EXPLORING VULNERABILITY AND CONSENT TO TRAFFICKING RELATED

MIGRATION: A STUDY OF SOUTH ASIAN BAR DANCERS

by

NAIRRUTI JANI

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ABSTRACT

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Nairruti Jani, PhD

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Supervising Professor: Maria Scannapieco

Lack of resources in South Asian countries compel many people to migrate to other countries, some legally, others illegally. In 2005, Over 100,000 bar dancers in Mumbai became unemployed overnight when the state government banned bar dancing under international pressure. Some of these bar dancers were forced to become prostitutes; some others migrated to other countries, including U.S., for work (Chadha, 2007). While dancing in U.S., these girls are kept under heavy security, they are not allowed to talk to the patrons, nor are they allowed to go out of their designated apartment on their own. They are sent from one city to another city, and are generally unaware of their next destination. Even though these girls have migrated with their own will, their prison like situation suggests that they can be defined as victims of human trafficking. Even though the girls actually consented, they are subject to debt-bondage, earn very little income and are denied basic liberties. This 'consensual trafficking' has not been studied by the academic community or by the policy makers. This research studies bar dancers in U.S. and explores the factors which create vulnerability in bar dancers to consent to trafficking related migration. The main research question is (1) What are the reasons that

create vulnerability among certain groups of people who either get trafficked or smuggled? This research explores a pioneering field of research which is a recent phenomenon.

This qualitative research is based on grounded theory involving in-depth data collection from the informants and the researcher. The data collection was based on auto-ethnographic principles, where the researcher observes and interacts with participants and creates a detailed field note that includes researchers own perceptions about participant interactions.

Findings indicate that the vulnerability to trafficking within south Asia is characterized by poverty, gender bias, caste or religion by birth, lack of education and lack of awareness. Single women are more prone to trafficking as they do not have any support systems and are required to feed themselves and their children. Lack of employable skill makes it difficult for them to find employment in South Asian competitive markets.

Another significant finding is that positive social networks and family support reduced the risk of trafficking among South Asian women from rural areas to urban areas in South Asia. However, lack of family support got translated in lack of community networks for some victims who then chose to use unknown migration networks. Traffickers employed migration agents at rural areas who deceived many of South Asia women and lured them as well as their families by creating false dream jobs in foreign destinations. Some women got trapped in debt trap of these agents who paid the migration cost for the victims and enslaved them after reaching the destination. This finding relates to theory of social support, social exchange and migration theory of network.

Lack of employment, increasing age, debts and acculturation in Mumbai bars were the primary contributors to South Asian bar dancers' vulnerability to international trafficking. Older women and Muslim women were more prone to be trafficked to gulf countries where as Hindu girls and younger girls were trafficked to western countries. After the ban on dance bars in Mumbai the vulnerability of former bar dancers increased significantly due to reduced employment opportunities.

v

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Lack of resources in South Asian countries compel many people to migrate to other richer countries every year. Most of the migration is towards U.S. or countries in Europe. The trend of migrating for work in western countries has seen a tremendous increase in the past few years. Last year 163,000 people applied for work visa in the U.S (Chuadhary, 2009). While this number only shows people migrating legally, many more people migrate illegally through human smuggling or false documents. Migrating to unknown foreign countries in search of better job prospects sometimes leads to exploitation of workers. In case of girls, especially less educated girls, this can lead to sexual exploitation or human trafficking. In recent years many girls from South Asian countries have been migrating to the U.S. for dancing in bars, and many of these girls are victims or trafficking. In view of increasing trend of migration, it becomes necessary to determine the reasons behind the bar dancers' decision to engage in risky modes of migration.

Over 100,000 girls were dancing in bars in the city of Mumbai till 2004. In 2005, the state government banned bar dancing under international pressure. While this step was taken to prevent or reduce trafficking of girls from rural areas of South Asian countries to large cities like Mumbai, it had one direct negative consequence: 100,000 uneducated or undereducated girls became unemployed overnight. These girls had no other skills. Many were working in these bars since a young age. Some girls were reduced to begging, some others had no choice but to sell their bodies in order to earn enough to feed themselves, while some others chose to migrate to western countries like the U.S. for work (Uchil, 2005). In 2006, during my visit to one of these bars, I came across one of these girls for the first time. Upon some basic investigation, I realised that the girls are kept under heavy security, they are not allowed to talk to the patrons,

1

nor are they allowed to go out of their designated apartment on their own. Upon further investigation, I learned that each group of bar dancers stay in one city for a period of maximum six months and then leave the bar and the city. Their next destination could be some other city or some other country, which the girls don't know till they have to actually migrate. Many bar dancers were sent to places like Sharjah or Dubai (Khan, 2005). Even though these girls had migrated by their own accord, their prison like situation meant they were by definition victims of human trafficking. I was at once intrigued by the subject of human trafficking and wondered why these girls chose this method of migration. While my observation and interaction with them led me to believe that they were living a life no different from victims of trafficking, they could not be rescued because they would not agree to confess that they were trafficked by a certain illegal migration network and would not comply with the law enforcement in tracking down criminal networks using which they were migrating. One could say that these girls were victims of "consensual trafficking".

To understand the importance of this problem, we first need to look at the problem of human trafficking in general. International concern over the cross-border trafficking of men, women and children has increased significantly over the past decade. It is unanimously agreed upon by all nations that trafficking should be seen as the movement of people across borders by using the means of coercion and other grave human rights violations (Trafficking in persons report, 2003). According to US Department of States (2003), approximately 600,000 to 800,000 victims annually are trafficked across international borders worldwide. Victims are generally trafficked into the United States from Asia, Central and South America, and Eastern Europe. Many victims trafficked into the united states do not speak and understand English and are therefore isolated and unable to communicate with service providers, law enforcement and others who might be able to help them. Traffickers use force, fraud and coercion to compel women, men and children to engage in these activities. Vulnerable people often fall in the trap laid out by traffickers in the routes of legal or illegal migration and find themselves in exploitative

2

circumstances in the destination countries. While existing laws are strengthened and new laws are designed for the protection and recovery of trafficking victims nationally as well as internationally, only 1,229 cases have been confirmed so far by the 42 anti-trafficking task forces in the United States (Agustin, 2009).

One of the reasons for this failure has been the lack of clarity on the definition of trafficking and unreal expectations in order to establish a case for victims of trafficking. As per the fact sheet prepared by US Department of health and human services (n.d.), the following terms are defined as,

- **Force:** involving the use of rape, beatings and confinement to control victims. Forceful violence is used especially during the early stages of victimization, known as the 'seasoning process', which is used to break victim's resistance to make them easier to control.

- **Fraud:** involving false offers that induce people into trafficking situations. For example, women and children will reply to advertisements promising jobs as waitresses, maids and dancers in other countries and are then trafficked for purposes of prostitution once they arrive at their destinations.

- **Coercion:** involving threats of serious harm to, or physical restraint of, any person; any scheme, plan or pattern intended to cause a person to believe that failure to perform an act would result in serious harm to or physical restraint against any person; or the abuse or threatened abuse of the legal process.

Traffickers often proivde documents and transportation means to migrate to destination countries. Since victims are not able to pay for these services at the source, they must pay for them after arriving at destination. This creates a debt-bondage, which makes it difficult for the victim to ever be free (U.S. Dept of Health and Human Services (USHHS, n.d.). Traffickers usually charge extremely high interest rates or inflated amounts for their services, making it virtually impossible for the victims to pay it off. Furthermore, whenever the victims need any kind

3

of support in the destination country, the traffickers provide that support and trap the victims into even more debt. Fines for not meeting daily quotas of service or "bad" behavior are also used by some trafficking operations to increase debt (USHHS, n.d.).

South Asian bar dancers who migrate on their own accord often get trapped in debt-bondage. In the case of former bar dancers from Mumbai, the dancers needed valid documents, and for which they had to borrow huge amounts of money from the traffickers in order to migrate to the U.S. Once arrived the in the destination country, they are made to believe that they have to repay this debt. The bars in the U.S. are successful businesses, however, the dancers only get a small fixed salary, which is frequently less than what they used to earn in Mumbai. Sometimes, the dancers are forced to have sex with regular patrons of the bar. Again, the dancer only gets a small amount of money out of prostitution, while their 'owners' or traffickers get the larger share. Bar dancers are afraid of talking to the authorities, because they fear deportation, which will only lead them back to unemployment in their home countries, on the other hand they fear retribution from their traffickers.

International organizations such as the United Nations (UN) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) have been actively involved in encouraging international cooperation on human trafficking issue, generating more research and creating better awareness to eliminate this form of 'modern day slavery'. As a result of this emphasis, a large number of studies carried out in the last decade are attempting to understand the causes and consequences of human trafficking. Most of the work concentrates on trafficking in Eastern Europe (Agustín, 2000; Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, 1999; De Ruyver, 2001). There has been some literature on bar dancers who dance in bars in Mumbai (Bunsha, 2005; Sharma, 2007; Mehta, 2008). However, there is scant literature on South Asian bar dancers in western countries (Viju, 2006). Moreover, all the literature assumes the trafficked women to be helpless victims who were kidnapped or were trafficked under false promises. No attention has been paid to the South Asian bar dancers who consciously choose to engage in

4

migration methods that may lead to their sexual exploitation. None of the existing literature answers the questions: (1) why do women choose risky migration? And (2) what are the reasons that create vulnerability among certain groups of people who either get trafficked or smuggled? This thesis answers these questions and explores a pioneering field of research which is a recent phenomenon.

One of the reasons behind lack of quantitative research on human trafficking is the limited availability of subjects. The same applied to this research as well. I started collecting data in August 2007 as part of the human trafficking task force. Realizing the nature of this research, it was decided to continue collecting more information on subjects as prolonged engagement plays an essential part in validating qualitative data. It was very difficult to find participants for this study due to the restrictions imposed on the bar dancers by their traffickers. In order to gain trust of bar owners, I frequented two of the South Asian bars in America. The research only involves responses of the girls who volunteered to participate. Again due the trust issues, it was not possible to ask them to fill out a questionnaire, and hence this research is based on auto-ethnographic methods, where the researcher observes the participants and interacts with them and takes notes. At the end of data collection, the researcher extracts patterns (called *codes*) from the notes and organizes these codes in a conceptual map of factors (Ellis, 2004).

Following the ethnographic methods, detailed notes were collected from the bar girls. The research was undertaken in two phases. In the first phase, initial codes were derived based on pre-existing literature and my own familiarity with the South Asian culture. At the start, I noticed four main theories affecting the vulnerability of bar girls to get trafficked.

(1) Theory of Conflict and Structure, which defines the problems as social and structural rather than individual (van Wormer, 2006). South Asian countries represent a patriarchal culture at different levels in society including caste, class and extreme

gender discriminations. This discriminations lead to vulnerability to trafficking among women of certain class.

(2) Theory of Social Exchange and Network theory in migration, which explain how women often get trapped in debt-burdens and how existing family, friends or social network in the receiving country provide support to new migrants (Wilson, 1994)

(3) Theory of Prospect, which explains how and lack of prospects force thousands and thousands of women and children from Asia, Africa and Eastern Europe to strive for a better future in prosperous countries (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979).

Ten girls were interviewed in the first phase, and their actions as well as conversations were recorded in field journal in detail. At the end of the first phase, I reviewed the conversations and derived emerging themes. These conversations affirmed some of the initial codes, and negated some other initial codes. I also noticed several new themes. Based on these refined set of themes, codes and guiding questions were derived for the second phase. Another set of ten girls were interviewed in the second phase and their conversations were recorded in detail. At the end of the second phase, a comprehensive analysis of notes was undertaken and the results were derived.

Some of the emerging themes from the field notes were: demographic characteristics like place of living, level of education, caste or religion, female headed households, unemployment, child abuse or neglect, confinement and lack of job opportunities, risky migration networks, lack of awareness about destination, debt bondage, acculturation, ban on dance bars, police and law enforcement, available prospects and risk taking behavior. After the data analysis, these themes were merged under three higher level codes: (1) Poverty and structural factors (2) Social networks and exchanges (3) Acculturation and International Migration for bar dancing.

This research is divided into six chapters. In chapter 2, I present a comprehensive review of the existing literature. As mentioned above, most of the literature focuses on the extent of human trafficking, or on treatment of rescued victims. Due to the limited availability of

subjects who are currently trafficked, there is not much existing literature exploring trafficking routes, methods or the reasons behind 'consensual trafficking'. I review literature from both South Asian perspective as well as International perspective. I also review the trafficking problem from a historical perspective. South Asian countries have seen forced migration of women to prostitution under several guises since third century A.D. Chapter 2 also discusses the theoretical perspectives of conflict, prospect, social exchange and acculturation. Chapter 3 describes the research methodology employed. As mentioned above, this is a qualitative research that links cultural and interpretive studies. One of the prominent methodologies in qualitative research is called grounded theory, a theory developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967). This methodology is based on symbolic interactionism and has gained acceptance in social work qualitative research in recent years. In the past decade it is described as the "most influential paradigm for qualitative research in the social sciences today" (Patton, 2002 p. 487). The name *grounded theory* is derived from the concept of exploring a theory which is 'grounded', since it involves in-depth data collection from the informants and the researcher. Conceptualizing and theorizing are the two important components of this theory. The data collection is based on auto-ethnography where the researcher observes and interacts with the participants. This approach falls between the science and art of qualitative research (Ellis, 2004, p.28). In order to understand whether the conceptual model derived from the existing literature can be validated on the South Asian bar dancers' population, data based on interactions with South Asian bar dancers working in the bars of United States is used partially as part of this research study. Chapter 4 describes data analysis, including initial and revised coding. This chapter also includes excerpts of the field notes in order to derive an emerging theme. Chapter 6 describes the results derived from the data analysis. This chapter provides the reasons behind South Asian women's vulnerability to trafficking. Some of the factors derived from data analysis are: lack of education, poverty, lack of job opportunities, lack of awareness about risks involved, and migration networks. This chapter looks at two levels of migration: migration from

rural areas of South Asia to the bars in big cities like Mumbai, and migration from Mumbai to western countries. Finally, chapter 7 presents a holistic picture of vulnerability for South Asian victims of trafficking. In the first part of chapter 7, I discuss the unique information which I gathered during this research and display the similarities and differences I found from existing literature on human trafficking. In the second section I discuss the implications arising out of this study for policy, research and practice and in the final section I present the strengths and weaknesses of this research to guide future researches.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A thorough review of literature helps the researcher in validating the results of a qualitative study by comparing the results with those from previous discourse on the subject (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). With this view in mind, a review of literature on factors contributing to South Asian women's vulnerability to trafficking was undertaken. The intent of this literature review is to assess the extent and complexity of this problem, gauge the economic as well as social factors impacting this problem and pinpoint the direction of future research on sex trafficking.

The United States of America ranks as the world's second largest destination country for sex trafficking in the world, with approximately 18,000 people trafficked to the United States every year (Mizus, Moody, Privado & Douglas, 2003). United States recognizes trafficking as modern day slavery and the CIA estimates that 700,000 people are trafficked annually worldwide (Office on Violence against Women (OVAW), 2000). However, there are very few cases of sex trafficking that are reported. Lack of information on this subject has lead to sparse research on the subject.

A significant portion of existing literature on this subject concentrates on post facto analysis of human trafficking policy by looking at prosecution of criminals and rescue of victims. However, there is limited research conducted on the reasons which constitute women's vulnerability to sex-trafficking. Most of the literature on the subject of sex-trafficking focuses on Eastern Europe as a source and USA, UK, Netherlands, Canada and Australia as primary destination for trafficking (Malarek, 2004; Destafano, 2001). Our understanding of human

trafficking phenomena is very limited for South Asia, which is socio-economically and culturally very diverse. In view of intricate nuances of trafficking from South Asia, sex trafficking has to be looked at from the point of view of the region in order to understand the factors that make women in this region vulnerable to trafficking (Lazaridis, 2001).

2.1 Review Method

This review represents an attempt to bring together the scientific literature available in English language on the subject of sex-trafficking within South Asia and from South Asia to the United States. This review includes empirical research as well as theoretical research focusing on determinants of women's vulnerability to sex-trafficking. There are sparse quantitative empirical studies conducted on this topic in relation to South Asia, especially before the enactment of Trafficking Victims' Protection Act (TVPA) and the UN convention against transnational crime in 2000. The reviewed studies are collected from various sources. U.S. government had commissioned several scientific studies to increase the understanding of this subject for lawmaking, enforcement, victim's rescue and rehabilitation services in the last decade (Estes & Weiner, 2001). Thus, publications and reports from Government agencies working in the field of human trafficking like US Department of Justice (DOJ), International Organization for Migration (IOM), Department of Labor (DOL), United Nations Office against Drug and Crime (UNODC), US Departments office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking (USOMCT) are reviewed. Peer reviewed journal articles are identified via electronic databases like Academic Search Complete, EBSCO, PsychInfo, LexisNexis Congressional and Academic, PAIS International and Proquest Criminal Justice Periodicals. Other sources visited are the websites of UNICEF, UNIFEM and UNDP, Country Offices of UNAIDS as well as case studies from organizations like *Prerana, Shared hope foundation, Apne Aap and Shakti Vahini* working with victims of sex trafficking in India and Nepal. Studies that meet stated review criteria are included in this review cohort. Any material specifically related to consensual migration for sex

trafficking in South Asia is included in this review. Material related to rescue and rehabilitation of trafficking victims, trafficking of men, and trafficking for labor exploitation is excluded from the review cohort.

2.1.1. Review Caveats

Various methodological caveats constrain interpretation of the findings of reviewed sources and present an incomplete picture of the trafficking scenario. There are fewer quantitative studies available in relation to sex-trafficking in South Asia and its relationship with 'women's vulnerability'. The few studies identified involve qualitative in-depth interviews with small, unrepresentative samples of migrant workers, rescued victims, employers or experts. The studies also lack methodological soundness and are liable to be biased by social desirability pressures on the interviewees. There were also examples of confusion within some of the literature in relation to the definitions of trafficking and interchangeable use of terms 'migration' 'smuggling', 'prostitution' and 'trafficking'. This hinders comparability of the literature reviewed.

However, the studies based on small representative samples do tend to draw out similar constructs, issues and findings and thus cannot be discounted. These findings are able to provide a platform based on which the researcher could develop a theoretical understanding of sex-trafficking in South Asia, to be explored and tested in this research. The findings also highlight knowledge gaps in the existing research and give way to the development of a research question that has not been studied in South Asian context.

2.2 Definition of Human Trafficking

The quality of scientific research depends on validity and precision of the definitions used and therein lies the hurdle hampering the growth of scientific research on sex trafficking. There is little agreement on the definition of sex trafficking among the varied individuals and groups interested in curtailing the enterprise of sex trafficking (Bales, 2000).

11

In December 2000, the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons was signed in Palermo, Italy. Prior to the crafting of the UN definition, trafficking in persons was often viewed as human smuggling and a type of illegal migration (Laczko, 2002). The Palermo Protocol defines trafficking in persons as:

> Article 3(a) The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labor or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.

> (b) The consent of a victim of trafficking in persons to the intended exploitation set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article shall be irrelevant where any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) have been used. (United Nations, 2003).

In essence, the protocol holds that consent cannot truly be given when acts, such as fraud and deception, are employed. Exploitation, rather than consent, is the central feature of the Palermo Protocol's definition. On the other hand, Human smuggling is a contractual agreement in which one person (the smuggler) agrees to take, guide, or transport another person (the smuggled human) across a national border illegally (Schauer and Wheaton, 2006). Human smuggling differs from trafficking in that smuggling suggests consent of the parties, whereas trafficking includes deception, fraud, coercion, force, or exploitation of the trafficked human by the trafficker (Klueber, 2003).

12

Since human trafficking and smuggling both involve transporting individuals by using criminal transnational networks, media often confuses the two. Problems in gauging the incidence of human trafficking are compounded by this confusion. Humans smuggled and humans trafficked are many times counted together by both national governments and NGOs (Demleitner, 2001).

Like the international community, the United States has struggled with creating a comprehensive definition of trafficking in human beings. The first US definition of trafficking in persons was created by the President's Interagency Council on Women; a body charged by President Clinton with coordinating US domestic and international policy on human trafficking. The Council crafted the following working definition to guide policy development on trafficking in persons (Destafano, 2007):

Trafficking is all acts involved in the recruitment, abduction, transport, harboring, transfer, sale or receipt of person; within national or across international borders; through force, coercion, fraud or deception; to place persons in situation of slavery or slavery-like conditions, forced labor or services, such as prostitution or sexual services, domestic servitude, bonded sweatshop labor or other debt bondage (TVPA, 2000)

Debt bondage means the status or condition of a debtor arising from a pledge by the debtor of his or her personal services or of those of a person under his or her control as a security for debt, if the value of those services as reasonably assessed is not applied toward liquidation of the debt or the length and nature of those services are not respectively limited and defined (U.S. Government, 2000).

This policy definition was later replaced by a legal definition of trafficking in persons, created under the TVPA (Division A of Public Law 106-386). The Act defines severe forms of trafficking in persons as: (a) sex trafficking in which a commercial sex act is induced by force,

13

fraud, and coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such act has not attained 18 years of age; or (b) the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery (U.S. Government, 2000). The definition includes force, fraud, or coercion, which encompasses two of the most common trafficking scenarios: (1) a scheme where victims are falsely promised one job and forced or coerced into another; and (2) a situation where victims choose or consent to a particular job in an industry or the commercial sex trade, but are deceived about the working conditions (Destafano, 2007).

Similarly to Human Smuggling, prostitution is also sometimes confused with sex trafficking. The U.S. legislature as well as U.N. protocols make distinction between prostitution and sex trafficking. However, among academics there are two differing opinions. One argues that sex trafficking is a result of ban on prostitution. Due to high demand for paid sex, ban on prostitution creates an underground market for sex trafficking. This point of view considers prostitution a choice and recommends providing basic labor rights (fair pay, health care etc.) to be extended for prostitutes (Bindman, 1998; Doezema, 1998). The second does not see prostitution as a choice and considers it a form of internal human trafficking (Leidholdt, 2003; Campagna & Poffenberger, 1988; Estes & Weiner, 2001). This definitional issue is critical to the issue of law making and law enforcement. In South Asian context, prostitution is morally degrading and yet becomes a necessity for many women who do not have alternatives for survival. It is therefore important to explore while reviewing the literature on this subject.

2.3 Review of South Asian Research Cohort

Indian Ministry of Women and Child Welfare reported that currently there are 2.8 million sex workers in India, more than half of them are trafficked (MWCW, 2000), 35.47 percent of them entering the trade before the age of 18 years (Free the Slaves, 2005). The extent of

human trafficking is increasing significantly over the past decade in South Asia (BBC, 2005). India is the worst hit country with this epidemic where trafficking occurs at all levels. India is not only a destination country for trafficking of girls and women from lesser developed South Asian countries but also a source and transit country for women and girls who get trafficked abroad. India is one of the largest players in the world's trafficking industry harboring in-country trafficking and trafficking across international boundaries (U.S. Dept. of State, 2006). One micro level study was conducted focusing on this issue from South Asian perspective, using qualitative interviews (Roy, 2007). Another quantitative study was conducted by Presenti & Rao in 2008 using the UN cross country dataset to evaluate the determinants of trafficking origin (Presenti & Rao, 2008).

Past researches conducted on South Asian population with regards to trafficking revealed that majority of the victims of sex-trafficking are young women (International Organization for Migration, 2001; UNICEF, 2003; Esther Benjamin Trust, 2003), less educated and from poor socio-economic backgrounds (Esther Benjamin Trust, 2003; Save the children, 2003). The only reasons widely explained in the literature include their sexual attractiveness or labor power (Esther Benjamin Trust, 2003). However, this is a very general explanation. Many attractive women and men with labor power do not get trafficked. So, it is important to conduct more research in order to understand who gets trafficked and why? Assessing the factors that contribute to the creation of vulnerability among South Asian women is one of the aspects explored in my research to answer the above question.

2.3.1. Extent of Trafficking

Trafficking and sex-slavery are rampant in South Asian countries. Bangladesh and Nepal are the key sources of trafficking in South Asia and India is the largest market ((International Organization for Migration, 2001). Approximately 200,000 to 250,000 women and girls from Nepal are currently in Indian brothels. According to Wadhawa (1998),

15

The girls are sold by poor parents, tricked into fraudulent marriages, or promised employment in towns only to find themselves in India's brothels. They are locked up for days, starved, beaten, and burned with cigarettes until they learn how to service up to 25 clients a day. Some girls go through 'training' before being initiated into prostitution, which can include constant exposure to pornographic films, tutorials in how to 'please' customers, repeated rapes.

It is estimated that approximately 45,000 Nepalese girls arrive in the brothels of Bombay and 40,000 in brothels of Calcutta every year. (Women's groups in Nepal, 1995, pp.8-9). In Bombay children as young as 9 are bought for US $1200 at auctions, where Arabs bid against Indian men (Freidman, 1996). There are around 1 million Bangladeshi and more than 200,000 Burmese women trafficked to Karachi, Pakistan (Chakraborty, 2006). More than 19,000 Pakistani children have been trafficked to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) (Sinha, 2006). Approximately 10,000 to 12,000 girls from rural areas of Bangladesh are trafficked and prostituted to pedophiles abroad by organized crime groups (Bedi, 1997).

2.3.2. Patterns of Trafficking Within India

Trafficking within the boundaries of a nation is the predominant form of trafficking in South Asian countries. For the limited scope of this paper I focus on the Indian example of bar dancers, while the situation is similar in most South Asian countries. The number of girls trafficked from rural areas to urban cities like Mumbai, Calcutta and Delhi in India is alarming (UNICEF, 2003a). Although, there are fewer empirical studies on this subject, some data is available that can describe the various patterns of trafficking and prostitution in India.

Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh are the high-supply zones for women in prostitution in India. Belgaum, Bijapur, and Kolhapur are some

16

common districts from which women migrate to cities either through an organized trafficking network, or due to socio-economic forces (Menon, 1998).

In south India, there are many *dhabhas*, (small-scale eating joints), along the Sholapur-Hyderabad highway, which provide women as an "additional service" to truck drivers and travelers. The girls are brought from rural areas. They are threatened, beaten, harassed, and forced to service local farmers and police. Not surprisingly, police does not register any complaints of these assaults (Menon, 1998). In Chennai, Tamil Nadu, an ethnographic study to map the areas of prostitution was conducted to streamline strategies for HIV prevention among commercial sex workers in the city (Kannan, 2002). Seventeen mobile brothels were found, manned by cell-phone toting operators employing 6,300 women.

In Eastern parts of India, Calcutta is the hub of prostitution employing over 10,000 prostitutes in the red light district of Sonaghachi. While girls from poorer Indian villages work as prostitutes here, the girls brought from Bangladesh are often trafficked through gangs and work under pimps as call girls (Gayen, Chowdhury, Saha and Debnath, 2004).

In Northern India engagement of women in prostitution with familial consent is widespread among some of the erstwhile nomadic groups such as the Bedia, Nat, Sansi, Kanjar, and Bachada. Women born into a Bedia family remain unmarried. They engage in prostitution in order to provide for the economic needs of their natal family. This practice is going on for many generations (Agrawal, 2008).

In Goa, a famous tourist destination in west India, around 2,000 girls are engaged in prostitution along the Baina beach (Moronha, 1997). Selling under aged girls brings significant income in Goa (Menon, 1998).

Mumbai is the hub of prostitution in the Western states of India. In red-light districts of Mumbai there are over 70,000 prostitutes servicing on an average 6 customers a day, for $2

17

each (Friedman, 1996). Around 60% of commercial sex workers in Bombay's red-light districts are infected with STDs and AIDS (CATW, 2003). Eunuch Lane in Bombay has more than 2,000 eunuchs in prostitution. As young boys they are abandoned or sold by their families to sex rings and taken into the jungle, where a so called 'priest' cuts off their genitals in a ceremony called *nirvana*. Due to societal discrimination they generally survive by begging and prostituting. There is a common belief among Indian men that they can't contact HIV from eunuchs (Freidman, 1996).

