(Un)Making Precarities: Geographies of Youth, Race & Citizenship among Afghan Refugee Youths in India



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ABSTRACT

This thesis draws on 8.5 months of fieldwork with ethnographic approaches to examine the everyday precarious lives of young Afghan refugees aged between 18 and 30 years in New Delhi, India. Using narrative accounts of young Afghan men and women at various stages in their educational journeys, this paper provides an alternative narrative of the refugee-student voice that examines personal aspirations, agency, emotions and active engagements of young people in an unexpected social, political and economic landscape. Although all refugees and asylum seekers in India have access to government education services, access is not universally attainable or desirable as some students instead assume familial responsibility and find work in the (in)formal sectors. Collectively, I shape this thesis into three empirical chapters which examine the spatial and temporal aspects of young refugee youths' everyday practices of citizenship, higher education and sociality despite the precarity of their refugee status. I employ a conceptual framework of relationality in order to critically examine the complexity of young Afghan refugees' everyday lives. Relationality crosses spatial scales, from individual body to socially embedded approaches intersecting processes of globalization and the ways in which these change through time. Young urban refugees in India are an educationally, socially, economically and ethno-religiously diverse group. My analysis interrogates these scalar connections within and across different spaces, underscoring the everyday lived experiences, imaginaries and strategies. This is significant to the ways young Afghan refugees are framing their social lives and generational changes in education spaces, in community life, and in the wider Indian society. In doing so, my research makes a series of contributions to ongoing debates around refugee youths in the global South, geographies of friendship, higher education and citizenship. I reflect on the ways to reflect on "the everyday" as a locus of social change and continuity through a relational approach that places an emphasis on the quality and nature of connections and relationships provides a valuable framework for understanding young people's lives.

I examine the link between the bureaucratic demands of waiting and the barriers faced by young refugees who seek access to higher education and are often rendered 'invisible' within Indian civil society. I raise the question of how this marginalisation is imposed and countered at the institutional level. Moreover, I advance an understanding of contemporary refugee students' socioeconomic and cultural transitions in India and their contested futures by understanding the socially differentiated ways young Afghans negotiate varying temporal dimensions of identity, mobility and alternative constructions of citizenship. My analysis in this thesis supports the case for a multi-sited methodological approach in order to locate youth refugees within the significant social relations that shape their everyday lives. Secondly, the scale of the everyday offers productive insights into the ways in which political, social and cultural changes associated with globalization in contemporary India are affecting marginalised populations. I take a broader approach to understanding the precarious lives of youth Afghan refugees to examine how young people conceive of, strategize, and transform their social practices in multifaceted ways.

TO MY PARENTS:

NARESH & KAILASH PADHIAR

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[1] Unless stated otherwise, the copyrights of all photographs are my own.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BJP	Bhartiya Janta Party
CUREC	Central University Research Ethics Committee
DAFI	Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative
DU	University of Delhi; Delhi University
CAB	Citizenship Amendment Bill
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
FRO	Foreigner's Registration Officers
FRRO	Foreigners Regional Registration Officer
GoI	Government of India
HRLN	Human Rights Law Network
IGNOU	Indira Gandhi National Open University
LTV	Long Term Visa
MEA	Ministry of External Affairs
MHA	Ministry of Home Affairs
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NIOS	National Institute of Open Schooling
NRI	Non-Resident Indian
PAN	Permanent Account Number
PoC	Persons of Concern
SAHRDC	South Asian Human Rights Documentation
SLIC	Centre Socio Legal Information Centre
SOL	School of Open Learning
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner of Refugees

NOTES ON TERMS, TRANSLITERATION, AND QUOTATIONS

Throughout this thesis there are terms used by my research informants mostly in Hindi, among other dialects spoken in Afghanistan such as Pashtun, which I have translated in what I understand to be the most apposite way of interpreting them within their spoken context. I have provided the actual Hindi and Pashtun terms used by my informants to allow readers familiar with Hindi and Pashtun to make their own interpretations of the words and how I reached my translations.

This can be seen in the transcripts where I use *italics* to indicate a verbatim account, most commonly to signal the use of the research informant's use of broken Hindi and English languages. When incorporating the transliteration of Hindi and Farsi words, phrases, or sentences, these are included in parentheses immediately following the English translation (*like this*).



Image 0-1. Young Afghan refugees going to class in North Delhi, February 2016

Chapter 1. Introduction. Precarious Youth: The Case of youth Afghan Refugees in India Today



Image 1-1. View of a North Delhi neighbourhood from an apartment complex rooftop, November 2015

1.1 Preamble

In early November 2015, I met with Rahim,[2] a twenty-one-year-old Muslim Afghan refugee, in a popular Afghani café in South Delhi. Rahim had arranged for an Afghani meal to be specially prepared for his friend's birthday and asked me to help him with the pick-up prior to the celebrations in North Delhi. India's capital city of New Delhi can overwhelm with its crowded, busy street scenes. The city does not deliver a gentle introduction to someone who is not accustomed to its numerous labyrinthine alleys (*gullys*) filled with street-side stalls. We entered the popular central market area known as 'Little Kabul' where the streetscape suddenly changed and business signs for pharmacies and travel agencies were written in Farsi. The word 'Afghan' was everywhere. I stood outside two adjacent restaurants and a phone shop. Rahim came out with the packaged food and greeted two men at the phone shop with handshakes

[2] In this thesis, all names are pseudonyms.

and exchanged informal pleasantries in Farsi and Dari, '*Salam. Khoob astam…kha yaast*? *Hi. How are you*?' The small one-room shop was owned by two brothers in their twenties, Pardeep and Sanjay, who identified themselves to me as 'Sikh Afghan' refugees. The brothers, who wore turbans, could be mistaken for Sikh-Punjabis but belonged to Delhi's Sikh-Afghani community and were referred to as the *Kabulis* by Indians in the neighbourhood.

Walking towards the main road to catch an auto rickshaw to North Delhi, a group of young Afghan migrants walked past us and entered a travel agency. Rahim knew that he could not return to Afghanistan due to security threats and the Taliban regime in the country, especially since he belonged to the Hazara ethnic minority. Rahim looked back at the travel agency and commented, 'I do not get too involved with them, they return back. I am a refugee and I will stay here.' Rahim went on to tell me about his time spent at the Bosco (Catholic charity Don Bosco Ashalyam) centres across Delhi and his interaction with other young people from other Afghan ethnic communities. Bosco is an implementing partner for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) regarding issues of refugee protection, medical support, and various education programmes. I was taken to a rooftop later that day (Image 1.1), where I met some of Rahim's friends, a group of young Muslim and non-Muslim Afghan[3] refugee and Indian men in their twenties and early thirties sitting in a circle with chilled bottles of Thums Up and spiced wafers. Sanjay and Pardeep joined the party after they closed their shop later in the evening. Rahim, staring at the city skylights, looked back at me and said:

> I wasn't happy with the fact that I've been a refugee since I was born. I first opened my eyes in a different country, Pakistan, and then went back briefly to Afghanistan before permanently shifting to India. Still nothing felt like 'home' till now. The future is India, but where do I go from here? I love hanging out at colleges and malls the most. They [Indians] are kids just like me. But

[3] I refer to 'Hindu Sikh' and 'Ethnic' Afghans as 'Non-Muslim' and 'Muslim' Afghan refugees hereafter in this thesis. I problematise the concept of 'forced ethnicities' in Section 1.3.

> somehow, I can't get there. We are managing lots of uncertain things in life…the pressures of life.

Rahim is the eldest of three children and desired an education when he came to India as a teenager, something that never materialised because he did not have the 'proper documents' required for admission into an Indian university. Instead, he became an assistant shopkeeper for Sanjay and Pardeep and a part-time translator in hospitals, aiding Afghan medical tourists, a common informal job among young Muslim Afghan refugees. In the conversations I had with him, Rahim placed significant value on how everyday life in Delhi represented the reality of being a 'refugee', which barred him from pursuing 'the good life' (*zindagi khoob*) he'd imagined. He also reminded me of the legal instability of his refugee status and not holding the necessary documents, such as school and birth certificates, to facilitate admission into the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) held at Bosco centres. The NIOS framework would have allowed Rahim to pick up where he left his studies back in Afghanistan and increase his chances of being admitted to an Indian university. This was in contrast to Sanjay and Pardeep's experience of 'growing up' in India.

Sanjay and Pardeep were born after their family migrated to India from Afghanistan following the outbreak of civil war in 1992. Their application to become naturalised Indian citizens remained 'in process' for almost two years. The brothers quickly realised that eligibility for Indian naturalisation does not ensure an easy pathway. They expressed discontentment with state- and local-level bureaucracies. Sanjay and Pardeep's parents discouraged their children, including one daughter, from participating in schooling beyond high school levels. Instead, they redirected their children's attention to marriage and connecting them to the broader non-Muslim Afghan refugee community for business and social prospects. This expectation was characteristic of non-Muslim Afghan refugee families for whom past experiences have engendered a sense of precarity and unpredictability among young Afghan refugees. They are effectively stuck in limbo in India. 'When we finally become Indians, we could do

more…maybe go back to school…make our own rules,' Sanjay added. Indeed, there are not only constraints in accessing Indian services for both Muslim and non-Muslim Afghan refugees, but also the precarious nature of their social lives is embedded in tricky socio-political environments. As such, the premise of encountering new precarious spaces that denote social positions of uncertainty and differential exposure to exclusion and navigating a fresh set of social and legal experiences are marked differently to their parents' generation, as well as across different races and ethnicities. This sense of precariousness in their lives was echoed by many other young Afghan refugees—both Muslim and non-Muslim—I met during my fieldwork in New Delhi in 2015–2016.

Several themes emerge from my short recollection above, which demands, first, the unpacking of 'everyday precarity' as it illustrates the key themes addressed in this thesis: youth, citizenship, and race/ethnicity. Race/ethnicity, gender, citizenship, and normative ideas about 'youth' are all entangled in how precarity is manifest at the scale of the everyday. In this thesis, I delve into the lives of young Muslim and non-Muslim Afghan men and women to understand some of the gendered, generational, and racialised changes taking place in their everyday lives in New Delhi. I put the stories of young Afghan refugees and their various personal and social uncertainties, imaginations of what the future holds, and tactics at the centre of my narrative.

At its core, this thesis is an ethnography of the everyday precarious lives of young Afghan refugees in urban India. In this introductory chapter, I first set out a contextual overview of the Government of India and the UNHCR's engagement with Muslim and non-Muslim Afghan refugees on issues such as citizenship. I then introduce in greater detail the history of Afghan refugee migration into India due to social and political unrest in Afghanistan created by the 1978 Saur Revolution and 1979 Soviet intervention. These successive events plunged the country into civil war, leading to the displacement of Muslim and non-Muslim Afghan refugees. I then problematise the concept of 'forced ethnicities' (Chhachhi 1991) as a way of

evaluating and thinking about transnational migration, belonging, and ethnic relations with those who rely on race and ethnicities before setting out the structure of the chapters that follow.

