# KUN BIDEXI? / KON BIDESHI?
# NARRATIVES OF VIOLENCE AND BELONGING IN THE CHAOS OF NELLIE MASSACRE, 1983.

By
Anika Anjum

*Submitted to*
*Central European University*
*Department of Gender Studies*

*In partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of MA in Critical Gender Studies*

Supervisor:  Dr Nadia Jones-Gailani
Second Reader: Dr Prem Kumar Rajaram

Budapest, Hungary

2020

*This thesis happened in motion.*

# ABSTRACT

The story starts with a third-world woman in a village north of Nellie, Assam, who was simultaneously a citizen and a foreigner. Delving into the ambiguity of 'third-world woman', the multiplicity of her identities, and impossibility of her representation, this thesis examines how intersectionality as a conceptual framework can be utilised to deconstruct dominant narratives that present themselves as credible truths. It further explores how dominant discourses and interpretations produce a truth effect through tautological references and reiterations as well as through material manifestations. To do so, this thesis first reframes intersectionality as a property of particles existing in chaos within a complex system. Through a synthesis of postcolonial and feminist literature as well as concepts of dimension-reduction from mathematics, a conceptual framework is built on the axioms of multidimensionality, situatedness, power, and temporality. The framework makes a theoretical claim that interpretations are attempts to linearise chaos with a logic of order based on comparison, continuity, and causality, which produce a frame of reference for subsequent interpretations. In order to contextualise the framework, the thesis maps a prominent journalist's interpretation of the Nellie massacre of 1983 where more women and children were thought to be killed than young men. The interpretation is deconstructed to reveal assumptions behind the clustering of the groups and the logics of order that linearise chaos of the past. Four alternative causal-effect chains leading to the same outcome are mapped in a complex system comprising socio-political components using an adaptation of backward induction method. The thesis accomplishes this through an exploration of narratives from survivors, perpetrators, local representatives, journalists' reports, official statements, and eyewitness accounts. This exercise demonstrates that linear patterns identified in chaos are influenced by the dominant discourses that create a feedback loop. The role of power, both discursive and material, is emphasised in crowding out narratives that do not fit into dominant frames of reference. Furthermore, this thesis makes a case for actualising feminist emancipatory politics beyond the analysis of gender on two fronts: on a methodological level, by lending its tools for analysis of similarly ambiguous categories of 'indigenous' and 'immigrant', and on a practical level, by endeavouring to alleviate material deprivations, as logics of subjugation are maintained through a co-existence of rhetoric and material reality in a complex system. Finally, the thesis offers a reflexive note on the embeddedness of the researcher in the global systems of power operating within academia and frames of references that despite critical analyses continue to shape lived experiences.

# DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of original research; it contains no materials accepted for any other degree in any other institution and no material previously written and/or published by another person, except where appropriate acknowledgement is made in form of bibliographical reference.

I further declare that the following word counts for this thesis are accurate:

Body of the thesis (excluding footnotes, bibliography, and diagrams): 27,960 words

Entire manuscript: 38,651 words

*Anika Anjum*

Budapest: 16/06/2020

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

# LIST OF FIGURES, TABLES, EQUATIONS, AND MAPS

## List of Figures

## List of Tables

## List of Equations

## List of Maps

# কোন বিদেশী?

Assamese: Kun bidexi? [Who is the foreigner?]

Bangla: Kon bideshi? [Which foreigner?]

# INTRODUCTION TO THE PEOPLE, THE PROBLEM, AND THE POGROM

*"Silence will fall when the question is asked." // The Silence, a religious order also known as The Sentinels of History, Doctor Who, BBC One.*

*"Because you still have hope that this war will end with your honour intact … Stand in the ashes of a trillion dead souls and ask the ghosts if honour matters.* (pause) *The silence is your answer." // Javik, sole survivor of a genocide that rendered his race extinct, Mass Effect 3, BioWare, 2012.*

## Introduction

On 18th February 1983, Mina Begum, a Bangla-speaking Muslim resident of Muladhari, a village on the southern bank of the river Kopili in Assam, succumbed to her wounds. As she breathed her last breath, and the soul left the body, she implored, "*Baba, amrai ki bideshi naki?"[1]* [Father, are *we* then the foreigners?] Her father, Sirajuddin Ahmed, who had lost four daughters and forty-five members of his extended family within a span of 6-8 hours that day, has no answer. He recalls that his daughters, perceived as Assamese, had previously picked up placards and partaken in demonstrations demanding detection and deportation of those they thought were 'illegal immigrants'. These demonstrations were a part of a larger movement, the Assam Agitation (1979-1985). The Nellie Massacre of 1983, during which Mina and her family were attacked, was one of its darkest hours. The six-hour killing frenzy saw deaths of 3,000-5,000 residents perceived as illegal immigrants, or 'foreigners' as they are locally called,[2] in a town called Nellie and 14-16 villages north of it. Mina and thousands that perished that fateful day had lived their live as natives, were killed as foreigners, and are remembered by different parties as both.

---

[1] Interview with Sirajuddin Ahmed by Subasri Krishnan, *What the Fields Remember*, Documentary (Public Service Broadcasting Trust, 2015) at 29m 45s. The interviewees speak an Assamese dialect of Bangla. All translations and transliterations have been produced by the author of this thesis.

[2] In the vernaculars of Assamese and Bangla, bidex or bidesh, although literally means foreign country, may be used to refer to regions outside of the district or division. The English translation of bidexi/bideshi is 'foreigner' and the word 'foreigner' is also used locally as a calque, but it may or may not refer to someone actually holding foreign citizenship documents.

To this date, the drive to detect foreigners in Assam goes on in the form of updating the National Register of Citizens (NRC). The process remains ambiguous and incomplete as no single definition for this 'foreigner' could be devised to the satisfaction of the stakeholders. Therein lies the initial questions that gave birth to this project: Who is the foreigner—and if the definition changes depending on the ambitious of the defining group—how do we decide who is the foreigner at any given time? And if most of today's populations are settled owing to long histories of Empire-building and migration, then which foreigner is defined as a 'foreigner' at any given place and time?

The title of this thesis is a reference to the question 'কোন বিদেশী?' written in the Purbi Nagari script, variants of which are used by Assamese and Bangla. This question is written in symbols common to both languages, leaving the root of the word ambiguous. When read in Assamese, the question reads 'Kun bidexi?' and translates to 'Who is the foreigner?', and when read in Bangla, it asks, 'Kon bideshi?' translating to 'Which foreigner?'. The question is ambiguous; its meaning depends upon the discretion of the translator as to which language is chosen to mediate. The same is the case with the people who speak these languages in the areas broadly understood as Assam and Eastern Bengal. Like the scripts, they are more similar than they are different, and it is the exaggerated differences that mark them as two peoples. These regions had been, at multiple times in history, parts of the same administrative unit,[3] making its borders appear, disappear, and reappear at different places drawn for different desired political and economic outcomes. This has left the meaning of 'foreigner' ambiguous. The ambiguity of phenomena and the interpreter's positionality that morphs the floating particles into making meaning are themes central to this thesis.

---

[3] Edward Gait, *A History of Assam* (Thacker, Spink & Company, 1906), 378–414; Willem van Schendel, *A History of Bangladesh*, 2009, 77–87, https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511997419.

For Mina, the outcomes for being perceived as a 'foreigner' were immediate. Despite spending her whole life as an Assamese and joining the Assam Agitation when the movement leaders sought support from Assam's citizens, she had been categorised as an illegal immigrant for being a Muslim woman who lived in a cluster of villages comprising residents whose ancestors had once migrated from lands that presently lie in the neighbouring region known as Bangladesh. This chain of reasoning that equated her to an 'illegal immigrant' made sense to her attackers but did not make sense to her. She asked, *"Amrai ki bideshi naki tahoile, tara ze amader emne marlo?"*[4] [Are *we* then the foreigners, that they killed us like this?] Silence falls, for there was no answer. She might be a citizen based on her papers, but the material reality of the pogrom marked her as a foreigner and doomed her to the fate she suffered.[5] She might be a foreigner as identified by the mob, but the court might uphold her legacy data to prove she indeed was a citizen. This paradox, the multiplicity and the power to enforce partial views at certain junctions in history, drives this project. This thesis does not aim to excavate a conclusive answer; rather, it maps key processes behind the attempts to fill the silence that follows Mina's question. With roots in postcolonial and gender studies, the concept broadly known as 'intersectionality' has been developed to understand and represent the multiplicity of oppressions and barriers that shape the experiences and identities of those who are excluded. Drawing upon themes of multiplicity, power, and representation, this thesis is concerned with the following central and pressing question: how can intersectionality, as a conceptual framework, be used to deconstruct dominant narratives that present themselves as 'the answer'?

---

[4] Sirajuddin Ahmed in Krishnan, *What the Fields Remember* at 30m 10s.

[5] Although it is known as the 'Nellie massacre' in public discourse, I use the word pogrom in addition to massacre because of the level at which it was planned prior to launching the attack. The villages had been cordoned off for six months prior to the attack with groups striking simultaneously from the east and the south, pushing the villagers into the rivers Kiling on the west and Kopili on the north. In this thesis, the word pogrom and massacre will be used interchangeably.

How does this answer that references the dominant discourse for validation subsequently produce a truth effect through reiteration?

This thesis is largely theoretical in nature, and it explores narratives from the Nellie massacre that attempt to answer who was killed and why they were killed on the morning of 18th February 1983 in the region bound by National Highway 27 and the rivers Kiling and Kopili, north of Nellie, Morigaon (erstwhile Nagaon), Assam (See Map 2). Several such narratives exist that refer to binary groupings: Assamese or Bengali, Indian or Bangladeshi, citizens or foreigners, natives or outsiders, legal migrants or illegal migrants, men or women, Hindu or Muslim, supporters of the Assam Agitation or traitors. In this thesis I will explore one of these narratives. Sanjoy Hazarika's interpretation of the events assumes that the residents of Nellie and surrounding villages were "Bengali-speaking Muslim immigrants" having 'illegally' acquired the right to settle.[6] He further classifies the deceased into two groups: "the old, the weak, the women, and the very young" and "the young and the fit". He claims that the former fell to the rushing Tiwa mobs, their spears, and their *dao*s [sickles], while the latter survived being able to outran the attackers.[7] Using this case to unbundle processes that privilege certain narratives, I will argue that from the chaos comprising an infinite set of combinations and permutations of possibilities, Hazarika picked one code of interpretation based on a partial reading of the observable state of the present, from the intersection at which he stands. Collecting other narratives of events and motives leading up to the massacre in 1983, I aim to explore four alternative hypotheses based on a range of sources: eyewitness accounts, observations from a massacre dataset ($n = 979$), rumours, and interviews with survivors,

---

[6] Hazarika writes: "The second [provocation] was a longer-held, deep-seated grievance: the gradual, sure march of the miyahs, as settlers from the old Mymesingh district of the former East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) were known, over traditional Tiwa lands. The miyahs worked for them, first as sharecroppers and then as tenants before finally acquiring rights, if these could be called that. Essentially, these rights were illegally sough, bought, and acquired." Sanjoy Hazarika, *Rites of Passage: Border Crossings, Imagined Homelands, India's East and Bangladesh* (Penguin Books India, 2000), 45–46.

[7] Sanjoy Hazarika, "'Where Are the Bodies?'", in *Rites of Passage: Border Crossings, Imagined Homelands, India's East and Bangladesh* (Penguin Books India, 2000), 51.

attackers, and local movement representatives. The cause and effect chain in Hazarika's interpretation will be broken down into multiple assumptions and propositions to test for the internal and external validity through these narratives. In addition, alternative patterns in the chaos will be explored where existing evidence can be lined up to lead to the same state of present as Hazarika's reading. The analysis seeks to demonstrate on theoretical level how the search for answers ends when one is found that resonates with the dominant discourses. I will argue that this answer, endorsed by the dominant narrative, produces a truth effect through references and reiteration in a tautological manner.
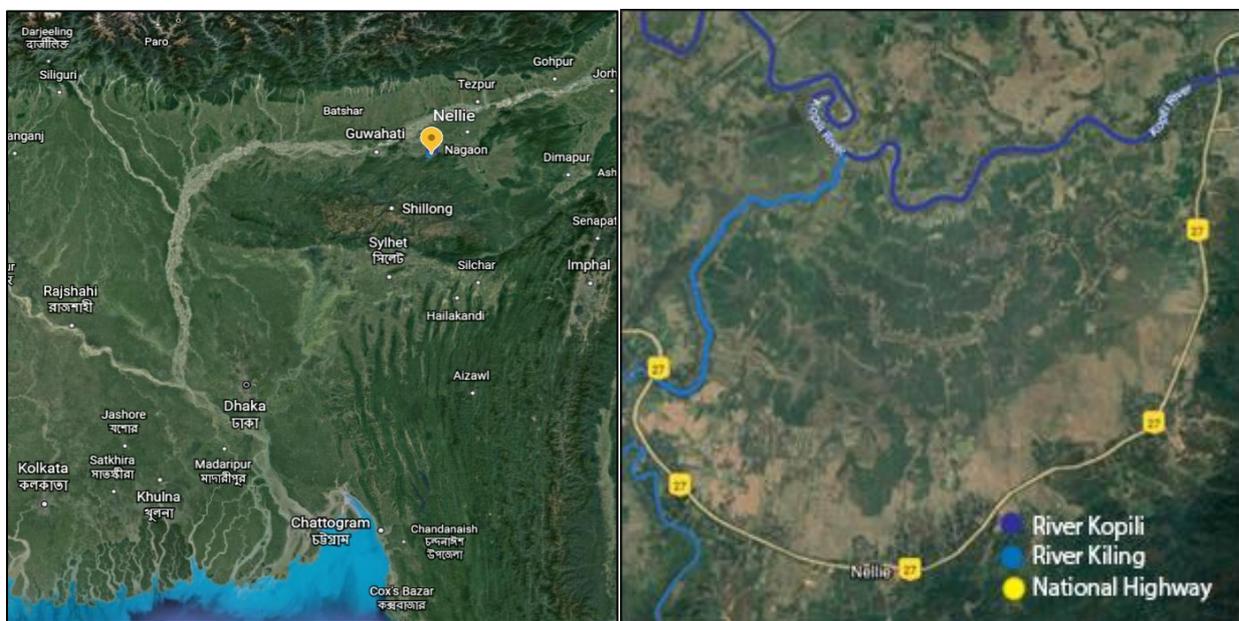


**Map 1: Location of Nellie in Assam and eastern Bengal.** No state borders.

**Map 2: Massacre region.** Bound by National Highway 27 (south and east), River Kiling (west), and River Kopili (north).[8]

The theoretical claims will be made through a mapping of these narratives into a complex system comprising socio-political components using an adapted version of backward induction. Although the ambiguity and fluidity of 'natives' and 'foreigners' as developed in

---

[8] Mapped on GoogleEarth by author. Project files at https://bit.ly/NellieMassacreSites, last updated 9 June 2020.

the historical trajectory of Assam and eastern Bengal remains outside the scope of this thesis, it contributes to disciplines of gender, nationalism, and postcolonialism by building an interdisciplinary a framework. Through conceptual deconstruction and methodological reflections, it will lay out paths for further studies of the ambiguity and fluidity of national identities. Intersectionality, honed by gender studies scholarship, privileges the selection of gender as the first necessary dimension of analysis. In light of this, this thesis will reframe intersectionality as a property of existing in chaos to extend the framework's applications beyond the preselected categories. A preselection, as will be demonstrated, is contradictory to intersectionality's goals to express multiplicity.

## Historical Context

The territorial bounds and demography of Assam as we know today is the result of its history of migration and its experiences of the colonial enterprise. The British East India Company's acquisition of the areas that currently lie in the Indian Northeast started with Goalpara in the late-1700s or early 1800s, soon obtaining the area that the Burmese had hold over through the treaty of Yandabo in 1826, and continued through 1873 when it took the shape of what the Indian Northeast is broadly today.[9] Masquerading as saviours of the people that had been suffering from "chaos, lawlessness, and oppression" since the 1770s, the British Raj slowly took control of the region with the agenda of turning Assam into "an agricultural estate of tea-drinking Britons and to transform local traditional institutions in such a manner as to suit the colonial pattern of exploitation".[10] Observing that the province suffered from an emigration of its population, villages 'decaying', and annual revenue decreasing, the Court of Directors declared that a large portion of Assam had been rendered a 'waste'.[11] Taking matters into their

---

[9] Amalendu Guha, *Planter-Raj to Swaraj: Freedom Struggle and Electoral Politics in Assam, 1826-1947* (Indian Council of Historical Research, 1977), 1–2.
[10] Ibid., 2.
[11] Ibid.

hands to 'revive' the lands, the British colonial enterprise sought to 'remedy' this and generate revenue. After the British lost its control over the Chinese trade market in 1833,[12] the Assam Company was founded in 1839 and granted monopoly over tea plantations.[13] Being in a sparsely populated region, the plantation-owning communities had been facing acute labour shortages, and they urged the government to "enhance land revenue rates so that poor peasants could be flushed out of their villages to work for wages in the plantations".[14] But who was to pay the land revenue if the poor peasants were pushed off the land? To make the growing wastelands available to cultivators in order to continue to extract land revenues, the Wasteland Grant Rules of 1838 was issued.[15] The Wasteland Grant Rules offered lucrative 'tax breaks' and long-term land titles (for 99-years) for settlers, under the condition that one-fourth of the land was cultivated.[16] Subsequently, migration was incentivised from places in adjoining regions of Bengal where the population was already familiar with the British-style land institutions of long-term land titles. This deal seemed preferable to the harsh institution of *jomidaari* (zamindari) in Bengal for many.[17] At the same time, recruiting plantation labourers from other provinces of the Raj continued.

Abstraction from social, economic, and political processes continued over time as the means of making available a body of surplus population ready to be absorbed into the revenue-generating endeavours of the colonial enterprise. Enumerations in forms of census were conducted that pigeonholed people into categories of arbitrary ethnicities, religions, and

---

[12] James F. Hancock, *Plantation Crops, Plunder and Power: Evolution and Exploitation* (Taylor & Francis, 2017), 116.
[13] Guha, *Planter-Raj to Swaraj*, 9.
[14] Ibid., 9.
[15] Ibid., 13-14.
[16] See: https://landrevenue.assam.gov.in/information-services/tea-land-administration-in-assam
[17] Anand A. Yang, 'Peasants on the Move: A Study of Internal Migration in India', *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 10, no. 1 (1979): 37–58, https://doi.org/10.2307/203300; Shahiuz Zaman Ahmed, 'Factors Leading to the Migration from East Bengal to Assam 1872-1971', *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 66 (2005): 1000, 1011, https://www.jstor.org/stable/44145913; Sanjib Baruah, *Durable Disorder: Understanding the Politics of Northeast India* (Oxford University Press, 2005), 90.

languages, designated by the colonial authorities.[18] A few decades previously, there had been Boro, Dimasa, Karbi, Koch, Ahom, Tiwa, Mising, Sonowal, Moran, Motok, Chutiya, Bamun, Sudir, Kayasth, Kalita, and so on, and now, all of a sudden, the category of 'Assamese' appeared from the colonial imagination.[19] It was constructed by the British through the Census of 1901, which lumped all the area's inhabitants into 'Assamese',[20] a name it was determined to keep based on Assam's popularity and association in the international tea market.[21] The groups were often conflated to their supposed suitability of engaging in different forms of labour for the colonial enterprise.[22] For Assam, the conflation was informed by the rumour that opium, which was cultivated in Assam, made its consumers 'lazy'.[23] Henceforth, this inference was used to provide 'scientific gloss' to the representation of the Assamese as 'lazy' and unaware of the agricultural potential of their lands.[24] This in tautological manner provided justification for the British to encourage migration to transform the economy.[25] Two phases of significant migration into Assam was identified: 1826-1905: Tea plantation labourers, *amolas* (office employees from Sylhet, Dhaka, Mymensingh, Rampur), merchants and traders from Rajasthan and districts of Bengal); and 1905-1947: Muslim peasants from eastern Bengal settling in rural areas and Bengali Hindus settling in urban areas.[26] Between 1920s and 1930s, the British claimed that the Assamese had finally 'learnt' from their "more enterprising neighbours" with the arrival of the eastern Bengali peasant settlers.[27] The effects of quests for

---

[18] Nandana Dutta, *Questions of Identity in Assam: Location, Migration, Hybridity* (New Delhi; Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 2012), 192.

[19] Ibid., 193.

[20] Ibid., 214.

[21] Sanjib Baruah, *India Against Itself: Assam and the Politics of Nationality* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 26–27.

[22] Piya Chatterjee, *A Time for Tea: Women, Labour, and Post/Colonial Politics on an Indian Plantation* (Duke University Press, 2001), 76–79.

[23] Jayeeta Sharma, '"Lazy" Natives, Coolie Labour, and the Assam Tea Industry', *Modern Asian Studies* 43, no. 6 (November 2009): 1287–1324, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0026749X08003831.

[24] Guha, *Planter-Raj to Swaraj*, 20; Baruah, *Durable Disorder*, 90.

[25] Dutta, *Questions of Identity in Assam*, 2012, 208.

[26] Ibid., 166–69.

[27] Baruah, *Durable Disorder*, 89–90.

revenue by the colonial enterprise and the imposed 'scientifity' on the people through enumeration and categorisation that caused a rift amongst peoples rendered commensurate are felt till date.[28]

The increased levels of migration from other parts of the Subcontinent unsurprisingly nurtured anxiety amongst the locals over the demographic change. This anxiety soon gave birth to a strong resentment of the *bohiragoto* ('outsider') that spanned across religions, languages, castes, and classes often manifesting through gender relations. With the Partition of 1947, the *bohiragoto* was transformed into the *bidexi* ('foreigner'), as the state of India and province of East Bengal (in the Dominion of Pakistan) were created rendering neighbours into foreigners overnight. Further, the Partition of 1947 as well as the Bangladesh Liberation War of 1971 experienced movement of unprecedented kind amongst neighbouring areas which suddenly found themselves across the newly created state-lines. These displaced people were termed 'refugees' or 'illegal migrants' based on the political motivations of local elders and elites.[29]

The once-innocuous jealousy that existed between the Brahmaputra Valley and the Surma Valley amongst the job-seeking middle class soon escalated to "a cult of aggressive and defensive linguistic nationalism".[30] The Assam Agitation or *Axom Andolon* (Assam Movement), a movement to "protect, preserve, and promote the cultural, social, linguistic identity and heritage of the Assamese people", gained steam in 1979 and ended in 1985 with the signing of the Assam Accord between the Government of India and the movement leader

---

[28] Sanjib Baruah, 'The Rise and Decline of a Separatist Insurgency: Contentious Poitics in Assam, India', in *Autonomy and Ethnic Conflict in South and South-East Asia*, ed. Rajat Ganguly (Routledge, 2012), 30.

[29] This pattern of categorising migrants and refugees based on political motives is exemplarily evident in the conference papers compiled in Braja Bihārī Kumāra, ed., *Illegal Migration from Bangladesh* (Delhi: Astha Bharati: Concept Pub. Co, 2006).

[30] Nandana Dutta, *Questions of Identity in Assam: Location, Migration, Hybridity* (New Delhi; Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 2012), 165–67.

representatives.[31] The same Accord ensures the detection of 'foreigners', their deletion from the electoral rolls, and eviction from the lands of Assam.[32] It is this sentiment in the public discourse that paved the paths to Nellie. This brief history illustrates that 'the gradual polarisation of peoples has the potential of violently erupting a century later. Such a long-term process resonates with the butterfly effect, the metaphorical example of chaos theory which views the world an interconnected and complex system.

## Methodology and Sources

This study utilises a combination of qualitative and quantitative sources in its methods of analysis. References to quantitative comparisons are abundant in qualitative sources, yet they are not exposed to the same logics of examination as such statements would have been in a more quantitatively leaning discipline. What does the multiplicative nature of identities and experiences imply? What does the observation that 'more' women and children than young men were killed imply, and can inferences be at all drawn from the observation that something, at a specific point, is more than the other? The processes behind this will be mapped in a complex system using an adaptation of backward induction method.

### *Model and method*

Complex systems are dynamic environments where the interactions amongst the components happen in a non-linear fashion.[33] The interactions are non-linear both in the sense of temporality and commensuration: a negligible difference at the initial condition can result in large changes over a long period of time.[34] Some properties of complex systems listed by

---

[31] Clause 6. 'Accord between AASU, AAGSP and the Central Government on the Foreign National Issue (Assam Accord)', 15 August 1985. Text version available at: https://assamaccord.assam.gov.in/portlets/assam-accord-and-its-clauses.
[32] Clause 5. 'Assam Accord'.
[33] James Gleick, *Chaos: Making a New Science* (Penguin, 1988).
[34] Ibid., chap. The Butterfly Effect.

Rosalia Condorelli include "non-linearity of interactions amongst system components", as well as "self-organisation, evolution by adaptation, and especially unpredictability of systems in their self-organising process, due to the interactional non-linearity and positive feedback."[35] Through feedback loops, system components are endogenous, that is, they 'feed into each other' and often provide an illusion of order in forms of fractals. Fractals are never-ending patterns that are constructed with replication and repetition at different scales. Each segment of fractals feed into other segments, and the similar patterns are found at smaller and larger scales (See Figure 1 and Figure 2). Complex systems are being increasingly used in social sciences to express historical or 'durable inequalities', interactions and representations of power at micro- and macrolevels, and exploring historical trajectories through narratives.[36] The narratives pooled from the range of sources will be mapped into such a complex system of socio-political components.
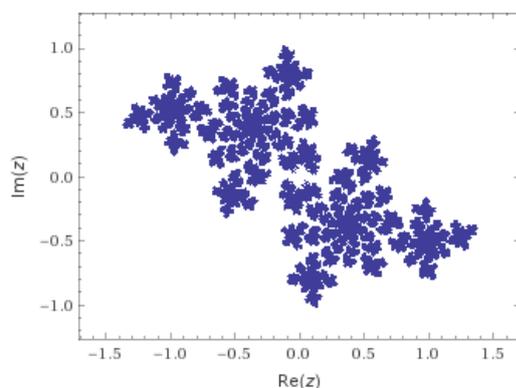


**Figure 1: Julia Set, an example of a fractal.[37]**      **Figure 2: Julia Set, time escape image.[38]**
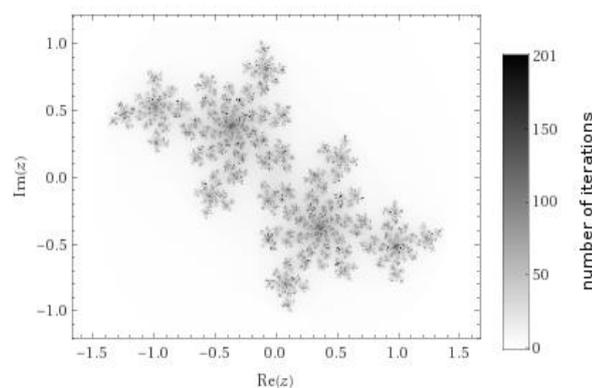
---

[35] Rosalia Condorelli, 'Complex Systems Theory: Some Considerations for Sociology', *Open Journal of Applied Sciences* 6, no. 7 (12 July 2016): 422–48, https://doi.org/10.4236/ojapps.2016.67044.
[36] R. David Smith, 'Social Structures and Chaos Theory', Text.Article, 30 March 1998, http://www.socresonline.org.uk/3/1/11.html; Raymond A Eve, Sara Horsfall, and Mary E Lee, *Chaos, Complexity, and Sociology: Myths, Models, and Theories* (Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage Publ., 2003); David S Byrne and Gill Callaghan, *Complexity Theory and the Social Sciences: The State of the Art*, 2014.
[37] Generated with Wolfram Alpha. The patterns are self-repeating spanning time and space. This could be a visual analogue for subpowers.
[38] Generated with Wolfram Alpha. The denser regions that have experienced more iterations form 'cores'.

The mapping will be done using an adaptation of backward induction. Backward induction method is an algorithm used in game theory and behavioural economics to solve a 'game tree' for a path of optimal decisions.[39] The game tree maps the possible combinations and permutations of actions that can be taken by the decision-making agents interacting in the setting. Here, based on the desired state of the future, branches of decisions and outcomes are created to determine which paths to take at each node, starting backwards from the future to the present, to reach the desired final outcome (See Figure 3, left panel).
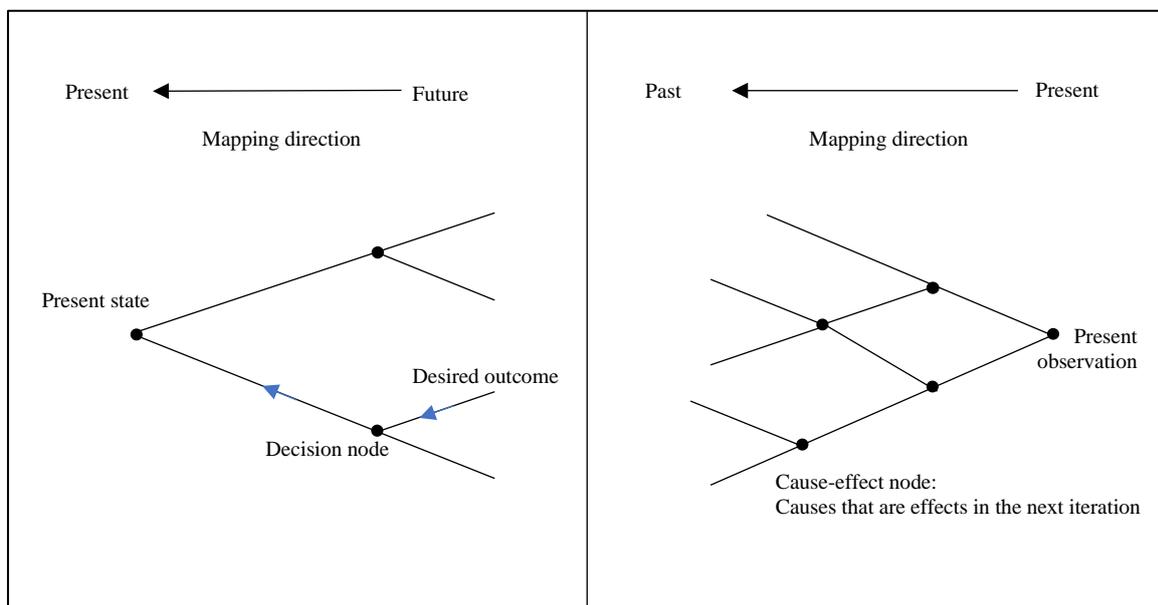


**Figure 3: Backward induction (left) and adapted method (right)**

I adapt this method to map the narratives, working backwards from the present into the past (See Figure 3, right panel). Backward induction as used in game theory is optimised in relation to the competing players' decisions, their power and likelihood of retaliation, and in more complicated game settings, randomness of events beyond control or observation of the

---

[39] John von Neumann et al., 'General Form Description of Games of Strategy', in *Theory of Games and Economic Behavior (60th Anniversary Commemorative Edition)* (Princeton University Press, 1944), 46–84, https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt1r2gkx.8. For further detail with graphical representation see especially sections Sets and partitions and Graphical representations.

participants.[40] While there is room for a game theoretic analysis of decisions taken by competing or collaborating agents in social sciences in various ways and further study may be conducted to adopt such a method for narrative analysis, I limit the use of backward induction method in this thesis to the mapping of the branches in order expose the parallel possibilities of arriving at the same outcome.