The bordering districts of Maharashtra and Karnataka, known as the "*Devadasi* belt," have trafficking structures operating at various levels. Many of the *Devadasis* are found in brothels and dance bars of India who were dedicated into prostitution by the family on the name of goddess *Yellamma* (Menon, 1998).

While the patterns of trafficking are different across South Asia and even within each country, the literature suggests that the primary reasons behind women's entry into prostitution willing or unwilling is a result of a combination of factors such as poverty, discrimination, lack of family and social support and aspirations of better life.

2.3.3. From Temple Dancing to Bar Dancing: A Historical Background

In order to understand the relationship of dance with prostitution and trafficking, I traced the pages of historical records. Bar dancers of today represent generations of tyranny and discrimination in South Asian cultures. In Indian literature of the third century A.D. there are references to a special class of girls born in poorer families who had been offered by the parents to the service of the God and their religion. In the south India, they are known as '*Devadasi*' and in North India as '*Mukhies*' (Biswanath, 1984). During the Mughal Empire the Muslim rulers brought these dancers to courtyards and recognized prostitution as a profession which flourished under royal patronage. After the downfall of the Mughal Empire, hoards of

18

dancing and singing girls turned to prostitution and were trafficked to red light areas, as they were not trained for any other profession and society had no jobs to offer them (Biswanath, 1984). The situation of dancing women worsened during the British regime (Biswanath, 1984). These dancing girls were termed *nautch* girls and were a part of the largest red light area in Bombay, Kamatipura. This brothel was built for the refreshment of British troop and it catered to Indian clientele following independence (Biswanath, 1984). Among dancing girls the types of dances changed from temple dances to Bollywood dances. Courtyards were replaced by dance bars. What remained unchanged over the course of time is the created 'vulnerability of women' that is sold in the flesh market. Till 2005, dance bars in Mumbai city employed around 100,000 women who were trafficked from parts of South Asia and coerced for bar dancing and prostitution (Watson, 2006).

2.4 Review of International Literature

This study aims to explore the routes of migration from South Asia to the United States and the factors which create vulnerability among women to accept the risky routes of migration. In order to understand this transnational aspect of trafficking, international literature is reviewed to gain an understanding of the factors which fuel transnational trafficking.

Many studies have been conducted to understand different aspects of human trafficking internationally. Women and girls sex trafficked into the United States come mainly from three sources: Asia, Mexico, and the newly independent countries of the former Soviet Block. However, United States has been the destination for some women from nearly every source country of the world. (Miko, 2000; Richard, 2000).

Although early U.S. government statements claimed that sex trafficking was largely controlled by organized crime (OVAW, 2000), it later came out those individual entrepreneurs and small organized groups are the perpetrators of most of the trafficking into the United States

19

(Bush, 2004; Klueber, 2003, p. 16). Commonly, women are trafficked into the United States through one of three ways: (1) Illegal use of legal documents. This appears to be the easiest and possibly the most common way of successfully sex trafficking women into the United States. Traffickers take the legal documents away from the first victim, and then the documents are used to cover the trafficking of others. (2) Traffickers produce fake documents for their victims. (3) Some women are brought into the United States without inspection (Klueber, 2003, p. 16; Richard, 2000).

Some of the reasons contributing to women's trafficking into the United States are explained in human trafficking literature. Historically men have been migrants to the United States. In recent years the trend has changed and many women have been migrating to this destination country for various reasons. Some of the common reasons are better prospects in developed countries as well as open minded culture. United States offers better socio-economic opportunities for women who have been oppressed in conservative cultures in their home countries.

Traffickers also offer false promises and provide illegal paper work for border crossing in return of large sums of money or contracts. These contracts create debt bondage for the trafficked women. Increasingly restrictive immigration laws create an underground economy.

Another important finding in the literature was that vast distances between source and destination countries, complications on the way, and having no contacts or support system in the country of destination would preclude vast numbers of marginalized women from migrating to the United States or Europe without resorting to third parties. The costs of travel and relocation are far beyond the means of most trafficked women, who more likely were struggling for mere physical survival in their source countries before being trafficked (Kelly, 2003). These women are especially vulnerable to the false promises of traffickers (Klueber, 2003, p. 6). This phenomenon is repeatedly observed in literature. Economic instabilities as well as political

instabilities create vulnerability in women and children (Bales, 2000; Derks, 2000; Hughes, 2002).

Literature also suggests that women are used as political pawns in radical and conservative Muslim countries (Goodwin, 2003). This leads to increased vulnerability to trafficking. Anderson and Davidson (2003) argued that capitalism and growth of transnational corporation leads to increased migration and trafficking. There are also some links between marginalization of women in source countries due to social stigma and increasing objectification of women also hinder women's ability to hold legitimate jobs and this leads to trafficking and exploitation of women (Klueber, 2003, p. 7),

The most frequent observation in the international literature is about the universal acceptance of prostitution as an accepted profession. Some authors argue that prostitution is not as much of a choice for many women who are born in unfortunate socio-economic or political environment. It is simply the forced choice for survival (Bloom, Owen, & Covington, 2003; Demleitner, 2001; Farley, 2003; L. Kelly, 2003; Leidholdt, 2003).

The methods used by most researchers include surveys or analysis of policy and documents. The empirical studies are few on this subject. Significant amount of literature listed the methodological limitations of validity and reliability due to the limitation of collecting data from trafficked victims due to the hidden nature of this criminal industry.

While various authors reflected upon different dimensions of human trafficking, the studies conducted to understand the reasons that make some people vulnerable to trafficking in order to design prevention strategies are not even handful in numbers. Thus, for the purpose of this research, I will elaborate on the studies that tried to understand 'what constitutes trafficking related vulnerability?'

2.5 Findings from Empirical Review

Only four empirical studies are conducted so far on this issue. A micro level study was conducted with 'vulnerable girls in Romania' (Vlad, 2006). Similarly, a macro level analysis was conducted using country development indicators (Bales, 2003). Only one micro level study was conducted focusing on this issue from South Asian perspective, using qualitative interviews (Roy, 2007). Another quantitative study was conducted by Presenti & Rao in 2008 using the UN cross country dataset to evaluate the determinants of trafficking origin (Presenti & Rao, 2008).

The results of the micro level study conducted in Romania (Vlad, 2006) found that victims belonged to the age group of 15 to 25 and lived with their parents at the time they got trafficked. A random sample was taken from this population and girls responded positively on two indicator questions. The first being their propensity of breaking rules and the second being vulnerability. The study also used a Likert scale to measure propensity of breaking rules in three levels high, moderate and low. The results of this study presented very detailed personality aspects that influenced some young women's decision to migrate taking the risk of trafficking.

Kevin Bales (2003) conducted a macro level study to address the following two questions.

1. What are the strongest predictors of trafficking from a country on a global scale?

2. What are the strongest predictors of trafficking to a country on a global scale?

He used 76 predictor variables with the information about all countries of the world. The analysis found factors like poverty, population growth, population profile and youth population, and food security as push factors and found that aging population as well as standard of living were the primary pull factors impacting increased trafficking in majority of the countries. The

important finding of this research revealed that the countries with higher government corruption had higher risk of trafficking.

A more recent macro-level study by Presenti and Rao (2008) used the UN cross-country dataset to find important determinants in source countries of trafficking. The study found contrasting results from most trafficking related studies. Democratic countries and countries that have suffered economic transitions or political conflicts are more likely to be source countries. Also countries where women have more economic mobility have higher rate of trafficking. The study found that more gender unequal countries had lesser rate of trafficking. However, these results are based on a statistically flawed dataset. But, since this is the only study that has contradictory results from some of the general findings in human trafficking literature it is reviewed for this study as a negative case in the literature review.

The only study that studied vulnerability from South Asian perspective is by Roy (2007) where, qualitative interviews with victims of trafficking reveal that some women are more likely to get trafficked under the circumstances of poverty, illiteracy, destitution etc. However, the scope of this study was limited to one country and the study focused on within country migration in South Asia.

2.6 Specific Findings from Theoretical Review of Literature

Various theories are described in the literature which explains the factors rendering marginalized women more vulnerable to trafficking in South Asian countries. The factors explained in theoretical literature were reviewed in order to develop organizational codes for my study.

2.6.1 Economic Factors

Absolute poverty is clearly a 'push' factor in trafficking and is cited throughout the trafficking literature as a determinant of trafficking (Travnickova 2004, Farr 2005, Onyejekwe 2005, Miko 2004, O'Connor 2005, ActionAid 2005, International Labor Organization, 2002). At another level, poverty is directly related with the desire to migrate and thus, people from economically poorer countries are more likely to fall in the trap of trafficking. As suggested by Presenti and Rao (2008),

A variety of economic factors could drive women to seek to migrate illegally and thus become vulnerable to being trafficked. First, a stagnant national economy means higher unemployment and lower earnings, increasing the likelihood of illegal immigration and thus trafficking (Presenti & Rao, 2008).

Also, a similar explanation is provided by another author (Derks et. al., 2006). Those who fall in the trafficking trap are not the poorest section of society, but people who have money to make an expensive payment to trafficking agents. Illegal migration involves a large upfront payment to the agents before migrating in order to supposedly obtain jobs abroad. Leaving the country is thus often too expensive for the poorest in the developing world (Derks et al., 2006). It thus becomes important to explore the importance of poverty or economic well being of women as well as women's family as a determining factor in trafficking related vulnerability.

2.6.2 Gender Inequality

The dominance of literature related to sexual trafficking makes it essential to include the potential impact of gender inequality as a 'push' factor for trafficking. There is now a body of evidence suggesting that women are more economically vulnerable in more gender unequal societies, where unemployment rates are higher with lower wages, less occupational choice and less control over earnings (Agustín, 2003b). In patriarchal societies, women are more likely

to be affected by conflict and broader social and economic dislocation (O'Connor, 2006). The prospect of finding a job abroad, however risky the means is thus likely to become more attractive (Travnickova, 2004). The few cases where selling women by family members of women and children to traffickers is common are from more gender unequal societies.

On the other hand, in many gender unequal countries, women face significant legal and cultural barriers to mobility. In such societies, women are discouraged from travelling alone and a woman leaving the country unescorted by a male family member would violate the ethical norms of morality. Most South Asian countries have higher gender inequality and a woman's leaving home alone is stigmatized. While severely decreasing a woman's freedom and autonomy, such curbs on women's movements lowers the likelihood that they will migrate alone, thus at lesser risk of being trafficked (Davidson & O'Connell, 2004). As Hausner (2005) explains, in Nepal such curbs on women's movements have been codified into law, and one of the impacts of this law does seem to be that it decreases instances of the trafficking of women.

As per the UN data, the profile of trafficked women suggests that it is more educated, urban women and who are already in the labour force that tends to be trafficked internationally (ActionAid, 2005). Countries with higher levels of gender inequality also have smaller shares of educated women participating in the urban labour force. Thus, while education might result in lesser chances of women's choice to migrate for sex-work, on the other hand higher level of women's participation in the work force also increases women's mobility, thus increasing the risk of trafficking. Gender inequality thus becomes another important construct to explore as a determinant of vulnerability in this study.

2.6.3 Legal and Political Factors

The literature on trafficking suggests that the political situation within a country is also an important determinant of the level of trafficking. Conflict and civil war have been extensively cited as push factors for migration and trafficking (Heyzer 2002, Aghatise 2004; Hausner, 2005).

25

Another frequent contributing factor to trafficking is the wider climate of corruption within a country that facilitates trafficking. Trafficking chains often require law enforcement officials who are willing to look the other way (Farr, 2005). Indeed, some studies suggest that official corruption is the most important determinant of trafficking (Aghatise, 2004; Onyejekwe, 2005).

2.6.4 Legal and Illegal Migration

As discussed earlier, the relationship between migration and trafficking is not very clear. On the one hand, within the country of origin the same economic, social and political factors drive the desire to leave the country whether legally or illegally. If legal migration became more difficult due to legal changes in destination countries, illegal migration tend to increase (Marshall, 2001). Trafficking is nothing but migration gone wrong (McCreight, 2006). Thus immigrants rights groups see tougher immigration policies associated with higher levels of trafficking as potential immigrants turn to illegal routes and agents who are more likely to exploit them (Zhang, 2007).

On the other hand it is important to realize that legal migration from developing into developed countries tends to have an increasingly strong high-skilled worker component, the profile of legal migrants may be very different from that of illegal migrants and trafficking victims. Illegal migration would be more closely related to trafficking. However, since legal or illegal migration is not considered trafficking as per the definition of human trafficking, there is no data or research exploring this aspect of trafficking. Exploring the relationship of legal or illegal migration with sex-trafficking thus becomes an important component of my research.

2.6.5 Social Support

Many researchers have pointed out that in the case of sex-trafficking social support networks play an important role. Roy (2007) suggests that having positive migration networks decreases women's vulnerability to trafficking and negative social networks in turn increase the

likelihood of being trafficked. Hausner (2005) suggests that with respect to the sexual trafficking of women, more than migration other factors such as the breakdown of family structures have the greatest impact upon the trafficking of women.

2.6.6 Needs Assessment for Future Researches

Majority of published research in academic outlets is dependent on secondary data. In general, two approaches are adopted to conduct trafficking research.

(1) Labor framework has often been taken up by journalists (Bowe, 2003) as well as by activist researchers (Chang, 2000; Louie, 2001). (2) Migration framework has been most frequently edescribed by academic researchers to date (Gushulak & MacPherson, 2003). While a few scholars have published academic research on trafficking from South Asian perspective (Roy, 2007), there is little work done in terms of prevention, scale and rehabilitation for victims of trafficking. Overall research on trafficking has not moved beyond estimating the scale of the problem; mapping routes and relationships between countries of origin, transit, and destinations. Also, some theoretical links have been proposed in literature which explain reasons behind increase in human trafficking.

During the past decade, there have been some micro level studies in Europe and South Asia, which have provided an understanding about the demographic profiles of the victims of sex-trafficking (Roy, 2007). This information is furthered by asking more questions related to the causes underlying the vulnerability that forces women into the routes of trafficking related migration.

2.7 Theoretical Perspectives

Since the focus of my study on understanding the factors that contribute to South Asian women's vulnerability to trafficking, the theories emerging from existing literature has relevant place, in guiding the theoretical questions to be asked. Therefore a conceptual framework of factors impacting vulnerability is presented, which includes analysis and relevance of political,

as well as socio-cultural theories that influence South Asian women's vulnerability to trafficking. A theoretical framework is derived based on theoretical connects to derive guiding questions for this research.

The theoretical question this research tried to explore was, "How vulnerability should be defined in establishing the cases of consensual sex trafficking related to South Asian victims?" Based on the review of the existing literature on this subject three stages of vulnerability were derived from three theoretical standpoints, that impacted victim's behavior of 'risk taking by complying to the crime of trafficking'.

1. Is victim's vulnerability a result of societal conflicts of discrimination of power and resources?

2. Is victim's vulnerability a result of lack of social network or harmful social networks in the family or community?

3. Is victim's vulnerability a result of internal conflict of the victim between two or more risky prospects for survival?

In order to answer these questions, I looked at the vulnerability that lead rural South Asian women to make a choice of migrating to a city. Literature suggests that many women who consent to migrate in search for work initially, later work in the sex industry and find themselves in the control of traffickers, pimps, or brothel owners eventually (Long, 2002; Dinan, 2002; Macklin, 2003; Johic, 2005). Many women migrate legally and their freedom is restricted in the receiving countries like in the case of mail order brides (Oxman-Martinez et.al., 2001) and also in the case of bar dancers from Mumbai, who became desperate to migrate after the dance bars were banned in Mumbai, India. Situations like these call for a deeper theoretical understanding of 'vulnerability to migration and trafficking' since many South Asian women get trafficked in the rotes of migration (Castles and Miller, 1998; Adepoju, 2000; Taran, 2000; Rogaly et al., 2002;

IOM, 2002b; UNIFEM, 2000, Aghatise, 2002; Plan international, 2005; Free the slaves, 2005, Groupe Development, 2006).

Various theoretical approaches can be used as a framework to analyze this issue. Drawing from the existing theories related to social work, the stated issue was approached using a three stage model, within the distal context (macro level structures such as poverty, discrimination, societal customs etc.), within the proximal context (mezzo level structures such as family, community and interpersonal relationships), and within the person (micro level structures such as desires, aspirations, and personal experiences). In this research I looked at the stated issue from the theoretical framework of Conflict and structure within a distal context to answer the question, 'If discrimination in the environment creates room for migration within which victims get trafficked'. To expand the analysis I will furthered this analysis from the prism of the theory of social exchange and network to understand how proximal networks like family and community create vulnerability to trafficking in South Asia, and finally I will analyzed this issue in light of the theory of prospects to explore the available prospects for girls who weighed the option of migrating to foreign destinations to work in dance bars knowing the risks of prostitution and trafficking.

2.7.1. Theory of Conflict and Structure

Most social theories that emphasize social conflict have roots in the ideas of Karl Marx, the German theorist and political activist. The conflict theory defines problems as social and structural rather than just individual. This theory was greatly influenced by Marxist ideology and Parson's functionalist writings (van Wormer, 2006). The theory is used to view human relations as the outcomes resulting from inequities in power based on class, race, gender, sexual orientation, ability, and age (van Wormer, 2006).

29

South Asian countries represent a patriarchal culture at different levels in society including caste, class and extreme gender discriminations. Gender discrimination begins at the primary level of education where parents invest in the education of boys over girls. This is because, (1) Men's wages in the labor market are historically higher than women, so there is better return on investment (2) There are direct benefits expected from the son as compared to a daughter who has to be married off to another family. Gender discrimination is observed more in families living below poverty line as they have to make choices when resources are scarce (Dollar & Gatti, 1999). In most cultures, a son is preferred, and daughters are often a liability to the natal family as a result of societal customs like dowry and arranged marriages. In families living below poverty line, having girl child is a clear threat to economic well being of their family. Poor parents thus prefer to marry their daughters off to strangers who make less or no monetary demands, thus making them more vulnerable to trafficking (D'Cunha, 2002; Frederick, 2005). Also, in economically backward regions of Nepal, due to economic limitations parents often sell their daughters to traffickers for petite income (CATW, 2003). Young girls are commonly married off to elderly men (Ejalu, 2006). Similarly, the girls from ethnic minority and lower caste groups are more at risk of trafficking (Ejalu, 2006).

The notion of conflict places a strong emphasis on the structures of economic and social inequality. "Bob Mullaly, in his book 'structural social work' introduced a conflict structured view of society and recognized that one's circumstances and difficulties are connected to one's economic and social position in society" (van Wormer, 2006). In majority of the South Asian countries, women's marital status impacts her status in society. Single women, widowed, remarried or deserted women are often looked down upon by society. Traffickers often target widowed women and girls of marriageable age presenting themselves as suitable candidates for marriage (Altink, 1995). Colleen Lundy (2004) developed this theory further by using structural approach to explore issues related to social justice, emphasizing the capitalist globalization and the undercurrents of oppression of the powerless. This view was expanded

30

from the pioneering work of Marx (1848) and Engel (1880) who viewed globalization of capitalism as the cause of social conflicts. The Marxist dialectical method focuses attention on how an existing social arrangement generates its social opposites. In recent times, the class relations of capitalism embody a contradiction (Ollman, n.d.). Capitalist countries need workers, and people in developing countries need work, but the economic interests of the two groups are fundamentally at odds. Such contradictions mean inherent conflict and instability. This conflict is reflected in the case of young girls who are pushed by poverty, unemployment, gender discrimination and societal neglect towards the capitalist or modern cities.

South Asia is traditionally a feudal agrarian society. With the advent of globalization in recent years, there has been a shift in agriculture from growing food crops to cash crops for export. Poor farmers hold smaller pieces of land if any, and often have to migrate in search of work; If they have any family land then tilling the family land left behind is the only means of survival for women and children left behind (Adepoju, 2003). Men are often exploited in production factories and receive infrequent wages (Free the slaves, 2005). Women keep waiting for their spouses to send money which is frequently delayed by months. With these increasing economic pressures of global society, more and more women and their children are forced to join the workforce for living (Free the slaves, 2005). Development is equally feudal in South Asia, leaving migrants with no choice but to migrate from rural areas to cities, where employment is available (Bolz, 2001). Many women who engage in prostitution of various kinds are rural migrants who came to cities in search of employment. The recently banned dance bars were filled with women who migrated from smaller towns and cities and were pushed into trafficking in more industrialized destination countries, where capitalization of women's bodies make trafficking the third most profit making industry in the world (U.S. Dept of State, 2003).

Stemming from the same theoretical roots based on Marxist ideology, the feminist theories primarily question the issues related to women's oppression in society (von Wormer,

31

2006). They relate discrimination in society from a micro and macro dynamics and how they create discriminative attitudes and practices. These theories explain the behavior of powerful and the privileged in society by race, gender, and class to maintain these privileges by oppressing the other and its impact on the powerless or neglected as outsiders. In South Asian cultures women learn during their upbringing to accept less power in relationships (von Wormer, 2006). In countries like India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and Nepal gender discrimination is not practiced at only economic level. Customs like female infanticide, wife burning, dowry, and arrange marriages socialize women to give up their rights and earn the status of an 'ideal daughter', 'perfect wife' or 'dignified widow' in society. Girls are often socialized to sacrifice their own interests to support their family (Hyland, 2001). An ideal daughter is considered disloyal if she refuses to obey her parents (UNICEF, 2001). Women often agree to migrate in risky situations under debt-bondage to support their family (Bishop & Robinson, 1999). In certain communities in South Asia, it is the daughter's responsibility to care for the parents (Kaime-Atterhog, 2000). Widows and divorced women bring shame to family and thus are left to fend for themselves and their children after the death of their husband. In the minority regions of Shan, Myanmar the devastating civil war and collapse of national economy have left native widows with little resources and higher need to migrate, making them more vulnerable to trafficking (Beyrer, 2001).

In a society where women are heavily discriminated against, their opportunities are curbed and options are limited, earning a decent standard of living by dancing or prostituting in a foreign city or country might not seem like a bad option (Pleumarom, 1998). The theory of conflict very well explains how socio-economic and demographic factors create an environment that pushes women from their native environments to migrate to foreign cities or countries and how the ever increasing demands of global customers in capitalized world order pulls women to migrate the illusive dream destinations. However, this theory fails to explain the choice of network for migration influences the kind of exchanges the women

32

have to make in the process of migration. The theories that emphasize the role of social support system in limiting immoral social exchanges are thus useful in analyzing how social networks can promote or discourage women's choice to migrate in risky environment. Based on this theoretical review, one of the guiding question explored in this study was whether victim's vulnerability is a result of societal conflicts of discrimination of power and resources?

2.7.2. Theory of Social Exchange and Network Theory in Migration

The theory of social exchange and the theory of network in migration reason the processes that underlie the behavior of women's consent in to risky routes of migration. The theory of exchange derived its roots from an economic theory that suggests that the predominant value that dictates economic behavior is wealth maximization. Mauss was one of the first theorists to define the theory of economic and social exchange (Mauss, 1967). The theory explains how women often get trapped in debt-burdens which eventually force them to consent to the proposal of working in the sex-industry.

In rural communities of South Asian countries, people's knowledge about jobs in cities, housing and transportation is usually limited. However, there are always some families or members in the community with a long history of migration. These people would normally have idea about the destination city or country. This knowledge is exploited by the community members who wish to migrate in return of some favor or amount (Massey et al. 1993). The process of migration is a result of either economic or social exchange. In South Asian countries, parents often agree to marry their young daughters with elderly men who do not ask for dowry (International Organization for Migration, 2003). Similarly, girls orphaned due to natural calamities and widows without any financial support often agree to prostitute for a certain time, till the trafficker recovers the cost of her migration. Traffickers are experts in creating debt-traps where illiterate women eventually assume the role of a slave (Groupe Development, 2006). This

33

phenomenon is explained by Mauss (1967) who explained the concept of 'Social Exchange' and noted that the gifts that appeared to be proffered in voluntary manner between two individuals or societies are in reality repayments under obligations.

Another theorist Blau (1964) viewed social exchange more broadly. He asserted that "Social exchange can be observed everywhere once we are sensitized by this conception of it, not only in market relations but also in friendship and love". Mauss (1967) based on this observation mentioned that social exchanges are not limited to things of economic value but they operate in the forms of courtesies, entertainment, ritual, military assistance, women and children. He categorized social exchanges in human relationships in terms of (1) status (2) love (3) service (4) information (5) material goods and (6) money. Factors like desertion by husbands, divorce, marital infidelity, death of husband are the reasons that increase women's irrational exchanges that lead to trafficking (Skrobanek et al. 1997, Farley, 2003). Other factors such as family disintegration or death of parents also make young girls more vulnerable to trafficking due to lack of economic or emotional support (Farley, 2003). In South Asia, virginity of a woman is the benchmark of acceptable, ideal woman. Events such as gang rapes in wars, sexual assault, or losing virginity with a man not approved by a family results in heavy stigmatization and abandonment of the girl from the community. Following sexual assaults, families view girls or women as ruined, dirty and impure. This also results in desperation of girls to migrate in order to escape shame. This helplessness is very well exploited by traffickers, pimps and criminal gangs (Kaime-Attrhog, 2000; D'cunha, 2002; Parrot and Cummings, 2006). When women make a choice to migrate, they enter into a social or financial exchange. As suggested in the literature, unable to pay back the favor or debt often results in compliance of women to the orders of the traffickers.

Another migration theory explains how traffickers exploit social networks and compel women to work as sex-slaves. Network theory of migration takes this notion further and states

34

that existing family, friends or social network in the receiving country provide support to new migrants (Wilson, 1994). Regular migrants make frequent trips to destination and are aware of the process as well as the cost of migration, immigration etc. Due to the trust in members of family or community, women assume that lesser risk is involved in the migration process (Groupe Development, 2006). This chain of network is often exploited by traffickers who bribe the community members in creating the debt trap and tracing possible victims of trafficking in South Asia (International Organization for Migration, 2003). These theories take a step forward in explaining women's vulnerability to trafficking. Apart from the larger socio-economic discrimination, having negative networks in the community can influence a woman's decision to take the step forward in migration, involving in irrational exchanges. In the case of bar dancers Kale (2006) explains, they often start working as just dancers, it is the increasing debt burden and demands of the environment that make them enter prostitution. This research explains if victim's vulnerability a result of lack of social network or harmful social networks in the family or community?

2.7.3. Theory of Prospect

Circumstances under which every woman decides to 'consent to trafficking' are different. However, literature suggests that traffickers exploit 'the desire of better life' or better life prospect. "Poverty and lack of prospects force thousands of women and children from Asia, Africa and Eastern Europe to strive for a better future in prosperous countries" (Kananen, 2009). Based on this theory the guided question derived for the study was, If victim's vulnerability was a result of internal conflict for the victim between two or more risky prospects of survival?

Most girls who were trafficked for bar dancing or prostitution chose to go to Mumbai as it was the city of dreams and many girls aspired to find good jobs or be actors or dancers in films. Aafter the ban on dance bars in Mumbai, the girls who went back to their native villages mentioned that "they were reluctant to leave the country. However, circumstances back home

35

had forced them to look for suitable avenues" (Sassaram, 2006). In our final analysis, this theory was supported by the narratives collected from informants. In the case of bar dancers, they have formerly been victims of trafficking when they left their villages to work in a city or dance in bars of Mumbai. After the bars were closed they had to pay money to the traffickers so that they can go to foreign countries and work in the same environment.

