

One Community, Many Identities: Language, Ethnicity, and Nationality among Bhutanese Refugees in South Philadelphia¹

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Abstract

In this paper, I discuss the formation of linguistic identities among Bhutanese Refugees in South Philadelphia and their impact on and relationship to ethnic and national identities. The Bhutanese Refugees lived in Bhutan until the 1990's when increasingly hostile pressure from the government forced them out. They are a multi-lingual, multi-ethnic, multi-national group of people, whose ancestors came from Nepal to Bhutan in the 19th and 20th Centuries. I use David Gellner's article *Nationalism and Ethnicity in a Hindu Kingdom* as a framework for understanding and explaining both identity and views towards identity among this group of people. I show that in general, on both the larger and individual level, they defy categorization within a single linguistic, ethnic and national identity.

What existed before were usually multiple, overlapping, flexible identities; only in exceptional cases did these approximate to the one-and-only-one tribe per person model.

-David N Gellner summarizing Aiden Southall in
Ethnicity and Nationalism in the World's Only Hindu State



Introduction

Research on the lives of the Bhutanese Refugees has only begun in the past 20 years, since they resettled in Nepal. While they lived in Bhutan, the Government limited contact between Bhutan and the rest of the world, making access to the country very hard and access to the people even harder. Their new arrival in the United States has made it possible for me to study their lives and identities, which are the focus of this paper. I look at ethnic and national identities among Bhutanese Refugees through the lens of linguistic identity, and use David Gellner's theories of national and ethnic identity to explain my findings. I show that in general, the Bhutanese Refugees in South Philadelphia have very fluid ethnic and national identities and view this as a normal way

of life.

To show this, I look at ethnic and national identity through the lens of language. In general, I found that the Bhutanese Refugees I interviewed resist identifying one language with one ethnicity and one language with one nationality. Their identities are often fluid, as one man said to me, “[originally] I called myself Bhutani because my birthplace is in Bhutan...I studied there. I learned about happiness and misery in Bhutan. [but] after going to Nepal, I called myself Bhutanese-Nepali (5).”²One area in which this consistently did not hold true is participants’ identification of the Nepali dialect spoken in Nepal with Nepali national identity, a phenomenon that I explain in section 4.3. To explain the formation of these linguistic, ethnic, and national identities, I first introduce my research, theories of ethnic and national identity, Nepal and Bhutan, the specific terms I use that relate to those two countries, the Bhutanese Refugees, and caste and ethnicity. Then I show how the Bhutanese Refugees have, for the most part, resisted making one-to-one correlations between language & ethnicity and language & nationality, thereby maintaining fluid identities. After suggesting some explanations for these findings, I explain the importance of studying issues of identity among Bhutanese Refugees.

For this research project, I conducted 6 formal interviews and many informal interviews during or after ESL class, on the street in South Philadelphia, even while riding the bus. Each participant I interviewed for this research project speaks Nepali as her home/main language. Participants speak varying degrees of Djongka, a Tibeto-Burman language and the official language of Bhutan; Hindi an Indo-European, widely-

²I use numbers 1-6 to identify the participants from my formal interviews.

used language in India; and English. Some of them also speak a Tibeto-Burman minority language of Nepal like Tamang, Gurung, Rai, Limbu, or Magar and/or identify as a member of one of these ethnic groups. All members of the community I researched have lived in and have ties to multiple countries, including Bhutan, Nepal, India, and the United States.

1.0 Introductions

In the next sections, I fill in background information that prepares the reader to understand the conclusions of this research. First I give general information about my research and the major terms used in this paper. Then I explain David Gellner's work and how it informs my findings. Next I introduce Bhutan, Nepal, and the terms I used that relate to both these places. Towards the end, I go into detail about the situation of the Bhutanese Refugees and then briefly report on caste and ethnicity in Nepal.

1.1 Introduction to My Research

Doing research within the Bhutanese Refugee community in South Philadelphia has been a great learning experience that has allowed me to extend upon my study abroad in Nepal. Despite how much I enjoyed it, the research presented several challenges. Many of the people I talked to were excited to discuss their lives in Bhutan, Nepal and the US, especially in casual conversation, but some people felt wary about being interviewed in a formal setting I think because they had not had experience with this type of research before. Language differences have also played some part in these difficulties. I started learning Nepali when I went abroad to Nepal for a semester

in 2009, and continue to practice it with my Nepali friends and the Bhutani-Nepalis I teach. To compensate for potential misunderstandings during research, I had a native Nepali speaker who is also fluent in English come to interviews with me and then listen to specific transcribed passages that I had trouble translating. Another aspect to this language barrier is dialect. I lived mainly in Kathmandu, the capital of Nepal, while I studied abroad, so I learned the particular variety of Nepali spoken there. As I describe in 4.3, the Bhutani-Nepalis spoke a very different type of Nepali in Bhutan and then learned to speak in a new way when they moved to Nepal. The speech they learned in Nepal still differs from the dialect I learned. Pronunciation and lexical differences both exist in part because their dialect has had more contact with Hindi than the one that I learned. My bilingual resource and a dictionary both helped me to overcome these language obstacles. Despite the difficulties of interviewing, I really enjoyed conducting the research for this project and getting to hear the participants' stories.

I came to know this community through the English tutoring and teaching I have done in South Philadelphia over the past 10 months. While studying abroad in Nepal, I became interested in Linguistics, particularly Socio-Linguistics. After coming back to the US, I wanted to continue interacting with Nepali-speakers, so I started working in South Philadelphia first as tutor to Nepali-speaking Bhutanese Refugee high school students and then as a teacher to adults in an ESL class. As I got to know my students better and learned about their lives, I became interested in studying their experiences as multi-lingual, multi-ethnic, multi-national people. This interest grew into my thesis topic.

1.2 Theories of National and Ethnic Identity in Gellner's Work

In his article introducing the book *Nationalism and Ethnicity in a Hindu Kingdom: The Politics of Culture in Contemporary Nepal*, David Gellner describes past and present theories of national and ethnic identity formation, including Primordialism, Instrumentalism and Modernism. His presentation of these theories and addition to the latter two help to account for the patterns of identity formation that I found among the Bhutani-Nepalis and for their own views towards identity.

In the first of these theories “ethnic and national units” have ancient roots and may have always existed, continuously affecting social identity (Gellner, 1997, p. 7). Instrumentalism and Modernism both oppose Primordialism. On the one hand, Instrumentalism opposes essentialist, always existent explanations of identity. It argues that people choose to identify with certain ethnic groups to gain political or economic advantage. The third theory, Modernism, also counters Primordialism by asserting that before the 18th century, national categories did not exist as a great influencing factor in determining a person's “political rights and duties” (pp. 13). Nationalism is a modern occurrence. Benedict Anderson in his book *Imagined Communities* supports the Modernist theory. He suggests that national identities are not somehow inherent to each individual but imagined. He writes that the nation is “an imagined political community - and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign” (1984, pp. 6).