1.2 Contextual Framework: Afghan '*de facto* refugees' in Delhi

Over sixty per cent of the world's refugee population now live in urban areas (Bhabha et al. 2016). The number of young people[4] in these areas is increasing each year (Castles et al. 2014). Young people in urban areas also make up the world's most mobile group, and this proportion of the world's population is expected to increase from fifty-four per cent in 2014 to sixty-six per cent by 2050 (UNDES 2014). India is considered a refuge hub, with over 200,000 refugees and asylum seekers residing in the country. Among this population, roughly twelve thousand were registered with the UNHCR as 'refugees' in 2019.[5] India has played host to a number of refugee groups since its independence in 1947. Beginning with Partition, refugees came from erstwhile East and West Pakistan, while other refugee groups include Muslim and non-Muslim Afghans, Chakmas from Bangladesh, Rohingya and other refugees from Myanmar (formerly Burma), Tamils from Sri Lanka, and Tibetans. Each of these groups has been dealt with through ad hoc executive responses. For instance, India has accommodated refugees from Tibet since 1959 and provided them with basic social services. More recently, in 2014, voting rights were granted to Tibetans born in India following a Karnataka High Court Order

[4] While there are no universally accepted definitions of adolescence and youth, the United Nations understands 'youth' to include persons aged fifteen to twenty-four years old for statistical purposes without prejudice to other definitions by Member States. Together, adolescents and youth are referred to as young people, encompassing the ages of ten to twenty-four years old. Globally, youths aged fifteen to twenty-four now represent almost one-fifth of the world's population. Sixty per cent of the world population will live in cities by 2030, and sixty per cent of urban residents are likely to be under the age of eighteen. For the purpose of this thesis, I refer to young Afghans with ages between eighteen and thirty years old. I focused on young people in this age bracket because this is the critical period of life during which many Afghan youth are transitioning into higher education and work. For further information, see 2013 UN World Youth Report (WYR) on Youth Migration and Development Report.
http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/newsletter/desanews/trends/2013/02/inde x.html.

[5] For a further breakdown of figures provided by the UNHCR, see
http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49e4876d6.html.

(Samaddar 2003; Banerjee 2014). In contrast, refugees from countries such as Myanmar and Afghanistan face disadvantages owing to a lack of legal protection, discrimination, and poverty (Field et al. 2017). The UNHCR-issued refugee cards are not publicly recognised by the Indian Government. The ad hoc approach adopted by India in its differential treatment of refugees is reflected in most refugee groups not receiving uniform legal status and privileges. Yet, in many ways, India's multi-ethnic and multi-lingual society continues to make it an attractive destination for refugees despite there being no refugee law in place.

Like many urban host communities, New Delhi is an immense concentration of economic development and infrastructure, on the one hand, and informal livelihoods and uneven integration in the urban landscape on the other (Datta 2006). Most refugees work in the informal sector in India, characterised by a lack of social security, low wages, and exploitation. Chase and Allsop (2013: 7) contend that scholarly work fails to consider young people's 'migration strategies'—across space and time—and the ways in which they find ways to build a better future amid marginalisation as the literature is scarce on young people's migration to the host state after the point of arrival. Since most Afghan refugees have settled in and around the metropolis of New Delhi, it is an ideal field site (Bentz 2013).

The case of the Afghan 'refugee' has been a tricky one. The absence of formal legislation to address refugee migration into the country creates uncertainty since India is neither a signatory to the 1951 UN Convention of Refugees nor to the 1967 Protocol. In this context, it is interesting to note that the Indian Government and the UNHCR share a paradoxical relationship, wherein India has been a member of the Executive Committee (ExCom) of the UNHCR since 1995 without being a party to the 1951 Convention or undertaking its obligations. Both the Indian Government and the UNHCR deny any responsibility for the protection and socio-legal welfare of refugees in India. The UNHCR office is in New Delhi and is not allowed to operate in other parts of the country, with the exception of Tamil Nadu,

where it provides limited repatriation assistance to Sri Lankan Tamil refugees recognised by the Indian Government. The Statute of the Office of the UNHCR empowers the UNHCR to issue refugee certificates to those who fulfil the criteria under the 1951 UN Convention on Refugees after having conducted interviews with such asylum seekers to determine their status. Unless India ratifies the 1951 Convention and establishes a national legal framework for refugees, it can be argued that the UNHCR has been unsuccessful in providing 'protection' and 'durable solutions' for refugees. As a result, refugees located in remote parts of India do not have access to UNHCR assistance; for example, Burmese refugees living in Mizoram live as undocumented immigrants as they do not have adequate resources to go to only two official offices in New Delhi or Chennai to seek UNHCR protection (Basavapatna and Shanker in *The Hindu* 2016).

The prospect of a refugee policy in India looms in a haze of 'promise' with the election of Narendra Modi, India's new prime minister after his Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP) won a parliamentary election in May 2014. The recent policy changes made by the BJP-led government under Prime Minister Modi signalled renewed hope for non-Muslim Afghan refugees in their pursuit of becoming Indian citizens. Following the election win in 2014, the Modi-BJP-led government successfully ushered in the BJP's electoral promise that 'Good days are coming' (in Hindi: *Achche din aane waale hain*). This promise was often discussed by the elder leaders of the non-Muslim Afghan community in my visits to their centre, Khalsa Diwan Society in West Delhi, in reference to the impending Citizenships Amendment Bill, 2019. In Modi's speeches, he often asserted, 'we have a responsibility towards Hindus who are harassed or suffer in other countries. India is the only place for them…their natural home…' (*BJP Election Manifesto* 2014: 40). The 2019 Bill passed, signalling an explicit discrimination towards Muslim asylum seekers and refugees.

In the absence of a concrete national refugee policy in India, the refugee certificate of the UNHCR is of paramount importance as it enables those who are entitled to it to acquire temporary residence permits from the Indian authorities, meaning they have a right to stay in the country with a subsistence allowance. According to a report by the South Asian Human Rights Documentation Centre (SAHRDC), refugees and their representative non-governmental organisations (NGOs) 'do not understand the UNHCR's criteria for refugee status determination' and often complain of 'unfair treatment during the interview process' (2007). Those whose applications are rejected are not given reasons and yet have the right to appeal the decision before the same authorities, 'rendering the appeals process practically meaningless' (Sengupta in *Infochange India* 2008). The refugee certificates issued by the UNHCR in New Delhi are, in practice, recognised by the Indian Government, creating a *de facto* system in India. Living within the sovereign state of India, albeit without legal recognition, Afghan refugees are *de facto* refugees. I hereafter acknowledge Afghan refugees as being *de facto* in the Indian context and use the term 'refugee' henceforth in this thesis.

The refugee system in India is, in effect, evolving. Several scholars within legal and academic fields have contributed to the study of refugee policy and working towards durable solutions to refugee problems in India, such as assistance in the form of basic shelter (Chimni 1998, 2005 and 2009; Sen 2003; Saxena 2007; Barthwal-Datta 2012; Basavaptna 2012). In India, 'refugees' are placed under three broad categories: (1) Category I, refugees receive full protection from the Indian Government (for example, Tamil refugees from Sri Lanka); (2) Category II, refugees granted refugee status by the UNHCR and are protected under the principle of nonrefoulement (e.g., Burmese and Afghan refugees); and (3) Category III, refugees who are neither recognised by the Indian Government nor the UNHCR but who have entered India and assimilated into the local community (e.g., Chin refugees from Burma living in the state of Mizoram; SAHRDC 1997). Survival is often challenging due to a lack of

social security and uneven social and spatial integration in Indian society, particularly in Categories II and III.

At the beginning of my fieldwork in September 2015, there were more than 200,000 refugees living in India,[6] according to the UNHCR. Despite the Syrian refugee crisis, Afghan refugees remain the second-largest protracted refugee population under UNHCR care. Mass refugee migration often have negative consequences, such as political turmoil, especially for host countries (Bentz 2013). These consequences include an impact on security and stability, as well as a demographic increase affecting the ethnic balance of the country. This research considers how refugees are often regarded as a socioeconomic burden by the host state. This is a strong sentiment that weighs heavily on countries such as Pakistan, Iran, and India (Gordenker 1983; Jacobsen 2006). Since 2002, Pakistan and Iran have facilitated the voluntary repatriation of more than 5.6 million Afghans, yet many refugees who returned to Afghanistan faced unsafe living conditions (UNHCR 2008: 3). Afghan refugees as of January 2014 numbered 1,615,876 in Pakistan and 840,158 in Iran. Although Pakistan has been hosting Afghan refugees since the Soviet invasion, it is working on their repatriation (Basavapatna and Shanker in *The Hindu* 2013). Similarly, the Iranian Government, affected by a stumbling economy, is also pushing for the refugees' return even as conditions in Afghanistan have economically deteriorated. Both documented (e.g., temporary visa holders) and undocumented Afghan refugees are being forcibly returned due to 'tense relationships' between Pakistan and Afghanistan because of volatile security conditions (Hiegemann 2014: 43).

India has witnessed a surge in the number of predominantly Muslim Afghan refugees fleeing to the country. The number of Muslim and non-Muslim Afghan refugees is around eighteen thousand in India (Akcapar 2018). While India works towards strengthening its diplomatic

[6] For further details, see https://www.unhcr.org/uk/statistics/unhcrstats/54aa91d89/mid-year-trends-june-2015.html

relations with Afghanistan through infrastructure development aid, there is no clear policy on dealing with increasing numbers of asylum seekers from the war-torn nation. Bentz (2013: 378) points to the fact that the number of refugees depends on the definition of 'refugee' utilized, such as registered and non-registered refugees, recognised refugees, and applicants (namely, asylum seekers; Ibid, 2013). However, other complications arise when questions of ethnicity and places of origin in Afghanistan blur the 'distinction between refugee and migrants', which often remains elusive and scant at refugee agencies (Ibid, 2013)

The UNHCR has been liaising with two implementing partners, the international Catholic charity Don Bosco Ashalyam (Bosco) and a non-profit legal aid and educational organisation called the Socio-Legal Information Centre (SLIC), for over two decades to provide refugees with basic services. Operating under the Human Rights Law Network (HRLN), the SLIC provides *pro bono* legal assistance to refugees and asylum seekers[7] in addition to ensuring refugee safety and protection. The SLIC is also responsible for spearheading the UNHCR's efforts to obtain Indian naturalisation for non-Muslim Afghans from Afghanistan and their children born in India. My aim in this thesis is to explore young Afghans' relationship with the host state, moving beyond issues of 'identity…[and] socio-cultural adaptation' to enhance our understanding of the existing ambiguities in the lack of legal frameworks of Afghan refugees in India (McConnell 2009, 343).

1.3 Brief History of Afghan Migration to India

Decades of refugee migration from Afghanistan have resulted from ongoing violence and the rise of the Taliban in the country. Several series of upheavals and dangerous developments since the 1970s, such as religious persecution and violence, have caused the (forced) migration

[7] I use the definition provided by Rajeev Dhavan (2004: 9): 'Refugees' and 'asylum seekers' are externally displaced persons forced out or forced to leave their countries and who cannot return because they have a well-founded fear of persecution. They are not bereft of ideas of social and economic betterment. But, they are distinct from 'migrants' voluntarily seeking a better life.

of Hindu, Sikh, and Muslim Afghans to India as an alternative destination to Pakistan and Iran. Bentz (2013) and Aced and Ghosh (2014) conclude that a combination of structural failures and the rise of Islamic fundamentalist ideology in Soviet Afghanistan led to war in 1979. Religious non-Muslim minorities (e.g., Hindus and Sikhs) were also systematically targeted, forcing many to flee Afghanistan and head to India. Building on my study and previous doctoral studies by Bentz (2013), Julie Baujard (2008), and Sahil Warsi (2015), I also consider a third wave of migration from Afghanistan to India as starting in the mid-2000s because of the worsening socio-economic and political conditions in post-Taliban Afghanistan.