Prospect theory was developed by two psychologists Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky in 1979. This theory was designed to explain how people make choices in situations where they have to decide between alternatives that involve risk. This theory is not extensively used in social work to explain human behavior but holds relevance in this specific case of understanding 'the decision of bar dancers' consent in trafficking'. This theory suggests that people under weigh outcomes that are probable as compared to outcomes that are obtained with certainty (Kahneman and Tversky, 1979). The earlier analysis of this issue utilizing the conflict theory and the theory of exchange suggests that South Asian women have fewer choices due to their created handicap to survive in the labor market. With limited skills or resources these women have to choose from various risk involving situations. After the closure of dance bars, women are left with fewer options like going back home, where they will not be treated with dignity but as prostitutes or immoral women, taking a manual job poorly paid in disorganized sector that has no guarantee of regular income or accept the offers of trafficking agents to migrate to another country that guarantees income. This theory suggests that women make a rational choice of working as sex-workers or bar dancers, after weighing other options which involve even greater risk. The analysis based on the theoretical model clearly depicts how women's internal conflict of choosing one of the two choices that she might want to avoid. However, her choices are limited in patriarchal and capitalist world. Based on this analysis, this research proposes a broader meaning of 'force' to be included in the definition of human trafficking. While law enforcement can do thorough investigation, social workers can support in

36

reaching out to the victims who had fewer options but pay the traffickers in order to migrate for survival.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLGY

Media around the world has reported the horrifying stories of victims of human trafficking over the past decade. Since the introduction of Trafficking Victims Protection Act in 2000, a wide range of estimates are published from various government and non governmental organizations. The U.S. Department of State estimated around 800,000 to 900,000 victims that are trafficked internationally (Wilson & Dalton, 2007). However, there is a wide discrepancy between the anecdotal data, research estimates and the actual number of confirmed cases of trafficking (McGaha & Evans, 2009). This gap calls to question the oft-quoted numbers of victims of human trafficking and the credibility of research conducted to understand the subject of human trafficking. The reports on human trafficking from various international organizations such as International Labor Organization (ILO), United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC) as well as Government's official documents like Trafficking in Persons' (TIP) reports showed considerable instability over the years. In the year 2000, TIP report states around 50,000 men, women and children were trafficked into the United States (U.S. Dept. of State, 2000), and in 2002 the TIP report quoted that around 50,000 women are trafficked into the U.S. for sexual slavery alone (U.S. Dept. of State, 2002). To combat human trafficking internationally, the U.S. government alone has spent over $5 million. The U.S. Department of State supported research efforts in human trafficking by providing funding for research and training to various human trafficking task forces and related non-government organizations (U.S. Dept. of State, 2008). Considering the lack of empirical data against millions of dollars spent on human trafficking research in these tough economic times, the U.S. Government's Accountability Office

(GAO) reviewed the methods of human trafficking research and estimation. All the existing data was found methodologically weak and scientifically unsound (GAO, 2007).

During the first phase of human trafficking the government funding was emotionally driven. Now with the advent of second phase the frustration due to lack of scientific research has led to the perception that the issue of human trafficking is inflated (McGaha & Evans, 2009). The data on human trafficking is challenged as the quantitative estimates and analysis are highly unreliable and invalid. Also, the primary question arising while researching this population is lack of reach to the actual victims who live their lives under enslaved conditions. Realizing this limitation, the academic community has paid little attention to the research on human trafficking. However, social work is a behavioral science and has an advantage of using scientific and artistic research techniques based on the research demands. The problems with researching human trafficking must not deter independent researchers to adopt innovative methods of inquiry in this subject, as it impacts victims of severe abuse who can otherwise live a life of freedom and dignity. I have been involved in anti-trafficking movement for the past three years. I have personally observed the situation that trafficking victims live in and interviewed potential victims of trafficking as part of anti-trafficking initiative. In order to gain an in-depth understanding of what causes trafficking and why women migrate to unknown destinations at the risk of their lives, I chose a qualitative methodology for data collection from South Asian bar dancers over the last two years. My involvement in this issue since 2007 becomes meaningful at this point when I am trying to give voice to the girls I have met, whose vulnerability and lack of choice available compelled them to live a life full of risk, shame and abuse.

The purpose of this study is to explore South Asian women's vulnerability to consent in trafficking related migration. It is evident from the review of literature that our understanding of sex-trafficking from the South Asian perspective is quite limited. Since the purpose of this study is to explore why South Asian women consent to trafficking related risky migration, an in-depth

qualitative analysis of the factors impacting South Asian women's vulnerability to trafficking is conducted using the grounded theoretical framework.

As per the original theory building approach in grounded theory, lack of prior knowledge in the area of research is the ideal situation as it prevents data from biases and helps in building completely original theories (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). However, Strauss and Corbin (1990) stated that prior knowledge of existing literature helps in validating existing concepts and relationships which can be checked on actual data. Keeping both of the above positions in mind, I have reviewed the existing empirical and theoretical literature on trafficking in South Asia. However, there is no research conducted specifically on the Indian bar dancers who migrated to the United States at the risk of being trafficked. Thus, as a researcher I had an advantage of collecting data with an open mind and not restricting the rich information that is generated on this subject.

3.1 Rationale for Qualitative Design

The handbook of qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 1-2) describes qualitative research as a "field of inquiry in its own right". This methodology was pioneered at the "Chicago School" in the 1920s and was later adopted by other social and behavioral science disciplines like history, education, political science, business, social work and nursing. Denzin and Lincoln (2000, p. 2) call it a "complex interconnected family of terms, concepts and assumptions". Qualitative methods link cultural and interpretive studies. These methods comprise of case studies, participatory inquiry, interviewing, participant observations, visual methods and semiotics, as well as interpretive analysis (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000).

Qualitative inquiry is an appropriate methodology for seeking answers to "questions that stress how social experience is created" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p.10). Various studies have tried to map the profiles of victims of sex-trafficking, and based on that assumed the factors

40

contributing to the 'vulnerability of young girls and women to sex-trafficking'. The voices of trafficked victims and women vulnerable to trafficking so far remain silent in sex-trafficking research. Currently, the UN protocols to suppress trafficking in persons and the United States' policy are based on theoretical assumptions. While there is general understanding about 'what creates vulnerability to trafficking', there are no studies depicting experimental case studies to support these reasons. Thus, it becomes important to understand what victims think are the reasons contributing to their vulnerability and consent to trafficking related migration. In order to gain in depth understanding of this reality, qualitative methodology is chosen as it is the most appropriate form of design and provides freedom of expression to the actual victims of trafficking without any kind of methodological barriers that limit the depth of understanding in quantitative research designs.

3.1.1. Grounded Theory

Grounded theory is developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) as a method of conducting research in sociology is widely used now by researchers from various disciplines (Henwood & Pidgeon, 2003). This methodology is based on symbolic interactionism and has gained acceptance in social work qualitative research in recent years. In the past decade it is described as the "most influential paradigm for qualitative research in the social sciences today" (Patton, 2002 p. 487). The name *grounded theory* is derived from the concept of exploring a theory which is 'grounded', since it involves in-depth data collection from the informants and the researcher. Conceptualizing and theorizing are the two important components of this theory. Grounded theory locates "subjective and collective experience in larger structures and increases understanding of how these structures work" (Charmaz, 2005, p. 508). Hence it is the most appropriate method for researching the subject of consent in sex-trafficking. This method allows an in-depth understanding of the larger societal structure in South Asia that impact the subjective experiences of bar dancers interviewed.

41

3.2 Research Questions

The overarching goal of this research is to explore what kind of push and pull factors create vulnerability among South Asian girls to consent to trafficking related migration. While I was engaged in this research with an open mind and did not limit my data collection by a formal instrument. Some of the guiding questions explored in this research included,

(1) What are the structural factors that lead to South Asian women's decision to migrate from rural areas of their country to Mumbai to work in dance bars?

(2) What are the structural factors that lead the bar girls from Mumbai to migrate to United States for working in the dance bars?

(3) What are the kind of social exchanges impacting women's submissiveness to the bar owners and traffickers in the destination city or country?

(4) What is the role of social support and social networks in South Asian women's decision to migrate?

(5) What is the role of economic factors in South Asian women's vulnerability to trafficking?

(6) What is the role of social policies regarding prostitution, bar dancing and human trafficking in promoting or curbing human trafficking?

(7) What is the impact of gender and caste discrimination on South Asian women's decision to migrate for working in dance bars?

(8) Does the prior knowledge of risk involved in trafficking related migration, help in mitigating women's decision to migrate?

3.3 Research Method

Based on qualitative methodology, ethnographic approach was used in exploring the factors impacting South Asian bar dancers' consent in migrating to United States at the risk of being trafficked. Ellis (2004) mentioned in her novel "*The ethnographic: A methodological novel about auto ethnography"* that in qualitative research --

42

Across the continuum, the focus changes from studying others who are assumed to be separate from the researcher, to examining interactions between the researchers and others, to include positionality, politics, values, and story of the researcher who interacts with others. (p. 27).

3.3.1. Ethnography

Secondary data was used for this research. The data was originally collected by the researcher using ethnographic methods for human trafficking task force. Interaction with participants and researcher focused observation was used to collect data. The settings of this research (selected South Asian dance bars) were repeatedly visited. Field journal was maintained recording the researcher's observations and interactions that were later useful in analyzing the data. Two methods of ethnographic data collection were used.

1. *Interaction based:* In this method researchers use to try to find patterns and models based on the data collected. This approach falls between the science and art of qualitative research (Ellis, 2004, p.28). In order to understand whether the conceptual model derived from the existing literature can be validated on the South Asian bar dancers' population, data based on interactions with South Asian bar dancers working in the bars of United States is used partially as part of this research study.

2. *Researcher focused:* This approach focuses more on art side of qualitative research. This approach blends the social science practices with expressive art forms. "This approach uses more artistic and empathic social science approach to present complexities of moments of experience lived by the ethnographer" (Ellis, 2004, p. 30).

This approach is extensively used by researchers in education. While new to social work, this method of qualitative inquiry can be extremely useful in studying populations like victims of trafficking or bar dancers which are not easy to approach for an academic research. Realizing the importance of this method, in this study researcher focused approach is used to explore the complex socio-economic structures, demographic characteristics, family and social

43

networks, as well as available prospects impacting the lives of women who comply in trafficking related migration to unknown destinations. Ellis (2004, p.26) describes that "ethnographic fieldwork includes everything you do to gather information in a setting, especially hanging around, making conversation, and asking questions". While collecting data where formal interviews with victims of trafficking are difficult to obtain, ethnographic approach makes it possible to collect data in an informal setting.

<u>3.4 Profile of Research Participants</u>

The population studied in this research is migrant women from South Asian countries who work in dance bars in the United States. Most of the girls working in these bars have worked in similar settings in dance bars in Mumbai prior to their migration to the United States. A study by Bharatiya bar girls union (2006) revealed that these girls migrate from smaller towns in South Asia to the destination cities like Mumbai in search of work to support themselves and their families. In 2005, the government of Maharashtra state banned the dance bars in Mumbai by recognizing them as 'breeding ground for crime' in the city. After the closure of dance bars in Mumbai, there has been a significant increase in the number of bar girls being trafficked to different countries, with Mumbai becoming a transit point for far-flung destinations like Hong Kong, Dubai, and even in African countries like Uganda and Kenya (Viju, 2006). It is documented that around 5,000 girls left their homes in search of livelihood from poorer north-eastern states of India and Bangladesh and reached the closed dance bars in Mumbai through pimps and agents. The agents later provided them an options of visiting foreign countries for a short period of time (Viju, 2006). Many of these bar girls from Mumbai are now found working in the United States. After the closure of dance bars in Mumbai, the city has changed its demographic from being a destination city to a predominant transit city for trafficking of young girls and women (Viju, 2006). To understand the profile of this subject population, it is important to understand the process of migration within South Asia, process of immigration from India (transit country in South Asia) to the United States (destination country) and the relationship of

trafficking with related issues of migration and immigration. Trafficking occurs using the processes of migration and immigration. Thus, it becomes important to understand the relationship of the two with trafficking (Nair & Sen, 2005). For this study, I particularly focused on 'trafficking related migration' at two levels: (1) understanding the phenomenon at the conceptual level by analyzing structural aspects that create environment conducive to risky migration within South Asia and, (2) understanding the process of migration at an operational level from South Asian destinations to the far off lands of Western and Middle Eastern parts of the world (Nair & Sen, 2005). For the current study, I focus on women over the age of eighteen who entered the United States after 2005, when the ban on dance bars occurred in Mumbai.

3.5 Research Setting

The South Asian dance bars operate as restaurants and bars. However, their primary income is the money showered on dancing girls every night. These bars are places where men are entertained by women who dance to Bollywood songs and tunes while men shower money on them. Similar bars are operated in metro cities in South Asia-Mumbai being one of the largest markets for these bars. South Asian dance bars are places that are similar to entertainment bars with exotic dancing or Belly dancing in many western countries. However, these bars are significantly different from western bars because bar dancers are fully clothed and there is no physical contact involved with any clients or patrons. In Mumbai, these bars operated as dens for criminal activity including drug and weapons trafficking and prostitution (Patil, 2005). The South Asian dance bars in the United States are very similar to Mumbai bars. The girls dance on the stage from 10 p.m. to 2 a.m. every night, seven days a week. The seemingly simple bars are places where men spend colossal amounts of money on the dancing girls. On a good night dancers in a Mumbai bar can make twice as much as a high class exotic dancer in a New York bar (Mehta, 2004).

The peculiar setting of dance bars made it possible to conduct an ethnographic research with minimum risk involved in studying human trafficking. While there is little

discussion about trafficking of girls for this purpose in the literature, the South Asian literature on dance bars makes it clear that women are trafficked and exploited in these bars (Group Development, 2006). These bars were chosen for this research because dance bars are public places where data can be collected and participant observation as well as interaction is a possibility without the concern of harming the subjects or the researcher. Also, the girls from South Asia work primarily in these settings abroad, which made it the most appropriate research setting for this study.

<div align="center">3.6 Sampling</div>

3.6.1 Non-probability Convenience Sampling

Snowball sampling and theoretical sampling methods were adopted for this research. Non-probability convenience sampling and snowball sampling were the sampling techniques used in this study. At first the subjects were chosen from the selected South Asian dance bars. Repeated visits were made to selected dance bars to establish contact and build trust of the owners as well as the girls who danced in these bars from March 2007 to August 2007 which was the first phase of data collection. The objective was to collect as much data as possible with a target of at least a sample size of ten participants. At the time of data collection it was clear that the study would only involve voluntary participation and thus, probability sampling was impossible to employ. Also, the number of dancers in the selected bars was low; however, it did represent a larger population of bar dancers from South Asia who chose to take risky routes of migration to work in destination countries willingly in the past five years. When I started visiting these bars, I realized that some girls were more open to talk while others were very afraid to talk to me. Thus, I decided to talk to those who were referred to me either by the bar owners or other girls who were more open to share their stories. This sampling technique was particularly useful in collecting information from the bar girls who did not regularly dance and were more reserved and skeptical of motives of a woman in a bar full of male clients.

3.6.2. Theoretical Sampling

Theoretical sampling is defined as "the process of data collection for generating theory whereby the analyst jointly collects and analyzes his data and decides what data to collect next and where to find them, in order to develop his theory as it emerges" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967 p.56). Theoretical sampling was useful in this study as it allowed the researcher to go back to the informants for clarifications or elaborations on earlier interviews and also allowed recruiting more participants to fill the gaps in theory (Fassinger, 2005). Bar dancers come to the United States on a short term entertainment visa or tourist visa and are moved from one bar to another. Thus, the timeline was very important to maintain in this research to gain enough information. From the initial interactions with the participants only three girls remained in the bars I was collecting data from and the other girls had been moved to different bars in different destinations. However, the stage was always full and they would bring new girls to replace the girls who left every four to six months. This provided me with an opportunity to collect theoretical sampling in the second phase. The first phase was over in August, 2007. I had collected ten in-depth interviews with the help of snowball sampling. From the collected sample many stories were very similar and only a few differed significantly from the majority. At that point I wondered if that could be because they all belong to the same cohort and have worked in the same places in the past. So, it was important for me to understand if there were new or different stories emerging from a different cohort that arrived in January, 2008. The aim of this phase of sampling was to collect at least the same number of interviews "to understand the multitude of differences" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967 p.56).

3.6.3 Sample Size

Qualitative methodology does not have strict rules about sample size. Since representative sample or generalizability are not the objectives. Qualitative researchers collect data from participants till the data saturates (Fassinger, 2005). However, generally twenty participants are usually enough for a qualitative study (Cresswell, 2007). During the first phase

the data was collected from ten women working as dancers in South Asian bars. Ten more participants were interviewed during the second phase using theoretical sampling and more data was collected from two girls who were interviewed in the first phase. Since there is no strict guideline regarding determination of sample size for qualitative research, data saturation was used to determine the number of participants for this study. When the stories became too repetitive the first phase was stopped and the second phase became an ongoing quest for answers from which ten interviews have been selected for this research. While secondary data was used for this research, since the researcher was involved in data collection, it became possible to elaborate on the process of data collection.

3.7 Data Collection Method

The methods of data collection adopted for this study included participant observation, demographic details, unstructured interviews, and review of existing literature.

3.7.1. Participant Observation

Data was collected using participant observation. Fetterman (1998, p. 34-35) explained that, "Participant observation combines participation in the lives of the people under study with maintenance of a professional distance that allows adequate observation and recording of data". The researcher becomes the instrument of data collection while collecting data using participant observation. The researcher becomes active participant in the natural setting of the subjects and tries interpreting their environments. One method involves getting close to the people, which for this research involved frequent visits to these bars and establishing a relationship with the subjects. However, using this method the research runs a risk of researcher bias. For this reason, naturalism is questioned as it does not account for the effect of the researcher on the social scene. However, for this research it served as the most beneficial method of discovering the unspoken gestures and cultural nuances. My understanding of this issue was enhanced by using this method of inquiry as I was able to understand what goes on

within these dance bars by being a part of this research setting. The advantage of this research method is that it not only provides the perspective from the research subjects' point of view on the factors that compel women to take risky routes of migration but it also provides the perspective of the researcher as an active participant in the research process.

3.7.2. Demographic Data and Unstructured Interviews

The most difficult and extremely important aspect of this research was to gain an understanding about 'vulnerability' and 'consent' in human trafficking among the South Asian bar dancers by interviewing the victims themselves. The strength of qualitative methodology is in gaining an understanding of "human lived experience" (Schwandt, 1997 p.84)

First person narratives of informants' life experiences are a crucial aspect of this research. Ethnographers use journals or interviews to achieve this aim. In this research, personal interviews were obtained. The data was collected on the bar girls' perception of themselves, their profession, individual journeys from their native places to Mumbai and from Mumbai to the United States. Since the interviews were unstructured in nature most interviews were free flowing and I went with an open mind as a researcher to collect any new information I could collect in every interview. The primary guiding question was 'why risky migration was chosen as an option' by bar dancers themselves to migrate to the United States themselves and why did their families choose to send their daughters to work in cities of South Asia from smaller town. Also, as a researcher I tried to explore if there was awareness about the risk of trafficking in the process of migration among the bar dancers or their families? There was no time limit set for any of these interviews. The interviews were conducted in a more informal conversational way. Unlike the structured interviews, the information was collected from the dancers based on their convenience and comfort level to talk. During these interviews, I tried to ask demographic data about the age, education level, state of origin, economic status of family, family support

and social network, prospects for work before migration, as well as tried to gauge their level of awareness about risky migration and its link with sex-trafficking.

3.7.3. Existing Literature

Secondary data was collected on the issue of internal as well as international sex-trafficking in South Asian context. Data was also collected from history books about the tradition of prostitution and trafficking in South Asia and from South Asian NGOs like *Apne Aap*, *Bharatiya* bar girls union, UNIFEM etc. Since there is little empirical research conducted on this population in relation to human trafficking, news archives media reports and news paper reports of past five years were also studied to understand the issue from a macro socio-economic and political perspective.

3.8 Ethical Issues in Data Collection

Victims of human trafficking live in severely controlled environment. Though bar dancers have a little more liberty than the victims of sex-trafficking, data collection for researching this subject was a challenge. The human trafficking task force consists of researchers, members from agencies working on human trafficking and officers from law enforcement. This data was collected as part of investigating the link between South Asian dance bars operating in the United States and its relationship with human trafficking or human smuggling. Several visits were made to the chosen bars and opportunities were created in the rest rooms, make up rooms and at the back of the stage where I could talk to the girls individually. After the participants established a good trusting relationship with me, I informed them that I am also interested in conducting a research to understand why they have migrated and if they perceive any risk in it. At this point due to the familiarity and comfort level it was possible to obtain information from some bar dancers who decided to not reveal their real demographic information but agreed to share their life stories with me.

3.8.1. Availing Access to Victims

During the first phase of this research, the owners of dance bars were very skeptical of my visits to the bar as South Asian dance bars are places with predominantly male customers. It was only when I convinced the bar owners that I would like the dancers to dance in a charity event that the owners saw an opportunity for their bar's publicity and image building and I was allowed access to the victims. This was the most difficult phase of this research. Once I was allowed to talk to the dancers it was not as difficult to establish a friendly relationship where they felt comfortable to talk. My training in Indian classical dancing helped me establish a relationship easily with the dancers. In order to maintain anonymity during the conversations, I explained to them that they could use their stage name and shadow information while talking to anyone before the event instead of using their real information to protect their identity. This was specifically important as most girls fear deportation and exposure of their names as bar dancers. Being a bar dancer is a taboo in most parts of South Asia and many girls worked in this profession without telling their family members.

3.8.2. Gaining Trust of Participants

Gaining trust of the bar dancers who are in the United States for a short period of time was the most difficult part of data collection. It is widely noted in human trafficking literature that it is difficult to obtain access to human trafficking victims and that has resulted in limited research in this area (U.S. Dept. of State, 2003). During my initial interactions with the bar dancers, I realized that these women had suffered betrayal at various stages of their lives and learnt the art of hiding their real identity. During my first three weeks of visiting the bars, I was given their names that were more poetic than real. Also, in the presence of bar owners and clients they behaved like beautiful happy dolls sharing their happiness with the bar audience. During my second visit at a bar, I asked one of the girls about the beautiful cloths she was wearing. She said that the dress she was wearing was 500$ and she paid that amount of

money in India. After ten minutes of conversation, I asked her name and where she was from? She paused, and said "My name is Tasveer which means (painting)". That is not a common Indian name and I was not convinced that it could have been her real name. After an hour on the same day, a middle aged man from the audience showered a lot of money and asked her name. The girl told him that she is "Naaz". I learnt from my experience that it was not easy to obtain any information from these girls. While they agreed to talk and shared their lives, the question that bothered me as a researcher was if any of the information they were providing was real? What seemed like a real challenge at the beginning of this research became my expertise towards the end the first phase of my research. After repeated visits to the bar and observation I could draw a pattern in their behavior and realized that they did not share any of their real information to anyone except the bar owners who held their passports.

The first time I got to know the real name of a dancer was when she told me her real name in the restroom of that bar. She had given me a different name for herself prior to that day. When I asked her why did she do that, she said that it protects her identity since she would not like her father to know that she is a bar dancer and clients can not be trusted. She said "these men can do anything to ruin my life". She explained how telling false names and heart melting life stories protected them as bar dancers. She said they used fake names and stories in Mumbai bars due to the fear of police and stigma attached to their profession back home. She also said that using fake identities protected them to an extent from their romantic old fat lovers who visited the bars every night looking for "something". When I asked her why was she telling me the truth, she said because I was a woman and lived in the United States. So, she said she trusted me. I did not go there for anything the men were there for. After this point, it was easier for me to gain trust from dancers. While deception could have been the easiest way to collect data for this research, as per the rules of research ethics, the method used for this research allowed complete freedom to participants to not participate if they did not wish to. The informants were under no obligation to provide any information that they did not feel comfortable

sharing. As a researcher, I was just an observer and only interacted with anyone in that setting when some amount of trust was established with the person and the person voluntarily shared some information. I always promised the participants that none of their identifying information will be shared with anyone. After my repeated visits to these bars, I had established trust among some girls who trusted my words that none of the information they shared with me was going to harm them in any way. Trust is viewed as a mutually beneficial exchange between the researcher and the informant or as a moral currency (Booth & Booth, 1994). Since, there was no tangible exchange of goods or currency possible during this research, for most women the only reason for sharing their life stories was the fact that 'someone was genuinely interested in hearing their reality without any expectations of favor in return'. For most girls they felt comfortable talking about their past life with me. However, there were times when some girls, were very resistant to share any information without any payment. I did not include those for this research.

3.8.3. Participants' Expectations

At first I had clarified clearly that I am a researcher and a classical dancer. As part of my research I was visiting these dance bars. However, after repeated clarifications the dancers started building expectations from me by suspecting that I was hiding my 'real identity' as one of the dancer mentioned on my third visit. She said that they were suspecting that I was either connected to the Bollywood or political party. After repeated clarifications that I was merely a researcher and interested in this subject, the bar girls believed it. However, they were to a great extent disappointed. At a point I was worried that their disbelief in me may result in their lack of interest in this research as there was nothing substantial that was gained by participants by sharing their life stories that they had hidden from not only to the world but themselves for a long time.

<u>3.9 Data Analysis</u>

Qualitative analysis software NVivo 7.0 was used to analyze the data collected from the secondary data sources. While I had collected the data for human trafficking task force, it was not analyzed. I have been permitted to use this data for the purpose of my dissertation. Data analysis began after the IRB approved this study in August, 2009. The primarily sorted transcribed data was then entered in NVivo as (1) individual documents – interview transcripts of the data collected for the human trafficking task force, saved as individual documents and (2) memos- Notes of the literature were saved as memos.

3.9.1 Saturation

The criteria used to determine the saturation point of the data collection was to stop when new themes stopped emerging. Strauss and Corbin (1990) explain that grounded theory uses sequential open coding and axial coding for theory building. Keeping this in mind for the purpose of this dissertation, the data was transcribed line by line, concepts were derived from these transcriptions using NVivo coding (in the words of the informants). When more data was collected, the newly coded concepts were compared with the existing concepts and new categories were formed acquiring new information. A 'core narrative' was generated at a point when the data saturated.

This described the important aspects of the data collected. From a pattern that emerged from the collected data, a tentative theoretical framework was generated. This model can be tested on larger populations by researchers in future with the use of quantitative research methods (Fassigner, 2005).

3.9.2. Issues of Validity

Validation of qualitative studies is quite different from the quantitative studies. Some of the methods suggested in literature with regards to validating a qualitative study are: prolonged engagement, triangulation of sources, thick description, member checking, negative case analysis, clarifying researcher bias, fairness, peer review, and external audit (Glaser & Strauss,

1967; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Maxwell, 2005). To maintain validity in my study, triangulation of multiple data sources was used. Thick descriptions have been provided at the analysis stage, negative case analysis is also used since it provides a different perspective and helps in maintaining objectivity in the research. Research biases have been clarified at the time of data analysis by maintaining reflexive journal throughout the process of data collection and analysis, fairness in reporting is maintained by using extensive quotations from the informants and quoting the dialogues that convey the essence of the research as well as the lived experiences of participants. Prolonged involvement was used but not in its strictest definition. The process of data collection took two years of consistent efforts and involvement. Similarly, member checking was not used due to the nature of data collection being auto-ethnographic. Peer review or external audits were considered for this research. But, as per the IRB guidelines in order to protect the anonymity of the available data, only researcher's credibility was used as validation criteria.

3.9.3.Credibility Statement

Qualitative research offers a route of digging the depth of any subject and thus can prove an asset in studying a subject at hand as needed and sensitive in nature. The primary concern while choosing a qualitative methodology to study any subject is regarding the validity of the study. One of the way qualitative studies can be validated is by providing a credibility statement (Patton, 2002).

