



Universiteit Utrecht

Should I stay or should I go?

*Housing pathways of highly educated British-Nepalese
young adults in London*

A qualitative research on how interpersonal relationships, cultural forces and parental expectations shape the housing pathways of highly educated British-Nepalese young adults in London.

Master thesis article Urban and Economic Geography

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Abstract In numerous western societies, leaving the parental home is seen as a crucial element in the life course development of young adults. Transitional practices however vary across different populations. Focusing on the city of London, I will investigate the housing pathways and transitional practices of highly educated British-Nepalese young adults. Drawing on in-depth interviews with 11 highly educated British-Nepalese young adults and 8 British-Nepalese parents, I will display how these housing pathways are significantly shaped by cultural forces and interpersonal relationships. Aiming to contribute to a more inclusive body of life course literature, I present how the individual housing decisions of these young adults are different from the British norm and more embedded in family structures. Moreover, I demonstrate that highly educated British-Nepalese young adults and their parents have different opinions on how the idea of independence is defined.

Keywords Housing pathways, Transitional Practices, British-Nepalese migrants, Life Course Geographies, Independence, Young Adults, London

Introduction

The past few decades have displayed fundamental changes in the timing of the transformation events related to the transition into adulthood in various Western countries, (Bayrakdar & Coulter, 2017; Berrington, 2018). For example, family formations trajectories have become prolonged and de-standardised, concerning their order and reversibility (Berrington, 2018). Moreover, living together has surpassed marriage as the earliest relationship type, resulting in parenthood progressively taking place outside of marriage, postponed or is even forgotten (Berrington, 2018). One of the first developments in this transition, leaving the parental home, is considered as a significant event in the life course of young adults. This development influences both young adults and their parents, since this move towards independence is associated with crucial social and economic conversions. Hence, the timing and consequences of home leaving could affect the chances of experiencing poverty in young adulthood, future housing careers, and the dynamics of the housing market (Bayrakdar & Coulter, 2017). Despite countless studies on home leaving behaviour of young adults, qualitative research that emphasizes the patterns of home leaving processes among children from non-western migrant families living in Europe are up to this time still limited (Zorlu & van Gaalen, 2016; Bayrakdar & Coulter, 2017). Nevertheless, there is a sizable and growing share of the European population that is made up of non-western migrants and their offspring (Kleinepier & De Valk, 2014; Bolt & Van Liempt, 2018).

Non-western migrant children shape a distinctive group in Western countries. They develop in between the norms and values of western culture and the culture from their parents, placing them in a unique situation (Berrington, 2018; Platt & Nandi, 2018). Commonly, non-

western migrants tend to value strong family relations more than natives from Western countries (Mulder, 2007). As such, it has been claimed that they possibly have different patterns and time courses of their transition into adulthood compared to Western Europeans (Finney, 2011; Berrington, 2018).

The contemporary population of the UK consists of a relatively high volume of non-western migrants and their descendants (Vertovec, 2007). One of these ethnic minority groups living in the UK, are Nepalese (Gellner, 2019). Nepalese are one of the fastest growing new ethnic groups in the UK (Gellner, 2019). Similar to other non-western migrant groups, Nepalese migrants and their offspring tend to value strong family relations and the cultural identity, norms and traditions from their home country (Mulder, 2007; Berrington, 2018). As such it is a good case to study transitional practices.

The aim of this study is to display an in-depth research on the underlying processes and factors that shape the housing pathways of British-Nepalese young adults, focusing on the urban case study of London. This is done by concentrating on the following research question: *How do the individual perspectives, experiences and parental expectations shape the housing pathways of British-Nepalese young adults in London?* In this article, I argue that prior life course research places too much emphasis on individual rational choices and overlooks cultural differences by assuming this to be universal. Therefore, I claim it does not fully cover the housing decisions of young adults with a non-western migrant background in western countries.

Life course research

Numerous studies on population geography and demography have been influenced by life course research (Bailey, 2009; Finney, 2010; Billari & Liefbroer, 2010; Ramos, 2019). Bailey (2009, p. 407) describes the field as: “Interested in patterns of order and orders of patterns in the often ordinary behaviour of everyday life, life course research has sought to describe the structures and sequences of events and transitions through an individual’s life.” Other authors have described the life course as a framework or concept to research how the complicated happenings that cover decisions about employment, marriage, and housing pathways are shaped (Billari & Liefbroer, 2007; Mulder, 2007). Theories concerning the life course have often put an emphasis on the individual rational choices that shape these happenings and seem to assume that this is universal in western societies (Bailey, 2009; Finney, 2010). However, according to Finney (2010) & Ramos (2020) in recent decades, new ideas and perspectives have emerged on the life course in western societies. These theories claim that expected happenings in the life course studies are subject to de-standardisation, have become more variable and occur together with growing complicatedness of transitions into adulthood (Ramos, 2020). Similarly, there is a common interest in the individualisation of experiences (Finney, 2010; Ramos, 2020). It has therefore been argued that more studies on the life course experiences of subgroups and subcultures in western societies should be conducted, since prior life course research has mostly overlooked these unusual life course structures (Finney, 2010; Ramos, 2020).

Adding to this, in his paper on life course research, Bailey (2009) shows the dynamics of the life course and how contemporary individual trajectories are more embedded in trans-temporal and trans local networks. Claiming that the complex happenings within the life course

are undeniably connected to structural conditions (Bailey, 2009). Based on these arguments, in this article I will argue that previous life course studies that situate more importance on individual rational decisions and appear to presume that these decisions are universal, do not quite comprise the housing decisions of a sub-group like British-Nepalese young adults. And presumably, the housing decisions of many other young adults with a non-western migrant background in western societies.