It is essential to understand the politico-historical context of Indo-Afghan relations and Indian state discourses on refugees as a result of increased Afghan migration to India. Several scholars in social anthropology and political science have focused on Afghan refugees, with an emphasis on the Afghan refugee situation in Pakistan and Iran (Centlivres and Centlivres-Demont 1988; Zolberg et al. 1986; Lischer 2005; Salehyan 2008; Chatty 2010). Refugees in acute crisis differ from other (voluntary) migrants in the sense that the former are pushed from a land of danger with little planning and seek refuge elsewhere. Migration between Afghanistan and India has occurred since the early nineteenth century when Ranjit Singh (founder of the Sikh Empire, 1708–1849) fought Afghans in Afghan-occupied Punjab. In more recent history, during the Partition of the subcontinent in 1947, it was 'believed it was unsafe to go back to India' (Bentz 2013: 378). The Afghan refugee exodus began in 1979 when the Soviets invaded Afghanistan during the 1979 Saur Revolution (Bentz 2013). An estimated one-third of the fifteen to sixteen million Afghan refugee population fled to different parts of the world in the following decade (Smith 2009: 60). Despite the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989, the pro-communist leader Najibullah remained in charge until 1992. A continuous power struggle ensued among various Mujahideen insurgents to take control of the government (Bentz 2013). The UNHCR (2008: 3) reported that, following the fall of Kabul to Mujahideen

rebels in 1992, which resulted in the death of many civilians, the Taliban had seized power of over ninety per cent of the country by 1998. This situation, in turn, signalled a growing 'lack of hospitality and sometimes outright hostility' not just from the neighbouring countries of Pakistan, Iran and India, but also across the Global North (Smith 2009: 61).

As a result of the rich history of migration between Afghanistan and India, Hindu and Sikh Afghan refugees 'regard India as their ancestral homeland', and many feel a strong tie to 'Indian origin or ethnicity' (2013: 378).[8] India, then, logically became more than an alternative destination choice for the Hindu and Sikh faiths during the Afghan civil war in 1992 and even more so after 1996, when the Taliban came to power, due to religious and/or ethnic links to India (2013: 378). More important, a distinction should be made between the first Afghan refugees to arrive in India following the 1978 revolution and Afghan refugees who arrived after 1992. The two distinct periods of refugee migration into India—that is, Hindus and Sikhs during the period from 1978 to 1989 and then in the 1990s—saw elite Afghans (or Pashtun Afghans) and non-elite Afghans who fled to India, respectively (Bentz 2013). 'Elite', in this context, is defined according to those who came from Muslim Afghan political exiles, namely Pashtun ethnics, being one of the first groups to flee Afghanistan in the 1980s (Bentz 2013). Muslim Afghan refugees also they included Muslims from the middle and upper classes who had valid travel documents and were considering India as a temporary host country before hopeful asylum in the West (2013: 378).

In anticipation of the worsening security conditions in their country, many (young) Afghans were scrambling to find asylum in a country they can call home. The refugees' political role in the ongoing conflict in Afghanistan has direct implications in the ways scholars refer to

[8] According to the UNHCR, in 2005 more than 8,000 Afghan refugees in India—close to 88% of the Afghan refugee population in the country—were of Hindu or Sikh faith; in 2007, there were 9,200 Afghan refugees in India, of whom 92% were Hindus and Sikhs (Bentz, 2013).

'refugee warrior communities' in Pakistan and Iran due to the protracted nature of their situation with deep insecurities in the host and sending communities (Zolberg et al. 1986 and 1989; Lischer 2005; Salehyan 2007 and 2008). This may explain the lack of prevailing scholastic interest in Afghan refugees in India since academics have been predominantly concerned with the geopolitical linkages between exiled parties in Pakistan and Iran and resistance movements within Afghanistan (Bentz 2013).

This research provides an alternative perspective on a group that has been studied from the narrow perspective of the 'refugee warrior' insofar as the needs of Afghan refugee youth are multifaceted and do not necessarily conform to Western models of achieving 'adulthood'.

Scholars on Afghan migration have focused on Afghans living in Pakistan (Novak 2007), Iran (Adelkhah and Olszewska 2007; Tober 2007), or North America, Europe and Oceania (Monsutti 2008; Oeppen 2010). Important contributions include Alessandro Monsutti's multi-sited ethnography on Hazara[9] migration, which can be understood as a coming-of-age rite (2008), as well as an economic necessity through which remittances are sent via transnational networks (2005). Since Hazara migration is viewed as either involuntary or voluntary (ibid), Monsutti's work reiterates the conflicting binary of the refugee and migrant in capturing the reality of Afghan refugees (see also Kronenfeld 2008). This thesis fills in the gap in the literature by focusing on contemporary Muslim and non-Muslim Afghan refugees in India, on whom little research has been conducted. This thesis builds on research by Baujard's (2008) doctoral thesis, which examines identity formation among Burmese refugees in New Delhi, and Warsi's (2015) doctoral thesis on how Afghan migrants belong to the urban city of Delhi at different scales. Warsi notes the limitations of his research, such as access to key stakeholders and not focusing on the '[Afghan] Sikh experience of migration to India…on which no in-

[9] The Hazara are an ethnic minority found in Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan, and India.

depth ethnographic research exists' (2015: 24). I build on previous work on Afghan refugees in India through a geographical lens on the areas of youth, higher education, and citizenship among Muslim *and* non-Muslim Afghan refugees. There is considerable scope for more studies on refugee youth in the Global South, and in particular, Afghan refugee youth at the margins in India by bringing together insights from geographical research. This thesis attempts to fill these gaps.

In the next section, I problematise the idea of 'forced ethnicities' (Chhachhi 1991) as a way of evaluating and thinking about transnational migration, belonging, and ethnic relations of those who rely on race and ethnicities.

1.4 Conceptualising 'forced ethnicities'

As discussed above, the legislation that governs Muslim and non-Muslim Afghan refugees in India—that is, the Foreigner's Act (1946)— fails to recognise the special circumstances of these groups and has played a crucial role in reshaping their identities as 'foreigners' in India. I follow Nagel in defining the concept of ethnicity as a 'series of crisscrossing boundaries dividing populations into multiple groups differentiated by religion, colour, language, culture, and...these boundaries are changeable and permeable', which helps us move beyond 'primordialist, essentialist understandings of ethnicity...as biological...or as historically or culturally determined' (2000: 112). In the Indian context, the use of the term 'ethnicity' denotes religious, regional, linguistic, and caste differences, rather than racial ones. The Government of India's approach to understanding the variations in the identity of the conflict-displaced Afghan refugee population is two-dimensional; namely, the place of national and ethnic identity in individuals understanding themselves.

What was striking to me, and equally problematic, was the institutional creation of the Afghan refugee label, in which the categories of 'Hindu-Sikh' and 'Ethnic' are used. I first heard the

term to designate Afghan refugees in India at my initial meeting with the director of Bosco in New Delhi in early September 2015. She explained:

> *Hindu Sikhs* have a sincere desire to stay here because they see themselves coming home and you can't even tell the difference between the first generation and *regular* Indians. They are no longer marginalised. The *Ethnic* Afghans want to move elsewhere. But [the] reality is [that] many will not. It's important to distinguish this.

Indeed, the Afghan refugee population in India has been interacting with different institutional actors and stakeholders regularly. These interactions and exchanges have impacted refugee adaptation experiences in important ways. For instance, non-Muslim Afghan refugees are seen as having shared historical and cultural ties to India. Non-Muslim Afghan refugees are also often viewed as 'coming home' back to India, challenging ideas about who a 'refugee' is in India due to anti-Muslim rhetoric. At the state scale (discussed further in Chapter 4), I consider the material artefacts and sentiments that shape citizenship schemes for non-Muslim Afghan refugees. This is indicative of a particular kind of exclusion towards a religious minority for which the state's perspective impacts refugee lives.

The UNHCR has 'prioritised' efforts to make Indian naturalisation available to non-Muslim Afghan refugees via a joint cooperation with the Indian Government (discussed in Chapter 4). Over the years, the Afghan Muslim and non-Muslim communities have had to renegotiate their various identities in Afghanistan and India in order to secure a quality of life. Non-Muslim and Muslim Afghan refugees in India belong to diverse ethnic, linguistic, and cultural domains according to the regional variance. In this thesis, I interrogate how multiple sites of citizenship, youth, and space are challenged and negotiated by young Afghan refugees. Sarkar's (2001) study on Muslims in India argues that the uniform 'Muslim' identity has homogenised their identity as 'backward' and/or 'Other'. I look to the concept of 'forced ethnicities', coined by Amrita Chhachhi (1991), in order to understand the power relationships of the Indian state to name a group as 'ethnic' (Pieterse 2000).

Chhachhi (1991) elaborates on the fragmentation of identities through the context of communal riots. In her research, she notes that Muslims in India, particularly Muslim women, are seen as passive objects of oppression. The concept of 'forced' ethnic identity is imposed on an individual externally with the burdens of signifiers such as the stereotypical depiction of the Muslim as the 'aggressor' by the Hindu right. Similarly, Indians tend to equate 'Afghans' to the 'Taleban log' (or 'Taliban people'), Al-Qaeda, and terrorists (see Field et al. 2017). In the context of Muslim and non-Muslim Afghan refugees in India, I suggest that identities are necessarily fluid in cases in which individuals have multiple ideas about belonging. I attempt in my analysis to reveal that fluid identities can be used to legitimise access to certain entitlements, such as different types of identity documents (Chapter 4).

I illustrate how the disparate conceptions of what it means to be 'Afghan', 'refugee', and 'Muslim/non-Muslim' explain young people's different orientations to space in the city of Delhi. Moreover, I connect the ways in which young people might, through their friendship groups or networks, facilitate social interaction and resources that affect their attitudes of 'living' in India. By considering Afghan refugees as belonging 'beyond reified notions of ethnicity, religion or tribe' (Sahil 2015: 38), I draw on geographical research on refugeehood (Costello 2017) and relatedness (Nash 2005, 2008 and 2012) to contribute to broader discussions on refugeehood, youth transitions, and precarity beyond South Asian context.

1.5 Objectives of the Study

In this thesis, I map out different dimensions of the social and political precarities and the 'othering' that Muslim and non-Muslim Afghan refugees are facing in India. The qualitative data presented in the following empirical chapters depict the changing nature of young refugees' social practices and relations despite the precarity of their refugee status that, I argue, reflects the transforming and rapid nature of young people's everyday sociality in India.

The key aim of this thesis is to examine the extent to which Afghan refugee youth negotiate their refugee status in urban India to secure liveable lives in conditions of precarity.

The empirical focus is on Muslim and non-Muslim Afghan youths, aged between eighteen and thirty, grappling with diverse realities and imagined futures. This focus enriches work on geographies of citizenship and youth at the intersection of the refugee experience and aims to cement an advancement of geographies of race in South Asia. In the chapters that follow, I provide a theoretically informed account of the ways in which Afghan refugees living in New Delhi are navigating a precarious urban landscape. Drawing on this research aim, three objectives guide this inquiry:

(i) to examine how Afghan refugee youths negotiate citizenship pathways in a context in which different precarious (i.e., social, youth) statuses are in place that further contribute to inclusion/exclusion as a consequence of postcolonial regimes of documentation and racialisation;

(ii) to examine how young Afghans work tacitly and strategically to secure opportunities that might affect their aspirations and agency in key spaces, including their communities and schooling/education;

(iii) to examine how refugee temporalities are entangled with 'youth time' and 'postcolonial time' in the lives of young people to understand how social relations built out of friendship are changing and articulated both within and across generational encounters.

