The social, cultural, economic and political strategies extending women’s territory by encroaching on patriarchal embeddedness in tourism in Nepal

WENDY HILLMAN ; KYLIE RADEL

This is the Authors Accepted Manuscript (AAM) of a work submitted for publication from the following source:

Bibliographic Citation


Publisher Statement

“This is an Accepted Manuscript version of the following article, accepted for publication in Journal of Sustainable Tourism. Hillman, W., & Radel, K. (2022). The social, cultural, economic and political strategies extending women’s territory by encroaching on patriarchal embeddedness in tourism in Nepal. Journal of Sustainable Tourism, 30(7), 1754–1775. https://doi.org/10.1080/09669582.2021.1894159

It is deposited under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, and is not altered, transformed, or built upon in any way.”

If you believe that this work infringes copyright, please provide details by email to acquire-staff@cqu.edu.au

Please do not remove this page
The political strategy of extending women’s territory by encroaching on patriarchal embeddedness in tourism in Nepal

Author 1 * (corresponding author)
Wendy Hillman
Dr/Senior Lecturer
Social Sciences
Central Queensland University
Central Queensland University, Bruce Highway, North Rockhampton, Queensland., 4701, Australia
Email – w.hillman@cqu.edu.au
Phone – +61 (7) 4923 2125

Co-Author 2
Full name – Kylie Radel
Dr/Senior Lecturer
School of Business and Law
Central Queensland University
Central Queensland University, Bruce Highway, North Rockhampton, Queensland., 4701, Australia
Email – k.radel@cqu.edu.au
Phone – +61 (7) 4930 9510

Introduction

Developed and developing nations globally have seen a sharp rise in women exploring entrepreneurship as a means to disrupt poverty for themselves and their families. This is despite the fact they face more serious challenges in their activities when compared to male entrepreneurs. Research in gender studies has demonstrated that women generally still face significant obstacles to entrepreneurship (Vossenberg, 2013) in the areas of reduced human capital, limited strategic choice options, and institutionalised structural barriers including taxation and legal disparities in the governance of industry in most countries (Pinkovetskaia, Kryukova, Campillo, & Rojas-Bahamon, 2019; Širec & Močnik, 2012). In addition, the socially constructed genres of ‘male’ and ‘female’ are gendered with inherent political, social, economic, and structural inequities that these signifiers entail. The resulting gendered division of labour and responsibility continues to define and restrict women’s opportunities to freely engage in social and economic endeavour (Carvalhoa, Costac, Lykked, & Torrese, 2019).

The situation becomes increasingly challenging for women in developing nations, in rural and remote locations, and for those in poverty. Women seeking entrepreneurship in developing nations such as Nepal are significantly resource constrained (Xheneti, Karki, & Madden, 2019; Xheneti, Madden, & Karki, 2017). The women lack access to opportunities in terms of education, business and entrepreneurship training, infrastructure (Panda, 2018) and access to technologies, mentoring, banking and government support mechanisms (Hillman & Radel, 2018a). They generally face challenges in balancing work and family while negotiating patriarchal social norms, and are constantly challenged by gender discrimination (Panda, 2018; Verheul, Stel, & Thurik, 2006). Nepali women generally possess a subordinate status when compared to that of their male contemporaries (Radel & Hillman, 2016, 2018a). Even though gender disparities differ across ethnicity, social unit and district, overall women are ranked below males in nearly every social dimension.
In parallel with these social, economic and cultural challenges for women in Nepal, the basis of the definition and contexts of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial endeavour are heavily masculinised and often perceived as the male domain (Jennings & Brush, 2013; Panda, 2018). Defining characteristics of entrepreneurship describe individuals who undertake ‘the organisation and management of an enterprise involving innovativeness, independence and risk, as well as opportunity for profit’ (Timmons & Spinelli, 2006, p. 10). Women struggle to establish credibility in male dominated industries, and social ideologies attach insufficient and often derisory values to so-called ‘independent’ women (Jennings & Brush, 2013; Maden, 2015; Panda, 2018). The strong focus on innovation and risk within this definition highlights that the successful entrepreneur has an enviable position to be able to take advantage of new technologies, products and markets, and to accept the inherent risks associated with these advantages (Bushell, 2008). Risk, as classified by Beck (Beck, 1992, 2010; see also Calhoun, 2010; Hillman, 2019; Jarvis, 2007) is an idiosyncratic, prevailing and modifiable depiction of contemporary reality. Women are commonly considered to be low risk-takers, due to their primary responsibilities for caring duties and household roles (Bushell, 2008). With scarce or only limited industry experience or capital funds, women are consigned to a nominal risk and marginal benefit positionality (Hillman, 2019). But, entrepreneurs are described as requiring a vision for growth, a strong commitment to innovation, and an intense need for achievement (Schaper & Volery, 2007). As Amiri and Marimaei (2012, p. 152) describe, they are individuals who ‘perceive a vision, commit themselves to that vision, and almost single-handedly carry the vision to its successful implementation’. The implication here is the drivers for innovation, ‘vision’, commitment to a singular task, and the underlying need to achieve predominates over other more mundane tasks such as reproduction, caring for families and other home-based, feminine activities (Cohen & Wolkowitz, 2018). Such domestic tasks remain largely the domain of women in developed nations and even more so for women in developing nations such as Nepal (Acharya, Bell, Simkhada, Van Teijlingen, & Regmi, 2010; Ahl, 2004; Hofstede, 2011).

This article investigates the complexity of the positioning of entrepreneurship, tourism development and gender for women in Nepal. We consider the ways in which entrepreneurship is characterised through masculine domains and reproduced in multiple institutions and discourses (Ahl, 2004) to subordinate and repress Nepali women. However, our research also shows that Nepali women are instrumental in their own empowerment. They are circumnavigating the social and cultural risks and seeking entrepreneurship opportunities through politically subtle strategies by disrupting the stringently imposed gender norms (Bennett, 2005; Subramanian, 2018). They are shaping their own significance and distinctiveness within tourism development. Our intention is to highlight Nepali women’s approaches to opposing the patriarchal embeddedness within tourism in Nepal and to consider the broader complexities of gender and entrepreneurship.

