the how poverty meant lower educational attainment which in turn meant that Sonahs were not able to enter the job market.

> *"Usually we [the Sonahs] are only able to educate our children up to grade 5, it is indeed because of poor economic conditions. When the children grow, everything costs more, tuition fees, books, and pens. Therefore, we have not been able to educate our children a lot. Among the Sonahs, there is nobody who has a lot of education. In other ethnicities, people have lots of education and are able to get jobs… this is how it is for us."*

Here, Sunmaya and Sonali encapsulated the cycle of education and poverty by linking lack of education to poverty and then linking poverty to the lack of education. In the same conversation, Devi linked education with social capital. She explained how poor economic conditions restrict educational attainment, which in turn prevents access to influential positions in societies.

> *"…Certain places require educated people, if a person is not educated and is not able to do anything, they would not be able to become a big person. Some people are not able to even if they want to."*

Thus, economic conditions and caste and ethnicity seem to be indirectly related as my informants connected their marginalized identity with inability to attain higher education which they then linked to access to salaried jobs and influential positions.

7.3. Discussion

I find that social support enabled women of elite as well as minority groups to participate in CCA programs. Similar findings have been observed by a number of other researchers. For

instance, Leder, Clement, and Karki (2017) find that for a woman to participate in water security programs, she needs her husband and her mother-in-law's permission. Additionally, according to Giri and Darnhofer (2010), lack of support from family might result in women's withdrawal from participation. They find a case where a woman's participation in the executive committee of a CFUG was disapproved by her husband which had pushed her to contemplate resignation.

The importance of social support is not limited to women in developing countries. Shumaker and Brownell (1984) detail how social support enhances individual well-being. They also find that "research findings over the past 15 years provide strong evidence for a positive association between support and personal well-being" (Shumaker & Brownell, 1984, p. 32). Since the publication of this paper 36 years ago, there has been substantial amount of research regarding social support in diverse disciplines based in global North as well as South (Broadhead et al., 1983; Chen et al., 2012; Coker et al., 2004; Kalpan, Cassel, & Gore, 1977; Logan & Ganster, 2007; Schaefer, Coyne, & Lazarus, 1981; Sinha, 2003; Wilcox, Winn, & Fyvie-Gauld, 2006). This speaks to the fact that requirement for social support is not unique to rural marginalized women of developing countries and requiring spousal and familial support should not necessarily be perceived as evidence against women's empowerment, agency and autonomy.

In addition to social support, my findings indicate that social capital framed women's ability to participate in CCA programs. Women, regardless of their position, seemed able participate in CCA programs and other activities through their social network. This finding is supported by the existing literature. One of the biggest movement based on social capital is the Grameen bank and the micro-finance movement. Rankin (2011) describes how micro-finance uses women's social capital by lending out credit based on women's social collateral such as social sanction and peer enforcement rather than tangible aspects. Additionally, researchers also find that social capital impacts women's ability to participate in community-based activities. For instance, Aruna (2018) studying Dalit women in Tamil Nadu, south India finds that social capital is critical for their ability to participate in local level politics. Aruna (2018) specifically finds that support from family and community, networks through familial connections and networks amongst one another facilitates Dalit women's participation in politics. Aruna (2018) further adds, "It is clearly visible that social capital aids in radically changing women in oppressed groups" (p. 66). Like my findings, Nagoda and Nightingale (2017) also find that social capital has implications for the elite capture. Nagoda and Nightingale (2017) find that elite groups use their social capital to network with NGOs in order to "promote their own interest and maintain their social status – an opportunity not available to most marginalized households" (p. 89).

Furthermore, social capital tends to reproduce itself. Bourdieu's social reproduction theory demonstrates how cultural capital creates persistent educational disparities. According to Bourdieu, educational institutions reward and value knowledge and culture that is possessed only by the elite class which perpetuates "stratified outcomes" and prevents social mobility for the lower classes (Tzanakis, 2011, p. 77). Bourdieu was writing in the 1970s France, but his theories are still applicable. For instance, Cleaver (2005) demonstrates how, in Tanzania, chronic poverty is reproduced because the poor do not have the ability to draw on social capital in the same way other members of society can. The arguments made by Cleaver (2005) may be applicable in Rajapur as well, especially considering how women of elite group are able to manipulate selection processes in their favor, as seen in Chapter 6. Furthermore, given adaptation program's ability to bring transformative changes in society (Nightingale, 2002; Ogra & Badola, 2015; Sultana, 2013), they could potentially provide an external intervention to disrupt the patterns of social reproduction of social capital. However, the elite group's manipulation of the adaptation programs hinders adaptation programs' ability to do so.