In addressing these objectives and drawing on original data from ethnographic fieldwork in New Delhi, my thesis makes three key contributions to contemporary scholarship on geographies of citizenship, race and ethnicity, and youth. First, it adds to the existing literature on youth transitions from a regional context outside the Global North by focusing on concepts of temporality and 'youth time'. Second, it analyses the material and social formations of citizenship and legacies of postcolonialism in India. Third, it recognises an understanding of the complexity of youth identities and decision-making, revealing the contested cultural and social reproductions of new spaces.

The three chapters constituting the empirical sections of this thesis contributes in unique ways to the field of geography, migration studies, and youth. This thesis is of interest to scholars studying marginalised youths. In particular, geography's role in scholarship helps to further explore, answer, and interpret on a wide of migration themes, including gendered geographies of migration, diaspora and transnationalism, and refugees and humanitarianism. This eclecticism can be argued a strength insofar as I contribute to bringing the everyday realities of race and ethnicity, migration, and youth into the centre of social theory. By engaging in research around marginalised youths South Asia, work on the urban experiences of youths in other parts of the world can help to ask different kinds of questions. For instance, questions regarding mobility and the gendered expectations of young women and men. This thesis also contributes to expanding how young people make sense of space through different ways of being. I propose that in thinking through these geographical themes, particularly as young people move through space that might not conventionally marked as 'urban', I wish to be attentive to the complex and subtle ways young people are working to bring change to their liveable lives in small and big ways to the future they desire. Thus, this thesis contributes to a new reading of young Afghan refugee identities that wrestles with intersectionality in geographical research to understand aspects of social identities and relations that influence social stratification and shape the conditions of young refugees in South Asia and beyond.

1.6 Thesis Overview

Having set out this larger context and the research aims of this thesis, the next chapter frames the thesis within relevant social-scientific and geographical readings of youth, race and ethnicity, and citizenship. I engage with theorisations of the precarity as it relates to ideas about space, time, and agency, reflecting on relational ways of seeing space and time in the everyday. I consider recent empirical scholarship that provides grounded accounts of these conceptualisations, locating my work among these ongoing efforts. The theoretical review is

intentionally broad, given that each of the three empirical chapters addresses a more specific set of debates within this broader geographical framework.

In Chapter 3, I provide a comprehensive overview of the ethnographic methodology I employed over the course of my fieldwork of 8.5 months, which was based on the theoretical framework outlined in Chapter 2. Turning first to qualitative methods, I elucidate on the in-depth interviews and focus groups undertaken, not only with young Afghan refugee men and women but also key stakeholders such as Afghan Embassy officials and the UNHCR and its implementing partner administrators in three districts across New Delhi. I also outline ethnographic approaches to the quotidian geographies of young Afghan refugee lives, including attention to unexpected moments in everyday life (see Lefebvre 1991; Goonewardena 2008). Finally, I reflect on issues of reflexivity, ethics, and the process of negotiating positionality and performing identity.

Drawing on this ethnographic research and situating the subjectivities of young Afghan refugees in the wider context of their families, communities, and peer groups set out above, Chapters 4 to 6 form the core of this thesis. In Chapter 4, I examine the construction of the legal identities of Muslim and non-Muslim Afghan refugees that underscores being in a state of legal limbo. I develop a set of debates around racialised modes of citizenship through the lens of documentary regimes to which Afghan refugees are subject. At the heart of this relationship is the bureaucratic system and the paper document trails that accompany it (or lack thereof). This is complicated by India's lack of refugee legislation, which fosters an environment in which culturally and ethnically elaborated differences are negotiated. I interrogate the politics of citizenship, categories of race and caste, and how paper documents such as visas are reproduced through colonial documentary regimes (Dirks 2002; Bayly 1999; Visweswaran 2010). I, therefore, expose how the Indian state consolidates its geopolitical and ethnic margins.

In Chapter 5, I turn to another mode of youth studies in the negotiation of young people's contingency within the institutional context of higher education in India. I draw on narratives of young Afghan refugees to spotlight the temporal uncertainties, complexities, and meanings that contribute to their understandings of 'studenthood'. I also engage with youth interpretations of 'regular' and 'non-regular' students in constructing the differences in the students' experience of, and unequal participation in, higher education (Gorad et al. 2006). I engage, too, with scholarship on racism and geographies of education to analyse the temporal structures in which racist structures exert their effects at the level of the everyday, including spaces of higher education. I argue that Afghan youths negotiate choices about their higher education pathways that shape their perceptions of racism in and through different encounters with various temporalities of the Indian education system. Viewing tertiary education as a vital site of social reproduction (Jeffrey 2011) opens up ways to examine the fluid, multiple, and relational identities of young refugees and how they and their families imagine different and better futures (Holloway et al. 2011; Cuconato and Walther 2015; Stambach 2017).

In the final substantive chapter, I draw on the spatial characteristics of everyday youth encounters to understand how young Afghan refugees re-evaluate their sense of their place in India through ideas about friendship and sociality. I point to the formulation of friendship through local sites of *yuva* (Hindi for 'youth') in youth clubs and spaces across five Bosco centres in New Delhi. I explore the function of friendship as a form of urban relation for young Afghan refugees in the city of New Delhi through spaces of youth clubs and institutions. The nature of everyday friendship and its centrality in young people's sociality is crucial to understanding the broader processes of social ordering and transformation. I argue that young people's ideas about friendship are not fluid, are constantly self-generated, and allow for opportunities in a changing city of Delhi, but they are also constraining and disciplining forces that cause burdens of generational uncertainty.

Finally, Chapter 7 returns to the research aims in light of the ethnographic study and outlines the wider implications of this research. I tie together observations across each of the three empirical chapters to draw out a series of conclusions and contributions to the scholarly debates introduced in Chapters 1 and 2.

Chapter 2. Theorising Precarity: Youth, Citizenship, & Race through a Geographic Lens

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss different debates across the social sciences to examine everyday life of young Afghans in New Delhi. This literature review evaluates geographical writings on precarity in relation to broader social science literature on refugee studies and the everyday to outline issues around youth, space, citizenship, and race. In addition to a detailed discussion of these writings in the literature review, each of my empirical chapters engages with emerging concerns across these bodies of scholarship, critically discusses them in the context of my field research materials (see Chapter 3) and identifies gaps in the literature. Given the particular debates with which each chapter engages, the review is intentionally broad.

I begin by introducing geographical theorisations of precarity as it relates to ideas about space, time, and agency, reflecting on relational ways of understanding space and time in the everyday. I consider recent empirical scholarship that provides grounded accounts of these conceptualisations, locating my own work among these ongoing efforts. I also discuss conceptual frameworks for analysing young people, focusing specifically on research on youth transitions and spatial aspects of young people's everyday lives. Following this, I engage in the fields of geography and (forced) migration and refugee studies that do not divorce the migration experience from that of settlement in the 'host state'. My focus on some of the conceptual research agendas based around citizenship, refugeehood, and belonging necessitates bringing these particular bodies of literature together. In doing so, I argue that these experiences are vital sources of reimagining the ways young people identify conditions of social and political inequalities, such as schooling, and negotiate these stresses.

I then introduce and expand on recent theorisations of race, with particular focus on reworking geographies of race and how debates in the literature are being examined in the Indian context. I take interest in the 'all-pervasiveness of race' (see Price 2010) that is less likely to come up in geographical discussions of identity and race. I engage with the broader social science literature on the under-represented realities of young refugees in the Global South through the lenses of precarity, agency, and space. The concept of precarity emerges from many literatures, yet I echo Butler (2004) to push the concept to mean the general condition of social lives. Taken collectively, I articulate broader relational and conceptual frameworks in this chapter that underpins each of the empirical chapters and this thesis as a whole.

2.2 Conceptualising Precarity, 'the everyday" and Space

In light of the research aims set out in the previous chapter—to examine how Afghan refugees negotiate their precarious refugee status to secure liveable lives—the evident place to start my theoretical engagements within geographical writings is with precarity. In this thesis, I am inspired by a relational understanding of space and its connection to the wider processes of precarity. Foregrounding relationality in geographical literature on precarity is important because of the 'the situation of relationality itself, insofar as our dependencies are vulnerabilities' (Puar et al. 2012: 171). This prompts an examination of precarity as a 'rethinking of social relationality' (Elwood et al. 2011), in which precarity is not only located in the margins, but also at the centre of making everyday life insecure (Berlant 2011). I also engage with the theoretical understanding of ongoing urban practices to conceptualise a form of precarity concerned with and experienced in the everyday. It is equally important to also understand the power relations that structure contemporary urban life in which precarity is routinely reproduced and experienced (Muñoz 2018).

Early social scientific scholarship on 'precarity' can be traced to the 1960s, at least, in the context of the conditions of labour. Pierre Bourdieu's (1963, 1999) study on colonial casual

labour conditions in Algeria furthered an understanding of the concept of precarity entrenched in the contours of neoliberal conditions of unsteady work, exposing issues of vulnerability and insecurity. This setting has inspired economic and labour geographers to use and conceptualise the term to explicate the conditions of precarity that originate from labour market experiences (Gill and Pratt 2008; Standing 2011; Coe 2013; Strauss 2017). The concept has been developed in distinct theoretical debates on work-life changes and the insecurities that are brought up as a consequence of socioeconomic phenomena, particularly for women in developed economies, who are most at risk (see McDowell and Christopherson 2009).

Ideas about vulnerability and risk are critiqued in relation to precarity and livelihoods and are considered synonymous by some scholars who explicate how precariousness permeates our world (Ettlinger 2007; Banki 2013a; Ottosson 2020). There is also a shift in theoretical focus from Bourdieu's historically bounded view of precarious or insecure work that is contingent on employment, in which the concept is still understood in terms of labour markets, working experiences, and insecure economies (Waite 2009), to work on intersecting scales (race, gender, ethnicity, the environment) and home (Hyndman 2008; Brickell 2012; Desmond 2016). I view precarity as a product of neoliberal forces that underscore a subjective feeling of social insecurity and lost recognition (Dörre et al. 2007; Waite 2009). Nancy Ettlinger (2007) departs from extant views of precarity within the social sciences, and instead suggests an alternative definition that shifts away from renditions of labour regimes. She defines precarity 'as being synonymous with uncertainty and unpredictability, and particularly "the unpredictability of terror"' (2009: 322–323). Precarity also encompasses a wider set of individual vulnerabilities to social, economic, political, and environmental risks (Ettlinger 2007; Paret and Gleeson 2016). For instance, unpredictable vulnerabilities manifest in various ways: different forms of surveillance; ecological disasters (e.g., earthquakes and tsunamis) that result in displacement; and violence and terror. This is in line with Judith Butler's work influenced by her perspective

of post-9/11 conditions in the United States, in which she underscores vulnerability as 'being socially constituted bodies, attached to others, at risk of losing those attachments, exposed to others, at risk of violence by virtue of that exposure' (2006: 20). Political theorists such as Butler (2009, 2011) and Berlant (2011) distinguish between precariousness, an inherent state of vulnerability and dependence resulting from the relational structure of society, and precarity, a political condition that is implicated due to unequal power relations. Berlant argues that conditions of precarity can lead to obstacles in obtaining a good life, but, paradoxically, these aspirations to evade temporary or long-term precarious conditions can also lead to the production of what she calls a 'relation of cruel optimism' (2011: 170). From these perspectives, precarity is also a socioeconomic condition in which the uneven distribution of precarity is intersected with ontological experience (Butler 2011).