Cultural forces affecting housing choices

Several studies have displayed that through role modelling, cultural values and norms are transferred from parents to their children (Kleinepier & De Valk, 2014; Zorlu & Van Gaalen, 2016). Although children often are not always supportive of the norms and values parents promote, foregoing research has claimed that parents do have a considerable impact on various features of adulthood transition processes, including the home leaving or staying behaviour of their children (Billari & Liefbroer, 2007; Kleinepier & De Valk, 2014). Cultural expectations of British-Nepalese parents, concerning their children's practices, have seemingly emerged from the cultural context from their countries of origin (Berrington, 2018). Due to the fact that first generation Nepalese migrant parents have mainly been socialized in Nepal and therefore to a large extent adopted the cultural context of Nepal (Berrington, 2018; Gellner, 2019). Moreover, through socialization of their cultural background, several studies have shown that gender differences in home-leaving patterns are found (Kleinepier & De Valk, 2014). Kleinepier & De Valk (2014) claim that women with a non-western migrant background move away from the parental home at an earlier age and more frequently with a partner, than their male peers. However, this is the case for both migrants and natives (Kleinepier & De Valk, 2014).

In this study, the influence of cultural forces on home leaving behaviour will be analysed in the results. It is expected that similar to other non-western migrant groups, Nepalese migrants and their offspring tend to value strong family relations and the cultural identity, norms and traditions from their home country (Mulder, 2007; Berrington, 2018). Furthermore, gender differences in home leaving behaviour is assumed to be present among British-Nepalese migrants as well (Kleinepier & De Valk, 2014). It is therefore assumed that these cultural forces may possibly be instrumental in shaping the housing pathways of British-Nepalese young adults.

The influence of interpersonal relationships on housing decisions

Various studies (Finney, 2010; Billari & Liefbroer, 2007; Berrington, 2018) have argued that interpersonal family relations also have an effect on the home leaving or staying behaviour of young people. The concept of interpersonal family relations is closely related to the previous described notion of cultural forces, since both are expected to shape young people through socialization and role-modelling (Arnett, 1995, Billari & Liefbroer, 2010). Interpersonal relationships influence the practices of young people through socialization, conflict and cohesion (Kleinepier & de Valk, 2014). Kleinepier & de Valk (2014) claim that a loving and accommodating family setting may be crucial in delaying the decision to move away from the parental home, while separated families and intergenerational clashes between parent-child can speed up the home leaving process. Other research has demonstrated that among children of

immigrants, the likelihood for parent-child conflict is assumed to be more eminent, since these young adults possibly have contrasting perspectives on social and cultural standards and norms, different from their parents (Lou & Giguère, 2012; Berrington, 2018). Owing to the fact that these young adults find themselves in a unique situation, where they experience the sense of being captured in between two sets of cultural standards and norms (Berrington, 2018; Platt & Nandi, 2018). Moreover, it has been shown that a bad relationship between young adults and their parents, stimulates young people to move away from the parental home at a younger age (Blaauboer & Mulder, 2010). However, it is claimed that leaving the parental home to work or study in another place is in many cases isolated from other factors and is often associated with practical reasons, like having to travel a considerable distance (Billari & Liefbroer, 2007).

Furthermore, studies suggest that young people are shaped by other relationships that arise outside their family environment, such as from contact with their peers (Billari & Liefbroer, 2007; Zorlu & Mulder, 2011). The connection of young people with their peers is assumed to mainly be a result of mirroring, since they seek for acceptance and confirmation among their peers (Zorlu & Mulder, 2011). Consequently, the behaviour of young people is usually shaped through the reproduction of the practices of their peers (Kleinepier & De Valk, 2014). Close and distant peers and friends both have an important contribution to this, since this is often shaped through role modelling. Nevertheless, near acquaintances may in general be the most important contacts in this matter (Billari & Liefbroer, 2007; Zorlu & Mulder, 2011).

Housing pathways approach

There is an increasing and diversifying body of literature that follows the so-called ‘housing pathway approach’ (Hochstenbach & Boterman, 2015; Meeus & De Decker, 2015). This study will also adapt the previously mentioned approach, which is seen as an accommodating and holistic framework to describe the progression of housing biographies and their resemblance across exemplifications (Fang & Van Liempt, 2020). Various researchers have contributed to establishing this approach, David Clapham (2002, 2005, 2014) is seen as the most important advocate in developing the framework (Meeus & De Decker, 2015). The concept of housing pathways is described as “patterns of interaction (practices) concerning house and home, over time and space” (Clapham, 2002, p. 63). According to Eskelä (2017), the housing pathways approach is drawn from theories on social constructionism and structuration and is to be utilized as a framework of analysis. Compared to a housing career that normally only illustrates the quantitative facets of housing (e.g. size, price and tenure), housing pathways complement this by adding the layers of social implications and connections. For example, the sense of community in a neighbourhood or the cultural context behind housing and lifestyle decisions (Eskelä, 2017). Eskelä’s (2017) study on the housing pathways of Indian professionals in Helsinki is in close correspondence with this research on the housing of British-Nepalese young adults in London. She claims that the housing pathways approach has been coined in previous migrant research to help understand and make sense of the often complicated reality and explanations of contemporary ethnic housing (Eskelä, 2017). Her claim supports the use of the housing pathway approach to analyse the results of this article.

Moreover, in their study on the housing pathways of young people in Amsterdam, Hochstenbach & Boterman (2015, p. 260) describe the housing pathway approach as “One of the more convincing critiques that is built on social constructivist theory”. The critique being

on positivist housing research, which often assumes that households have a common set of priorities and behave logically in their efforts to fulfil them (Clapham, 2005). It is argued that the phrase ‘housing pathway’ is more suitable than the term ‘housing career’, since a housing career suggests that each move is a progression to a higher level in housing quality and presumes a fixed and linear course (Hochstenbach & Boterman, 2015).