My experience as a social worker since past eight years helped me decide on using qualitative methodology for this study. I was familiar with the issue of vulnerability in bar dancing and prostitution in India. In 1999, I had interned with an organization that worked closely with women engaged in prostitution and bar dancing in India. I was aware of the dangers involved in bar dancing and the relationship between bar dancing and human trafficking. At completion of my MSW degree in social work from Tata Institute of Social Sciences, I had worked for five years with rural and tribal communities in different parts of India where I was made aware of fact

that number of people migrated from rural areas to urban areas in search of work. While working in disaster relief and rehabilitation I had come across cases of trafficking of young children. During my education at University of Warwick to pursue Master's degree in International human rights law, I wrote my thesis focusing on how women's rights were lost in genocides in South Asia, especially India. For the past ten years I have been an advocate for women's rights in South Asia. Being born and brought up there I was aware of the inhuman treatment received by women born in vulnerable families. Thus, when I came across the subject of trafficking of bar dancers from India to United States, I joined the local task forces that were engaged in understanding the reasons that compelled victims to live in abused situations. After a year of research using some forms of deception and performance ethnography I had collected information from South Asian bar dancers on various aspects of their lives. At some point when I was disappointed with the fact that being aware of many victims who lived in situations similar to that of trafficked victims, and yet they could not be rescued without their consent or a direct statement admitting that they were trafficked, I decided to understand why was it that the law required victims of trafficking to give a legal statement against their traffickers and what factors stopped them from accepting the reality. I knew that there were several reasons behind the victims' decision of continuing their life in exploitative environment one of which was stigma and shame and the other was the fear of deportation to home country. However, I wanted to study this issue more objectively to understand what at the first place compelled those women to accept offers of risky migration? My years of experience and involvement in this subject carved my path to conduct a qualitative study as part of this Ph.D. program on this topic.

I had conducted academic researches with various academic institutions in India using qualitative methodology and had also taught qualitative methods at National Institute of Design and MICA to graduate students. My familiarity with this method of research and the subject as well as years of experience in women's rights movement in South Asia helped me in effectively carrying out this qualitative research.

56

<center>3.10 Human Subject Protection</center>

3.10.1. Recruitment Procedure/Informed Consent

This study uses secondary qualitative data for analysis. I obtained permission to use the data on South Asian bar dancers in the United States. While conducting a secondary data analysis the issues of human subject protection do not hold as much importance as in the case of first hand data collection. However, since in this case the researcher was also involved in the process of data collection, it becomes important to address this issue at the time of analysis.

For this research the analysis has been based on anonymous data made available by the task force for this research. During the data collection women who were recruited for this study were those that came forward and willingly talked to the researcher about their life experiences.

3.10.2 De-identification of Informants and Confidentiality

All the dancers entered United States with legal visas. Bar dancing per se, is not illegal in the United States. Thus, there was no serious harm involved for informants to participate in this study. However, serious harm can be caused to the victims as well as the researcher if confidentiality was not maintained in this research. In order to maintain confidentiality, at the time when the data was collected the researcher changed the names as well as specific identifiable information about the participants like their name, age or address. Also, during current research at the time of analysis the names as well as any specific demographic information that can identify the victims were replaced in order to maintain confidentiality.

3.10.3. Data Security

The data for this research was collected in phases. During the first phase the interview records were kept safe by the agency the data was collected for. While there was no identifiable information in the data, just to ensure the safety for the researcher as well as the participants the interview transcripts were also saved in a locker by the researcher and the agency. At the

<center>57</center>

time of analysis, only my private computer was used to maintain the safety of the information and all the files used were password protected. The computer hard drive is encrypted to secure the data analyzed for this research.

<u>3.11 Cost-Benefit Analysis</u>

Studying the population of trafficked or migrant victims is a difficult area of study, especially studying it qualitatively. While for most researchers the primary problem is their reach to the victims of trafficking or vulnerable migrants and avail data on human trafficking, it was relatively easy for me since I had access to the data collected for the task force. Thus, I decided to conduct a cost benefit analysis and assess the risks involved against the possible benefits from conducting this research using secondary data available.

3.11.1. Cost

The only cost involved in this research at the time of data collection was that of identification of the informants. Ethically, this practice could be risky for the victims if any form of identification was exposed. However, since I was only using secondary data for my dissertation; it was not an issue for this research. However, at the time of analysis of this data strict norms of confidentiality were enforced to protect the victims from any kind of harm that can be caused for being part of this research directly or indirectly.

3.11.2. Benefits

The primary benefit of this research is the pioneering of an empirical inquiry for the South Asian bar dancers who are always at a very high risk of being trafficked. For years, this population has been completely neglected by social workers as well as law enforcement in the South East. The population is heavily exploited and abused. However, there are no services for the victims trapped in this nexus to come out of their abusive situation. This research is an attempt to start a dialogue among academic community about the neglect and abuse suffered

by millions of girls in South Asia. This is perhaps the first empirical study that describes the linkage between international policies, and their enforcement in signatory nations. This research evaluates the impact of recent human trafficking protocols of UN on the vulnerable population to trafficking. This empirical work brings to light the lack of diagnosis of issues related to trafficked population as well as any kind of service options for this population and answers some oft raised questions in the literature like, 'why do victims of trafficking remain in abusive situations'? The reason I have explored the causes of vulnerability in this study is because curbing human trafficking cannot occur with one time strategy. Unless we know what causes the problem, it is difficult to find ways to deal with it. Thus, while the study was difficult to conduct, it was conducted timely for the neediest population.

Also, the reflective journal recorded that the informants were really happy about having someone to care about their situation and listen to them and that was the primary reason for their participation. One of the thing the girls said repeatedly was, 'I am feeling much better now' after the interviews. The researcher was asked to come again after every interview and spend some time with them. It was realized that the understanding of policy makers and social work practitioners is very limited. This is also reflected in the human trafficking definition spelled out by the United Nations. When a foreign victim of trafficking consents or pays money to go to another country for prostitution or related trade, victim is considered to have assisted in a criminal activity. Hopefully, this research will present the real reasons that compel South Asian women to become active participants in the crime of trafficking. Also, the results of this study will be disseminated to a larger audience including NGOs, policy makers, interest groups, academicians as well as with the law enforcement offices in South Asian countries to bring about some change in the fatal victimization of South Asian girls born in poor and patriarchal families.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS

In this chapter I summarize the process of data analysis adopted for this research. At first the field notes from interviews and reflective journals were transcribed into organized write ups. Then the analysis involved first level coding of the data from available transcripts. After coding individual transcripts, patterns were coded. General themes were then recorded, the process for which is described as *Memoing* in qualitative research (Miles & Huberman, 1994). After arriving on the general themes, a comparative analysis of data was conducted to measure the similarities and differences in the experiences of participants (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

4.1 Contact Summary Sheet

After the first phase of data collection in August 2007, the interviews and reflective journals were transcribed. The demographic details were generalized and all the sensitive information that existed in the field notes or the journals were deleted.

Contact summery sheets were filled out after each visit at the bars. This sheet incorporated the themes that emerged in that particular contact visit, and a brief description of the answers I obtained on the guiding questions. Anything unexpected, salient, or interesting that I had noticed in that contact was recorded. The contact summary sheets were very useful after the first phase of data collection, as the sheets contained new themes and ideas that came out during each visit. They were also useful in identifying new questions or issues I would like to obtain information on during my future visits. Based on the summery sheets, new guiding questions were generated for data collection in the second phase with theoretical sample.

The target questions that were developed after the first phase of data collection were,

(1) Do bar dancers perceive themselves as vulnerable in the routes of risky migration?

(2) What is the understanding of bar dancers about the possibility of being trafficked in the routes of trafficking?

(3) Does child sexual abuse within family at a younger age have any relationship in South Asian women's decision of migrating at the risk of being in abusive situations?

(4) What are the requirements for a bar dancer from South Asia to be recruited for working abroad in similar bars?

(5) Who is more vulnerable to trafficking? Working women or women at home?

(6) Does being born in a certain caste increase vulnerability to trafficking among South Asian women?

4.1.1. Vulnerability

During the first phase I was not asking questions except the guiding questions that were derived from existing theoretical literature. However, some of the questions added after the first phase were based on the interactions with participants during the first phase. The summary sheets helped me question my beliefs based on prior reading in this subject and called for newer information.

During the first phase of data collection, six out of ten girls interviewed mentioned that they felt really powerful and they were glad that they could leave their country to come and work in the United States. My perception was that the girls who live under the control of the migrating networks and their exploitative employers would be really vulnerable and unhappy. However,

this hypothesis was not supported in the first round of interviewing. Two girls out of the six who did not perceive themselves as vulnerable said that this is work like any other work. One of these girls, Sharmila[1] said:

Women work all night long in call centers in India and many get raped in the night jobs. They make no money; they work so hard and get exploited. I am better off. I love to dance and people love to watch me dance like you do. You are a lady and I have no fear. I work hard all seven nights of a week but I get better paid here. I was worried last year when I lost my job. But, I consider myself lucky I could come here.

Three girls perceived some risk in their job. However, they did not find themselves at a vulnerable position by migrating through a network to work in dance bars abroad. One of the older dancers in the bar told me how dance bars are not seen with respect in any other country but America and rarely do they find women customers in those bars.

I asked Tanuja, were you scared that you might be in bad hands and may not get what you were expecting from American bars when you were leaving country? She paused for ten seconds. As if she was thinking how to answer this question! Then she said "there is risk in any job". I am not afraid of risks very much. Well! Girls like me – no one can touch. There are some girls like that who have this risk. But, they can't speak English, can't dance, have no money to pay for their ticket or dresses and cry for taking them abroad for work. Those girls have more risk in this job.

The youngest girl in that cohort said that she did not perceive herself as vulnerable to trafficking because she was doing very well even in Mumbai. She would have never agreed to leave that city and her boyfriend if she was not compelled. "I was on the top in Bombay. You ask any girl in the city about Rakhee, they will tell you who I am. A year before I left India, I was

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[1] All the names have been changed to protect identities of participants.

approached by a producer to screen me in his film. The only thing I did not have I feel that time was foreign experience. I originally wanted to go to Dubai as Bangla girls make a lot of money there. But, I am really not here for money. I just need some experience of different countries. That's all".

These initial responses made me think that perhaps it was my own mind that was thinking that the girls were vulnerable to trafficking. However, most of the girls in that cohort showed no signs of vulnerability of any sort and instead seemed really convinced about what they were doing. While this could pose a huge risk in my study, the most important thing to add in my study was to find out if the girls perceived themselves as vulnerable victims of trafficking and whether trafficking is linked with foreign travel for work for South Asian bar dancers.

4.1.2 Possibility of being Trafficked

Having realized that many South Asian girls working as bar dancers did not see themselves as vulnerable victims of trafficking, it became important for me to understand whether they could visualize a possibility of being trafficked in the routes of migration. It was at my ninth interview that I added this question in the first phase. Thus only one of the participants was asked about the possibility of trafficking. I tried asking this question to Reshmi in many indirect ways. While at first I did not get any clear answer. Towards the end she opened up and said that "a lot of girls are sold in the gulf countries, like Saudi Arabia, Dubai, and Jordan. Some of my friends who went there never returned and no one knows where they are. So, it is risky to go there. But, if you pay and the party does your paperwork, you can work without being prostituted". She said that she preferred not going to gulf for working even though as a bar girl she could make a lot of money there. But, she said that she knew many Muslim bar girls who died after living as prostitutes of some Arab Sheikhs for a few months and no one was there to claim their bodies.

63

I did get a little understanding about the fact that these girls are aware of not only the risk involved in trafficking but also which destination is risky and which one is not as risky. However, I wanted to verify if more participants shared the same level of awareness and thus added this question in the second phase's guiding questions.

4.1.3 Child Sexual Abuse

During the interaction with one of the bar dancers, I came across a new reason that I had not heard of in the prior interviews or any literature I had read so far. The girl said that her elder uncle had raped her repeatedly as a child. When she complained about it to her family, the family called her names and she decided to leave her house. After reading her transcript several times, I thought that this might not be as unusual in South Asian cultures. Perhaps not every girl would have the courage to leave home, some may. Thus, Child sexual abuse was added as a guiding question for the second phase.

4.1.4 Qualifications to Work as Bar Dancers in America

One observation which was repeated in every summary contact sheet was the skill of dancing, command over English language and amount paid to get this job as a bar dancer in America. I did realize that all the girls working on these bars were over the age of 18 years and had a good level of stage confidence. These girls did not at all resemble the dance bar girls I remembered from five years ago who worked in some of India's *mujra* bars. These girls had a class about themselves and yet every one of them had paid a different amount for getting this job in America. Thus, it became necessary to understand the profile of South Asian bar dancers who get recruited for working abroad.

4.1.5 Women's Mobility

One of the participants said that it is a perception of people that women who sit at home get trafficked for sex work. But, the fact is that a lot of families leave their young girls on this path. The dancer said that there are few young girls who are forced to prostitute. However, majority of the bar girls dance only to feed their families and are the sole earning member in the

family. So, women who are mobile and have to work to sustain their own and their family's lives often get offered lucrative jobs of making more money by doing foreign trips or working in foreign bars abroad. While only one of the participants mentioned this, and yet this finding was important in connection with the literature. Thus it was incorporated as a guiding question in the next stage of data collection.

4.1.6. Caste/Religion

Based on my prior work experience I was aware of the fact that many dancers who worked in South Asian dance bars belonged to Muslim families. However, during my review of the contact summary sheets, I repeatedly observed that most girls working in the dance bars belonged to lower castes in both Hindu as well as Muslim communities. As one of the girls mentioned during a conversation "Dancers are dancers. They should be treated with respect. But, in dance bars all the girls come from lower caste families. All those upper caste rich customers have fun there. No one cares really". Understanding the importance of caste and its relationship with bar dancing I thought it would be important to understand if there is any relationship of caste with the trafficking among South Asian girls. For the second phase of theoretical sampling, this was added as a guiding question.

4.2 Coding

Based on a thorough review of theoretical literature, a conceptual map of factors that impact South Asian girls and women's vulnerability to trafficking was prepared. A provisional "start list" of codes was prepared prior to starting the field visits. The conceptual map of factors impacting women's vulnerability to trafficking or risky migration included many variables. Thus, I started this research with a master code of trafficking and migration indicators coded as (TMI). The three sub-codes that I had hypothesized which theoretically explained South Asian women's vulnerability to risky routes of international migration were (1) Conflict and Power related structural indicators (CTMI) (2) Societal and support indicators (STMI) and (3) Prospect

related indicators (PTMI). During the first phase of data collection, all the sentences related to any of these codes were added to the particular code. However, the interviews revealed many more factors that impacted their vulnerability for making the risky choices of working abroad in unknown dance bars. Since those phrases and reasons did not classify in any of the above sub-codes. Phrases repeatedly used by informants ("in vivo codes") were good leads suggesting repeated pattern related to vulnerability among South Asian women (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

4.2.1 Conflict and Power Related Structural Indicators

In an ethnographic study, the idea is to avoid pre-conceived notions that may affect possibility of generating new knowledge. However, I had read extensively on human trafficking and I was also active in anti-trafficking efforts. My prior knowledge of the subject had set my mind on assuming that all the girls who get trafficked are either forced or coerced into slavery-like conditions. My first visit to the dance bar was a shocking experience. I saw around ten girls dancing joyfully on Bollywood songs as if they loved what they were doing. Another assumption I had was that the people who get trafficked are often from poor economic backgrounds. However, hailing from India, I could tell that the girls dancing in that bar seemed far from being poor. They wore really expensive dresses and jewelry while dancing. When I asked one of the girls how much is her dress? She said $900 and 1000$ worth jewelry. I asked how many such dresses you have. She said we don't repeat the same dress twice in a month. I asked her, how much do you spend to come here? She said "two to three *lakhs*[2] minimum". I was shocked hearing the expense they incur for coming abroad for just three months. Two or three hundred thousand in Indian rupees could last a middle class family for three years in India. So, my assumption changed and I realized that perhaps the girls have a lot of money. However, the

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[2] Lakh in Hindi mean 'hundred thousand'.

real story of how these girls gather the amount asked by 'agencies' and why was unfolded at a later stage in my research.

4.2.2 Societal Support Indicators

While theoretically I was aware that having social support might decrease the risk of being trafficked, when I conducted my research, I found the reality to be quite the opposite. During the first phase of data collection I had encountered that there was some amount of resistance to family and friends among all the girls I had interacted with. I had realized that working in a dance bar made these girls social outcasts and that fact did not bother them. This was an interesting observation based on conversations with girls at different times. Some of the things they said about families and friends were, "family is the reason I am here. If my family did not force me to earn, I would be like you studying in a college". At another occasion a girl said "I feed my family. I am the only member feeding my husband his family and my own father. I wish I was on my own".

These kinds of remarks in the middle of a conversation were not uncommon. However, it was the case of Seema, one of the middle aged girls that made me understand how societal networks actually influence the families of young girls to send them for work in cities. She said, "My stepmother never wanted me to go to school. I was a good student and yet I never got a chance to go to school after she married my father. I had two younger sisters and my new mother gave birth to a son that year. She told me that I was the eldest and since my father had lost crop twice in season, he would like me to take up some job. I knew how to read and write, so I at that time thought she was asking for my support. I also heard my father talk to the landlord about getting me work in a nearby city. But, I had no idea that they were selling me for money. When I went to Mumbai with six other girls, we were asked to do all kinds of jobs for no money. Money was directly sent to my family. I was fourteen when one of the six girls from my village asked me to join a dance bar. I was reluctant for two months. But, I was fed up of that

67

dirty life of poverty and physical abuse. So, I ran away from the place I worked for a year and started learning the dance moves instead from senior dancers. That was when I first earned my own income and till date, I am with the same owner who got me that first job". This incidence was a clear indication of how parents are coerced by traffickers to sell or send their children to work in unknown cities. While I could not find much literature or data to substantiate it, I thought it was an important factor to look at.

4.2.3 Prospect Related Indicators

Literature suggested that poor prospects led Eastern European and Mexican women to join modeling agencies and become mail order brides. The subject population I wanted to study was not too different from these examples. Thus, lack of prospects seemed like another important code to start with. During my interviews, I observed that there was a link between the limited prospects available to the girls as it involved some amount of risk. At various occasions I was convinced after listening to the of informants that if I were in their position perhaps I would choose to take the route of risky migration. Especially, all the girls I interviewed in both the phases said that closure of dance bars in Mumbai made them more vulnerable to activities like cheap prostitution, low paid jobs that involved higher risks or exploitation. For these girls working in dance bars abroad was the less risky option as they knew a little about this from their friends who had worked in Gulf countries before.

<u>4.3 Revised Coding</u>

During the first phase of data collection I realized that there were many more codes generating out of the interview transcripts which were not the part of initial codes. Many more codes emerged progressively at the time of data collection. In order to organize the codes that emerged during data collection an accounting scheme was prepared. As per Bogdan and Biklen (1992) the accounting scheme was prepared to organize data. The organizational codes

68

included setting, definition of the situation, perspectives, and ways of thinking about people and setting, process, events, activities, strategies, relationships, and methods. At 'etic' level this scheme provided a general structure for distributing the codes derived after the first phase of data collection. At 'emic' level the codes evolved after the first phase as a result of repeated observations and participant interactions. I started with the initial three codes. However, at the end of the first phase of data collection, there were eight more codes that emerged from the interviews. As per Miles and Huberman, (1998)

> All approaches to coding - Pre defined as well as accounting scheme guided or post defined codes change as the field experience continues. Researchers with start lists know that codes will change; there is more going on out there than initial frames have dreamed of. (p.61).

In this research, the initial codes were extended by two methods. (1) *Surfacing* by identifying new categories and (2) *Filling in* by reconstructing the pre constructed scheme with new insights emerging from extended data collection. The revision of coding scheme took place twice in this research. The first revision took place after the primary phase of data collection and the second after the theoretical data collection process in the second phase at the time of data analysis (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

At each stage of coding, all the codes old and newly emerging were operationally defined to avoid any kind of confusion and add clarity in analysis.

4.4 Pattern Coding

The initial coding pertains to simply naming the observable phenomena and categorizing it. The second level of coding goes beyond just identifying the codes to understanding the patterns in different codes, by identifying recurring codes in different transcripts. After the first phase the patterns were analyzed in existing codes and newly

emerging codes were listed based on their recurrence in different transcripts. After the final phase of data collection, again the pattern codes were derived.

Pattern coding was a helpful tool in dividing large data into smaller analytic units. These codes also provided me with a schema to correlate emerging themes and categorize interactions in organized units. Pattern coding after both phases of data collection helped me in understanding the interrelation among summary transcripts, as well as the relationships among different theoretical constructs which explained the causes that impacted South Asian women's vulnerability to trafficking. The table on the following page explains the patterns in coding after each phase of data collection in relation with the initial codes developed based on the theoretical review of literature.

4.4.1 Creating Memos:

After pattern coding the data, memos were developed in order to reflect theoretical and conceptual ideas connected with the codes and overall with the study. Memos were generated based on reflective journals to explain how the collected data related to the research questions I wanted to study.

Table 4.1 Emerging codes at various phases

Initial Codes	Emerging codes- phase- I	Emerging codes phase - II
CTMI	Poverty (P-ct)	Accidents in family (A-ct2)
	Discrimination (D-ct)	Physical abuse (P-ct2)
	Illiteracy (I-ct)	
	Unemployment (U-ct)	
	Rural urban divide (R-ct)	
	Caste (C-ct)	
	Sexual abuse (S-ct)	
STMI	Family (parents) (F-st)	Boyfriend (B-st2)
	Spouse (in laws) (S-st)	Organizations (O-st2)
	Neighbors (N-st)	
	Extended social network (E-st)	
	Religious groups (R-st)	
PTMI	Clerical (C-pt)	Maid (M-pt2)
	Actress (A-pt)	Prostitute (P-pt2)
	Lab technician (L-pt)	Item-girl (I-pt2)
	Support Call centers (S-pt)	
	Daily labor (D-pt)	
	Air hostess (H-pt)	

4.5 Field Report

I interviewed 20 participants for this study. From the 20 participants, 12 were trafficked at an early age in their lives and two were trafficked for labor trafficking. Four girls had chosen bar dancing as a career option. One girl was born to a prostitute and had joined bar dancing as one of her obvious option and one was sold by her parents. Since the proposal was about focusing on understanding victim's consent to migration and human trafficking, seven girls working at the same bars were left out as they refused to participate in the study. There were two common factors among the girls who were selected for this study. (1) All the twenty girls had previously worked as bar dancers in Mumbai, India and (2) All the twenty girls worked for one of the two bars selected for this study in United States.

The data was collected in two phases. During the first phase, talking to the victims was very difficult as the owners of these bars were very particular about not letting me talk to the bar dancers as I was clearly not a client and they were suspecting that I had some connection either with the police or immigration. However, with repeated visits and several conversations about dance and my interest in the subject of understanding culture of bar dancing, I was allowed to talk to the girls for brief periods of time when they were off the stage and not dancing. Thus, all the informants were interviewed over several visits during the first phase. Due to the girls' fear of deportation and abuse if they shared any personal information, it took me a year to just get enough information that I wanted to answer my research questions.

During the second phase the data collection was theoretical and fairly simple. Snowball sampling was used to get access to negative cases. By this time, the bar owners as well as previous informants had mentioned about my work to the new recruits for this study and the only girls who were interviewed in the second phase were those who voluntarily agreed to share their stories. Thus, during the second phase the interviews took place in the bars before they started dancing. An average length of each interview was almost two hours.

72

Data collection in the field was challenging as it demanded me to be present at the dance bars during their work hours as I was not allowed to visit them at their residence. From what I was told, the girls in both the bars lived as a group in the apartments provided by the bar owners, cooked for themselves and never went out without the permission of the bar owners. Also, while at the bar, I had to wait for the right opportunity to talk to the girls at length. The only time I could talk to the girls was when they were off stage. The girls took turns in dancing. On an average six girls danced on the stage while the other four or six rested. The first group of six would dance for three hours or so and then the other group would take over. However, when the clients kept showering money on particular girls, they kept dancing throughout. Thus, waiting till the girls were free and in a mood to talk lengthened the time of data collection. Some girls preferred talking behind the stage and not in front of the bar owners. Thus, data collection was logistically challenging as I spent around seventy six days to collect data from the twenty participants. At times data collection was exhausting as it involved being at the bar till 2.30 p.m. and listening to the bar dancers who shared stories of survival that are unforgettable.

4.6 Field Observation

I was exposed to the dance bars in Mumbai, India during my MSW program. I had interned at an organization that worked closely with prostitutes and bar dancers on alternative lifestyle program. I knew some bar dancers in Mumbai who came to the organization I interned at for counseling and was always amazed at the amount of abuse they had suffered. My assumption before starting this research was that the South Asian dance bars in America would be more sophisticated where dancers will be protected, unlike the dance bars in Mumbai that were filled with gangsters and old aged men who got pleasure out of exploiting the young girls' need for income.

Knowing that girls were not quite welcome at dance bars, I decided to just be an observer for a month in various South Asian bars and chose the bars where I could see a possibility of interaction with the owners as well as bar dancers. I visited six bars during that one

73

month. Realizing it was difficult to be accepted being a girl at such places that thrive after sunset; I chose to go the two bars where a friend of mine was a frequent visitor. Since he owned a few hotels in America, he was a frequent visitor to two of these bars and knew the bar owners briefly. It was because of him that I got a chance to talk to the bar dancers and the bar owners.

Both the bars where data was collected from were very similar in their outlook. Their owners knew each other as competitors. I was introduced to the owners by phone. The owners knew me as an art patron who loved Indian dancing. Before I could ask them to allow me to conduct a research it was very important to establish a rapport with the owners. The first time I walked into the bar, I was a little scared as I had to pass through a dark alley and there was no guard, security or anyone to check my id at the door when I entered. I was worried about my security. But, as soon as I reached inside the bar was lit as if for a special occasion in red dim lighting and there was loud music that somehow could not cut through the walls to the door. The floor of that bar was flooded with dollar bills and all the tables were full of middle aged South Asian men. The customers were blowing money away on the dancers. These sites were very different from the western strip clubs as the bar dancers were clothed. They dressed in a conservatively provocative manner with backless blouses and see through *sarees*. In both the bars I noticed that the women were in the age group of 18 to 40 years. On an average there were ten dancers dancing every night on those well lit stage in the middle of all the customer's tables. However, being a classical Indian dancer myself, I could tell that only two to three from the group were trained on dancing. The rest of the girls kept taking rounds and smiling at customers who showered money on them. As the night would progress the men will start approaching these women and the dancers will just smile, sometimes talk a little with the customers and tell them to come back again.

During my initial observational visits, I thought that the dancers were really happy here happily dancing and the bars did not seem risky compared to the dance bars I had seen in Mumbai. The clients in Mumbai were primarily gangsters, drug dealers or lonely men, whereas the clients in America were almost homogenous. Middle aged men who had families and were looking for something better than a routine life. While the client groups were different, in either of the places there was no respect for these women. Men tried holding hands with these women, asking for their phone numbers and a time they could visit these women. In most of my visits I saw the girls turning down the offers by telling the bar owners. However, they did give out their home phone numbers to some regular clients who spent a lot of money on them.

It seemed like a illusion was created in these bars where men of any age could walk in with as little as a dollar bill as get attention from a beautiful South Asian girl who danced like an actress of a Bollywood film. These girls danced on the Bollywood songs and the clients perceived themselves as the actor in Bollywood films pairing themselves with beautiful bar dancer they get attracted to.

The girls seemed adept at the art of flirting and storytelling. I heard the girls telling various stories to different customers about themselves when they would talk in the afterhours. My presence was initially intimidating to not only the male clients but also the dancers. However, my being a female made it easy for me to get an opportunity to build a friendly relationship with some dancers, who later agreed to participate in the study.