Gellner's descriptions of theories of national and ethnic identity formation help to explain what I found among Bhutani-Nepalis. Certainly, Primordialism does not explain their experience. Gellner has his own problems with this theory, asserting that, “[ethnicity] has to be created. It is not an essential and universal aspect of the

human condition” (pp. 12). When considering both ethnicity and nationalism, I found that participants had in general fluid identities that sometimes changed depending on the context, a fact that is not explained by Primordialism. One woman called herself Nepali when talking about her friends in order to differentiate their identities. She says, “They’re called Dukpa. We’re Nepali” (1). Later, when asked more directly about her national identity, she was adamant about her Bhutani identity, “We say Bhutani...What was ours in Nepal? We are actually Bhutani” (1). Both Instrumentalism and Modernism, in their assertion that identity is not fixed or timeless, support what I found among the Bhutani-Nepalis. Although they do not directly address the potential for having fluid, unfixed identities in today’s world, by opposing primordialism, they allow for this possibility. Gellner fleshes out these two theories, making explicit what they did not. He writes, “In premodern situations boundaries between ethnic categories could be fluid and context-dependent...Some groups manage to continue such strategies well into the modern period” (pp. 15). Although he only addresses ethnicity in this quote, this statement applies to both ethnicity and nationalism. Gellner himself connects the two in his paper and states that, “any theoretical approach which pretends that ethnicity and nationalism are unrelated is unlikely to be fruitful” (pp. 10). Instrumentalism and Modernism’s rejection of Primordialism is incredibly important for explaining identity among Bhutani-Nepalis because it allows for the possibility that ethnic and national identity do not need to be fixed but can be fluid. Gellner’s addition to these theories that makes this possibility explicit further explains their identity formation.

1.3 Bhutan and Nepal

Bhutan had a population of almost 670,000 in 2005 (US Department of State). It sits near the North East part of India, right below Tibet, separated from Nepal by the Indian state of Sikkim. Three majority ethnic groups exist in Bhutan: the Drukpas, who speak Dzongka and have a culture very similar to that of the dominant cultural traditions in Tibet. They live in the Northern and Central regions of Bhutan. The second group, the Sarchops, speak Tsangla, a language also within the Tibeto-Burman language family, and have settled in the Eastern part of Bhutan. The third group is comprised of people of Nepali origin, whose families immigrated to Bhutan in the 19th and 20th Centuries for economic reasons, and live in the Southern region of Bhutan (Khanal, 1998, pp. 147, 150). Participants consulted for this research belong to this third group. Refer to Appendix 2 to see a language map of Bhutan.

Nepal is a country of nearly 29,000,000 people (US Department of State). It is located North of the Indian states of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar and south of Tibet. Until 2005, Nepal was officially a Hindu Kingdom, but many people there practice a mix of Hinduism and Buddhism. There are also populations in Nepal who practice Christianity, Islam, Shamanism and Animism.

1.4 Introducing the Terms

People in the Himalayan regions of Nepal and Bhutan navigate multiple identities every day because both countries are so linguistically and ethnically diverse, something that I discuss in 1.6. Now I will define some of the terms used by the people of Nepali descent, academics, researchers, and governments to describe some of the languages and ethnicities in Nepal and among Nepali diaspora communities.

Indo-European is the name for a family of languages that includes **Nepali** and many languages spoken in Europe, the Middle East and South Asia. **Djongka**, the official language of Bhutan, falls within the **Tibeto-Burman** language family. This term is used to both classify a family of languages and the groups of people who speak these languages. The language family includes many languages spoken throughout the Himalayas in Nepal, India, Tibet, and Burma. Note that this expression has been cited as problematic by Mark Turin. He writes,

First of all, no group or person can be said to be, or speak, 'Tibeto-Burman,' since Tibeto-Burman is simply the language family...Tibeto-Burman is therefore neither an 'ethnic' category nor is it a classification which can be used to impute socio-cultural behavior. (Turin pp. 2)

Turin makes a valid criticism, pointing out that this is a rigid category and an identity imposed upon certain groups that might not want it. However, I do not think that the participants I interviewed mind having their languages classified under one title. In fact, they themselves pointed out to me the similarities they noticed between the Tibeto-Burman languages and cultures they have familiarity with, including the new ones they are being exposed to in South Philadelphia. As one participant said of his language, Rai, and Djongka, "Many words are the same. It's also like Burmese language" (2).

The names **Tamang, Rai, Subba/Limbu, Gurung, Magar** are used by individuals, governments, and academics to describe people within a certain group living in Nepal and its surrounding countries who often speak related Tibeto-Burman languages. Some of my participants identify as members of these groups and speakers of these languages, so I use these terms in certain instances when referencing them.

Bahun and **Chhetri** are the names of two castes in Nepal, with which some participants identified. Refer to 1.6 to read more about caste and ethnicity in Nepal.

I have struggled to find an appropriate name for the group with which my participants identify. They are internationally known as Bhutanese Refugees. However, this phrase does not refer to many of their ancestors' country of origin, Nepal. It also places the identity of refugee upon them, something that not all members of the community necessarily want. Some authors call them Ethnic Nepalis, but this term treats them as a homogeneous unit, failing to address the diversity within the group. The difficulty in identifying this group touches upon the issues of linguistic, ethnic, and national identity that I am exploring. For this paper, when talking about them within the context of their experiences as refugees, I use the term Bhutanese Refugee. When I am discussing ethnicity, I use the ethnic names with which participants self-identify. In other instances, when referring to them as a whole, I call them **Bhutani-Nepalis**³, a name that one participant called himself and a title that makes reference to their multi-national roots.

1.5 Bhutanese Refugees in Bhutan, Nepal, and the US

Here, I provide a short description of important events that led to the movement of the Bhutani-Nepalis out of Bhutan. The descriptions of the government's policies show how their support of direct, reductive correlations between language & ethnicity/ cultural customs and language & nationality altered the lives of the Bhutani-Nepalis. At the end, I report on their lives in Nepal and the US, touching on some of the difficulties

³"Bhutani," not Bhutanese, is the adjective that participants used. "Bhutanese" is an Anglicization.

they have faced in both countries.

Since 1907, Bhutan has been under the rule of a king (Khanal, 1998). Especially since the 1950's, this monarchical government has been very resistant to outside pressures and has developed measures to reduce the possibility of this influence. It requires students, upon return from study abroad, to take intensive classes in Bhutanese history and culture before they can become public servants (Khanal 1998). The government also restricts tourist visas to 3000 per year and does not allow tourists access to remote areas or monasteries, in the fear that their influence will change cultural traditions.

These policies did not have much of an effect on the relations between the Drukpas and Bhutani-Nepalis until the passing of certain legislation in 1958. Bhutan's government increasingly latched onto the notion of one language, one nationality, and its policies reflect that. In an attempt to integrate Nepali-speakers into Bhutan and create a more homogeneous society, the government passed the Citizen Act, which allowed people of Nepali descent to become Bhutani citizens while requiring them to pledge allegiance to Bhutan (Khanal 1998). A series of measures throughout the 1960's, 70's, and 80's made the lives of the Bhutani-Nepalis increasingly harder. In 1961, the government declared *Djongka* the official language of Bhutan (Chalmers, 2007). In the 1970's and 80's, hostility from those in power increased towards the Bhutani-Nepalis. The original Citizen Act was changed, making it much harder for people born after 1958 to become citizens, and the requirement of fluency in *Djongka* was added to the act (Khanal, 1998). One participant described the situation to me,

The Bhutia⁴ [Drukpas] would nag us. The Bhutia [Drukpas] would say, don't speak your own language, follow ours. [They would say] it's not your country. Go to your own country. And then we came to Nepal. We had to go because they gave us too much trouble. They would pressure our children to marry a Drukpa (6).