**Literature Review**

**Gender and work**

There is little question that women in both developed and developing nations have fought to access entrepreneurial opportunities. Their activities are obstructed by stereotyping, discrimination, patriarchy and social, cultural and economic barriers. These barriers are often based on the ideologies and social constructions of gender (Butler, 1999; Carvalho et al., 2019). One proffered explanation for these gender
differences is that women have learned to overcome their own lived experiences (Greer & Greene, 2003). They have developed cooperative and flexible ways of working in their efforts to manage and negotiate the often conflicting responsibilities of household work and external work or career activities (de la Rey, 2005; Helgesen, 1990).

Much has been written in relation to the politics of gender, representation and the normalisation of inequality that results as a function of the power differential created through the ideological identity. As Butler (2004, p. 2) noted, the concept of gender enables dominant groups to insist that the ‘viability of our individual personhood is fundamentally dependent on these social norms’ (see also Celis, Kantola, Waylen, & Weldon, 2013; Walker, 2016). Gender is a socially constructed and (re)produced perception of the differences between the feminine and masculine domains. It is the central characteristic of patriarchy and the social systems that identify men as dominant in relation to women (Holmes, 2007; Rowlands, 1997). In terms of industry participation and entrepreneurship, there are both vertical and horizontal divisions of labour as a result of continuing political and social dogma around the necessity of women’s responsibilities for families (Holmes, 2007). Vertical divisions of labour by gender result in fewer women being able to access higher positions in industry and government occupations (Holmes, 2007; Rafnsdóttir & Weigt, 2019). While horizontal divisions of labour entail that work is divided by genders within occupations and worker types (Bloksgaard, 2011; Campos-Soria, Marchante-Mera, & Ropero-García, 2011; Murphy & Cross, 2017).

Together, these gendered divisions have significant implications for the ways in which wealth and power are distributed between men and women – and this remains the case in both developed and developing nations.

**Entrepreneurship to disrupt patriarchal hegemony**

Entrepreneurship is a concept that embodies the ideas of transformation, creation and vision. It is the epitome of these aspirations which should provide avenues for women to disrupt patriarchal hegemony. Reynolds, Hay and Camp (1999, p. 3) describe entrepreneurship as ‘new business or new venture creation, or the expansion of an existing business, by an individual, a team of individuals, or an established business’. According to Drucker (1985, p. 35), entrepreneurship requires ‘a systematic innovation, ...[which] consists in the purposeful and organized search for changes’. It is reliant on the ‘systematic analysis of the opportunities such changes might offer for economic and social innovation’. These lofty ideals however, obscure the challenges that entrepreneurship presents as it characterises a particularly complex phenomenon. The title has been ascribed based on the entrepreneurial individuals themselves, or the business type, or indeed the environment in which the entrepreneurial endeavour occurs (Širec & Močnik, 2012; Solymossy, 1998).

Further, the values of ‘systematic innovation’ and an organised ‘search for change’ (Drucker, 1985) are often far removed from the realities available to women in poverty.

The very concepts of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial endeavour are commonly understood as being a ‘man’s domain’ (Cesaroni, Pediconi, & Sentuti, 2018; Das, 2000; Jennings & Brush, 2013). While gender represents a poor indicator of the potential success or otherwise of enterprises, institutionalised assumptions persist around the reduced capacity of women’s ventures to perform (Gupta, Wieland, & Turban, 2018; Marlow & McAdam, 2013). It is these assumptions that continue to demonstrate the subtle (or not-so-subtle) gendered biases manifested within entrepreneurial fields. Many female owned or operated enterprises are marginal and vulnerable to social and economic changes; few are considered truly innovative or have the capacity to create significant profit and wealth (Marlow & McAdam, 2013). Further, women entrepreneurs are often characterised as being ‘chance’, ‘forced’ or ‘created/pulled’ entrepreneurs (Das, 2000; Hillman & Radel, 2018a). Chance entrepreneurs start businesses without clear goals (ie. business has grown from hobbies or was passed on by a family member). Forced or ‘necessity’ (Schaper & Volery, 2007) entrepreneurs are compelled to start businesses because of poor financial positions; while created or
pulled entrepreneurs start businesses because they were encouraged through entrepreneurship development programmes, and/or wish ‘to build their own identity, develop leadership skills, and contribute to society through their venture’ (Bushell, 2008, p. 550). Alternatively, the accepted masculine traits of risk-taking, proactiveness, innovativeness (Bushell, 2008; Drucker, 1985; Solymossy, 1998) and the development of ‘comprehensive entrepreneurial skills to outperform the business rivals’ (Kee & Rahman, 2018, p. 700) are simply not attributable to women under these assumptions.

Indeed, the persistence of such gender-based entrepreneurial identities would be an interesting research reflexion, if in fact, the resulting consequences of gendered identities were not so grim. On the Human Development Index, Nepal currently ranks 147th of 187 countries of the United Nations member states (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2019). Nepali women achieve an average of just 4.9 years of schooling and only around 35.9% of women over the age of 25 have any level of secondary education (UNDP, 2019). Nepali women are susceptible to domestic violence, sexual harassment, rape, slavery, premature matrimony, a lack of financial means, among other things (Bhushal, 2008; Hillman & Radel, 2018). Nonetheless, women in Nepal have long been campaigning for human rights for themselves (Becker, 2015).

Even allowing for the challenges associated with overcoming barriers from socially constructed ideologies of gender (Butler, 1999, 2004; Celis et al., 2013; Chafetz, 2001; Rowlands, 1997), research indicates that there is a global growth in women entrepreneurs (Bosma et al., 2020). Research also shows that very different factors are driving this growth when comparisons are taken between developed and developing nations. As noted in much of the research into entrepreneurship in developing countries, becoming an entrepreneur is generally largely due to necessity of an individual’s circumstances (Panda, 2018; Schaper & Volery, 2007). As Schoar (2010) noted, entrepreneurs in the majority of developing countries are subsistence entrepreneurs. In comparison, for developed nations, entrepreneurship is largely driven by opportunity. In the absence of any practical alternatives, women in developing nations such as Nepal, therefore seek to increase their potential household earnings with some form of entrepreneurial endeavour. They run tiny businesses that rarely grow into larger firms, but provide some alternative income and employment opportunities largely for their family members (Schoar, 2010).