By using the housing pathway approach to study the housing biographies of highly educated British-Nepalese young adults, it will be possible to comprehend housing decisions and tenure changes as an intricate series of experiences (Fang & Van Liempt, 2020). Consequently, housing pathways are seen as a specific collection of living and housing circumstances that fluctuate in tenure, costs and condition (Clapham, 2002). Non-western migrant children, like British-Nepalese, form a unique group in Western countries. As they grow up in between the norms and values of western culture and the culture from their parents (Berrington, 2018; Platt & Nandi, 2018). In general, it has been claimed that non-western migrants tend to cherish strong family relations more than natives from Western countries (Mulder, 2007). It has therefore been argued that they may have different patterns and time courses of their life course developments, such as housing pathways, compared to Western Europeans (Finney, 2011; Berrington, 2018). In this study, it is for this reason assumed that highly educated British-Nepalese young adults will follow divergent housing pathways, in comparison to their native British peers and other Western peers. I will pursue to compare the housing pathways found for British-Nepalese young adults to those found by these earlier studies and initiate new ones if necessary.

Data & Methods

This article draws on semi-structured qualitative interviews with 11 highly educated British-Nepalese young adults and 8 British-Nepalese parents in London, conducted in 2019 and 2020. According to Wengraf (2001), by using in-depth interviews, a researcher is enabled to collect personal narratives and understand the socio-cultural circumstances and the subjectivity of the interviewee. Moreover, Ęsekala (2017) claims that using in-depth interviews as a research method to study the housing experiences of migrants, enables the researcher to identify specific information and to put forward follow-up questions. This makes it possible to respond to unforeseen or ambiguous matters. Foregoing studies on immigrant housing matters endorse the use of semi-structured qualitative interviews (Ęskela, 2017). Giving that the interest of the study was to get a better understanding of how the housing pathways of British-Nepalese young adults are shaped, I chose to interview both the young adults and their parents. This is a new and unique approach to research the housing of non-western migrants, since similar earlier housing studies have not applied this method yet. It was expected that a combination of these perspectives would give a more complete overview to answer the main research question. Since through this approach both the experiences and perspectives of the young adults and their parents would be taken into account, giving insights and interpretations on how these lived realities influence housing decisions. The British-Nepalese young adults were all aged between 18 and 30 years and had lived on their own or with their parents in London. The young adult interviewees were sampled to attain a variation in age, gender and Nepalese ethnic background. In this research, to find respondents for the qualitative interviews, purposive sampling was applied. The purpose was to find British-Nepalese young adults between 18-30 that had lived

or were living in London. To find parents for the interviews, the young adults were asked if they agreed if I interviewed their parents. Purposive sampling is a non-probability way of sampling. With purposive sampling, it will not be possible to generalize the research results to an entire population (Bryman, 2012). However, this is not the goal of this research. This research is in essence exploratory and therefore the outcomes cannot be generalized.

Interviewees were approached at several locations, where a variety of Nepalese young adults were likely to be found. I attended multiple events organised by distinctive Nepalese organisations, where I got into contact with a considerable number of young adults. Furthermore, I recruited interviewees through snowball recruiting. I got into contact with the first three British-Nepalese young adults and their parents via my own network, they thereafter helped me to get into contact with other British-Nepalese young adults and their parents in London.

Table 1. Characteristics of interviewees (N = 19)

Name (Pseudonym)	Parent/young adult	Gender	Age	Ethnic background	Educational level
1. Niti	Parent	Female	61	Newar	University
2. Krishna	Parent	Male	60	Newar	University
3. Lasata	Young adult	Female	30	Newar	University
4. Shanti	Parent	Female	67	Newar	High School
5. Krishna	Parent	Male	72	Newar	University
6. Prayash	Young adult	Male	20	Newar	College
7. Bhibu	Young adult	Female	23	Newar	University
8. Laksman Gopal	Parent	Male	53	Newar	University
9. Ankit	Young adult	Male	18	Newar	University
10. Dipen	Parent	Male	50	Bahun	University
11. Madan	Young adult	Male	22	Bahun	University
12. Nitesh	Young adult	Male	27	Limbu	University
13. Ganga Lal	Parent	Male	60	Newar	Primary school
14. Renu	Parent	Female	59	Newar	Primary school
15. Ganesh	Young adult	Male	29	Newar	University

16. Rama	Young adult	Female	20	Bahun	University
17. Aakriti	Young adult	Female	27	Magar	University
18. Jamini	Young adult	Female	28	Ghale	University
19. Sandeep	Young adult	Male	27	Bahun	University

All the interviews with young adults were conducted in English, recorded and transcribed. With the parents, several interviews were conducted in Newar, and thereafter translated to English while transcribing. Newar is my mother language and originates in Nepal, spoken mostly in the capital Kathmandu by Newar people. It is important to reflect on the overrepresentation of Newar speaking participants in my study as a result of my positionality. According to Kusek & Smiley (2014: 157) “researchers traditionally are categorized as insiders or outsiders relative to the ethnic or cultural group they are studying based on whether or not they share characteristics”. Therefore, my positionality shows how I related to the interviews concerning their ethnic and cultural background (Kusek & Smiley, 2014). Reflecting on how my multiple identities influence the study I have conducted, several characteristics come forward. Since I am a Nepal born Newar myself, who lives in a western country and speaks Newar, I could see myself as an insider in terms of ethnic and cultural background for many of the respondents. While searching for participants, my Newar Nepalese background resulted in finding people in networks with an overrepresentation of Newar Nepalese in London. I did therefore actively try to also find Nepalese with other ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Moreover, my highly educated background is similar to the highly educated background of all the young adults. Giving me an insider perspective in this regard as well.