To try to justify its aggressive policies, the government of Bhutan has claimed that Nepali-speakers want to “migrate in millions [to Bhutan], so as to steal out peace, happiness, and prosperity from us and our children” (Hutt, 1997, pp. 107). Michael Hutt also suggests that the political upheaval in Darjeeling between Nepali speakers and the Indian government may have made the government of Bhutan wary of Bhutan's Nepali-speakers (Hutt, 1997). Besides amending the citizens acts, the government also required Bhutani-Nepalis to adhere to the customs, including the traditional dress, of the *Drukpa*. One participant told me, “In Nepal, you wear a *kurta* (woman's shirt and pants), but in Bhutan, you have to wear a *kira* (traditional women's clothing in Bhutan)” (1). Another participant confirmed this, “We had to wear their clothing while going to the market and office. We couldn't wear our own clothing” (6).

A record of the 68th session of the National Assembly debate in 1989 again shows this obsession with making a one-to-one connection between cultural customs & nationality, and language & nationality:

Some of our people tend to identify more closely with the people of other countries...in a small country like ours it would adversely affect the growth

⁴Participants used this word interchangeably with “Drukpa.” My bilingual resource told me that he has always heard it used as a more general term for anyone with Tibeto-Burman roots. He also told me that he has mostly heard it used as a discriminatory term, but I do not think it had these negative connotations for the Bhutani-Nepalis.

of social harmony and unity among the people. The government has, for these reasons, promulgated a policy to promote...National Dress and Language among our people (Hutt, 1997, pp. 136).

The speaker assumes that because certain people practice cultural customs found in another country, they identify with that other nation. He suggests that the multitude of cultural customs found in Bhutan will only negatively affect the country, thereby supporting the mantra that one country should only contain one culture and/or ethnicity. By propagating the policy that promotes one language in Bhutan, he links one language to one nation.

After continued repression from the government and a removal of the Nepali language from schools (Human Rights Watch, 2006, pp. 15), members of the Nepali community protested. The Students' Union of Bhutan, the National Institute of Education, and the Bhutan People's Party (in India) began to demonstrate in June 1990 (Hutt, 1997). After demanding the government adhere to basic Civil Rights, the government of Bhutan classified everyone involved in the protests as anti-nationals. Shortly after, refugees began leaving their country for Nepal and India.

Nepal has hosted approximately 107,000 refugees in seven UN camps (Shrestha, 2008). Despite opening its doors to the Bhutani-Nepalis, it has "ruled out local integration as a durable solution" (Human Rights Watch, 2006, pp. 3). Because the government forbids them from working, they must rely on others for support. Rules barred them from owning land and farming, a fact that may have negatively affected their identify as Nepalis. In the Agricultural society that is Nepal, owning land is not only a source of food but also an important status symbol. Because they were not given the

opportunity to own land, the Bhutanese Refugees may have felt it harder to integrate into the local society. For the next 17-19 years, Refugees lived in Nepal in camps. The US agreed to accept about 60,000 refugees and in 2008 resettled the first families in the US. Other countries, including Australia, New Zealand, and Canada as well as some in Europe have agreed to resettle the rest of the refugees (Shrestha, 2008).

Arrival in the US may have been both a good and a bad change in the lives of the Bhutani-Nepalis. They have more freedom and can travel and work, but the language and cultural barriers are, of course, hard to overcome. One community leader said, "People had a hope for life in America, but when they get here, condition is harder than their life in the camp" (Hitomi 2010). In several informal conversations, people have also told me that as soon as they make enough money, they want to return to Nepal. As *Human Rights Watch* makes evident, before coming to the US, refugees were not allowed to integrate into Nepal. In the US, although they are allowed this right, doing so is extremely difficult.

1.6 A Brief Look at the Intersection between Language, Caste, and Ethnicity in Nepal

Looking at Nepal and its complex history of language, caste, and ethnicity can help explain linguistic, ethnic, and national identity among Bhutani-Nepalis. This tradition of mixing languages, castes and ethnicities may have contributed to the Bhutanese-Nepalis own comfort with having multiple identities. Nepal and much of the Himalayas is a mixing ground for languages from different families. Nepali is the official language, traditionally used in government offices and schools, yet there are many languages spoken in Nepal that are part of the Tibeto-Burman language family as well.

Some have also made claims of the existence of both Dravidian and Austro-Asiatic languages in Nepal (Sonntag, 2007, pp. 208).

There exists no clear distinction between ethnicity and caste in Nepal. With the declaration of Nepal as a Hindu state came an imposed caste system, originating from the same source as the one in India. Bahuns (Brahmans) and Chhetris were at the top of the hierarchy and Dalits at the bottom; members of these castes descended from speakers of Indo-European languages. As the caste system penetrated the area known as Nepal, the Tibeto-Burman language speaking groups became incorporated into the hierarchy.⁵ They were placed in the middle of this class structure and dubbed *matwali*, meaning “alcohol drinkers,” an activity in which Brahmans and Chhettris were not supposed to participate (Sonntag 209). Some of the Tibeto-Burman ethnicities became Hindu, some remained Buddhist or Animist.

A certain amount of intermarriage was culturally sanctioned within this Hindu state, something that further blurred the distinction between ethnicity and caste. In some areas of Nepal, communities have permitted inter-marriage between chhettri and matwali castes. If children are born from this marriage, they take on the caste of their father. Among Tibeto-Burman communities, intermarriage is not a new or necessarily unusual practice⁶. The Nepali word *jaat* shows speakers’ tendency to conflate ethnicity

⁵The non-Hindu foreigner also has a place within the caste system. Because she is an outsider, some higher-caste Nepalis consider her to be akin to the “untouchable” castes (Dalits). However, the caste system in Nepal has lost some of its stringent rules within recent times. When I was abroad, many Bahuns and Chhettris excepted me graciously into their homes, something they might not do with members of the Dalit caste. However, my hosts did have specific rules about what I could and could not do as a foreigner. For example, my host mother forbid me from entering her *puja* (religious worship) room because of my non-Hindu status.

⁶While studying abroad, I lived with a Sherpa family for about a month in a small village in the hills. The community’s two predominant ethnic groups were Sherpa and Tamang, and marriage between members of the two was common and very much accepted.

and caste. Although some Nepalis make a distinction between the Sanskrit loan-word *jaati* (tribe) and the Nepali word *jaat* (caste), colloquially “most...countrymen either have only *jaat* in their vocabulary or regard the two words as interchangeable” (Whelpton, 1997, pp. 52). In general, speakers use this one word to mean both ethnicity and caste.

Understanding the history of language, ethnicity, and caste within the Nepali context can help to explain the situation of the Bhutani-Nepalis because most of the people who identify within this group have ancestors who came from Nepal. In Nepal, both external and internal attempts to categorize linguistic, caste, or ethnic groups will have a very hard time because of the diverse, multi-identifying people who live there. The Bhutani-Nepalis I interviewed, like people in Nepal, navigate this complex mixture of language, ethnicity, and caste. The traditions that blurred the distinctions between ethnicity and caste may have contributed to many of my participants’ comfort with having multiple, fluid identities. Even within the relatively small group of people I talked to for my research, I noticed this diversity of identification. I had conversations with people who identify as one or more of the following: Chhetri, Bahun, Magar, Tamang, Rai, Subba, Limbu, and Gurung.

2.0 Identity through Names

In the introduction, I talk about the difficulty of finding an appropriate name with which to refer to participants. This is in part due to the multiple languages, ethnicities, and nationalities with which they identify. Names can be imposed or self-chosen, used for political reasons or to show allegiance to a particular place or people. I found that Bhutani-Nepali participants used names in a contextual way, drawing on names from

multiple languages, nations, and ethnicities to define themselves. Both the reality that defining this group with a single name was insufficient and the fact that participants tended to refer to themselves with multiple names support my findings that the Bhutani-Nepalis continue to maintain very fluid, contextual identities.