Attaining social and economic emancipation from the confines of gender and poverty is potentially a more difficult prospect for Nepal’s women than perhaps in many other cultures. This may be attributed to the social, cultural and political structures that dictate subservience for Nepali women; as suggested by Hofstede’s research (1984) for example. Hofstede (2005) believed that poor nations such as Nepal have a well-established, male dominance in the work place, with deeply entrenched patriarchal and caste configurations. The patriarchal embeddedness of Nepal entails that it is difficult for females to achieve political, social or economic importance. The prevailing religious norms further invest authority and control overpoweringly with males. Chetterjea and Basu (1978), and Phillips, Rothbard and Dumas (2009) find that nations with such considerable social disparity have larger gaps between the rights and capacities of males and females. Hosni and Lundberg (2005) state that there continue to be strict parameters defining the social distances between males and females in Nepal. In order to better understand, document and counteract the embedded patriarchy and gender reproductions that position Nepali women as inferior, incapable and irrelevant to economic growth, our research explored women’s lived experiences in Nepal, and the effects and effectiveness of Nepali women’s interventions within their own lives that enhance women’s rights, power and agency.

Methodology
For this research, the authors used a constructivist, grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Hillman & Radel, 2018b; Radel & Hillman, 2018b) to design the overall research process and intersected this with a critical theory lens (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000; Seiler, 2004). We recognised that understanding the intersections between entrepreneurship in tourism and women’s journeys to disrupt patriarchy was a far more complex challenge than could be interrogated by ‘reducing dimensions of women’s experience to a set of measurable indicators’ (Cornwall, 2016, p. 343). This approach was used to animate the juncture where both angles of inquiry strive for understanding of culture and positionality (Daniels, 2019; Geertz, 1973); including the data collection for subsequent phases of the study. As Daniels (2019, p. 83) noted, ‘adding a critical perspective to the constructivist [grounded theory] approach offers multiple perspectives to the analysis process thereby providing opportunity to increase the understanding of culture and society’. Through this interdisciplinary approach we brought together the critical social science traditions of sociology and management/marketing, to explore Nepali women’s lived experiences of entrepreneurship within a patriarchal society. Our goal was to better understand the effects and effectiveness of entrepreneurship in tourism as a mechanism to disrupt poverty for Nepali women.

According to Charmaz and Belgrave (2012, p. 347):

Grounded theory refers to a systematic method for constructing a theoretical analysis from data, with explicit analytic strategies and implicit guidelines for data collection. In addition, the term refers to the products of the method, the completed theoretical analysis. We emphasize the flexible strategies that constitute this method and aid the researcher to (a) study social and social psychological processes, (b) direct data collection, (c) manage data analysis and, (d) develop and test an abstract theoretical framework that explains the studied process.

Grounded theory has two distinctive features: constant comparative analysis and theoretical sampling (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Constant comparative analysis involves a reiterative procedure of simultaneous data collection and analysis, which comprises ‘the systematic choice and study of several comparison groups’ (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 9). The investigator does not delay evaluation until data are fully collected to undertake data analysis. Data collection and analysis take place concurrently so that the evaluated data directs subsequent data collection. Throughout the data analysis procedure, an event is assessed and linked with other occurrences (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Researchers build relationships between observed data and interpretation, and the development of themes and categories – between data, between categories, and between ‘different “slices of data” in order to reach higher levels of abstraction and advance with the conceptualization’ (Gregory, 2010, p. 7 cited in Cho & Lee, 2014).

In the grounded theory approach, theoretical sampling takes place as the data collection develops. Glaser (1978, p. 36) stated that theoretical sampling occurs when ‘the analyst jointly collects, codes, and analyzes his [sic] data and decides what data to collect next and where to find them, in order to develop his [sic] theory as it emerges’. Through this process, interpretations and categories developed from early data collection and analysis direct subsequent data collection and analysis. The process requires the recruitment of new participants with divergent experiences of the phenomenon under study. This process of sampling enables the exploration of the multiple dimensions and properties of the phenomenon (Starks & Trinidad, 2007). In the course of analysis, researchers must be theoretically receptive to the data analysis that steers them in the direction of how to proceed next (Cho & Lee, 2014).
The project aimed to capture experiences from women entrepreneurs in a range of urban and rural settings. However, as constructivist researchers we believe that it is imperative that research provides benefits to the communities who participate. We therefore developed a reciprocity approach in the research design by offering free workshops on entrepreneurship, leadership, small business practices, and marketing for small business. Using a purposive/snowball approach to sampling for difficult to reach or vulnerable communities (Valerio et al., 2016), Nepali women entrepreneurs from three main regions were invited to participate in both the workshops and the research project. Participants could attend the free workshops and then they were asked if they would be willing to participate in the research interviews after the workshops were completed. Involvement in the workshops was not contingent on any further contribution to the research project and participants could withdraw from the project at any time. The women entrepreneurs were recruited through local (Nepali) contacts known to the researchers in four locations from diverse regions of Nepal; Mugu district in the far north western region, Pokhara in the middle western area, Kathmandu the capital city, and Bhaktapur (a largely Newari ethic community, south east of Kathmandu). In this initial phase of the study, a total of 16 women were interviewed, using open-ended, in-depth interviewing and question prompts.

Each woman was interviewed for up to one hour, at a location close to their home or enterprise. Participants were asked questions relating to their participation (as women) in the tourism industry in Nepal. Further questions regarding how they began their enterprises, the way they recruited other women to join them, how they responded to male interference or ridicule in the sphere of tourism; and, what strategies they employed to combat long-term and culturally embedded social, historical, cultural and economic patterns of abuse, exploitation and violence were also examined. The critical theory lens enabled the researchers to engage and identify inherent conflicts and tensions embedded within the women’s stories. The critical perspective provided a way to evaluate the narratives and give voice (Hertz, 1997) to participants’ hidden positioning (Daniels, 2019; St. Louis & Calabrese Barton, 2002) within the research.

Interviews were also transcribed by a Nepali Research Assistant to further assist with the nuances contained within the contexts of the data. Some women were interviewed at their business site and some of the women chose to be interviewed in groups as was culturally appropriate. Most of the women were compensated for their participation in the research by being provided with culturally appropriate food and beverages. The importance of interviewing women from across city, rural, regional and remote Nepal, who have commenced trading as ‘female only’ enterprises; and, who employ other women from low socioeconomic circumstances, is that these Nepali women are at the frontline of negotiating and subverting the dominant structures of patriarchy, caste and class in their country. This enables them to find their own agency and voices in this oppressive climate; and, of being able to express their opinions without fear of reprisal or violence.