My findings also indicate that the opportunity costs of participation to livelihood work hindered some marginalized women's participation in CCA programs. This finding is supported by the existing literature. For instance, Dahal, Nepal, and Schuett (2012) find that many Dalits in their research area were wage workers and were not interested and nor was it possible for them to give up a whole day of economic activity to attend meetings. Similarly, Chhetri (2019) also finds that Dalits are unable to take leadership positions in CFUG because they have "no luxury of time" since financial compensations are not always provided for such positions (p. 7).

The government of Nepal has adopted a pro-poor strategy for its poverty reduction goals. This strategy has been incorporated in the participatory approaches in natural resource management (Chhetri, 2019). My findings indicate that organizations specifically sought participation from economically impoverished groups. From an intersectional perspective the pro-poor strategy is admirable as it addresses the power relations outside of the caste-ethnicity hierarchy. Pro-poor strategy recognizes that caste and ethnicity often coincide but there are cases when it does not. It allows space for tailored categorization of vulnerability specific to each locality. For instance, in the case of the Sonah ethnicity, they are positioned at the intersection of Tharu and economically impoverished groups. If affirmative action were only applicable for minority groups, Sonahs would have no claim to positive discrimination. However, through the pro-poor strategy, it is hypothetically possible for them to receive positive discrimination. However, there is an opportunity cost of participation to daily wages for poorer men and women

which discourage their participation. Thus, I believe this presents a paradox for the pro-poor strategy as the very group of people it targets may be unable to participate in their programs.

My findings also indicate that economic capabilities were linked to caste and ethnicity. Mainali, Jafarey, and Montes-Rojas (2017), in their study of wage differences among different castes in Nepal, find that marginalized groups do tend to earn relatively lower wages but they state that is due to “legacy of past discriminations” such as “lack of networks that facilitate entry into higher paid jobs” rather than discriminatory practices by employers (p. 413). Similarly, Aasland and Haug (2011) find that, in Nepal, regional differences is more statistically significant than caste, ethnicity or religion in explaining perceived social change. However, they also state that this does not indicate that caste and ethnicity is irrelevant for socio-economic status. Furthermore, economic status is also known to be related to educational attainment and vice-versa (Lohani, Singh, & Lohani, 2010; Thapa, 2013). Education in turn is related to ability to participate in CCA programs (Bhattarai, 2020; Dahal, Nepal, & Schuett, 2012; Nagoda & Nightingale, 2017). Education is similarly related to social mobility and life opportunities. Thus, even without explicit discrimination, the historical marginalization of certain castes and ethnicities may continue to impact individual lives today.

8. Conclusion

This thesis aimed to explore the relationships between gender, caste, and ethnicity in shaping women's participation in CCA programs through intersectional lenses. Interaction with women and men of elite group (Tharu ethnic group) and women of marginalized groups (Dalit caste and Sonah ethnic group) in Rajapur, Nepal, revealed that gender as well as caste and ethnicity were important in framing ability to participate in CCA programs. Thus, this thesis has illustrated the significance of the intersectionality framework in studying heterogeneous communities.

Gender was revealed to be an important factor in shaping women's access to participation in CCA programs. In the past, participation in community-based programs used to be considered a male job in Rajapaur. However, a feminization of participation roles, which was encouraged by male outmigration, shifts in gender norms and affirmative actions for women, has increased women's access to CCA programs. Women have also been motivated to participate in CCA programs as they perceived it as a platform to develop their network and skills. However, the leadership roles were seen to be reserved for men. Thus, while women's increased participation indicates elasticity of norms, leadership positions being reserved for men indicates the opposite. Furthermore, while women seemed to have an easy access to participation, intra-gender differences in terms of the power relations associated with caste and ethnic identity did have implications on participation as well. This highlights the importance of an intersectional approach even in participatory programs that target specific social groups.