First I look at the case of the Nepali-speakers in Darjeeling to give an example of politically determined names. Darjeeling is an area located within the state of West Bengal in India, once owned by Nepal and has a large population of people whose ancestors came from Nepal. Some Nepali-speakers in this region have struggled to find “an appropriate term that indicates Indian nationality or which does not confuse them with the ‘Nepalese’” (Hutt, Subba, 1992, pp. 108). A movement called the Gorkhaland National Liberation Front has, like their title suggests, adopted the terms Gorkha and Gorkhali to separate themselves from Nepal (Hutt, 1997). Ironically the early rulers of Nepal came from the Kingdom of Gorkha (Burghart, 1984). Nonetheless, the Gorkhas of Darjeeling adopted their name for political reasons.

In 1958, when the Citizen Act was passed, the Drukpas, created their own name for the Bhutani-Nepalis, for both political and geographical reasons. In creating this act, the government of Bhutan wanted reassurance that the Nepali-speakers in the south of Bhutan would side with it over Nepal. To promote Bhutani-Nepalis to identify with the Drukpas and Djongka language, the government dubbed them *Lotshampas*, meaning those who live in the south. While interviewing participants, I never heard a participant identify as *Lotshampa*. This is expressed in the sentiments of one man, “We are Nepali, but they [others in Bhutan] say *Lotshampa*” (2). Even though this participant did not identify with the imposed name, this same man did identify as Drukpa, another Djongka

word. He cited the word's morphology to explain his identification, "*Druk* means Bhutan, country. *Pa* means the people who live there. We are also Drukpa" (2). Here, he implies that geographic location, not ethnicity, determines identity within this group.

The ways in which the Bhutani-Nepalis have used names to identify themselves will be discussed more in the sections below

3.0 One Language, One Ethnicity

In this section, I discuss how the mantra of one language, one ethnicity has permeated part of Nepal and its surrounding countries, particularly among ethnic activist groups. Then I explain the Bhutani-Nepalis' own reaction to connecting language and ethnicity. I look at participants who identify with certain ethnic groups as well attitudes towards Djongka to demonstrate that they do not associate one and only one language to one ethnicity. Their resistance against this association as well as their own varied identities continue to support my argument that the Bhutani-Nepalis maintain fluid identities.

3.1 The Rise of One Language, One Ethnicity

The ideology of one language, one nation initially harmed the stability of many unrecognized minority languages because it banned them from use in state-funded sectors like education and government. However, it also created a backlash among members of ethnic groups with distinct languages. Recently, many communities where minority languages are spoken have pushed for mother-tongue instruction in their local schools. The National Foundation for the Development of Indigenous Nationalities

in Nepal (NFDIN) employed 200 women in communities to teach mother-tongue languages (Turin, 2005). It is within this activist work that the association of language and ethnicity becomes apparent. Embedded in the ideology of many ethnic activists is the assumption that “a specific and unique language [is]...a primary basis for the identification of an ethnicity” (Turin, 2005, 3). Gellner writes about this trend as well, “the criterion which is central to many ethnic activists’ efforts at mobilization in Nepal, as well as in much of South Asia and elsewhere [is] namely a distinctive language” (Gellner, 1997, 14). However, this one-to-one connection of ethnicity to language is not perpetuated among the Bhutani-Nepalis I talked to in South Philadelphia. Mark Turin has his own objections to equating language and ethnicity. He quotes Joshua Fishman to make this point, “language has rarely been equated with the totality of ethnicity” (pp. 2). Gellner also mentions that historically these one-to-one associations did not exist, quoting Toffin to make his point, “‘classification of Tibeto-Burman hill tribes...correspond only very imperfectly to reality...In fact, none of these groups forms a homogeneous ethnic group, either culturally or linguistically’ (Toffin, 1981: 39; cf. Levine, 1987)” Many people within Nepal or whose ancestors were Nepali and identify with an ethnic minority do not speak the language that is associated with this ethnicity. An ethnic group may also have members who speak multiple languages. Arjun Guneratne presents research on this phenomenon as it applies to the Tharu people of Nepal, a group that “consists in reality of a great many named, historically endogamous groups sharing neither a language nor a distinctive culture that sets them apart” (Guneratne, 2002). While conducting interviews among Bhutani-Nepalis, I found that identity within a particular ethnic group did not entail knowledge of the language traditionally associated with that

group.

3.2 Participants' Attitudes towards One Language, One Ethnicity

The first of the examples comes from my participant who identifies as Rai. Although his parents spoke fluent Rai language, he told me he could only speak a few words of Rai. "My parents...speak. I only understand a few things. The language is slowly going extinct" (2).⁷ This participant does not speak Rai, nor does he think it is important to learn because so few people speak it. When I asked him about whether or not he would teach his children either or both Rai or Nepali, he told me, "Your son and daughter will speak whatever is more common and whatever they are used to. A lot of people understand Nepali. If you speak Rai, only a few will understand" (2). Despite the fact that he does not speak Rai, nor does he view it as a very important language, he still identifies as Rai. In doing so, he maintains a flexible ethnic identity, not predicated by the knowledge of a particular language.

Another woman I know from ESL class identifies as Gurung but does not speak the Gurung language. Unlike the man above, she does not have any family members who speak Gurung, so she is even further removed from the language than the other participant. When speaking with her about language in Bhutan she told me that, "In Bhutan, everyone would speak their own languages, but our own language is Nepali, so we would speak that." Despite not speaking Gurung, she strongly identifies as a Gurung woman. Recently she related a bad experience she had with a translator. She went to work out some issues with her heating bill, and the gas company provided her with a

⁷Note that he does not specify whether the language is going extinct only in his family or more widely.

translator over the phone. She had trouble communicating what she wanted to say to the workers at the gas company, and she blamed the translator. Ultimately, she believed he was discriminating towards her as a Gurung woman. She kept mentioning the fact that he was Bahun, which in her mind made him untrustworthy. By enforcing the divide between herself and another ethnicity, she reinforces her own identity as a Gurung woman. Despite not being able to speak the Gurung language, she strongly identifies as Gurung.

The ability to break the association between language and ethnicity also showed up in participants' attitudes towards Djongka. Participants did not directly associate the Djongka language with the ethnic group that predominantly speaks it, Drukpa. Their attitudes towards Djongka when compared with their attitudes towards the Drukpa continue to support my thesis that the Bhutani-Nepalis' views of the link between ethnic and linguistic identity has not been affected by modern forces.

Before I started interviewing, I expected very negative attitudes towards this language, the language of the people who oppressed and eventually expelled the Bhutani-Nepalis from Bhutan, an assumption that reflects my own tendency to associate ethnicity with language. However, while talking with participants, I did not detect any strongly negative attitudes towards Djongka. In fact, at least one participant had enough positive feelings about the language that she is teaching it to her grandchild. This does not imply that no negative attitudes exist towards Djongka, but it does show that these attitudes are not completely pervasive among the Bhutani-Nepalis. Although I did not uncover negativity towards Djongka, I did find some evidence of resentment towards Drukpa people. This shows that Bhutani-Nepalis I interviewed do not make a one-to-one

correlation between language and ethnicity. Even though they may feel anger toward Drukpa people, this feeling does not spread to the dominant language of the Drukpa, which is Djongka.