Following the grounded theory approach, the interviews were transcribed and underwent thematic coding, gerund coding, memoing, categorising and eventual reintegration (Charmaz, 2014; Radel & Hillman, 2018b). Incorporating the critical lens, we sought to uncover women’s’ strategies for circumventing embedded patriarchy in the Nepal tourism industry. As shown in Table 1, a section of transcript was coded and memoed as follows. As the researchers were both English speakers with only limited Nepali language knowledge, interviews were conducted in English via a Nepali female translator where required. The excerpts from the transcripts below are direct quotes from the interviews and the transcriptions are written in situ to retain nuances of language uses.

Table 1: An example of coding, categorising and memoing of transcripts with the addition of a critical lens
In Nepal, they don’t have rafting guide also. In other countries they have ladies guide. I am so exciting to see these things also. In 2008, there also I met an “Inka group” from Sweden and am just like talking with Inka-Didi. She is already a rafting guide and am so exiting to talk with Inka. After we talk rafting things also and am so happy to meet her and asked to she can you teach me like kayaking other things also. She also very happy to teach me also and this day we talk like rafting things also and there after tomorrow we decide to go to lake again and she hires kayak to go lake and she is so happy I am doing kayaking.

(Here S means In Nepal, there are not any female rafting guides. In 2008, she met a lady Inka from Sweden who is a rafting guide. Then she asked if Inka can teach her rafting which she agreed upon and started teaching her rafting from the next day. They hired a kayak to go to the lake and from there onwards she started Kayaking and both are very happy about it).

After that she making plans to going back Sweden and she like to teach swimming (rafting?) for Nepal and she starting to form this project. (Inka decided to go back to Sweden who wanted to teach Nepalese women swimming and rafting and started to form project)

S: I am first lady from Pokhara also after I met one lady also who know kayaking and after we have only two ladies who starting. (I am the first lady from Pokhara who knows kayaking and I have also met another lady who knows kayaking so now we are two ladies who have started kayaking)

Another one also coming she is not exactly ready. She is also sister from Kathmandu. She is MA. She is also support Nepalese women for other things also. After that she helping to connect to media. Inka-Didi she helping to equipment, transportation and other money also. (Another lady from Kathmandu, MA is support worker for Nepalese women has also joined them. She helps to connect to the media. The lady from INCA provides support for equipment, transportation and finances).

I: Yes Yes

S: After that other ladies also coming to join rafting things. After we have…. we will start one to 10 ladies. We will decide to open like new NGO (Here she means: after that other ladies also came to join rafting. We were up to 10 people and then decided to open up new NGO).
Informed consent was requested and gained from each participant. Ethical clearance was applied for and granted from the authors’ university Human Research Ethics Committee.

Findings and Discussion

Participants
We first provide an overview of general characteristics of the women in our study. To date we have interviewed, transcribed and analysed data from sixteen Nepali women entrepreneurs. These women range in ages from 25 years up to 65 years and have varying levels of education. Some of the women have completed just a few years of schooling, and some who have completed undergraduate and postgraduate university studies. As noted, the women originated from a variety of regions throughout Nepal but primarily, their businesses are headquartered in the main cities of Kathmandu and/or Pokhara. The participants also range in their level of business development; with some of this group being new entrepreneurs and others having been in successful business for many years.

Many of the females had started their own initiatives to achieve supportable incomes for themselves and their relatives. These women have the burden of innumerable means of production and reproduction comprising: managing the family unit and the smallholding; giving birth and tending to family; reaping of crops, animal husbandry; sustaining consistent supplies of provisions; and, when they initiated their tourism venture, all organisational accountabilities for the project, and any active workforce. Some of the businesses they have started are: women only trekking companies with female guides for female trekkers, a guesthouse, a small trekking hotel, a workshop for women to learn sewing, knitting and weaving skills and then sell the products onward to the retail market, a not-for-profit organisation to help women lift themselves out of poverty through practical training, a community bank, microfinance loans; and, a used trekking goods outlet. The women also indicated they were seeking to change social and cultural perceptions of women in Nepal, and to help other women to “come out of poverty”. Further, the women’s motivations for entrepreneurship were all necessity driven (Pinkovetskaia et al., 2019); they were either chance or forced entrepreneurs (Das, 2000) due to their social, cultural and/or economic circumstances. Interestingly, the most common element emerging from their stories, was the desire to engage in social and cultural change in status for women.

Constraints to women's agency and structural disadvantages
Social structures or institutions and our capacity to both embody and/or resist these structures simultaneously, represents our agency to respond to social and cultural hegemony. Agency may be particularly significant in an individual’s private life or relating to one’s social wellbeing since it is possible for an individual’s welfare to be shaped by their own agency (Stampe, 2017). To put it differently, agency is about what an individual is free to do to achieve the aims or ideals that they consider essential. It is a talent to rise above difficulties, to be taken notice of in society (either alone or as part of a group), and to query and challenge circumstances of repression or denial (Hanmer & Klugman, 2016).

Hays (1994) suggests that agency can be understood in four ways and these depend on the degrees of choice considered as being available to individuals to accept or deny the social constraints. First, individuals are agents as the bearers of social structures and institutions. Second, people and these social structures are indivisible – they are constantly creating and (re)creating each other through socialisation processes. Third, individuals are then also agents in that they can choose to engage with social structures and transform or disrupt the institutions within which the structures are embodied. Finally, agency and the capacity to control identity is necessarily constrained by resources and access. Agency is what an individual does to reach an objective with the appropriate ethical attitude, and it can have diverse consequences for the individual using the agency attitude (Stampe, 2017). Nevertheless, how women in developing nations employ and command
their own agency are particularly important questions to address – particularly in gender and entrepreneurial contexts (Chafetz, 2001).

The following participant spoke about the challenges for women in asserting their agency in a male dominated profession:

“...trekking is adventurous, the so-called mature man’s job, you know...; and also skilled human resource, there were no other women working on that and lack of confidence, lack of knowledge, skill, training and these all [for women] ... many, many challenges were there. But, once you [were] determined and once you do it, it’s happen [sic]”.

Conversely, agency symbolises the burdens of needs and considerations and meanings of cultural constructions. Agency (which can also be perceived as emancipation) is both a cause and a consequence of power, where it supports the doer’s position; and, it is both a cause and a consequence of ‘culture’ (Chafetz, 2001). The cultural construction of power is both continually and concurrently, the cultural construction of structures of agency and value in managing dominant others (Butler, 1999; Hays, 1994). Many women have experienced male domination and patriarchal embeddedness since their entry into the tourism industry in Nepal. As noted by another participant:

“At the beginning, it was very, very difficult for us. They [men] were saying like ‘why you are snatching our bread?’ They were saying, ‘Oh my god women guide you cannot do this all’, you know, like that; also, and many times, young women when we train to the trekking area, you know that time when they come back, they almost cried and they were so confused because they were told like ‘this not good job for them’ you know... ‘They should do something else’, like that...