The other interviews with parents were directly conducted in English. The interviews with both the young adults and their parents normally lasted between 60-120 minutes. The conversations gave detailed insights into the housing biographies of the young adults and demonstrated the perspectives and expectations of their parents, in regard to the housing of their children. During the interviews, the young adults were asked about several themes related to their housing decisions. Parents were asked similar questions, but there was an emphasis on what they expected from their children and how they negotiated about their housing choices. The interviewees and participants were all asked for consent. Before the interview started, the aim and goal of the project was explained. Also, it was stressed that the information of the interviewees and participants would remain anonymous and all interviewees were asked consent to digitally record the information. All identifying information was removed from the transcripts. Each transcript was assigned with a code and linked personal information was stored safely. For the analysis and article, the names used are all pseudonyms. Any revealing personal information has been removed.

For the qualitative analysis I used the NVivo program to code the data. The coding was based on the themes that were found in the interview guide, but also on interesting topics that emerged from the data. Quotations from the interviews, found through the coding, are used to increase the reliability and clarity of this study.

Housing pathways of highly educated British-Nepalese young adults

Since almost all the young adult interviewees were highly educated, many participants started their individual housing pathways at the beginning of their University career. All young adults emphasized the significance of parental expectations, cultural influences and their Nepalese background when talking about housing. Demonstrating the influences of diverse cultural norms and values in regard to their housing pathways and showing varying perspectives on and experiences with housing.

Table 2. Housing pathways of British Nepalese young adults in London

Interviewee (pseudonym)	1. Timing of leaving parental home	1. Timing of moving back to parental home	2. Timing of leaving parental home again	Current housing	Marital status
1. Sandeep (26)	19 years old, 1st year University	-After he finished his first bachelor's degree, 21 years old.	-When he started working at 24, but not permanently, he moved back after some short term stays away from his parental home for work.	Living at parental home	Not married
2. Ganesh (29)	-When he moved to London from Nepal as a student, 19 years old	-After he finished his bachelor's degree at 22 years old.	-	Living at parental home	Married
3. Lasata (30)	- At 22, 3rd year of University	- 30 years old	-	Living at parental home	Not married
4. Rama (20)	2nd year of University, 19 years old	-	-	Living on her own, sharing room with a friend in an apartment in London	Not married
5. Madan (22)	-	-	-	Living at parental home	Not married
6. Prayash (20)	-	-	-	Living at parental home	Not married
7. Bhibu (23)	1st year of University, 19 years old	- After she finished her University degree, 23 years old	-	Living at parental home	Not married
8. Aakriti (27)	2nd year of University Bachelor, 21 years old.	- 3rd year of University, 22 years old.	1st year of Master, 23 years old.	Living on her own, renting a room in an apartment in London with friends	Not married

9. Jamini (29)	Second year of University Bachelor, 20 years old	- 3rd year of University Bachelor - For a short period of time while she was working in London, because she couldn't find proper housing.	- After she finished her bachelor, she was 22 years old. - When she was 29, while working in London and had to move back for a short period at home.	Living on her own, renting a room in an apartment in London with friends	Not married
10. Nitesh (28)	First year of University Bachelor, 18 years old.	2nd year of University, 19 years old.	-	Living at parental home	Not married
11. Ankit (18)	- First year of University 18 years	-	-	Living at university campus, renting an own room with shared facilities	Not married

British Nepalese young adults and their parents' perspectives on housing pathways

Leaving the parental home is an unusual thing to do

On the basis of 11 individual housing biographies of British-Nepalese young adults, various insights were found. Many stressed the influence of their Nepalese background when talking about housing choices and expressed the differences between British and Nepalese norms and their parental expectations, considering the theme of leaving or staying at the parental home. The participants often mentioned how things would go in Nepalese society or what is seen as normal in Nepalese culture when they spoke about this topic. This shows that their Nepalese background has a big influence on their housing decisions. For example, Jamini (29) describes how her Nepalese background has influenced her decision to stay with her parents during the first year of her study:

But for me, which is really common in the Nepalese society here is, you apply for university, you get a place, but you still live at home, and you go to your lectures and still live at home. So, I did that for the first year.

Similar to common behaviour of other young adults with a non-western migrant background, the cultural context of their country of origin is thought to have a considerable influence. Almost all participants talked about the cultural complexity of their housing choices, considering that in traditional Nepalese society and therefore what is often seen and expected as normal by their parents, leaving the parental home for independence and freedom is not seen as a usual thing to do. Through the experiences of Sandeep (27), I will show how there are generalities and / or exceptions compared to the stories of the other participants.

Sandeep lived on his own during his studies in Warwick and thereafter moved again to his parental home. A few years ago, his father passed away. Also because of this reason, he feels responsible to live with and care for his widowed mother. Not only providing her financially, but also as a companion to battle loneliness.

I think even to this day, it's not normal for you to leave the home until you get married (..) In Nepal, I don't know anyone who is not married, who's moved out. Not a single person. In the West, the only people who I know who live on their own or have their own place, are those who work in a different city.

Needing a purpose to leave the parental house

Sandeep further explained that if you have a purpose for moving out, like working or studying in a different city, parents seem to be more understanding. Even though the Nepalese norm is described to be to stay with the parents, for the sake of education or employment it is accepted for the young adults to move away. Ankit (18), who grew up in London and started studying in Bath this year, decided to live on the campus immediately. He explains how his parents were supportive with this decision, since he had a valid reason to move out:

My parents were very supportive with it. They were like, we understand it. So just go there to study, don't get distracted and stuff. So, like yeah. And they know I'm going there to do good. So, they've got no problem with it.

Sandeep described this as something that is generally done by his British-Nepalese peers. This is a way to move out of the parental home, with parents fully supporting the decision, even though it is seen normal to move out only when you get married as a young adult. According to him, this is encouraging for some British-Nepalese young adults to study or work in a different city and in a way engineering the necessity to move out:

However, do I think some of those necessities were engineered? Yes. So, I think people do purposely apply for a job in a different city, or put their preference for a different city, because they want to move out from their parents.