4.6.1 The Dance Bars

The girls lived and worked in a controlled environment. They were always on the watch and did not have their own passports with them. They were provided their documents only before each travel. The girls lived as a group in a guest house provided by the bar owners and did not go out unless the owner arranged for it. They were brought to the bar every evening in a

75

closed van with dark glass windows. They entered the bar from the back door and occasionally went to motels after the bars were closed. It appeared like their freedom was restricted in the places they worked. The owner of the first bar belonged to 'Shetty' community of India and the other bar owner was from Pakistan. While the former started his life as a waiter in a Mumbai hotel and later moved to the United States in search of jobs, the latter was a property broker before opening dance bars. From talking to the bar owners, I learnt that the reason they run dance bars is there is a great demand of such bars in South Asian male population and business owners spend huge amounts of money just to get a glimpse of these girls. While the owners said that they give a fair share of the money blown on the dancers to each of the dancers, the dancers on the contrary said that they were paid Indian wages depending on their years of experience and their demand.

4.6.2 The Customers

The customers ranged from college boys to men in their sixties. They wore casual dresses, often similar to those Hindi film actors wore in the films. It appeared as if the younger boys came in groups and loved showing off that a particular girl is giving them attention. They had little money but they often went up the stage and started dancing with the dancers. However, the dancers never focused on these boys as they knew that they will never have enough money to shower on them.

The most frequent customers of these bars were middle or old aged men, who I noticed lying to their families about being out of town or in a business meeting. These men were really often fat, fatigued looking and had accounts with the bars. They would enter and the bar tender would bring two beers right away. I never saw them paying money and later discovered that they knew the owners well and paid monthly. '*Peise Udana*' (Throwing paper money in air) over a beautiful young woman has been a tradition in many cultures in India. I saw some men showering around 1500$ one night on a single dancer. These men believe that bar dancers only

76

know the color of a dollar bill. They often made garland of dollar bills and asked dancer to wear it. However, in a dance bar setting the equation appeared different. The customers were throwing money and feeling powerful that they could buy beautiful girls as young as their daughters. These were the men who often got the phone numbers of these dancers in the darker hours of the night.

The third group of customers was that of more strange customers. These were people who were entering the bar for the first time and sat on the end tables far from the stage where dancers were dancing. They would order beer and sometimes food which was the rare. They kept starting at the women and often gave the server some money to go and blow on the girls. Their conversations often revolved around either organizing a privet party with these women or pitying these women.

While I was imagining that at some point I will get to see some kind of criminal activity or gangsters in these bars as was the norm in Mumbai bars, I did not get to see any such activity. However, I often saw the regular middle aged men spending quite a lot of time in the back of that dance bar with the bar owners.

4.6.3 The Band

The girls were brought to the United States as a part of an entertainment band, on a temporary visa category called 'entertainment visa' which is a short term permit to perform in a foreign country. When the Maharashtra government banned the dance bars in Mumbai city, these girls were approached by companies that organized foreign tours. These companies had connections with embassies and they hired smart lawyers who did false paperwork when necessary for the women to obtain foreign visa. The girls who worked in the two bars were approached several times before in their lives but had denied the offers of foreign tours as they were earning well enough in Mumbai. Out of the twenty girls I had interviewed some had

77

worked in dance bars in other gulf countries. The same company also consists of a team of singers and musicians whose talents are really poor but enough to convince the foreign officer granting visa when dressed in Indian costumes. The band leader is normally responsible for controlling the women while they are working abroad. In one of the two bars, the band leader was the singer and in the other one the band leader was a man who just accompanied the troop but did not do anything at the bar except watching the women. Girls seemed to be afraid of the band leaders. If any customer approached the girls for organizing a privet party or a date, they referred him to the band leader saying we don't do anything without his permission. The band leaders were completely reluctant talking to me at all the times. While the bar dancers became friendly after a few months of my regular visits at these bars. In one of the two bars, one girl often sang as well as danced. She was really in demand and wore more Indo-western outfits.

4.6.4 The Bar Dancers

The dancers were dressed in beautiful Indian sarees with backless provocative *cholis*[3]. At first they appeared like a group of friends dancing on a stage of a dance club having fun. But, there was much more to that dancing than anyone in the audience could perhaps notice at first.

What I observed during repeated visits to these bars was that very few of the girls who were on stage could dance as a trained dancer. However, their heavy makeup, rich cloths and extravagantly lit stage, the non dancers were just moving on the loud music and Hindi film songs. During the first three hours the girls strictly danced on the stage. If any customers showered a lot of money on them, they reciprocated that with their smiles and flirtatious moves pointing the patron. It was as if an unspoken norm that the dancers could relax after the first three hours. In the later hours of the night, some dancers would go to the customer's table and dance close. Sometimes, the customers will absolutely fall for a particular dancer and keep asking her phone number. She would say, 'I can't. Talk to my band leader.' When disappointed

78

the man would return, the bar dancer would explain to him 'come tomorrow. I will wait' while dancing. In my observation it is rare that the customer does not reappear after getting some hope of interaction with the bar dancer. At one incidence, a young college boy kept asking a girl for her number repeatedly for three consecutive nights. On the third night the girl gave him a number and said I will talk to you tomorrow. Apparently, that was the last time I saw that customer at that bar. There were many reasons coming to my mind. Perhaps, he met with her. Perhaps, he was warned not to contact the dancer or he lost interest after that third night. But, during my interactions with the dancers, I found out that the bar dancers earned based on their understanding of men clientele. As one of the dancer said, "We know the nerves of our clients. Who is coming to pass time, who is coming to look for another wife and who is coming frustrated with his wife. Looking at a client we get a feeling about the client and the amount of money he will spend. Everybody wants us. All these men want to sleep with us. But, that is not what we are here for. We know how to exploit their desires and get cash out of their pocket. Yes, we do fall for someone sometime. Like, I have a boyfriend here, who I deeply care for. I love him like his wife although, I am not his wife. He spent a lot of money on me. He says he will come with me wherever I go. But, I love him. I don't want to hurt him later on. So, I will just leave this bar and go to another town without telling him. He cannot contact me then. I am sure he will go back to his wife and kids and forget me". From what I observed majority of the girls were dancing in these bars due to economic necessity. They were either sold by parents or forced by husbands to join the trade and they willingly accepted it since the girls or their children will die of hunger in a city like Mumbai. Many of them were sold by parents at a young age for petite amount of money, and some were tricked into the trade by false promises of giving them a break in film industry or in modeling. While, the initiation of bar dancing was forced for most girls, it was their own decision to not leave the trade. When I asked the girls about considering another option after the bars closed down, they either said 'it is too late', or that 'nothing else

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[3] A Type of ethnic upper body clothing worn by women in India.

pays as well as they can run their family in the same way they have so far'. Some of the dancers actually felt powerful and independent in this profession which they often referred to as 'the bar line'.

CHAPTER 5

RESULTS

Ethnographic data collected from twenty South Asian bar dancers, who migrated to the United States using migration networks at the risk of trafficking, yielded themes and culturally unique factors which can be useful in designing prevention programs for trafficking of South Asian women. The major findings indicated the interrelation of migration for bar dancing and human trafficking. Findings also suggest how acculturation and thinning prospects fueled the dance-bar industry at the expense of vulnerable victims.

This chapter describes the results from data collection by providing the pattern of coding based on the descriptions from transcripts. The organizational codes of poverty, gender biases, lack of social support and prospects were used to formulate guiding questions in the field. After the data was transcribed, substantive codes were generated. The codes added at this stage were demographic characteristics like place of living, level of education, caste or religion, female headed households, unemployment, child abuse or neglect, confinement and lack of job opportunities, risky migration networks, lack of awareness about destination, debt bondage, acculturation, ban on dance bars, police and law enforcement, available prospects and risk taking behavior. Based on participant narratives matching each codes, pattern codes or axial codes were derived -- weaving all the substantive codes under three higher level codes (1) Poverty and structural factors (2) Social networks and exchanges (3) Acculturation and International Migration for bar dancing.

The results section is divided in two parts. The first part describes the factors that impacted South Asian women's vulnerability to trafficking within South Asia from their native

towns, and second part describes the factors that created vulnerability among South Asian women's decision to migrate from Mumbai to United States for working as dancers in bars.

5.1 Poverty and Structural Factors

Poverty was a thread cutting across various participant narratives. Dire poverty in some parts of South Asia compels many young women to be a prey of trafficking networks. This was a significant finding supported by the data analysis in this research. All the twenty girls who joined the dance bars in Mumbai hailed from extremely poor or lower middle class families. Majority of them belonged to border towns of rural regions in South Asian countries. A number of minority groups, especially belonging to lower castes or Muslim family origins, fall below poverty line in South Asia. All the informants for this study belonged to one of these minority groups. Lack of resources in poor families along with the existing cultural biases prevented most informants from accessing higher education or skills training. The only options left for these women were either to become house wives or do manual labor work. Illiteracy combined with lack of skill and a vulnerable position in society resulted in entering risky migration for most informants. For eight informants the decision regarding migration was made by parents, whereas the remaining girls were coerced either by their family members, friends or community members.

5.1.1. Education

The informants I interviewed had working knowledge of conversational English and Hindi languages. So, it was surprising to find that only five out of twenty informants had attended formal education. For the remaining fifteen girls, education was an unfulfilled dream which some of them fulfilled out of their own income while working in the dance bars in Mumbai. Narratives also suggested that the level of education impacted South Asian women's level of awareness about working in the dance bars. From the twenty informants, four were aware of the

risks involved in migrating to work in dance bars. However, the other sixteen informants were ignorant about the possible risk of trafficking and exploitation while working in the dance bars in Mumbai. From the four women who attended formal education, three had attended college and one had studied up to high school. Two informants who finished college said that they always thought of girls working in dance bars as a matter of shame for society. Both of them belonged to rural areas in South Asia and knew other women from their neighboring villages who had gone to work in the dance bars. One of the informant said that she knew a girl who was prostituting in a bar in Mumbai city. When I asked her, "How did you know that?" She said, "Our professor once said that most women who go to work in places like Dance bars and hotels of Mumbai are forced into prostitution by Mumbai pimps". The other girl said that she did not know whether she heard about it in college or from some friend but she did know that working in dance bars was full of dangers. "I knew that it was dangerous for a woman's life, especially if she was not from a city." Another informant who belonged to Mumbai and had finished college narrated,

> I had a friend who had joined the bar line a year before I graduated from college. She knew I was a good dancer and had asked me if I wanted to join and make money. I had accompanied her once to her bar and a gang war had broken into the bar where she worked. It was over a dancer paying more attention to a gangster. I wanted to leave but the bar's security would not let me out since I was with *Seeta* who worked at the bar. So I knew that it was dangerous to work in a dance bar. But, I could not find a job after college. Not even a front desk clerk or receptionist's job. That is when I decided to risk my life as long as I could gather enough to pay my own dowry.

The remaining sixteen participants had not finished high school. In fact, one of the participants only attended school up to sixth grade and was made to leave school in order to earn. As the dancer described,

83

We were four sisters. I was the second eldest daughter. My older sister was married off but the other four of us were going to school. When I was in school, we had a '*didi'* who came from some organization that helped poor children. She had talked about how women are abducted and sold to beg and do *mujra* in bars. At that time I had no idea I would become one such dancer. But, I was in the sixth grade when my father lost his job. He was a taxi driver. My mother did not allow us to go to school after that year. I was instead asked to work in a leather factory in our slum. My job was to punch holes in leather belts. But, I used to barely get fifty rupees a month after punching thousands of belts.

On the other hand all the informants were aware of the risk of being trafficked while migrating for work in foreign countries. Education did not play any role in their decision to migrate for working in South Asian dance bars abroad. "I had friends who had made foreign trips before, so I knew how it is", said one of the informants. Another informant said, "A top dancer from Mumbai was murdered last month in Dubai. I knew her. She knew that there is more money in gulf and she was forcedly sold to a Sheikh in Gulf. But, no one knows the reason of her death".

5.1.2. Religion

Religion was another distinct factor that appeared to have a significant impact on trafficking of young South Asian women. However, this finding can be a result of another intervening factor that traffickers use specific source areas from where the girls are trafficked and it could be that the girls from Muslim families are sourced from certain geographic areas by the networks. In my sample, I found that women with Muslim religious backgrounds were trafficked at a younger age from rural areas to urban areas, whereas the women who were raised in Hindu lower caste families often joined bar dancing due to unusual circumstances. My understanding of Muslim culture in South Asia was more conservative. I realized that it was

perhaps a myth, which many people believed in when I was growing up. The general perception is that Muslim families in South Asian counties allowed lesser freedom of work to women in their families. Thus, at first I was surprised at the fact that seven women who belonged to rural areas from different South Asian countries were compromised for money by their families. These women belonged to very poor families of farmers and were trafficked to Calcutta in West Bengal at a young age. Their parents earned a petite amount for selling their daughters. The monitory equation differed in different cases. While some families received a lump-sum amount of money at the time of migration of their daughter, few others entered in a recurring contract where girls at a young age were sent to work in cities with a promise to send a guaranteed monthly income to the family. One of the informants said "I think my parents knew that they were selling me to a brothel owner and they did not ask him anything before giving the thumbprints (signing the contract). They never even wrote a letter after I left. So, you can't trust your own parents in this world today". I was a little surprised at the finding that a number of Muslim families risked their children's lives for money. However, one of the narratives clearly explained why that happens.

> My father never had a farm. He worked in the landlord's farm with my two uncles and some other men. He had borrowed money for the birth of my younger brother and was repaying the loans. But, when he could not repay the money in three years, the landlord asked my father to send me with his son to work in a city. Abbu (father) asked me several times if I wanted to go. I was very scared at first and said 'not alone' but my mother explained that my parents did not have money to go with me but there were other women from my village who were also going. This is when I said okay. I was fifteen then. When I went to India, I was in a different world... If my father ever came to know what I have done in all these years he might kill himself. He gets his money even now. But, now I send the money as I no longer work for those people. I earn my own money from bar dancing.

85

5.1.4 Marital Status

Majority of the informants who I interacted with were married. Their spouses ranged from unemployed mill workers to gangsters. I was amazed at this finding since my understanding based on the reading about bar dancers was that they were unmarried women. Also, culturally being a bar dancer in South Asia is demeaning. Thus, finding that a number of my informants were married and yet risking their lives by joining bands to work abroad was at first surprising. When I read the narratives, I noticed a pattern among bar dancers that many of them had a history of abuse in marital relationships. Two of the women were also abused by the man they loved. In each of the narratives I found that it was the men's incapability to earn enough for the family that compelled these women to earn an income using whatever skill they could develop. Dancing in dance bars did not require a lot of efforts. It was easy money for women whose families did not educate or provided other trainings to these women, Thus, leaving them with not many options but to end up as bar dancers or get exploited in a low paid job. One of the dancers said,

> Women can do everything on their own. Why do we need men? My husband forced me into this business. It was not that he did not earn but he spent all the money in drinking and gave the rest to his mother. For me or my children he never had money. He used to say earn it yourself. So, now I am earning. He likes me now because I make more money than him. But, sometimes he makes me feel like a whore. At mid nights when he comes to the bar drunk, he calls me names and creates a scene. I know that he thinks I have a bad character. But, he is the one who needs my money. (She got too emotional and started crying) Believe me, most of the bar women have families that make them do this work and then call them bad women. Why should we care?

Another narrative had a similar point to make.

> Bar dancing is the only work where you can live independently and not suffer abuse from your family. I was raised by my mother. She had divorced my father long time ago and was now living with another man she was not married to. I hated her for most part of my childhood. So when I grew up, I was proposed a good life by a neighbor's son if I went to live with him in Mumbai. I was never ready for non-marital relationship. So, I asked him to marry me. We got married and I discovered that he was working in a factory. I was used to his aggressive behavior and forcing me into sex. But, he crossed the limit one time when he got an offer to make me dance on a slum bar. I was really angry then. I did dance for him one night. But, that was the day I freed myself from him and I can say I married life of bar dancing.

One of the informants had a completely opposite story to share. She worked in the dance bars since the death of her husband. She needed money to feed herself and her child. She had no idea if the husband left behind any money. So, when she approached an elderly member of the clan.

> He suggested that I contact Vinu who had contacts in Mumbai and can get me a job. Vinu explained to me all about dance bars. He did say that it was risky to dance in those bars and many times drunken people go to those bars. But, I had absolutely no alternative. I had to go to dance bars.

She said that she had to turn to dancing in the bars which was better than getting a daily wage job that would not pay her enough to feed herself or the children.

5.1.5. Primary Earning Member in the Family

Sixteen out of the twenty informants were primary earning members in their families. While in six cases the girls were the only earning members, the rest had some family members who were earning. However, their income was not enough to support the family. This came out

87

as a deterrence factor for women from thinking of any other type of employment. The income they earned in Mumbai bars was around Rs. 40,000 - 50,000 a month, which is more than an average person's salary who holds a master's degree in India. However, when asked about their income in the United States, they said that they were here on a fix income of Rs.30,000 a month. This income was not enough for most dancers. As narrated by one of the dancer,

> Mumbai is much better. We have our friends and fans there. Over here it is difficult. I used to earn around Rs. 4,000 a night on an average. See, I was a good dancer and had some fixed customers, who loved my dance. So, I have made as good as Rs. 80,000 a month. My son studies in a boarding school in Darjeeling. His fees are so high and he does not have a father. I will make sure that he becomes a doctor. I will pay for him. But, he does not know that his mother works in the bar. Please don't tell anyone. He thinks that his mother works in a hospital. He is a brilliant child. After I lost my employment I had to think of how will I earn this kind of money? So, just for job safety, I agreed to work for a minimum salary going abroad. These people know that at this time you ask any bar girl about any kind of a job, she will take it….because, our industry is over. All bar girls have the same story. One person to earn and 10 to feed.

5.1.5. Regional Poverty

Poverty played an important role in every informant's first migration for work. Fifteen girls out of twenty belonged to rural areas in South Asian countries of Nepal, India and Bangladesh. Twelve girls out of these migrated to Mumbai in search of work. For some of the girls their parents were deceived by traffickers and the other girls were unsure of the kind of job they were going to be offered and joined the migration agents willingly. Their stories revealed classic examples of trafficking networks, which took advantage of these women's vulnerable position and forced them to sell themselves. One informant's narrative is presented verbatim here.

88

My father worked in a neighboring farm. I used to go and help him out every day after school. I loved playing in the farm and eating sugarcanes fresh from that farm. But, my father was told that he is not needed any more to work in that farm as the farm owner was planning to sell that farm. We did not have any money and no saving. My father kept looking for work for fifteen days. In this time, I and my younger brothers slept hungry most nights. My father then joined a group of migrant workers who went to city in search of some work. He had promised my mother that he would send money home every week. But that was the last time we saw our father. He did not return months after he left. My mother kept crying and borrowing money from '*panchayat* fund'. She was thinking of joining some work herself but she could not find any work to repay the money. Also, my youngest brother was just one year old and she had to take care of all of us. One day, my mother asked me if I wanted to go to the city and work. At that time I thought I might be able to find my father also in the city. I was excited and said 'yes'. I was given a ticket to the city nearby our village and an address where I was supposed to work. I was going to work as a 'maid' in a rich pundit household. I was young and naïve that time. I not only worked there like a slave dog but also was abused by the grandfather in that house. I was quiet thinking that they are sending money to my mother every month. But, one day I received a letter stating that my mother had died and that was the last day for me in that house. I took leave to go home to see my parents. When I went back to my village I found out that my mother never got any money from me and was living on borrowed money all that while. At that time I was offered a job by a 'mandali' that recruited women from my village for sex work in Mumbai. I had no choice now if I wanted to feed my brothers. I thought I will join them and run away with my brothers in that city to look for some better job.

Her narration revealed two related issues with poverty. Poverty of landless among rural farming communities lead to women's decision to work in risky professions which is not a choice but necessity.

5.1.7. Gender Inequality and Fewer Prospects

Gender inequalities were recorded among seven cases in this study. Gender inequality is not directly related to South Asian a woman's trafficking. However, there are sub-categories within gender inequality that seem to be increasing women's vulnerability to trafficking related migration. The transcripts which pointed out different kinds of inequalities suffered by the informants highlighted the connection of different practices and gender biases in South Asian culture that render women more vulnerable to trafficking. As narrated,

> I wanted to study like some other girls in my town. But, my parents would only send me to the religious school. That school taught us messages from the holy Quran and reading the Arabic language. All of the girls in my family went to the religious school. Only my brother went to the government school. I liked going to school. But, you don't get admission in a college after '*Madresa*' schooling easily. I wanted to study further. But, my parents did not want me to study. It was as if no one questioned it. All my sisters were fine with the little education they had. I wanted to study more. I knew that no one spoke Arabic and the knowledge of 'Quran' was not enough to get a job. I asked my parents many times if I could do general schooling and pass S.S.C. But, I was always considered a nuisance because of my desire to study. Also, my mother always said that girls no matter how much they study have to look after a man and children. There is no use of all this schooling. God will give you courage to fight difficulties in life. So, for women all these government schools are useless. Who will marry you after you study in a government school? …And I never had the courage to

fight it. But now, when I think about all the things I do, I wish I had this courage then to fight for myself. I might be doing some better job than working at this humiliating place.

Her narration succinctly described some of the common myths and realities that exist in different South Asian cultures. The gender related stereotypes are so strict that going against them could exclude a woman from her clan and any related support system. Similar response was derived from other informants.

Nobody sent their daughters to school in those times. My mother never went to school, I did not go to school and my sister did not go to school either. I am doing so much to educate my daughter…but sometimes I talk to some educated dancers and feel there is no use of girls' going to school, college and all. Look at me, Can you tell I am not educated? I talk good Hindi and talk English also little bit. I earn more than many educated girls. So, I don't know. But, I was not allowed to study. I am allowing my daughter to study as long as she wants.

While women's primary education is free in most South Asian countries, the cultural practices and stereotyped societal roles do not allow girls their basic right to education. Girls in most of South Asian countries are considered liabilities as the parents have to give dowry when their daughter's marriage is arranged. Also, sons are expected to care for parents but daughters' are donated to the groom's families. For this research gender biases at different points in the lives of informants explain the structural vulnerability which increases women's risk of being trafficked.

With changing economic demands in South Asian countries, most women are expected to work in order to support their families at some point of their lives. However, lack of education compels women to join low paying jobs or high risk jobs, as one of the informant said, "If I had not joined the bar, I would be a low income prostitute like many other Nepalese girls".

91

Many girls are trafficked from Nepal at a young age and sold directly in brothels. In India, some girls who have basic knowledge of dancing and have better economic bargaining power reach dance bars. Similarly a dancer revealed how difficult it is to survive as an educated single woman in South Asian society.

I agree. I am a first class graduate with a degree in accounts. When I came to Mumbai for the first time from my village, I had Rs. 50,000 with me. I stayed at a relative's place who did not like the fact that I was not paying them any rent. So, I moved out. I don't have any account of where that money was spent in that city. I had to borrow money to survive in that city. For six months I was unemployed. I finally found a job as a receptionist in a big manufacturing company. I almost worshiped the CEO of that company who understood my condition and hired me after just one interview. There were around 200 more applications. But, soon after joining I realized that I was almost replacing the wife of that CEO. Once he asked me to accompany him for a conference in Goa. He insisted on my staying with him… I had no idea what he would have planned in his mind. Soon I realized that he wanted to use me. I cried so much for two nights. I came back and wanted to leave that job right away. I could not stand that man… But, from the other staff members I found that many women had compromised like me. I had lost all confidence I had in myself. I was feeling so used that I decided to leave that job and die hungry if I had to. I knew that going back to my parents was impossible now. So, I decided to continue that job and look for another job. I was feeling so humiliated that I actually applied to work in a dance bar and got selected. It was a bad job… I did not like the fact that we had stinking clients and everyone used bad language. We were called prostitutes all the time. But, it was all open. I was not used there and I could make more money than I could have ever made with a life time of working in that office.

92

In another interview, a dancer said,

> For girls like us, whose parents don't want them and whose husbands are pimps, there are only three industries to go to. (1) If you have guts and time go for modeling (2) become an air hostess, travel the world, get a decent salary (3) become a bar girl and make money. As such these are all the same. You call them whatever; women have to forget their character to earn. None of these jobs have any respect. But, all these jobs pay well. So what if they abuse us and call us whores! We get used to it. They come to us and throw money on us, we don't ask them to. But, the government closed dance bars because our clients are from gangs. Why don't they close down airlines or modeling agencies? Because, they get to sleep with those women for free and they get a good cut from them.

These transcripts depicted a pattern and allowed axial coding. The primary cause behind not educating girls was poverty and societal stereotypes. These resulted in lack of employment opportunities. Without a decent employment opportunity, these women had to choose from risky options that were available to them. While the pattern suggests that girls have all risky alternatives, what is yet to be explained is what makes them choose bar dancing instead of other risky options?

<u>5.2 Social Networks and Exchange</u>

Another theme that emerged from the interactions with informants was the role of social networks in migration related exchanges. In some cases the social networks played a positive role which tried to prevent girls from entering risky migration. However, in many cases social network resulted in trafficking of young girls. I included social networks in the analysis because having an understanding of the role played by positive or negative social networks can help in designing a prevention strategy for South Asian women who are at risk of being trafficked.

93
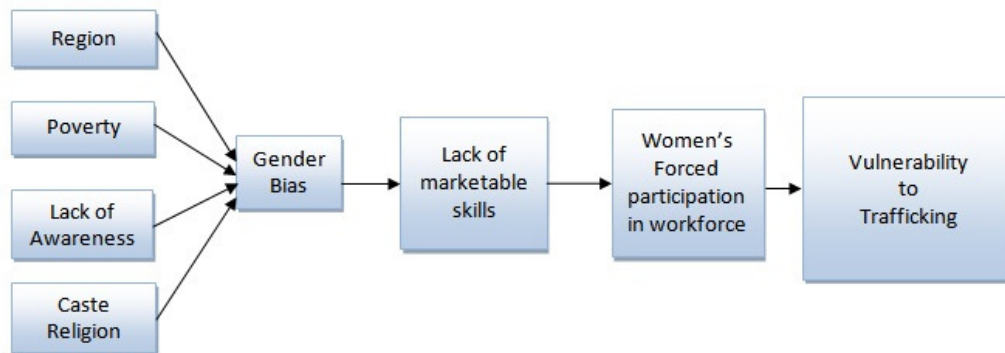
Fig. 5.1 Structural Factors Impacting Trafficking of South Asian Girls and Women

5.2.1. Positive Social Networks

Out of twenty informants, two narrated situations where their social networks provided the support which would have prevented them from being trafficked. While other informants did not have many positive things to say about the support provided by social networks, they did agree that having a social network which is positive can certainly reduce young girls' chances of being trafficked.

I was brought up in a small town very close to Mumbai. I always thought that I had the charm and talent to become an actress. I was thinking like that for many years before I realized that the only reason I ruined my life was that kind of thinking. My father was strictly against my dreams of becoming an actress and my mother always said that all those actresses have to sleep with producers. They or their families have no shame. My parents would never allow me to go to Mumbai as they feared I would try to get into acting. I was a fool then to not listen to them. I always thought that my family was very

94

narrow-minded. But, only after I left home for the man who said that he saw a potential actress in me, I realized why my parents did not want me to go to Mumbai. Mumbai is a mad city. No one leaves a single girl…no one. I have suffered a lot in Mumbai. I thought my parents had abandoned me. But, when I was raped for the first time in that city I went back home. Since it was difficult for my parents to keep me with them due to the shame I brought to them, they sent me to my father's side aunt who is a social worker. She lives in Mumbai and she gave me a room on rent with little money. She always says, I can live in half the income I had and live peacefully doing some respectable job. But, she has her family to support her, it is easy for her to say. Who will employ a bar dancer like me?