Structural disparity can also be ameliorated through basic modifications in economic and social interactions that can bring about a loss of culturally endorsed inequity. For instance, the exodus of Nepali labourers to the Middle East has empowered large numbers of citizens to bypass feudal suppression and unjust social relations in their society by functioning within a totally different financial system (Dani & de Haan, 2008). Structural disparity can also be altered by struggle and aggression, when it generates comprehensive social dislocation, which on occasion destabilises established stability and gender distinctions. Marginalised groups have need of voice, influence, and the right to use available assets (Dani & de Haan, 2008).

“So, it was very, very difficult at the beginning. My goodness! ...and we had no idea at all, like people they suffer us [people made us suffer]. Even from the government, even from the local people, everybody you know! And even they took us in a court and police custody. They did not put us in the custody within, but outside - we had to go many times to explain what we are doing, why we are doing. It was very, very challenging, you know”!

The experiences of structural inequities are in no way straightforward ones. They underline the need for public policy to make a distinction between deprivation and inequity or social exclusion and to integrate an appreciation of power and prejudice. They also identify the need to focus on poverty in economic, social, and cultural domains all at the same time and over an extended period. Experience in this field is consequently somewhat inadequate and will likely be a key part of policy discourse into the future (Dani & de Haan, 2008).
Social strategies

Social customs and traditions at the domestic, private and social levels are key features in inequity against, and the isolation of, females and these traditions cannot be disregarded simply by installing legislation against prejudice alone (Pearse & Connell, 2016). As Butler (1999, p. 6) suggested, where gender transects with race, class, ethnicity, sexuality (or sexual orientation), and/or regionally based traditions, it becomes ‘impossible to separate out “gender”’ [emphasis in original] from the political and cultural intersections in which it is invariably produced and maintained’. Patriarchy provides the central tenant that has deprived and repressed females within all social groupings in Nepal (and elsewhere); even though its influence is varied among caste, ethnic and religious alliances (Nazneen, 2018). Lawoti (2010, p. 21) defines patriarchy as ‘a set of social relations with a material base that enables men to dominate women’. Patriarchy may be further sustained by attributes of belief systems, families and familial role requirements, constitutional structures, institutionally (re)produced narratives, legally framed male power over chattels (property, home, women, children, etc.), wage disparities, and female’s manual labour. Patriarchy situates females in a subjugated position in family units, within communities and in society, and hinders them from contributing to political affairs, financial activities and society at large (Lawoti, 2010).

Beginning a female-owned tourism enterprise presented its specific challenges for the following participant. Understanding the anomalies in the community and social configuration of norms and mores for local females in remote locations in Nepal presented initial difficulties and obstacles.

“Just at the beginning, we liked the idea…, but we did not read the social structure. Because we were migrated from Darjeeling to here and so we can communicate in Nepali… we did not realise the cultural difference in Darjeeling and here. So, we thought, maybe this is good idea to start women trekking guide services. But there was you know… in Nepal and in Pokhara, still women were not that much you know… coming out to do something. So, that was the contribution…was the main thing, and the other thing that tourism was not that much explored for women, you know”.

And, according to another female enterprise founder

“We came to this society; we started working in a tourism and guest house running [sic]. … But immediately, realised the women trekking guide is the need. So, we caught [sic] that and we worked on that you know… Like that way we did and one after another we are just trying to addressing [sic] the challenges you know, addressing the issues is coming up. So that’s how we are developing. It is nothing like we are planning or learning”.

As Lawoti (2010) suggests, findings from affluent but conventional societies have revealed that social norms limit even educated females. For instance, females in Middle Eastern societies like Saudi Arabia are well educated but are not permitted to work in various occupations (Morrison & Jutting, 2005). Nepal does not have comparable arrangements of constraints, but it is incorrect to accept that educated females, as well as females from the Dalitii (“untouchable” class) and other ethnic groups, do not face difficulties in politics and employment markets. Indeed, another female participant told us that, “Here is a kind of you know social pressure, mental pressure you know like they have many different kind of [ways to] treat you and [let you] down…”. When asked about how she was treated by male staff in the trekking industry, another participant spoke in more stark terms:

“Of course, at first they treated very badly when there were few females than males. Sometimes, they treat very good. But many times, they are jealous, they say you should be working in different
sector like nursing, administration or so. I am also feeling more confident than before. Now, they are good.”

Lawoti (2010) has noted that patriarchy functions in two ways to replicate and support exclusion of females. Firstly, patriarchal models, for instance those that deem females to be inferior, are at odds with ineffectual governance structures and generate opposing consequences of female marginalisation. Secondly, patriarchal customs reinforce oppressive traditions, such as inequitable inheritance laws and labour rights. They support exclusionary official traditions to embed marginalisation of women in society (Lawoti, 2010). However, the women in this study, have subverted these customs and found ways to intervene and give voice to their positioning and lived experiences. As another participant said “sometimes, male guides suggest like ‘Why you are here?’ I say, I am enjoying here, and you can’t talk about my freedom”.

Subversive strategies

Historically, Nepal has witnessed significant turmoil. As Tamang (2009), Yadav (2016) and a number of other researchers (see for example Bennett, 2005; Des Chene, 1997; Grossman-Thompson, 2013; Humagai, 2012; Pant & Standing, 2011; Pherali, 2011) have shown, Nepal has suffered a 10 year long civil war, the abolishment of the monarchy, political factioning, increasing demands for inclusion from various marginalised ethnic and caste groups, along with a generalised lack of security (food, financial and physical) in many parts of the country. Within this context of political and social conflict, along with the characterisation of Nepal as a Hindu state from 1962 onwards which, according to Tamang (2009, p. 64), ‘ranked the entire population in a caste hierarchy that regimented social life accordingly’, have all contributed to the historical and continuing embeddedness of patriarchal legitimacy. One participant relates how she experienced marriage and learnt the skills she needed to run a small trekking hotel:

“Actually, we got started in 1971. It was an arranged marriage and then I was.... Here with my... [husband]. He was running a small restaurant. I was the only one daughter in the house. I was well trained in the cleaning and everything, washing, cooking and all”.