***Sources***

Drawing upon narratives of the massacre, this thesis seeks to build a conceptual framework and reflect on the methodological issues in feminist postcolonial scholarship to address the multiplicity of experiences, narrations, and events. The theoretical arguments and methodological reflections made in this thesis are be informed by a combination of interviews from documentary films, video recordings, elite interviews, eyewitness accounts, historical documents, and observations from census and smaller enumeration datasets. While not all sources are analysed directly in this text, they form the foundation to the extent that it was a mapping of controversial and contradictory narratives in the domains not discussed in this thesis (international relations and political economy) that influenced the idea of narratives being threads in chaos. This subsection briefly lists the main sources.

To assess the validity of the quantifier in Hazarika's observation ('more women and children than young men'), a sample of 979 names collected by Diganta Sharma will be used. This list was published on an online news site TwoCircles.net and in a fact-finding report compiled by Indilens News Team (hereinafter referred to as 'the massacre dataset'), while no official counts or lists could be found in the public domain.[41] The massacre data only contains

---

[40] Robert Gibbons, *Game Theory for Applied Economists* (Princeton University Press, 1992), chap. Static games of incomplete information, Dynamic games of complete information, Dynamic games of incomplete information, https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvcmxrzd.

[41] Diganta Sarma and Anzu Azad, 'Recalling Nellie 1983', *TwoCircles.Net* (blog), accessed 17 December 2018, http://twocircles.net/2009feb17/recalling_nellie_1983.html_0; Main Uddin, 'Genesis of Nellie Massacre and

the names of the deceased, age, sex, and relationship to the head of household. Using the raw data, 'age' and 'sex' columns were encoded into dummy variables, grouping for the age ranges 0-2, 3-17, 18-29, 30-59, and 60 and above and retaining the 'M' and 'F' as sex categories. The groupings of age groups and the sex as such would allow to draw descriptive statistics for the groups Hazarika had identified. For each unique household head, a unique household ID has been generated, and within households, the data is sorted by dependency, sex, and age. If Hazarika's hypothesis of 'most' of the dead being women, children, and elderly were to be tested through the dataset, a counterfactual would be required to compare the likelihood of death and survival with respect to groupings based on sex and age. However, there was no village-wise location information, nor enumeration of injured or unharmed survivors in the massacre dataset. One possible way to mitigate the problem of a counter factual would have been to approximate survivors from the census of 1981 by extracting village-wise population data, however the enumeration was not conducted in Assam in 1981 on the grounds of political instability.[42] Without a counterfactual, there is risk of committing *cum hoc, ergo propter hoc* fallacy (known in the world of econometrics as the creed 'correlation does not imply causation') with inferences. Since the massacre data does not contain any data of the survivors, inferences of causation, at least through quantitative comparison, cannot be made to test Hazarika's hypothesis. However, since the dataset contains 979 observations decomposed into age and sex, there is greater room for making observations and assessing the validity of Hazarika's grouping of the women, children, and the elderly as one comparable to the young men, where the former had been 'more' than the latter.

Assam Agitation', Fact-finding Report (Indilens News Team, n.d.), https://www.academia.edu/17665743/Genesis_of_nellie_massacre_and_assam_agitation.
[42] The census of 1981 was not conducted in Assam. See A Handbook of Population Statistics: https://censusindia.gov.in/DigitalLibrary/data/Census_1981/Publication/India/49962_1981_POR.pdf

To explore the everyday relationships between the groups involved in the massacre and to map the narratives of violence and belonging, the analysis draws upon interviews that were conducted with participants of the massacre, representatives in the civil society, and eyewitnesses from various sources. An attempt was made to triangulate into the narratives from perspectives of the attackers, the survivors, the local movement leaders and representatives, passive eyewitnesses, and post-hoc narrations by journalists. Survivors who expressed the interest to tell their stories, like Abdul Khayer who himself approached director Subasri Krishnan while she had been filming Sirajuddin Ahmed,[43] have been quoted at length in an attempt to amplify their voices by means available in the scope of this piece of written work. Where the source material had been in Assamese or Bangla, the translations and transliterations are mine. Table 1 summarises the sources and the media in which they were accessed. Part of the research for this thesis was conducted at the South Asia Institute Library and CrossAsia Archive at the Centre for Asian and Transnational Studies, Heidelberg.

| Interviewee (Location) | Interviewer | Published in (Medium accessed in) | Stratum |
|---|---|---|---|
| Anonymised respondents (Villages C and D) | Makiko Kimura | 'Nellie Massacre of 1983' (Text) | Attacker |
| Hemandra Narayan (Mokaria to Demal bil, Nellie) | - | '25 years on…Nellie still haunts…' (Text) | Eyewitness |
| Sanjoy Hazarika (Nellie to Bhogduba Habi) | - | 'Rites of Passage' (Text) | Journalist |
| Anonymised respondents (Morigaon) | Makiko Kimura | 'Nellie Massacre of 1983' (Text) | Representative |
| Narayan Kumar Radu Kakoti | Taha Amin | Personal YouTube Channel (Video) | Representative |
| Sirajuddin Ahmed (Muladhari) | Subasri Krishnan | 'What the Fields Remember' (Video) | Survivor |
| Rashida Begum (Muladhari) | Subasri Krishnan | 'What te Fields Remember' (Video) | Survivor |
| Abdul Khayer (Borbori) | Subasri Krishnan | 'What the Fields Remember' (Video) | Survivor |
| Anonymised respondents | Impunity Project | Impunity Project Database[44] (Text) | Survivor |
| Anonymised respondents (Villages A and B) | Makiko Kimura | 'Nellie Massacre of 1983' (Text) | Survivor |
| Rahila Khatun (Muladhari) | Taha Amin | Personal YouTube Channel (Video) | Survivor |
| Saimun Nessa (Muladhari) | Taha Amin | Personal YouTube Channel (Video) | Survivor |
| Romisa Khatun (Muladhari) | Taha Amin | Personal YouTube Channel (Video) | Survivor |

---

[43] Suryasarathi Bhattacharya, 'What the Fields Remember: Subasri Krishnan on the Human Cost of the Nellie Massacre', Firstpost, accessed 10 June 2020, https://www.firstpost.com/long-reads/what-the-fields-remember-subasri-krishnan-paints-a-stark-portrait-of-the-human-cost-of-the-nellie-massacre-7140311.html.

[44] Accessed in a secondary source: Anjuman Ara Begum, and Patrick Hoenig. 'Nellie (1983): A Case Study of Mass Violence and Impunity'. In *Landscapes of Fear: Understanding Impunity in India*, edited by Patrick Hoenig and Navsharan Singh, Ebook edition. Zubaan, 2014.

| Interviewee (Location) | Interviewer | Published in (Medium accessed in) | Stratum |
|---|---|---|---|
| Nurjahan Begum (Bhogduba Habi) | Teresa Rehman | 'Nellie Revisited' (Text) | Survivor |
| Fatema Khatun (Bhogduba Habi) | Teresa Rehman | 'Nellie Revisited' (Text) | Survivor |
| Mohammad Nobi Hussain (Muladhari) | Atul Dev | 'India is testing the bounds of citizenship' (Text) | Survivor |

**Table 1: Summary of interview-based sources.**

As I could not reach the pogrom-survivors and attackers in remote villages for an MA-level study, I instead interviewed researchers who study the region. Elite interviews in form of consultation meetings were conducted with six professors and seasoned researchers in migration in Kolkata between 4th and 19th August 2019.[45] The interviews were broadly unstructured, which helped frame the scope of the study and map the available sources at the formative stages of the research design. Additionally, issues of interpretation surrounding Hazarika's observation about the massacre were discussed extensively. Table 2 offers a summary of the consultation meetings and themes discussed. The interviews were in Bangla and English, with occasional references in Assamese and Hindi. The translations are mine. Validation of translations from Hindi were sought from native speakers.

| Interviewee | Affiliation at the time of interview | Main themes |
|---|---|---|
| Dr Debdatta Chowdhury | Assistant Professor of Gender Studies Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta | Gender, Borders, Borderlands, Nationalism |
| Dr Omprakash Mishra | Professor of International Relations Jadavpur University | Migration, Citizenship |
| Dr Paula Banerjee | Vice-Chancellor The Sanskrit College and University | Gender, Violence, Nationalism, Borderlands |
| Dr Ranabir Samaddar | Director Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group | Rumours, Temporality, Nationalism, Historiography, Citizenship |
| Dr Sabyasachi Basu Ray Chowdhury | Professor of Political Science Rabindra Bharati University | Migration, Statelessness, Political economy |
| Dr Samir Kumar Das | Professor of Political Science University of Calcutta | Migration, Violence, Gender, Political economy |

**Table 2: Summary of consultation meetings.**

---

[45] Kolkata is in West Bengal, which is separated from the Northeast by Eastern-Bengal/Bangladesh except a 33km-wide corridor. For studies that seek voices of the Northeast in Kolkata, where a considerable number of people from the Northeast is found in employment and education, see: Kunal Mukherjee, 'Insurgency in the Indian Northeast: Student Voices from Kolkata', *International Journal on Minority and Group Rights* 25, no. 2 (16 May 2018): 261–82, https://doi.org/10.1163/15718115-02502003.

## Organisation of the Thesis

This thesis is divided into three core chapters. Firstly, based on theories of intersectionality as has been developed in gender studies scholarship, Chapter I will explore the concepts of additive and multiplicative approaches of representing the multifaceted dimensions of identities. This is to illustrate, using a multidimensional space, that phenomena in the world happens at an infinite speed of interaction, and the attempts to represent a partial segment takes out one set of relationships. The partial reading introduces a logic of order to a complex system that otherwise comprises feedback loops, fractals, and endogeneity. As I engage this logic, I will map existing scholarship in postcolonial and feminist scholarship in order to situate this research within broader academic discussion. This chapter will reframe intersectionality as the property of particles existing in chaos, by claiming that an interpretation is a pattern woven out of chaos by making it linear with the intervention of thought, and as such the positionality of the viewer and the means of knowing employed influence the interpretation.

Chapter II serves to contextualise such a conceptual formulation of intersectionality through the analysis of a case study. This chapter will first discuss the role of discourses in the search for patterns. It will suggest that the dominant discourses, wherein the interpreter is embedded, validates the patterns found and certain means of finding patterns. This feeds into the discourse and strengthens it by producing a form of truth effect through reference. Introducing two concepts, clustering and linearising, this chapter will draw on lessons from the gender discourse and its ability to 'stop thought' by ending the search for further possible explanations. Putting the discussions of chaos and patterns together will form the framework to explore the assumptions that led to Hazarika's clustering of "the old, the weak, the women, and the very young" as one group comparable to "the fit and the young" and his linearising of past events to attribute the cause of death to being 'weak' and surviving to being 'fit'. A

discussion will follow on the power of authorities to feed the patterns they identify in chaos back into associated discourses by creating a truth effect through reiteration as well as on the 'stickiness' of an authority's interpretation.

Chapter III will briefly explore ways in which gender scholarship can be invoked in the more practice-based disciplines within the social sciences. It will discuss agency as capacity for inaction and the choice to not self-determine through the production of a counter-narrative. Additionally, it will offer the use of this interdisciplinary framework of intersectionality as chaos to addressing the anachronisms of the nation that creates binaries between the 'indigenous' and 'immigrants'. This chapter ends with a discussion of the interaction of discourses and material realities that together maintain oppressive structures of power and claims that emancipatory politics cannot be actualised only through analysis of gender and must continue to alleviate material deprivation.

Finally, this thesis will conclude on a reflective note upon silences, untold stories, and frames of references through which 'answers' are found. For questions such as the one Mina asked, for questions where there is no single answer, a momentary silence ought to fall for researchers. There are, as will be argued throughout this thesis, many ways of thinking about the answer, and as such, it is crucial to reflect on assumptions, intersections, and unknowability before identifying patterns in the chaos. The silence surrounding the Nellie massacre haunts the survivors, and the attempts to unearth their stories may be crucial to actualising their political agency, if they want their stories to be told to a broader audience. However, interpretations that present themselves as an objective answer have the potential of providing the illusory effect of truth, further hindering the process of unsilencing the voices of the marginalised.

# I.
## OF CHAOS AND THOUGHT:
## REFRAMING INTERSECTIONALITY AS A COMPLEX SYSTEM

*"All events, even those which on account of their insignificance do not seem to follow the great laws of nature, are a result of it just as necessarily as the revolutions of the sun. In ignorance of the ties which unite such events to the entire system of the universe, they have been made to depend upon final causes or upon hazard, or appear without regard to order; but these imaginary causes have gradually receded with the widening bounds of knowledge..." // Pierre-Simon Marquis de Laplace, A Philosophical Essay on Probabilities, 1905 [1825].*

## 1. Introduction

The story starts with a third-world woman. In this case, it is with Mina's multiplicity as an Assamese but also a Bengali, a native but also a foreigner, and an anti-foreigner activist but also a victim of an anti-foreigner pogrom. She had been perceived as all these categories and as varying degrees of each in between, over her life and after her death. The figure of this 'third-world woman', Leela Gandhi claims, is the site at which postcolonial and feminist theories collide and collude.[1] Intersectionality as a concept has been developed by these fields to understand the broader structure of power and provide the platform for political agency for a multiplicity of identities, experiences, and representations of power. This chapter takes up the task of intersectionality in order to map how this third-world woman who is perceived as members of multiple categories can be many people according to a divergence of factors at the same time.

Race, gender, and class, the trifecta most frequently analysed within intersectionality analyses, are a result of the broader structures of power of colonialism, patriarchy, and capitalism. As was briefly outlined in the previous chapter, colonial interventions that abstracted social, economic, and political processes from their existing systems of relations had in multiple regions incited conflicts between racially inscribed groups through gendered

---

[1] Leela Gandhi, *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction* (Allen & Unwin, 1998), 83.

understandings of relations for centuries to come. Anne McClintock argues that "race, gender, and class," and I would add any such social, economic, cultural, linguistic, religious, or political categories, "are not distinct realms of experience, existing in splendid isolation from each other, nor can they be retrospectively yoked together … Rather, they come into existence *in and through* relation to each other."[2] The conflicts between races, genders, and classes, fuelled by complex structures of power, are perhaps the most evident in colonial spaces where the violent displacement makes the conflicts visible. Feminising native lands was not simply to invoke the desire of the invading men to explore and conquer but also a question of subdued labour and imperial plunder. Race was not only the difference in skin colour but what it represented of people's mental capacities and potential in the hierarchy of labour value and civilisation.[3] This description of race, gender, and class as experiences being 'in and through' relation to each other invokes the image of a multidimensional or complex system where each of these components feed into each other through various feedback loops, repetitions, and fractals. In fact, gender as an identity that is 'tenuously constituted in time [and] instituted through a stylised repetition of acts'[4] can be thought of as one part of the fractal in the broader system in which the components are constructed in and through relation to one another.

Returning to the figure of the third-world woman, it is often posited that the third-world woman finds herself in a 'doubly' disadvantaged position in relation to both the colonisers and the native men. The word 'double' (or 'doubly') is used by Leela Gandhi,[5] Gayatri Chakravorty

---

[2] Emphasis in original. Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (Routledge, 1995), 5.
[3] Ibid., 5–7; Timothy Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 13,19-20.
[4] Judith Butler, 'Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory', *Theatre Journal* 40, no. 4 (1988): 519, https://doi.org/10.2307/3207893.
[5] McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, 83.

Spivak,[6] Kimberlé Crenshaw,[7] Frances M Beal,[8] or even 'triple' by Floya Anthias and Nira Yuval-Davis[9] and Delia Aguilar[10] to refer to the position of women of colour. I find usage of the 'double' fascinating because of what it implies in a mathematical sense. Although many feminist researchers and scholars invoke ideas of 'double' and 'multidimensional' in their studies on the intersection of race, class, and gender, there is rarely any engagement with these ideas on a conceptual or methodological level.[11] 'Double' can be understood in an additive sense and in a multiplicative sense, and how it relates to multidimensionality in particular is an avenue not as explored in gender and intersectionality scholarship. Several disciplines in addition to feminist research methods approach the same idea of multiplicity and state being in flux in various manners: quantum field theory, philosophy of chaos, econometrics, and postcolonial theory. This chapter is an attempt to take the partial knowledges of these fields and put them in a conversation in order to triangulate intersectionality as a concept. It will serve as a detour into the conceptual framework before applying it to unbundle the search for patterns in chaos of the pogrom.

This chapter will demonstrate that when conceptualising identities as a multiplicative (as opposed to additive), that is, formed within a multidimensional space, concepts of their 'being in and through relation to each other' can be expressed in greater detail. As such, the

[6] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (University of Illinois Press, 1988), 84.

[7] Kimberle Crenshaw, 'Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color', *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6 (1991): 1247, https://doi.org/10.2307/1229039.

[8] Frances M. Beal, 'Double Jeopardy: To Be Black and Female', *Meridians* 8, no. 2 (2008): 166–76, https://www.jstor.org/stable/40338758.

[9] 'Contextualizing Feminism — Gender, Ethnic and Class Divisions - Floya Anthias, Nira Yuval-Davis, 1983', accessed 10 May 2020, https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1057/fr.1983.33.

[10] Delia D. Aguilar, 'From Triple Jeopardy to Intersectionality: The Feminist Perplex', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 32, no. 2 (19 August 2012): 415–28, https://muse.jhu.edu/article/483513.

[11] Gloria Holguín Cuádraz and Lynet Uttal, 'Intersectionality and In-Depth Interviews: Methodological Strategies for Analyzing Race, Class, and Gender', *Race, Gender & Class* 6, no. 3 (1999): 156–86, https://www.jstor.org/stable/41674900; Leslie McCall, 'The Complexity of Intersectionality', *Signs* 30, no. 3 (2005): 1771–1800, https://doi.org/10.1086/426800; Lisa Bowleg, 'When Black + Lesbian + Woman ≠ Black Lesbian Woman: The Methodological Challenges of Qualitative and Quantitative Intersectionality Research', 2008.

concept 'intersectionality' by principle has to consider the formation of macrosocial phenomena in a dynamic multidimensional space. To do this, Section 1.1 will explore the concept of 'double' as additive ($a * x = ax\ where\ \{a \in \mathbb{R} \mid a > 0\}$ i.e. expansion along the same dimension)[12] and multiplicative ($x * y = xy$, i.e. expansion to a second dimension). Referring to the methodology behind interaction terms in regression analysis, additive and multiplicative concepts on a one-dimensional axis and in two-dimensional plane, respectively, will be illustrated using Lisa Bowleg's studies on black lesbian women. Section 1.2 will take the multiplicative principle forward in positioning an individual at an intersection of two dimensions. Accepting that the world exists in complexities beyond the comprehension of any one individual and the current state of sciences, this section will lay the grounds, through a review of literature, for the claim that views of this world is always partial, and knowledge generated from the partial view is 'situated', to use Donna Haraway's term. This claim is informed by postcolonial and feminist theories both of which are concerned with the partiality of knowledge. Section 1.3 will take a step back into abstraction, combining the principle of multidimensionality and the situatedness of knowledge, and present the world as a 'chaosmos', a portmanteau of chaos and cosmos joined by James Joyce. The term 'chaosmology' has been picked up Deleuze and Guattari, notably in their book 'What is Philosophy?' and therefrom travelled to mathematician and literary theorist Arkady Plotnitsky's examination of sciences, philosophy, and arts. Drawing on Plotnistky's analysis of chaos and thought, the idea of intersectionality as a plunge into chaos will be explored, accepting the properties of chaos as incomprehensible, chance, and virtual. This chapter will conclude by reframing intersectionality as a concept that accepts 'chaosmologies' and intersectional research methods to be those that embrace and navigate through chaos as opposed to rejecting it.

---

[12] Explanation: $a$ is a positive real number. It can be interpreted as, e.g. 2, so $x$ times 2 gives $2x$. This, as I will later elaborate, falls within the domain of addition, as $x$ is being added $a$ number of times along the $x$-axis.

## 1.1. Intersectionality as multiplicative

Lisa Bowleg's proposition, 'Black + Lesbian + Woman ≠ Black Lesbian Woman',[13] lends itself well to being incorporated into this methodology given that her method and approach to interpretive issues is rooted in intersectional research using a blended model of quantitative and qualitative methods. Through her study of black lesbian women in USA, Bowleg argues that the experiences of a black lesbian woman cannot be captured by a mere sum of their parts. In other words, she claims that the identity of a black lesbian woman cannot be decomposed into her race, sexuality, and gender, nor can each of the parts be ranked into a state of being independent from the other parts.[14] To unbundle this idea, this section turns to quantitative methods that offer the tools to visually illustrate the distinction between addition and multiplication.

### Identities as additive

In Bowleg's discussion of methodological and interpretive issues in intersectional research, she uses examples of trying to locate the source of subjugation based on race, sexuality, and gender. In a hypothetical scenario, using the same setting, say a study is to be devised to understand workplace discrimination of black lesbian women. The determinants of wages include level of education and years spent in full-time employment and is controlled for race, gender, and sexuality. The dependent variable captures wage penalty, which means the lower this value, the higher wages the individual earns in comparison to the others in the sample. This regression equation, at its simplest form, would be the following:

---

[13] Lisa Bowleg, 'When Black + Lesbian + Woman ≠ Black Lesbian Woman: The Methodological Challenges of Qualitative and Quantitative Intersectionality Research', 2008.
[14] Ibid., 314–16.

$$W = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Ed + \beta_2 Ex + \beta_3 R + \beta_4 G + \beta_5 S + \epsilon$$

**Equation 1: Model with additive terms.**

where $W$ = wage penalty, $Ed$ = dummy variable for educational attainment where 0, 1, 2, and 3 represent secondary school graduate, bachelor's degree, master's degree, doctoral degree, respectively, $Ex$ = years spent in a full-time employment, $R$ = dummy variable for race, $G$ = dummy variable for gender, $S$ = dummy variable for sexuality, and $\epsilon$ is the error term.[15] The coefficients associated with each independent variable would reflect the change in the dependent variable as a result of the independent variable. Thus, if wages were to be offered without any discriminatory practices or preferences shown to people belonging to different categories of $R$, $G$, and $S$, and were only correlated to years spent in education and in employment, then $\beta_3 = \beta_4 = \beta_5 = 0$, ideally, or statistically insignificant.

Such a model helps expose wage differentials and can be a useful place to start the study. However, an additive model operates with an underlying assumption that the levels of wage discrimination faced by an individual can be decomposed into her state of being black, her state of being lesbian, and her state of being a woman, and that each of these experiences can be understood separately. Indeed, in Bowleg's studies in southern California and Washington DC (USA), several of her interviewees either refused to or were unable to rank their identities into discrete parts of their selves while recalling their experiences. Some of them also acknowledged that the primary reason for their oppression sometimes changes depending on the context, that is, whether they are discriminated against because they were black or because they were lesbian sometimes depended on the circumstances. More often than not, however, it was not possible to identify at a given instance, which 'part' of one's identities, if

---

[15] I only elaborate on educational attainment because its ordering will be referred to later. The other dummy variables in this regression are strictly categorical and are not ordinal.

at all it can be isolated, the reason behind discriminatory acts. Her respondents reached the conclusion that they were "all of those" at the same time.[16]

*Identities as multiplicative*

To understand the nuances of living at all these intersections at the same time in greater detail, there exists such a concept in regression analysis called an 'interaction term' that captures observations belonging to multiple categorical variables at the same time. This means, the interaction term will capture the variance in the sample resulting from an individual's membership to multiple groups at once, as opposed to treating them as separable. To revise Equation 1 with an interaction term,

$$W = \partial_0 + \partial_1 Ed + \partial_2 Ex + \partial_3 R + \partial_4 G + \partial_5 S + \partial_6 (R * G * S) + \gamma$$

**Equation 2: Model with an interaction term.**

Here, $\partial_6$ would capture the correlation between wage penalty and belonging combinations of $R$, $G$, and $S$ at the same time. Now it no longer suffices to simply add the coefficients of correlations of $R$, $G$, and $S$ but also take the interaction term into account that explains the variance in wage penalty due to an individual's being a combination of all three, that is $(R * G * S)$, beyond a sum of its parts. Formulating it as such suggests an interaction amongst the categorical variables that influence the level of wage penalty. Note that the number a categorical variable can take does not refer to any quantitative value but simply a position, like coordinates, within the multidimensional space.

The necessity for a multidimensional space to understand intersectionality is made evident by the interaction term. Consider the following diagrams that break down the additive and multiplicative processes and draw the clear distinction as to how the multiplicative process

---

[16] Bowleg, 'When Black + Lesbian + Woman ≠ Black Lesbian Woman', 315.

can make use of the idea of 'double' in multiple dimensions. The axes can refer to any applicable category. The numbers act as coordinates to determine the position in the plane, like vectors, and not necessarily numerical values.
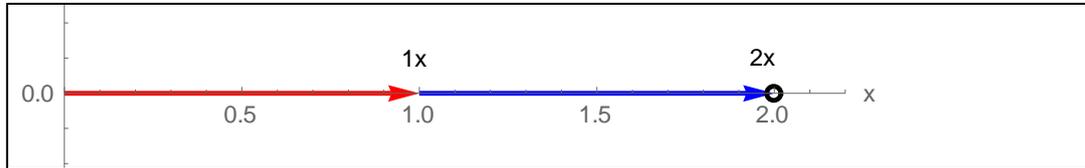


**Figure 4: Additive approach.**
*The resultant position is in the same dimension.*[17]
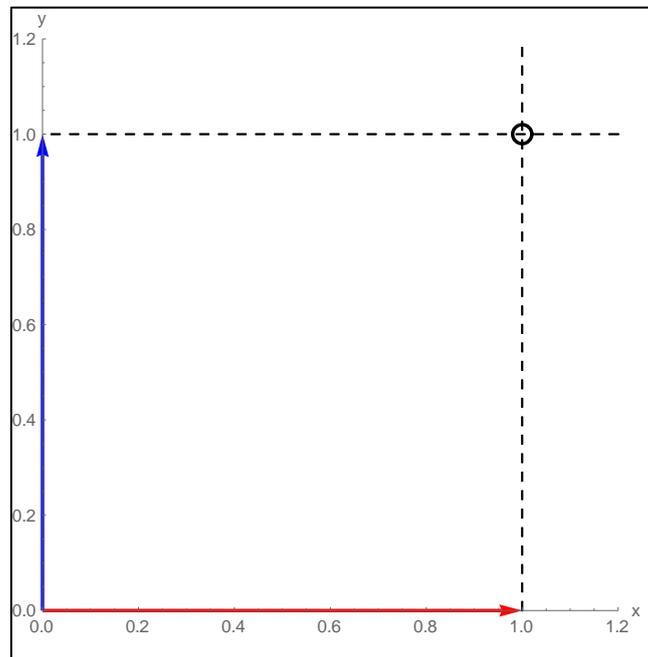


**Figure 5: Multiplicative approach.**
*The resultant position lies at an intersection of x and y.*[18]

In Figure 4, $x$ is multiplied by 2, i.e. doubled, but it is done so in an additive sense. Here, $x$ is added to a second $x$ along the same dimension. In the same manner, it can be tripled $(x + x + x = x * 3)$ or quadrupled $(x + x + x + x = x * 4)$ but it would be along the same

[17] Generated in Mathematica 11.2.
[18] Generated in Mathematica 11.2.

dimension or as repeated addition. It is in Figure 5 that it conceptually refers to multiplication that expands to a second dimension, i.e. the $xy$ plane since $x$ and $y$ cannot, mathematically, be added unless at least one of them takes a scalar value that renders it additive, in which case it stops being a distinct variable. This amplifies the key difference in conceptualising identities as additive and as multiplicative: Additive assumes the category at hand to be one that increases or decreases in the same dimension and it not possible to allow for interactions that is not in a linear fashion, while multiplicative refers to an expansion to multiple dimensions where the categories are not commensurable, interchangeable, or linear. The word multidimensional, like 'double', has been used by the majority of researchers dealing with intersectionality as a concept, notable amongst which is Kimberlé Crenshaw's description of intersectionality as a "discourse about identity that acknowledges how identities are constructed through the intersection of multiple dimensions".[19] While intersectionality in her work is framed as the idea that identities exist at the intersection of these categories, there must in the first place exist multiple dimensions wherein an intersection can be formed. I am concerned here with the latter understanding in order to ascertain these multiple dimensions.

At this stage, this section will lay out some principles of intersectionality that emerge frequently in feminist scholarship and elaborate on the concepts as they have been used in both gender and postcolonial studies. While credit goes to the former for developing intersectionality as a concept and research method on a micro-level in which lived experiences are analysed, the latter had been employing the ideas on a macrolevel, i.e. within the realms of social, economic, and political processes, without having given it a name. The following section serves to situate this research in the broader conversation about intersectionality in academic literature.

---

[19] Crenshaw, 'Mapping the Margins', 1299.

## 1.2. Intersectionality as multidimensional

After being coined by Crenshaw in 1991, intersectionality has been acknowledged as one of the most significant contributions of feminist scholarship in the last century, especially one that has travelled to other disciplines. Shortly before Crenshaw, the concept without being named had emerged in the writings of several feminist and/or postcolonial scholars of colour, key amongst them being Gloria Anzaldúa's 'Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza' in 1987,[20] Chandra Talpade Mohanty's 'Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses' in 1988,[21] and an anthology edited by Cherrie Moraga and Anzaldúa 'This Bridge Called My Back: Writings of Radical Women of Colour' in 1983.[22] In all these pieces, a common assertion exists that 'woman' denotes not a universal category but that what it represented is a result of the impact of race, class, and gender. In the same vein, Wendy Smooth claims that "for centuries, women of colour have articulated the conundrum that the term intersectionality represents today".[23] Thus, while I adopt the term 'intersectionality' in my work, it refers less to the genealogy that starts with Crenshaw and more to the feminist postcolonial scholarship wherein the concept has been employed to articulate the experiences and interests of otherwise marginalised peoples, as well as the broader structures of power that frame their lives.

What does the term intersectionality represent today? Much like the ideas that it proposes, the concept itself means multiple things and continues to be under development across disciplines. Smooth lists five principles of intersectionality that serve as the starting point to unpacking the 'dynamic and complex' framework, wherein she states her goal to take

---

[20] Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands - La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (Aunt Lute Books, 1987).