I am drawn to scholarship views on precarity that consider it not just a condition of flexible or temporary labour, but rather a wider process of precarious life with important gendered (Butler 2009), racial, and spatio-temporal dimensions (Chako and Price 2020). Precarity is extended beyond contemporary phenomena, such as the war on terror, as Ettlinger argues that precarity is, 'an enduring feature of the human condition. It is not limited to a specific context in which precarity is imposed by global events or macrostructures' (2007: 320). I argue that thinking about precarity in spatio-temporal terms can help conceptualise how young refugees interact relationally with social relations (Massey 2005). This theoretical refocus reflects 'critical geographies of precarity' (Ettlinger 2007; Waite 2009) in which the theoretical agenda is to 'develop an expansive view of precarity by dissolving spatiotemporal boundaries' (Ettlinger 2007: 320). The role of precarity, then, can also be understood in the active construction of social reality that can also open up an analytical space for agency. While the idea of precarity is not new per se, the role of precarity in shaping the social insecurities of people in response

to globalisation and rising inequalities is important to examine both theoretically and analytically (Sassen 2014).

The concept of precarity also encompasses a wider set of vulnerabilities and the need to traverse the North–South divide as conditions of precarity present themselves in different global contexts. Yet, scholars from the Global South critique the application of precarity due to its Western-centric nature. Thinking about precarity globally and comparatively is not only challenging, but also necessary as a lived reality (Robinson 2016). I take particular interest in borrowing literature from migration and refugee studies that discuss ideas not just circulated in labour and economic geography, but also contribute to bridging ideas about migrant and refugee precarity as they relate to space and are characterised by livelihoods that are temporary, uncertain, and restrictive (Chako and Price 2020). Drawing together these elements, a fuller and more nuanced reworking of precarity can be conceptualised that brings together multifaceted literature on precarity and agency. While migrants and refugees often experience precarity due to 'the vulnerability of removal or dislocation from one's physical location' (Banki 2013a, 453; but see also: Strauss and McGrath 2017; Wang et al., 2017), young people and children may experience new and extreme forms of precarity and vulnerability, especially if they are undocumented and unaccompanied (Allsop and Chase 2019; Blue et al., 2020). In other studies on migrant experiences, labour exploitation of female migrants in Latin America highlights the way in which precarity transforms across spatio-temporal contexts within and beyond labour markets that cannot be purely linked to static conditions associated with working experience or explored '*in situ* wider processes of mobilities' (McIlwaine 2020: 1) and migrant precarity (Casas-Cortés 2014). While labour geographers grapple with evolving forms of precarity, including insecurity, exploitation, and vulnerability, studies in geography on precarity remains limited to work on labour in comparison with those scholarship perspectives

from sociology, anthropology, and feminist philosophy on the Global South (see Butler 2003; Anderson 2007 among others).

Certainly, the concept of precarity has the potential to contribute to geographical understandings of the everyday by moving beyond its sustained use in European contexts. Geographic work on precarity gestures towards understanding intersecting forms of precarity by highlighting that precarity is not just about work, it is also as a '*condition* that emerges from a generalised societal malaise' (Waite 2009: 417). It is about precarious life in many different fields (e.g., education, housing, migration, and women's health) across different spaces and times (Tsianos and Papadopoulos 2006). Although Ettlinger (2007) generalises the experience of precarity as a condition in the micro-spaces of everyday life, and Tsianos and Papadopoulos (2006) deploy the concept in the more specific context of working experiences among migrant populations in Europe, precarity needs to be further interrogated in relation to space (Waite 2009). I now turn to geographical literature that urges consideration of the everyday and space (Lefebvre 1991; Massey 1993, 2004; Crang and Thrift 2000) through a relational approach (Holloway and Hubbard 2001).

Scholars have underlined 'the everyday' as the locus of social change, emphasising the fragility and instability that are felt through negotiating marginalisation (Mann 2010). Marginalisation is defined as 'the social process of becoming or being made marginal and excluded in terms of the personal needs and requirements' of the larger society (Tafaroji and Reeves 2014: 2). As such, the identification processes of marginalised groups are reshaped through their everyday lives and experiences. A lens on the everyday exposes particular modes of marginalisation, such as during times of undocumented residency status (see Krause and Li 2020). Henri Lefebvre's (1991) examination of everyday life underscores how the production of space is essential. He was interested in how the production of everyday life conflicts with dominant forms and representations of space in which hegemonic values and meanings are imposed. In

this sense, routine life emerges as power-laden practices in multiple, interconnected sites of the everyday where tensions between the marginalised and dominant forces manifest. Space is shaped by day-to-day social reproduction of precarity and as 'space is permeated with social relations: it is not only supported by social relations but is also producing and produced by social relations' (Lefebvre 1991: 286). Sensitive to this perspective, I am interested in the ways in which the formation of the everyday is conceptualised in the accelerated pace of the widening of urban space. I also extend theories of social ties and sociability that make new social practices among urban youths (in)visible (see Chapter 6). To undertake this task, I argue that Lefebvre's framework of the everyday can be transposed to ideas about precarity in urban sites, which is worthy of geographical analysis and encompasses a broader range of subject positions and spaces than those we encounter in Lefebvre's work.

Of relevance to this thesis is the growing body of geographical literature concerned with a relational understanding of space. Lefebvre's (1991) conception of the production of space rejects the conventional separation of space/time. In calling for 'the right to the city', Lefebvre articulates—though not universally—the importance of the 'shared right' to 'be at the heart of urban life' (1996: 193). This is a response to his observation of the systemic exclusion of labour workers, in which one's ability to access the city is tied to the notion of social and spatial mobility. These spaces include public spaces (e.g., parks, sidewalks, libraries) and private spaces (e.g., malls, restaurants, residential), which powerful actors exclude through the same kinds of power they manipulate to discount the public (Voyce 2003). In some ways, Massey's (1994; 2005) epistemological roots stem from Lefebvre's work in understanding that space comprises relational context.

I argue that a relational examination of space and time and its relation to precarity should be considered 'intimately connected to socio-spatial contexts' in the everyday (Waite 2009: 427); that is, 'a dynamic which disrupts the predefined terms of any system of causality' (Massey

1994: 252). Other studies have drawn on Marxist scholars such as Lefebvre (1991), who considered the importance of a 'geometry of space', but also 'its lived practices and the symbolic meaning and significance of particular spaces and spatializations' (Massey 1994: 251). In this view, Massey (2004, 2005) borrows from David Harvey's (1973; 1989) thesis on 'space-time compression' used to conceptualise the increasing pace of social life. Harvey's (1973) thesis on space-time compression combines his tripartite model of space (i.e., absolute, relative, and relational) with Lefebvre's triad concept of space (i.e., experienced, conceptualised, and live). In doing so, Harvey acknowledges the failure of this matrix 'to do justice to either the experienced or the lived realms of spatiality' (2004: 104). Within the geographical framework of precarity and space, then, spatiality can be theorised as fluid and 'thinking in terms of the ever-shifting geometry of social/power relations, and it forces into view the real multiplicities of space-time' (Massey 1994: 4; see also Amin 2002). Massey states that 'space and time are inextricably interwoven' (1994: 261). Thus, the implication for challenging and advancing a critical geographical lens on precarity and space is important as it is an 'ever-shifting geometry of power' (Massey 2005: 3) in which precarity becomes a kind of delimiting process of movement that takes shape across scales. I build on the work of Watts and Bohle (1993) and other human geographers, such as Findlay (2005: 430), who have engaged with ideas about precarity. For instance, I demonstrate how structural forces can shape feelings of vulnerability in a 'multiplicity of social relations across all spatial scales' (Massey 1994: 4). Adopting this theoretical perspective helps advance a relational framework to understand spatial aspects of young people's identity formation (see Valentine 2003; Skelton 2013), as well as attention towards spatial (see Horton and Kraftl 2006) and temporal (Worth 2009; Hardgrove et al. 2015) aspects of precarious life. Harvey's (2006) idea about the way young people negotiate their social interactions across communities, families, and peer groups to define their everyday subjectivities helps also to highlight the links between precarity and urban space.

In this thesis, I advance the notion of precarity as it relates to urban space. I interrogate the link between urbanity, defined as 'unique features of an urban landscape', and precarious space for refugee populations (Banki 2013b: 1). There is literature in refugee and migration studies on the way in which urban structures of a city influence the production of precarity (Banki 2013b; Ferreri et al. 2017). For instance, Ferreri, Dawson, and Vasudevan's (2017) work in cultural geography illuminates how obtaining housing property in the UK is not only precarious and insecure, but the everyday lives of young individuals negotiate flexible housing in the form of temporary permanence. The authors explicate that due to their precarious employment status, young people, usually university students and highly skilled workers, take up roles as 'guardians' of housing properties in unusual areas of major cities, such as London, in return for low rent, which feeds into the reproduction and normalisation of precarity in the Global North. Muñoz's (2018) research on the micro-spaces of the everyday underscores the gendered dimensions of precarity in Buenos Aires among migrant squatters. She posits that due to the socio-spatial complexities of living in informal housing, precarity is intensified and becomes routine for the marginalised women whose traditional roles as caretakers and mothers influence their sense of place. These studies highlight the importance of precarity in the context of large urban settings, where negotiating and accessing space exposes routine experiences in uncertain spatio-temporal dimensions.

Another important aspect of the study of the urban is the relationship between refugees and the city. For instance, extant research in refugee studies, migration studies, and geography have reflected on the role of the city in the settlement of refugees (Burke et al. 2011). Much of this literature has underscored the range of logistical challenges refugees face as they establish themselves in a new host country in places such as Canada (see Lacroix 2004; Hyndman and McLean 2006). In non-Western contexts, scholars have argued that it is important to interrogate the city as a framework (Sanyal 2012; Darling 2017). For instance, Sanyal's (2012)

research concerns the complexity of refugee spaces regarding socialising in cities, such as Somali refugees in Nairobi and Burmese refugees in Kuala Lumpur. Sanyal draws on ideas about urban informality, in which refugees face 'different spatial and legal conditions…where urban citizenship is achieved and lost by the urban poor' (2012: 634). The debates around urban informality are useful because they provide important questions about 'class, race, and present colonial relations'; however, like the discussion on refugees, understanding informality needs to be context-specific across different geographies (Sanyal 2012: 640). As such, understanding refugees in the city allows us to reconsider the evolving socio-spatial relations of refugee spaces in urban areas where the conditions of status are a result of negotiating formal and informal practices and rights. These discussions maintain a focus on sovereign authority that tends to prioritise the policing of forced migration over the possibilities for contestation that also emerge through cities. I agree with Darling (2017) in arguing for a complete engagement with debates in geography and how fuller discussions on urban informality can unpack the social and cultural tensions of living in a city and forced migration (Amin 2012; Wilson 2015). Informal practices underscore the 'ever-shifting urban relationship between the legal and the illegal, legitimate and illegitimate, authorized and unauthorized' (Roy 2011: 233). Given the precarious legal status and uncertainties of refugees in a city, the shifting relationships of those in power and authority in the negotiation of urban practices question 'the very basis of state legitimacy' (ibid).