For the women in our study, combatting historical legacies requires forward-looking, subversive and emancipatory strategies that work to modify perceptions and expectations and also contribute directly to emancipation for women. Within the research presented here, the term ‘subversive strategies’ refers to the notion that those women who experience or who are oppressed via embedded hierarchies, rebel either through the polarities of meek and/or assertive approaches, and through using either approach aim to destabilise, disrupt, subdue or weaken a prevailing system, particularly an officially established regime or collection of values. This notion is also enhanced and extended by the argument of Scheyvens (1998, p. 236) who suggested that:

In this context it is important to remember that not all men are advantaged by existing social structures, nor are all women disadvantaged by these structures. Thus, as Kabeer (1992, p. 19) explains, men’s interests will not necessarily be diametrically opposed to those of women: ‘gender relations are relations of power as well as difference, of conflict as well as cooperation’.

When asked why she had become an entrepreneur, one participant who started a hostel business explained:

“Actually, I am also from outside of Kathmandu valley. I was staying with my relatives and some of my friends at that time also stayed at the hostel. One of my friends is also from Dharan and I am actually from Dharan. We two then made a planning and .... “Lets’ start one hostel”. Then I visited some [hostels] .... Most of the hostels around 6 or 7 I visited. Then I started from smaller one, there were 6 or 7 beds only at that time. Then after 6 months I took two floors/ flat. Then [I had] 14/15
students and then did 4-5 years. After 4-5 years I took the whole building. I am here since 14 years. We are independent and we don’t want anyone’s pressure... I also saw some of my friends staying in hostel and that concept raised in our mind and thought why not start a [hostel]. Then people like us outside of Kathmandu valley don’t have to search for places where to stay. For their convenience.... only for girls...”

For this participant, the choice or necessity to become an entrepreneur was the simple answer to their feelings of isolation from their home villages. Their subversive strategy however is to provide options and opportunities for other girls and women from outside of the city area to engage with education for future emancipation. Moreover, and according to Cleves-Mosse (1993, p. 170)

...given the opportunity and support, and ways of working which respect culture and women’s pace, women readily question the reasons that their lives are as they are and, far from being content, seek out ways of challenging and changing this situation (as cited in Scheyvens, 1998, p. 236).

When asked for example, how long her students stayed, the participant noted:

“Some students stay for 4-5 years also. Most of the students stay here for year or two years. Some come for just one months. But most stay here for more than a month. They don’t have to worry about how to cook and where to find things to cook. We all manage for them. At lunch and dinner time, they come and eat. We provide all things like electricity, water and internet service. They finish bachelor after completing their Plus 2 [years 11 and 12 in secondary school]. They did bachelor and went abroad. So, it obviously takes 4-5 years. So, this is their home for 4-5 years. ...Yes”

To enable the autonomy of women, legislators must be willing to proceed beyond supporting women with day-to-day subsistence, and aspire to afford them abilities, expertise and conviction to establish the development direction they aspire to, and to handle the societal structures that dominate them (Scheyvens, 1998, p. 236).

In line with the research of Scheyvens (1998), it is noteworthy that the women did not endeavour to be truculent, but still efficiently and constructively altered facets of their lives and increased their own capacity (Scheyvens, 1998, p. 238). In this way, women are accepting the risks and developing entrepreneurial opportunities for the goal of enabling emancipation for more women – the opportunity to make their own choices and to have a voice in their own lived experiences.

Political Strategies

On attempting to disrupt poverty and social repression, the women in our study were also able to subvert patriarchy in Nepal through seemingly covert or perhaps even unconscious, subtle, politically motivated strategies. Indeed, one of the participants spoke of how it was extremely difficult to begin a female only enterprise within the tourism sector. For her and for many other women in our study, it has been a test of her abilities to perform well under pressure; presenting often frightening and isolating situations for women who dare to step outside of the historical, social, structural (patriarchal), cultural, economic and political boundaries to begin a fledgling tourism business venture. One of our participants started a trekking and guiding training enterprise and related her experiences of starting the venture:

“Yeah! people... started coming and they really loved our initiation. There were some women trekking with men. You know, there was no choice for women. At that time, they had some experiences. Many of them were good but some had very bad experiences from male guide, you know... they were really frightened. I said, ’OK, is there any way that we can do something in this
situation?’, and I thought, ‘OK, once I will go to the mountain and I will see. Because I have done montaineering training before that in 1990’.

As a trailblazer in women’s tourism enterprises within Nepal, the participant additionally recounted how she had to come to terms with the idea that many Nepali women in remote areas of Nepal experience impoverished existences.

“...I was doing some research work and I had been on very remote areas of western Nepal. I have seen very, very, you know, poorest women, needy women over there. At that time, I was wondering why people live here because nothing is here. No... nothing is there, and I kept asking people why these people stay here because nothing there? I was very young, and I could not understand about the sentiment of the places you know.”

The participant related that even though she did not understand why women would continue to live in remote and isolated situations, she suggests her youth and lack of experience at that time prevented her from perceiving the historical, social/structural (patriarchal), cultural and economic reasons the women remained in in villages where there was no hope for improvement in their lives. However, even though this participant belongs to a high-caste, had opportunities for higher education (having studied at university) and had opportunities to experience different parts of Nepal, her story highlights the (re)produced ideologies that represent substantial obstacles for women to imagine an entrepreneurial opportunity which cuts across all of these boundaries. This is more starkly illustrated in her discussion of the living conditions for Nepali women in remote locations.

When applying a critical lens to the research, it is obvious that the women the participant witnessed, living in poverty and abjection, have now been able to improve their lives and overcome their patriarchal oppression through extending their daily activities and mundane household and farming tasks to incorporate them into cottage industries and appropriate them for the tourism industry in Nepal. Nepali women are skilled at all home duty and small holding tasks. For them, this makes a perfect segue into the wider earning sphere offered by tourism activities (see Snellinger, 2010).