[21] Chandra Talpade Mohanty, 'Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses', *Boundary 2* 12/13 (1984): 333–58, https://doi.org/10.2307/302821.

[22] Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (Kitchen Table, Women of Color Press, 1983).

[23] Wendy Smooth, 'Intersectionality from Theoretical Framework to Political Intervention', in *Situating Intersectionality: Politics, Policy, and Power*, ed. Angelia R. Wilson (Springer, 2013), 19.

intersectionality from a theoretical concept to a practical instrument.[24] Again, the words 'dynamic' and 'complex' are of interest to me as, in the discourse of mathematics, they refer to temporality, non-linearity, and multidimensionality, all of which are key to understanding intersectionality. The five principles Smooth lists, along with some commentary on literature, are as follows:

Firstly, "resisting additive models and parallel categories".[25] As discussed in Section 1.1, the 'add gender and stir' or 'add race and stir' approach, that amounts to stacking additional categories in an additive manner does not lead to a 'multidimensional' understanding, ergo, does not constitute as intersectional analysis. These categories that an individual belongs to must be understood as ones that are formed in and through relation with each other. They are neither interchangeable nor parallel. The logics of social organisation as well as their histories of formation as categories differ, and therefore, cannot be conceptualised as commensurable in the same dimension.[26]

Secondly, "anti-essentialism and diversity within categories".[27] Essentialism, named or unnamed, is a key antagonism pervasive in all disciplines, and one that is especially problematic iin postcolonial and feminist scholarships. Ranging from the works of Chandra Mohanty who provides evidence through comparative literature in which the 'third-world woman' is constructed as a monolith to Arjun Appadurai who analyses the role of census in classifying the population into pigeonholes of races, genders, tribes, religions, ethnicities, etc.,[28] the problem of essentialising a group based on a certain trait into being representative of

---

[24] Ibid., 21.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Ann Phoenix and Pamela Pattynama, 'Intersectionality', *European Journal of Women's Studies*, 1 August 2006, https://doi.org/10.1177/1350506806065751.
[27] Smooth, 'Theoretical Framework to Policy Intervention', 22.
[28] Mohanty, 'Under Western Eyes'; Arjun Appadurai, *Fear of Small Numbers: An Essay on the Geography of Anger* (Duke University Press, 2006); Arjun Appadurai, 'Number in the Colonial Imagination', in *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament: Perspectives on South Asia*, South Asia Seminar Series (South Asia Seminar, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), 314–39; Chandra Talpade Mohanty, 'Cartographies of

their capacities, potential, and behaviour is heavily critiqued.[29] Intersectionality invites the acknowledgement there exists more diversity within these groups than there is across groups (insofar as the rigid boundaries of grouping has no factual basis).[30]

The third dimension is "power as shifting and changing".[31] This principle refers to power, as well as positions, being subject to change across space and time. It acknowledges that categories are not fixed and that they change over time, and the position of an individual in the local socio-political and economic hierarchy also changes as context and physical space setting changes. As Nira Yuval-Davis argues, these categories are both contested and restructured at an individual level (i.e. meaning for an individual and her experiences) and at a societal level (i.e. meaning for the society and social systems).[32] The local systems of power also influence the position of a social group. Scholarship in gender and development as well as feminist economics make this evident by bringing to attention the economic process of feminisation of migrant labour poverty.[33] Although intersectionality as a term has not travelled to mainstream economics yet, what it stands for can be seen in the analyses of migrant labours' positions in relation to local hierarchies, both private and public, in their host and home countries.[34]

Struggle: Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism', in *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity* (Duke University Press, 2003).

[29] Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt*, p26-28.

[30] Riki Lane, 'Trans as Bodily Becoming: Rethinking the Biological as Diversity, Not Dichotomy', *Hypatia* 24, no. 3 (2009): 136–57, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1527-2001.2009.01049.x; Enikő Vincze, 'Precarization of Working Class Roma through Spatial Deprivation, Labor Destitution and Racialization', *Szociológiai Szemle* 25, no. 4 (2015): 58–85, http://www.szociologia.hu/dynamic/58_85_oldal.pdf; Rene Almeling, 'Selling Genes, Selling Gender: Egg Agencies, Sperm Banks, and the Medical Market in Genetic Material', *American Sociological Review* 72, no. 3 (1 June 2007): 319–40, https://doi.org/10.1177/000312240707200301.

[31] Smooth, 'Theoretical Framework to Policy Intervention', 22.

[32] Nira Yuval-Davis, 'Intersectionality and Feminist Politics':, *European Journal of Women's Studies*, 24 July 2016, https://doi.org/10.1177/1350506806065752; Smooth, 'Theoretical Framework to Policy Intervention', 23.

[33] Ann Anagnost, 'A Surfeit of Bodies: Population and Rationality of the State in Post-Mao China', in *Conceiving the New World Order: The Global Politics of Reproduction*, ed. Faye D. Ginsburg and Rayna Rapp (University of California Press, 1991); Marta Kolářová, 'Gender and Globalisation: Labour Changes in the Global Economy', *Sociologický Časopis / Czech Sociological Review* 42, no. 6 (2006): 1241–57.

[34] Kolářová, 'Gender and Globalisation'; Jamie Goodwin-White, 'Is Social Mobility Spatial? Characteristics of Immigrant Metros and Second Generation Outcomes: 1940–1970 and 1970–2000', *Population, Space and Place* 22, no. 8 (November 2016): 807–22, https://doi.org/10.1002/psp.1960; Jon E. Fox, 'From National Inclusion to

The fourth variable category is "privilege and marginalisation".[35] The greater majority of academic literature on intersectionality views the concept as a framework to study experiences of subjugation and by extension privilege. A few recent studies, however, have expanded it to understanding it as a macrosocial process where the interactions amongst individuals' sexuality, gender, and class are tied to the broader framework of the economic and political processes. One such example is in Kaijser and Kronnel's study of the effects of climate change on women, where they framed intersectionality not only as a metric of oppression, but as a discourse that aims to capture the differential experiences of socio-political phenomena,[36] built through what Benita Moolman explains as "different vectors of [socio-political] relationality." [37] This endogenous relationship between socio-political institutions and individuals has been described as a 'macrosocial' process. This school is similar to the ways in which postcolonial scholars have ideated their critical lens. In line with the latter cluster, I view privilege and marginalisation not as formative of intersectionality, but as a result of the interacting vectors of socio-political and economic relationality.

And finally, the fifth factor is "changing conditions".[38] The goal of changing conditions is a political motive grounded in the spirit of 'emancipatory politics with social justice-based outcomes as the goal'.[39] This principle emerges in feminist research methods as self-reflexivity and -reflection, where the personal's being political is acknowledged. In the same vein as Marx-Engels' eleventh thesis on Feuerbach that the goal of interpretation of the world is to change it. In this regard, it is imperative for feminist research to be interdisciplinary and

Economic Exclusion: Ethnic Hungarian Labour Migration to Hungary*', *Nations and Nationalism* 13, no. 1 (2007): 77–96, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-8129.2007.00280.x.
[35] Smooth, 'Theoretical Framework to Policy Intervention', 23.
[36] Anna Kaijser and Annica Kronsell, 'Climate Change through the Lens of Intersectionality', *Environmental Politics* 23, no. 3 (4 May 2014): 417–33, https://doi.org/10.1080/09644016.2013.835203.
[37] Benita Moolman, 'Rethinking "Masculinities in Transition" in South Africa Considering the "Intersectionality" of Race, Class, and Sexuality with Gender', *African Identities* 11, no. 1 (1 February 2013): 94, https://doi.org/10.1080/14725843.2013.775843.
[38] Smooth, 'Theoretical Framework to Policy Intervention', 23.
[39] Ibid., 24.

collaborate with natural sciences and other practice-based social sciences such as applied economics and public policy,[40] in order to be able to not only interpret the experiences as the intersection but also push for material change, that feeding back into the realm of philosophy may change 'the dream'. Again, the ideas of intersectionality, without having been named as such, are key to the latest generations of inequality indices pioneered by Sabine Alkire and James Foster's multidimension indices that allow for self-definition of autonomy and centralises the participants' wants as opposed to prescription of needs, while leaving the scope for the multiplicity of wants across time and space.[41] Collaboration between critical theory honed by feminist scholars and other disciplines that concern themselves with material changes would be instrumental to realising the fifth principle influenced by emancipatory politics whence feminist scholarship stems.

In most of the literature reviewed above in discussion of the principles of intersectionality, race, gender, class, and sexuality have been the key categories. Especially in the scholarship originating in the Americas, as the concept named and framed as the site of multiple oppression originates therefrom, the categories of race, gender, and class have been particularly important sites of analysis. However, other categories such as religion, region, caste, language, etc. may play a greater role in structuring the social and political organisation depending on the context.[42] In fact, major strands of postcolonial and feminist literatures converge in critiquing the inability of the 'West' or the masculine, whichever its antagonist, to see beyond the façade visible from one's vantage point. The racially inscribed groupings

---

[40] Susan Stanford Friedman, 'Statement: Academic Feminism and Interdisciplinarity', *Feminist Studies* 27, no. 2 (2001): 504–9, https://doi.org/10.2307/3178774.
[41] 'Policy and the Alkire-Foster Method', Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative, accessed 5 February 2018, https://ophi.org.uk/policy/alkire-foster-methodology/; For application of the AF-method, see Sabina Alkire et al., 'The Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index' (Washington, 2012), http://www.ifpri.org/publication/women's-empowerment-agriculture-index.
[42] Anil Al-Rebholz, 'Gendered Subjectivity and Intersectional Political Agency in Transnational Space: The Case of Turkish and Kurdish Women's NGO Activists', in *Situating Intersectionality: Politics, Policy, and Power*, ed. Angelia R. Wilson (Springer, 2013).

created for censuses, land reforms, as well as ideas of modesty, morality, and modernity imposed by colonial enterprises, that reordered existing social organisations to match its categories, are testaments to this.[43] There are two things to be unbundled here: Firstly, the reduction of existing phenomena by filtering it through categories at one's vantage point, and secondly, the power to make the vision from this vantage point an 'objective' and credible source of knowledge. Continuing the discussion of multidimensional space in the previous section, these two processes will be situated in a three-dimensional space that will utilise the idea of intersectionality as multiplicative.

### *Reduction of dimensions*

For the sake of practicality, assume that only three categories exist in the universe.[44] In an abstract sense, it can be any three categories, but to continue in the context of Section 1.1, assume these three are race, sexuality, and gender. Experiences of inequality will be captured by a standardised wage penalty index ($P$), where the individual that faces the least discriminatory practices has a wage penalty of 0. This means, the rest of observations will be scaled up in relation to this individual. Given the practical restriction that on a static diagram, only three axes can be drawn at best, consider that only individuals who self-identify as women take part in paid employment. Consider the following plot, drawn out of this hypothetical scenario.[45] Let the reference group, $S = 0$, denote heterosexual women.

---

[43] Benedict Anderson, 'Census, Map, Museum', in *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (Verso, 1983); U. Kalpagam, 'The Colonial State and Statistical Knowledge', *History of the Human Sciences*, 25 July 2016, 42–46, https://doi.org/10.1177/09526950022120665.

[44] This is because we perceive the universe in three dimensions. It is not, at the current state of sciences, manifestly possible to represent greater than three dimensions through static images on a piece of paper.

[45] The plot points are generated using a random number generator for illustrative purposes, where the general trend is in line with the interviews in Bowleg's article but is not reflective of any empirical data.
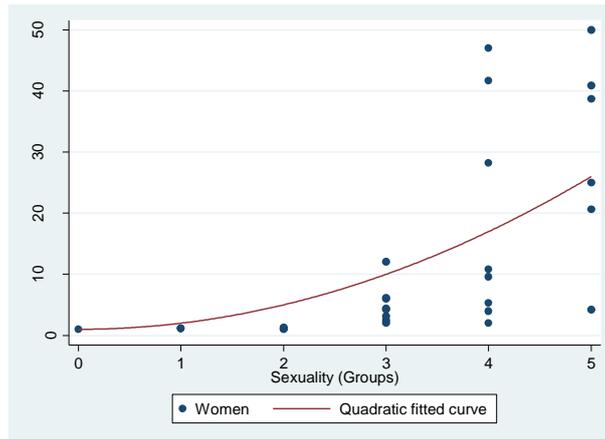
**Figure 6: Hypothetical Penalty vs Sexuality (Groups).**
The numbers on the x-axis are strictly categorical and refers to arbitrary groups.[46]

In this plot, the wage penalty appears to be the lowest towards the left (at $S = 0$)

populated by heterosexual women, while the rest of the groupings by sexuality face higher

penalties. This graph tells a story about sexuality and economic standings, but it only tells half

the story as it is not possible to plot race, a third dimension, in the $xy$-plane. Thus, the

experiences of individuals as a part of groups in the category of race will remain inexpressible

in this framework. This is where intersectionality as multiplicative will set itself apart from

additive idea, as incorporating race into this picture would be possible by expansion to a third

dimension.

The graph in Figure 6 corresponds to $S^2 + 1 = P$, plotted for $S \in [0, \infty)$ on a two-

dimensional plane. Thus, the individual that would lie at $S^2 + 1 = 0$ would be, as mentioned

earlier, the one that experiences the least wage discrimination based on her membership in the

sexuality and race groups. However, there is no instance in this equation where the curve

intersects the $x$-axis. Even if the restriction on $S \geq 0$, the curve would reflect on the y-axis,

that is, it would curve upwards on the left having its minimum point at $\{P, S\} = \{1,0\}$. It is

mathematically and manifestly impossible, in a two-dimensional system, to conceive of a value

---

[46] Generated in Stata 14, using an ad hoc data set created for the purpose of illustration.

where $S^2 + 1 = 0$. This type of equations, in the format $f(x) = x^2 + 1$,[47] that is, ones that have no imaginable solutions, holds a special place in the history of mathematical thought because of a special term $(\sqrt{-1})$ that appears in its solution.[48] Zooming into the bottom-left end of the graph, observe in Diagram 4 that there is no intercept.[49]
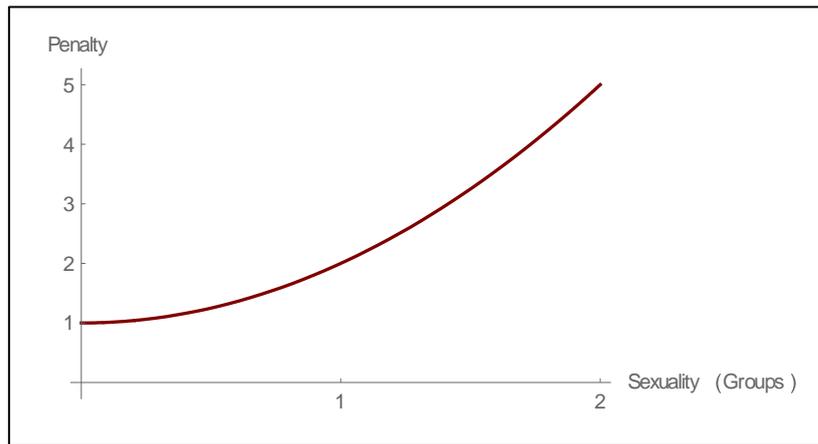


**Figure 7: Function depicting no position where $P = 0$.**

Observe the solution of *Equation 3:*

$$x^2 + 1 = 0$$

$$\Rightarrow x^2 = -1$$

$$\Rightarrow x = \sqrt{-1}$$

**Equation 3: Solution of $x^2 + 1 = 0$.**

---

[47] Note on interpretation: $f(x) = x^2 + 1$ has two parts $f(x)$ on the left-hand side and $x^2 + 1$ on the right-hand side. The right-hand side defines the function or the 'process' through an input value of $x$ and would result in an output value. If we consider $f(x) = 2x$, then, $f(1) = 2 * 1 = 2$, $f(2) = 2 * 2 = 4$, $f(3) = 3 * 2 = 6$. For $f(x) = x^2 + 1$, there is no 'real' value where the output can be 0, as the square operator forces even negative inputs positive or at least zero. Added to that, the $+1$ determines that the output would remain positive and have no intercept. See: https://mathworld.wolfram.com/AlgebraicFunction.html

[48] In the realm of real numbers, the square root of a negative number cannot be found. Squares are a result of a number multiplied by itself. On the other side of this, the square root of a number finds one such number that can be multiplied by itself to attain the former. Since multiplication of two negatives make a positive, the square root of a negative number cannot be placed on a real number line.

[49] An intercept is the point where a function crosses an axis. In this case, the function is the lowest at $P = 1$, therefore, has no intercept.

35

There exists not a number in the realm of real numbers, ℝ, where the square of any number remains negative. The problem concerning a square root of a negative number has eluded the greatest minds of mathematics and physical sciences for the longest time in history. One of its earliest instances in recorded history was excavated by a pair of infamous thieves in a burial site in Egypt that goes back to c.75CE when Heron of Alexandria was in the process of calculating the volume of a pyramid's frustrum,[50] at a time when the concept of negative numbers itself had not existed in the Hellenistic world.[51] Where and when the concept of zero and negatives did exist, Bhaskara Acharya (486CE) and Mahavira Acharya (850CE) both from what constitutes modern-day South Asia asserted that there is no square root of a negative number.[52] The troublesome $\sqrt{-1}$ had kept being abandoned as impossible and even 'useless' throughout early history for a century earning the name 'imaginary number' dubbed by René Descartes and denoted with $i$ by Leonhard Euler. However, there was nothing imaginary about imaginary numbers, as Carl Friedrich Gauss has shown,[53] apart from the fact that they could not have been placed in the two-dimensional space. It just so happened that the $i$ lies in a dimensional lateral to the two-dimensional world of Cartesian planes, and in order to find the intersection, the conception of the world cannot be limited to addition in the two-dimensional world but has to be expanded to capture a three-dimensional world. Once the third dimension was introduced to the 2D-plane making it a 3D-space, the location of $i$ could be found on a lateral plane, hovering above the 2D-plane. It took a change of perception and an understanding

---

[50] Paul J. Nahin, *An Imaginary Tale: The Story of √-1* (Princeton University Press, 2009), 3–4.
[51] Ravi P. Agarwal, Kanishka Perera, and Sandra Pinelas, 'History of Complex Numbers', in *An Introduction to Complex Analysis* (Boston, MA: Springer US, 2011), 321, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4614-0195-7_50.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Gauss writes, if instead of positive, negative, and imaginary (or even impossible), the numbers were called direct, inverse, and lateral, such an association with incomprehensibility could hardly have been made. Original in German, quoted in Carl Friedrich Gauß, *Carl Friedrich Gauss Werke: Achter Band* (Springer-Verlag, 2013), 264.

of space beyond the dimensions conceivable by the state of sciences to incorporate an idea that was for long thought to be non-existent or even 'impossible'.

Thus, the once-imaginary came into existence through imagination, and the realm of the real world was expanded to that of complex numbers, that are a combination of so-called real and imaginary numbers, making the word 'real' nothing but a gross misnomer reflective of its history. They are expressed in the format $ax + bi$, where the first term refers to the segment that exists on the real axes and the second on the imaginary axes. This refers to a position akin to a vector and not an additive number that can be added. The framework of a complex number system, with non-interchangeable terms, referring to positions at an intersection of several dimensions is an ideal analogue for understanding intersectionality.

Extending the parabolic section from a two-dimensional plane to paraboloid segment in a three-dimensional space, the $f(x) = x^2 + 1$ from Figure 7 becomes $f(x, y) = (x + yi)^2 + 1$,[54] which contains the imaginary component, $i$. Updating the figure with a third dimension renders the image as follows in Figure 8:
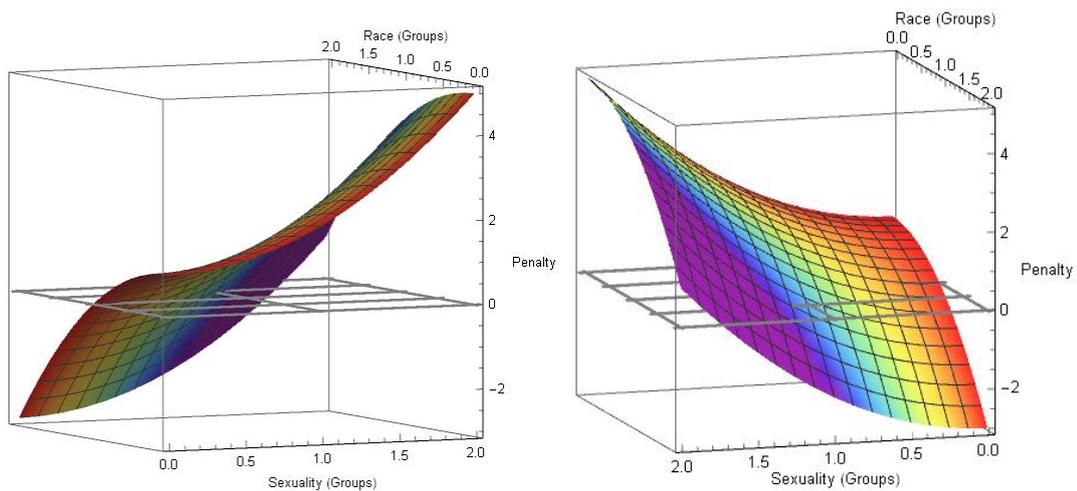
**Figure 8: Extension to a third dimension to include Race. Two perspectives.[55]**

---

[54] Similar to $f(x)$, the $f(x, y)$ indicates that the function now changes depending on both $x$ and $y$.
[55] Generated in Mathematica 11.2.

After introducing the third dimension, each of the data points which were previously thought to show the relationship between membership in sexuality groups and wage penalty now shows that a combination of race groups and sexuality groups relate to the wage penalty. What could be only drawn as a parabola in Figure 7 now becomes a quadratic surface exposing the position of the individuals at intersections of sexuality and race, and showing new relations amongst wage penalty, sexuality, and race. It follows in this framework that once a third dimension for race is brought into the space of analysis, that the individual's position both as a member of the sexuality and race groups can be expressed in multidimensional space. This picture tells that a cluster of heterosexual white women experience the wage penalty differently than heterosexual women as a broader group or as white women as a broader group. Multidimensionality illustrates more relations within and across groups. The discourse of the complex number system in mathematics illustrates that what it could not locate in its system of understanding was considered absurd for long and had fallen out of its scope of knowledge. On top this knowledge, furthermore, lay the representations of knowledge that privilege certain forms of knowing and certain methodologies, insofar as possibly flushing out attempts to bring what it considered 'the absurd' into the scope.

This exercise assumed three categories in the universe for simplicity. Amongst the three, the number of categories to be illustrated had to be limited to two because of the practical constraint that anything more than three dimensions cannot be presented on a static plane (this page). That being the case, complex webs of relationships would only be partially visible depending on the categories that they are understood through and the dimensions in which they are imagined. Now, outside of this fictional world with three categories, exists one where people are members of groups based on religion, region, language, citizenship status, age, ability, so on and so forth. Given that any one perspective cannot comprehend the cosmos in its countless categories and their combinations of possibility, probability, and plausibility, then:

Perspectives are always partial, viewed from a vantage point that makes knowledge situated. Thus, not only does this exercise of understanding intersectionality as multidimensional through visual representations illustrate the multiplicative principle of intersectionality but also provides the platform for another key principle of feminist research methodology, that is the idea that knowledge is situated and is a view from *somewhere*. Self-reflexivity and positionality in relation to favouring on the view from the bottom in contemporary times are integral to feminist research methodology.

The next section will take as its foundation the idea proposed in this section that relations in a complex system are understood from partial dimensions and may be deemed fallacious or will remain inconceivable depending on the perspective it is viewed from. It will synthesise feminist and postcolonial perspectives, the situatedness of knowledges, and the power to claim certain forms of knowing more scientific, credible, and desirable.

*Redaction of (the other) dimensions*

Donna Haraway's notion of situated knowledge claims that all knowledge comes from a partial perspective. She argues that although there has been Western feminists' attempts to appropriate the view from below as one that is capable of revealing some form of truth, the view is nevertheless a view from somewhere.[56] As such, it will always be partial. It is to be noted here that some partial views present itself as impartial under the guise of 'objectivity'. This subsection will discuss the discourse around views from bottom and the situatedness of knowledge to introduce the role of power in limiting dimensions and influencing perspectives.

---

[56] Donna Haraway, 'Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective', *Feminist Studies* 14, no. 3 (1988): 583–84, https://doi.org/10.2307/3178066.

Both postcolonial and feminist bodies of thought come forth in "the study and defence of the marginalised 'Others' within repressive structures of power and domination."[57] The list of the Others include the subaltern social groups and classes, and this form of knowledge production that moved its focus onto formerly excluded groups came to be known as "history from below".[58] Both these fields of literature have followed a similar pattern in viewing the figure of the 'third-world woman' where in the beginning both have attempted to simply invert the existing hierarchies in the beginning but have increasingly begun to accept poststructuralism's invitation to opposing the binaries of patriarchal and/or colonial structures. The former is form of "oppositional criticism" that, as Spivak asserts, may encourage the political employment of alterity as the antidote to Western imperialism and in the process usher in a "new Orientalism".[59] Leela Gandhi, in her book chapter Postcolonialism and Feminism, after reviewing several works of Trinh Thi Minh-ha, Chandra Mohanty, and Gayatri Spivak, claims that although they raise solid arguments against the instrumentalisation of the 'third-world woman' by Western feminists, they each make her the "bearer of meaning/experiences which are always in excess of Western analytic categories".[60] Thus, although it might make sense to trust the knowledge of the subjugated, there is also the danger of appropriating their perspectives or claiming to see from their positions.[61] Haraway argues that it is a political stance to privilege the voices of those who had been typically unheard in history in a manner of resetting the power balance in the domain of knowledge but it does not mean that the view from below is any more 'innocent' than it is from the top.[62] As such, all knowledge is situated and is a view from *somewhere.*

---

[57] Cited in Gandhi, *Postcolonial Theory*, 82–83.

[58] Dipesh Chakrabarty, 'Minority Histories, Subaltern Pasts', in *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, Princeton Studies in Culture, Power, History (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 97.

[59] Gandhi, *Postcolonial Theory*, 84.

[60] Ibid., 88.

[61] Haraway, 'Situated Knowledges', 584.

[62] Ibid.

Referring to the position of the viewer, Haraway argues that it is power that creates totalising views with claims of objectivity, backed up by technoscientific forms of knowing, and presents itself as the unmarked 'knowledge' (as opposed to e.g. marked categories like 'indigenous knowledge' or 'women's intuition') through 'systematic narrowing and obscuring' of other views.[63] Postcolonial scholars have analysed at length the processes through which a certain imagination of the Europe or 'the West' is maintained and celebrated in the world, re-establishing its forms of knowing based on the axioms of European modernity as scientific, objective, and representative of the one grand truth.[64] Dipesh Chakrabarty's book Provincialising Europe is a testament to the body of postcolonial literature critiquing the idea of Europe. Firstly, he explains the processes in which the view from the commonly understood region that is the loosely defined territorial 'Europe' presents itself as the 'Philosophy' while views from elsewhere are marked by its region (e.g. 'oriental philosophy').[65] In such a manner, knowledge from the so-called Orient is read as "a lack, an absence, or as incomplete" that is ultimately understood to be inadequate in relation to European history (or, universally speaking: history).[66] Secondly, he emphasises the ability of the dominant narrative, i.e. history as opposed to epics, driven by the dominant narrator, i.e. the objective historian as opposed to a subaltern protagonist, to oust any other narratives that do not fit into its matrix of reasoning or logic behind order. Like the imaginary number, narratives that do not fit the European Enlightenment-based dimensions of rationality are pushed to the margins as minority history.[67] Quite literally like the imaginary number, that could not be accommodated in the realm of 2D

---

[63] Ibid.
[64] Dipesh Chakrabarty, 'Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History', in *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, Reissue (First impression: 2000), Princeton Studies in Culture, Power, History (Princeton, NJ: Univ. Press, 2008); Chakrabarty, 'Minority Histories'; Ashis Nandy, 'South Asian Politics: Modernity and the Landscape of Clandestine and Incommunicable Selves', *Macalester International* 4, no. 1 (31 May 1997), https://digitalcommons.macalester.edu/macintl/vol4/iss1/21; Ashis Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self Under Colonialism*, 1983.
[65] Chakrabarty, 'Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History', 29.
[66] Ibid., 32.
[67] Chakrabarty, 'Minority Histories', 101.

Cartesian planes and was disregarded as impossible, 'minority histories' that cannot be understood from the perspective of this 'Europe' are practically "either banished from history or studied clinically as rumours or stereotypes, or handed over as fantasies to artists and writers for creative use".[68] Ashis Nandy sums up this process of history-writing through the lenses of Europe and presenting itself as the one true narrative aptly in the cryptic yet poetic one-liner: "History, while historicising the world, dehistoricises itself."[69]

Bringing together the discussions about multidimensionality and positionality, it can be said that identities, events, or phenomena exist in the world at the intersection of numerous dimensions, unordered and chaotic, and any view of this world is always partial, influenced by the position of the viewer. The notion of ordering a chaotic system with the process of thought will be explored in the next section.

## 1.3. Confronting chaos in a complex system

"We are dealing here with a heterogenous yet interactive *space* of relationships, where differences, similarities, and interactions are all found, but each becomes more or less crucial at different conceptual, historical, or cultural junctures,"[70] writes Arkady Plotnitsky in his article 'Chaosmologies' that unbundles quantum field theory, chaos, and thought bridging how this chaos is treated in the realms of philosophy, art, and science. When read in the context of this chapter thus far, what Plotnisky refers to a dynamic system built with chaos can be thought to be the dynamic macrosocial space that intersectionality scholars have tried to describe with concepts like 'multidimensional' and the state of being in flux. Contrary to Crenshaw and Bowleg, where invitations had been made to *increase* the number dimensions that the

---

[68] Nandy, 'South Asian Politics', 230.
[69] Ibid., 299.
[70] Arkady Plotnitsky, 'Chaosmologies: Quantum Field Theory, Chaos and Thought in Deleuze and Guattari's *What Is Philosophy?*', *Paragraph* 29, no. 2 (1 July 2006): 52, https://doi.org/10.3366/prg.2006.0017.

researcher is concerned with, I approach it from the opposite direction where I conceptualise the universe as one that already exists numerable dimensions, in a state of chaos, till an attempt is made to produce (situated) knowledge. It is worth mentioning at this point that chaos is not randomness, rather it a complex system of relationships,[71] that has not yet been made linear with the intervention of thought. In the words of Deleuze and Guattari, "Chaos is defined not so much by its disorder as by the infinite speed with which every form taking shape in it vanishes. It is a void that is not a nothingness but a *virtual*, containing all possible *particles*, and drawing out all possible forms."[72]

### Setting up the framework: Axioms

The discussions of the concepts regarding intersectionality and feminist research methodologies in this chapter thus far can be summarised into four logical axioms. This subsection combines the four axioms to arrive at chaos as a state of the world, before proceeding to a theoretical discussion how to confront chaos. To this end, consider the following proposition based on the four logical axioms:

If,

*Axiom 1:* Multidimensionality. The world exists in numerous dimensions, wherein both micro (e.g. identities and experiences of individuals) and macro (social, political, economic, cultural processes and the interaction of the individual with these processes) particles and clusters of particles exist at an intersection of these dimensions.