Not all parents are the same/different parental perspectives

The normative expectation for most of British-Nepalese young adults participating in this research was to stay with their parents, however they still managed to move out when showing their parents that there was a purpose. However, there are also some young adults who had different and more easy-going experiences in relation to housing and lifestyle choices. These different experiences could be explained by different attitudes of their parents. Some young adults described their parents as more liberal or progressive than general Nepalese parents in relation to housing and lifestyle choices. Nitesh (28), who had lived on his own for a year, but moved back in with his parents illustrates this:

Obviously, they're very progressive and I say this only because the more I spend time with other Nepali friends (...) Some of them have such restricted lifestyles and makes you think like my parents are really easy-going, and they just facilitated so much in our lives as well.

In line with Sandeep's view on home leaving among British-Nepalese young adults, a majority of the participants were currently living at their parental home. Nevertheless, almost every interviewee did have the experience of living away from their parental home. Mainly when they started their university career. But similar to Sandeep, most young adults had returned or were planning to return to their parents after finishing University, or already moved back during their higher education career.

Breaking out

Some young adults did explicitly speak out on pursuing their own housing career. Hoping to develop and attain their own independence, freedom and own space. This seems to be in line with what the British society is expecting from a young adult, in the experience of the participants. When asked what young adults see as normal in British society in regard to home leaving, most participants stated that leaving around the age of 18 and becoming independent is seen as the norm. Lasata (30) who has lived away from her parents for many years, but is temporarily back at their home, explains her main motivations to leave the parental home:

I needed my own space, so I left. I was 22 or 23, when I was in UCL. I'm 30 now (...) But also for my own personal growth, I wanted to experience life.

Moreover, Rama (20) is adapting to what is normal in British society, by striving for independence by starting her own housing career.

I wanted to experience how it was like, living on my own. And not having the luxury of home. Like at home, your mom does everything for you (...) But when you're on your own, you have to make your own food, do the laundry. (...) Become independent.

Gender differences

A few interviewees stated that in Nepalese culture after marriage, there is also the expectation of parents for their children to stay with them and live in a so-called joint family. This is mainly the case for boys, namely the youngest son in the family. Several male participants experienced pressure as a boy to fulfil this expectation. For girls there is a different expectation in traditional Nepalese culture, they are expected to move out with the man they marry. Either with his family or away. Ganesh (29), who has been living with his parents after his marriage, describes what he thinks is the difference between British and Nepalese culture in relation to home leaving or staying:

Cause their culture is more like, if you are 18/19 you.. they kind of start thinking, okay you have to earn yourself, then you start to move out. (...) But our culture is exactly the opposite, they never think about their kids moving out, away from them. They more kind of think kids should be staying with them and mainly the sons (...) Because they have this cultural thinking that daughters will get married and then move out.

Nevertheless, a few interviewees stressed the importance of their own individual freedom in choosing to marry at all. Gender issues in Nepalese culture and society, was an often returning theme during the interviews when talking about housing pathways. Nepalese cultures were in several instances described and critiqued as patriarchal, not only because the cultures and society are suppressing women's rights and freedom, but also because boys were pressurized into a certain role, also in relation to home leaving. Moreover, discussions around arranged marriage culture and also the pressure on children that they have to get married, were also coined. Several interviewees described how discussions concerning the topic of gender and related cultural issues in Nepalese society were very common in their home with their siblings, or with their friends. These discussions therefore mostly take place between young people. This can be related back to the literature on interpersonal relations, where it is has been claimed that

young people with a non-western migrant background possibly have contrasting views on cultural standards and norms, in comparison to their parents (Lou & Giguère, 2012; Berrington, 2018).

Jamini (29), who lives on her own in London with friends, describes herself as a rebel who challenges the societal pressures and says she has opposing and more liberal views in regards to traditional Nepalese cultural norms and values than her Nepalese peers in the London:

It's always a woman being in the kitchen or cooking or doing house chores. And the men always, you know, not doing the house chores or like doing certain things in the house, that really cements the patriarchy, you know.

These findings are related to the earlier mentioned literature about gender differences and home leaving behaviour ((Kleinepier & De Valk, 2014). Moreover, these outcomes show that the Nepalese culture related to housing choices is alterable and up for discussion among British-Nepalese youth. The expected gender-roles are not taken for granted but actively talked about and up for change.

Parental perspectives on and expectations of housing transitions

As first-generation non-western migrants in British-Society, the Nepalese parents that participated in the research had lived for a considerable time in Nepal. Many stressed their connection up until this day with their mother country. With the cultures, their family and the norms and values in Nepalese society. Especially in relation to housing, almost all participants referred back to how things would go in Nepalese society. Often talking about joint families, with children (after they have turned adults) and parents living together in one household, and how this is the norm in Nepalese families. Dipen (50), father of a son Madan (22) who lives at home and a daughter, shares his thoughts:

You try to be in a joint family, so that you can help each other. It can make the strength (...) I would like them to be, my children, always with us. So, we know each other, you know every day if there is any problem, if there is a chance to solve it collectively. It would be good for both sides.