**Cultural strategies**

Taking a pragmatic stance, concepts and implications of cultural traditions offered by Rao and Walton (2004) are helpful in grasping the contexts and impacts of culture on potential development (see also Narayan, 2013). These authors view culture as essentially ‘about relationality—about the dynamics of relationships between individuals within groups, between groups, and between ideas and perspectives’ (Rao & Walton, 2004, p. 4). They also appreciate culture as constantly challenged and made susceptible to change. They argue that culture ‘is not a set of primordial phenomena permanently embedded within national or religious groups, but rather a set of contested attributes, constantly in flux, both shaping and being shaped by social and economic aspects of human interaction’ (Rao and Walton 2004, p. 4; Bennett, 1983, pp. 205-206). In the context of females working in the tourism industry in Nepal, and the patriarchal structures entrenched in the sector, participants spoke about how the restrictive cultural norms have shaped them and their cultural uniqueness. One of the participants recounted:

“We learned so much on this you know women empowerment and social entrepreneurs, like the cultural difference in many different [ways]... You know how we are taking the culture, the tradition, you know very personally. But if we go back and think that is all because of our climatic condition and geographical situations and the availability of the things. They have made our culture. They practiced things and we are carrying on as a culture. And now we are
...fighting for that, for our identity. ...That’s also something, through tourism we can learn. We learn from this because we are meeting many different people. Its amazing lesson that we are learning from tourism”.

Another female, working in the hospitality industry in Kathmandu further explains:

“In [my culture], we women and man we work together. So, we are both equal. In Nepali, men work first, and men are superior also. They have respect in the family. Their sons will protect the family like this... But now, women are coming forward. They are fighting for their rights. In [my culture] as a daughter or son who can help, they can help both sides. Daughter’s parents or husband or spouse’s parents”.

As previously noted, in Nepal, females are less emancipated and fall far behind their male equivalents in education, civil, financial, health, employment and many other societal areas (UNDP, 2019). Strategically, Nepali women are recognising these issues and deploying political strategies to subvert and disrupt these socio-cultural ideologies. Another participant began a weaving and clothing manufacturing enterprise specifically to raise women’s status focusing on caste and status of women to disrupt the status quo. She stated:

“Yeah nine years ago I started. These people are really have problems... we like to [bring them] up [Make them come out of poverty]. First, we start with four ladies. Now we have around 200 people I give for training already. [I: And now you have...?] 22 people working. Yeah... first we have to make the product... for the ladies ... They don’t have anything. No school, study, no education. Just we give for the education. First, we search for the family who is this kind of people and then who is this caste. My country is like so much for the caste system. After that we give for the training for them. We give for the money also. They need money to live. We sell for the products [to bring in the money] ... We go like that.”

Using cultural entrepreneurship principals coupled with social and empowerment entrepreneurial goals, an encompassing desire to change cultural and social gender identities, and a great deal of hard work and tenacity, Nepali women are (re)writing their own cultural directions.

**Economic strategies**

Mountain tourism, along with other tourism activities, creates localised wages and occupations for poor communities (Lama, 1999; Lama & Sattar, 2004). Even at high altitudes, Nepali females have capacity to cater for trekkers and hire out beds for a small fee per night providing direct economic exchange. Both direct and indirect revenues are produced by the trekking industry including income from accommodation supply, and trekking house ventures; retailing of crafts; and hiring of guides, buildings, employees, and smallholders. Lama (1999) also notes a range of non-monetary benefits arising from tourism comprised of: 1) contacts with unfamiliar concepts like expertise, diverse verbal communication and viewpoints; 2) improved knowledge and enthusiasm for appropriate hygiene and refuse management; 3) prospects for foreign-subsidised tourism and schooling; 4) self-esteem in customs and self-assurance that comes from interrelating with guests; and in some instances, 5) an enriched socio-economic significance of women.

However, in terms of economic strategies to disrupt patriarchy, many of the women relate stories of their foray into the world of Non-Government Organisation (NGO) development to address social or political issues. One of the participants recalls how she and her sisters began their enterprise and concentrated on training and uplifting women in Nepal. They have since gone on to expand their business and have also created an NGO to continue to empower women.
In 1998, we registered the company, a trekking company... You know we were going very well, and we were providing small trainings to the girls, so we liked to keep and continue that program and [then] we registered NGO, [names NGO]. That was solely started by... [us], we were looking for women guide, so we were, you know supporting each other... [the] trekking company is a business and make a profit and contribute to train the women. And also, they provide job on the training [sic - on-the job training] and the job. [Names NGO] is NGO that provide the training for women and also the professional other additional trainings... We are doing other programs too. So, this is how we are working together”.

And another participant stated:

“This hostel we are registered in government [a registered business]. We have to pay taxes. There is hostel association also. I am the founder and vice president of the association [provides name of association].”

The women in our study, are not only founding enterprises to disrupt poverty and patriarchy but are subverting government structures to increase their political and legal influence from within the dominant ideologies. Other participants demonstrate economic strategies of starting their own (community-based and run) banking opportunities, and yet others are initially accessing microloans but then opting to become the patron or micro-financier for others. When asked what the most difficult part was of starting out as an emancipation entrepreneur, another participant stated:

“Hard things we have... main things to money. [The hardest thing was mainly accessing money] ... my government does not help. That is one question [sic - problem]. And after we loan for the microloan. [we applied/received a microloan]. First, we start with the microloan. Still we have. [I: So, you paid out the initial microloan and you got another one?] Yes. We have ladies now is 28 people, we keep for the microloan also. We buy for the looms, we buy for the [sewing] machine, we buy for raw material.”

Ultimately, these women are disrupting gender stereotypes through taking charge of economic means and repositioning them to work better for others. This process on a smaller scale can also be said for the women who have received their training in trekking guiding, weaving, basic hotel management etc. For over twenty years, female organisations have been training women to become independent through tourism and trekking guiding. Guides speak directly about their spending capacity as a type of self-determination; that is, the self-determination to be a contemporary participant in the new economy. Opponents of neoliberal economic strategy find ‘self-determination via expenditure’ a concerning result to the historical marginalisation of females from inclusion in community life (Grossman-Thompson, 2013). Yet, such philosophical allegiances should not stop recognition of the meaning of income-making and purchasing power for participants. Whereas autonomy and self-determination through improved purchasing power does not inevitably convert into political power, guides (and indeed, other women working in the tourism industry and local economy) nonetheless identify their wages as a fundamental component of acquiring increased independence, which is the basis of their individuality as contemporary women (Grossman-Thompson, 2013).

The following participant explains how she and her immediate family began in the tourism sector in Nepal:

“My brother used to teach me... in office. His wife used to work as cook. At that time, tourists used to climb the mountain. When they came back, they used to give us sleeping bags, jackets everything. “OK, now we are going back you can take it”. We used to wash them and used to sell
them. Then I invited my sister-in-law. “Why don’t you come here and start the trekking shop”? Whatever they gave we used to wash in the river here. That time river was very clean... So, we worked together supported by my family. Even my sister-in-law. By evening to support us she had to come back, take over the cashier, check the bills, watch the bills, get the money like this”.