Another informant shared,

I had already paid the deposit to another band from Bandra after I lost my employment. I was told that I was going to go to Dubai first and work there for six months and from there I will have to accompany a businessman to go to Saudi to work in his bar. They asked for just one *lakh* twenty thousand from me including deposit of ten thousand. But, the Bhisa told me that this was a big gang and he knew of three of the former dancers from my bar who were sold to Sheikhs in Saudi. He said one of the girls was murdered. He was more than a brother to me and so he told me not to sign a contract with them.

I had realized that social networks play a very important part in preventing trafficking. However, what was clear from these conversations was that the level of awareness that people have about trafficking in South Asia is limited. Thus, generating awareness among community organizations and source areas might serve useful in prevention of trafficking among young South Asian girls.

95

5.2.2. Negative Social Networks

Unfortunately, before the awareness about criminal networks of trafficking reached the South Asian villages, the trafficking mafia had started the practice of paying powerful members of villages for becoming suppliers for women and children for sexual as well as labor slavery. This was especially true among the dancers who hailed from Nepal. Eight girls said that their parents were deceived by community members who forced them into exploitative work places.

> I was raised by my grandmother. She had no money to educate me or anything. I was very happy working in the farms with her. But, when I was fourteen she thought that I had to start working if I wanted to get married when I grow up. She said she had talked to the manager in the estate she worked for and he had arranged for my work in India. She was so happy. They paid her an advance for my first salary and said they will regularly send her the money. She said she did not want money and I could keep the money. But, when I first came to Delhi, I was just new and they placed me with a businessman's house as a maid. The madam was very nice and taught me some Hindi and English. The man was very very rude and abusive. He kept yelling at me all the time. I was made to sleep on the floor in outside of their house without a blanket so many times and can you believe this, their dog had a room to sleep! I would cry and cry so much. I still worked there for two and a half years. When I was sixteen, I my grandmother died and when I went for her last blessings to Nepal, I asked 'Seth' if I could work somewhere in Nepal? I was not happy over there. He said that I could become a server in a bar since there was not much I knew how to do. I was then working in a dance bar in Kathmandu for a year. I saw that the dancers over there made more than I could. They would dance of Hindi song tunes and entertain people. Then I asked the bar owner if I could dance instead of serving. He said that I would have to learn it first… When I started dancing on that stage, he prepared me that I had

to be ready to give up a lot. I said I was ready. So, he made other dancers teach me for a fee of ten thousand rupees. I was told that clients might want to sleep with new girls and that was a part of our job. They also taught me moves and how to make tips there.

Another informant shared that she was trapped into trafficking by her relatives. She hated her parents who she said sold her for petite amount of money.

My father died in the floods. My mother (step-mother) never wanted to keep me. She always used to say that I was a bad influence on my younger sister and the brother. After my father died, she never worked or anything. She just had all those relatives coming to stay with her and giving her money. In one year, she said that I had to be on my own now. She could not keep me any more. She called one of her brothers and he set me up to go to Calcutta with a gang of dirty looking old men. (Pause…after a long silence) Those men were my grandfather's age who beat me up and raped me over and over until I fainted (she was upset…break)…I was running heavy fever on the way and they said they will dump me if I acted more. I was almost unconscious when I was brought to the bazaar. The bazaar was a red light area and yet people were better than my mother or those uncles. I would never forgive her for what she did to me. Nor will my father ever forgive her.

Another girl shared her experience with villagers. This was something similar to what I had read in the literature.

I wanted to help my family. I knew that my parents were doing so much for us. They worked all day and yet were not getting rid of the debts. I knew I had no future for myself. Without dowry, who will marry me in my community? So, I took help of a man my father knew from Mumbai. He worked there. He liked me I guess. So, I asked him if he could help me get a job in Mumbai…He said he understands my situation and will

97

see what he could do. He brought me this offer of working in a dance bar. I said I can't dance in front of anybody. I was too shy then. Now, what you see on this stage is not original me. But, at that time I was going mad thinking our situation will never improve if I did not help with income…whatever little. And he told me stories of how he knew girls from neighboring villages who now make millions because they are all artists. I was very excited about his offer. I knew my parents would not allow me to go. So, I asked him to go with me and asked my parents if they would allow me to go with him. At first my father said, my daughter will die but not work in bars. Never. But, when he explained how it is a short term thing and took responsibility for me, my father agreed. This is how I started working. After a few months when I found out that I was not earning much and the man I trusted was just a middle man for the bars, I was mad at him. But, I guess I loved him. I cried a full night that night. So, I just hope he will realize how much I loved him and repent on what he did with me some day.

5.2.3. Abuse and Deception

The narratives made it clear that most girls who are trafficked have had negative social networks which misguided the parents of young girls and in some cases used deception to lure women with false promises that ultimately resulted in sex trafficking. Abuse and Deception seem to be the weapons often used byu trafficking networks in South Asia. As narrated,

My husband had an affair with another girl. My marriage was arranged and so, I could not say anything to my parents. Every time I told them they said you have to tolerate it now that you are married. He never loved me. There were times I was beaten up so bad that I would and leave his house. But I did not have the courage to leave my house's premise…One day he said he will take me to India for a vacation and I was excited…(break) He left me in the hotel room saying he is coming back in two hours. He did not come and I was raped by three men in that hotel who kept saying they paid

98

for it. I don't remember much about what happened after that but somehow I was taken to a red light area. I was a nuisance to the brothel people as I would be beaten up as many times but would refuse to have sex with clients. Once when I was crying aloud, *'maushi'* (land owner in a brothel setting, an elderly lady) said to me one time, if you don't want to sleep with clients, just own a room like me and live on the rent. I said 'I have no money'. She asked me if I could dance okay. I said I used to participate in school programs when I was young. She said if I danced in the pimp's bar, I could earn good money and buy a room in five years or so that I could then give out for rent to prostitutes. But, soon after I was brought to this bar they closed down the bar. Since I knew some English, *'maushi'* said that she can pay for my foreign trip if I wanted to dance in a foreign bar. She has spent so much money on me, I don't know how many years it will take for me to return it?

5.2.4. Limited Prospects

One of the indicators I found which fuelled trafficking in South Asia was 'aspiration for better prospects'. At least seventy percent of all participants mentioned that they chose the option of going to a city for work. However, while connecting the narratives with the theory I found that people often choose the least dangerous prospects from the available prospects. The responses I gathered from the informants also emphasized the fact that when there are limited prospects and even limited knowledge about what those prospects are, deception becomes easier for trafficking networks. For all the informants in this study, their prospects were limited. The only variation was that for some their career goals revolved around one of the available prospects, for some the available prospect was a way to reach their real goal and some had to make a forced choice as their options were limited. A conversation that took place at the time of thematic sampling provided me with a negative case which was not supported by most other transcripts. One of the informants narrated,

99

I was always good at dancing. My great grandmother was also a very good dancer. Actually all the ladies in my family were very good dancers. So, for me I always wanted to dance and got a job in the dance bar. I considered myself lucky. But I did not know that the people who come to the bar are not all nice people. How does that matter though? I am doing what I like to do and making good money!

Another informant who hailed from a suburb of Mumbai city suggested another type of poverty that compelled her to enter bar dancing as a profession.

I am educated. In fact, I studied up to college in Mumbai itself. After completing college I had a degree in micro-biology but did not have a first class, so getting a job was quite difficult. My mother was saying that I should get married. At some point I was convinced myself. My parents had arranged for many guys who came to see me. But, for some reason I did not like any of them. I wish I got married then. But, I was looking for a suitable match and in the mean time my father was diagnosed with blood cancer. We were completely broken. We were a middle class family and had neither insurance nor enough savings for his blood transfusions. My mother knew someone who found me a job in a laboratory in South Mumbai (which is a posh area where wealthy people live). My income was only Rs.7,000 a month. The income was enough for running the home's fire burning but it was not even close to what we needed for saving my father. I was completely broken and had no idea what to do. I was crying in the local train on my way back from work one evening when a lady sitting next to me gave me water and asked me if I was okay? I told her everything. I normally don't do that. But, I don't know why that day I was perhaps very weak. I told her the reasons why I was crying. The lady told me not to worry and asked me if I knew how to dance or sing? I said I can't do either. I was raised like a boy and liked games. Dance or music were not my things. She said don't worry. If you don't mind, I can suggest you a job. You can work in a

100

dance bar where I work and make good money. You don't have to be a dancer for that. As long as you can just walk on the stage with some gait and confidence and know how to get men attracted to you, you can make very good money. At that time I was alert and thought she seems like a prostitute. I said, no I am not interested. But, she gave me her number and said if I change my mind, I could call her. I thought about it for three days. I had more questions and curiosity about this bar dancing since I thought all prostitutes did that kind of job and I did not want to do that. But, my father's worsening health compelled me to call her. After a week we met and she showed me her bar. She said you don't have to prostitute if you can make money without doing it. Some girls are smart and they do it only when they need extra cash. But otherwise they just dance. I said I will give it a try. This was around four years ago. I joined that bar and learnt the tricks of getting cash out of my client's pockets. This business is not for dancers or prostitutes. The girls who make good money are like me…I know how to get attention of a man and how to make him shower all the cash he has in his pocket. I am unhappy for only one thing that I could not get married after that. But, I am very happy about the fact that I could give my father four years of life out of my money. My parents still don't know that I work in a dance bar. They think that I have a good job with a foreign company. Even now, my mother thinks I am here for work as part of my job.

There were at least four narratives that directly suggested that for them the prospect of going to the city or working in the dance bar was a way to get to their final goal. They chose it because they thought other options would take them longer to achieve their goal.

I knew that I wanted to become an actress. I was always told by everyone in my family that I was a heroin. I knew that Mumbai had the film industry and when I was recruited I was told that film producers often look for item girls (dancers) from the bar. So, I thought that was a good way to get to meet those busy people. I knew the girls who

101

wasted their time auditioning for films for years. But, I was thinking that time that if I became a known bar dancer, I will not have to go door to door giving auditions.

Another narrative reflected a similar pattern.

I knew that I had fewer choices. I could either become a model or a dancer. I had tried modeling. In fact I had lost around 80,000 rupees in just the portfolio and had not found a single assignment. That is when I thought that I would join a bar to make some money and then go for modeling again. Money speaks in Mumbai.

5.2.5. Social Networks in Mumbai Bars

For all the informants the decision of going abroad was a result of fewer available prospects. After the ban on dance bars in Mumbai, the bar dancers were left with limited options like going back home, prostituting in different cities or finding some kind of similar employment. All the prospects involved different degrees of risks. And for the informants, going abroad for dancing seemed like an option involving lesser risks.

Otherwise, what could I do? Beg or borrow money. There was no way I was going to get a normal job. There are so many people with good degrees who are unemployed and why would someone give me a job?"

A similar expression was expressed by the eldest informant.

No one wants to give a job to a girl who danced in bars before. When they banned the bar, I thought that it was my chance to relive my life by doing some honest work which may not pay me well but is less risky and humiliating. But, after three months of applications, waiting for answers and spending a lot of money I realized that no one wanted to hire me. My degree did not have any value after joining the bars I guess. So, it was better that I continued working in whatever I get. I had two options, either buy a

room and rent it for which I lacked around two *lakhs*. Taking a loan from a mafia lender was something I did not want to do now after years of their slavery. So, I thought I will go wherever the owner takes me, gather the money myself and retire.

Another informant said,

I tried going back home. I lived with my family in my native for four months. I had regularly sent money to my parents and they knew what I was doing. They had no problems when I was working in the bar. But, when I went back home and told them that I lost the job and needed shelter till I found another job, they changed. As if I was no more their daughter. Then they cared about the concerns of what will people say and forced me to get married. They also knew that marriage was not an option for me. Because they had told other people that I ran away to Mumbai and so, no one would want to marry me. Besides, I did not want to marry anyone from my caste. They are all money hungry bears. So, I decided to go anywhere do anything but stay at home where my own father called me names. I contacted a few money lenders from the bar line to pay for going abroad and working in a similar bar.

The girls who get trafficked to Mumbai city are devoid of the social support they had from their family, friends or community. However, what I found during analysis was that they develop another type of social network, which consists of underworld dons, money launderers, drug dealers, people working at the bar and former bar dancers as well as prostitutes. Some dancers were also well connected with political leaders and police officers. After the bars were banned most dancers turned to underworld money lenders for loans at very high interest rates with a hope of making the repayments once they get to do their work anywhere in a different city or another country.
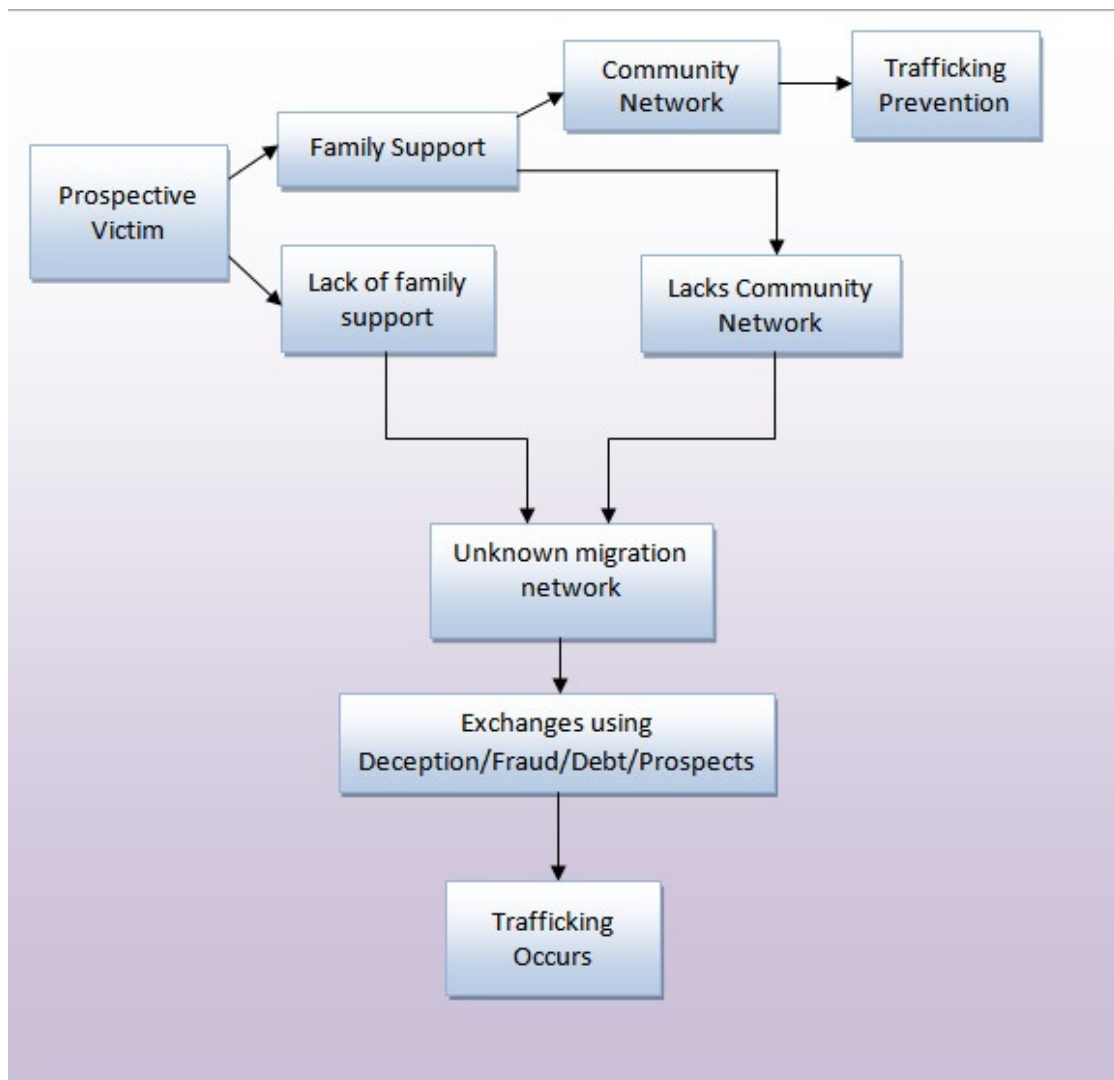
103

Fig. 5.2 Lack of Family Support and Use of Unknown Migration Network Creates
Vulnerability to Trafficking in the Process of First Time Migration.

Migration from Mumbai dance bars to the United States for working at the risk of being exploited was a result of multitude of factors. Especially some factors came out significantly important contributors in this risk taking decision for the twenty informants I interacted with. The factors described by informants included ban on dance bars in Mumbai city, fewer prospects, debt bondage, fears of aging out, police and underworld, and acculturation.

5.3.1. Debt Bondage

All the twenty girls interviewed said that they had incurred debts in Mumbai and foreign tour was a way to earn money and repay the debts. Three girls had actually incurred debts only in order to go abroad for work. The following conversations reveal how bar dancers incurred debts which forced them to migrate at the risk of being trafficked.

> As I crossed thirty and mothered a child, my dance career was over. My regular clients left me for younger girls. My income started reducing and I started earning less than half of what I was earning before. With age, I was gaining weight and I still needed the same expensive dresses, protected area to live in and expensive make ups. Also, after becoming a mother my daughter's needs were also to be met. I kept cursing myself for having the child at a wrong time. If I was young I still had a chance. I knew that it was a mistake. I tried all home techniques to get rid of that child. I danced a lot, ate papaya, ate very spicy food. But, nothing worked this time. The man who gave me this daughter did not come to my bar even once after hearing the news that I was pregnant. So, I had no choice. I borrowed money from a money lender in bar line. Now, I have to go wherever he wants me to go, as long as I finish my debt.

Another informant was furious while talking about this issue and said,

> Show me one bar dancer who wants go to a foreign country to dance unless she has to pay off her debts. All of us have taken money from money lenders at some or the other time for illness, family needs, or for buying the rooms. So, we have no choice. Those

105

who pay their installments regularly and earn enough in Mumbai don't have to go out but those who don't make good money there, or for some reason can't pay back have no choice but do as their lender says or live under their torture. I know of so many girls who got killed like that. We can't take any chances with life.

One of the themes I found repeated over 80% of the conversations was that after entering the dance bars the girls borrowed heavily. Especially after the ban, many girls survived poverty and unemployment through the borrowed money. I had often heard conversations among clients about the colossal amount of money these bar dancers make. To an outsider it appears as if the dancers make a lot of money and that amount should be sufficient for them to live the rest of their life. However, what is overlooked by spectators is the hidden cost incurred by dancers and the vulnerable nature of their profession. During interactions with the informants I discovered that they are expected to meet some standards due to which they have to wear different dresses every day of the week. The dresses are made by contractors contracted by the bar owners normally. Since the primary clientele for dance bars in Mumbai and some gulf countries is people from the underworld, who often force dancers to service them using different threats, the girls spend good amount of their income paying the protection agencies provided by some gangs in Mumbai. Similarly, the rent in a small one bedroom shared kind of living in Mumbai is proportionately high. As these women live in ghettos that are secured and again the dancers pay a high price for their security. Apart from this, they also have to pay the police, bar tenders, bouncers at the bar as well as taxi drivers their cut to keep the identity of these women confidential. Most importantly, the informants said that the girls who were formally employed as entertainers in some places earned a very little salary with which they did not have a choice but borrow. They relied heavily on the share of their tip amount every night. Thus, most girls have fluctuating income.

Since dancing in the bar is heavily tabooed and the girls working there are associated with underworld, it is impossible for a bar dancer to apply for a bank loan or go to a formal money lending agency. As a result, they become dependent on money lenders from underworld who lend them money at interests as high as 20 to 25%. In return, dancers are called for privet parties and for entertainment of their special guests for free. Debt bondage creates an environment of continuous threat that compels women to obey the orders of the owners of the bar, the money lenders, and the heavy headed powerful customers who visit the dance bars.

5.3.2 Age

Majority of the women I had interviewed were in the age group of eighteen to thirty five. The older women were more acculturated to the dance bar culture and refused to share any information initially. They also appeared more at ease with dancing and did not attract many customers. Two of them were good dancers and said, 'it is only because of our dancing skill that we are still a part of this business'. The elder women completely denied any kind of prostitution they were involved in either in the United States or in India. They had some kind of barrier that restrained them from talking about sex or prostitution. The younger women on the other end were more open. They explained that there is no place for older women in bar dancing. One of the girls shared her future plans with me,

> I had earned good amount of money in India. But, police took their cut in the last year and I made a lot of losses. My first five year's income went in supporting my mother's illness at home. I could not save anything for myself. In fact, I danced all night long and did not get food or sleep for a whole week at times. But, I was crazy. I did not know that this line is not going to employ me long. I realized it when my friend was forced to leave. She had nowhere to go when she left the bar. She was my mentor. She actually taught me the dance moves and wiped my tears when I would feel miserable about myself. But now, she is unemployed and has to prostitute with dirty *bhaiya* (a slang

107

word used for illiterate men from the state of Uttar Pradesh) men to survive. She just made one mistake of having a child and could not control her weight. I don't want to be like her. This is why I am doing all these foreign trips so that I get a good life when I leave dancing. I know that I cannot work there after I am 30-35. I mean I can work but I have to do things then I don't want to do.

Another informant said,

When bar women get old no one cares for them. This is a business of young good looking women. The day I stop taking care of myself, I will be out of business. So many bar dancers die and no one collects their bodies. Municipality takes their bodies and no one cares. Old women can only survive by either renting their secured rooms they purchase in their good time or by finding a client to pay for them. I don't know how lucky I will be in finding a client. But, I know that I can't go back to my family when I leave dancing.

Another significant finding in this research was that women age out of dance bar at the age of 35 to 40 which is half the age of an average retired person in South Asian countries. Shunned by society and their own families, these women have to save for the time after they age out of dance bars. As one of the informant said, "This is my time to make money. I want to make as much as I can in my years". What I discovered during conversation with informants was that many women who age out of dancing end up becoming prostitutes or live off of favors from their man (client) who provides for a dancer he likes. "Some women are lucky who get to have businessmen who give them flats and security and everything for just spending a week or so with her when they are in town. But, some other men are dangerous. They keep women just for sex that's it". Some women are hired as middle women for some illegal activities like match fixing, money laundering, gambling and drug supply chains. Thus, with limited options available

108

to women who age out of bar dancing, they turn to the available options offered by their world of dance bars.

5.3.3. Customers, Members of Police and Underworld

During the conversations with dancers there were subtle remarks made about the involvement of police and underworld in running the dance bars. While none of the informants made direct comments about the connection of police and underworld with their foreign tours or employment, their frustration with police was often revealed when they talked on different subjects. Most girls seemed to trust underworld members more than police members who were also referred as customers at dance bars in Mumbai. Expressions like "police dogs", "service for free type government people" revealed that members of police department knew about the nature of dance bars but got free service at the bars instead of protecting the girls as government servants. On the other hand, ironically enough some girls idealized mafia dons and said "without underworld Mumbai city will drown", another informant said, " Because there is underworld we are surviving today. Otherwise, what does government care? ".

No girl joins a dance bar for any other reason but money. When government closed down bars, they did not say that they will give us all some money till we find some other job. In fact, some 800 girls' houses were raided and they hijacked all the hard earned money. Those who were lucky and not exposed by news paper people, ran away. I was in Ranchi for a month. What to do! But, people may not know film stars they somehow find out who is a bar dancer. My life was a hell for that one month. I paid everyone police dogs, the security, taxi-driver, everyone. All wanted their share to keep their mouths shut. Finally, I was lucky to get some offer from this foreign tour band. I knew I might have to obey some rules they have for us. But, it was better than staying in India right now. Bar dancers are all connected. We have our lovers who are high flying politicians to cricketers. So, I am hoping that they start the bars again. Otherwise we

will be exploited always. This is loss making business…they demand anything they want from us and we have to do it. What have I seen in America? Nothing but the same stage every night and same people all the time.

While I was not sure if the frustration of women with police department was a result of ban on dance bars, I thought it was an important finding that women working in dance bars had less faith in their own families or government as compared to their confidence in underworld.

5.3.4. Closure of Dance Bars in Mumbai

Except four girls who said that they wanted to see the world and earn money by going to gulf countries, the rest of the girls had one common factor that compelled them to join the migration network for bar dancing. A ban was executed on Mumbai dance bars in 2004 and that had rendered around 100,000 bar dancers unemployed. These girls were thus looking for avenues that could help them continue their income and working in foreign country seemed like a golden opportunity to most in the times of crisis.

When policemen, politicians, all these big people come and ask for girls from the bars, that is not criminal activity. But, girls dance in these bars where mafia comes, it becomes a criminal activity. Who says that we are all prostitutes? Do we look like that? This is all political. They have killed so many lives with that ban you can't imagine.

This narration also hinted towards the corruption and exploitation of bar dancers by people in power like the police and politicians who were served by dancers for free prior to the bars closed down.

They call us prostitutes. But, what they don't see is that every bar girl is someone's mother, someone's wife, someone's daughter. She is not doing this for her own. She has many mouths to feed. It was so easy for them to just close down bars. But, it brought us on the road. We earn our daily wage from the bar. The day bars closed down I was thinking my life was over. I knew I could not go back home nor did I have

110

any other experience. Who wants to hire a former dance bar girl even as a maid? Most people think we are just prostitutes. What could we do then? With the blessings of lord Ganesha I got this offer. I had to spend a lot for this trip. But at least I am no more on the roads living a dangerous life.

While most girls shared similar reasons for coming to United States to work in the bars, one informant was really unhappy and was least aware of the life she was made to live by the bar owners in the US.

I am not a dancer. I paid three *lakh* rupees to the band for getting me here. My boyfriend is here and he was supposed to come and pick me up. I had applied for US visa before, three times, but got rejected. So, this was a chance for me to come here. Now, I am just stuck with these people. I can't find him in this big country. It is so risky to go out as I paid so much to just come here. They did paperwork and got me the visas. I am just getting used to this life of not sleeping in the nights and working all day and living with all these others. But, I can't do anything till I meet my boyfriend.

However, for most informants, the decision of going abroad was a result of fewer available prospects. All the prospects involved different degrees of risks. And for the girls, going abroad for dancing seemed like an option involving lesser risks.

Otherwise, what could I do? Beg or borrow money. There was no way I was going to get a normal job. There are so many people with good degrees who are unemployed and why would someone give me a job?

5.3.5. Exploitation in Mumbai bars

Most girls were very resistant talking about their life as a bar dancer and specially their life in a foreign city. However, two girls described their life style in Mumbai, when they were working in the dance bars. This helped me understand how the seemingly legal bars where dancers danced and did not strip or prostitute were related to modern day slavery.

111

I knew that my bar was going to close down. I had some regular clients who could spend a lot of money on me wherever I worked. They would find me. So, I did get the thoughts of getting employed at another bar. But, we had threats. I knew if I left my 'seth' (owner) will make me handicapped or kill me. I know of another dancer who tried to change job to another bar and the bar issued a 'supari' [4] on her. She lost her legs in that paid accident. Since I know the horrific stories, I would never dare to be greedy. I knew the bar owned me. Even this foreign trip was not possible with any other agency but the one that my 'seth' organized for me.

When I asked her if she would be allowed to see her clients outside of the bar, she said that she did prostitute for some well paying clients but again, she only gets a limited share in the total deal. Most of the money goes to the bar owner. However, she said it is not like that in America. In my reflective notes, I wrote that it seemed as if she was protecting herself from any harm while making sure that she did not share anything confidential about her trips abroad. Especially, her eyes were always watching for the bouncer, owner or other dancers seeing her talk to me.

Another informant shared a similar view about freedom. She said dance bars are the places for men to free themselves from their families and bind girls like us with chains that can never be broken.

I was very young when I made my first out of India trip. I did not know English or Urdu. But, that time it was all organized before. We did not have to pay because we were still too young. The bar owner organized our trip to Kuwait. We were told that we would not tell anyone our real names or anything about ourselves without permission from the band leader. I used to dance every night, all seven days and was forced to entertain old clients many times during my stay there for just three months. If I refused to have sex

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[4] Contract to kill

with a client they brought, I would be killed. Also, I was so young I had no energy or knowledge of what to do then. I was one of the lucky girls to come back from that tour. Two of my friends who were fourteen and fifteen were sold and they lived there as slaves to the men who bought them.