When asked about housing choices for their children, most British-Nepalese parents expressed the expectation for their child to live with them. Various parents referred back to how things were in Nepalese society and cultures, often describing the advantages for both the children and parents in the situation where they would live together in one house. Also, almost all the parents criticized the British society and cultural norms in relation to home leaving. Often sharing their incomprehension about how British parents deal with their young adult children, as well as emphasizing the importance that children should take care of their parents. Nonetheless, most parents appear to accept that the British society is different and therefore they can't really stop the fact their children and themselves have to adapt to it. Most parents seem to have accepted this faith in some way, considering that their child will end up in a better place if they leave the parental home:

In the future means, if there will be problems for them to stay with us together. Then they will leave right. We don't want to stop them in their development if they really want to leave (...) But they need to remember about their parents. Not only

remember, but also take care of us. In Nepal that is normal (...) If you can stay with the parents and have a good life, every parent will be happy to live with their kids (Renu, Mother, 59)

In addition, several interviewees stressed the importance of passing on and preserving their Nepalese cultural identity. As for this couple, Niti (Mother, 61) & Krishna (Father, 60), who have a daughter (Lasata, 30). Lasata currently lives with her parents, for the time being, because of practical reasons. However, she had lived on her own for 8 years, with full support of her parents to pursue her freedom and independence. Her parents give a realistic view on living in a foreign country:

But for the Diaspora the question is how to transfer our culture, language in a foreign land. That is important in my opinion. For the rest, it doesn't matter. We have to adopt, wherever you live. You have to adapt there (Krishna, 60).

Yeah, where you live, you have to adapt to the circumstances. If you go to a blind country, you will have to be blind (Niti, 61)

Putting it into the context of the UK and home leaving behaviour, what Niti is trying to say with this metaphor is: In a country where the norm is to leave the home and pursue independence, one must adopt and accept this, when your child's behaviour is shaped this way.

Laksman (53), father of two children, is both critical and understanding when speaking about the norms related to housing choices of young adults in British society. If his children want to live independently, they should. But if young adults really want to be independent, they shouldn't be asking their parents for support with rent or other expenses, they should be really economically independent as well. Laksman and other parents question why they should pay for the rent of their children, when they want to live on their own. If their children are not able to pay for themselves, why not just live at the parental home?

They should be independent at first before they decide to leave (...) If we need to support them living somewhere here in London. Renting a flat, renting some place. It doesn't give any meaning. (...) Normally I see that British people think, if their children are 18 years, they start to live on their own and they can be independent (...) But in our culture, we are not like that, and we don't mind if our children are with us up till 25 years.

The complicated housing pathway

The housing pathways of the British-Nepalese young adult participants shown in this research, have been approached with a rather different perspective, compared to housing pathways of other western young adults described in earlier research (Hochstenbach & Boterman, 2015; Fang & van Liempt, 2020). The difference is that in this research, by combining the perspectives of the highly educated British-Nepalese young adults and their parents, a more in-depth and nuanced progression is shown on how the housing pathways of participants with non-Western backgrounds are shaped. The advantage of including the parent's perspective is that it has enabled me to put certain decisions of the young adults in a more understandable and detailed cultural context. This made it easier to understand the behaviour of young adults, by being able to situate their decisions in the interpersonal and cultural context of the parents. Giving deeper meaning to the experiences of highly educated British-Nepalese young adults in London who are navigating between two cultures. The participants have shown that through a mix of parental culture and expectations, and also the norms of British culture in regard to

housing decisions, the housing pathways of these young adults are shaped and subject to different influences. This can be related back to the literature on cultural forces and interpersonal relationships, since it shows that through socialization and role modelling these decisions are shaped (Kleinepiper & De Valk, 2014; Zorlu & Van Gaalen, 2016). How cultural influences and interpersonal relationships shape these pathways, will be further explained.

The most notable finding shows that a majority of the young adults are still living at their parental home or have moved back in with their parents after finishing their university. An uncommon situation for most western young adults, since housing is seen as a main driver towards independence (Buchmann & Kriesi, 2011). The findings show that moving out of the parental home is not a self-evident thing for most young people participating in my research.

Temporary independence & experimental housing

The decision to leave or stay at the parental home for these young adults is subject to change, there is not really a clear end goal like in normative housing pathways described in earlier research and moving back to live with parents after having moved out is quite common. Their decision to leave the parental home is essentially more a way of exploring and experimenting with their independence and freedom, instead of aiming to really become independent from their parents and family. The housing decisions of British Nepalese young adults are embedded in their family structures (see also Bailey, 2009).

Rather than assuming that these decisions are made through the universal idea of individual rational choices, these results show that decisions in the life course of these young adults do not follow a standardised pattern, as is argued by various life course studies. This finding can therefore be framed in the earlier mentioned new theories on life course research. Since this shows that life courses are variable for this particular sub-group and it shows there is de-standardisation of presumed life course patterns, like housing pathways, in western countries (Finney, 2010; Ramos, 2020). However, these outcomes do not imply that all the participants are restricted by their parents, because of their culture or because of what is expected by their parents. The research rather shows that these participants have different experiences and perspectives on what is seen as a normal progression of their housing pathways and that the culture and norms related to home leaving is dynamic, up for change and negotiable.

Independence? Then pay your own rent and expenses

Another outcome that arises from the conversations with the highly educated British-Nepalese young adults and their parents, is their perspective on how independence is defined in Western society. This finding can also be related to the previous literature on life course patterns, since this shows that a subgroup like Nepalese migrants have distinctive views related to independence (Finney, 2010; Ramos, 2020).

The different British-Nepalese young adults and parental perspectives show how there are different interpretations to describe independence. Some participants and their parents' question if a young adult is really independent if he or she still needs parental support to live alone. Questioning if independence is really achieved, if young adults still depend economically on their parents. It is interesting to critically think about this in the context of how many contemporary young adults in western countries achieve independence, since the

transition to independent housing is often seen as a main driver towards this independence in previous studies (Buchmann & Kriesi, 2011; Druta et al., 2019). These findings show that independence can be interpreted in different ways, indicating that living on your own without economic independence, in essence is not seen as independence by several British-Nepalese parents and young people.