*Axiom 2:* Situatedness. The viewer of this world is not divorced from the world. She herself exists at an intersection, inheriting and conditioned into certain logics of reasoning,

---

[71] James Gleick, *Chaos: Making a New Science* (Penguin, 1988), 6–8.
[72] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell III (Columbia University Press, 1996), 118.

categories of analysis, and discourses of order. As such, the view of the world is always partial, and the knowledge produced must be situated with the viewer. Through this process, there is a reduction of dimensions.

*Axiom 3:* Power. Proclaimed objectivity and acceptance thereof stems from the strength of authority. Power lies in the ability to proclaim certain experiences (through reduction) as objective, universal, and scientific, while other experiences (through redaction) as subjective, localised, and random. It is also in the capacity of this power to endorse certain methods of knowing and maintain representations of knowledge that 'crowd out' other forms. And,

*Axiom 4*: Temporality. These particles fleet through a dynamic system, as conditions, contexts, and categories change depending on a plethora of factors and actors.

Then,

It must be such that any thought, at any point in time, is an attempt to introduce order based on "resemblance, continuity, and causality",[73] that cuts into the universe of chaos taking with it only a static segment thereof.[74] This implies, chaos is the pre-existing state of the universe, intersectionality as a concept is the idea that particles in the midst of chaos come into existence through processes in multiple dimensions, and intersectionality in practice is being aware of the partial view and making space for the plurality of meanings.

Building up on the visuals earlier in the chapter, the following show the intersection of a plane cutting into paraboloid surface from various lines of sight, taking with it only one possible set of relations. Observe Figure 9 and Figure 10. The loci of intersections, depicted on the right panels in black, are traced on the left in a reduced form that only show a partial set of

---

[73] Ibid., 201.
[74] Plotnitsky, 'Chaosmologies', 49.

relations. Deleuze and Guattari refer to disciplines of science, art, and philosophy as having such planes called chaoids that cut into chaos, each dealing understanding the world around them through partial observations.
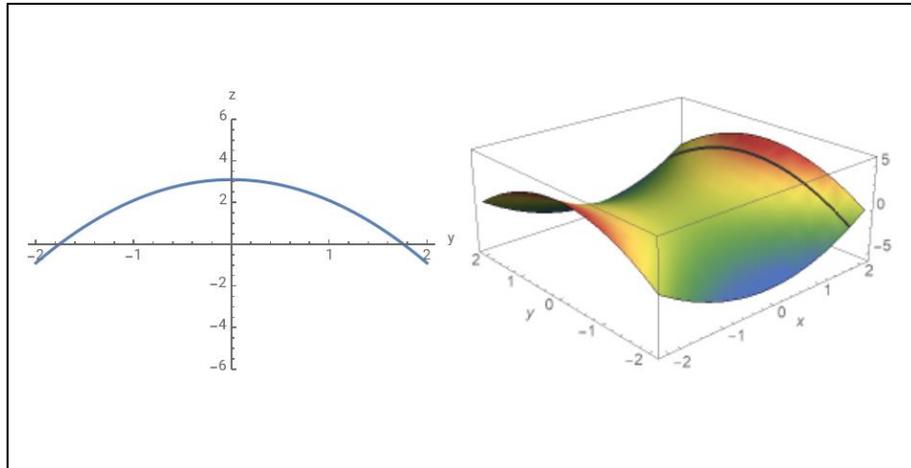


**Figure 9: Dimension-loss in comparison, plotted with x constant.**
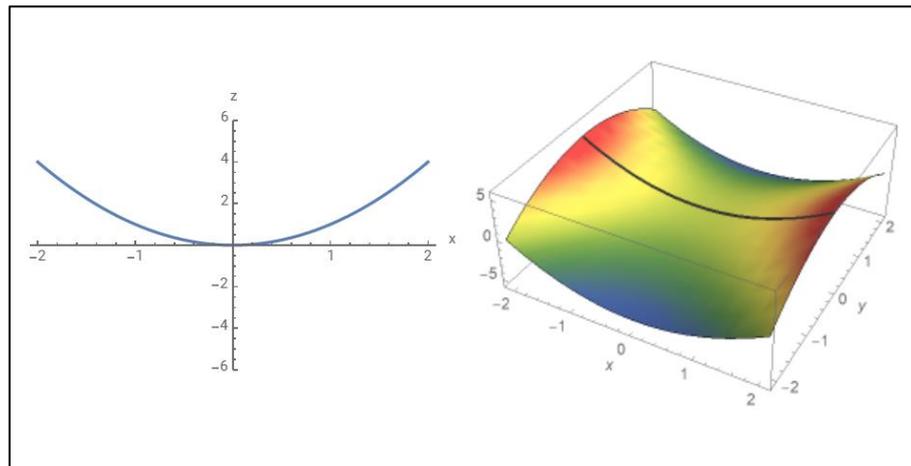


**Figure 10: Dimension-loss in comparison, plotted with y constant.**

*Properties and applications of chaos*

Classical sciences, and other disciplines inspired by similar logics of empiricism, initially aimed to tame chaos. Classical physics specifically views objects to be knowable and behaviour of these objects available to conceptualisation, generalisation, and representation, which can then be abstracted from 'actual objects in nature' to draw the connection between

the idea of these objects and the measurable properties of the samples.[75] This form of knowing things, influenced by positivist empiricism of European Enlightenment, had made its way to imperial anthropology where measurement, generalisation, representation, and re-presentation, insofar as abstraction from actual people, was deemed to be the objective and scientific form of knowing.[76] This form of doing science, Deleuze and Guattari claim, creates a frame of reference that 'slows down' the chaos. The frame of reference is what they call a *chaoid*, defined as a line or a plane that cuts through chaos based on some partial observation. This is analogous to arguments about the existence of historical metanarratives against minority histories,[77] where the latter must be expressed in the language of the former treating it as a reference point,[78] and delegating narratives unexplainable by the logics of the rational historian to the domains of unorganised, localised exceptions that are not a part of the system but simply exists in chaos.[79]

Even this school of sciences has come far since the days of Newtonian deterministic view of the world where behaviour of objects was thought to be available for universal generalisation. Physics has increasingly acknowledged the unknowability of things within the current state of sciences. One such example, even within the desire towards deterministic prediction, would be the development of Pierre-Simon Laplace's demon referring to his proposition that "given for one instant an intelligence which could comprehend all the forces by which nature is animated and the respective situation of beings who compose it—an intelligence sufficiently vast to submit these data to analysis—it would embrace in the same formula the movements of the greatest bodies of the universe and those of the lightest atom;

---

[75] Ibid., 44.
[76] Appadurai, 'Number in the Colonial Imagination'; Anderson, 'Census, Map, Museum'.
[77] Chakrabarty, 'Minority Histories'.
[78] Moraga and Anzaldúa, *This Bridge Called My Back*, vii.
[79] Nandy, 'South Asian Politics'.

for it, nothing would be uncertain and the future, as the past, would be present to its eyes".[80] In

addition to Laplace's journey towards deterministic prediction while accepting its

unknowability in state of sciences, there exists James Clark Maxwell's demon towards

probabilistic evaluation that challenged the second fundamental law of thermodynamics, and

finally Werner Heisenberg's uncertainty principle that addresses the precarity of both the

observer and the observed, claiming that a fixed position of both these have no meaning in

nature, implying that they must always be relative in the greater system of things. Chaos, thus,

exists as incomprehensible and as chance, while "retaining the key philosophical conceptual

architecture of the virtual".[81]

In line with previous analogies of real and imaginary planes, 'History' and minority

histories, 'Science' and oriental philosophies, 'Theory' of social organisation in the West and

informal traditions of culture in the rest, where the unseen dimensions were not only possible

on their own but that their possibility and interaction with the visible dimensions makes the

visible intersections possible, particle physics also conceptualises real and virtual particles. The

virtual particles, again like imaginary numbers, are not non-existent; rather, it is the inability

of the partial observer in the current state of sciences to express them fully. To visualise this,

Richard Feynman developed what is now known as the Feynman diagram, exhibiting the

annihilation and then the creation of an electron and a positron through a virtual photon,

extracting a frame of reference frozen in time.[82] In Figure 11, these ephemeral virtual photons

that cannot be detected in experiments are represented by wavy line.

---

[80] Pierre-Simon Laplace, *Philosophical Essay on Probabilities [1825]*, Sources in the History of Mathematics and Physical Sciences (New York: Springer-Verlag, 1995), 4, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4612-4184-3.
[81] Plotnitsky, 'Chaosmologies', 48.
[82] Ibid., 49.
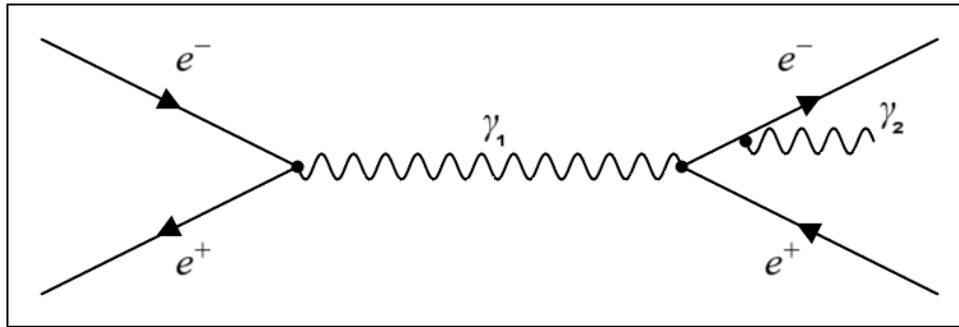
**Figure 11: Feynman Diagram. Showing real and virtual particles.**[83]

This discussion of particle physics applies in the case of intersectionality since the issues of unknowability and the positionality of the observer have been developed in parallel in multiple disciplines in different forms from different perspectives. Complex analysis in mathematics and quantum field theory have embraced the domain of the virtual, acknowledging that the only distinctive feature between the real and the virtual is our inability to process or represent them. Econometrics, even with all the issues it inherits from neoclassical economics, operates to seek systems of relationships within multiple dimensions across time. Feminist and postcolonial scholarships, at the same time, are pushing on a societal level to blend the boundaries between the constructed binaries of histories and myths, sciences and philosophies, objectivity and positionality, and most of all, bringing to light processes, relations, and behaviour beyond comprehension in certain frameworks of understanding that is not only possible, but their possibility and interaction with what is observed actualises the state of the observed. This line of reasoning manifests in several feminist agendas for recognition. For one, the Marxist-feminists demand for the recognition of reproductive work that creates the conditions and maintains the capacity for productive work to be done, but it is the definition of 'productive' that values only one part of this process.[84] Feminist economists, in the same

[83] Generated using https://www.aidansean.com/feynman/
[84] Heidi I. Hartmann, 'The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Towards a More Progressive Union':, *Capital & Class*, 11 September 2016, https://doi.org/10.1177/030981687900800102; Mariarosa Dalla Costa, 'Women and the Subversion of the Community', 1971, https://www.generation-online.org/p/fpdallacosta2.htm.

manner, have argued for the recognition of household and care work, that creates value not recognised in the country's gross domestic product, but makes production of value in the public sphere possible.[85] Native labour in the colonial and migrant/minority labour in the neo-colonial eras have been similarly made invisible, their labour devalued and their being dehumanised, while appropriating the value of their labour in maintaining a moral landscape and economic system that has no space for them.[86] At the same time, the scientist's embeddedness in the social and cultural realms has made its way into the narratives created about bodily processes, but remain unquestioned based on the scientists' authority.[87] Intersectionality, built on those four axioms leading to a plunge into chaos, allows for the space to not only study oppression at an individual level but the larger processes through the individuals find themselves to be in the positions that they are, and the logics through which the hierarchies are ranked, and importance of self-reflection as all views are partial.

Thus, categories such as race, gender, sexuality, language, class, caste, ethnicity, tribe, religion, native, Europe, etc., can thus be thought of as "momentary pockets of order" weaved out of threads of chaos in patterns that the observer is embedded within.[88] We are conditioned into observing order in forms of patterns, through methods that we are taught to employ. It is the idea that these categories can be grouped by a logic of difference-creation allows the population to be sorted by such groups, and although the groups as they are ordered do not

---

[85] Marilyn Waring, *If Women Counted: A New Feminist Economics* (Harpercollins, 1989), https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-4991.1992.tb00422.x.

[86] Christine B. N. Chin, 'Visible Bodies, Invisible Work: State Practices toward Migrant Women Domestic Workers in Malaysia':, *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal*, 20 July 2016, https://doi.org/10.1177/011719680301200103; M. Leonard, *Invisible Work, Invisible Workers: The Informal Economy in Europe and the US* (Springer, 1998); Dorothy Nelkin, 'Invisible Migrant Workers', *Society* 9, no. 6 (1 April 1972): 36–41, https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02701761; Gal Ariely, 'Exploring Citizenship Spheres of Inclusion/Exclusion: Rights as "Potential for Power"', *Patterns of Prejudice* 45, no. 3 (1 July 2011): 241–58, https://doi.org/10.1080/0031322X.2011.585020; Vincze, 'Precarization of Working Class Roma'.

[87] Emily Martin, 'The Egg and the Sperm: How Science Has Constructed a Romance Based on Stereotypical Male-Female Roles', *Signs* 16, no. 3 (1991): 485–501, https://www.jstor.org/stable/3174586.

[88] Brian Greene, *Until the End of Time: Mind, Matter, and Our Search for Meaning in an Evolving Universe*, Large Print edition (New York: Random House Large Print, 2020).

exist perfectly in the world, it is the idea that they do that holds them together. A random population exists in chaos until an attempt at order is made, and the result of this ordering is categories. The chaosmos, then, like Schrödinger's cat, exists as chance, as incomprehensible, and ultimately as virtual,[89] until its intervention with thought and our drive to impose order.[90] How the ordering, grouping, and logics of reasoning are employed to cut into the chaosmos is a site for reflection even before engagement with analysis of empirical or observable data.

## 1.4. Concluding remarks on material resource to maintain power of knowledge

This chapter advances three main points. The first is the idea of 'double' that appears numerous times to describe the figure of the third-world woman in both feminist and/or postcolonial bodies of thought. Section 1.1 shows that 'double' can be understood additive and multiplicative ways, using the proposition that 'black + lesbian + woman' is not equivalent to 'black lesbian woman'. Using 1D and 2D figures, the analysis showed that it is in a multiplicative sense that 'double' can mean 'multidimensional' which is another concept repeated throughout feminist and postcolonial theories, empirical studies, and methodologies. Secondly, to understand the interaction of multiple dimensions that allows for an intersection to exist in the first place, I turned to the complex number system in Section 1.2 to locate the intersection of race and sexuality in multiple dimensions. I further tied into this framework the concepts of situated knowledge pioneered by feminist scholars and the role of power in establishing certain situated knowledges as objective and scientific unbundled meticulously by postcolonial scholars. These two together situated two processes within the multidimension system: the reduction of dimensions due to vantage points that gives a partial view, and the role of power in redacting the leftover dimensions as incredible, false, or unscientific. The central idea is that the world exists in multiple dimensions, and that events, identities,

[89] Plotnitsky, 'Chaosmologies', 47–48.
[90] Deleuze and Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, 208.

phenomena, etc. exist at an intersection of these dimensions, all of which are not conceivable by any one vantage point. Finally, Section 1.3 reframed intersectionality as embracing chaos motivated by how chaos. Doing so acknowledged the possibility of infinite dimensions beyond the oft-used gender, race, class, and sexuality, and that these are products of the historical trajectory in which intersectionality has been developed within the scope of gender studies. It brings to attention positionality, even for those chaoids that claim to be objective, since the perspective that cuts into chaos must be situated somewhere. It questions the logics of reasoning within and across disciplines.

Two themes surfaced repeatedly in this chapter: power and patterns. While analyses illustrate that even 'objective' knowledges are partial, the dependency on the 'West' continues for metatheories and ideas.[91] In the practice of academic writing, references and reiteration of these 'credible' publications form a feedback loop to offer the illusion of 'logical' order. Furthermore, dependency also exists for technology of education, financial resources for research and teaching, and employment in specialised industries continue through various forms.[92] Syed Farid Alatas writes, "If in the colonial past, academic imperialism was maintained via colonial power, today academic neo-colonialism is maintained via the condition of academic dependency."[93] Thus, while analysis using the first four principles of intersectionality is important, material intervention is also crucial for 'changing conditions'.

The next chapter will build on this framework by exploring how chaos gets reduced to gender(ed) relations and introducing 'time' as a dimension, which brings together the fourth axiom. My point of departure from intersectionality as developed by feminist scholars, will be

---

[91] Syed Farid Alatas, 'Academic Dependency and the Global Division of Labour in the Social Sciences', *Current Sociology*, 30 June 2016, 604, https://doi.org/10.1177/00113921030516003.
[92] Ibid., 603–5.
[93] Ibid., 602.

in situating time itself as a dimension that is mutually constitutive, as opposed to a path along which an individual with intersecting social categories move.

# II.

## PATTERNS IN THE IVY:
### RECONSTRUCTING NARRATIVES IN THE CHAOS OF NELLIE MASSACRE

*"Chaos breaks across the lines that separate scientific disciplines. Because it is a science of the global nature of systems, it has brought together thinkers from fields that had been widely separated. ... Chaos poses problem that defy accepted ways of working in science. ... The first chaos theorists who set the discipline in motion, shared certain sensibilities. They had an eye for pattern, especially pattern that appeared on different scales at the same time. They had a taste for randomness and complexity, for jagged edges and sudden leaps."*
*// James Gleick, Chaos: Making a New Science, 1987.*

## 2. Introduction

"Human was the music; natural was the static," begins an influential book on chaos theory and chaotic systems with a reference to the poet John Updike.[1] An ordering of sound waves into patterns weaved within recognised scales and rhythms through human intervention make the music out of the chaos that is otherwise white noise. As was discussed in the previous chapter, the chaosmos, uninterrupted by human intervention with thought, exists in complex system in which particles come into existence in and through relation with each other, and interpretations of social phenomena are made through logics of order that identifies patterns in the chaoids. Patterns have become a powerful tool for processing data, especially with the advent and imposition of 'modern' sciences whose positivist form of knowing relies on categorising by "dividing things into manageable parts".[2] We, conditioned into searching for order, recognise patterns and situate them within similar patterns we encountered in the past. If we think of ivy trailing along a wall, its vines branching out in an infinite repetition and its stems separate but intertwined, we can recognise the branching fractals as patterns similar to the human vascular system or lightning in the sky but different from the spiral fractals of the

---

[1] James Gleick, *Chaos: Making a New Science* (Penguin, 1988), viii.
[2] Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (Pantheon Books, 1978), 72.

eyes of storm or the Andromeda galaxy. Patterns require categorisation, otherwise particles remain unordered in the realm of chaos.

Patterns, however, when identified by an authoritative agent or institution, has the potential of reordering existing processes, pigeonholing into broad categories, and redirecting them in a manner that fits within the authority's ordering.[3] This is especially important as certain means of finding patterns and clustering into certain categories are conditioned into people as the more objective, reasonable, or rational form of knowing, inspired by modern Western philosophy which has been concerned with finding patterns of cause to effect since Descartes.[4] In addition, when categorisation as a means of finding patterns, seek to provide explanation of cause to effect based on a partial reading of the present, it also reorders the past in the way that leads up to the reading of the present. Considering writings of history can ultimately be traced back to memories narrated by the historian, the journalist, or by living sources,[5] there is reason to suggest that the past is a (re)construction, "mainly, if not wholly, shaped by the concerns of the present".[6] Thus, to unbundle the narratives that inform us of the events of the past, it is imperative to unbundle the patterns identified at the present. It is also to be noted that certain patterns, especially ones identified and/or disseminated by an authority, has the potential of becoming 'sticky', through repetition, references, and feedback loops feeding into the discourse that legitimises the reasoning in the first place.

This chapter will delve into the categorisation of who were killed during the Nellie massacre and the reordering of the events leading up to it based on a categorisation. Two

---

[3] Arjun Appadurai, 'Number in the Colonial Imagination', in *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament: Perspectives on South Asia*, South Asia Seminar Series (South Asia Seminar, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), 316.

[4] U. Kalpagam, 'The Colonial State and Statistical Knowledge':, *History of the Human Sciences*, 25 July 2016, 41–42, https://doi.org/10.1177/09526950022120665.

[5] Alessandro Portelli, 'What Makes Oral History Different', in *The Oral History Reader*, ed. R Perks and A Thomson (London: Routledge, 1998), 70.

[6] Lewis Coser and Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory* (University of Chicago Press, 1992), 25.

concepts key to this chapter will be introduced in Section 2.1: One, clustering to form ordered groups within chaos based on arbitrary homogenising factors and two, the linearising of chaos of the past based a perceived chain of causes and effect. These two concepts will be used throughout the chapter to expose the 'present-bias' of understanding past actions or inactions. To set these two concepts in context, Carol Cohn's ethnographic studies of defence strategists will be used to illustrate the role of discourses in finding patterns in order to cluster individuals into groups and creating a linear chain of cause to effect based on the grouping and traits associated with said groups. This will help understand how people (viewers and thinkers of the chaosmos) are positioned by discourses and positioned within discourses. The key concept from Cohn's studies will be in proposition that discourses (in her example the gender discourse) can act as a pre-emptive deterrent to thought: Once someone is categorised into a group and her actions/behaviour is made out to be because of being a member of said group, speculation stops, ending therewith the search for patterns. Drawing lessons from the gender discourse also serves to situate this thesis within gender studies scholarship. The positionings in relation to and within a discourse refer back to the intersections discussed in the previous chapter.

Projecting the micro-level example in her case from the actions of an individual to a macro-level case depicting actions of a collective, Section 2.2 will delve into the reordering of the past based on a final observed outcome and the role of the gender discourse in legitimising a certain narrative. This section will present a case study of the Nellie massacre based on Sanjoy Hazarika's observation most of the dead were women and children and it was, according to him, because they were unable to outrun their attackers. The arguments, for the lack of a counterfactual, in will be more hypothetical and theoretical in nature as was in Chapter I, based on scenarios constructed out of the available data both from quantitative dataset and qualitative interviews. The qualitative interviews include Subasri Krishnan's interviews with survivors from Muladhari and Borbori from documentary film, Makiko Kimura's group interviews with

survivors from anonymised villages around Nellie, Hemendra Narayan's eyewitness account of the massacre following an attacking group from Mokaria to Demal Bil, and Taha Amin's interviews with survivors in Muladhari. This section will explore four alternative hypotheses, showing that based on the final outcome (i.e. the hypothetical propositions), the events of the past can be weaved into a linear narrative leading to said outcome. Doing so will show the role of prevalent discourses in categorisation and linearisation of the past as well as the power to establish certain discourses as the logical chain of cause to effect. Finally, Section 2.3 will discuss the 'stickiness' of certain narratives endorsed by authorities in the field that, through repeated reference and reiteration, reinforces itself as a reasonable truth. The discussion will be based on my consultation interviews with scholars in migration and refugee studies conducted in Kolkata in August 2019. The goal of this chapter is to expose the role of power, material or otherwise, to violently tear people out of their intersections and prescribe an order that it deems plausible or logical, which is further maintained through representations of this power in everyday life.

## 2.1. Categories as pre-emptive deterrents: Lessons from the gender discourse

I borrow the idea of categories as pre-emptive deterrents from Carol Cohn. In her book chapter 'Wars, Wimps, and Women: Talking Gender and Thinking War', she writes of her time during the Reagan administration, conducting participant research in a North American community of defence intellectuals and security affairs analysists.[7] Using her research on the gender discourse prevalent in the context of defence and security, this section explores two things with regard to categorisation (clustering of observable data) and interpretation (linearising of past narratives to lead up to the present-state of clustering): One, how people are

---

[7] Carol Cohn, 'War, Wimps, and Women: Talking Gender and Thinking War | The Consortium on Gender, Security and Human Rights', in *Gendering War Talk*, ed. Miriam Cooke and Angela Woollacott (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993), 227–46, https://genderandsecurity.org/projects-resources/research/war-wimps-and-women-talking-gender-and-thinking-war.

positioned by and positioned within discourses influencing the categorisation of what they interact with, and two, how discourses influence the interpretation of these actions and behaviour, thereby acting as a pre-emptive deterrent to thought.

### *Clustering: "We require just a little bit of order to protect ourselves from chaos"*

For a segment of chaos to be clustered into a group, a homogenising factor is required for its cohesion: "We require just a little bit of order to protect ourselves from chaos … resemblance, contiguity, causality which enable us to put some order into ideas."[8] For example, the clustering of cinnabar as a subset of ores is made possible by its homogenising factor 'red', in the same way sapphires can be grouped for being 'blue' and can be recognised as group different from cinnabar. The understanding of colour as a logic for ordering an assorted set of ores found the basis for their clustering. At the same time, Deleuze and Guattari stress, that the "little order in ideas" is enforced by a "little order in things or states of affairs".[9] "If cinnabar," they quote continuing Kant's analogue from a Critique of Pure Reason, "were sometimes red, sometimes black, sometimes light, sometimes heavy… my empirical imagination would never even have the occasion when representing red colour to bring to mind heavy cinnabar."[10] Figure 12 (left panel) shows when no attribute has been assigned or observed to the dots, there is no means of clustering into groups that can be differentiated from other groups: They are all black dots. The right panel of Figure 12, on the other hand, shows clustering of these random data points into red and blue, where the homogenising factor is the colour, allowing for a grouping of 'reds' which are different from 'blues'. Matters are however made more complicated when it comes to categorisation of a person who belongs to an intersection of multiple such categories. 'Men' and 'women' are often categorised by stereotypes of masculinity and

---

[8] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell III (Columbia University Press, 1996), 201.
[9] Ibid., 202.
[10] Ibid.

femininity which are based on ideas and are then projected onto the material manifestation of a person. In this way, character traits of femininity are extrapolated from a person's assignment to a cluster ('women') based on some observable appearance, behaviour, or action. A discourse is formed through this back-and-forth between ideas and partial empirical observations.
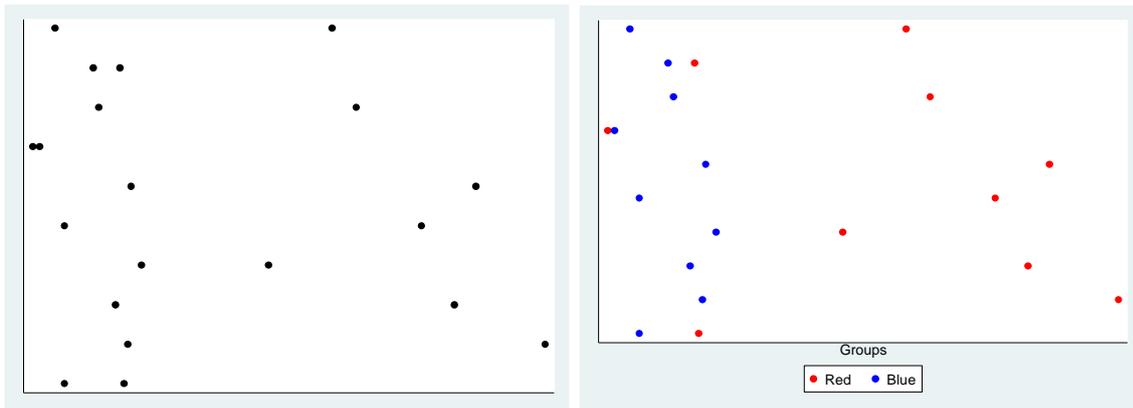


**Figure 12: Clustering: Using colour as order, the dots can be grouped into 'red' and 'blue'.[11]**

As the gender discourse assigns categories of gender to human behaviour in general, Cohn suggests thinking of discourse as something one is positioned by. She provides two examples, both leading to the same conclusion but through different lines of reasoning. In the first, she proposes that if she were to claim a hypothetical firm should refrain from dumping toxic waste into a river because it harms the earth, i.e. appealing to the sentimental value of the nature, she would categorised by the gender discourse as a woman, associated with a plethora of traits reserved for women: irrational, emotional, and subjective.[12] On the other hand, she claims, if she had made the same argument about not dumping toxic waste by saying that it causes $8,215 billion worth of damages to 8 non-renewable resources that would lower the GDP by 0.8%, then the gender discourse would position her as masculine with the traits of rational, objective, and logical thinking associated with masculinity.[13] Secondly, she claims

---

[11] Diagrams generated in Stata 12. The datapoints are randomly generated.
[12] Cohn, 'War, Wimps, and Women: Talking Gender and Thinking War | The Consortium on Gender, Security and Human Rights', 230.
[13] Ibid.

that if one can be positioned by the gender discourse, then one can also be positioned within the gender discourse. This is to say that although she would by default fall into the category of feminine, she can choose to 'act like a man' and in a manner of speaking, emulate being "hardnosed, realistic, unsentimental, [and] dispassionate."[14] Being positioned within the gender discourse would in turn influence a person's understanding of social relations, behaviour, and actions, which feeds back into the complex system of the gender discourse.

### Linearising: "Like a bath of a sulphuric acid, it erases everything else"

Not only does this gender discourse cause a pre-emptive deterrence from action when one tries to avoid being grouped as feminine, emotional, irrational, etc., it also acts as a pre-emptive deterrent to thought. Cohn evidences this by another incidence when she was involved in a war game simulation designed by the RAND corporation with two other women beside herself and 55 men. They were divided into smaller six-people sets, where each set had two teams of three people, Red and Blue, playing war game in a given scenario set in the cold war, put in separate rooms with no means of communication except through their military (in)actions. Cohn's group comprised the three women assigned to a Red team (acting as the Soviet Union), and they were planning strategies, engaging with ground forces, and 'playing war' in general. In two instances, they pulled their troops out of Afghanistan with the reasoning that the Afghans "had a right to self-determination" and, later, out of Eastern Europe.[15] Slowly, their game escalated to a nuclear war. When the Blue team used nuclear weapons against their team, they had initially decided against nuclear retaliation. The game ended when the allotted time was over, and the Red team had 'lost' the war. This means, they had "political control over less territory" compared to the initial endowment, although, Cohn stresses, "[their]

---

[14] Ibid.
[15] Ibid., 233.

homeland had remained completely unviolated and our civilian population safe".[16] After all three sets of war games ended, they were brought together to reveal their reasonings behind their actions. Cohn's team was accused of being "wildly unrealistic" in voluntarily pulling their troops out of Afghanistan by a group of experts on the Soviet Union.[17] The highlight of the debriefing for Cohn was however when a member of the Blue team commented:

> "Well, when he took his troops out of Afghanistan, I knew he was *weak*, and I could push him around. And then, when we nuked him and he didn't nuke us back, I knew he was just a *wimp*, I could take him for everything he's got, and I nuked him again. He just *wimped* out."[18] [Emphasis added.]