I did try to ask her how they acquired visas to go to those countries as I knew that the security is tight. She said a little over various conversations. I had to knit the conversations to make sense of it.

They made all our paper work. They also trained us on talking in Urdu. Since I was a Muslim, it was not that difficult to learn Urdu. From September to December was our tour and we never got to see our papers. We were told that if anyone asked anything about us, we will say we are not allowed to talk to anyone and they could talk to the band leader.

In another conversation she said, "We left in a mid night flight. We were told that if anyone asked us about why we were going there, we had to give names of relatives who we were visiting". When I asked her, "did a thought ever occur to you in your visit to the gulf that the band leaders made money and exploited you?" She said, "We all knew we were exploited. Who wanted that life of a slave? I can say today that I have visited six countries in my career so far. But, if you ask me anything about any of that country, I would not be able to tell you anything except the bar and the people I met there. But, like me, most girls have no choice. I knew they were using me and my life was ruined. But, I knew that I did not have any choice. Also, I was too young to understand all this".
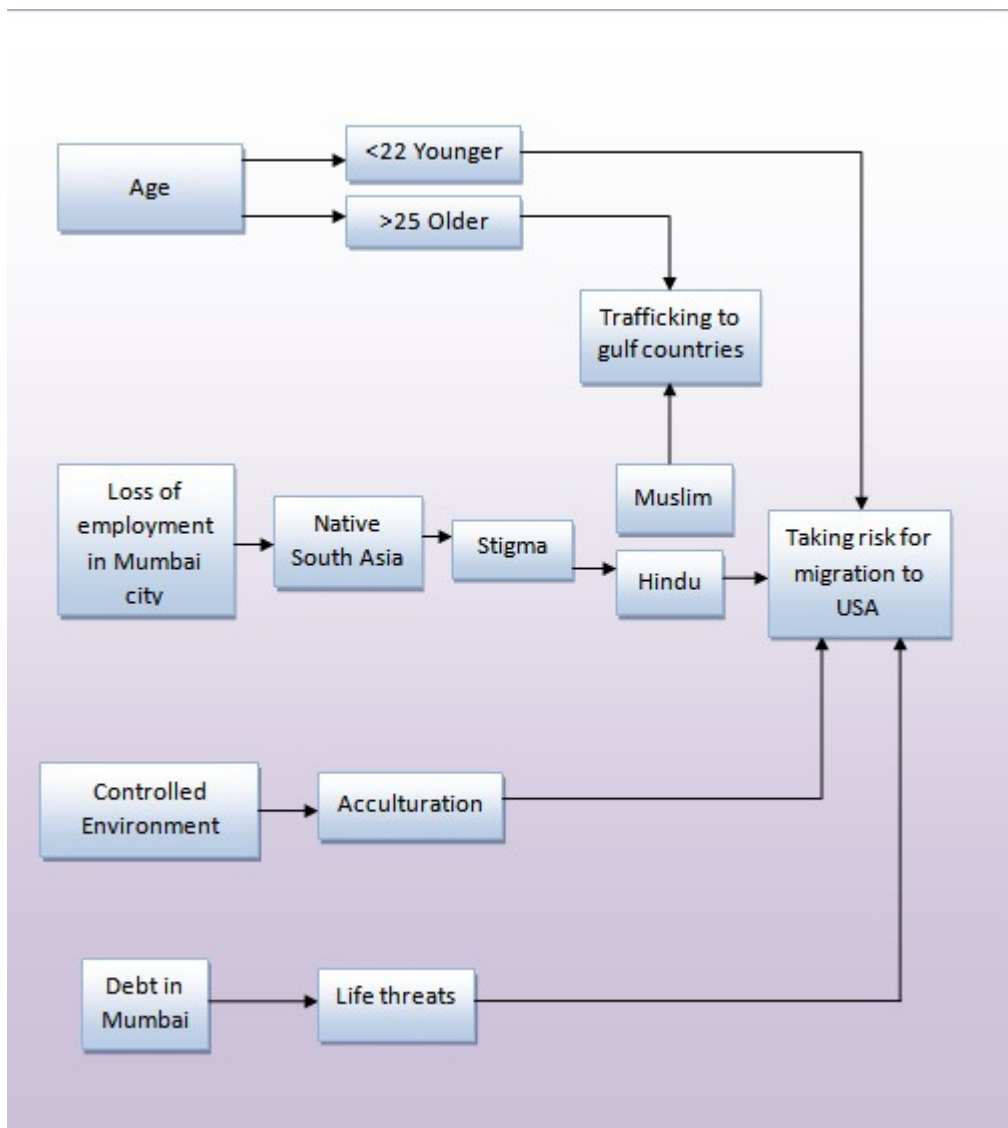
Fig. 5.3 Factors Creating Vulnerability to International Trafficking in Mumbai

114

5.3.7. Acculturation

Acculturation is defined as the changes that individuals or groups experience when they come in contact with two or more cultures. Acculturation includes psychological, social and cultural aspects of the adaptation process (Wilson, 1994). While interaction of cultures changes both the groups, usually the non-dominant cultural group experiences more change as compared to the dominant culture group. The minority is often forced to accept the new language, gestures, religion, and laws of the host culture. Acculturation refers to the degree of agreement with the norms, values, attitudes, beliefs and preferences of a particular group to the host society or culture (Berry, 1992).

Literature on human trafficking tends to assume that victims of trafficking are exploited and seek freedom. However, the narratives from this research contested this general understanding. Many victims I interacted with seemed to have accepted the culture of bar dancing. When asked to leave bar dancing for any other profession majority of the dancers said that they did not want to do that because they felt 'safe' dancing in similar settings. Also, they did not want to learn or get trained in a completely newer profession. To most, what they knew was safer than the unknown. Thus, while acculturation was not a theory that I was set out to explore, it was one of the prominent factor which was derived from data analysis.

Analysis of summary transcripts showed acculturation as another factor impacting South Asian women's decision to take the risk of being trafficking during their migration for work abroad. While this was not one of the factor identified in existing literature, after careful examination of narratives, this became one of the primary factor that impacted South Asian bar dancers' decision to migrate for working in similar situations as Mumbai bars in foreign countries.

A pattern was generated based on the narratives that showed how these women's resistance to their work place (bars) reduced over the years. Most women I interviewed had some other choices that could prevent them from working in high risk professions like bar dancing and prostitution. However, most girls chose to continue working in similar situations. I was not sure if it was purely economic or there was something more to it. After analyzing the transcripts I found out that some women had accepted their situation of exploitation and abuse and were unwilling to accept another change. Thus, familiarity with existing culture was another contributing factor that made some women choose to go for working in dance bars abroad. "I have been in this line for over six years now. I have invested so much in this. I cannot imagine my life outside of a bar now". A similar response was,

> If the bars closed down few years back I would be the first one to perhaps try and change my lifestyle or live an honest life. But, I have spent half my life here. My new family is everyone in the bar. It is not the best family and yet it is better than my parents who sold me for nothing in this hell. So, I don't think I would want anything except that the bars reopen in Mumbai.

Analysis of narratives unfolded many factors that contributed in the decision of South Asian girls to migrate to a foreign country for dancing in the bars. While, the informants did not share any information about their life in the United States, they did give glimpses of the world they had lived in after entering the dance bars in Mumbai.
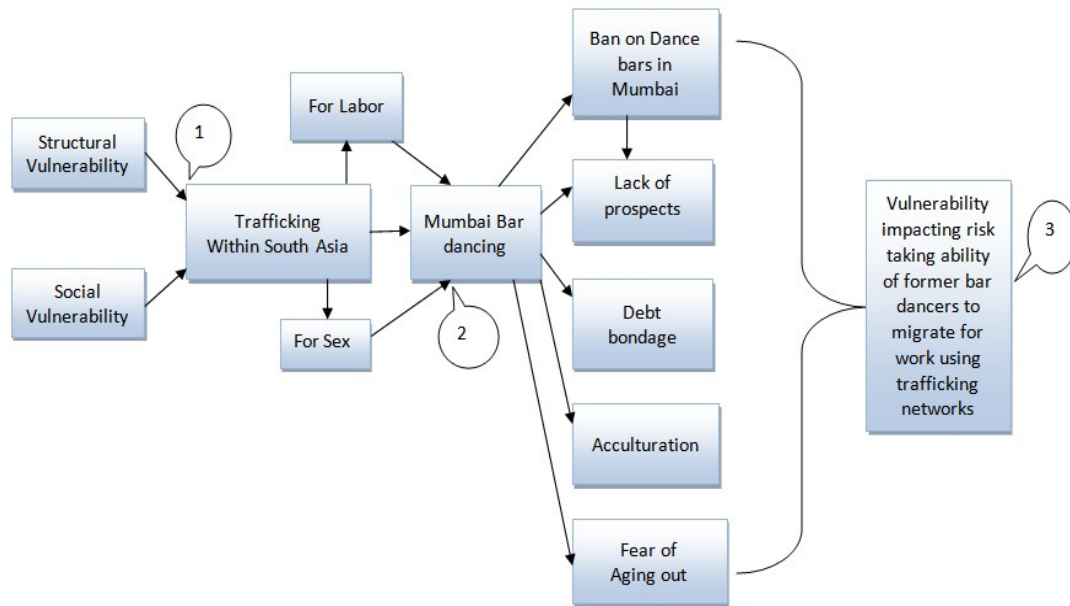
Fig. 5.4 The Factors Impacting South Asian Girls'/Women's Vulnerability to be Trafficked: (1) Within South Asia (2) To Mumbai bars and (3) Outside South Asia

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION

In the previous chapter I found threads from similar narratives and derived patterns that affected South Asian women's vulnerability to trafficking and related migration. In this chapter, I build on the understanding of vulnerability gained from thematic coding of data collected for this study. This chapter presents a holistic picture of vulnerability for South Asian victims of trafficking at two levels: (1) Migration from rural to urban areas within South Asia and (2) migration from Mumbai to the United States at the risk of trafficking.

In the first section of this chapter, I discuss the unique information which I gathered during this research and display the similarities and differences I found from existing literature on human trafficking. In the second section I discuss the implications arising out of this study for policy, research and practice and in the final section I present the strengths and weaknesses of this research to guide future researches.

6.1 Unique Findings

Literature on factors that create vulnerability to trafficking among South Asian women was reviewed before starting the data collection. Based on existing theoretical framework, the guiding questions for this research were formulated. However, ethnographic approach allowed me to be more receptive in obtaining important information that was not directly related to my research questions. Keeping in mind the value of new information in qualitative approach, I would like to discuss some of the valuable information that can guide future researches in this area. Some of the research findings from my research were consistent with the theoretical

literature on human trafficking in South Asia, while some other research findings shed new light on the issue of trafficking

6.1.1. Factors Creating Vulnerability to Trafficking Within South Asia

6.1.1.1 Economic Difficulty

Poverty was the primary factor influencing South Asian women's choice to migrate for work. This finding was in line with the existing literature on human trafficking. However, during my analysis, I came across three aspects of poverty that made informants more vulnerable to trafficking related migration. At a macro level, environmental degradation in some parts of rural South Asia is causing dire poverty. Soil erosion, flash floods, consecutive droughts and saline land cover are causing a serious threat to agriculture and the families dependant on agriculture in South Asia (Lipton, 1989). In two of my narratives, this factor was emphasized. One of the informants had to migrate because her father who was a landless laborer working on a landlord's farm and lost his employment when the landlord decided to sell the farm due to lack of productivity. Another informant mentioned that in hilly regions of Nepal the environmental patterns have changed and the families that could survive on agriculture alone now have to look for work in cities.

Another aspect of poverty that was repeatedly mentioned in the narratives was relative poverty or 'meso' level poverty in families. This aspect was reflected in many interactions repeatedly. Women were expected to earn for themselves and their families when the primary earning source (which is normally the father or the husband) lost his job or met with some kind of accident which compelled women to take up the economic responsibility for the family. In the narratives three informants mentioned reasons for entering a risky migration. The father of one of the informants was diagnosed with a terminal illness. She needed money to pay the hospital bills and even with a degree she was not able to find a job. She spoke about the competitive

market where women with just college level education find it difficult to find a job, leaving the family to suffer. Another informant said that her worry was that she did not have money to pay the rent for her house or pay the electricity bill two months after the dance bar closed. She said that she needed money to save herself from dangers of living on the street and under the threat of mafia. The link between homelessness and poverty is well established in prior literature in South Asia (Kapoor et.al. 2003). The third type of poverty described in the narratives was micro or individual level poverty. Being born as a girl, especially in a lower caste, in some parts of South Asia resulted in abandonment or selling of that child for sex work. Also, in one of the narratives the informant described how being divorced made it impossible for her to survive when the ex-husband refused to support her or her children economically and the parents refused to support her financially. This aspect of poverty, while structural in nature, creates excessive pressure for women to earn. Literature suggests that various structural aspects such as gender, caste and marital status render women in South Asia helpless. My findings were in line with the literature when women mentioned the reasons for which they agreed to work in the dance bars in Mumbai.

In the literature poverty is often defined homogenously in terms of severe poverty (Karger and Stoesz, 1990). However, at different stages relative or absolute poverty compels women to join risky migration networks. Absolute poverty refers to the income level below which a minimum diet and essential non-food requirements are not affordable and reflects the inability of people to live life with dignity where as relative poverty refers to the inability to satisfy needs at a level that is consistent with the prevailing norms of one's community or reference group -- whether or not these norms exceed the requirements for human survival (Estes, 1999). It was realized that the first time migration was a result of absolute poverty in families, whereas the decision of women to work in dance bars was a result of relative poverty. The narratives suggested that women who were already trafficked to cities and were exploited for nothing or very little in return, turned to dance bars with an assumption of improving their lives. However,

after the ban on dance bars in 2004, the women employed in dance bars again hit the rock bottom of poverty. In a narrative it was described that the only means of earning left to the informant was to obey the orders of the bar owner for whatever the work or work destination might be. At different points of the informants' lives different types of situations were narrated clearly reflecting the link between poverty and South Asian women's trafficking or related migration.

6.1.1.2 Gender Bias and Traditional Customs

Patriarchal nature of South Asian culture creates and harbors the notion of a girl child as a burden on the family. Daughters are thus deprived of education, putting them at a higher risk for possible participation in labor force if circumstances demand. This reality about South Asian culture is well exposed in prior literature (Dollar et.al., 1999; Lokshin et.al., 2003).

This economic gender discrimination is a result of the fact that in South Asian cultures the son is expected to care for the family where as the daughter is expected to meet stereotypical demands of being a woman by cooking, home making, raising children and so on. In poorer families gender biases are higher due to economic limitations. Parents try to minimize expenditure on the daughters. The only major expenditure on a daughter is the dowry to be paid to the groom at the time of marriage. Dowry, though illegal in most countries, is widely prevalent culturally. Gender biases limit the growth and access of women to the outside world and thus leave her more vulnerable to trafficking (Roy, 2007). This fact was supported by majority of the narratives in this research. Apart from the traditional understanding of depriving women of her rights to education, awareness, health care and choice a few contrasting phenomenon were recorded in the transcripts.

Culturally women are considered the honor of the family. Loss of virginity before marriage has resulted in the worst consequences in the past including honor killings of the

121

daughter by her own family members. However, in the narratives I sequentially noticed different ways that parents as well as spouses forced women into sex trade. The most stunning finding was when one of the informant described how her parents misguided her by telling her that her migration was needed using roundabout words like making a better life and supporting the family like a son, without telling her that they were selling her to the sex slave market. Similarly, one of the informant mentioned that her husband forced her into bar dancing and later abused her calling her a 'prostitute'. Thus, a newer pattern of gender biases is found which is more hypocritical than the earlier practices of blatant discrimination. Some of my informants showed anger about the fact that families were manipulating their daughters by silently watching them sink in the risky professions involving prostitution and shame. One of my informants said that when she sent money back to her family, no questions were asked as if everyone thought it was appropriate for her to dance in a bar and serve customers as long as she was earning good money. However, when she lost her job and went back home, her mother said that she should make some other arrangements to stay as she brought shame to her family. This was an ironical and disturbing finding showing the breakdown of social support in structural context. Also, my finding was in line with existing literature when informants said that destitution due to loss of social status compelled them to join migratory networks being aware of the risk of being sexually exploited. Widowhood, divorce, abandonment, remarriage or running away from home due to domestic violence renders a woman with not much choice but to live in isolation and fend for themselves. Thus, loss of social status also cuts the social support for women in South Asia, and puts them at a higher risk of being trafficked (Ahmad, 2005; Groupe Development, 2006).

Poverty is also linked with increasing gender biases in some parts of South Asia. In order to avoid dowry, parents prefer to marry their daughters to men who are much older than the daughters and who sometimes agree to pay the parents instead (Da Cunha, 2002). Getting the daughters married off to strangers in far off destinations also comes with an attached risk of trafficking which is often overlooked. Another distinct finding from this research

was the mobility of South Asian women. Culturally, South Asian women were expected to stay at home and women who did the homely duties was honored. Whereas women who migrated for work were looked down upon. However, my research showed completely opposite trend. Informants repeatedly mentioned how they had to migrate for work to support their families and no one from their family had money to accompany them to make sure that they were safe. Especially, when younger girls are sent with strangers from Bangladesh and Nepal, the parents discount the risks and exploitative nature of migration networks. Majority of literature in trafficking talks about now parents are being deceived and their daughters are trafficked in the process of migration. However, based on the interviews with informants what was observed was a knowing submission of women in exploitative environments by parents under the pretext of being unaware of the possible risks.

6.1.1.3 Social Networks

Literature suggests that villages in South Asian countries are connected to the cities through personalized networks. Few people from villages work in the cities and they try to pool people from their villages as and when job opportunities arise (Massey et.al., 1987). In developing countries of South Asia, migration is often a result of irrational social exchanges taking place through social networks. Especially in rural areas families invest heavily in developing and maintaining social networks by giving expensive gifts in weddings of individuals attached to migratory networks, providing special favors for free including wage less labor or gifting farm produce for free. While social networks normally serve as a social support for families in the process of migration, some findings from my research showed negative consequences of existing social networks. One of my informant narrated how she and her family was cheated by the migration network even though the network was known to her family. Listening to her account it was realized that migration networks have recruited agents in vulnerable areas of South Asia who are paid to coarse and deceive young women into

123

trafficking related migration. Migration networks have been exploiting the community's trusted members who become active partners in the criminal activity of trafficking (Free the Slaves, 2005).

In traditional cultures, single women who are widowed, separated or who run away are heavily ostracized (Bhattacharya, 2004). The families who invest in social exchanges for gaining social support for their families, especially children are made to delink themselves with their daughters due to the pressures from their social networks. Where social support from known communities ends, the possibility for destitute women to engage in other social networks begins. Traffickers and migration agents seem to be taking advantage of this reality and luring women into risky professions like bar dancing. Two of my informants had trusted the traffickers when they were humiliated by their families due to the failure of their marriage.

Social networks play both positive and negative role in increasing or decreasing South Asian women's vulnerability to trafficking. Trafficking related migration chains differ from the supportive migration networks known to the community in a sense that the former refuses to provide authentic information about the nature of work and legality of the same where as the latter is usually an established network that brings back the information about cities and the work culture and shares it with the community so that interested people can make an informed choice. The positive aspect of social network can be emphasized in order to break down the existing trafficking chains in South Asian countries.

6.1.1.4 Caste and Religion

Literature suggested that Caste plays a very important role in human trafficking. Young girls from poor families belonging to lower castes are trafficked at a young age and used as sex-slaves by the traffickers (Rizvi, 2008). In my research I found majority of the informants belonged to lower castes. On the other hand all the informants mentioned that majority women

124

who work in bar dancing or sex industry belong to Muslim families. A unique aspect of caste and religion was brought forward in one of the conversation. She said that " the girls who come from Nepal and South are usually from lower caste families, where as girls from Bengal and other parts of India are usually from Muslim families". She also mentioned that she knew of girls who worked as street prostitutes and were paid less in Mumbai were all from lower castes. However, she amazed me by distinguishing the classes within sex slave market. She also mentioned that "Muslim girls were high in demand in Mumbai and could earn a lot by just dancing in bars or serving in hotels as compared to the lower caste of girls who are cheap for taxi drivers and local vendors. Those are brought young into prostitution are all diseased by the time they are twenty". While I thought her perceptions could have been biased since she was from a Muslim family, they were important to record as her narrative to a greater extent supported what I had read in some literature on human trafficking in South Asia.

Another contradictory finding with regards to the religion was the belief that Muslim culture refuses to accept the daughters back if they find out the daughter is not a virgin. One of my informants said that she was a second wife to a man and since she could not give birth to a child in a year after their marriage, he remarried again and expected all three of his wives to live with him. When she disagreed with that condition and consulted her parents, she was told that she would have to survive on her own if she wanted to leave the husband. She mentioned that marrying multiple times is common in some parts of Bangladesh when there are justifiable reasons. However, since she disagreed with the justification and wanted to divorce the husband she had to accept the condition of living independently without the 'meher' which her husband refused to give her. Based on the narratives I could fathom that caste created economic vulnerability among South Asian families, where as social customs put women from Muslim families at a higher risk of trafficking.

125

6.1.1.5 Awareness about Trafficking

Literature on human trafficking suggests that lack of awareness is the primary cause behind vulnerability to trafficking for South Asian women. Findings from my research were in line with the fact that better awareness could reduce the risk of women being trafficked from lower income or rural areas of South Asia to the trafficking destinations. In addition to this, the narratives from informants brought forward the fact that awareness alone may not help in reducing trafficking. Women in South Asian countries are often not the decision makers and thus, creating awareness about trafficking in schools or colleges may not be enough to reduce trafficking. A multi pronged approach to awareness generation might bring better results in reducing the number of girls and women being trafficked from source destinations in South Asia. Also, awareness generation efforts would have to be coupled with some economic incentives or opportunities created for very poor and conservative families in the source areas in order to deter them from being lured by economic opportunities that currently outweigh the awareness generated regarding trafficking. Women in South Asia are trafficked from families living below poverty line. Some of the narratives defined poverty in terms of absolute hunger and thus, it becomes important to address the larger issue of poverty alleviation without which awareness about trafficking might fail in deterring families from selling their daughters or women from selling themselves for the families.

6.1.2. Factors Increasing Vulnerability to International Trafficking

All the informants said that working in dance bars was relatively less risky as compared to anything else including working as a domestic help with any family. Analysis of data collected during my research revealed that most informants were originally trafficked from poorer families with false promises to various destination cities like Mumbai, Calcutta and Delhi in India and Kathmandu in Nepal. Their next movement was from wherever they were working in the city to work in Mumbai's dance bars. Since there was a clear reluctance on sharing information about

126

that aspect from the informants I decided not to force them into that conversation but analyze whatever information they felt comfortable sharing. For most women who were brought to Mumbai city from their native village or town, working in dance bars was an economic choice. Whereas for the women who were exploited in different ways in other cities, working in dance bars was not necessarily an economic choice.

The primary reason for the informants to leave Mumbai and migrate to the United States for working in South Asian dance bars was the loss of employment in Mumbai city after the ban on dance bars. For a couple of informants the reasons were to make better money or use the migration network to get visa to America. As a researcher I was disappointed when I learnt that many of the informants did not feel that they were at risk of being trafficked while they knew that they were exploited and some of them lived under severe threats.

6.1.3 Perception of Bar Dancing and Trafficking in the Process of International Migration

A blanket definition of human trafficking makes it difficult to identify the difference between trafficking, prostitution and related trades like bar dancing. Especially, in this study I realized that the term trafficking was far from the vocabulary of informants. Only six of the twenty informants had a vague idea about what is trafficking. At the time of data collection, I had observed that some of my informants were very proud of themselves for being able to have a job in crisis time. For those women, bar dancing was a way of life. I was surprised at this because of the exploitative nature of the trade as well as the dangerous environment in which the girls were made to work in Mumbai and other destinations. However, some of the responses unfolded some of the reasons why they perceived bar dancing as a regular job. One of the informants described her situation and revealed that when you live in the city of Mumbai you are taking risks every day. She said,

Local train is risky, there can be bomb blasts, working in a company is risky, you can get exploited there by old bosses, going to night clubs is risky because you can get raped or murdered there. Risk is a part of life. Dance bars are less risky for women I think. Because, they have bouncers and we are so powerful on the stage, if a customer misbehaves we know how to handle it. Bar dancers don't get paid for dancing, but they are smart women, that is why we are paid so well.

Similarly majority of the informants pointed out the fact that the dance bars provided a protective environment for them. "Underworld may kill other people, but they fall for us and they protect us. Even police officers protect us", said another informant. As an outside observer when I visited the dance bars several times during the course of this study, I found it degrading for the dignity of women especially when I saw old men showing bundle of dollars for just a smile of a dancer and showering it over her to hold her close. However, for the informants it was a routine and they did not mind it at all. One of the younger informant said, "I prefer old men of my father's age. I know they can spend a lot of money for just watching me dance looking at them. This is about income not about romance".

The most important finding of this research was the fact all the informants felt more powerful when they worked in Mumbai dance bars and said that the pride was lost as they were compelled to do things they did not want to do after they lost their employment. One of the informant shared stories of her friends who could not do foreign trips. She said "Begam was working in the bar for many years. Now it was her time to retire in five years. But now, she has nowhere to go. She has some money but she has AIDS. So, she is not going to live too long. She has nowhere to go now. She is prostituting now in Uttar Pradesh. Where can she go?" Similarly another bar dancer she knew who was young and a very good dancer also turned to prostitution. She said, "Rajni is the best dancer. She is young and she made more money than any of us by just dancing and nothing else. She has a car and a flat in Mumbai. She is smart so

128

she accepted the offer of being a business class escort. She now travels with all big people from companies, government and all. She lives with them like a wife for a week two week months depending on the contract. She did not tell me but from what I have heard she makes around 25,000 a week plus gifts like new cloths sarees, diamond jewelry, sweets and a lot of things. Plus, she gets to travel more freely and gets to stay in good hotels and all that. But, she is smart and so she had connections, not all girls have such charm". Thus, revealing the fact that many women who were just dancers and who had not yet entered prostitution were forced into prostitution after the ban on dance bars. The reason my informants decided to migrate for working in dance bars abroad was also a result of the ban on dance bars and lack of employment options in India. This fact revealed the theoretical link between the push and pull factors of market demand and supply that made women more vulnerable to trafficking by entering risky routes of migration (Bales, 2000).

While the informants felt more powerful and confident dancing in the dance bars, their perception about the risks involved in traveling abroad for bar dancing were varied. The informants who had been to Gulf countries before were aware of the risks involved in trafficking. While all the informants said that they were not allowed to talk about international travel to anyone, some of them did share their experiences about traveling to 'Dubai' and 'Kuwait'. What I observed in the interactions was the fact that none of the informants were willing to talk about themselves but they were more comfortable sharing the story of their friends in bar dancing and their experience. One of the informants said that, "Dubai is heaven for us. I have been there in 2000 and I made a lot of money. Also, the customers are all rich and they know how to treat women. I want to go to Dubai. There is nothing here". When I asked, "But, I thought it was not very safe to travel there for bar dancing", she said "Yes it is not very safe. If you are unlucky or if you misbehave with clients or something, you can be locked up in prison-like places all alone without anything to eat for days. But, that rarely happens if you are nice to everyone. Obviously if you are in their country you have to respect them". Similarly another informant narrated that

Indian bar dancers are very well received in Kuwait. They do private parties and some of them work like escorts to some rich businessmen, doctors and professional people. She said, "Those country laws are strict. So, we have to be very careful. It is also risky because if you are caught you can be jailed for a long time. But, those people spend a lot on private parties and private time". When asked about the United States she replied, "No. We are different. We all went to the embassy and got our visas and all. It is only for going to gulf countries that you need those things. Over here no one does anything but perform. We are performers here". When I asked the informants if they were scared before coming here their answers were mixed. For those who came for the first time they said that they were a little apprehensive and had no idea about what it is going to be like. One of the girls shared her frustration, "Here it is no life outside this place. I would love to see some places here and go out. I have requested the owner to take us for a picnic or something at least. I have come this far, I would like to see something. I can't go anywhere alone. This is a country of paperwork. Police might catch me and I barely speak English, don't even keep my passport with me. If this was some city in India, I would have seen some places at least". However, majority of them said that they were here simply to perform and they were doing their jobs. In order to understand the reasons why some women did not perceive bar dancing or trafficking as severe risks, more research might be needed.