Context of Cultural forces and influences

Housing practices in Nepalese culture

Adding to the earlier described perspectives and experiences of British Nepalese young people and their parents, the ideas about normative behaviour in Nepalese culture related to housing, confirm initially mentioned theories in the thesis about cultural forces. As explained in the literature, cultural expectations of British-Nepalese parents concerning their children's housing behaviour, have emerged from the cultural context from their countries of origin (Berrington, 2018). This has resulted in many participants mentioning what is common in Nepalese culture when talking about home leaving or staying. The different interviews have shown that for parents, the cultural expectation for their children is for them to stay with them. Since in the Nepalese culture, it is much more accepted and even expected that young people stay with their parents to support them, keep strong family ties and also prevent loneliness by accompanying their parents. The idea of a joint family is prevalent here, where parents and young adults live together with several generations in one house.

Most of the highly educated British-Nepalese young people expressed similar thoughts when asked about what is normal in Nepalese culture. This has been demonstrated as well in the earlier findings in the housing experiences of the young adults. The outcome that most young adults live at their parental home, can therefore be explained by this cultural context. Showing that Nepalese parents and young adults do not think it is a bad thing to live with their parents for a long time. Ganesh (29) & Jamini (28) explain:

So because it's, you know, this is normal, or our society in a society it's normal to live with your parents. (Jamini, 28)

I think it would be more kind of staying then leaving. Because of the culture they grew up, it has always been like living with their parents as well. (Ganesh, 29)

Even though the norm is to live with your parents, the cultural norm is definitely up for discussion and change, as the earlier findings have shown that several participants do want to have their independent housing. Showing that culture is a dynamic concept that can develop over the years between generations. Some young adults stick more to what is expected by the Nepalese culture, while others try to navigate their way by adapting more to the British culture.

Changing cultural norms around home leaving in the UK

Several young people claim that the behaviour to stay at the parental home is not just a 'migrant' or 'Nepali' thing to do anymore. Due to changing economic circumstances in the UK and especially in an overheated housing market like the one in London, it seems it is more and more

accepted to stay with your parents for a longer period of time. These changing cultural norms around home leaving indicate some sort of reverse adaptation to Nepalese culture, where living with your parents is becoming more normalized:

It's changing because of how expensive things are becoming. (...) Some of us are getting into work later on and some of us are studying longer and so we don't normally have that kind of: oh this is the time to leave and do my own thing, right. Yeah and some of us are kind of finding much more comfort living in our own homes (...) So in a way they're kind of adapting to the Nepali practice. (Nitesh, 28)

Moreover, due to this development, Sandeep (27) says he is able to use this more accepted economic narrative in popular culture to justify that he still lives with his mother. Before he would get surprised reactions from people he did not know when he told he was still living with his mother. But now this changing cultural norm seems to be more and more accepted, he has an explanation why he hasn't left the parental home yet. Even though this is not the real reason, to explain that because of Nepalese culture he is living with his mother would be more complicated to make understandable. With the economic cultural narrative, people would assume that it's about economic reasons like saving up money. He therefore prefers to use this narrative now:

When I told them that I'm still living with my mom, some of them gave me... Most people I don't know, they kind of give me like: "Oh Okay!" I think it's becoming more acceptable now, because people are living with family to save up for money to buy a house. So now I've got a narrative, even if I don't tell them that it's for that reason. There's a narrative that exists in popular culture, which they assume that's the reason why.

Interpersonal relationships: ambiguity of conflict and strong ties

As described in the previous literature (Billari & Liefbroer, 2007; Kleinepier & De Valk, 2014; Berrington, 2018), the findings display that family relationships are in many cases instrumental for their decisions. Most of the participants expressed the importance of their family ties and how they considered their parents' expectations, when making decisions about housing. This can also be related back to the literature on life course, where Bailey (2009) claims these choices are much more embedded in family structures.

Sense of indebtedness towards parents

One of the main outcomes in this research, that can be related back to the literature on interpersonal relationships (e.g. Bilari & Liefbroer, 2010; Platt & Nandi, 2018), is that a sense of indebtedness towards parents has an important role in shaping the decision of the highly educated British Nepalese young adults to stay at the parental home. Many explained they owe their parents a huge deal, since they sacrificed so much for their children. They moved to another country and left all their friends and family behind for a better life. The young adults expressed that these actions make them thankful for everything their parents did for them and consequently develop a sense of gratitude for these sacrifices. The strong feeling of responsibility to give back to their parents, illustrates itself when considering leaving or staying at the parental home. The close family bonds that emerge from these feelings of responsibility, lead to housing choices that are embedded in their family structures. Strongly showing that they consider the history of their parents, when talking about why these young people decide

to stay at their parental home. Bhibu (23), who is living at her parental home after she had lived on her own during her University explains:

It feels like we owe it to them to be together. Rather than be like. It's not like we are forced to stay. (...) It's an awkward conversation to approach with your parent's, especially when you do want to move out and you feel like it's easier for you to move out. But then you look back at all the history and you be like, it's not the right way to go about. (Bhibu, 23)

Sandeep (27) has a similar experience and coins the term sense of indebtedness to describe his feelings. He also assumes that this feeling is a general one for young adults in the Nepalese diaspora:

So it's definitely a sense of gratitude, like indebtedness to like your parents, I think that was just like, especially anywhere in the Nepalese diaspora exist, because it definitely wasn't easy for your parents. (Sandeep, 27)

Moreover, Ganesh (27) also expresses that his parents supported him a lot while living in London. So, it is not only about the sacrifices of migration his parents have made, but he also feels indebted for all the help his parents gave him while being in the UK:

Look, they have helped me a lot. It's ten years of life and only recently, I have got a settlement. Only a month back, so only recently. Only since recently, everything is sorted. Till this time, they looked after me a lot, so yeah. That's why I don't really think about leaving. (Ganesh, 29)

Household conflicts

However, other young adult experiences show that in some cases parent-child conflicts and sibling-conflicts have a damaging influence on the relationship with parents. Resulting in that the sense of indebtedness towards the parents is questioned and becomes less present as a reason to stay at the parental home. Some young adults expressed their desire to break from the negative experiences they had with living at their parental home. In the case of Jamini (28), who shortly moved back in with her parents after she had already lived on her own, these challenging experiences made it clear for her that she is just not able to live at her parental home anymore. She explains:

I think recently, my recent experience living at home with my dad and then moving out. That was really challenging. That kind of affected our relationship. But like, then he made me really see that okay, like we cannot live together like this, it is impossible.