Women's marginalized caste and ethnic identity did not automatically disadvantage their participation in CCA programs. Mechanisms for positive discriminations such as affirmative actions encouraged marginalized women's involvement in community programs. The absence of males and feminization of participation roles meant that women of marginalized groups benefitted from affirmative actions in CCA programs, more than men of marginalized groups. Additionally, a change in inter-caste and ethnic relations seems to have occurred in Rajapur which has resulted in discontinuation of explicit discriminations. This has allowed women of marginalized groups to share committee platforms with women of elite groups.

However, affirmative actions were subject to elite capture. Members of the elite group were able to maneuver around affirmative action by manipulating information and candidate selection processes through their positions of power, which are often unavailable to the marginalized groups. Women of marginalized groups perceived their lack of access to influential positions and their weak social capital as a hinderance to not only their participation in CCA programs but also for other life opportunities. Additionally, weak economic conditions,

indirectly linked to membership of marginalized groups, had negative implications on participation in CCA programs as well as education attainment, employment, and reproduction of social capital. Affirmative actions were also lacking in their consideration of officially unrecognized groups. Although officially unrecognized groups would be able to access affirmative actions through the pro-poor strategy, opportunity costs of participation to daily wages does raise the question of its feasibility. Furthermore, discontinuation of explicit discrimination did not necessarily entail elimination of all forms of discrimination and exclusion, as evidenced by elite capture of resources. Thus, my application of the intersectionality framework to study intra-gender power relations has shown that caste and ethnicity do shape women's participation directly and positively through affirmative actions but also negatively through legacies of discriminations.

Since male outmigration is a growing area of research in Nepal, its implications on affirmative actions and marginalized women would also make for an intriguing topic for future research. Furthermore, given that caste-based discrimination still has a strong hold in South Asia, a case study of reduction of explicit discrimination in Rajapur could provide insights into how it could be replicated in areas still struggling with caste-based discrimination. Similarly, gender equality is a persistent issue in many areas around the world. It could be worthwhile to explore the shifts in gender norms observed in Rajapur as the insights could be helpful in battling gender discriminations in similar places.

Lastly, I would recommend NGOs conducting CCA and other community-based programs to practice a stricter mechanism to check elite capture. I recommend a stronger accountability mechanism, not only for the community but for the NGOs as well. I would also recommend that NGOs share information with all members of the community, not just community leaders to make participant selection process transparent for all individuals involved.

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10. Appendices

10.1. Categories for informants

Type of informants	Type of data collection method	Pseudonyms for informants	Total number of informants
Women of marginalized groups who **have** participated in CCA programs	2 individual interviews	Drishti, Sunehna	2
Women of marginalized groups who **have not** participated in CCA programs	1 group interview	Deepa, Dhanmaya, Dayakumari + 3 others	6
	1 FGD	Drishti, Devi, Dikshya, Sonali, Sunmaya and Sunkesari	6
Women or men of **elite groups** who have or have not participated in CCA Programs	3 individual interviews	Trishna, Tripti and Tilak	3
Key informants	4 individual interviews	Navin + 3 others	4

Note: Informants with names starting with the letter 'D' are Dalits, 'S' are Sonahs and 'T' are Tharus

10.2. Interview Guide

Section I

- Introduction
  - Of myself
  - Of the study
- Informed Consent
  - Explanation of the study
  - Consent to interview
  - Confidentiality
  - What I will use the data for
  - The right to withdraw at any point
  - Consent for recording the conversation

Section II

Opening Questions

- As I have told you, I am not from this area, can you tell me a little bit about the weather here?
- How do you feel about the adaptation program being conducted in the community?

Section III

Participant Type I

- Why have you decided to participate in the adaptation programs?
- What helped you participate in the program?
- How do you participate in the program?
- You belong to (certain) gender /caste/ ethnicity. How do you this impacted your participation in this program? Has it made it easier or more difficult in certain ways?
- How about concerns regarding money? How do you think this has impacted your or other women's participation?
- What would make it easier for you to participate in programs such as these?