Cohn felt silenced by being called a wimp and her agency reduced to a single-word description. The reasoning that went into making the strategic and tactical decisions that she and her team had, their intelligence, and their politics and personal values that informed those decisions were fully erased and invalidated by positioning Cohn and her team as a 'wimp' and by ordering the factors and actions that went into their decision-making as one compatible with the qualities perceived of a 'wimp'. Cohn comments:

> "I could not explain the reasons for my action, could not protest, "Wait, you idiot, I didn't do it because I was weak. I did it because it made *sense* to do it that way, given my understandings of strategy and tactics, history and politics, my goals and my values." The protestation would be met with knowing sneers. In this discourse, the coding of an act as wimpish is hegemonic. Its emotional heat and resonance is [*sic*] like a bath of sulfuric acid: it erases everything else."[19] [Emphasis in original.]

Using the adapted version of backward induction, the logic of reasoning from the observation of not retaliating, categorised by the attribution of wimp, and referring back to the 'weakness' at the root of the decision can be mapped in the following way in Figure 13:

---

[16] Ibid.

[17] Ironically, this was 6 months before Gorbachev, the last general secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, did exactly that.

[18] Cohn, 'War, Wimps, and Women: Talking Gender and Thinking War | The Consortium on Gender, Security and Human Rights', 234.

[19] Ibid.
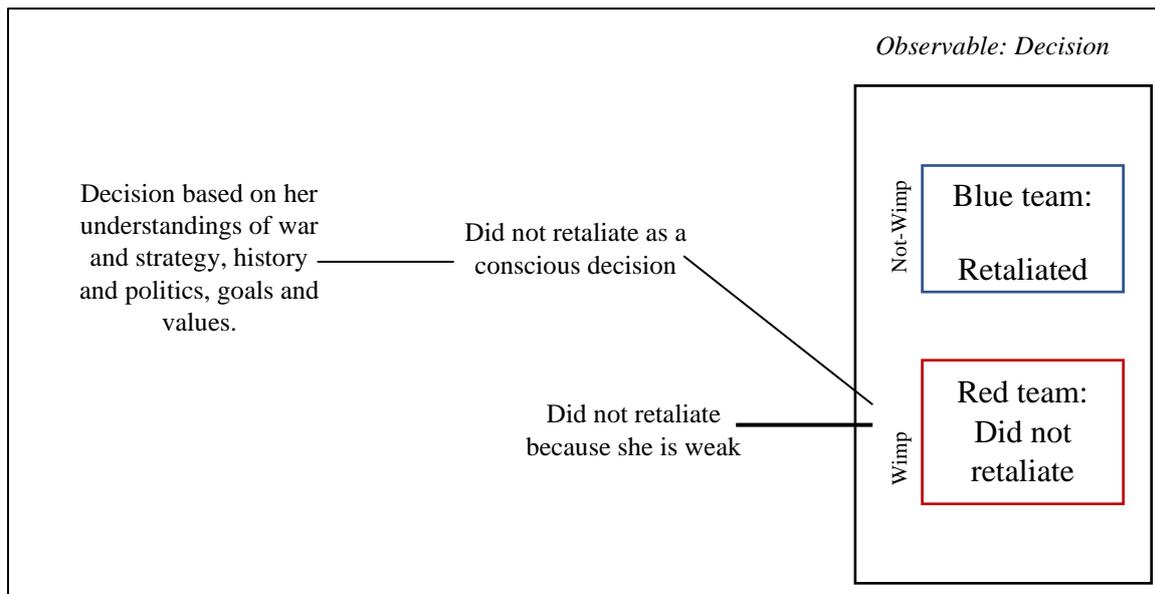
**Figure 13: Linearising: Associated traits of a cluster are made out to be the causes for their decisions.**

Categorising someone into a 'wimp' was thus an interpretation of someone's actions, behaviour, or decisions. As is with any form of interpretation, this was a selection of one amongst many possible ways to understand. Once the selection was made and the actor was categorised into being a wimp, which was "one of the most readily available interpretive codes" amongst defence intellectuals, the several other possible ways of interpreting disappeared. Furthermore, Cohn was situated in the gender discourse of military strategists which endorses the pattern of this cause (being a wimp) to effect (not being capable of retaliation). The search for pattern ends there, as one that is found endorsed by the gender discourse is acknowledged through repetition by the participants.[20]

The following section will use the concepts of clustering and linearising to analyse the events before and during the Nellie massacre with attention to a narrative interpreted by an authority on the region that surfaces repeatedly in writings on the massacre. This is to

---

[20] Cohn elaborates on how the battle over masculinity resurfaces in military strategies and public media later in the chapter.

demonstrate that readily giving into a discourse stops parallel voices and interpretations from manifesting, insofar as it can silence them when articulated from a position of power.

## 2.2. Case Study: Narratives of who perished and why in the Nellie massacre

The Nellie Massacre happened on the 18<sup>th</sup> of February 1983, two years before signing of the Assam Accord that marked the end of the Agitation period. As the Congress-fronted centre Government of India called for elections to be held in February, the Agitation-leaders and -supporters called for a boycott of the elections. To this end, the All Assam Students' Union (AASU) and All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AAGSP) mobilised masses for participation in *bandh* (general strikes), absenteeism from public offices, and other attempts to prevent the election from being held.[21] The movement was supported by the local elites and residents, allowing the situation to escalate to *janata curfew* (people's curfew) and even *janata arrest* (citizen's arrest) for those who 'violated' the boycotts or curfews in the months of January and February. It was during this time that violent clashes between several groups of the population began to take place at an unprecedented scale and frequency. Although armed conflicts, insurgencies, or struggle for liberation – the wording depends on who narrates it – were not new in the neighbouring states of Mizoram and Nagaland, large scale 'Hindu-Muslim communal riots' of the sort seen in other parts of India were not commonplace in Assam. This changed with Nellie.

Nellie is a small village/town located on the National Highway 27 connecting Nagaon and Guwahati, two major cities of Assam (See Map 1, which also shows the distance from the state of Bangladesh, which the villagers were alleged to have migrated from). The villages in

---

[21] Makiko Kimura, *The Nellie Massacre of 1983: Agency of Rioters*, Kindle edition (SAGE Publications Pvt. Ltd, 2013), chap. Election Boycott and the Nellie Incident.

which the killings took place were as far as 10km from Nellie.[22] These villages include Alisingha, Khulapathar, Basundhari, Bugduba Bil, Bugduba Habi, Borjola, Indurmari, Mati Parbat, Mati Parbat No.8, Silbheta, Borbori, Muladhari, and Muladhari No.1, Borjora, Butuni, and parts of Nellie.[23] The area is bound by the National Highway 27 on the south, Kiling river on the east, Kopili river on the north. The survivors were brought to the relief camps in Nellie which collectively gives the massacre its name.[24] Map 4 is cadastral map that shows the locations of the villages. The exact locations on present-day topology could not be found as mind-maps and and narrations were far from congruous with present-day locations of the villages, names of the villages, course of the rivers Kopili and Kiling, lack of geotags in maps metadata, construction of roads, and disappearance of waterbodies such as rivulets and beels[25].
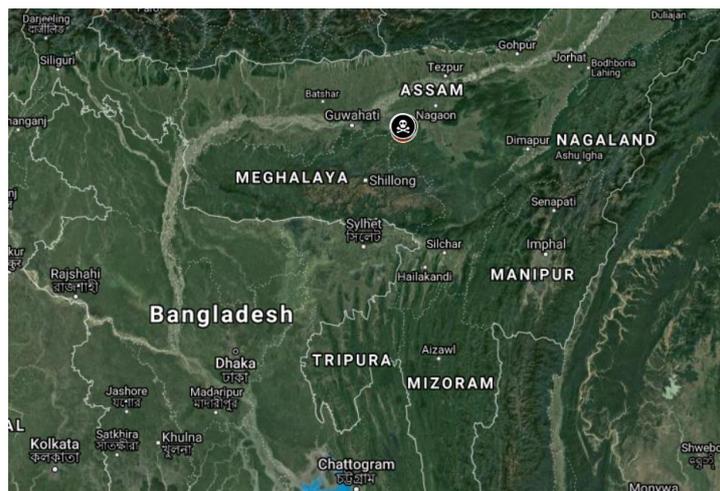


**Map 3: Location of Nellie in Assam (with state borders).**

---

[22] The figure 10km appears in the following publication but the river Kopli is 5km north from Nellie in present-day maps. Ibid., sec. (Chapter 6) Memories of the Massacre: Method and Locations.

[23] Hemendra Narayan, 'Woman in Green Sari', in *25 Years On- Nellie Still Haunts: Assam '83: A Journalists' Travails*, eBook version (Delhi: printed by Hemendra Narayan, 2008); In Barooah Pisharoty's list of 14 villages, the names and spellings differ slightly. Sangeeta Barooah Pisharoty, *Assam: The Accord, The Discord* (Penguin Random House India Private Limited, 2019), 90; Taha Amin Mazumder, 'Nellie 1983 Revisited: Victims Say They Had Been Barricaded for 6 Months Before the Massacre', *NewsClick*, 24 February 2019, https://www.newsclick.in/nellie-1983-revisited-victims-say-they-had-been-barricaded-6-months-massacre; Anjuman Ara Begum and Diganta Sarma, 'Nellie 1983', *TwoCircles.Net* (blog), 18 February 1983, http://twocircles.net/special_reports/nellie_1983.html.

[24] Kimura, *The Nellie Massacre of 1983*, chap. Election Boycott and the Nellie Incident.

[25] Bil or beel is a wetland with bodies of stagnant water. Generally found in floodplains, a beel is formed as floodwaters accumulate in depressions and remain after the season's flood recedes.

**Map 4: Cadastral map of villages north of Nellie.[26]**

The attack began between 8:30 and 10:00 in the morning according to multiple sources.

Hemandra Narayan, one of the 3-4 journalists who had been an eyewitness to one part of the

attack, marks the beginning of his account with a "mixed group of tribals" gathering at Nellie

Mokaria with cries of '*Joy Ai Asom*' (Victory to Mother Assam) at 10am.[27] The mixed group

has been described by other sources as "Tiwas, mainly the indigenous people whose kingdom

was in this area, as well as other local residences, including the Kochs and the Hiras, who are

Hindus of lower status."[28] The plains Tiwa had further sought assistance from the hills Tiwa

---

[26] Source: Assam Survey, Department of Revenue Administration and Land Records, republished in
Proceedings from the Assam Water Conference, 2013: http://thebrahmaputra.in/pdf/awcProceeding2013.pdf
[27] Hemendra Narayan, 'Eyewitness Account: "Horrible Doesn't Describe It" How Many Deaths? Difficult to
Say.', in *25 Years On- Nellie Still Haunts: Assam '83: A Journalists' Travails*, Originally published in Indian
Express, February 19, 1983 (Delhi: printed by Hemendra Narayan, 2008).
[28] Makiko Kimura, 'Election Boycott and the Nellie Incident', in *The Nellie Massacre of 1983: Agency of
Rioters*, Kindle edition (SAGE Publications Pvt. Ltd, 2013).

who had come down into the plains with handmade weapons.[29] Another group, according to an interview with a participating village, had gathered in Borbori across the highway on the east end.[30] One of the participants told Narayan and his group the reason for their discontent and gathering: "We have become *bideshi* (foreigners) in our own lands."[31] At first three houses in Mokaria were set on fire to "arouse passion and boost the morale", after which the group headed northwards towards the river Kopili.[32] Soon afterwards, 40 more houses in Demalgoan (5 km off the highway) were set on fire. The residents of these villages pushed out of their houses and towards the village Muladhari, where villagers from Alisingha, Silcheri, and Baihati had already gathered.[33] After the first group wielding weapons from the south reached Muladhari, there was a 45-minute stagnation as the villagers and attackers were separated by the Demal Bil, till a second group appeared.[34] With the side flanked, the first group advanced into the waist-high waters of the beel. "This," Narayan writes, "was the start of the killings and the end of lives. Women, children, all."[35] The houses in Muladhari were similarly set on fire, with the residents pushed out into the open space. The villagers were trapped by Kopili on the north, pushed through Demal by attackers on the south, and flanked by attackers from the side. Outnumbered and boxed in, the bodies began to fall. Narayan ran along the south bank of the beel and soon afterwards lost sight of the killing frenzy that headed forward. Smaller groups branched off in either direction, following the villagers who scrambled for safety.

---

[29] Makiko Kimura, 'Agency of the Rioters: A Study of Decision Making in the Nellie Massacre', in *The Nellie Massacre of 1983: Agency of Rioters*, Kindle edition (SAGE Publications Pvt. Ltd, 2013), sec. Decision making before the attack.

[30] Kimura, 'Agency of the Rioters: A Study of Decision Making in the Nellie Massacre'.

[31] Narayan, 'Woman in Green Sari'.

[32] Narayan, 'Eyewitness Account: "Horrible Doesn't Describe It" How Many Deaths? Difficult to Say.'

[33] The details in Narayan's account is unclear here as to how or why the villagers from Alisingha, Silcheri, and Baihati had already gathered there. However, since Kimura's interview at a Tiwa village mentioned having gathered at Borbori on the west, who had crossed the highway and travelled eastwards with their killings, perhaps that group had pushed the villagers into Demal?

[34] Source notes "Another group of armed persons was seen rushing eastwards". I interpret this is rushing eastwards from the west.

[35] Narayan, 'Eyewitness Account: "Horrible Doesn't Describe It" How Many Deaths? Difficult to Say.'; Narayan, 'Woman in Green Sari'.

This was but one part (from Mokaria to Demal beel, 10:00 onwards) of events that took place on that day. Several such carnages comprise the Nellie massacre affecting at least 14 villages north of Nellie. The river Kopili, that provided the villagers with water to drink, bathe, and cook, is described to have turned red with blood of the fallen. Some survived by feigning death, letting their bodies float on the river.[36] Some survived by fleeing towards the foothills in Bhutnimara village.[37] Others, however, were not as lucky. Thousands were killed with spears, machetes, arrows, guns, and other local weapons. The attack is estimated to have happened between 08:00 and 14:00 with an official death toll at 2,191.[38] The actual figure however was much higher, according to Radhakrishna Pisharoty, the press advisor to the governor of Assam at the time.[39] A one-person inquiry commission had been assigned to prod into the matters of the day by the government of Assam. This 600-page Tiwari Commission Report was never made public and till date only three copies thereof exist under heavy wraps. Unofficial figures range from 3,000 to 5,000 dead and up to 10,000 affected.

When the prime minister Indira Gandhi visited the relief camps at Nellie four days later, "a huge pond in one of the villages were several bodies were thrown into by the killer mob was covered up with mud overnight".[40] Six months later, when Narayan visited Nellie again, some buildings in Nellie bore the slogan, "*Vote nidiba; Nohole rastiya path* [sic] *tezere rangoli kori dim*."[41] [Do not vote; otherwise there will be *Rangoli* drawn on the streets with blood.[42]] Fifteen

---

[36] Subasri Krishnan, 'Thirty-Two Years Later, the Nellie Massacre Remains All But Forgotten', *The Caravan* (blog), 18 February 2018, https://caravanmagazine.in/vantage/thirty-two-years-later-nellie-massacre-remains-all-forgotten.

[37] Narayan, 'Eyewitness Account: "Horrible Doesn't Describe It" How Many Deaths? Difficult to Say.'

[38] Narayan, 'Woman in Green Sari'.

[39] Sangeeta Barooah Pisharoty, 'NRC Final Draft: How One Document Will Determine the Fate of These Married Women', *The Wire*, 29 July 2018, 91, https://thewire.in/politics/nrc-final-draft-how-one-document-will-determine-the-fates-of-these-assamese-women.

[40] Pisharoty, *Assam, Accord, Discord*, 91.

[41] The transliteration is copied as is from the source. Translations are mine. Narayan, 'Woman in Green Sari'.

[42] Rangoli is an art form, consisting of motifs, drawn on the ground with rice, flowers, sand, etc. This threat is particularly haunting as Rangoli is drawn during auspicious or festive occasions couple with the fact that some survivors describe the gather of the attacking with the beating of drums carrying an air of festivities.

years later, a new Nellie police outpost was erected, where the officer-in-charge said to Narayan, "It is all quiet in the Muslim villages."[43] Till day, the Muslim residents in the villages around Nellie live in fear: "Still they threaten us, saying things like, 'We will repeat Nellie 1983'".[44] The memories of Nellie actively suppressed from official discourses live on in silence, as recurring torment for the survivors, and as instruments to discipline a part of Assam's population that is considered 'foreign'. The narratives surrounding who were attacked, why they were attacked, who were the attackers, and who were the instigators widely varies depending on who narrates the story. Each group of stakeholders has developed their own interpretation based on not only their experiences of the massacre but also on how they wish to identify themselves. While there were many political, economic, and social issues key to these narratives to frame the victims as foreigners or how they were undesirable to the moral landscape or economic structure of Assam, the following case study explores one portion of the narratives that involves gender(ed) relations and the role of the gender discourse in understanding causes and results of the massacre. The case study serves to illustrate how one pattern—one line of reasoning—was extracted by an authority, that through reiteration crowded out other explanations.

### $H_0$: "How had the men survived? The answer was simple."

On 20th February 1983, Sanjoy Hazarika, a journalist at the New York Times, headed to Nellie to cover the massacre two days afterwards.[45] As Hazarika drove past the town, towards the massacre sites, he was approached by a local, in tears, claiming things were much worse than "those two hundred metres on either side of the road [which] were a testament to

---

[43] Narayan, 'Woman in Green Sari'.
[44] Anjuman Ara Begum and Patrick Hoenig, 'Nellie (1983): A Case Study of Mass Violence and Impunity', in *Landscapes of Fear: Understanding Impunity in India*, ed. Patrick Hoenig and Navsharan Singh, ebook edition (Zubaan, 2014), sec. Testimonies of survivors.
[45] Sanjoy Hazarika, *Rites of Passage: Border Crossings, Imagined Homelands, India's East and Bangladesh* (Penguin Books India, 2000), 49.

brutality, hatred, and bloodshed".[46] They walked towards the river Kopili, and in village of Bhogdubi Habi,[47] more bodies began to appear. Hazarika writes, recalling his experiences:

> "As I clambered up the small bank, my eyes were attacked by perhaps the most hideous scene that I have seen in all my years. An entire family was laid out at the top of the bank: parents and five children, of varying ages—the youngest was no older than an infant. Each was dead, stabbed, slashed; the tiny one had been beheaded. Its head lay beside the body. I looked up and saw more bodies. I think after that, we became numb to feeling—the paddy fields were full of young women, older women, old men, young children who were struck down. In one small patch of land, I counted 200 bodies which lay where they had fallen. Yet, how had the young men survived? The answer was simple: because they could run faster than the women, the old, the infirm, and the children."[48]

He continues, elaborating upon the last sentence shortly afterwards:

> "The old, the weak, the women, and the very young fell to the rushing mob and its spears, *daos* [machetes], bows, and arrows and muskets. The young and the fit ran the fastest, fleeing from certain death…"[49]

And that was it: No further possible reasons behind the exact composition of the corpses were explored in his account of the massacre. Owing to the lack of data, however, "no one knows" with certainty whether women had indeed been killed compared to men, but it is one reasoning that is repeated till today.[50] The death tolls vary between 1,300 to 5,000 in most sources and goes as high as 10,000 in some unofficial narratives. With such large variation and incomplete information, especially the lack of a counterfactual, a correlation between sex category and incidence of death ("the old, the weak, the women, and the very young fell") cannot be drawn. Establishing causation (the young men survived "*because* they could run faster than women") requires both a statistical correlation and narratives in forms of a priori and further speculation to determine causality. The gender discourse that offers a plausible a priori to support young men's ability to run faster than 'women and children' seems to have stopped further speculation in Hazarika's observation. The data, using Plotnitsy's analogy of

---

[46] Ibid., 50.
[47] The spellings of these villages widely vary, as there is no consistent transliteration scheme. I use whichever spelling is used by the source.
[48] Hazarika, *Rites of Passage*, 51.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Samir Kumar Das, Professor of Political Science, University of Calcutta, interview by author, Kolkata, August 2019.

chaosmos, is equivalent to particles in chaos, and the interpretation of the data is the intervention with thought that linearised the events connecting the a priori 'weakness' as a reason behind women's and children's death.

On matter of statistical correlations and causations: Firstly, a counterfactual (literally: 'what it is not') is instrumental to suggesting causation. In this case, to suggest that child was killed because of its being a child and an extrapolation of the qualities associated with being a child ('weak'), it has to be compared with two groups formed based on being a child and on being killed: one, children who were not killed, and two, adults who were killed in order to find a pattern. Without a counterfactual, i.e. just with the number of dead children, relationality between being a child and being killed cannot be inferred. The most that can be done through the logic of causal inference from statistics is make a blunt statement that notes the fact that in the sample of 979 observations (with age data for 974), the number of children who had been killed was 499 or the percentage in this sample had been 51% without drawing any inferences. Causality may be established through narratives that can connect the hypothetical cause to the final effect, using relationality through comparisons with counterfactuals as empirical support.

There is however no survivor data nor census of residents in the villages to approximate the number of survivors (listing the injured and/or unharmed) from. For example, if the village had a demographic composition such that 80% of the population were women and children, then, with no deliberate targeting during the massacre, then 80% of the dead to be women and children is expected. Similarly, if the villages had an ageing population with only 20% of the people under the age of 18, then the figure of 51% children amongst the dead shows a disproportionate killing of children. Thus, to be able to interpret the descriptive statistics, a counterfactual is necessary in the logic of quantitative inference. Turning to narrations of relief camps for a sense of a counterfactual, comments about a disproportionate percentage of young

men survivors could not be found. For example, when Shekhar Gupta at Indian Express, visited the Nellie relief camp describes the scene as "what field hospitals in mediaeval battlefields must have looked like,"[51] and notes further:

> "There were hundreds and hundreds of men, women, and children walking or crawling around aimlessly with gaping stab, spear, and bullet wounds all over their bodies. The wounds, unattended, still bleed. Blood and grime mix and even a non-medic man [presumably referring to himself] can small gangrene and tetanus that are lurking [a]round the corner."[52]

He makes no observation about many or all young men surviving, injured being treated at the relief camp, or accompanying the injured women, children, and the elderly.

Secondly, even if only one adult man, one adult woman, one child, and one elderly person were killed, the percentage of 'women, children, and the old' (75%) would still be greater than that of adult men (25%). It is not the data that implies 'women, children, the old' grouped as 'the weak' were more likely to be killed, but the understanding of the former as a feminised, fragile, weaker group as one comparable to the smaller subset of masculinised agile, young men. Thus, although it might be statistically accurate to state that there was a higher incidence of 'women, children, and elderly' (i.e. 3 as opposed to 1 of 4), there is nothing in the data per se to suggest that 'women, children, and elderly' should be considered a group based on 'weakness' as their homogenising factor that is defined in opposition to young men grouped as 'the fit'. It is in the interpretation of statistics that a narrative, which offer one of many possible explanations, are formed that in turn, when provided by an authority of and supported by that 'little order' in the state of things, becomes established as a cause.

---

[51] Shekhar Gupta, *Assam, a Valley Divided* (New Delhi: Vikas, 1984), 2, http://books.google.com/books?id=bvCAAAAAIAAJ.
[52] Ibid.

Being an authority on the matters of Assam and its ethnic conflicts, Hazarika's words made their way into prevalent literature on the Nellie massacre.[53] His reasoning is still repeated in articles published in Feminism India in 2020,[54] The Print in 2019,[55] and The Caravan in 2015.[56] It has become common knowledge to the point that even when unprompted about reason behind their killing, the news reporting mention casually that the women and children could not run away. In a recent book on the Assam Accord, Sangeeta Barooah Pisharoty, a journalist at The Wire, writes:

> "These were mostly children, women, old people—all those who didn't have a pair of legs faster than the killers. The mob set ablaze the houses to push out those inside them, then circled them from all sides before hacking them to death with sharp machetes and spears, or with poisoned arrows shown from bamboo bows."[57]

The victims are positioned by the gender discourse as weak and the attackers as aggressive, offering an explanation behind the deaths of "children, women, [and] old people", while the interpreter, positioned within the gender discourse, finds this explanation plausible. Secondly, the interpretation formed within the gender discourse seemed to have 'stopped thought' in its tracks, as the several other possible interpretations remain unexplored. Thirdly, having been published in a widely accessible book written by an authority on the subject-matter, this interpretation becomes the generally accepted reasoning behind the allegedly disproportionate killing of women and children in the public discourse.

Using the massacre dataset, Table 3 shows the decomposition of the sex in the sample. Out of 974 observations, 45.48% were male and 54.52% were female. These figures fall within

---

[53] Das, Interview by author, Kolkata 2019.; Debdatta Chowdhury, Assistant Professor of Gender Studies at Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta, interview by author, Kolkata, August 2019.

[54] Maduli Thaosen, 'Revisiting Assam's Bloody History: The Nellie Massacre 37 Years On', Feminism In India, 17 February 2020, https://feminisminindia.com/2020/02/18/revisiting-assams-bloody-history-the-nellie-massacre-37-years-on/.

[55] Ratnadeep Choudhary, 'Nellie Massacre and "Citizenship": When 1,800 Muslims Were Killed in Assam in Just 6 Hours', *ThePrint* (blog), 18 February 2019, https://theprint.in/india/governance/nellie-massacre-and-citizenship-when-1800-muslims-were-killed-in-assam-in-just-6-hours/193694/.

[56] Krishnan, 'Thirty-Two Years Later, the Nellie Massacre Remains All But Forgotten'.

[57] Pisharoty, *Assam, Accord, Discord*, 90.

50%±5%, a range in which average sex ratios fall. With no counterfactual to compare against, the likelihood (i.e. the probability) of being killed based on some categorical attribute (age and/or sex) cannot be through the logic of probability be inferred.

| sex | Freq. | Percent | Cum. |
|---|---|---|---|
| Male | 443 | 45.48 | 45.48 |
| Female | 531 | 54.52 | 100.00 |
| Total | 974 | 100.00 | |

**Table 3: Decomposition of Nellie victims by sex[58]**

There could be several reasons why more 'women and children' had died in comparison to young men, if that had indeed happened. For one, it could be possible that the attackers had an agenda of purging the demography by targeting its reproductive capability. It could also be because of a random initial condition that is unrelated to their physical abilities to run. Some of these themes exist, albeit in fragments, within the narratives of various stakeholder groups. The following subsubsections explore four such possibilities, through speculation based on eyewitness and survivor interviews that could result in the killing of more 'women and children' than the young men. I will start with scenarios that hold the assumptions underlying in Hazarika's observation to check for the internal logic of his explanation and increasingly relax his assumptions in the succeeding hypotheses. Allow me to stress at this point that I do not intend to suggest that any of these other progressions of events is the 'truth'. The purpose of the mapping exercise is to demonstrate there may be many possible paths that lead to the

---

[58] Note on reading these tables: Freq. stands for Frequency. It lists how many observations there were with the codes for 'Male' and 'Female' in the column for 'Sex'. 'Percent' calculates the percentage of each group over the total number of observations. Cum. stands for Cumulative. It adds the preceding percentages with the percentage in their respective rows. In this particular case, cumulative percentage does not refer to anything meaningful, as the groups male and female are not ranked. In the next table depicting age, which is a continuous variable, the cumulative percentage can be meaningfully interpreted.

same outcome where most of the dead had been women, children, and elderly, and that Hazarika's observation one interpretation out of many.

***H₁: Durable inequalities: Social conditioning and intrahousehold resource allocation***

*Assumption*: In line with Hazarika's comment, the reason for being killed was because the women were physically weaker and unable to run away from the attackers.

*Proposition*: What if the source of weakness is not an innate biological state but a longer-term sociocultural process that conditions female bodies into being unsuitable for physical activities such as 'running'?

Even if we assume for the sake of argument, that the only reason that all the young men survived was that they were simply faster, it could then also be possible that the reason behind why the women were slower was not biological, i.e. being 'weak' as Hazarika implies by grouping with children and the infirm, but sociocultural. It could be possible that events leading to the massacre left the women 'weak' in terms of their ability to partake in a physical activity that is running. Firstly, in terms of long-term effects, girl children in their adolescence in the Subcontinent are generally discouraged from playing outdoors that involve physical exertion such as running, jumping, etc.[59] Social conditioning of the body starting from adolescence can create vast differences in bodily capacities in adulthood. Secondly, longer-term nutrition can also affect bodily capacities. Studies on intrahousehold resource allocation suggest that male members of the household, including boy children, are prioritised over adult women and girl children in the distribution of food.[60] Studies in rural India, where household-level food

---

[59] Suad Joseph and Afsana Nagmabadi, *Encyclopedia of Women and Islamic Cultures: Family, Law and Politics* (BRILL, 2003), 203.
[60] Amitava Mukharjee, *Food Security in Asia* (SAGE Publications India, 2012), 123–26.

insecurity exists, show that there exists a concept of 'maternal buffering' where mothers eat less (deliberately or otherwise) for there to be enough for younger men and children to eat.[61]

There exists evidence in the narratives of the survivors to suggest that the villages had been facing at least household-level food insecurity in the months leading up to the massacre. The survivors recall that they were barricaded in their villages for six months prior to the attack.[62] Rahila Khatun, a villager from Muladhari in her 60s now, recalls:

> "We couldn't go to the markets. We had lots of problems gathering food. We could hardly feed ourselves then. We couldn't even purchase the daily grocery from the local shops… they stopped giving us grocery items on credit after a while. There were the Dharamtul and Nellie markets, but we couldn't go there. There were no other markets around. Moreover, we were barred from going to the markets. On some days, when we could grab some rice, we would cook the rice and would eat the food without any curry, mixing only salt."[63]

Saimunnesa from the same village revealed the women of the village hesitated to jump into the river to save themselves as their clothes would have gotten wet, which refers back to the social valuation of modesty.[64] She jumped into the river after her husband urged her to. As such, it could also be possible that the reason the women were 'weaker', abiding by Hazarika's assumption that they were, was because of their social conditioning leaving them at a disadvantage and not because of biological or any innate physical abilities.

***H₂: Sociocultural factors: Women 'slowed down' by dependents in household.***

*Assumption*: In line with Hazarika's comment, the reason for being killed was because the women were slower and unable to run away from the attackers. Observing that more than 50% of the dead were children, the children had been the target of the massacre.