I advance the theoretical agenda of these scholars by focusing on urban precarity among refugee youths—specifically, legal status (see Chapter 4), access to higher education (see Chapter 5), and ideas about friendship and sociality (see Chapter 6)—and how the production of everyday life becomes 'the dominant process of reproducing social relations' (Goonewardena 2008: 137). Considering this viewpoint, I situate the subjectivities of young Afghan refugees within the broader contexts of their families, peer groups, and social and

ethno-religious communities, and I frame 'space as a product of interrelations; as constituted through interactions' (Massey 2005: 166). The important idea here is not only the spatial as inherently political and important for microsocial connectivity, but equally important is that perceiving identities as 'relationally constructed and spatially enacted' is relational in nature (Massey 2005: 5). This idea builds on precarity as an extension of young people's practices within spaces of new socialites that permeate across social, political, and economic elements of life.

2.3 Theorising Youth: New Subjectivities and Geographies of Higher Education

The second set of literature tied to precarity and the everyday that I engage with is concerned with understanding how a new phase of 'youth' can be reconceptualised as a consequence of young Afghan refugees' changing perceptions and lived engagements under contemporary neoliberal economic, political, and social change. Focusing on the analytical lens of youth, and specifically within the context of their everyday experiences, enables a nuanced picture of young people's subjectivities through the recognition of 'youth' as a social construction (France et al. 2012; see Valentine 2008). Scholars in youth studies have posited that young people are producers of a 'critical gaze' that has the potential to shed light on a range of contemporary youth issues, including, but not limited to, the risks complicating the role played by structural factors such as gender, class, religion, and geographical location that define the experiences and opportunities of young people (see Skelton 2002; Valentine and Skelton 2003; Tolonen 2008). Elsewhere, social science engagements with youth transitions, such as in feminist geography (Teather 2005; Katz and Monk 2014), behavioural geography (Huff and Clark 1978), and migration studies (Bailey and Boyle 2004; Apitzsch and Siouti 2007), have posited that young people now face intensified challenges regarding transitioning from education to work (Jeffrey and McDowell 2004; Katz 2004; Jeffrey 2010). Extant scholarship

in youth studies has rightfully recognised that young people are responding to the rapid pace and changing nature of social processes.

Geographies of youth as a subject is a growing field within the discipline of geography, particularly in relation to exploring processes of socialisation during childhood, as well as distinct stages within the life course for 'childhood', 'youth', and 'adulthood' (Dyson 2008; Bailey 2009). Geographers in recent years have employed the concept of life course (Hopkins and Pain 2007; Bailey 2009; Hörschelmann 2011) to understand the relationality of social and spatial relations. Some social science writing has considered how space is central to young people's experiences move between the macro/micro. For instance, Nancy Worth (2014) examines lived space (understood as the social organisation of space that is foundational to young people's lives), drawing attention to everyday spatial and relational dynamics of young people's localities. Worth (2014) posits that global restructurings intermingle with young people's lived experiences (see also Hörschelmann and Schafer 2005; Jeffrey and Dyson 2008). Geographers argue that youth have been more adversely affected by rapid economic restructuring than other age groups, a critical aspect of inequality (Katz 2008; Jeffrey 2010). There is also a need to examine 'the importance of different life spaces and the interconnections between them (e.g., school and work, work and home)' while also investigating in greater depth how young people are both actors in space and constrained by it (Valentine 2007: 48). Geographers broadly continue to study youth transitions (Valentine 2007; Tse and Waters 2013; Punch 2015; Hopkins et al., 2015; Wood 2017), but this thesis departs from extant scholarship on youth transitions that assumes young people are 'adults-in-waiting', as opposed to 'beings in the here and now' (Skelton 2009: 177).

Theoretical and empirical work on youth transitions have focused on a greater understanding of the social relationships significant within young people's everyday lives and are particularly pertinent to a theorisation of youth refugee lives in India. My approach towards theorising

refugee youths aligns with notions of 'transitions' as a 'general, overarching concept; a metaphor that does not presume a particular sort of content, direction or length at the individual experience' (MacDonald and Marsh 2005: 36). I embrace the fragmented, contested, and often-complex nature of youth transitions (Furlong et al. 2011) and make the case for developing understandings that 'help explain the dynamic process of growing up, including personal motivations, fluid experiences of time, and perceived constraints to future success' (Worth 2009: 1051). I also approach the concept of 'youth transitions' as an emotional aspect accompanying young people who come from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds, confront multiple risks, and build social relationships (Hörschelmann 2018). Hörschelmann developed this approach 'as an embodied medium through which time–spaces are brought into connection and boundaries are transgressed, maintained, and/or (re)produced' (2018: 31). In particular, Hörschelmann examines how emotions affect education decision-making processes and future career trajectories for disadvantaged youth in Germany. I also borrow Jeffrey's (2010) notion of 'timepass'—that is, the 'passing time' and 'waiting' observed in unemployed young men in India—as a way to understand a non-linear notion of young people's subjective experiences in which everyday activities are governed by personal decisions, actions, and occurrences that lead to mobility. I employ the focus on aspects of 'timepass' to articulate the complexities of youth, education, and social life in the everyday. In particular, understanding the emotional elements of youth, such as their frustrations regarding obtaining a higher level of education (Chapter 5), opens up ways to interpret how the discourse on youth refugees in India is a shifting and fluid process.

Punch (2014) uses the notion of negotiated and constrained interdependencies within and across generations as a way of theorising youth transitions. She posits that relations of interdependence are negotiated and constrained as a consequence of restricted socioeconomic opportunities, but also negotiated both within and across time and space and generations.

Moreover, in describing Ghanaian youth as 'both a shifting social position and fluid process', Langevang (2008: 2046) advocates for the study of young people's everyday lives as they unfold in practice and context and as they move through their life course (see Morrow 2013). There remains, however, a paucity in the literature regarding the contextual experiences of youth refugees in non-Western contexts, with some notable exceptions (see Chatty 2007 and 2010).

Dawn Chatty's (2007, 2010) work on Afghan refugee youths in Iran challenges the discursive representation of refugees as passive victims and objects to be saved (see also Malkki 1995; Zetter 2007). Her study focuses on youth transitions among refugees and how their migration represents a collective response to war, economic hardship, and persecution, among others. Monsutti (2007) draws attention to how the pathway to adulthood among young Afghan men migrating to Iran is a type of masculine rite of passage via which they can provide for their families. In some ways, a pathway to adulthood for young migrants and refugees helps them achieve a sense of safety and freedom (Chase 2013) and experience a feeling of adventure (Cirvello 2011). Fiddian-Qasmiyeh's (2019) research on Sahrawi youths is also crucial to this thesis, especially the empirical chapters, which highlight how young refugees create (and imagine) their lives beyond their legal status and exclusionary institutional practices, including the negotiation of refugee labelling (see also Chatty 2010; Ramadan 2012). Chatty's (2007) argument continues to resonate with scholars working in the field of refugee studies and offers a starting point to understand how refugee youth research juxtaposes ideas about agency and different legal statuses that can be theoretically captured through comparative research (Chatty 2010; Bradley et al. 2019). Comparative research on the nature of migrant aspirations and youth transitions (Chatty 2007) across different contexts underscores the importance of strategies among refugees to secure an education for their children; strategies in which students are 'imbued with a sense of importance of education, which they perceive as a major weapon in their nation's fight for economic and political freedom' (Chatty et al. 2010: 37). As mentioned

in the previous chapter, India is neither a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention nor its 1967 Protocol, nor does it have national legislation related to refugees. This is important to reiterate as recent studies have revealed the ways in which constraints experienced by refugees may be closely related to those faced by other vulnerable groups, which is particularly poignant for discussing how different legal statuses impact agency exercised to negotiate constraints in the everyday, including access to education (see Bradley et al. 2019). In more recent work on youth refugees and precarity, Johnson and Gilligan (2020) highlight how legal and social marginalisation are negotiated along the Thailand–Myanmar border. The authors argue that young refugees as 'agentic social actors' are conscious of their constraints, which are rooted in their ability to respond to the uncertain nature of precarity, which has the unexpected effect of sustaining hope that challenges passive victim narratives (Johnson and Gilligan 2020: 1). Taken collectively, this body of literature underscores the significance of the prominent social relationships in the everyday lives of young people, supporting broader calls for relational geographies of young people by demonstrating the transforming normative ideas about 'childhood' and 'youth'. This is part of an ongoing effort among scholars to recognise 'the roles of young people as actors and agents of the mobile world' (Skelton 2013: 469).

Empirical studies on diverse situations have revealed how youth subjectivities, agency, and socio-political acts are constituted in and through intersected paths of power that span 'the local' and 'the global' (Jeffrey 2012; Kallio and Häkli 2013). Through these works, scholars have demonstrated that young people's everyday experiences under global economic change are often complex and paradoxical. For example, young people may be drawn to circumstances in which their perceptions of higher education and ideas about the future are framed by mixtures of fear, hope, optimism, and anticipation (Deuchar 2014). Nevertheless, young men and women's subjectivities may be reconfigured in ways that require them to navigate their own productions of contestations and 'shift in generational sensibilities, attitudes, and values'

(Lukose 2009: 5). Craig Jeffrey argues, 'we are now well accustomed to reading stories of children and youth who protest against injustice, often in difficult circumstances, or who express agency simply through their own resourcefulness' (2012: 245). I draw on the literature on geographies of higher education that lends critical value to theorising the way in which young people are shifting some of the norms of 'adulthood' to articulate different styles of being youths; that is, to negotiate differently gendered roles and responsibilities of family, community and social lives to redefine forms of everyday life (see Holloway et al. 2012; Kraftl 2015).

Through a comparative study of the economic and socio-political situation of Hindu-, Sikh-, and Muslim Afghans, this study adds to research in the field of refugee studies and the geography of youth by recognising the regularities and irregularities of (youth) transitions among young Afghan refugees that do not 'presume a particular sort of content, direction or length at the level of individual experience' (MacDonald and Marsh 2005: 36). Bailey (2009: 407) suggests that by the 'linking and synchronization of lives and through space', biographies and narratives of individuals in transit could help challenge notions of life course by considering the importance of young people's everyday practices (e.g., mundane practices of 'dress, speech, comportment'; see Dyson 2008). The reality of refugeehood is often shaped by institutionally framed futures (e.g., repatriation, integration, resettlement) and requirements of demonstrable pasts (e.g., traumatic events, memory, persecution). As part of navigating their present realities and coping with the challenges of daily life, young refugees may be constrained from achieving their desired futures, which are often imagined in another space/place, and from reconciling with their past homelands.

Youth geographers have posited the need to understand the complex 'decision-making processes that temporality entails' (Kirk et al. 2017: 2772). This thesis focuses in particular on links between temporality and liminality (Durham 2008; Worth 2009; Hörschelmann 2011)

when considering temporal experiences of migrants and refugees. This study extends social anthropologist Victor Turner's work on the processes of liminality that can be characterised as 'a space of transformation between phases of separation and reincorporation' (1969: 95). Liminality represents ambiguity, a marginal and transitional space 'at the boundary of two dominant spaces, which is fully part of either' (Dale and Burnell 2008: 238). Casey (1993: 115) defines liminal spaces as 'spaces on the margin' and spaces of 'dwelling' insofar as dimensions of liminal space and identity can be experienced in complex transitory regions and zones (e.g., doorways, temporary spaces of 'dwelling', airports, borders, areas of zones; Shortt 2015: 6).