6.1.4 Social Support for Bar Dancers

A surprisingly unique finding of this research was that the informants had better social network in Mumbai as compared to their native places or in the United States. It was mentioned several times that they were cautioned about the risks in migration by someone from the bar in Mumbai, People they knew from underworld were willing to lend them money and they had several different offers like prostitution, escort services to making foreign tours from different networks they formed in Mumbai while working in dance bars. One of the informant said that "the only people who are reliable are people from the gangs in Mumbai. Anything happens to us

even at midnight we can call them and can be sure that they will help us out". Even in the exploitative and quite controlled environment, they had some kind of networks that they counted on for things like advice, money, and social support. Whereas over here, all the informants said that they felt lonely and out of place since everything was new. The people were new the dances were new, the customers were new and they did not have enough time to make networks since they were moved from one city to another in the United States. This was a unique finding which I had not found in the literature. While trying to design preventive interventions and reduce South Asian bar dancer's vulnerability to trafficking it becomes important to understand how they are connected with a social network which is closely associated with crimes of human trafficking. Thus, interventions would also have to target the migration networks or find a way to reach out to women in a way that they can develop more trust in preventive interventions than their existing social networks from underworld.

6.1.5 Age and Acculturation

My analysis found a salient feature that explained the reasons why some informants chose to go abroad for work while being aware of the risk of being exploited in the routes of migration. Older informants had been to foreign countries even before coming to United States. They were aware of the dangers involved in traveling out of South Asia. Similarly, some of the informants were offered other job trainings from NGOs that could get them a job to survive after the ban on dance bars. However, they preferred the choice of going abroad for bar dancing. The older informants said that they had danced on the stage of dance bars since they were young. Staying in Mumbai was full of risks as they had incurred debts and did not have any options of paying it back except prostitution. So, from the options they had they chose the option that involved some risk but guaranteed them a fair amount of income. Whereas the younger informants who rejected the offers of training from NGOs expressed, "training, education and things like that are not for me. I can't do that kind of things. I am a dancer and I

131

can just dance". Another informant said, "All those NGO people think we are like prostitutes and full of diseases. They make us fill out paperwork asking us things like if we have AIDS or not? They are all the same as police, sympathetic from outside and cunning from inside". The youngest informant said that she was very scared. She had just started dancing in the bar and had lost the employment. Now, her owner had invested in her and she could not just leave him like that and take some other training. Along with these reasons all the informants discussed that it was impossible to find a job in Mumbai or India as a former bar dancer. They feared that their identity might be exposed and they might be stigmatized. Also, some of their families were unaware about the nature of their work and they feared that their families might come to know about their jobs at the dance bars.

While the girls find it difficult to get adjusted to the culture of bar dancing, the study revealed that during the course of their work in Mumbai bars they get acculturated to the kind of setting, clients and the entire nexus of bar dancing. Also, factors like debts and favors in times of emergency bring some amount of guilt for leaving the owners. However, most importantly leaving dance bars could be extremely threatening to the women due to internal bar owner rivalries in Mumbai and extended social stigma. A combination of these factors increase the risk taking capacity and they find traveling abroad for dancing in the bar as the most familiar setting to adjust to as compared to prostitution, escort services or going back home. I found more resistance among older women to work anywhere except dance bars. Acculturation has not been talked about in the human trafficking literature. However, it became significant factor to incorporate in this analysis because it was expressed by many of the informants in my study. While more research might establish the significance of acculturation for this population, this research pioneers the quest for understanding whether acculturation impacts the human trafficking victim's resistance to come out of the exploitative environment?

6.1.6. Derived Theoretical Model: Two Step Internal South Asian and International Trafficking

This study aimed at understanding the factors that create vulnerability among South Asian women to be trafficked. Qualitative framework was used to conduct this study since it was a pioneering research to be conducted on the particular population of South Asian bar dancers. As a researcher while I did have a few guiding questions I invited the free flow of information shared by informants and later during the analysis tried to see if any patterns emerged from the collected data. A combination of various factors was discovered that made South Asian women more vulnerable to trafficking at different stages of migration. The factors that created vulnerability among the subjects and their families for entering risky migration within South Asia for the first time were quiet different from the factors that made the same women vulnerable to make a choice of migrating out of South Asia at the risk of being exploited or trafficked.

Corroboration of various themes derived from the informants' narratives were used to create a theoretical model that explained factors that make South Asian women from certain backgrounds more vulnerable to trafficking. Structural vulnerability in terms of gender, caste, religion and region in South Asia constitute South Asian women's vulnerability to human trafficking. Also, lack of social support and use of unknown migration networks existing in South Asian regions where women are sourced from. Trafficking networks engage vulnerable women and families in economic or social exchanges. Women without social support, especially single women in South Asia are also targeted by traffickers. Thus, a preventative action is required to first identify the population which is more vulnerable to trafficking in different regions of South Asia and then designing preventative programs that reach out to not only the prospective victims but also their families. Breaking the existing chains of trafficking at the village level is equally important to prevent South Asian girls from being trafficked. Also, offering equal rights to South Asian women by changing existing hypocritical customs in South Asia are essential in

133

order to reduce sourcing girls for trafficking from this region. While all efforts are important, poverty alleviation programs for families and skill development programs for young women are required to prevent families from selling their daughters and for daughters to sacrifice their lives by accepting trafficking related migration to support their families.

At a second stage, some women are abducted and some are lured by better economic prospects in Mumbai. Having suffered exploitation and poverty, South Asian women are often eager to look for some faster method of earning better money and live a better life. Dance bars in Mumbai offer the exact match to their expectations. At the time of recruitment women are told about the rich and glamorous world of dance bars where important people from all walks of life visit. "From film producers, government officials to CEOs of companies visit dance bars and they spend a colossal amount of money appreciating the dances of the bar dancers". These are the typically luring words of a recruiter for dancers in Mumbai bars. Women often see the stage as an opportunity to make more money and either support themselves or their families, and in some cases their goals in life. Traffickers look for women who are looking for better prospects to better their lives or find single woman as prospective recruits. Also many young girls are lured into this profession by false promises and fraud. South Asian women who are discriminated against at different stages of their lives find this prospect more lucrative as compared to fewer other available prospects and fall in the trap of recruiters.

The focus of my research was to understand the third stage of trafficking which has increased significantly in recent years. South Asian bar dancers are trafficked to various distant countries as entertainers for various business establishments. International migration agents are recruited and in some cases paid for bringing South Asian girls to dance in bars abroad. On July 21, 2005 a bill was passed by Maharashtra government to ban the dance bars since they were hubs of criminal activities. The objective behind this policy was to reduce human trafficking for sex trade in South Asia and also close down meeting joints for criminal gangs. Prior to this ban a few bar dancers were rescued by police and that lead to the conclusion that dance bars

134

should be banned as they are another face of prostitution and trafficking (Uchil, 2005). However, the consequences after the ban have been quite the opposite. Since the government did not provide any kind of rehabilitation plan for former bar dancers, around 100,000 girls who worked in different bars in Mumbai city were rendered unemployed. Due to lower level of education and lack of any other marketable skill these women had to turn to either prostitution or migration taking the risk of trafficking (Agnes, 2009). The bar owners who went out of business for sometime adopted different means of exploiting these women. They started offering options like joining prostitution, escort services or foreign tours controlled by the migration networks. Apart from structural vulnerability, women who worked in dance bars were subjected to stigma and hatred in Indian society (Roy-Chaudhury, 2006). While all the factors contributing to former bar dancer's vulnerability to international trafficking are documented in news media, my study found another theoretical connect that supported these women's decision of entering the risky routes of migration. Acculturation and social network in Mumbai were the two factors which pushed bar dancers to enter risky routes of migration to foreign destinations. With more time being spent in that culture of exploitation, life of a bar dancer became a way of life for some of my informants. The theoretical assumption established in this research based on analysis of narratives presumes that with more time spent in bar dancing or exploitative environment such as trafficking, women become more and more culturally akin to that world of work and get resistant to the outside world, especially in South Asia due to the prior stigma and discrimination suffered in the family and community.

6.2 Implications for Policy Practice and Research

6.2.1 Policy on Dance Bars

In cross border trafficking, India is a sending, receiving and transit nation. Receiving children from Bangladesh and Nepal and sending women and children to Middle Eastern nations is a daily occurrence. (Executive Director of SANLAAP, Indrani Sinha, Paper on

135

Globalization and Human Rights"). While a lot has been discussed in terms of policies regarding prostitution and child trafficking, a group that has been overlooked for many years by policy makers is that of bar dancers.

This study has identified this new group which is extremely vulnerable to trafficking in recent years after government of Maharashtra changed its policy on dance bars. Trafficking for prostitution under the guise of bar dancing has been going on for over thirty years. Prostitution is legal in India. However, brothel keeping, living off the earnings of a prostitute, soliciting or seducing for the purposes of prostitution are all punishable offenses. There are severe penalties for child prostitution and trafficking of women (Freidman, 1996). Similarly, employing women in the dance bars to dance was not illegal in Maharashtra till 2005. But, after several raids on dance bars when under aged girls were found trafficked for the purpose of prostitution alongside being dancers in the bars, the Maharashtra government banned these dance bars in order to reduce trafficking of girls for this purpose and stop other related criminal activities.

My research found that trafficking of women for bar dancing and prostitution was rampant from poor, lower caste families in South Asia. Pure economics of demand and supply gave rise to the trade of trafficking. However, the dance bars in Mumbai employed women who consented to work in dance bars due to socio-economic necessities knowing the risky nature of that profession. These bars also employed women who were abducted or whose families were deceived by traffickers for sending or selling their daughters to work in the dance bars. While the setting of dance bars did involve severe forms of exploitation of young women the women working there found some sense of safety in that risky environment due to the fact that it was a known setting to them. However, after the bars were banned all the dancers employed by dance bar owners were jobless and had no way to earn a decent income to sustain their lives. Lack of education or marketable skills made them more vulnerable to join prostitution and trafficking rings offered by the same networks that hired them earlier. Thus, the policy that was

136

designed to curb trafficking ended up giving rise to trafficking of bar dancers to unknown destinations. While a blanket ban was executed by the government on dance bars, The former bar dancers were not offered any kind of counseling, shelter or employment. Instead many homes of bar dancers were raided by police and all illegal income (which was the primary income of bar dancers) was seized. A policy change was desired in order to change the plight of South Asian women who were extremely vulnerable to trafficking. Banning dance bars suddenly was perhaps a wrong policy move. The ban would have yielded desired results if it was executed with advanced planning that could offer victims alternatives to continue their livelihood. Also, it was made clear from the narratives that most bar dancers had dependent children or parents who completely depended on their salary. After they lost their employment they had no options but to accept cheap offers of going abroad for work, and also take the risk of living a life of a slave in countries abroad or live life of a prostitute in India.

In order to curb trafficking a multi dimensional approach is necessary. Policies should encourage self employment trainings, counseling and adult education as well as awareness programs to the unemployed women. Also, some kind of loans should be made available to these women till they find an alternative employment.

The one size fits all policies adopted by South Asian countries to follow the recent anti-trafficking protocol guidelines have been failing and resulting in further victimization of existing victims of sex trafficking. Since, the policies are more focused on curbing the crime and punishing the criminals, the issue of assistance for victims of trafficking remains unaddressed. There are some provisions in the policies related to the rescue and rehabilitation of victims after being rescued, but little is addressed in terms of prevention or protection of young girls in the source countries. The victims who are trafficked internationally are required to comply with the law enforcement's investigations to track down traffickers. However, giving a legal statement like 'I have been trafficked' involves many serious risks to the victims in destination countries

137

like in this case, in United States where the victims completely rely on the trafficking network and do not know anyone or anything about the law and order in this country.

South Asian girls fear deportation as a very big risk and shame for themselves and their families (Simmons, 2009). Also, giving a statement is risky while living in a foreign place controlled by traffickers, especially when the girls have paid the traffickers a huge amount or borrowed from them a huge amount of money in order to migrate to another country.

Another issue is stigmatization. Current South Asian policies related to bar dancing and sex-trafficking involve heavy stigmatization of victims as prostitutes engaged in immoral behavior. India's 'Immoral Traffic Prevention Act 1986' is suggestive of the stigma attached to these policies. This research calls for the adoption of a broader definition of 'force' in policies related to human trafficking at least in the South Asian context. The ban on dance bars in Mumbai, and subsequent increase in vulnerability of women to international trafficking calls for a victim centered policy approach with a focus on prevention, rescue as well as rehabilitation based on regional socio-cultural and economic requirements.

6.2.2 Customs

In order to reduce trafficking in South Asia it also becomes important to change the attitudes of communities who are rooted in the customs like dowry, polygamy, marital rapes and domestic violence.

6.2.2.1 Dowry

The custom of giving dowry when the gets married is prevalent in South Asia. This leads of some inherent gender biases among South Asian communities and deprives women of their right to education or employable skill enhancement. While dowry was predominantly a Hindu custom in recent years the custom has become a part of Muslim culture as well. Few years ago, in Muslim culture the groom would give an amount of '*Meher*' for the wife which she

could use in the times of crisis like in cases of divorce or multiple wives living like a family with one man. However, I was told that in recent years men do not divorce women and yet compel them by force to fend for themselves while staying with the groom's family. Also, in Muslim families in Bangladesh the custom of giving dowry to women at the time of marriage is prevalent which not the case about a generation ago. As a result of this girls are married off at an early age and parents of girl children are reluctant to spend anything on a girl child. Similarly in certain tribes of Nepal reverse dowry is a custom in recent years where by the parents find grooms for their daughters who pay the parents a dowry in return of marrying their daughters. This has resulted in young girls being married off to strangers who could be of double the age of girls (Sharma, 1986). Also, child marriages are fixed as a result of this new type of dowry system. As per law, giving or accepting dowry in India is illegal. However, the social norms have not changed. Communities are still as much under the pressure of the age old custom and the biases against girls are making them more vulnerable to live an enslaved life. In other countries like Bangladesh and Nepal dowry is a new trend and there are no laws addressing these types of exchanges. Policies need to be focusing on changing the attitudes and creating awareness among communities to stop such practices instead of trying to curb the practice by passing laws, which do not mean much in South Asian society where corruption and bribery are rampant and law is heavily manipulated by the rich and the powerful.

6.2.3 Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is another factor that creates South Asian women's vulnerability to trafficking. In South Asian culture the social necessity of marriage alongside the strange economics of marriage deprives women of their rights to education and employment. This increases their risk of being trafficked. Further, gender inequality also ingrains some role stereotypes for women which are hard for women to break. Thus, women keep living in violent conditions instead of speaking up for themselves. Those women who make a decision of living

139

an independent life like in the case of some women I interacted with in this study are dishonored in society and heavily stigmatized for not being able to sustain a marriage. As a result of the dependency created by customs women end up either living in abusive situations or they gather courage to leave the abusive situation and end up at a higher risk of abuse in the routes of trafficking. Long term preventative policy is required to reduce domestic violence which leads to destitution of young women in turn making them more vulnerable to trafficking related migration networks.

6.2.4 Single Women

Maximum informants of this research were the primary wage earners in their families. Some of them had dependent children and some had parents or spouses who depended on their income. After the closure of dance bars, these women had no alternative but to migrate for risky work options like prostitution or bar dancing to foreign destinations or to work as escorts with Mumbai's escort agencies which are again another version of prostitution. Since the girls who worked in dance bars had different educational backgrounds it might be difficult to find one policy addressing the issue of their employment. However, in absence of any kind of policy women are made highly vulnerable to trafficking. Some Mumbai based NGOs provide Support and employment training programs for women. However, these programs are very traditional and the skills training provided to former bar girls have no marketability. It is important to understand that these women earned at least as good as a normal corporate executive if not more by working in dance bars. Thus, economic support policies should be designed keeping in mind the marketability and family demands of former bar dancers. Also incentives have to be provided to former bar dancers to increase participation in employment programs. Leaving them without any option does not prevent trafficking and instead fuels it.

6.2.5 Education

Being aware of the primary cause behind the reasons why people sell their children or women accept risky migration options, it would be unrealistic to expect that poor families can afford girls' education beyond elementary school. The purpose of education policy should be creating sustainable livelihood options for poor families. Keeping this objective in mind, the education policy which only supports elementary education seems unacceptable. Most countries in South Asia are over populated. In the competitive market elementary level education is no different from illiteracy. Providing free schooling for women in South Asia might result in reduction of dropout rate among girls and will eventually result in better employment options for women making them less vulnerable to trafficking networks. This will eventually provide them with better choices but to prostitute and live with that stigma for the rest of their lives.

6.2.6 Practice

Little information exists on the needs of trafficking victims and the service providers working to meet those needs (Clauson, 2003). In some western countries, services are available for victims of trafficking concerning their rehabilitation, and recovery. However these services are not specifically designed keeping in mind this special population of girls who were trafficked for sexual slavery from South Asia. Similarly, in South Asia, not for profit organizations are trying to provide services like counseling and job trainings to assist rescued victims. However, based on this research, development of training programs like marketable skill development, adult education classes and personality development classes for rescued and returning victims might bring better results in preventing trafficking. In terms of Social Work practice with victims of trafficking there is a need to develop decentralized service delivery system based on the needs of victims in the source as well as destination countries. In South Asian context it is important to find (1) what services currently exist for trafficking victims? (2)

141

How responsive are these services to victims and whether they are meeting their needs? (3) What are barriers to providing services to trafficking victims? (4) What are the barriers to accessing services? (5) What assistance/support do service providers need to effectively serve trafficking victims? (6) What type of services should be developed to assist transnational victims? (IOM, 2003). My study identified a few target groups where action is necessary to reduce trafficking. (1) Unemployed bar dancers in Mumbai (2) single women widowed, abandoned or divorced (3) Young girls from rural and tribal areas (4) children or youth headed households (5) women with heavy debts (6) wives or daughters of poor landless farmers in rural areas.

The anti-trafficking initiatives need more grassroots interventions to prevent girls and women from being trafficked from poorer countries in South Asia. Awareness generation programs and creating equal opportunity for the marginalized groups like women, people belonging to lower castes are equally essential to reduce trafficking among children. Also, community and societal level networks can become useful agents of change in creating awareness about the dangers involved in trafficking. Career or alternative counseling centers can be opened where women can get more information about the places of destination offered by traffickers as well as the interest rates negotiated by traffickers for the loans provided to women in order to cover their migration cost. In practice, there is a need to develop more programs to prevent the future generation of South Asian girls from suffering the consequences of discrimination and trafficking. Reaching the women who live in abusive marriage situations is difficult. So, self help groups and out of school vocational training programs should be made available in source areas of trafficking in South Asia. Knowing the market is equally important to carve innovative programs like independent small businesses or enterprises that can help women support their families.

It is equally important to take a close look at the police corruption and bribes for employment in South Asia that make women more vulnerable to trafficking. Without the support of police and high level government officials, trafficking networks would not thrive as successfully as now. The root cause of corruption in police is poor wage rates as compared to the risks involved in their job (Presenti & Rao, 2008). Thus an alternative human resource planning might be beneficial incorporating better incentives for police and government officials.

Finally, family is the primary support available to young women. They should be made aware of the risks involved in trafficking. Also, innovative approaches have to be designed in order to reach out to the victims of trafficking while in transit and at the destination without involving the victims in cracking down criminal networks. Having gone through the amount of abuse and exploitation it would be unrealistic to expect victims' cooperation in cracking down crime. The primary goal of practice with this population should be rehabilitation and prevention and not punishment.

6.2.7. Research

The researchers face difficulty in finding ways to collect data on the population of trafficked girls, and lack of research creates a hurdle in implementing informed policies. As a result of this, fewer victims are rescued and, they are often served by social workers in general shelters using counseling and therapy developed for similar populations like domestic violence and trauma victims (Farley, 2003). This research is a pioneering research in the area connecting bar dancing, prostitution and human trafficking. The results of this study found different layers where victims become vulnerable to trafficking. The study also found factors that increased South Asian women's vulnerability to trafficking and most importantly, at what stages interventions can help in preventing South Asian women from falling in the traps of trafficking networks during the process of migration for work. Due to the limitation of time and resources this study focused on the population of South Asian bar dancers who were brought to United

States after the ban on dance bars in Mumbai. However, in order to understand what goes on at the transit and other destinations more research is essential.

There is immense need for research on sex-trafficking from all the different perspectives. In order to develop prevention strategies for sex-trafficking, research is needed to understand 'what creates vulnerability', what explains 'risk behavior' and 'at what point in migration does trafficking occur'? Also, more research is needed on how to prevent trafficking? What are the special needs of this population? In order to protect former victims of trafficking and prevent girls from getting lured into the trade, more research is needed to understand how cannot for profit organizations create awareness among source communities of trafficking? Further research is needed in the area of reintegration of victims into the society. Empirically, there is need to develop scales and measures to evaluate the impact of sex-trafficking and assist them. There is immense need to develop research on theory as well as practice intervention with respect to victims as well as the networks that influence women and their families' decisions related to migration.

According to Sheriff, Dunston & Chunn II (1983) theory development is required to explain the relationship among structural or institutional factors as racism, cultural diversity, social change and its impact on various Asian Communities. Due to lack of research and knowledge various generalizations are drawn in South Asian countries based on the Western community which can have serious implications (Rigg, 1997). This research attempted to develop a theoretical framework that explained how at different stages South Asian women are vulnerable to trafficking. The study was initially expecting to reveal the socio-cultural nuances of this community from a theoretical perspective. However, the unique finding of this research was the link between acculturation at dance bars and resistance to change which puts dancers at a higher risk of trafficking. While this study supported existing theoretical literature that explained vulnerability in terms of structural conflicts, fewer prospects and social support, it found two

144

more factors as important contributors in creating women's vulnerability. While this research could not find a theoretical support for a factor that was observed in narrative, future research can be developed in the area of 'personality factors' that contribute to South Asian women's risk taking behavior. In this study I found that most women who decided to go abroad for bar dancing had a history of seeking independence. Also, these were women who questioned existing customs and disagreed with some. While that was not the focus of my study it would be an important aspect to explore in future research.

Due to limited research on sex-trafficking in the South Asian context, there is a tendency of governments to develop policies and interventions based on western models. There is room for extensive research in developing region specific grounded theory to understand issues related to sex trafficking. Theoretical models developed in this research explain certain aspects of vulnerability that lead to consent of victims in trafficking. However, the theoretical framework needs to be tested on similar South Asian populations. This study pioneers the future research trajectory in the area of 'what factors make South Asian women vulnerable to trafficking?' and how the derived thematic concepts explain consent of South Asian women's trafficking '.

6.3 Implications for Social Work

The subject studied in this research is limited to the specific population of girls from South Asia. Theoretically the subject connects to wide range of disciplines like criminology, law and political science. However, considering the limited amount of research conducted on this subject it becomes important to study this issue from a social work perspective.

The National Association of Social Workers' mission's code of ethics "The primary mission of the social work profession is to enhance human well-being and help meet basic human needs of all people, with particular attention to the needs and empowerment of people

who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty" (National Association of Social Workers, 1996, p.1). Since the subject population belongs to the community social workers are set out to serve it becomes important to address this issue in this research.

The International Federation of Social Workers mission statement reads:

"Professional social workers are dedicated to service for the welfare and self-fulfillment of human beings; to the development and disciplined use of scientific knowledge regarding human behavior and society; to the development of resources to meet individual, group, national and international needs and aspirations; to the enhancement and improvement of the quality of life of people; and to the achievement of social justice". (International Federation of Social Workers, 2005, p. 1). Realizing the mission of international social work this research seemed most relevant and timely as it advocates for social justice on behalf of several women whose lives are lost in the routs of trafficking in and out of South Asia.

Studying the population of trafficked or migrant victims is a difficult area of study, especially studying it qualitatively. While for most researchers the primary problem is the difficulty in reaching the victims of trafficking and availing data on human trafficking. However, I decided to conduct a cost benefit analysis and assess the risks involved in this research against the possible benefits that could emerge from this research if I could analyze the data on this study population.

6.3.1. Weaknesses

Various aspects of human trafficking were overlooked in this research. What factors constitute women's vulnerability to go to Mumbai for bar dancing was one factor the study intended to explore but could not find enough data on that aspect to derive a pattern. Similarly the study results were full of contradictions like the women who were interviewed were not educated enough and yet could speak fairly understandable English. Also, the women lived in oppressive environment and did not have control of their own lives which suggested that they

146

lived like victims of trafficking in the United States. However, their narration suggested that they had accepted that reality and some of them found this profession better than working in a low paid job with dignity. The study was also limited as only twenty subjects were interviewed using qualitative methodology. Thus, its results cannot be generalized. The study was aimed at a specific population from a specific geographic location and work culture. Thus the study results cannot be applied to many other populations.

6.3.2. Strengths

The primary benefit of this research is that this study starts a pioneering qualitative inquiry for the populations closely related to trafficking. In this case the South Asian bar dancers who are at high risk of being trafficked are studied. This population has been extremely vulnerable to trafficking for many years and yet has been neglected in social work research, as well as practice. For years, this population has been completely neglected by law enforcement in South Asia. Their narrations suggest that they have been exploited at every step of migration. While individuals who commit rape crimes suffer severe punishment in all countries, this vulnerable population is instead stigmatized for being abused. There are not enough services for the victims trapped in this nexus of trafficking that can help them come out of their abusive situation. This research is an attempt to start a dialogue among academic community about the neglect and abuse suffered by millions of girls in South Asia. This is by far the first study that describes the link between international policies, and their enforcement saga in developing countries. This empirical work brings to light the lack of diagnosis of issues related to trafficked population as well as any kind of service options for this population and answers some oft raised questions in the literature like, 'why do victims of trafficking remain in abusive situations'? Curbing human trafficking cannot occur with one time strategy, thus it is important to take a close look at the factors which contribute to South Asian women's vulnerability to trafficking. Unless we know what causes the problem, it is difficult to find ways to deal with it. Thus, while

147

the study focused only on one group within South Asia it was conducted timely for that neediest population.

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BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Nairruti Jani started her career in social work from India. She completed her MA in Social Work from Tata Institute of Social Sciences in 2000. At completion of her Master's degree in social work she started working with Oxfam International on disaster mitigation and women's rights. She continued working with various NGOs in India alongside continued adjunct teaching in Master's programs at National Institute of Design and Mudra Institute of Communication in Ahmedabad, India. She also worked with Indian Institute of Management as a Research Associate on projects related to maternal health and mental health. In the year 2003, she was awarded the British Chevening Human Rights Scholarship that recognized her work with victims of genocide in Gujarat in 2002. In 2003-04 she pursued her second Master's degree in International Human Rights Law from University of Warwick, UK. At completion of LLM degree program, she returned to India and founded an organization to fight for women's rights in that part of the world. Her research focused on women's rights and genocide. In the year 2007, Ms. Jani continued her academic career by enrolling in Ph.D. program in Social Work at University of Texas at Arlington. While at UTA she worked on research projects with eminent faculty members and taught an undergraduate course on social welfare policy. She is currently working at Florida Gulf Coast University as a faculty member. Her future interests in teaching and research involve macro or International social work, policy studies and human rights.