Participant Type II

- Would you have wanted to participate in the adaptation program?
- If you wanted to, why were you unable participate?
- How do you think your gender is related to your participation in the program?
- You belong to (certain) caste, gender, ethnicity. How do you this has impacted your lack of participation in the program?
- How about concerns regarding money? Do you think that has made it difficult for you to participate in the program?
- Do you think the main reason is your class/ethnicity/religion or economic concerns? Why do you think so?
- What are the connections between the two?
- What would make it easier for you to participate in programs such as these?

Participant Type III

- Why have you decided to participate in the adaptation programs? (Optional)
- What helped you participate in the program? What has hindered you from participating in the program?
- How do you participate in the program? (Optional)
- How do you think your gender has made it more difficult (or easier) for you to participate in the program?
- How do you think your ethnicity/class/religion has made it easier for you to participate?
- How about concerns regarding money? Do you think that has made it difficult for some women to participate in the program? How?
- What would make it easier for you to participate in programs such as these?

Section IV

- How does the GESI approach address or enable participation of minority women?
- Can you explain what GESI is to me?
- How do you think GESI approach is helping the cause of minority women?
- How do you think GESI can improve their approach to reach the women of minority groups?

Section V Closing Remarks

- Open space for additional comments
- Express gratitude for the participation

10.3. Interview Guide for Key Informants

Section I

- Introduction
  - Of myself
  - Of the study
- Informed Consent
  - Explanation of the study
  - Consent to interview
  - Confidentiality

Section II

Opening Questions

- Explanation of methods and participants of the study

Section III

- What kind of participants do adaptation programs generally target? Why?
- Do you think your target participants are interested in adaptation programs? Why? Why not?
- What are the hinderances faced by women to participate in adaptation programs?
- What are the hinderances faced by minority groups to participate in adaptation programs?
- What are the hinderances faced by the women of minority groups to participate in adaptation programs?
- What does participation generally entail?

Section IV

- Can you elaborate on the GESI approach? How does it work?
- What are some the strategies used by the GESI approach?
- What does GESI approach accomplish well?
- What is the GESI approach missing? Its limitations particularly in terms of women of minority groups?

Section V

Closing Remarks

- Open space for additional comments
- Express gratitude for the participation

10.4. FGD Guide

Section I

Introduction

Consent

Section II

Opening Question

- What are your opinions regarding the adaptation program?

Section III

- Did you want to participate in this program? Why? Why not?
- Why have you/ have you not participated in the program?
- What do you think helped you or encouraged you to participate?
- What do you think discouraged you or stopped you from participating?
- How did being a woman effect your participation?
- How did being a minority group effect your participation?
- What do you think could have helped you participate?

Section IV

- Do you know about the GESI approach? How do you think it works?
- Has it helped you participate in different programs? How?
- Where do you think they are falling short, how can they improve?

Section V

Closing Remarks

- Open space for additional comments
- Express gratitude for the participation

10.5. Ethical Clearance from NSD

NSD's assessment

Project title

Intra-gender differences and women's participation in climate change adaptation programs

Reference number

542573

Registered

28.06.2019 av Preema Ranjitkar - Preema.Ranjitkar@student.uib.no **Data controller**

(institution responsible for the project)

Universitetet i Bergen / Det psykologiske fakultet / Hemil-senteret

Project leader (academic employee/supervisor or PhD candidate)

Haldis Haukanes , Haldis.Haukanes@uib.no, tlf: 4755589259

Type of project

Student project, Master's thesis

Contact information, student

Preema Ranjitkar, preema.ranjitkar@student.uib.no, tlf: 41327104

Project period

01.09.2019 - 01.06.2020

Status

12.07.2019 - Assessed

Assessment (1)

12.07.2019 - Assessed

Our assessment is that the processing of personal data in this project will comply with data protection legislation, so long as it is carried out in accordance with what is documented in the Notification Form and attachments, dated 12.07.2019, as well as in correspondence with NSD. Everything is in place for the processing to begin.