4.0 One Language, One Nationality

The intersection of language and nationality is very relevant to people living in the United States as languages other than English become part of our linguistic make-up. In section 4.1, I look at the correlation of one language to one nationality in European nations and then in South Asia. Then I show how in general participants did not consider language to be a prerequisite to nationality. In the last section, I describe the exception to this.

4.1 The Rise of One Language, One Nationality

A 1992 article by Jan Blommaert & Jef Verschueren, which analyzed media in certain European countries, attempted to understand how language fit into larger national ideologies. The authors analyzed Germany, the Ukraine, France, Britain, Belgium, Holland, the Soviet Union, Palestine and Israel. Blommaert and Verschueren found that “homogeneism seems to be a widespread ideological premise” (pp. 374). After looking at a German report, they found that “implicit in this German report is the idea that the coherence of a society strongly benefits from the existence of just one language” (1992, pp. 358). Through implicit and explicit language, media sources continually presented the idea that homogeneity, including linguistic, is the best way to stabilize a country. This ideology is not restricted to Western countries. Nepal and

Bhutan have both struggled with this issue. Mark Turin writes “During the Panchayat rule in Nepal, which ended in 1990, the state promoted the doctrine of ‘one nation, one culture, one language’” (2005, pp. 2). This ideology shows up in education planning in the 1950’s. The Nepal National Education Planning Commission in 1955 wrote that using mother-tongue education for primary school students was alright but hoped that “other languages will gradually disappear and greater national strength and unity will result” (Whelpton, 1997, pp. 49). This one language, one nation ideology contributed to the government’s decision to force the Bhutani-Nepalis from Bhutan.

4.2 Participants’ Attitudes Towards One Language, One Nationality

Among the Bhutani-Nepalis I interviewed, I found some evidence for a belief in this one-to-one correlation between language and nation and some evidence for a total rejection of it. Their lives have been affected by policies built around the belief that one nation can only have one language, and so have some of their identities. National identity among certain participants was very clear and rejected the notion of one language, one nationality. I asked a middle-aged woman and her daughter “What do you call yourself, Nepali or Bhutani?” Earlier she told me that she only spoke “a little bit” of Djongka, and her daughter identified as speaking no Djongka. When I asked this question, both participants immediately answered “Bhutani,” without hesitation; they did not consider speaking Djongka to be a prerequisite for being Bhutani. Note that they also did not consider speaking only Nepali to be a requirement for being Bhutani. The mother recognized that there were other languages spoken in Bhutan (including Djongka and English) by people she considered to be Bhutani. Others who rejected the

notion of one language, one nationality identified with multiple nationalities, although may have felt conflicted about this. One woman mentioned her Nepali identity when talking about her friends in order to differentiate their identities. She says, “They’re called Dukpa. We’re Nepali. They would also speak Nepali” (1).⁸ Later, when asked about her national identity, she seemed adamant about her Bhutani identity, “We say Bhutani. We were born in the South of Bhutan. Our land and homes are in Bhutan... What was ours in Nepal? We are actually Bhutani” (1). Being Bhutani for this participant is more about having a home, owning land, and being born in Bhutan, rather than knowing a particular language. Another participant felt that birthplace strongly affects national identity, but ultimately created a hyphenated national identity for himself. He said, “I call myself Bhutani because my birthplace is in Bhutan...I studied there. I found out about happiness and misery in Bhutan. [but] after going to Nepal, I called myself Bhutani-Nepali” (3). This participant seemed to speak more Djongka than the previous ones, but did not consider himself fluent. Despite his non-fluent status, he could identify as Bhutani. He also speaks a second Tibeto-Burman language, Subbha/Limbu, yet knowing this other language posed no barriers to national identity.

Overall, national identity among these Bhutani-Nepali participants is not necessarily driven by having knowledge of one, particular language, but I did hear a few instances where participants linked language or way of speaking with nationality. In an informal interview, an older woman told me that she had been teaching her grandchild Djongka, and I asked why. She told me, “I teach him Nepali because we

⁸Note that she says her friends can be both Dukpa and speak Nepali, which shows she does not support the idea that one ethnicity can and/or should speak only one language.

are from Nepal and Djongka because we are from Bhutan.” This woman directly linked each country with one language. I saw the most prominent instance of participants linking way of speaking with nationality when sharing their opinions about the variety of Nepali spoken in Nepal. Participants described this variety as ‘good’ and as the speech of the educated. The variety of Nepali spoken in Bhutan was according to some participants, ‘not clear’ and ‘not pure.’ Participants were very negative about this language and saw it as a barrier to being Nepali. One man said to me, “The Nepalis in Bhutan aren’t Nepali. There are many ethnicities, and they speak in a different way” (2).

4.3 Attitudes towards Nepali

In the introduction, I argue that the Bhutani-Nepalis are able to resist making a one-to-one correlation between language and ethnicity, and in most instances, this did hold true, but when I asked about the form of Nepali that is used in Bhutan, participants had generally negative and at best neutral attitudes towards this speech. Many believed that only speaking the Bhutani variety of Nepali was a barrier to having a Nepali national identity. This belief opposes many of their other attitudes about language, ethnicity, and nationality, that reject the correlation between language & ethnicity and language & nationality. First I discuss attitudes towards Nepali and then explain the potential reasons for these attitudes that differ in ideology from their other linguistic, ethnic, and national attitudes.

Several participants talked about the difference between the Nepali spoken in Bhutan and the Nepali spoken in Nepal. Nepali has a number of different words for the second and third person and to go along with those differing conjugations

that indicate varying degrees of formality. In Bhutan, Nepali-speakers do not use the formal subject or verb conjugations, only the two informal subjects and informal conjugations. Note that this does not mean that in the context of their speech, formality is ignored. Instead, it is possible that formality and respect are expressed in another way or one of the supposedly less formal forms has been adopted for formal use. One participant described the speech to me, “the Bhutani Nepali is a little different from Nepali in Nepal. In Nepal, “haajur”(higher-order formal, second person), “taapai” (formal second person) are used.. In Bhutan it will be like this: “timi kahaan gaeko?” (where did you(informal, second person) go?) “timile ke khaeko?” (what did you(informal,second person) eat?) “timi kahan janndaichau?”(Where are you(informal) going?). It’s a curt language...Bhutan and Nepal are different” (1). Another man mentioned that what sets it apart is its influence from Djongka, “The people who are in Nepal, they speak Nepali, but they speak it with a Djongka tone” (3).

After noting these differences, many speakers then began to talk about their attitudes towards this way of speaking. Many associated positive qualities with the Nepali of Nepal like educated, pure, clear, good, and negative qualities with the Nepali of Bhutan. One man associated this speech with the uneducated, “It’s like when people who haven’t been to school speak English, it [this way of speaking] is very different.” (2) He went on to explain, “Nepalis who are educated and live in their own communities speak pure Nepali, but Nepalis who live within other communities; they pick up their [the other communities’] tones. The non-educated speak like the Nepalis in Bhutan.” (2) He cited language contact as a reason for the difference between the Nepali spoken in Bhutan and Nepal, which seems to also be the reason why he does not consider

the Nepal of Bhutan to be “pure.” Another participant added positive adjectives to her description of the Nepali spoken in Nepal. She said, “In Nepal, [they say] *tapaai* (formal, second person), *haajur*(higher-order formal, second person)...We learned after we came to Nepal, after meeting Nepalis who spoke good Nepali” (4). She calls the Nepali spoken in Nepal “good Nepali.” She also associates the adjective “clear” with the Nepali of Nepal. Those who speak the Nepali of Bhutan “don’t speak [Nepali] that clearly (4).” One woman described her anger at the grammatical forms used in the Nepali of Bhutan. She told me that, “It’s not okay that we speak like that [using the informal] with our elders” (1). Would she have framed this comment the same way if she had not ever learned the formalities used in the Nepali of Nepal? I would guess that the unique characteristics of Bhutani-Nepali did not become obvious to her until she moved to Nepal and came into contact with this new form of Nepali.