---

[61] United Nations ESCAP, ed., *Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security in Asia and the Pacific*, United Nations Publication (Bangkok: United Nations ESCAP, 2009), 32.
[62] Mazumder, 'Nellie 1983 Revisited', sec. The 6-month-long blockade before the massacre.
[63] Ibid., sec. The 6-month-long barricade before the massacre.
[64] Mazumder, 'Nellie 1983 Revisited'.

*Proposition*: Observing that the women were in physical proximity of the children perhaps due to social understanding of responsibility towards children, what if the attackers chased the children, and the women who had been with them were also killed at the time of killing the children?

Decomposing the data available by age groups, that more than half of those killed were under the age of 18. Table 4 shows a breakdown by age categories, and it can be seen that 50.50% were children (under the age of 18). What if the children were the main target and the adult women in the household happened to be in proximity? Could it be possible that it was their having to carry, shield, or otherwise being responsible for dependants that slowed them down?

Shortly before the Nellie massacre, there had been a report of several Tiwa children being killed by 'Muslims' which could be possible grounds for retaliation.[65] In contrast to the children, only 9.8% were elderly (60 and above). Hazarika's assumption that ability (based on age and sex) to run was the defining difference between being killed and surviving does not hold when the age categories are broken down, as an average 70-year-old's ability to run would, as intuition would suggest, pale in comparison to that of a 12-year-old. Yet both 12-year-olds and 70-year-olds accounted for 1.76% each of the sample. Thus, the explanation "because [the young men] could run away faster than the women, the old, the infirm, and the children" has an internal logical inconsistency, as children's and the elderlies' abilities to run are not homogenous. This implies, based on the ability to run (as Hazarika suggested), children and elderly cannot be homogenised into one group, and to say 'most' had been women, children, and elderly who comprise more than half the population is not a valid grouping.

---

[65] Kimura, *The Nellie Massacre of 1983*, sec. The Nellie Incident (Chapter 4); Begum and Hoenig, 'Nellie (1983): A Case Study of Mass Violence and Impunity', sec. Trigger for Nellie.

| Age Category | Freq. | Percent | Cum. |
|---|---|---|---|
| 0-2 | 95 | 9.80 | 9.80 |
| 3-17 | 404 | 41.69 | 51.50 |
| 18-29 | 138 | 14.24 | 65.74 |
| 30-59 | 237 | 24.46 | 90.20 |
| 60+ | 95 | 9.80 | 100.00 |
| Total | 969 | 100.00 | |

**Table 4: Decomposition of Nellie victims by age**

Thus, using the quantifier of 'more', there were more children killed than adults. In the same logic as Hazarika on the basis of 'more', let us assume that this implies children had been a target. Returning to the suggestion that the adult women in the household were in physical proximity to the children: in another news report, published on 28th February 1983 in India Today, Sumanta Sen and Jagannath Dubashi state:

'As the *daos* [machetes] rose and fell with monotonous precision, the women and children tumbled in heaps in the rice paddies. Mothers were still clutching their babies – both slashed and chopped about like hunks of meat on a butcher's slab.'[66]

And in Hemandra Narayan's eyewitness account:

"She had a baby in her [arms] and dragged a child with her left hand. Another young boy was also running with her."[67]

The depiction of women carrying, dragging, or leading children is a recurring theme in most accounts, which indicates women and children's being in physical proximity at the time the children were killed.[68] Children were torn out of clasps of mothers and thrown into the fires. Thus, if the children had been the target of the massacre and if the women were not a target

---

[66] Sumanta Sen and Jagannath Dubashi, 'Nellie Massacre: Assam Burns as Ethnic Violence Singes the State', *India Today*, 26 May 1983, sec. Howling Mob, https://www.indiatoday.in/magazine/cover-story/story/19830315-nellie-massacre-assam-burns-as-ethnic-violence-singes-the-state-770520-2013-07-23.
[67] Narayan, 'Woman in Green Sari'.
[68] 'Nellie 83 Revisited: Victims Say They Had Been Barricaded for 6 Months Before the Massacre - YouTube', accessed 13 October 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nNTJDEEExas; Begum and Hoenig, 'Nellie (1983): A Case Study of Mass Violence and Impunity', sec. Respondent 10; Narayan, 'Woman in Green Sari'; Teresa Rehman, 'Nellie Revisited: The Horror's Nagging Shadow', *Tehelka - The People's Paper*, 11 November 2006, https://web.archive.org/web/20061111192753/http://www.tehelka.com/story_main19.asp?filename=Ne093006the_horrors.asp.

themselves, the killing of children could also result in the killing of a disproportionate number of women because of their being together at the time of the killing.

Surviving men who had been carrying children with them also mention losing their children while on the run. Abdul Khayer who had been living in Borbodi at the time of the attack recalls the death of his children in great detail, memories of which still haunt him:

> "That day I saw people fleeing out of their homes dragging their children with them. I looked around and spotted my (two) children in the pond: the elder son and one younger son. I tied one of them to me like this [to my back] and grabbed the other one. Then I crossed the pond like that. We went towards Kopili. On this side of Kopili (*motions towards him*) lies Dalung. I went till the Dalung-side bank of Kopili and then finally sat down. I was so thirsty, I felt like my chest would explode. Then, I sat down with my sons. The elder son went forward, cupped the murky–fully cloudy–water in his hands, drank some, and then came back to me. A little later, the firing started. They started firing at us with guns. Two or three people were shot dead. We started running again immediately towards Mathabhori. While running down, I lost grip over my elder son's hand. While I was running, an Assamese person stuck my back (*motions a sickle-striking movement with his hand*). The son on my back… his head (*makes a diverging gesture*) … his head split in two. His head was half on this side and half on that side. I cried out once, '*Baba, ami toh shesh.*' [This must be the end!] and that was it. He died, then and there. I turned back then and saw his neck… I still have scars on my back from where it hit me through him."

Even Khayer, a young man at the time of the massacre, had been carrying his child, implying they were physically moving or 'running away' at the same pace, but it was his children that had been killed. The targeting of children during genocides would not have been unprecedented in the case of Nellie. There had been cases during the Bangladesh liberation war where foetuses had been cut out of pregnant women or corpses and torn by limbs.[69] In Potocari during the Bosnian genocide, young boys had been a deliberate target.[70] In Mytyazo during the Rwandan genocide, children who had been rescued from the massacre and taken in refuge in a nearby church were tracked down and killed deliberately.[71] Given there was also motive for retaliation in the case of Nellie, it could be possible that in the case of Nellie that children had

---

[69] Yasmin Saikia, 'Beyond the Archive of Silence: Narratives of Violence of the 1971 Liberation War of Bangladesh', *History Workshop Journal*, no. 58 (2004): 275–87, www.jstor.org/stable/25472765.

[70] Selma Leydesdorff, *Surviving the Bosnian Genocide: The Women of Srebrenica Speak* (Indiana University Press, 2011), xii.

[71] Human Rights Watch, 'Lasting Wounds: Consequences of Genocide and War for Rwanda's Children', *Human Rights Watch*, 3 April 2003, sec. Children targeted in the genocide, https://www.hrw.org/report/2003/04/03/lasting-wounds/consequences-genocide-and-war-rwandas-children.

also been deliberate targets. Killing children could be a possible genocidal strategy to wipe out the minority population.

***H₃: Demographic targeting: Agenda to wipe out population***

*Assumption*: Observing that children being carried by men were killed while the man was spared or had otherwise survived, capability to run was not the defining factor behind who had been killed.

*Proposition*: What if women, in addition to children, were strategic targets of the cleansing exercise?

The fear of a demographic change in which the 'natives' would be outnumbered by the Bengali and/or Muslims or otherwise 'outsiders' or 'foreigners'—the wording changes—looms over Assam since the early 1900s.[72] The root of a demographic rivalry is often traced back to a census report published in the colonial era where the British administer assigned to Assam compares East Bengalis to vultures: "Wheresoever the carcases, there will the vultures be gathered together—where there is wasteland, thither flock the Mymensinghias."[73] This comment, made by an institution that prides itself in sciences of categorisation and enumeration and poses itself to be the bearer of objective 'truth',[74] made its way into the public discourse and is often referred to as concrete evidence that Muslims from East Bengal are infiltrating the lands of Assam.[75] The imagery of this land-hungry *Miya* (a derogatory term in Assamese for

---

[72] Sanjib Baruah, *India Against Itself: Assam and the Politics of Nationality* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 118.

[73] Demonym of Mymensingh, a central region in East-Bengal presently a division in Bangladesh, across the Western border of Assam. It is to be noted, that a national boundary between Mymensingh and Assam did not exist at the time. Cited in Rafiul Ahmed, 'Anxiety, Violence and the Postcolonial State: Understanding the "Anti-Bangladeshi" Rage in Assam, India', *Perceptions* XIX, no. 1 (2014): 55–70, http://sam.gov.tr/anxiety-violence-and-the-postcolonial-state-understanding-the-anti-bangladeshi-rage-in-assam-india/.

[74] Appadurai, 'Number in the Colonial Imagination'.

[75] Rizwana Shamshad, *Bangladeshi Migrants in India: Foreigners, Refugees, or Infiltrators?* (Oxford University Press, 2017); Uddipana Goswami, 'Miyā or Axamiyā? Migration and Politics of Assimilation in Assam', *Journal of Social and Policy Sciences* 1, no. i (2010): 3–36.

Muslims of Eastern Bengali origin) is invoked repeatedly in the memorandum sent by the Lalung Darbar of Assam and Meghalaya to prime minister Indira Gandhi, following the events at Nellie.[76] The memorandum serves as a formal statement from the council regarding the massacre. It underscores that the Lalung tribal community 'is backward' but a 'calm and qui[et] and peace-loving tribal people' who was deeply affected by the presence of 'Bangladeshi immigrants' (as they call the Muslim residents in the villages around Nellie) in their homelands.[77] Resentment towards the 'Bangladeshi immigrants' for allegedly bringing forth ailments, corruption, violence, and denigration of the Assamese moral landscape is heavily articulated not only in this official statement but also in the public discourse. In addition, allegations were made by the villagers that the Muslims ate the cows that happened to walk into the rivers towards the Muslim villages committing blasphemy and morally offending the Hindu community. An AAGSP leader also commented on the uncontrolled population growth of the Muslims that risks changing the demographic landscape:

> "Their population was increasing because they have a larger number of children. For the Muslims, numbers are important. […] We thought if lose we [the election], we would become foreigners in our own land. I felt the Assamese should have the sovereign right in Assam."[78]

This fear of a growing number of Muslims, especially ones that would vote for the Congress government, and the anxiety of becoming a minority in "[their] own country" are echoed in the voices of the marauding group that gathered in Mokaria on the morning of the 18th. When Narayan and his team of journalists tried asking why people were gathering at Mokaria, one person said to him:

---

[76] Lalung is an older term for Tiwa. Hemendra Narayan, 'Lalungs Darbar', in *25 Years On- Nellie Still Haunts: Assam '83: A Journalists' Travails* (Delhi: printed by Hemendra Narayan, 2008).

[77] The council writes off the Nellie incident as 'a clash' that took place between 'the Assamese and immigrant people', condemns the activities of these 'miscreants', and calls for 'peace and harmony' amongst people. It is to be noted that the council groups themselves with 'the Assamese' people only in this paragraph regarding the events of Nellie while separating themselves everywhere else from the mainstream Assamese by underscoring their 'backwardness' or tribal status. Ibid., sec. Lalung Darbar's Memorandum.

[78] Kimura, 'Agency of the Rioters: A Study of Decision Making in the Nellie Massacre', sec. Opposition towards the Congress Government.

"We will kill all these *bideshi mians*.[79] They have made us *bideshis* in our own country."
[Note: Transliteration of 'bideshi' as in original transcription. It is unknown which language was being spoken. The transcription was dictated via telephone to a newspaper station in Mumbai by Narayan who had been eyewitness to the attack. He stated earlier that he did not speak Assamese.][80]

One news report, published in 2006 in India Today, refers to the high proportion of dead women and children and claims that "it looks as if the attackers wanted to make sure of getting rid of the entire new generation as mostly women and children were killed". In genocidal situations where reducing a population had been a goal, hitting the reproductive capacity by exterminating women or otherwise defiling the lineage had been an oft-used strategy.[81] During my meeting with Paula Banerjee, editor of Refugee Watch, Calcutta Research Group, she referred specifically to border brothels and trafficking from Bangladesh through or to the Indian Northeast in saying, "the Bengali women's body is the epitome of insecurity in the Northeast", and that by framing the Bengali woman as the morally corrupted and inferior, sentiments of superiority is harvested for the 'natives'.[82] The battles of national pride, belonging, and entitlement, she goes on to explain, are fought over the bodies of the woman, as it has been during the period post-Partition. Veena Das makes a similar argument in her study on population exchange and violence over the 'unwanted women and children' following the Partition in saying that the battles between men of the nation are fought through the bodies of the women.[83] It would, thus, according to Banerjee, be unsurprising if women

[79] Hindicised spelling of 'miya'. Miya in Bangla means 'mister' but is used as a derogatory term in Assamese to refer to Muslims of Eastern Bengali origin.

[80] Hemendra Narayan, 'Eyewitness Account: "Horrible doesn't describe it": How many dead? Difficult to say', originally published in Indian Express, February 19, 1983, reprinted in Narayan, *25 Years on, Nellie Still Haunts*.

[81] Veena Das, 'National Honour and Practical Kinship: Unwanted Women and Children', in *Conceiving the New World Order: The Global Politics of Reproduction*, ed. Faye Ginsburg and Rayna Rapp, 1995, 212–233; Saikia, 'Beyond the Archive of Silence'; Neelima Ibrahim, আমি বীরাঙ্গনা বলছি *(I am the War Heroine speaking)* (Jagriti, 1994); Elisa von Joeden-Forgey, 'Gender and Genocide', in *The Oxford Handbook of Genocide Studies* (Oxford University Press, 2010), https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199232116.001.0001.

[82] Paula Banerjee, Vice-Chancellor, The Sanskrit College and University, interview by author, Kolkata, August 2019.

[83] Das, 'National Honour and Practical Kinship: Unwanted Women and Children'.

had been a deliberate target of the massacre as a means of injuring the Bengali minority population as a whole, in addition to immediately reducing the reproductive capacity.

One study conducted post-2000 brought to light a stream of narrative regarding the gender aspect of the massacre that fits in line with the battle of nationalist pride and entitlement fought over the bodies of women. An interview with the convener of AAGSP in Morigaon, one of the justifications of the attack had been "[the Muslim people] were stealing the Hindu girls [and] in that way they are harassing the Assamese people".[84] In further interviews with perpetuators from a Tiwa village anonymised as Village C, the reason was heavily traced back to kidnapping of girls:

> "Initially, they were peacefully living. But one point was noticed by us later on, that many girls were kidnapped, and they used to kill them… They used to take girls; they used to keep them at their homes and some of them, they used to kill. We were very much offended, and this thing was shared by the AASU and the Assamese people, these areas' people. The main issue was the girls…"[85]

For villagers in Village C, the kidnapping and killing of *their* girls was the primary cause for a counterstrike to avenge the kidnapping and/or killing of these girls. However, they admitted that they had a good relationship with the 'immigrants' and there was no trouble them before early 1980s, that is, till before the Agitation started. In Village D, another Tiwa village, the interview participants had not mentioned the kidnapping of girls at all, till the interviewer brought it up. Then, too, they suggested that this was a matter instrumentalised by the AASU and AAGSP to gain Tiwa support to attack the 'immigrant' community.[86] Had the kidnappings and killings actually taken place is a separate line of inquiry,[87] as the Subinspector Kabir Singh Limboo of Police Outpost Nellie says that often inter-religious or inter-ethnicity elopements

---

[84] Makiko Kimura, 'Memories of the Massacre: Violence and Collective Identity in the Narratives on the Nellie Incident', *Asian Ethnicity* 4, no. 2 (1 June 2003): 223, https://doi.org/10.1080/14631360301651.
[85] Ibid., 231.
[86] Makiko Kimura, 'Memories of the Massacre', in *The Nellie Massacre of 1983: Agency of Rioters*, Kindle edition (SAGE Publications Pvt. Ltd, 2013), sec. Different narratives on the cause of the massacre: The muslims, the tiwa, and local movement leaders.
[87] Begum and Hoenig, 'Nellie (1983): A Case Study of Mass Violence and Impunity', sec. Trigger for Nellie.

are termed as kidnappings by 'angry' parents.[88] Regardless, it remained such that the call to arms had happened on the grounds of protecting the local women, and the retaliation based on the allegation manifested materially. It was in the name of *Asom Ai* (Mother Assam) that those gathering in Mokaria had went forth into the killing fields. Some survivors of the massacre interviewed for Impunity Project admitted hearing about women being raped during the massacre, although they were hesitant to speak about it.[89]

Considering that there was motive to retaliate for the kidnapping of Tiwa girls with killing the Bengali women, and there was motive to reduce to minority population by killing the Bengali women, there is reason to suggest that women had been a target of the massacre.

**H₄: Random initial condition: Men stepped out first and got a head start to escape.**

*Assumption*: Capability to run was an irrelevant factor behind who had been killed.

*Proposition*: What if a random initial condition placed the men in a place where relatively fewer killings happened?

This hypothesis is informed by the birth of chaos theory and fluid dynamics where a computer glitch revealed how sensitive processes can be to initial conditions. In two interviewees' accounts, one from Muladhari and the other from an unnamed village, two men reported that some of them had stepped out of the house when they realised their neighbours were up to something. An anonymised respondent R4 reported that he had stepped out of the house before the attack started and ran to safety when the attack started:

> "My residence was near the main road. There were Hindus living on the backside of our house. They were holding a meeting. We could hear that they were up to something. In the morning around 7am, it started. We [presumably the men in the village] ran to the field and

---

[88] Chaitanya Kalbag, 'Bloodstains in Assam: The Legacy of Nellie Communal Frenzy', *Economic Times Blog* (blog), 1 April 2016, https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/blogs/the-needles-eye/bloodstains-in-assam-the-legacy-of-nellie-communal-frenzy/.
[89] Begum and Hoenig, 'Nellie (1983): A Case Study of Mass Violence and Impunity', sec. Truth.

saw people coming towards our village. We were not thinking at that time that they would burn houses and slash people, and we had no arms' [Editorial note in original.]"[90]

The plausibility of men stepping outside first to understand the commotion has a gender relation underlying as interactions outside of the domain of the household is primarily reserved for men. It could be possible then, these men who had stepped out of the house first, before the burning of houses and the killings began, got a head-start to flee to a safer distance.

## 2.3. Discussion on the 'stickiness' of narratives constructed by an authority

This chapter explored two concepts as a means of processing data: One, clustering, as a means of grouping people based on preconceived traits or stereotypes, informed by the discourses one is embedded in, and two, the extrapolation of the homogenising factor as the reason behind the current observed state. Using these two concepts, the clustering of Nellie massacre victims and linearising events leading up to and during the massacre were unbundled. Four alternative hypotheses were mapped, which at varying degrees relax the assumptions behind Hazarika's clustering of the present observed state.

The hypotheses discussed were all attempts renarrativise the past based on an observed state of the present, some less convincing than others. In each hypothesis, assumptions were made based on clustering 'women' (or 'men') into groups that were likely to act or be acted on in a particular way as suggested by a gender discourse. Then, based on arbitrary possibilities, selected events of the past were lined up in a way that led to the state of the present ('the dead were mostly women, children, elderly'). The evidence provided for each hypothesis was also dependent on the narratives already present in textual and visual form that had been interpreted by several researchers' and journalists' interpretive lenses understood at their intersections. To

---

[90] Ibid., sec. Testimonies of survivors.

visualise these five hypotheses in a tree-diagram, analogous to the metaphor of patterns in the ivy, observe Figure 14 mapped using the adapted backward induction method.

Out of these possible paths, and several more not discussed, interpretations of who was killed during the Nellie massacre and why, Hazarika picked one that made logical sense to him. Situated within a gender discourse, Hazarika found women, children, the elderly, and the infirm could be homogenised as a 'weak' group in contrast to the young men homogenised as a 'fit' group. Based on this grouping and extrapolating their capability to run away from the attackers, which is a plausible explanation for survival, the past was imagined into a linear progression as follows: the state of being weak for one group caused the inability to run away which in turn caused a disproportionate number of women, children, and elderly to be killed, which in a circular flow validates the initial logic of grouping. The gender discourse which situates the victims as fragile and the attackers as agile endorses this and stops further speculation, as a pattern satisfactory to its attribution of feminine and masculine qualities had been formed. The discourse has, as it had in Cohn's case, stopped thought, taking with it one set of relationships out of the chaos of the past. Finally, being an authority on the region, Hazarika's words are repeated and maintained through the public discourse and academic studies of the massacre, creating a feedback loop into establishing his interpretation as the reasonable cause. His interpretation, albeit being one of many interpretations available from the observed state of the present, became 'sticky'.
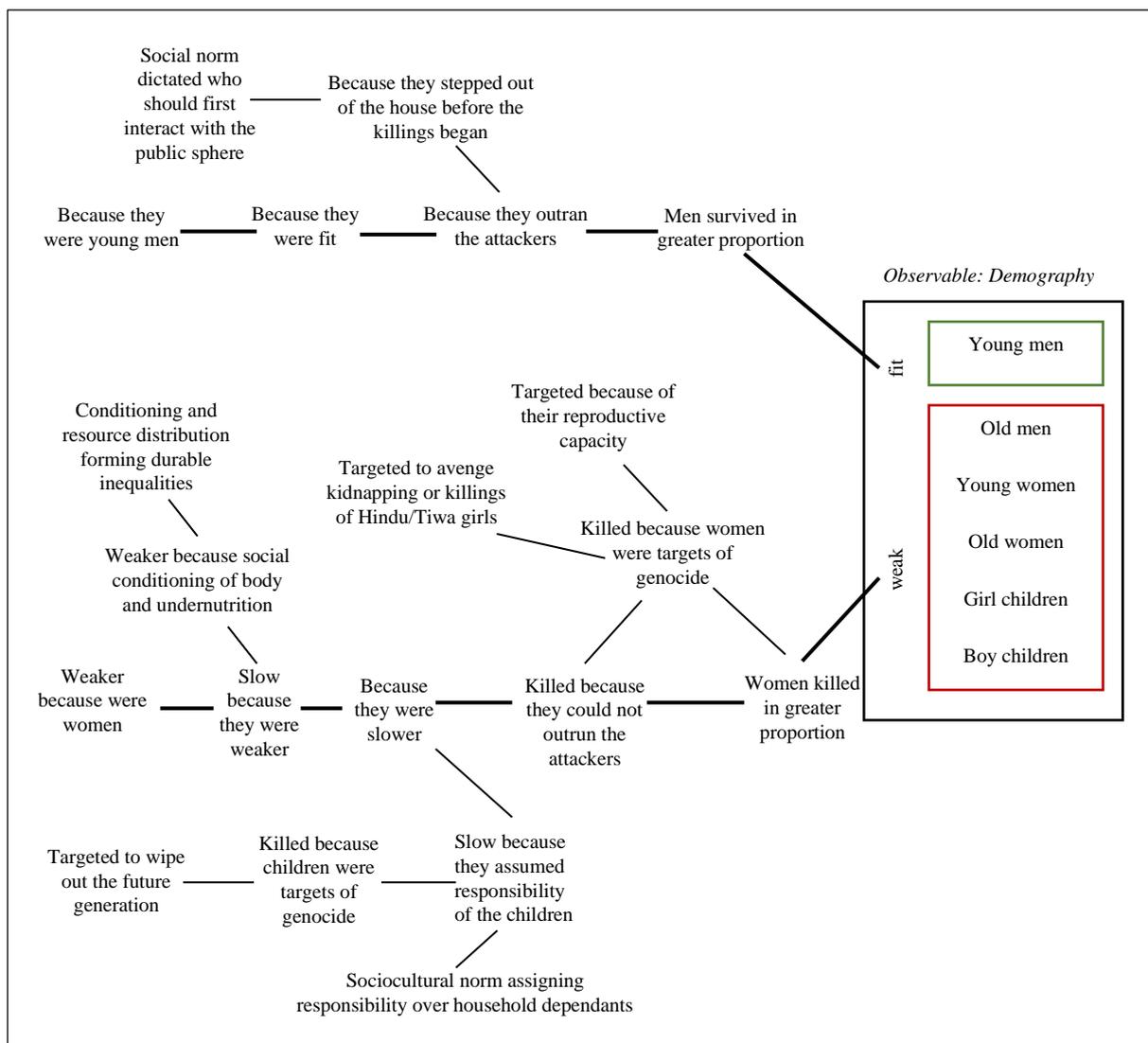
**Figure 14: Mapping possible cause-effect paths leading up to Hazarika's conclusion.**

When I reached out to contemporary scholars in refugee and migration studies during my fieldwork in Kolkata in August 2019 regarding who were killed and why in the Nellie massacre, our conversations covered parts of the claims I make in this chapter. While in news reporting and in the public discourse, Hazarika's interpretation is uncritically adopted, the academics acknowledged multiple possibilities. However, the research products and writings of academics especially on such sensitive cases often tend not to make its way into the public

discourse, retained in a form of specialised language for specialised consumption of critical analysis. Newspaper reporting on the other hand reach a wider audience.[91]

Paula Banerjee corroborated the idea that violence on a community-level surrounds the body of the woman, inflicting damage on whom serves to both hurt the honour of the community as well as the reproductive capacity of the demography. Such a pattern is observed in many communal riots and genocides in the past. At the same time, gendered relations continue to show itself in many forms of violence even when reproductive capacity of the demography or the community's honour had not been the target. In rampages leading to destruction of property and looting, women children are often kidnapped as they are treated as property in the structural context of political economy.[92] In the Rwandan genocide, for example, when businesses were looted and burnt down, civilians who had participated were 'rewarded' with material loot, and women and girls were treated as 'war booty'.[93] The burning and looting of businesses could be considered a cognate to the killing of cattle and livestock during the Nellie massacre,[94] as the surrounding villages primary engaged in cultivation and animal husbandry. Gendered relations are entrenched in the greater structural political economy and identity politics, and as such, there are several pathways for exploration of gendered relations as to why 'the victims were mostly women and children' within the domain of gender studies in collaboration with political economy. In Hazarika's comment, it was as if the part of gender discourse that ascribes agility to the assailants and fragility to women, children, and the elderly practically 'stopped thought' over why those specific bodies lay as

---

[91] Oftentimes the reading of newspapers or listening to the radio are considered in indices of literacy and public exposure in developing countries where school education is unstructured.

[92] I do not elaborate here further for the lack of space, but the section 'The Political Economy of Everyday Gender Violence' is highly informative of the gendered structure of violence tied to political economy. Jennie E. Burnet, 'Situating Sexual Violence in Rwanda (1990-2001): Sexual Agency, Sexual Consent, and the Political Economy of War', *African Studies Review* 55, no. 2 (2012): 100, www.jstor.org/stable/43904824.

[93] Ibid., 109.

[94] Begum and Hoenig, 'Nellie (1983): A Case Study of Mass Violence and Impunity', sec. Testimony of survivors.

they did, just as thought stopped when Cohn was classified as a 'wimp' and erased all the reasons why she could have possibly made the choices she did to arrive at her decision.

Objections to Hazarika's statement, however, are difficult to raise and parallel interpretations are difficult to establish because of his being an authority on the matter, especially as one of the few people who had been to the sites of the massacre and the only person who had been with Indira Gandhi at the time of her visit to Assam. Being a contemporary authority and personal acquaintance of Sanjoy Hazarika, Samir Kumar Das, professor of Political Science at University of Calcutta, could express his reaction to him. During my conversation with him, he reiterated his interaction with Hazarika regarding this statement:

> "*Eta ekta kotha holo*? [Is this a thing to say?] I have said this to Sanjoy da, '*Eta ekta kotha bollen*? [Did you just say this?]. *Apni eta kii likhlen?'* [What did you just write?] … *Eta toh kono kotha na* [It's a preposterous thing to say] that the women couldn't run, that's why they were killed. Men—In fact, no one knows that the number of women killed was greater than the number of men killed. We get to know this only from the writings of Sanjoy Hazarika. Why Sanjoy Hazarika? Because he was at that time a New York Times correspondent, and he was the only journalist who was accompanying Indira Gandhi at that point. Now, he wasn't there during the time of the attack; he visited the place afterwards."[95]

Such a contestation, however, is not possible for the vast majority of researchers including myself. Journalists writing in a genre that reaches a wider audience continue in his genealogy of reasoning. On the topic how to interpret such statements, Debdatta Chowdhury, assistant professor of Gender Studies at Centre for Studies of Social Sciences, Calcutta, comments:

> "This is too sweeping a statement to not be able to run away and the victims were … [*interview interrupted by a visitor*] Is this from Sanjoy Hazarika's book? I guess he has some *iye* [filler word, shows hesitation, presumably substitute for 'reason'] for saying that because he was there… but still I mean, when you are talking about this kind of issues, even if it's true, even if that is what it was, it's not very wise, or… you know, it's unscholarly should I say, to just use it as it… I mean, you will of course refer to him but it's better to have your

---

[95] The exclamations in Bangla capture the intensity that is difficult to translate. I leave the original statements transliterated with an English translation for transparency. Das, Interview by author, Kolkata 2019.

own way of looking at it rather than just… because massacres or any conflict doesn't happen that simply or that clearly, [that] one group runs away, the other just sits there, victimised."[96]

While it is acknowledged that the massacres do not happen this linearly that a group is able to run away and another cannot, which is conveniently congruous with gendered understanding of feminised/weak and masculinised/fit bodies, the discourse that Hazarika created remains difficult to contest as a result of his being an authority ("I guess he has some [reason] for saying that because he was there"). Through references to this in succeeding narratives, as can be seen in the public discourse of the Nellie massacre, a feedback loop is formed which upholds and strengthens the discourse by feeding into it. The fractal continues in the same way when Hazarika's comment feeds into the gender discourse that ascribes the victims as feminised and weak and the survivors as masculine and fit who could compete with the masculinised and agile assailants. Thus, both the affect surrounding the narrative of an authority as well as the existence of a widely available book to cite from makes it 'sticky', reinforced through references and repetition.[97] Having a 'simplistic' observation also allows responsible authorities to eschew responsibility. If targeted killing can be written off as the women's inability to run, the scrutiny that arises from the possibility of a genocide is conveniently avoided.

How had, indeed, some survived the pogrom? The answer was perhaps not that simple.

---

[96] Chowdhury, Interview by author, Kolkata 2019.

[97] On the affective front, see generally: Sara Ahmed, 'Affective Economies', *Social Text* 22, no. 2 (14 May 2004): 117–39, https://muse.jhu.edu/article/55780. On the material front, Alatas talks about the dependency of published media for reference and academic resource. Syed Farid Alatas, 'Academic Dependency and the Global Division of Labour in the Social Sciences', *Current Sociology*, 30 June 2016, https://doi.org/10.1177/00113921030516003.