In this thesis, I consider ways in which young people occupy liminal space and liminal status in the mundane and taken-for-granted junctures of everyday life. Simon Turner's (2004) study of young refugee men in Tanzania helps to frame theoretically the ways Afghan refugee youth in India occupy liminal spaces that can be fundamental to the social construction of identity. Liminality can also be a vital part of everyday experiences in transit that can help us understand 'physical displacement, imaginative travel and anticipation of the pressures and requirements' of the host state (Shubin 2015: 8). The various gendered-aged identities of young people can illustrate the potential experiences and meanings that may occupy a somewhat liminal space when placed against the social practices of friendship or going to college. Victor Turner's liminal concept paves the way for a theoretical framework to recognise the agency of refugees and the social context in which their time as refugees is situated. Geographers working on youth and agency now recognise the link between how agency as 'strategic power' constructs alternative futures (see also Jeffrey 2013), on the one hand, and 'tactical agency', on the other, which does not always 'alter broader societal structures' (Holloway et al., 2019: 461). For instance, Langevang and Gough's study on liminality among young people in Ghana indicates that young people's agency 'take[s] the form of "tactic" or "bounded" agency, as their actions are more a matter of continuously adjusting to a changing situation than having complete

control over their lives' (Langevang and Gough, 2009: 752). I engage with this literature on young people with a distinct set of interrelated debates concerning the way the identities of young people are constructed in their engagement with globalisation that is mediated by age and social relationships through the life course. This may be a useful way of theorising young people's lives through multiple social constructions of adulthood that help explain 'the dynamic process of growing up, including personal motivations, the fluid experience of time, and perceived constraints to future success' (Worth 2009: 1051).

Studies on youth have also considered the various ways in which young people exercise and negotiate their agency, whether through active resistance or subtle strategies and tactics across multiple scales and sites (Jeffrey 2012). My research engages with geographical work on agency that situates existing societal/familial demands, social relationships with national/local level officials, opportunities, and constraints. Thus, in this thesis, I centre the geographical approach to youth transitions in the South Asian context by identifying how inequalities may shape the precarious social lives and relations of young Afghans. In this thesis, I take up the issue of how young Afghan refugees negotiate spaces of higher education while traversing unfamiliar territory in New Delhi. This research contributes to an emerging strand of literature on youth geographies through the lens of higher education by underscoring the diverse ways agency is charged with meanings, attitudes, and young people's everyday practices (Jeffrey et al., 2004; Waters 2009). It also adds to wider studies in contemporary human geography on the impact that socioeconomic transformations have on young people's reflections, aspirations, 'everyday strategies', and 'the terms they use to theorize their lives' (Jeffrey 2010: 466; see also Jeffrey 2012 and Dyson 2008).

2.4 Citizenship and Belonging

The third set of debates I engage with in this thesis concerns notions of citizenship and belonging and their relationship to youth. I acknowledge that there is a vast literature on both

conceptions of citizenship and belonging across the social sciences. My understanding of citizenship is that it is often subjected to a legal- or place-bound identity, on the one hand, and performative and participatory dimensions on the other. Scholars have argued that citizenship should no longer be understood as legal status but as a 'social practice that individuals engage in beyond the state, through organizations of civil society and civic actions' (Ehrkamp and Leitner 2003: 5; see also Nagel and Staeheli 2004). This shift of scholarly attention from citizenship as a legal principle to citizenship as a social and cultural construct opens up for thinking about alternative modes of citizenship such as urban citizenship (Secor 2004) and belonging. In this context, 'belonging' has informal and formal aspects, implied, for instance, by ideas of formal and informal citizenship, as well as civic identity (Akinwumi 2006; Alexander 2008). Most commonly, 'belonging' appears in the phrase, 'sense of belonging' (see Walsh 2006), in which the affective aspects of the concept focus on the feelings of being in place.

Desforeges et al. contend that citizenship is shaped through 'scalar reconfiguration and engagement with place' (2005: 444). Other scholars have pointed to how citizenship is constructed, performed, and contested under neoliberal globalising processes, such as migration and recent refugee migration in the Middle East and Europe (Kallio and Mitchell 2016), arguing that people are increasingly governed at the level of 'subjectivity' (Davies and Bansel 2007; Jones 2009). Through new discourses, the state governs people's subjectivity by 'structur[ing] the possible field of action of others' (Foucault 1994: 341) and, by internalising the discourses, individuals come to govern themselves. There has been a spatial turn in research on South Asia, via which scholarship has examined urban space as a context to study wider processes of national belonging and citizenship (Desai and Sanyal 2011). Although I recognise dimensions of citizenship that consider the legal framework for refugees in India (Ananthachari 2003) and conditions of refugees and internally displaced peoples within

national contexts in India and more broadly across South Asia (Oberoi 2006), I explore how refugees' experiences in the city both reflect a sense of belonging and shape the city.

The concept of 'spaces of citizenship' is useful to study the 'differentiated nature of *de facto* citizenship as experienced by "othered" groups who are subjected to social and spatial marginalisation' (Desforges et al., 2005: 339; see also Cresswell 2001). 'Space' is an important concept in understanding citizenship, enabling geographers to examine the formation of spatially differentiated rights and senses of belonging. I follow Massey (2004), who describes a form of spatially bounded citizenship that is based on frequent negotiation. Studies on refugee geographies and citizenship have contended that the lack of formal recognition of 'refugees…exacerbates their vulnerability' (Darling 2017: 181) and livelihood opportunities in cities. This thesis considers the everyday precarities that emerge as a result of uncertainness and insecurities with fluctuating experiences and degrees of agency (Sigona 2012) and agency's relation to (legal) documentation among institutions (Goldring and Landolt 2011).

Engaging with social science research on human migration (Ehrkamp and Leitner 2006, Hyndman: 2010 and 2012; Conlon 2011; Wright 2014; Kuusisto-Arponen and Gilmartin 2015; Collyer and King 2016), this thesis advances 'critical refugee studies' in order to 'not reduce refugees as mere victims, even if their losses have been significant' (Espiritu 2014: 171). What makes the geographical angle of this thesis a leap forward theoretically is that, instead of 'de-subjectifying refugees by placing them in unexamined categories' (Ehrkamp 2016: 818), it redirects attention to refugees themselves to allow for a fuller understanding of the complex social formation through which claims, political acts, and subjectivities are experienced and forged. The relationship between citizenship and refugeehood is also explored, wherein the loss of the former defines the dilemma of refugees as being deprived of citizenship rights and legal protection under the state (Costello 2017). Citizenship for refugees has been studied through the processes of institutional labelling from above (Zetter 2007) and 'acts of

citizenship' from below (Isin and Nielsen 2008; Isin 2009). There is now a burgeoning synthesis (e.g., Ataç 2016) on explaining how different accounts of citizenship among refugees are reshaped, regulated, negotiated, and contested among a variety of actors across 'new sites and scales of struggle' (Isin 2009: 368).

Examining citizenship through an assemblage of *interactions* (e.g., multi-level, multi-actor, and multi-scalar) can produce a better understanding of 'inter-scalar tensions' when focusing on top-down structures and institutional practices regarding everyday interactions from below (Goldring and Landolt 2016: 857). In particular, this thesis draws attention to notions of space-time as heterogenous and 'relational' in shaping the everyday lives of young people and their 'experiences of being a part of the social fabric' (Anthias 2006: 21). It reflects on how the experience of the migration journey does not end when the final destination is reached, but that the political and personal processes of becoming or failing to become a 'recognized' refugee could be more pervasive and intrusive than that. I conceptualise citizenship and its connection to shaping an individual's identity 'as a legal status founded on membership in a territorial nation-state and citizenship [/identity] as a social and increasingly deterritorialized cultural construct' (Amin 2012: 165; McConnell 2013: 978).

As a result of the liberalisation of the political economy, shifting reconfigurations of time, space, and mobility have implications for how young people imagine new modes of belonging as a dimension of citizenship in the sites and spaces of the everyday (Holston 2008). Approaching young people's ideas and feelings about citizen identities through a focus on the relational perspective facilitates an interconnected understanding of 'cohesion, connection and belonging' in urban areas characterised by high socioeconomic disadvantage (Harris 2015: 7). This standpoint intersects with interpersonal and social relationships (Hörschelmann and Refaie 2014) and is somewhat related to an emphasis on youth sociality in which young people not only inhabit spaces of relationality, but also act in relation to others. In doing so, this

viewpoint shapes and reproduces attitudes and meanings of global (and neoliberal) citizenship (Hopkins et al. 2015). This allows for a clearer understanding of how young people in urban areas negotiate practices of exclusion and alienation, such as in spaces of education (see Chapter 5) and friendship encounters (see Chapter 6). For instance, Edgeworth's study found experiences of 'unbelonging' among recently arrived Sudanese immigrant youth in a rural Australian school and community (2015: 351). In this context, young Sudanese immigrants felt a sense of being 'out of place' because of their intensified experiences of spatial and social exclusions, which underscore a lack of social membership within a place where young people are seen as different (ibid: 362). Feelings of (un)belonging are not limited to one geographical region from another.

I argue that citizenship in India is being contested due to the Modi-led government cohering Indian citizenship around an idealised Hindu identity. The dominant rhetoric of Hindutva forms of recognition limits the imagination of alternative modes of belonging for those who identify as minorities in India. This thesis demonstrates the continuing significance of discussing citizenship (Mitra 2008) and moves away from the comforts of citizenship defined as formal-legal rights and towards one that is all-encompassing and inclusive (Antonsich 2010). I unpack the ways in which citizenship may be ethnicised and racialised at distinct moments, which undergirds the experience of exclusion for Afghan refugees. In doing so, I contribute to emergent debates on racialisation (discussed in the following section) in the Indian context (c.f. Bayly 2001; Beteille 2004; Visweswaran 2010), which are a useful touchstone to this thesis in examining how young Afghan refugees frame and imagine different moments of their lives and notions of race/ethnicity and citizenship as a central site of experiencing a sense of belonging.

There is now a growing body of work that examines the everyday practices of citizenship and in different senses of belonging (Arnot and Schwartz 2012; Kraftl 2015). This body of work

has suggested the importance of understanding citizenship and belonging (and not belonging) as being based on relationships that extend people's daily lives (Ho 2010; Staeheli et al., 2012: 631). For instance, unequal social transitions among young people attempting to build their notions of social inclusion, particularly in informal and formal institutional settings, such as school, open up other meanings of citizenship and belonging through ideas of community, shared language, history, and culture (see Habib and Ward 2019). While Cuervo and Wyn state that the idea of belonging is 'often implicit but under-theorized in discussions of place, space and young people' (2017: 2), I advocate the importance of 'disrupt[ing] the taken-for-granted temporal frameworks' through which youth is represented (Farrugia and Wood 2017: 211). In doing so, I reflect on how youth refugees understand themselves in different ways and in relation to the scale of the state. I conceptualise ideas about belonging as it relates to the importance of space in the formation of identities. I also regard belonging as tied not only to young people's sense of everyday life, but also as it relates to participation, entitlement, and status (Yuval-Davis 2011). In this way, I illustrate how young people's understandings of belonging and not belonging are not always mutually exclusive.