Even though participants hold such negative attitudes towards this form of the language, at least half of the participants from formal interviews also nationally identify as Nepali. It seemed that having known and spoken this language was not a barrier to becoming Nepali nationally. However, speaking the Nepali of Nepal seemed to be, in most cases, a requirement for becoming Nepali. Many of the participants talked about learning a new way of speech after they came to Nepal, as one participant says, “After we stayed in the camps, we learned a little Nepali” (3). They could identify with that national identity because they spoke this new Nepali, whereas the the Bhutani-Nepalis still living in Bhutan could not, in the eyes of participants, be called Nepali because they did not speak the “pure”, “clear” “good” form of Nepali.

What does this mean for integration into Nepali culture and adoption of a Nepali

identity? The report by the Human Rights Watch claims that if local integration had been allowed, “there would be very few obstacles to ensuring their social and cultural integration, since they have much in common with their Nepalese hosts; not only do they speak Nepali, but they also identify closely...in terms of religion and culture” (HRW, 2006, 55). In fact, there does exist something of a language barrier between people of Nepali descent from Bhutan and other people in Nepal. For some, this initial language barrier may have made them feel that they could never be Nepali nationally. Two of my participants, a mother and a daughter, when asked about their nationality, immediately answered Bhutani. They did not consider themselves Nepali at all. Maybe it was this language barrier that made them feel less Nepali

Why do the Bhutani-Nepali participants connect being able to speak the Nepali of Nepal to having Nepali national identity when they do not make this connection between language and nationality in other instances? They may be trying to differentiate themselves from those still in Bhutan. In moving to Nepal and now the US, participants may reject this language in order to separate themselves from those in Bhutan and create a new identity for themselves. As one participant said, “the Nepalis in Bhutan aren’t Nepali” (2). In framing his comment in this way, while identifying as a Nepali himself, he intentionally separates himself from the Nepalis in Bhutan. It seems that many of these negative attitudes about the Nepali spoken in Bhutan developed after participants moved to Nepal. Because their dialect was the dominant and possibly only way of speaking Nepali in Bhutan at the time they lived there, they would not have had other forms of Nepali to compare their speech to. These attitudes must have developed after they made the trek to Nepal and came in contact with the prestigious form spoken

there. It would be very interesting to interview Bhutani-Nepalis still living in Bhutan or who had very recently immigrated to Nepal. They may not feel that knowing and speaking the Nepali spoken in Bhutan is a barrier to being nationally Nepali.

5.0 Speculation about How the Bhutani-Nepalis Maintained Fluid Identities

Exploring literature and research on the Nepali diaspora in South Asia can be useful in understanding ethnic, national, and language identity among Bhutani-Nepalis. Michael Hutt, in his article “Being Nepali without Nepal: Reflections on a South Asian Diaspora” sheds light on these identities among Nepali speakers who live Darjeeling. Comparing their situations to those of the Bhutani-Nepalis helps to elucidate the potential reasons behind the Bhutani-Nepalis’ fluid identities.

5.1 Preserving Mother-tongues

Darjeeling, a region in the Indian state of West Bengal, borders Nepal. It was at one point owned by Nepal and has a large percentage of Nepali-speakers and people of Nepali origin. A study conducted in the region shows that the majority of people of Nepali origin both speak Nepali and identify as Nepali, even though many of the participants’ ancestors spoke a different language as their mother-tongue(Pradha, 1982, 36). Results were more mixed among my participants. The high rates of adoption of Nepali in Darjeeling indicate a pressure to speak Nepali, one that was not as great while the ancestors were living in Nepal. Those of Nepali ancestry in Darjeeling may feel that in order to identify as Nepali nationally, they must speak the language, an example of the pressure to make a one-to-one correlation between language & nationality. In

this section, I will discuss how these results compared to what I found among Bhutani-Nepali participants and why. Ultimately, I show that the particular linguistic and ethnic self-segregation in Bhutan as well as the larger proportion of Bhutani-Nepalis living there may have allowed them to resist pressure to identify speaking Nepali with being Nepali nationally.

In this study, people of Nepali origin whose mother-tongues differed from Nepali adopted Nepali within one generation of emigrating out of Nepal. Hutt notes that

A striking feature of the diaspora is the rapidity with which mother-tongues appear from the censuses to fall into disuse in favour of Nepali...Although Nepali was the ancestral language of only some 20% of the Nepalese population of Darjeeling, the 1961 Census of West Bengal (1967L 238-55) recorded that 59% claimed Nepali as mother-tongue (1997, pp. 114).

When Hutt says that “Nepali was the ancestral language of only some 20% of the Nepalese population,” he means that of the people who identify as having Nepali ancestors, 80% of the people’s ancestors did not speak Nepali but probably a Tibeto-Burman language like Gurung, Tamang, Rai, etc.

My data about the percentage of Bhutani-Nepalis who kept or dropped their ethnic group’s mother-tongue when moving to Bhutan is very limited because I had the opportunity to speak to relatively so few people. However, I would guess that more people with Nepali ancestry in Bhutan continued to speak these minority languages than in Darjeeling. The reasons for this may have to do with self-segregation and the relative size of the Nepali-speaking populations, discussed below. In the data I did collect, out of the three people I interviewed who identify as belonging to minority group,

three spoke the language of their ancestors as a mother-tongue. Three of these people were included in my formal interviews. The younger of the three, a 25-year old man, did not identify as a fluent speaker of Rai, the language of his parents. However, another speaker, whose mother was Tamang and father Rai told me spoke both Tamang and some Rai. A third speaker, a 36 year old man identified as Subbha and spoke Subbha/Limbu language. Three out of the six people who identified as a minority came from informal interviews. In these informal interviews, one out of three spoke the language of their minority group. My pool of participants is very small compared to research that Hutt cites, so I cannot make many general claims based on this data alone. I look to participants' comments about the distribution of ethnic groups in Bhutan as well as the size of the Nepali-speaking populations in Darjeeling versus Bhutan to show that people in Bhutan may not have had as much pressure to drop their original mother-tongues and adopt Nepali.

Ethnic and linguistic self-segregation may have allowed the Bhutani-Nepalis to maintain their minority languages. When I asked one of my participants what language she spoke most often while living in Bhutan, she responded, "We would speak our own languages" (4), where "own" is a reference to her minority language. When asked why, her husband explained further by saying, "in the village, the Tamang only speak Tamang, the Subbha only speak Subba, the Rai only speak Rai" (3). His wife added for emphasis, "There would be one group of Tamang, one group of Rai, one group of Subbha and one group of Magar" (3). This husband and wife came from separate parts of Bhutan and met in a refugee camp in Nepal, yet they both had experience with similarly segregated communities. How intense was this segregation? The

female participant I just mentioned had a Tamang mother and a Rai father (although only spoke Tamang fluently). She told me in Bhutan, “Everyone is mixed” (4), and her parents’ marriage is a testament to that. She and her husband also mentioned that intermarriage did occur between Bhutani-Nepalis and other groups in Bhutan, sometimes with Drukpas and sometimes with other minority groups who did not have Nepali ancestry. It seems that some people did intermarry between minority groups and across linguistic lines. However, despite the mentioning of inter-marriages, these two participants indicated that segregation within and among communities along ethnic lines did predominate. This segregation allowed them to keep their mother-tongues. Like I mentioned in section 3.3, they certainly spoke Nepali in Bhutan. By having knowledge of both languages, they maintained multi-faceted, fluid linguistic identities.