# III

## FEMINISM BEYOND GENDER:
## ACTUALISING POLITICS THROUGH INTERDISCIPLINARITY

*'When I was a boy, my mother used to bring me to the river [Kopili] ... All water we used came from here: Water to drink, to bathe, to wash clothes, to clean utensils, all of it. When I grew up a little, at seven or eight years of age, I learnt how to swim in the river. The river is the river. The water comes; the water goes. The river keeps moving. It is free. The river remained the river; it didn't change. The only change is in the humans [that interact with the river].' // Sirajuddin Ahmed, Mina's father and Nellie massacre survivor, 2016.*[1]

*"The difference between the native and the migrant is when they migrated to the location." // Dr Piash Karim (1958-2014), Professor of Political Sociology at BRAC University, Dhaka, 2013.*[2]

## 3. Introduction

Literature on the Nellie massacre most often refers to the people who had been killed during the massacre as '(illegal) Bengali Muslim immigrants' or '(illegal) Bangladeshi immigrants', very rarely as 'Bengali Muslims', and never as 'Assamese Muslims' even though they were born on Assamese lands, spoke Assamese, and their ancestors have been living on Assamese lands for at least a century.[3] The definition of legality, as was discussed in the introduction, remains loose and is interpreted differently by authorities based on desired political, economic, and social outcomes. The description of their identities has been tied to, at least, a nation and/or state. Often the descriptions of their identities have references to time to denote a notion of belonging, since an 'immigrant' is one that has technically arrived at the location *after* the formation of the nation and/or state. The central themes in the stories written about these migrants are either to say they were not foreigners and the killing was unfounded, or to assume that they had been 'illegal immigrants' or 'Bangladeshis' uncritically as had been

---

[1] Subasri Krishnan, *What the Fields Remember*, Documentary (Public Service Broadcasting Trust, 2015).

[2] Personal correspondence. It was in this series of conversations that I decided to pursue further social sciences in addition to behavioural economics. Professor Karim passed away a year later before he could pen down these thoughts to be fashioned into a citable publication. As the frames of reference acceptable in academia cannot accommodate undocumented ideas as 'knowledge', have I lost him to chaos?

[3] Hemendra Narayan, *25 Years On- Nellie Still Haunts: Assam '83: A Journalists' Travails* (Delhi: printed by Hemendra Narayan, 2008), sec. Nellie six months later.

the case with several news reports and blogposts, or to say that Tiwas whose kingdom had once been on the same lands had considered this 'pay-back'.[4]

The construction of these narratives out of chaos at the interpreter's intersection was discussed in the first chapter, while the role of discourses and the power of authorities in privileging some narratives over others were discussed in the second. The ways in which some of these narratives can become 'sticky' can stem from the power of being an authority, but it may also come from the power of material force. For those who were killed during the massacres in the proximity of Nellie, Borpeta, Khoirabari, Goreswar and countless other localities in Assam, whether or not they had been a 'foreigner' under the Foreigners Act of 1946 was a non-issue. Who would be suspected to be Muslim and killed for being a 'foreigner', says Sirajuddin Ahmed, was decided on the basis of the "fear on [their] faces" as there had been no other visible factor for heterogeneity.[5] For the attackers, it did not matter what the facts would be held up in a court. The public perception was the Muslim demography voted for the Indian National Congress who were seen to be sympathetic towards refugees and migrants from the neighbouring regions, and by extension, "for the mob, a 'Muslim' simply meant an illegal immigrant."[6] Ghosts of the deceased cannot vote. If the goal of the Assam Agitation had been their deletion from electoral rolls and eviction from Assam's lands, this was achieved through the massacre in wake of death, fear, and despair.

This chapter, influenced by a political agenda as is any piece of writing, carries a tone of personal reflection. It is an attempt to bridge the learnings from the theories and analyses of gender(ed) relations, feminist research methods, interventions, and ethics with some of the

---

[4] Sanjoy Hazarika, *Rites of Passage: Border Crossings, Imagined Homelands, India's East and Bangladesh* (Penguin Books India, 2000), 45–46.
[5] Avirook Sen, 'A Follow-up Report of Nellie Massacre in Assam', *India Today*, 6 October 1997, https://www.indiatoday.in/magazine/states/story/19971006-a-follow-up-report-of-nellie-massacre-in-assam-832259-1997-10-06.
[6] Ibid.

more practice-based social sciences in order to actualise intersectional feminist goals through material channels in parallel to the study of gender. I discuss three such themes where associated social sciences can help take a step towards these goals. By revisiting the question of who perished and why during the massacre, Section 3.1 suggests that it might be in the interest of an intersectionality researcher to not engage in the gender analysis. As I revisit the discussions of intersectionality as chaos, Section 3.2 demonstrates that the studies of migration, nationalism, and postcolonialism, where concepts of 'indigenous' and 'immigrant' are central, may benefit from the advancements made by gender studies in critically thinking about the fluidity of categories and frames of references. This chapter will end on a note on making research a two-way process where, through a long-term engagement beyond the research period, we can contribute to the communities whose stories we write and benefit from as academics in the process of writing and publishing.

## 3.1. Narratives, counter-narratives, and agency as capacity for inaction

What narratives should we, responsibly, engage with? Is the attempt to unearth silences surrounding gender in narratives always compatible with feminist political goals? Can feminist ethics be applied to analyses of fluid categories beyond gender and remain 'feminist'? During the formative stages of this project, my goal had been to extend the scholarship on fluidity of gender identities to analyse the fluidity of national identities. However, negotiations with my degree programme's requirement of having 'gender' or 'sexuality' at the centre of the project urged a reframing of the project's scope. In this section, I suggest how feminist research ethics may be employed in other fields, and even when gender is not the key question, the research can still have a feminist goal and benefit from feminist interventions.

In the chaos of Nellie massacre, the narratives constructed by the stakeholders vary widely. For the residents of the villages north of Nellie, the cause was traced to their

participation in the election.[7] For the Tiwas, their participation was to lend support to the anti-foreigner movement in Assam's interests: "The main issue was that particular movement. We only knew that [anti-foreigner] movement is going on and led by the AASU. We felt one crisis is going on with the Assamese people, so we united and [took] a stand."[8] Both the Tiwas and the Muslim villagers, however, admitted that they had historically been on good terms with each other, occasionally engaged in trade and commerce, and that they had no quarrel with each other till the movement started.[9] The local movement leaders, on the other hand, ascribed tensions between local people and the 'immigrants' insofar as voicing that the "direct cause [was] identity: the identity of indigenous people."[10] They further described that the tensions were over kidnapping of Hindu girls by Muslims, stealing cattle, eating cows, forcefully harvesting lands during night time, and buying lands from the local people.[11] The narrative of land-alienation and identity politics that exists in broader literature surrounding the anti-foreigner movement,[12] as can be seen, is one consistent with the narrative of the movement leaders.[13] The movement leaders had clustered the 'indigenous people' as the rightful owners of the lands who had been affected by the migration of, as they claimed, the 'illegal Bengali Muslims'. Based on stereotypes of the *Miya*, a further clustering was done of the Muslim villagers that they claimed had cultivated at night and engaged in immoral activities. Thus, claiming that the 'indigenous people' were "harassed" by the "misbehaviour of the Muslim people", which the anti-Bengali-Muslim discourse finds plausible,[14] an interpretation of the

---

[7] Makiko Kimura, 'Memories of the Massacre: Violence and Collective Identity in the Narratives on the Nellie Incident', *Asian Ethnicity* 4, no. 2 (1 June 2003): 231, https://doi.org/10.1080/14631360301651.
[8] Ibid., 231–32.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Ibid., 232.
[11] Ibid., 233.
[12] Hazarika, *Rites of Passage*, 46.
[13] Sanjib Baruah, *India Against Itself: Assam and the Politics of Nationality* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 134.
[14] Uddipana Goswami, 'Miyā or Axamiyā? Migration and Politics of Assimilation in Assam', *Journal of Social and Policy Sciences* 1, no. i (2010): 3–36; Nandana Dutta, *Questions of Identity in Assam: Location, Migration, Hybridity* (New Delhi: SAGE Publications India, 2012), chap. Who are the Assamese?

causes behind the massacre was made. An interpretation that retrospectively fit into the linear chain of cause and effect in a tautological manner as follows: 'If the Miya is immoral, they must engage in immoral activities, and it is likely that they engage in immoral activities because they are Miya.' Thus, the processes of clustering and linearisation formed a narrative that feeds back into the discourses of the antiforeigner movement. The dominant interpretation, through repeated reference and reiteration in the public discourse, remains that of the movement leaders. As members of the civil society, the movement leaders claim to represent the interests of the Assamese people and viewpoints of the Assamese intellectuals.[15]

On the other hand, the narratives of actual participants of the massacre, the attackers and the attacked, became subordinate due to the authority they lacked to represent Assam. The Tiwa community maintains that they were misled by the movement leaders and claims that although many ethnic groups had participated in the killings, the blame fell on them since the area was surrounded by Tiwa land.[16] Furthermore, some feel that the massacre is attributed to them as they ('tribals') are seen as 'wild' by the 'ethnic Assamese people'.[17] They distance themselves from the ethnic Assamese to form a counter-narrative. The Muslim villagers, however, do not describe the identities of the attackers, so not to antagonise themselves, and only refer to the attackers as "some local people".[18] Had the villagers identified the amalgamation of tribal groups and general local Hindu residents as a group separate from themselves, it provides would provide the grounds for clustering into heterogenous groups. The narratives, amidst the chaos of Nellie massacre, are constructed in line with a broader network in which the groups relate to one another and with their agendas. The minority group was not

[15] Kimura, 'Memories of the Massacre', 234.

[16] Narayan Kumar Radu Kakoti, Tiwa Leader Narayan Kumar Radu Kakoti Blames RSS-AASU for 'Misguiding' Tiwas During Nellie Massacre, interview by Taha Amin Mazumder, 21 February 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aXxIqspqR0A.

[17] Sangeeta Barooah Pisharoty, 'That Spot of Shame', *The Hindu*, 27 October 2013, sec. Authors, https://www.thehindu.com/books/books-authors/that-spot-of-shame/article5275859.ece.

[18] Kimura, 'Memories of the Massacre', 235.

vocal in creating a narrative for themselves as a means of deliberately not distinguishing themselves from the locals. Not seeking an autonomous counter-narrative, then, can be seen as an autonomous decision,[19] congruous with their choice to assimilate with the Assamese community.[20] Identity politics might not always be in the form of emancipatory self-determination, as was illustrated by the Muslim villagers who aimed to assimilate.

Feminist scholarship, notably the works of Saba Mahmood, provides the framework for understanding agency as capacity of action—or for that matter, inaction.[21] Taking a cue from such a feminist framing of agency and feminist ethical directive of 'do no harm',[22] I maintain that there is scope for actualising feminist research methods and political goals in areas without the analysis of gender, sexuality, or women at the centre. If the feminist goal is to provide the platform of agency in a way individuals or communities chose for themselves and to amplify their voices to the extent they want, then our work still can be feminist when the communities whose stories we write do not want gender at the forefront of their narratives. There was scope for this thesis to fully focus on the subdiscipline of gender and nationalism to analyse what it means to take up arms based on the rumour that the Muslim villagers were kidnapping the Hindu girls. I deliberately chose not to do so, and it is only left a hypothesis along with four others. Producing an academic piece of work feeds into a discourse that might potentially harm the community, as it provides a source of reference at a 'credible' institution's database. Their choice to not seek a counter-narrative or bring controversial themes at the centre, in order to

---

[19] On agency as resistance versus agency as choice, see Saba Mahmood, 'Feminist Theory, Embodiment, and the Docile Agent: Some Reflections on the Egyptian Islamic Revival', *Cultural Anthropology* 16, no. 2 (2001): 202–36, https://www.jstor.org/stable/656537.
[20] Goswami, 'Miyā or Axamiyā?', 29.
[21] Mahmood explores an urban women's mosque movement to revive Islam in Cairo to unbundle the manifestations of agency developed in geographical and cultural contexts in which the liberal idea of agency as resistance and self-determination do not resonate. Mahmood, 'Feminist Theory, Embodiment, and the Docile Agent'.
[22] Sharlene Nagy Hesse-Biber, *Handbook of Feminist Research: Theory and Praxis* (SAGE Publications, 2011), 583.

assimilate and refrain from antagonising themselves as a community separable from 'the locals' has to be respected.

## 3.2. Looking back into the future: Anachronisms of chaos

Taking the conceptual framework put together in this thesis forward, considering the following proposition: If a partial reading and concerns of the present (at time $t$) and discourses at the reader's intersection can influence the ordering of the past (at time $t - 1$),[23] then it flows that an aspiration or imagination of a future $(t + 1)$ by the reader can also influence the reading of the present $(t)$. In both cases, the interpreter pegs herself to a moment in time, clustering information based on categories that become important at a particular time period,[24] and reorders the events leading up to or surrounding it.[25] This is to suggest that reordering of the teleology applies both to the past that converges to the partial reading of the present as well as to the present that is thought to converge to an aspiration of the future. At the same time, a historical moment in the past $(t - 1)$ upon which a community hinges its identity or nationalist pride can influence the reading of the present, as patterns that had been important in the past can influence the clustering at present. Formulated as such, it can be said that, it is not only the memories of the past that influences knowledge at the present, or concerns of the present that influences the ordering of the past, but that aspirations of the future are equality culpable in the forces behind ordering chaos.

---

[23] Walter Benjamin writes, 'History is the object of a construction whose place is formed not in homogenous and empty time, but in that which is fulfilled by the here-and-now [*Jetztzeit*].' Walter Benjamin, 'Frankfurt School: On the Concept of History [1940]', Online Archive, trans. Dennis Redmond, Marxists Internet Archive, 2005, s.v. XIV, https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/benjamin/1940/history.htm.
[24] Erika Apfelbaum, 'Halbwachs and the Social Properties of Memory', in *Memory: Histories, Theories, Debates*, ed. Susannah Radstone and Bill Schwarz (New York: Fordham Univ. Press, 2011), 85.
[25] Schwarz argues that the writing of history is reconstructed in a manner that leads up to the modernity. I propose 'modernity' can be replaced with any desired outcome state and the reconstruction of history would change accordingly. Bill Schwarz, 'Memory, Temporality, Modernity: Les Lieux de Mémoire', in *Memory: Histories, Theories, Debates*, ed. Susannah Radstone and Bill Schwarz (New York: Fordham Univ. Press, 2011).

95

Categories such as 'indigenous' and 'immigrant' that denote a level of belonging to a homeland are ultimately a reference to time. The UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues describes indigenous peoples as "descendants of those who inhabited a country or a geographical region *at the time* when people of different cultures or ethnic origins arrived."[26] The UN, although refusing to define clearly define what the term 'indigenous' means due to "the diversity of indigenous peoples", lists that indigenous people tend to have "historical continuity with pre-colonial and/or pre-settler societies".[27] The categorisation of the indigenous peoples, here, is in reference to 'European time',[28] which in a manner of speaking marks the beginning of '(European) history' for these lands. The primary focus here is on European perspective of indigeneity, in the same way 'immigrant' uses the creation of the nation-state as its frame of reference. In the same vein, the reason why the 'ethnic (Hindu) Assamese' is considered native in addition to the 'tribal' population,[29] while the Bengali Muslim continues to be unwelcome and branded as a 'foreigner' is tied to the idea of India and quite blatantly the idea of the Partition designating territories of Muslim clusters. In everyday life, this imagination is represented through slogans, "Bangladeshi/*Miya*, go back,"[30] and through slurs referring to them as ailments, plagues, pests, and termites that dehumanise them into second-class citizens for whom there is no space in Assam's moral landscape.[31]

---

[26] United Nations, 'Factsheet 1: Indigenous Peoples and Identity', UNPFII Fifth Session | United Nations For Indigenous Peoples, sec. Who are indigenous peoples?, accessed 7 June 2020, https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/unpfii-sessions-2/fifth-session-of-unpfii.html.

[27] Ibid., sec. Understanding the term 'indigenous'.

[28] Anne McClintock, 'The Lay of the Land: Genealogies of Imperialism', in *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (Routledge, 1995).

[29] Sanjib Baruah, *Durable Disorder: Understanding the Politics of Northeast India* (Oxford University Press, 2005), 202–3.

[30] Rafiul Ahmed, 'Latitutes of Anxieties: The Bengali-Speaking Muslims and the Postcolonial State in Assam', in *Asia in International Relations: Unlearning Imperial Power Relations*, ed. Pinar Bilgin and L. H. M. Ling (Routledge, 2017); Humayan Kabir Bhuiyan, 'Spill-over Effect on Bangladesh Feared: "Illegal Bangladeshi" Issue in Assam', *The Independent*, 27 May 2017, http://www.theindependentbd.com/home/printnews/96535.

[31] Yasmin Saikia, 'From Citizen to Termite: The Case of the "Bangladeshis" in Assam', শুদ্ধস্বর *(Shuddhashar)*, 1 June 2019, https://shuddhashar.com/from-citizen-to-termite-the-case-of-the-bangladeshis-in-assam-yasmin-saikia/.

The imagination of a past, present, and future, along with their continual representations and re-imaginations at critical historical and political junctions, influence these definitions of 'indigenous' and 'immigrant'. The invocation of time as a dynamic and endogenous dimension can lend itself to the more 'powerful' social sciences such as political science and economics that assume the nation-state to be primary units of analysis in studying the economies, international relations, and trade between the areas bounded by a national border.[32] Furthermore, while scholarship in mainstream history provides an account of a longer period of time, the primary unit of observation remains the nation-states, "the 'thing' whose change history was supposed to describe".[33] This framework has the potential of addressing methodological nationalism in studies that uncritically use states as primary units of analysis, pegging itself to the time of creation of the nation-state. In this way, a framework built through intersectionality pioneered by critical gender and postcolonial scholarship can lend itself to analyses of identities beyond gender.

### 3.3. Concluding comment on contributing to communities

The agenda of unearthing events that had been deliberately silenced by authorities may be one way of doing feminist research with a political agenda of offering the platform to actualise the marginalised groups' agency.[34] Oral history as a research method has been adopted by feminist researchers for this reason, and several qualitative interviewing methods urge to make research a two-way process.[35] How does it benefit the community whose stories we as researchers benefit from? Do they want to tell their stories and make them available for

[32] Andreas Wimmer and Nina Glick Schiller, 'Methodological Nationalism, the Social Sciences, and the Study of Migration: An Essay in Historical Epistemology', *The International Migration Review* 37, no. 3 (2003): 580, https://www.jstor.org/stable/30037750.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Lynn Abrams, 'Power and Empowerment', in *Oral History Theory* (Routledge, 2010), 153–75; Joan Sangster, 'Telling Our Stories: Feminist Debates and the Use of Oral History', in *The Oral History Reader*, ed. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, 1998, 87–100.
[35] Barbara Merrill and Linden West, *Using Biographical Methods in Social Research* (SAGE, 2009), 29–30.

dissection, analysis, and dissemination, thus making the telling of the stories in itself beneficial to them? If not, how does the research process benefit them at all?

In the 14-16 villages north of Nellie, "You people come here, listen, leave," says Nobi Hussain, a survivor, "You remind us. We remember."[36] And they do remember: the memories of the massacre torment the survivors who have received no justice to this date. A 65-year-old Nurjahan Begum says thinking of that day still sends her body shaking and legs trembling.[37] Abdul Khayer jerks awake in the middle of the night as the deaths flash before his eyes.[38] He is withdrawn socially as he constantly keeps wondering why his family was slaughtered so inhumanely. 688 First Informant Reports (FIR) had been filed, out of which 299-310 charge-sheets were recorded and the rest had been dropped citing the lack of evidence.[39] Soon afterwards, all cases were dropped and there has not been any prosecution.[40] So what do the survivors want, and how does the dissemination, dissection, and analysis of their lives and stories help them? While Abdul Khayer was vocal and keeps fighting in the court for justice with whatever means he has, many villagers are not. "Don't add salt to our wounds," says Fatema Khatun, "Please go from here. It hurts to talk about our pasts."[41] The villagers in Bugduba Habi resonated with her. She continues, "3300 of us were killed on a single day and the rest of us are being made to die everyday: with no schools, no electricity, no roads, no

---

[36] Atul Dev, 'India Is Testing the Bounds of Citizenship', *The Atlantic*, 31 August 2019, sec. Global, https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2019/08/india-citizenship-assam-nrc/597208/.

[37] Teresa Rehman, 'Nellie Revisited: The Horror's Nagging Shadow', *Tehelka - The People's Paper*, 11 November 2006, https://web.archive.org/web/20061111192753/http://www.tehelka.com/story_main19.asp?filename=Ne093006the_horrors.asp.

[38] Krishnan, *What the Fields Remember*.

[39] Ipsita Chakravarty, 'Why Was Assam's Nellie Massacre of 1983 Not Prevented, despite Intimations of Violence?', *Scroll.In*, 18 February 2017, https://scroll.in/article/829682/why-was-assams-nellie-massacre-of-1983-not-prevented-despite-intimations-of-violence; Rehman, 'Nellie Revisited: The Horror's Nagging Shadow'.

[40] Debarshi Das, 'The Ghosts of Nellie, Assam: Thirty Years After', accessed 8 April 2020, http://sanhati.com/excerpted/5221/.

[41] Rehman, 'Nellie Revisited: The Horror's Nagging Shadow'.

infrastructure whatsoever… Our blood boils when we think of what happened that day and what we are made to endure everyday. Aren't we human beings?"[42]

The collaboration of critical gender studies with practice-based disciplines would prove useful here as a means of making the research process a two-way channel. For the case of Nellie, on topic of what they want, two things resurfaced through the interviews conducted over the years. Some want justice in form of recognition, compensation, and punishment. Some want to forget and hope to live again with dignity. Abdul Khayer spends all his money on litigating cases and trying to obtain justice through the legal system. His wife, however, has lost hope and worries about their children's future, education, and the more immediate need for money for food. Sirajuddin Ahmed wants answers: If the 2-4 people who died on the attacker's side during the massacre can be declared martyrs, while the survivors are left with nothing but torment, where is the ground beneath his feet?[43] Fatema Khatun wants electricity, schools, and roads. If our feminist research ethics urge us to be contribute to the community whose stories we write, and the writing of their stories in itself does not directly benefit them, we ought to work with the more practice-based disciplines such as law, economics, education, social work, and so on and so forth, to push for material change.

The racialisation of the 'Miya' and their exclusion from political economic or infrastructural development is also a two-way process. This has in recent times emerged in a sinister manner, where the precarious labour of the demonised demography 'Miya' was hired to build the very detention centres in which they fear their family members might be locked up.[44] And while the government injection into the construction market might elevate the

---

[42] Ibid.

[43] Suryasarathi Bhattacharya, 'What the Fields Remember: Subasri Krishnan on the Human Cost of the Nellie Massacre', Firstpost, accessed 10 June 2020, https://www.firstpost.com/long-reads/what-the-fields-remember-subasri-krishnan-paints-a-stark-portrait-of-the-human-cost-of-the-nellie-massacre-7140311.html.

[44] Tawqeer Hussain, '"How Is It Human?": India's Largest Detention Centre Almost Ready', accessed 14 January 2020, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/01/human-india-largest-detention-centre-ready-200102044649934.html.

economic lull caused by lack of consumer spending, the local orators will possibly ascribe the removal of the 'illegal immigrants' from the society to the economic fortunes. Through sustained poverty, dehumanisation, and deprivation of space, representation in the court of law, and access to healthcare, education, roads, and electricity,[45] a 'surplus population' is maintained readily available to be invoked for various purposes. It is important to flag here that there are no plans for this 'surplus population' to be deported,[46] as had been the demands of the Assam Accord, but to be continually maintained. They are 'included through their exclusion as cheaply exploitable and dispensable labour',[47] and for their existence within the territories of Assam to provide 'empirical evidence' for political rhetoric. This surplus population benefits the 'host' country in a number of ways. The politicians refer to this population as the reason behind all of Assam's ills to gain popularity to eschew responsibility.[48] The labour demand market finds a source of cheap, exploitable, and irregular labour ready to be absorbed and discarded at will to do jobs that no one else wants.[49] The dominant political and economic discourses act to legitimise their exclusion through tautological narratives, forming a feedback loop.

---

[45] Vincze makes a similar argument about the racialisation, spatialisation, and labour-related destitution of the Roma population in Romania. Enikő Vincze, 'Precarization of Working Class Roma through Spatial Deprivation, Labor Destitution and Racialization', *Szociológiai Szemle* 25, no. 4 (2015): 58–85, http://www.szociologia.hu/dynamic/58_85_oldal.pdf.

[46] Kalyan Ray, 'No Deporting after NRC, Modi Told Hasina, Says Top Aide', *Deccan Herald*, 4 October 2018, https://www.deccanherald.com/national/no-deporting-after-nrc-modi-696243.html; Press Trust of India, 'PM Modi Assured Us India Won't Deport NRC-Excluded People to Bangladesh: Official', *Hindustan Times*, 6 October 2018, https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/pm-modi-assured-us-india-won-t-deport-nrc-excluded-people-to-bangladesh-official/story-MiWCkFoxpoMvOsdWSEylCK.html.

[47] Prem Kumar Rajaram, 'Refugees as Surplus Population: Race, Migration and Capitalist Value Regimes', *New Political Economy* 23, no. 5 (3 September 2018): 628, https://doi.org/10.1080/13563467.2017.1417372.

[48] Rafiul Ahmed, 'Anxiety, Violence and the Postcolonial State: Understanding the "Anti-Bangladeshi" Rage in Assam, India', *Perceptions* XIX, no. 1 (2014): 55–70, http://sam.gov.tr/anxiety-violence-and-the-postcolonial-state-understanding-the-anti-bangladeshi-rage-in-assam-india/.

[49] Paran Balakrishnan, 'Detention Camps as Growth Model', @businessline, accessed 22 December 2019, https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/opinion/columns/from-the-viewsroom/detention-camps-as-growth-model/article29460978.ece.

If feminist goals are founded on emancipatory politics to provide the platform for agency and dignity through recognition, reconciliation, and repatriation, then the work of a feminist does not end at analysis of gender and must include towards material change.

# CONCLUSION

*'… just as the phenomenon of Orientalism does not disappear simply because some of us have now attained a critical awareness of it, similarly a certain version of "Europe", reified and celebrated in the phenomenal world of everyday relationships of power as the scene of the birth of the modern, continues to dominate the discourse of history. Analysis does not make it go away.' // Dipesh Chakrabarty, Provincialising Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference, 2000.*

The ferocity of the massacre that violently brought an end to several thousand lives forces the memories of their lives to be focused around the massacre. Their death leaves them frozen in time, creating a frame of reference for their lives, and their pasts reordered by its concerns. We do not speak of how Mina used to play marbles under a big mango tree with her sisters Rashida, Urmi, Rumi, and Julekha. We do not speak of how she along with her sisters were participants of the antiforeigner movement, or how the Assamese Muslims, Bengali Muslims, and Bengali Hindus slowly withdrew support from the movement, when they were violently torn out of their intersections and made to fit into categories of either 'Assamese' or 'foreigner'. The narrative of their lives and deaths have become one that is either in agreement or in disagreement with whether they had been a 'foreigner', a theme that had been defined for her by an act of categorising done by those wielding the power to do so. Confronted with the National Register of Citizens for Assam and the Citizenship Amendment Act (2019), we debate the survivors' legacy data and citizenship documents in courts and tribunals. We try to prove that they had not been foreigners, as if not being foreigners is the defining factor that justifies not being dehumanised and brutally killed. We engage in methodological nationalism when taking for granted the current territorial boundaries of India, echoing (unconsciously or unwillingly as it might be) the nativist/nationalist sentiment that people whose ancestors were once from lands that currently lie in a separate nation-state are 'outsiders'. When we do want to study the ambiguities and fluidities of people, processes, and pogroms, we find ourselves in disciplinary, security, and resource restrictions. We reframe the problem, revise the questions, reduce the analyses, and reorder the evidence in a manner compatible with these restrictions.

We debate whether Mina and her fallen sisters were able to outrun the attackers. I, possessing papers that mark me as Bangladeshi, situated at a point that requires that I put 'gender' at the centre of my analysis, with limited access to resources and security, and no authority in the field, am complicit in this.

There are many stories we do not speak of. Some because they are mundane and cannot be formed into an 'exciting' research project that lines up with the frames of reference endorsed by the global structures of power operating within academia and funding agencies. Some because they are seen to lack historical depth if they do not fit in the cause-effect branches of epochs or events deemed important in the key political moments in time and space. Some because they have been deliberately silenced through political repression. And yet more because the 'credible' methods of knowing do not consider them stories 'worth' telling or allowing space in the discourse of knowledge production.

The story of the Nellie massacre that persists in prevalent academic literature and broader political discourses is one of several weaved out of chaos, but it is one that pushes all else back. It provides a circular logic that equates selected causes and effects that, being self-contained within its set of relations, stops thought and hinders a further exploration into the chaos. Official dominant narratives as such have a 'crowing out' effect. They remain the dominant narrative not only by repeated referencing in academic or other 'credible' literature, methodologies, and political rhetoric, but also through instruments of instilling fear, perpetual poverty, and material deprivation. And when the narrative is that of a nation-state, be it an imagination of its past or an aspiration of its future, methodological nationalism remains endemic. The frame of reference that cuts into the chaos of time, space, geographies, and peoples with the birth of a nation divides the populations into 'indigenous' and 'immigrant',

referring to its own bureaucratic instruments for an 'objective' definition in a tautological manner.

Similarly, other frames of reference draw the line between masculine and feminine, men and women, European and native, the West and the rest, 'robust' comparative methods and 'fickle' personal anecdotes, history and myth, fact and fiction, Indian and Bangladeshi, Assamese and Bengali. Sitting atop a global political economic structure of labour, administration, and resources, these binaries continue to shape our experiences. Intersectionality research, by deconstructing the frame of reference, strives to carve out a space between and beyond these binaries to understand, express, and represent the people of chaos. The tools of critical gender studies that aim to mainstream intersectional analyses, as was discussed in this thesis, have been honed to challenge the multi-faceted operations of power in various ways. But "analysis does not make it go away."[1] How do we, then, embedded in the global academy and division of labour in sciences, navigate this chaos? How do we plunge into chaos from the ground beneath our feet that is familiarity of the system, expertise of our disciplines, stability of resource inflows, and comfort of reclusion as academics?

At this point, I do not have an answer.

At this point, I take my leave to retreat into silence for further research and reflection, to walk through the patterns in the ivy, to try to listen to the muffled voices from the depths of chaos, while I map ways in which I can utilise my training in critical gender studies, political sociology, and economics to contribute to the infrastructural development project that aims to clean the waters of Kiling flowing northeast of Nellie.

---

[1] Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, (First impression: 2000), Princeton Studies in Culture, Power, History (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), 28.