NOTIFY CHANGES

If you intend to make changes to the processing of personal data in this project it may be necessary to notify NSD. This is done by updating the Notification Form. On our website we explain which changes must be notified. Wait until you receive an answer from us before you carry out the changes.

TYPE OF DATA AND DURATION

The project will be processing special categories of personal data about ethnic origin and religion, as well as general categories of personal data, until 01.06.2020.

LEGAL BASIS

The project will gain consent from data subjects to process their personal data. We find that consent will meet the necessary requirements under art. 4 (11) and 7, in that it will be a freely given, specific, informed and unambiguous statement or action, which will be documented and can be withdrawn.

The legal basis for processing special categories of personal data is therefore explicit consent given by the data subject, cf. the General Data Protection Regulation art. 6.1 a), cf. art. 9.2 a), cf. the Personal Data Act § 10, cf. § 9 (2).

PRINCIPLES RELATING TO PROCESSING PERSONAL DATA

NSD finds that the planned processing of personal data will be in accordance with the principles under the General Data Protection Regulation regarding:

- lawfulness, fairness and transparency (art. 5.1 a), in that data subjects will receive sufficient information aboutthe processing and will give their consent
- purpose limitation (art. 5.1 b), in that personal data will be collected for specified, explicit and legitimatepurposes, and will not be processed for new, incompatible purposes
- data minimisation (art. 5.1 c), in that only personal data which are adequate, relevant and necessary for thepurpose of the project will be processed
- storage limitation (art. 5.1 e), in that personal data will not be stored for longer than is necessary to fulfil theproject’s purpose

THE RIGHTS OF DATA SUBJECTS

Data subjects will have the following rights in this project: transparency (art. 12), information (art. 13), access (art. 15), rectification (art. 16), erasure (art. 17), restriction of processing (art. 18), notification (art. 19), data portability (art. 20). These rights apply so long as the data subject can be identified in the collected data.

NSD finds that the information that will be given to data subjects about the processing of their personal data will meet the legal requirements for form and content, cf. art. 12.1 and art. 13.

We remind you that if a data subject contacts you about their rights, the data controller has a duty to reply within a month.

FOLLOW YOUR INSTITUTION'S GUIDELINES

NSD presupposes that the project will meet the requirements of accuracy (art. 5.1 d), integrity and confidentiality (art. 5.1 f) and security (art. 32) when processing personal data.

To ensure that these requirements are met you must follow your institution's internal guidelines and/or consult with your institution (i.e. the institution responsible for the project).

FOLLOW-UP OF THE PROJECT

NSD will follow up the progress of the project at the planned end date in order to determine whether the processing of personal data has been concluded.

Good luck with the project!

Contact person at NSD: Jørgen Wincentsen

Data Protection Services for Research: +47 55 58 21 17 (press 1)

10.6. Informed consent form in English

Are you interested in taking part in the research project:

"Intra-gender differences and women's participation in climate change adaptation programs"?

This is an inquiry about participation in a research project where the main purpose is to to explore if and how factors such as caste, ethnicity, income and education impact women's participation in climate change adaptation programs. In this letter we will give you information about the purpose of the project and what your participation will involve.

Purpose of the project

My name is Preema Ranjitkar and I am a Master's degree student at University of Bergen. I study Global Development in the Department of Health Promotion and Development.

For my Master's thesis, I am conducting a study on the differences among women and their participation in climate change adaptation programs. The purpose of this research is to explore if and how factors such as caste, ethnicity, income and education impact women's participation in climate change adaptation programs. This is an area of interest because climate change and development programs in Nepal frequently focus on the participation of women and of minority groups but it is important also to consider how it impacts the participation of women of minority groups.

Who is responsible for the research project?

The University of Bergen is the institution responsible for the project.

Why are you being asked to participate?

You have been asked to participate in this interview because you are fit either one of the following criteria:

i. A female belonging to a minority group who has participated in climate change adaptation programs.

ii. A female belonging to a minority group who has not participated in climate change adaptation programs.

iii. Female or male of elite groups who have or have not participated in climate change adaptation programs.

iv. Key informants in the organization that conducts these climate change adaptation programs.

What does participation involve for you?