The lower proportion of people of Nepali descent in Darjeeling compared to the higher proportion in Bhutan would also support the theory that Darjeeling Nepalis might have lost their mother-tongues more quickly than Bhutani-Nepalis. Darjeeling is a small region situated in the large country of India. It might have been easier for Darjeeling residents of Nepali-descent to both maintain their identities and fight for rights as a minority if they both could claim Nepali descent as well as speak the language of Nepal. This fact might indicate India’s own tendency to associate nationality with language, if it is more likely to give benefits to members of the Nepali minority group if they speak Nepali. Special rights are awarded to certain minority groups in India, but the competition is fierce. The situation in Sikkim demonstrates this. Sikkim is another Indian state with a large percentage of people of Nepali descent, that became part of India in 1975. Before becoming part of India, Sikkim was its own nation with a very unified

identity, “no matter what their background, [they] were commonly attached to Sikkim as a homeland...” (Hiltz, 2010, pp.78). After the disintegration of the national forces that had brought the diverse people of Sikkim together, “each community [clung] to its tribal or caste roots in the hopes of claiming economic and political privileges” (Hiltz, 2010, pp.82).⁹ The people of Nepali descent in Darjeeling may have clung to their national roots to gain an advantage and to try and emphasize this connection, they adopted Nepali as their mother-tongue.

Bhutan is a comparatively small country and the proportion of residents of Nepali descent to other groups is much larger. Over the years, people there may not have had to cling onto Nepali national and language identity so strongly because their status was not being threatened. Ultimately, of course, the government did threaten their statuses, but for many years, their identities went un-threatened.

The phenomena of self-segregation in Bhutan and the greater proportion of people of Nepali descent to other ethnic groups leads me to believe that Bhutani-Nepalis were able to maintain their mother-tongues for longer and in turn maintain fluid identities that did not equate language with nationality.

6.0 Why Study Identity among Bhutanese Refugees?

Language will always have an impact on identity. Speaking one language or another from birth, learning a second or third language, or having a perceived accent influences who we are and how we relate to others. In studying linguistic identity, we will better understand ourselves.

⁹Note that this phenomenon may be an example of Instrumentalism, which argues that people choose to identify with certain groups to gain political or economic advantage.

Why study the intersection between linguistic and other forms of identity? A current example from Nepal provides one answer to this question. In September 2008, the newly elected Vice President Paramananda Jha took the oath of office. Rather than taking it in Nepali, as many expected he would, he took the oath in Hindi, his mother-tongue (nepalnews.com). Many people were outraged, and the government did not let him retain his new position as vice president. Jha's private residence was attacked multiple times with bombs, and the government removed both his security guards and national flag (Thaindian News, 2010). Finally in February of 2010, he agreed to retake the oath in Maithali, a language spoken in the plains of Nepal, and the government rescinded his suspension from the post. This incident demonstrates the importance of studying language and its intersection with other areas of identity; in this case, specifically national identity. Countries and people around the world are dealing with these issues. Studying them will help to avoid conflict and strife.

Why study the lives of the Bhutanese Refugees? The number of Bhutanese Refugees in the United States reached 30,000 in September, 2010, and thousands of refugees remain in Nepal, waiting to be resettled (nepalnews.com, 2010). Understanding their lives will help resettlement agencies, social workers, and teachers provide them with the best services they can. More broadly, studying linguistic identity is incredibly salient, as the United States struggles to define its own linguistic identity. The idea that a nation should only operate with one language, as the Bhutanese government believed leads to discrimination at the least and genocide at the worst. Supporters of the English Only movement fear that our country will lose something if it permits multilingualism. This fear is not a new one. In 1919 President Theodor Roosevelt said,

We have room for but one language in this country, and that is the English language, for we intend to see that the crucible turns our people out as Americans, of American nationality, and not as dwellers in a polyglot boarding house. (History Matters: Arizona and English Only, 2010)

This fear of multilingual identity continues to permeate politics and education today. As James Crawford, the former Washington editor of Education Week, writes, “Monolinguals tend to regard language learning as a zero-sum game. Any use of children's mother tongue for instruction, the assumption goes, is a diversion from English acquisition” (Crawford, 2001). A look at the situation of the Bhutani-Nepalis and their ability to maintain fluid identities and multi-lingualism may help some policy makers realize the potential for multiple languages and identities to exist not only within one country but also within one individual.

Conclusion

The creation of rigid and homogeneous ethnic and national units shows up in politics and policy decisions, as the story of the Bhutanese Refugees shows. In Bhutan, a drive to create a linguistically homogeneous state developed into a hostile situation that led to the expulsion of Bhutani-Nepalis from Bhutan. Ethnic activists have adopted the ideology of one language, one ethnicity, and in doing so have excluded some members who identify with ethnic minority groups but do not speak the language.

I started this paper by introducing Bhutan and Nepal, specifically describing the situation of the Bhutani-Nepalis and their place within the Nepali framework of caste and ethnicity. In sections on Language & Nationality and Language & Ethnicity,

I show that in general, despite pressure to have very one-sided national and ethnic identities, the Bhutani-Nepalis have diverse, fluid identities that are not determined solely by language. They resist the notion that national identity and ethnic identity are determined by language. The one exception to this is the association of the Nepali dialect spoken in Nepal with Nepali national identity, explored in 4.3. I then propose potential reasons for my findings after comparing their situation to that of the members of the Nepali diaspora in Darjeeling. Instances of linguistic and ethnic self-segregation among Bhutani-Nepalis as well as the relatively high numbers of Bhutani-Nepalis in Bhutan somewhat account for this. Overall, it seemed that Gellner's work on theories of national and ethnic formation explained what I found. In his discussion of premodern identities, he summarizes Aden Southall, writing, "What existed before were usually multiple, overlapping, flexible identities; only in exceptional cases did these approximate to the one-and-only-one tribe per person model." Gellner, allows for the possibility of having these overlapping identities exist in modern times as well, stating, "Some groups manage to continue such strategies well into the modern period" (1997, pp. 15). I found among the Bhutani-Refugees that not only did their cases not "approximate to the one-and-only-one tribe per person," more specifically, their cases also did not approximate to one and only one language, nationality, and ethnicity per person.

Although I found resources on linguistic identity among other groups in the Nepali diaspora, I came across very few scholarly resources that mentioned Linguistic identity among Bhutani-Nepalis. I hope that in the future more researchers will take on this topic and fill in the gaps of information that exist. Coming back to re-interview this group within the next 20 years will also be useful for understanding their identities. Will people

who grow up in the US have different views about identity than their parents do? How much of their parents' languages will they maintain and how will this affect their identity? How will their answers compare to those of other 1.5 and 2nd generation immigrants in the US?

Appendix I: Interview Questions

These are the interview questions I often started out with during my interviews. Follow up questions I asked while interviewing are not included in this list. One the right at the Nepali translations.

General Questions:

What is your name? Tapaaiiko naam ke ho?
How old are you? Tapaaiiko umer kati bharsha bhayo?
What country were you born in? Tapaai kahaan janminubhayo?
How long did you live in Bhutan? Kati bharsha Bhutanmaa basnubhayo?
How long did you live in Nepal? Kati bharsha Nepalmaa basnubhayo?