# BIBLIOGRAPHY

## Primary Sources

*State and autonomous council documents*

'Accord between AASU, AAGSP and the Central Government on the Foreign National Issue (Assam Accord)', 15 August 1985. Scanned copy at Government of Assam's website: https://assamaccord.assam.gov.in/sites/default/files/swf_utility_folder/departments/assamaccord_medhassu_in_oid_3/portlet/level_1/files/The%20Assam%20Accord%20-%20English.pdf

Lalung Darbar Memorandum. 'A brief note on violence occurred pre and post election period and prayer for relief for the affected tribal communities of Assam', 24 June 1983. Republished in *25 Years On-Nellie Still Haunts: Assam '83: A Journalist's Travails* by Hemendra Narayan, 2008.

*Reports, Reporting, and Eyewitness Accounts*

Hazarika, Sanjoy. '"Where Are the Bodies?"' In *Rites of Passage: Border Crossings, Imagined Homelands, India's East and Bangladesh*. Penguin Books India, 2000.

Uddin, Main. 'Genesis of Nellie Massacre and Assam Agitation'. Report. Indilens News Team https://www.academia.edu/17665743/Genesis_of_nellie_massacre_and_assam_agitation.

Narayan, Hemendra. *25 Years On- Nellie Still Haunts: Assam '83: A Journalist's Travails*. Delhi: printed by Hemendra Narayan, 2008.

*Interviews (Videos in Assamese and Bangla, Text in English)*

Kakoti, Narayan Kumar Radu. Tiwa Leader Narayan Kumar Radu Kakoti Blames RSS-AASU for 'Misguiding' Tiwas During Nellie Massacre. Interview by Taha Amin, 21 February 2019. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aXxIqspqR0A.

Survivors from Muladhari and Borbori. Krishnan, Subasri [director]. *What the Fields Remember*. Documentary. Public Service Broadcasting Trust, 2015.

Muladhari villagers. 'Nellie 83 Revisited: Victims Say They Had Been Barricaded for 6 Months Before the Massacre'. Interview by Taha Amin Mazumder. Accessed 13 October 2019. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nNTJDEEExas.

Anonymised villagers. Anjuman Ara Begum, and Patrick Hoenig. 'Nellie (1983): A Case Study of Mass Violence and Impunity'. In *Landscapes of Fear: Understanding Impunity in India*, edited by Patrick Hoenig and Navsharan Singh, ebook edition. Zubaan, 2014.

*Consultation Meetings (in Assamese, Bangla, and English)*

Banerjee, Paula. Vice-Chancellor, The Sanskrit College and University. Interview by author. Kolkata, August 2019.

Chowdhury, Debdatta. Assistant Professor of Gender Studies at Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, Calcutta. Interview by author. Kolkata, August 2019.

Das, Samir Kumar. Professor of Political Science, University of Calcutta. Interview by author. Kolkata, August 2019.

Chowdhury, Sabyasachi Basu Ray. Professor of Political Science, Rabindra Bharati University. Interview by author. Kolkata, August 2019.

Mishra, Omprakash. Professor of International Relations, Jadavpur University. Interview by author. Kolkata, August 2019.

Samaddar, Ranabir. Director, Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group. Interview by author. Kolkata, August 2019.

*Enumeration data*
Sarma, Diganta, and Anzu Azad. 'Recalling Nellie 1983'. TwoCircles.Net (blog). Accessed 17 December 2018. http://twocircles.net/2009feb17/recalling_nellie_1983.html_0.

## Secondary Sources

Abrams, Lynn. 'Power and Empowerment'. In *Oral History Theory*, 153–75. Routledge, 2010.

Agarwal, Ravi P., Kanishka Perera, and Sandra Pinelas. 'History of Complex Numbers'. In *An Introduction to Complex Analysis*, 321–25. Boston, MA: Springer US, 2011. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4614-0195-7_50.

Aguilar, Delia D. 'From Triple Jeopardy to Intersectionality: The Feminist Perplex'. *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 32, no. 2 (19 August 2012): 415–28. https://muse.jhu.edu/article/483513.

Ahmed, Rafiul. 'Anxiety, Violence and the Postcolonial State: Understanding the "Anti-Bangladeshi" Rage in Assam, India'. *Perceptions* XIX, no. 1 (2014): 55–70. http://sam.gov.tr/anxiety-violence-and-the-postcolonial-state-understanding-the-anti-bangladeshi-rage-in-assam-india/.

———. 'Latitutes of Anxieties: The Bengali-Speaking Muslims and the Postcolonial State in Assam'. In *Asia in International Relations: Unlearning Imperial Power Relations*, edited by Pinar Bilgin and L. H. M. Ling. Routledge, 2017.

Ahmed, Sara. 'Affective Economies'. *Social Text* 22, no. 2 (14 May 2004): 117–39. https://muse.jhu.edu/article/55780.

Ahmed, Shahiuz Zaman. 'Factors Leading to the Migration from East Bengal to Assam 1872-1971'. *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 66 (2005): 999–1015. https://www.jstor.org/stable/44145913.

Alatas, Syed Farid. 'Academic Dependency and the Global Division of Labour in the Social Sciences'. *Current Sociology*, 30 June 2016. https://doi.org/10.1177/00113921030516003.

Alkire, Sabina, Ruth Suseela Meinzen-Dick, Amber Peterman, Agnes R. Quisumbing, Greg Seymour, and Ana Vaz. 'The Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index'. Washington, 2012. http://www.ifpri.org/publication/women's-empowerment-agriculture-index.

Almeling, Rene. 'Selling Genes, Selling Gender: Egg Agencies, Sperm Banks, and the Medical Market in Genetic Material'. *American Sociological Review* 72, no. 3 (1 June 2007): 319–40. https://doi.org/10.1177/000312240707200301.

Al-Rebholz, Anil. 'Gendered Subjectivity and Intersectional Political Agency in Transnational Space: The Case of Turkish and Kurdish Women's NGO Activists'. In *Situating Intersectionality: Politics, Policy, and Power*, edited by Angelia R. Wilson. Springer, 2013.

Anagnost, Ann. 'A Surfeit of Bodies: Population and Rationality of the State in Post-Mao China'. In *Conceiving the New World Order: The Global Politics of Reproduction*, edited by Faye D. Ginsburg and Rayna Rapp. University of California Press, 1991.

Anderson, Benedict. 'Census, Map, Museum'. In *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Verso, 1983.

Anthias, Floya, and Nira Yuval-Davis. 'Contextualizing Feminism - Gender, Ethnic and Class Divisions'. *Feminist Review* 15, no. 1 (January 1983): 62–75. https://doi.org/10.1057/fr.1983.33.

Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Borderlands - La Frontera: The New Mestiza*. Aunt Lute Books, 1987.

Apfelbaum, Erika. 'Halbwachs and the Social Properties of Memory'. In *Memory: Histories, Theories, Debates*, edited by Susannah Radstone and Bill Schwarz. New York: Fordham Univ. Press, 2011.

Appadurai, Arjun. *Fear of Small Numbers: An Essay on the Geography of Anger*. Duke University Press, 2006.

———. 'Number in the Colonial Imagination'. In *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament: Perspectives on South Asia*, 314–39. South Asia Seminar Series. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993.

Ariely, Gal. 'Exploring Citizenship Spheres of Inclusion/Exclusion: Rights as "Potential for Power"'. *Patterns of Prejudice* 45, no. 3 (1 July 2011): 241–58. https://doi.org/10.1080/0031322X.2011.585020.

Balakrishnan, Paran. 'Detention Camps as Growth Model'. @businessline. Accessed 22 December 2019. https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/opinion/columns/from-the-viewsroom/detention-camps-as-growth-model/article29460978.ece.

Baruah, Sanjib. *Durable Disorder: Understanding the Politics of Northeast India*. Oxford University Press, 2005.

———. *India Against Itself: Assam and the Politics of Nationality*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999.

———. 'The Rise and Decline of a Separatist Insurgency: Contentious Poitics in Assam, India'. In *Autonomy and Ethnic Conflict in South and South-East Asia*, edited by Rajat Ganguly. Routledge, 2012.

Beal, Frances M. 'Double Jeopardy: To Be Black and Female'. *Meridians* 8, no. 2 (2008): 166–76. https://www.jstor.org/stable/40338758.

Begum, Anjuman Ara, and Patrick Hoenig. 'Nellie (1983): A Case Study of Mass Violence and Impunity'. In *Landscapes of Fear: Understanding Impunity in India*, edited by Patrick Hoenig and Navsharan Singh, Ebook edition. Zubaan, 2014.

Begum, Anjuman Ara, and Diganta Sarma. 'Nellie 1983'. *TwoCircles.Net* (blog), 18 February 1983. http://twocircles.net/special_reports/nellie_1983.html.

Benjamin, Walter. 'Frankfurt School: On the Concept of History [1940]'. Online Archive. Translated by Dennis Redmond. Marxists Internet Archive, 2005. https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/benjamin/1940/history.htm.

Bhattacharya, Suryasarathi. 'What the Fields Remember: Subasri Krishnan on the Human Cost of the Nellie Massacre'. Firstpost. Accessed 10 June 2020. https://www.firstpost.com/long-reads/what-the-fields-remember-subasri-krishnan-paints-a-stark-portrait-of-the-human-cost-of-the-nellie-massacre-7140311.html.

Bhuiyan, Humayan Kabir. 'Spill-over Effect on Bangladesh Feared: "Illegal Bangladeshi" Issue in Assam'. *The Independent*. 27 May 2017. http://www.theindependentbd.com/home/printnews/96535.

Bowleg, Lisa. 'When Black + Lesbian + Woman ≠ Black Lesbian Woman: The Methodological Challenges of Qualitative and Quantitative Intersectionality Research', 2008.

Burnet, Jennie E. 'Situating Sexual Violence in Rwanda (1990-2001): Sexual Agency, Sexual Consent, and the Political Economy of War'. *African Studies Review* 55, no. 2 (2012): 97–118. www.jstor.org/stable/43904824.

Butler, Judith. 'Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory'. *Theatre Journal* 40, no. 4 (1988): 519–31. https://doi.org/10.2307/3207893.

Byrne, David S, and Gill Callaghan. *Complexity Theory and the Social Sciences: The State of the Art*, 2014.

Chakrabarty, Dipesh. 'Minority Histories, Subaltern Pasts'. In *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*. Princeton Studies in Culture, Power, History. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000.

———. 'Postcoloniality and the Artifice of History'. In *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, Reissue (First impression: 2000). Princeton Studies in Culture, Power, History. Princeton, NJ: Univ. Press, 2008.

———. *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*. (First impression: 2000). Princeton Studies in Culture, Power, History. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008.

Chakravarty, Ipsita. 'Why Was Assam's Nellie Massacre of 1983 Not Prevented, despite Intimations of Violence?' *Scroll.In*, 18 February 2017. https://scroll.in/article/829682/why-was-assams-nellie-massacre-of-1983-not-prevented-despite-intimations-of-violence.

Chatterjee, Piya. *A Time for Tea: Women, Labor, and Post/Colonial Politics on an Indian Plantation*. Duke University Press, 2001.

Chin, Christine B. N. 'Visible Bodies, Invisible Work: State Practices toward Migrant Women Domestic Workers in Malaysia': *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal*, 20 July 2016. https://doi.org/10.1177/011719680301200103.

Choudhary, Ratnadeep. 'Nellie Massacre and "Citizenship": When 1,800 Muslims Were Killed in Assam in Just 6 Hours'. *ThePrint* (blog), 18 February 2019. https://theprint.in/india/governance/nellie-massacre-and-citizenship-when-1800-muslims-were-killed-in-assam-in-just-6-hours/193694/.

Cohn, Carol. 'War, Wimps, and Women: Talking Gender and Thinking War | The Consortium on Gender, Security and Human Rights'. In *Gendering War Talk*, edited by Miriam Cooke and Angela Woollacott, 227–46. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993. https://genderandsecurity.org/projects-resources/research/war-wimps-and-women-talking-gender-and-thinking-war.

Condorelli, Rosalia. 'Complex Systems Theory: Some Considerations for Sociology'. *Open Journal of Applied Sciences* 6, no. 7 (12 July 2016): 422–48. https://doi.org/10.4236/ojapps.2016.67044.

Coser, Lewis, and Maurice Halbwachs. *On Collective Memory*. University of Chicago Press, 1992.

Crenshaw, Kimberle. 'Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color'. *Stanford Law Review* 43, no. 6 (1991): 1241–99. https://doi.org/10.2307/1229039.

Cuádraz, Gloria Holguín, and Lynet Uttal. 'Intersectionality and In-Depth Interviews: Methodological Strategies for Analyzing Race, Class, and Gender'. *Race, Gender & Class* 6, no. 3 (1999): 156–86. https://www.jstor.org/stable/41674900.

Dalla Costa, Mariarosa. 'Women and the Subversion of the Community', 1971. https://www.generation-online.org/p/fpdallacosta2.htm.

Das, Debarshi. 'The Ghosts of Nellie, Assam: Thirty Years After'. Accessed 8 April 2020. http://sanhati.com/excerpted/5221/.

Das, Veena. 'National Honour and Practical Kinship: Unwanted Women and Children'. In *Conceiving the New World Order: The Global Politics of Reproduction*, edited by Faye Ginsburg and Rayna Rapp, 212–233, 1995.

Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *What Is Philosophy?* Translated by Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell III. Columbia University Press, 1996.

Dev, Atul. 'India Is Testing the Bounds of Citizenship'. *The Atlantic*. 31 August 2019, sec. Global. https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2019/08/india-citizenship-assam-nrc/597208/.

Dutta, Nandana. *Questions of Identity in Assam: Location, Migration, Hybridity*. New Delhi ; Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 2012.

———. *Questions of Identity in Assam: Location, Migration, Hybridity*. New Delhi: SAGE Publications India, 2012.

ESCAP, United Nations, ed. *Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security in Asia and the Pacific*. United Nations Publication. Bangkok: United Nations ESCAP, 2009.

Eve, Raymond A, Sara Horsfall, and Mary E Lee. *Chaos, Complexity, and Sociology: Myths, Models, and Theories*. Thousand Oaks, Calif: Sage Publ., 2003.

Fox, Jon E. 'From National Inclusion to Economic Exclusion: Ethnic Hungarian Labour Migration to Hungary*'. *Nations and Nationalism* 13, no. 1 (2007): 77–96. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-8129.2007.00280.x.

Friedman, Susan Stanford. 'Statement: Academic Feminism and Interdisciplinarity'. *Feminist Studies* 27, no. 2 (2001): 504–9. https://doi.org/10.2307/3178774.

Gait, Edward. *A History of Assam*. Thacker, Spink & Company, 1906.

Gandhi, Leela. *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction*. Allen & Unwin, 1998.

Gauß, Carl Friedrich. *Carl Friedrich Gauss Werke: Achter Band*. Springer-Verlag, 2013.

Gibbons, Robert. *Game Theory for Applied Economists*. Princeton University Press, 1992. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvcmxrzd.

Gleick, James. *Chaos: Making a New Science*. Penguin, 1988.

Goodwin-White, Jamie. 'Is Social Mobility Spatial? Characteristics of Immigrant Metros and Second Generation Outcomes: 1940–1970 and 1970–2000'. *Population, Space and Place* 22, no. 8 (November 2016): 807–22. https://doi.org/10.1002/psp.1960.

Goswami, Uddipana. 'Miyā or Axamiyā? Migration and Politics of Assimilation in Assam'. *Journal of Social and Policy Sciences* 1, no. i (2010): 3–36.

Greene, Brian. *Until the End of Time: Mind, Matter, and Our Search for Meaning in an Evolving Universe*. Large Print edition. New York: Random House Large Print, 2020.

Guha, Amalendu. *Planter-Raj to Swaraj: Freedom Struggle and Electoral Politics in Assam, 1826-1947*. Indian Council of Historical Research, 1977.

Gupta, Shekhar. *Assam, a Valley Divided*. New Delhi: Vikas, 1984. http://books.google.com/books?id=bvCAAAAAIAAJ.

Hancock, James F. *Plantation Crops, Plunder and Power: Evolution and Exploitation*. Taylor & Francis, 2017.

Haraway, Donna. 'Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective'. *Feminist Studies* 14, no. 3 (1988): 575–99. https://doi.org/10.2307/3178066.

Hartmann, Heidi I. 'The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Towards a More Progressive Union': *Capital & Class*, 11 September 2016. https://doi.org/10.1177/030981687900800102.

Hazarika, Sanjoy. *Rites of Passage: Border Crossings, Imagined Homelands, India's East and Bangladesh*. Penguin Books India, 2000.

Hesse-Biber, Sharlene Nagy. *Handbook of Feminist Research: Theory and Praxis*. SAGE Publications, 2011.

Human Rights Watch. 'Lasting Wounds: Consequences of Genocide and War for Rwanda's Children'. *Human Rights Watch*, 3 April 2003.

https://www.hrw.org/report/2003/04/03/lasting-wounds/consequences-genocide-and-war-rwandas-children.

Hussain, Tawqeer. '"How Is It Human?": India's Largest Detention Centre Almost Ready'. Accessed 14 January 2020. https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/01/human-india-largest-detention-centre-ready-200102044649934.html.

Ibrahim, Neelima. *আমি বীরাঙ্গনা বলছি (I am the War Heroine speaking)*. Jagriti, 1994.

Joeden-Forgey, Elisa von. 'Gender and Genocide'. In *The Oxford Handbook of Genocide Studies*. Oxford University Press, 2010. https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199232116.001.0001.

Joseph, Suad, and Afsana Nagmabadi. *Encyclopedia of Women and Islamic Cultures: Family, Law and Politics*. BRILL, 2003.

Kaijser, Anna, and Annica Kronsell. 'Climate Change through the Lens of Intersectionality'. *Environmental Politics* 23, no. 3 (4 May 2014): 417–33. https://doi.org/10.1080/09644016.2013.835203.

Kalbag, Chaitanya. 'Bloodstains in Assam: The Legacy of Nellie Communal Frenzy'. *Economic Times Blog* (blog), 1 April 2016. https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/blogs/the-needles-eye/bloodstains-in-assam-the-legacy-of-nellie-communal-frenzy/.

Kalpagam, U. 'The Colonial State and Statistical Knowledge': *History of the Human Sciences*, 25 July 2016. https://doi.org/10.1177/09526950022120665.

Kimura, Makiko. 'Agency of the Rioters: A Study of Decision Making in the Nellie Massacre'. In *The Nellie Massacre of 1983: Agency of Rioters*, Kindle edition. SAGE Publications Pvt. Ltd, 2013.

———. 'Election Boycott and the Nellie Incident'. In *The Nellie Massacre of 1983: Agency of Rioters*, Kindle edition. SAGE Publications Pvt. Ltd, 2013.

———. 'Memories of the Massacre'. In *The Nellie Massacre of 1983: Agency of Rioters*, Kindle edition. SAGE Publications Pvt. Ltd, 2013.

———. 'Memories of the Massacre: Violence and Collective Identity in the Narratives on the Nellie Incident'. *Asian Ethnicity* 4, no. 2 (1 June 2003): 225–39. https://doi.org/10.1080/14631360301651.

———. *The Nellie Massacre of 1983: Agency of Rioters*. Kindle edition. SAGE Publications Pvt. Ltd, 2013.

Kolářová, Marta. 'Gender and Globalisation: Labour Changes in the Global Economy'. *Sociologický Časopis / Czech Sociological Review* 42, no. 6 (2006): 1241–57. https://www.jstor.org/stable/41132360.

Krishnan, Subasri. 'Thirty-Two Years Later, the Nellie Massacre Remains All But Forgotten'. *The Caravan* (blog), 18 February 2018. https://caravanmagazine.in/vantage/thirty-two-years-later-nellie-massacre-remains-all-forgotten.

Lane, Riki. 'Trans as Bodily Becoming: Rethinking the Biological as Diversity, Not Dichotomy'. *Hypatia* 24, no. 3 (2009): 136–57. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1527-2001.2009.01049.x.

Laplace, Pierre-Simon. *Philosophical Essay on Probabilities [1825]*. Sources in the History of Mathematics and Physical Sciences. New York: Springer-Verlag, 1995. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4612-4184-3.

Leonard, M. *Invisible Work, Invisible Workers: The Informal Economy in Europe and the US*. Springer, 1998.

Leydesdorff, Selma. *Surviving the Bosnian Genocide: The Women of Srebrenica Speak*. Indiana University Press, 2011.

Mahmood, Saba. 'Feminist Theory, Embodiment, and the Docile Agent: Some Reflections on the Egyptian Islamic Revival'. *Cultural Anthropology* 16, no. 2 (2001): 202–36. https://www.jstor.org/stable/656537.

Martin, Emily. 'The Egg and the Sperm: How Science Has Constructed a Romance Based on Stereotypical Male-Female Roles'. *Signs* 16, no. 3 (1991): 485–501. https://www.jstor.org/stable/3174586.

Mazumder, Taha Amin. 'Nellie 1983 Revisited: Victims Say They Had Been Barricaded for 6 Months Before the Massacre'. *NewsClick*, 24 February 2019. https://www.newsclick.in/nellie-1983-revisited-victims-say-they-had-been-barricaded-6-months-massacre.

McCall, Leslie. 'The Complexity of Intersectionality'. *Signs* 30, no. 3 (2005): 1771–1800. https://doi.org/10.1086/426800.

McClintock, Anne. *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*. Routledge, 1995.

———. 'The Lay of the Land: Genealogies of Imperialism'. In *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*. Routledge, 1995.

Merrill, Barbara, and Linden West. *Using Biographical Methods in Social Research*. SAGE, 2009.

Mitchell, Timothy. *Colonising Egypt*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988.

Mohanty, Chandra Talpade. 'Cartographies of Struggle: Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism'. In *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*. Duke University Press, 2003.

———. 'Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses'. *Boundary 2* 12/13 (1984): 333–58. https://doi.org/10.2307/302821.

Moolman, Benita. 'Rethinking "Masculinities in Transition" in South Africa Considering the "Intersectionality" of Race, Class, and Sexuality with Gender'. *African Identities* 11, no. 1 (1 February 2013): 93–105. https://doi.org/10.1080/14725843.2013.775843.

Moraga, Cherríe, and Gloria Anzaldúa. *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*. Kitchen Table, Women of Color Press, 1983.

Mukharjee, Amitava. *Food Security in Asia*. SAGE Publications India, 2012.

Mukherjee, Kunal. 'Insurgency in the Indian Northeast: Student Voices from Kolkata'. *International Journal on Minority and Group Rights* 25, no. 2 (16 May 2018): 261–82. https://doi.org/10.1163/15718115-02502003.

Nahin, Paul J. *An Imaginary Tale: The Story of √-1*. Princeton University Press, 2009.

Nandy, Ashis. 'South Asian Politics:  Modernity and the Landscape of Clandestine and Incommunicable Selves'. *Macalester International* 4, no. 1 (31 May 1997). https://digitalcommons.macalester.edu/macintl/vol4/iss1/21.

———. *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self Under Colonialism*, 1983.

Narayan, Hemendra. *25 Years On- Nellie Still Haunts: Assam '83: A Journalists' Travails*. Delhi: printed by Hemendra Narayan, 2008.

———. 'Eyewitness Account: "Horrible Doesn't Describe It" How Many Deaths? Difficult to Say.' In *25 Years On- Nellie Still Haunts: Assam '83: A Journalists' Travails*, originally published in Indian Express, February 19, 1983. Delhi: printed by Hemendra Narayan, 2008.

———. 'Lalungs Darbar'. In *25 Years On- Nellie Still Haunts: Assam '83: A Journalists' Travails*. Delhi: printed by Hemendra Narayan, 2008.

———. 'Woman in Green Sari'. In *25 Years On- Nellie Still Haunts: Assam '83: A Journalists' Travails*, EBook version. Delhi: printed by Hemendra Narayan, 2008.

Nelkin, Dorothy. 'Invisible Migrant Workers'. *Society* 9, no. 6 (1 April 1972): 36–41. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02701761.

'Nellie 83 Revisited: Victims Say They Had Been Barricaded for 6 Months Before the Massacre - YouTube'. Accessed 13 October 2019. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nNTJDEEExas.

Neumann, John von, Oskar Morgenstern, Harold W. Kuhn, and Ariel Rubinstein. 'General Form Description of Games of Strategy'. In *Theory of Games and Economic Behavior (60th Anniversary Commemorative Edition)*, 46–84. Princeton University Press, 1944. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt1r2gkx.8.

Phoenix, Ann, and Pamela Pattynama. 'Intersectionality'. *European Journal of Women's Studies*, 1 August 2006. https://doi.org/10.1177/1350506806065751.

Pisharoty, Sangeeta Barooah. *Assam: The Accord, The Discord*. Penguin Random House India Private Limited, 2019.

———. 'NRC Final Draft: How One Document Will Determine the Fate of These Married Women'. *The Wire*. 29 July 2018. https://thewire.in/politics/nrc-final-draft-how-one-document-will-determine-the-fates-of-these-assamese-women.

———. 'That Spot of Shame'. *The Hindu*. 27 October 2013, sec. Authors. https://www.thehindu.com/books/books-authors/that-spot-of-shame/article5275859.ece.

Plotnitsky, Arkady. 'Chaosmologies: Quantum Field Theory, Chaos and Thought in Deleuze and Guattari's What Is Philosophy?' *Paragraph* 29, no. 2 (1 July 2006): 40–56. https://doi.org/10.3366/prg.2006.0017.

Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative. 'Policy and the Alkire-Foster Method'. Accessed 5 February 2018. https://ophi.org.uk/policy/alkire-foster-methodology/.

Portelli, Alessandro. 'What Makes Oral History Different'. In *The Oral History Reader*, edited by R Perks and A Thomson, 63–75. London: Routledge, 1998.

Press Trust of India. 'PM Modi Assured Us India Won't Deport NRC-Excluded People to Bangladesh: Official'. *Hindustan Times*. 6 October 2018. https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/pm-modi-assured-us-india-won-t-deport-nrc-excluded-people-to-bangladesh-official/story-MiWCkFoxpoMvOsdWSEylCK.html.

Rajaram, Prem Kumar. 'Refugees as Surplus Population: Race, Migration and Capitalist Value Regimes'. *New Political Economy* 23, no. 5 (3 September 2018): 627–39. https://doi.org/10.1080/13563467.2017.1417372.

Ray, Kalyan. 'No Deporting after NRC, Modi Told Hasina, Says Top Aide'. *Deccan Herald*. 4 October 2018. https://www.deccanherald.com/national/no-deporting-after-nrc-modi-696243.html.

Rehman, Teresa. 'Nellie Revisited: The Horror's Nagging Shadow'. *Tehelka - The People's Paper*, 11 November 2006. https://web.archive.org/web/20061111192753/http://www.tehelka.com/story_main19.asp?filename=Ne093006the_horrors.asp.

Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. Pantheon Books, 1978.

Saikia, Yasmin. 'Beyond the Archive of Silence: Narratives of Violence of the 1971 Liberation War of Bangladesh'. *History Workshop Journal*, no. 58 (2004): 275–87. www.jstor.org/stable/25472765.

———. 'From Citizen to Termite: The Case of the "Bangladeshis" in Assam'. শুদ্ধস্বর *(Shuddhashar)*, 1 June 2019. https://shuddhashar.com/from-citizen-to-termite-the-case-of-the-bangladeshis-in-assam-yasmin-saikia/.

Sangster, Joan. 'Telling Our Stories: Feminist Debates and the Use of Oral History'. In *The Oral History Reader*, edited by Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, 87–100, 1998.

Sarma, Diganta, and Anzu Azad. 'Recalling Nellie 1983'. *TwoCircles.Net* (blog). Accessed 17 December 2018. http://twocircles.net/2009feb17/recalling_nellie_1983.html_0.

Schendel, Willem van. *A History of Bangladesh*, 2009.
https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511997419.

Schwarz, Bill. 'Memory, Temporality, Modernity: Les Lieux de Mémoire'. In *Memory: Histories, Theories, Debates*, edited by Susannah Radstone and Bill Schwarz. New York: Fordham Univ. Press, 2011.

Sen, Avirook. 'A Follow-up Report of Nellie Massacre in Assam'. *India Today*, 6 October 1997. https://www.indiatoday.in/magazine/states/story/19971006-a-follow-up-report-of-nellie-massacre-in-assam-832259-1997-10-06.

Sen, Sumanta, and Jagannath Dubashi. 'Nellie Massacre: Assam Burns as Ethnic Violence Singes the State'. *India Today*, 26 May 1983.
https://www.indiatoday.in/magazine/cover-story/story/19830315-nellie-massacre-assam-burns-as-ethnic-violence-singes-the-state-770520-2013-07-23.

Shamshad, Rizwana. *Bangladeshi Migrants in India: Foreigners, Refugees, or Infiltrators?* Oxford University Press, 2017.

Sharma, Jayeeta. '"Lazy" Natives, Coolie Labour, and the Assam Tea Industry'. *Modern Asian Studies* 43, no. 6 (November 2009): 1287–1324.
https://doi.org/10.1017/S0026749X08003831.

Smith, R. David. 'Social Structures and Chaos Theory'. Text.Article, 30 March 1998.
http://www.socresonline.org.uk/3/1/11.html.

Smooth, Wendy. 'Intersectionality from Theoretical Framework to Political Intervention'. In *Situating Intersectionality: Politics, Policy, and Power*, edited by Angelia R. Wilson. Springer, 2013.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' In *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, edited by Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg. University of Illinois Press, 1988.

Thaosen, Maduli. 'Revisiting Assam's Bloody History: The Nellie Massacre 37 Years On'. Feminism in India, 17 February 2020.
https://feminisminindia.com/2020/02/18/revisiting-assams-bloody-history-the-nellie-massacre-37-years-on/.

United Nations. 'Factsheet 1: Indigenous Peoples and Identity'. UNPFII Fifth Session | United Nations For Indigenous Peoples. Accessed 7 June 2020.
https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/unpfii-sessions-2/fifth-session-of-unpfii.html.

Vincze, Enikő. 'Precarization of Working Class Roma through Spatial Deprivation, Labor Destitution and Racialization'. *Szociológiai Szemle* 25, no. 4 (2015): 58–85.
http://www.szociologia.hu/dynamic/58_85_oldal.pdf.

Waring, Marilyn. *If Women Counted: A New Feminist Economics*. Harpercollins, 1989.
https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-4991.1992.tb00422.x.

Wimmer, Andreas, and Nina Glick Schiller. 'Methodological Nationalism, the Social Sciences, and the Study of Migration: An Essay in Historical Epistemology'. *The International Migration Review* 37, no. 3 (2003): 576–610.
https://www.jstor.org/stable/30037750.

Yang, Anand A. 'Peasants on the Move: A Study of Internal Migration in India'. *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 10, no. 1 (1979): 37–58. https://doi.org/10.2307/203300.

Yuval-Davis, Nira. 'Intersectionality and Feminist Politics': *European Journal of Women's Studies*, 24 July 2016. https://doi.org/10.1177/1350506806065752.