Female’s functions in tourism in Nepal are mainly an expansion of the domestic-manager and tourist receptionist duties. Females run trekking lodges and tea houses beside the main trekking routes, at times with their spouses or fathers, but frequently single-handedly. As cooks and principal waitstaff, they have the most interaction with trekkers and their guides and porters. They are never sedentary. Whenever they have spare time, they knit woolen hats, gloves, and slippers, weave sacks, or make souvenirs to sell to trekkers. Many females operate as porters or labourers for trekking groups, and a few have become trekking guides and even summiteers (Grossman-Thompson, 2013; Lama, 1999; Lama & Sattar, 2004). Whether employed in the sector or acting as agents of change and development through entrepreneurial activities, Nepali women are creating, (re)positioning and ultimately encroaching on patriarchal territories.

**Implications and Conclusions**

By engaging the lens of a critical theoretical framework, we can uncover insights into the institutionalised gender and power structures. A critical perspective engages with the socially constructed layers of social, historical, political, cultural, economic, ethnic and gender values that have been crystallised and embedded over time (Daniels, 2019; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Nepali women are subject to and regulated by patriarchal structures embedded both within Nepal’s social and cultural contexts but also within the contexts and capacities of entrepreneurship. However, as Butler (1999, p. 4) noted, ‘by virtue of being subjected to them, formed, defined, and reproduced in accordance with the requirements of those structures... the feminist subject [sic] turns out to be discursively constituted by the very political system that is supposed to facilitate its emancipation’. Therefore, we need to not simply describe the lived experiences of women in Nepal, but to disclose and analyse those experiences to produce alternative ways of thinking. When data analysis is enriched by adopting a critical lens, the analysis can be unpacked through multiple layers and ensure that the findings are not therefore divorced from any possibility of corrective political actions to overcome oppressions and confinement. There are many battles to be fought by women of Nepal. These include working out how to combat patriarchy in tourism through developing their own subversive and political strategies. The strategies Nepali entrepreneurial women use to contest patriarchy in tourism, and more generally in Nepal include political strategies, social strategies, subversive strategies, cultural strategies, economic strategies, and structural strategies (agency/structure debate).

Nepali women’s political strategies to overcome social and cultural repression are subtle, understated and subversive. Women entrepreneurs disclose they are unable to tackle the masculine domains head on, so they negotiate around obstacles and subvert the dominant paradigms through much more sensitive practices. In this research we investigated the capacity of Nepali women to invade and disrupt patriarchal held territories in the tourism industry in Nepal. The research shows that the intersections between gender, entrepreneurship and emancipation are challenging and present significant barriers for women, but they are not insurmountable. We used a grounded theory approached informed by a critical theory lens to examine the social, cultural, economic, historical, and structural political strategies that Nepali women have adopted and adapted to access and redress the socially constructed and maintained imbalances.

There has been a lack of sensitivity towards, and action to, redress gender inequity within Nepal’s cultural and social structures. Even while publicly supporting the inclusion women in economic development opportunities, typical support mechanisms have continued to constrain women from fully benefitting from
tourism opportunities. On face value, this denial of gender equality to contribute to economic development creates a situation of economic irrationality on the part of governments and industry, as Nepal’s female population constituted just over 54.5% of the total population in 2018 (World Bank Group, 2019). The globally recognised capacity for women to contribute to economic growth as an asset for growing labour markets, has therefore been ignored in Nepal to the detriment of the country and its peoples. The success of tourism development and growth in Nepal remains a challenging space where governments, industry and individuals must make significant efforts to support the crucial roles played by women entrepreneurs in tourism. Even allowing for increasing government interest in women’s emancipation through entrepreneurship, there is yet a long way to go for Nepali women to achieve an equity akin to equality.

The study contributes to extant literature and existing knowledge through expanding the literature on women, development, patriarchy, gender inequity and inequality; and, applying women’s voices and agency to lessen the domination of national structures and barriers within Nepal. The findings of the study serve to inform managerial actions and policy through highlighting the plight of women within Nepali society. While the Nepali Constitution provides for protection of women, including equal pay for equal work, over the long term, the Government of Nepal has been less than successful in realising these requirements. The position of women in Nepal persists as very deficient in terms of health, education, income, resolution-making, and access to policy programs (Secretariat & Durbar, 2015). Our research aims to inform wider Nepali society and give voice (agency) to the women for the future.

Limitations
There are some limitations to the study. One of these is that the findings are not generalisable to the female population throughout the Nepali nation. Interviewing the participants in English is also a minor limitation as, even though schooling in Nepal is conducted in English, and many people speak English, it is not the mother tongue and there are anomalies in the way things are expressed in English across the country. However, this has not affected the rigor or thoroughness of the data collection, transcription, and coding. Rather, it has led to a more distinctive, original and unique set of findings and conclusions regarding the pathways for women in Nepal wishing to engage within an occupation that will provide for themselves and their families. The findings and conclusions presented here will contribute to policy and legislation of government strategies to improve and expand the predicament of women seeking equality in their society.

Future Research
The future of research within this study focus will need to extend and include women from all zones and districts throughout Nepal. Investigating how women extricate themselves and subvert embedded and patriarchal conditions while still maintaining, extended family, land holdings and income-based activities is a long-term project for Nepal, researchers, the government and many other nations within South Asia. Indeed, a longitudinal study would provide insights and findings to promote equality in policy and life experiences to inform government practices, legislation and understandings of equity and equality throughout the country into the future.

Acknowledgments
The authors wish to acknowledge the editors and reviewers of this article for their insightful help and patience. We also wish to acknowledge the women who participated in the study, as without them there would be no research for us to disseminate and subsequently, no contribution to knowledge.

Declaration of interest statement
No potential competing interest was reported by the authors.

References


Charmaz, K., & Belgrave, L. (2012). Qualitative interviewing and grounded theory analysis. In The SAGE handbook of interview research: The complexity of the craft (pp. 347-365.).


---

1. Where quotations are drawn from participants’ own narratives, these quotations have been italicised and indicated with double quotations to clearly denote them as such.
2. In the context of Nepal, the National Dalits Commission defines ‘Dalits’ as “those communities who, by virtue of atrocities of caste-based discrimination and untouchability, are most backward in social, economic, educational, political and religious fields, and deprived of human dignity and social justice” (Dalit Welfare Organisation, 2018).