You have been asked participate in an interview for 30 minutes to 1 hour or in a focus group for 30 minutes to an hour. You will be asked questions regarding your experiences, challenges you have faced, the resources you have used and the reasons why you have participated in a climate change adaptation program. You will also be asked information and experiences in participation in climate change adaptation programs in terms of your gender, ethnicity, caste and religion. I will record the

interview to transcribe and analyze the responses. You may refuse to be recorded, if you wish it so.

Participation is voluntary
Participation in the project is voluntary. If you chose to participate, you can withdraw your consent at any time without giving a reason. All information about you will then be made anonymous. There will be no negative consequences for you if you chose not to participate or later decide to withdraw.

Your personal privacy – how we will store and use your personal data

We will only use your personal data for the purpose(s) specified in this information letter. We will process your personal data confidentially and in accordance with data protection legislation (the General Data Protection Regulation and Personal Data Act).

My supervisor at the University of Bergen, Haldis Haukanes will be responsible for this project.

Your responses will be anonymous. If your responses are mentioned, you will be given a code name/number.

What will happen to your personal data at the end of the research project?

Your personal data (your name and connections you might have to an organization or institution) will be treated confidentially. Your personal information and the information you provide will be stored in a password protected laptop. The audio recordings will be erased after I transcribe them. Your information and responses will not be shared with any individual not directly related to this study.

Your rights

So long as you can be identified in the collected data, you have the right to:

- access the personal data that is being processed about you
- request that your personal data is deleted
- request that incorrect personal data about you is corrected/rectified
- receive a copy of your personal data (data portability), and
- send a complaint to the Data Protection Officer or The Norwegian Data Protection Authority regarding the processing of your personal data

What gives us the right to process your personal data?

We will process your personal data based on your consent. Based on an agreement with the University of Bergen, NSD – The Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS has assessed that the processing of personal data in this project is in accordance with data protection legislation.

Where can I find out more?

If you have questions about the project, or want to exercise your rights, contact:

Please contact me if you have any questions: preema.ranjitkar@student.uib.no, or by phone +47 41327104.

You may also contact my supervisor at Haldis.Haukanes@uib.no or +47 55 58 92 59.

NSD – The Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS, by email: (personverntjenester@nsd.no) or by telephone: +47 55 58 21 17.

Yours sincerely,

Haldis Haukanes Research Supervisor	Preema Ranjitkar Student

Consent form

I have received and understood information about the project 'Intra-gender differences and women's participation in climate change adaptation programs' and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I give consent:

- ☐ to participate in interview
- ☐ to participate in focus group

I give consent for my personal data to be processed until the end date of the project, approx. 01.06.2020.

(Signed by participant, date)

10.7. Thematic Network Analysis of Data

<table>
<tr><td>Absence of males</td><td rowspan="2">Male Roles</td><td rowspan="7">Gender</td></tr>
<tr><td>Men in decision-making roles</td></tr>
<tr><td>Is participation role a burden for women?</td><td rowspan="2">Women’s perceptions of participation roles</td></tr>
<tr><td>Increasing Women’s Capabilities</td></tr>
<tr><td>Affirmative action for women</td><td rowspan="3">Feminization of participation roles</td></tr>
<tr><td>Transformation in gender norms</td></tr>
<tr><td>Now, participation is women’s job</td></tr>
<tr><td>Affirmative action for marginalized groups</td><td rowspan="3">Membership of marginalized groups</td><td rowspan="5">Caste and Ethnicity</td></tr>
<tr><td>Perceived discrimination</td></tr>
<tr><td>Transformation in inter-caste and ethnic relations</td></tr>
<tr><td>Unfair selection process</td><td rowspan="2">Elite capture</td></tr>
<tr><td>Control over information and resources</td></tr>
<tr><td>Social support</td><td rowspan="2">Social Factors</td><td rowspan="4">Socio-Economic</td></tr>
<tr><td>Social capital</td></tr>
<tr><td>Opportunity cost of participation</td><td rowspan="2">Economic Factors</td></tr>
<tr><td>Weak economic capabilities</td></tr>
</table>

10.8. Map of the Literature Review