General Questions Language:

What language(s) do you speak at home?
Tapaaiiko gharmaa kun-kun bhasha bolnuhunchha?
What languages did you speak in Bhutan? Bhutanmaa kun-kun bhasha bolnuhunthyo?
What languages did you speak in the refugee camp in Nepal?
Saranarathi siwirmaa kun-kun bhasha bolnuhunthyo?
With whom do you speak Nepali? Tapaai ko-sang Nepali bhasha bolnuhunchha?
With whom do you speak English? Tapaai ko-sanga English bhasha bolnuhunchha?
What languages are you learning right now?
Tapaai ahile kun-kun bhasha sikdaihunuhunchha?
What languages do you want to learn? Tapaailaai kun-kun bhasha sikne man chha?

Questions about Djongka Language:

Do you speak Djongka? Tapaailaai Djongka bhasha aauncha?
With whom do you speak Djongka Bhasha? Ko-sanga Djongka bhasha bolnuhunchha?
Was it easy to learn Djongka Bhasha? Djongka sikna sagilo thyo?
How did you learn Djongka? At home? At school? in the Refugee camp? in Bhutan?
Kasari siknubhayo? Gharmaa? Bidyaalyamaa? Saranathi siwirmaa? Bhutanmaa?
Why did you learn?
Kina siknubhayo?
Did you have friends who did not speak Nepali while living in Bhutan?
Butanmaa basdakheri, Nepali na bolne saathi thie?

Questions about Language Preservation:

Do you plan on teaching your children or grandchildren Nepali?
Tapaaiiko chora-chorilaai ki nati-natinilaai Nepali sikaunuhunchha?
How will you teach them Nepali?
Kasari Sikaunuhunchha?
Did you speak a language when you were younger that you now no longer speak?
Tapaailaai pahila aaune kunai bhasha birsinubhayekochha?
Did you parents speak a language you do not speak? Why didn't you learn this language?

Tapaaiko bua-aamaalaai ki hajurbua-hajuraamaa tapaaailaai na aaune bhasha
aaunthyo?

Kina thyo bhasha siknubhayena?

Questions about Minority Language (If participant speaks one):

How is it different from Nepali?

Tapaaile janubhayeko bhasha (Gurung, Tamang, magar, etc) Nepali baaTa kati
pharuk chha?

Questions For adults:

What languages do you speak at work?

Kaammaa kun-kun bhasha bolnuhunchha?

What language do you speak with you friends?

Saathiharu sanga, kun-kun bhasha bolnuhunchha?

Questions For students:

At school, do you speak Nepali with your friends?

Schoolmaa gaera, timro saathisanga nepali bolchhau?

At school, when do you speak English?

Schoolmaa kahile English bolchhau?

At home, do you speak Nepali or English?

Gharmaa gaera, timi Nepali ki English bolchhau?

What languages do you parents speak?

Timro bua-aamaa kun-kun bhasha bolnuhunchha?

Have you forgotten any Nepali since you came the US?

Americamaa aapachi Nepali birseko chha ki chhaina?

Questions about National and Ethnic self-identification:

Do you call yourself Nepali or Bhutanese?

Tapaaai aphulaai Nepali bunuhunchha ki Bhutani bunuhuncha?

What ethnic group do you belong to?

Tapaaai kun jaatko hununchha?

Questions about Life in Bhutan and Nepal:

Bhutanma basdakheri Nepali bhasha bolna gharo huntyo ki hudainthyo?

How many years did you go to school? Kati bharsha bidyalamaa padnubhayo?

What languages do you read and write?

Tapaaailaai kun-kun bhasha padna ra lekhna aaunchha?

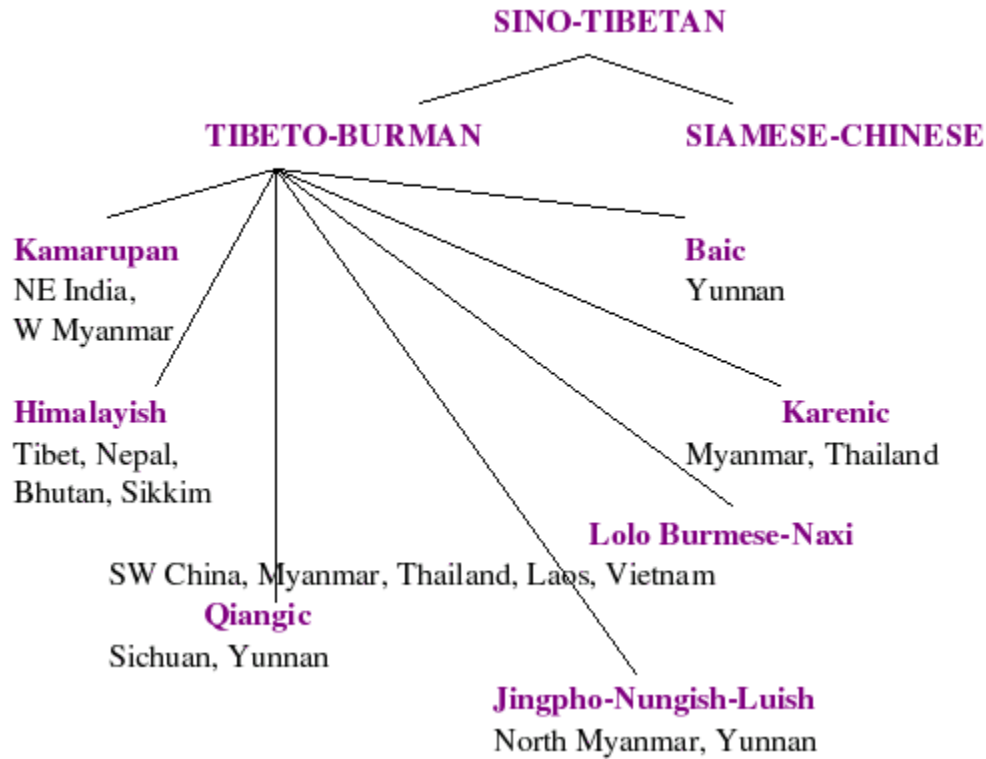
What camp did you live in in Nepal?

Kun campmaa basunhunthyo? naam ke ho?

Do you know of any Bhutanese Refugees who married Drukpas?

Kunai Bhutani Saranarthile aru Bhutanisanga bihaa gariyo?

Appendix 2
Figure 1:



The Himalayish branch comprises many of the languages mentioned in this paper, including Djongka, Gurung, Rai, and Tamang.

Figure 2:



Above is a map of Bhutan showing its approximate distribution of languages.

Appendix 3: Conducting Formal Interviews

I conducted my formal interviews over the course of a few weekends in early October, 2010. I went to three different houses and interviewed six people, bringing with me both a tape recorder and a bilingual speaker of Nepali and English. The first two of my participants were a mother and daughter, the second two were neighbors, and the third two a husband and wife. I sat in each household with participants, recording interviews as well as drinking tea and socializing. Before recording, I got participants' permission to both record and include any information in my thesis. During the interviews, I had a set of prepared questions written out in Nepali, but conversations often veered away from the questions, which usually turned out to be very valuable. The bilingual speaker would sometimes clarify meanings or ask questions as well. I have continued to meet participants in South Philadelphia while I am there teaching ESL, which has allowed me to get updates on their lives and ask follow-up questions.

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