Moreover, Jamini was also affected by her relationship with her sibling in her decision to move away from the parental home. She explains that there were continuous conflicts with her brother, making it more uncomfortable for her to live at her parental home:

So living at home with my brother there as well, was really, really hard. And like actually a lot of arguments that happened in the house, was between me and my brother. Which would make my mom upset.

Threatening to move back to Nepal

Another striking outcome was expressed by several participants. Because of the strong family relations that exist, several parents' kind of emotionally blackmail their children, by threatening to move back to Nepal, if the young adults consider moving out. This ambiguity of conflict, while having a strong relationship with their parents, was experienced by several participants. If these young adults would even think about leaving the parental home, their parents would threaten to leave them instead, much further away. Ganesh (29) explains that this has made him even less interested in living on his own:

“In a way she kind of indirectly tells us, if you think of leaving, then we will not stay in the UK. That is how she tells us (...) But yes, like I said, they have helped me a lot, during these ten years of my life. Last ten years. So even I don't want to think of leaving them. Rest of everything, the closeness with my mum, living together with my parents. I think everything has just taken away the feeling of leaving them.”

Furthermore, Prayash (20) who has not lived on his own yet had a similar experience with his father. For this reason, he does not even think about leaving the parental home just yet:

“No, no. I said to my dad, I was like I'm going out. And he goes like: “Instead of you going out, we are going out.” That's basically emotional blackmail. So you are going to stay home or we leave.”

These examples show how family relationships and cultural context are instrumental in shaping the decision of young adults to stay or leave the parental home. Even though strong relationships with parents are very common and young adults seem to appreciate their parental offers, conflict and disagreement about transitional practices are also experienced by the young adults. However, for most cases, these disagreements do not appear to result in long lasting disputes between parents and young adults.

Conclusions

In this article, I have argued that prior life course and housing research places too much importance on individual rational choices and overlooks cultural differences, by assuming the choices related to the life course to be universal. Several studies (e.g. Bailey, 2009; Finney, 2010; Ramos, 2020) have claimed that presumed happenings in the life course like leaving the parental home are subject to de-standardisation, have become more inconstant and take place simultaneously with increasing complexity of transitions into adulthood. As such, it has been debated that more research on the life course experiences of subgroups and subcultures in western societies should be carried out (Finney, 2010). By conducting a qualitative in-depth research on the underlying processes and factors that shape the housing pathways of highly educated British-Nepalese young adults in London, I aimed to answer the following research question:

How do the individual perspectives, experiences and parental expectations shape the housing pathways of British-Nepalese young adults in London?

By combining a housing pathway approach with theories on the life course, cultural forces and interpersonal relationships, I found that many of the young adults expressed the impact of their Nepalese background when talking about housing choices. Moreover, they stressed the distinctions between British and Nepalese norms and the influence of their parental expectations. Using interviews with both young adults and British-Nepalese parents, a unique glance into the lived realities of the participants and a better cultural context to understand these experiences was given.

I have demonstrated that a majority of the young adults are still living at their parental home or have moved back in with their parents after finishing their university. This is an unusual situation for many western young adults, because housing is considered a crucial step towards independence (Buchmann & Kriesi, 2011). It indicates that leaving the parental home is not a self-evident choice for many young people participating in my study. This can be explained by the cultural background and the family context in which these decisions are made. It is not seen as a failure by their parents if the young adults stay at their parental home. On the contrary, their parents encourage their children to stay with them. Adding to the housing pathways literature, I therefore define the **complicated housing pathway**. A set of housing practices that consider the non-linearity of housing choices, de-standardisation of the life course and takes the cultural and family context of these decisions into account.

The decision of highly educated British-Nepalese young adults that do leave the parental home, is in nature more a practice of examining and experimenting with their independence and freedom. Rather than intending to become independent from their parents and family, they consider the expectations of their parents and family when making housing decisions. This has demonstrated that the housing choices of these young adults are more integrated in their family structures (see Bailey, 2009). The decision to leave or stay at the parental home for these non-western young adults is subject to change and there is not really a clear end goal like in normative housing pathways studied in earlier research. However, these findings do not suggest that the participants are restricted by their parents, because of their culture or their parental expectations. This study instead shows that the participants have distinctive experiences and views on what is seen as a normal development of their housing pathways and that the culture and norms connected to home leaving is up for change and open to discussion. Adding to a more inclusive body of literature on the de-standardisation in life course and housing choices, I therefore propose the use of the concept's: **temporary independence** and **experimental housing**. This specific case study on non-western migrants shows the significance of these terms for highly educated British-Nepalese young adults, but I presume that in general they could be applied to the housing and life course decisions of many non-western migrant young people living in western countries. Some participants and their parents also questioned when someone is really independent, questioning if this is the case if a young adult still needs parental support to live alone and therefore still depends economically on their parents. It is important to critically consider this in the context of how many contemporary young adults in western countries realize independence, since home leaving practices are often seen as a crucial driver towards this independence in previous studies.

In general, I believe more qualitative in-depth research is needed to fully understand how housing pathways of young adults with a non-western migrant background in western societies are shaped. For future housing and life course research, I therefore recommend more

studies focused on the cultural aspects of housing, the definition of independence in the western context and on how life course decisions are embedded into the family structures of young adults with a non-western migrant background in western countries.

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