New forms of citizenship and belonging are needed for refugee narratives and what their presence and arrival mean for the host state (Greussing and Boomgaarden 2017), as well as for individuals through social interaction. These new forms can be achieved through an expansive notion of citizenship and belonging characterised by 'flexible social membership' (Isin and Turner 2007) to underline the role of young people in enacting them, encouraging a more layered, multiple reading of citizenship practices characterised by an elastic view of identity and rights beyond the nation-state (Beck 2007; Isin and Turner 2007). Following Turner (2016), this thesis also moves away from binary realities such as informal/formal, illegal/legal, or non-citizens/citizens to facilitate a flexibility in drawing out other concepts in studying refugees on the cusp of citizenship.

2.5 On Intersectionality: Framing Race and Identity Formation

The final set of debates I engage with in this thesis traces the connection between race and identity formation to understand intersectionality. It is important to first set the context in which I use intersectionality as a theoretical approach to the study of race and Afghan refugee youth in India. Geographical efforts to understand the complex empirical and theoretical links between 'race' and 'identity' require a wider reworking of race and its centrality to the construction of space and identity. Similar to work by spatial scholars such as Massey (1994) and Lippard (1997), who illustrate the hybridity of place, race-space theorisation by Knowles (2003: 80) suggests that, 'Space is an active archive of the social processes and social relationships composing racial orders. Active because it is not just a monument, accumulated through a racial past and present…it is active in the sense that it interacts with people and their activities as an ongoing set of possibilities in which race is fabricated.' Knowles' (2003) concept recognises the dialectical process of space in the formation of racialised identities and social formations. Crenshaw (1989, 1991) introduced intersectionality to anti-racist scholarship to underscore the mutual reinforcing ways the concept of intersectionality indexes the ways in which social categories (i.e., race, gender, class, nationality, sexuality) are mutually reinforcing phenomena. Intersectionality does not function as distinct, separate entities or reducible to categories of difference, but it is through the broader processes of everyday encounters such as racism, heterosexism, and colonialism that intersect to shape and reveal social and structural inequities (see also Mohanty 2013). Therefore, this research examines multiple bases of identities, social, and power relations—that is, those related not exclusively to gender and ethnicity—which can be crucial for analysing spatial relations of vulnerability, marginality, liminality, and disparity among young Afghans in India (Hyndman and de Alwis 2003).

To begin, I view race as a social construct (Omi and Winant 1986; but see also Gilroy 2000). I also consider the concept of race to signify and deconstruct the complex entanglements and

social processes of difference, exclusion, and inclusion (Acker 2011). Within the theory of racial formation, Omi and Winant characterise racism as fluid, contested, and 'complex of social meanings' with definite material consequences (1994: 55). Inwood and Yarbrough posit that the processes of racialisation continue to shape identities 'that help define and reinforce racialized social hierarchies, thus facilitating domination and exploitation' across space (2009: 299). I approach race and racialisation as an interrelationship rather than a fixed identity, sharing core attributes such as both being socially constructed, concerned with community-like groups, and categorisation of a group as the 'other' (Groothuis 2020). However, race denotes socially constructed groups, whereas racialisation 'is the process by which these races are constructed, and racism is negative discrimination on the basis of ideas regarding races' (Groothuis 2020: 681).

Given the focus of this thesis on 'Muslim' and 'non-Muslim' Afghans, literature on processes of racialisation in relation to religion and migration is useful. For instance, Joshi's (2016) work on understanding the racialisation of religion in relation to the experiences of South Asian migrants moving across borders offers important insights on how racialisation of religion renders religious faiths (i.e., Sikhism and Islam) socially, morally and theologically 'wrong'. Indeed, the reduction of people to homogenous groups or static view is. The outcome of racialisation is the conflation of racial, ethnic, and religious identities (see also Meer 2018). By placing the context of race within spatial contexts in examining the relationship between the construction of racialised identities and the racialisation of identities specific to historical, religious, and geographic contexts (see Pulido 2008; Meer 2018), I 'critically engage with how race and racism require interdisciplinary effort' (Nash 2003: 638).

As Ashutosh and Winders (2009: 56) note, 'geographical scholarship tends to "document" racial patterns…or "analyze" race's meanings…with little interaction across the divide.' Geography has a longstanding engagement with the study of race (Bonnett 1996 and 2018).

The development of 'racial studies' within geography (Bonnett 1996) is central to racialised discourses that echo British histories of Empire (Back et al., 2002; see also Nayak 2012), as well as a theoretically grounded approach to understanding race and racism as socially constructed (Miles 2000 and 2004). Robert Miles draws on the conception of racism that differentiates the 'Other' from the 'Self' and produces historically and geographically specific differences and race relations (2009). Anoop Nayak (2006 and 2011) follows Miles (2000 and 2004) and Gilroy (2000), who reject 'race' as an analytical category and disassemble 'race' as a credible concept. One way to study race geographically is through intersectional approaches (Nayak 2011). Nayak suggests that by not having a 'myopic focus on subjectivity and identity' (2011: 558), geographers can open up space for issues concerning difference and diversity and the politics of representation (Jackson 1996) rather than research that engages and challenges social inequality directly. Examples of this are evident in his work, which focuses on the coming-into-being of race and the way it is assembled 'through event, encounter, and performance' among British Bangladeshi Muslim young women who negotiate their own intergenerational and intersectional lives through relational interactions (2011: 549; 2017). Nayak's work, although set in the Western context, is crucial to this thesis to develop an understanding of how perspectives among young refugees are required to redefine space that is sometimes marked by institutional, intergenerational, and gendered frictions in urban India.

The study of intersectionality has been employed by numerous feminist scholars in geography (e.g., Valentine 2007; McDowell 2008; Nash 2008), who have used the concept to theorise the relationship between different social categories, such as gender, race, and sexuality. I trace earlier geographical scholarship by Susan Ruddick (1996) to engage with the idea of the mutual constitution of inequalities—that is, around race, ethnicity, gender, and class—to understand articulations of intersectionality. Ruddick (1996: 138) engages with intersectionality that is influenced by black feminist theorists and social activists, noting that feminist geographies

'moved beyond viewing gender, race, and class as distinct categories that operate independently in an additive fashion. These are now recognised as mutually *transformative* and *intersecting*, each altering the experience of the other.' Ruddick (1996) recognised that cities often function as localities where people begin to understand themselves and their sense of place through the perspectives of others. For instance, Isin (2002) explains that in urban space, racialised groups tactfully decide whether they choose to be in solidarity or differentiation with other social groups. This means that individual or group-based choices are nuanced in whether their performance of race, class, and gender is strategic, and how these challenge established power relations in the city (Mahtani 2002). For instance, Mahtani (2002) examines the role that gendered and racialised power hierarches play in mixed-race women's encounters and participation in public space in Canada. The author argues that the mixed-raced women, through their racialised performances, create new meanings out of 'imposed hierarchal and dualistic orders' (2002: 425).

In line with this viewpoint, Bilge and Collins (2016), in their framing of intersectionality, identify six key characteristics of the concept: social inequality; power relations; relationality; social context; complexity; and social justice. For the purposes of this thesis, intersectionality is particularly valuable for examining the intersection of different institutions and hierarches of power in different social, political, and historical contexts. This approach helps to reveal the complexity and importance of space and identity formation with other key characteristics of intersectionality. For instance, Barber's (2014) study of Vietnamese men's performance of masculinities in London suggests a range of power relations at the intersections of race, ethnicity, and space. Barber observes that the young men rework their masculinities and challenge homogenous views of Vietnamese masculinity despite being marginalised. Notable contributions to geographies of intersectionality include Fisher's (2015) and Mollett and Faria's (2013) focus on the intersections of gender and race. Fisher uses her 'experiences of hybridity'

and role as a researcher to understand the role of power and identity in the everyday lives of young people across different spaces in relation to complex intersecting subjectivities such as race (2015: 13; see also Kobayashi and Peake 2000; Inwood and Yarbrough 2009). Yuval-Davis (2011) posits that, when employing intersectional framing to think through the everyday politics of belonging[10] and human experiences, it is important to examine specific social divisions and their influence on people's lives, for instance, the way in which social divisions such as gender, race, ethnicity, life course positioning, and refugee status are likely to influence important and everyday aspects of people's lives (Hopkins 2020). As such, intersectionality is 'more than simply multiple identities' (Hopkins 2020: 586; see also Hopkins 2019) and presents a productive framing through which to explore race and identity further.

A variety of geographical, political, and anthropological work has been central in developing the link between spatiality and transnational identity, its functions, meanings, and practices (Lefebvre 1991; Massey 2005; Conway and Leonard 2014). Scholars have claimed that it is valuable to rethink aspects of race and social identity with transnational identity, which is defined as follows: A transnational identity can develop only among those who not only master both languages (host and origin), but also come into contact and have the social skills to establish connections with people and communities from both the host and origin country.

2.6 Interrogating Identity and Transnationality

Previous debates on identity and space have focused on spatial and symbolic practices of daily routines and the production of power relations (Casey 1993; Gieryn 2000). A geographical lens is needed to identify topographies of power and forms of inclusion/exclusion through the accounts of contested dimensions of identity politics at play and how notions of race are framed in and through various national policies. Geographers and sociologists have elaborated

[10] See Section 2.4 for a discussion on 'belonging' and Chapter 4 for a detailed discussion on 'citizenship' and 'belonging' among young Afghan refugees.

on the lingering effects of colonialisation on postcolonial dialogues of the past and the Western orientation of British race narratives that come together to create distinctive postcolonial geographies (Jazeel and McFarlane 2010; Nayak 2011; Bhambra 2014; Jazeel 2014). The postcolonial approach to identity means that the study of shared historical and cultural experiences emerged in power relations that construct racial identities, as well as problematising how racial identity is signified in dominant colonial narratives that circulate in European colonies (see Hall 1996 and 2000). In this sense, by not having a Eurocentric reading of identity, literature within postcolonial geographies reveals a hybridisation of colonialism (Raju et al., 2006) by 'drawing attention to hybridity as a process that can disrupt essentialised and fixed identities' (Fisher 2015: 460).

Mollett and Faria argue that, 'Postcolonial intersectionality acknowledges the way patriarchy…embeds race and gender ideologies… [and the ways in which] women and men are always marked by difference whether or not they fit nicely in colonial racial categorizations, as cultural difference is also racialized' (2013: 120). I engage with 'postcolonial intersectionality' as an approach to delve into subaltern representation among young Afghan refugees. In the Indian context, Rogaly and Thieme (2012) engaged with Harvey's framework and the interpretation of 'relative' and 'relational' understandings of space-time to underpin the relations that reproduce differentiated experiences. Their study of precarious migrant labour in East India examines both the material and subjective dimensions of low-paid labourers' spatio-temporal experiences. For these labour migrants, space and time 'reshaped themselves' at multiple scales and in response to economic liberalisation practices, as well as regionally specific gender and interethnic relations (2012: 2097). Reflecting on Harvey's relative space-time position, Rogaly and Thieme (2012) underline the need to locate individuals' agency and subjectivities within broader structural inequalities. This standpoint opens up important debates about young people's experiences of, and responses to, being recognised (or lack

thereof) in the explorations of meaningful gendered, youthful, and racial encounters across space. I draw on Rogaly and Thime's (2012) work to conceptualise young Afghan refugees' social practices as a set of temporal tactics so I can critically examine young people's resistance to marginalising discourse. This thesis draws upon intersections with systems of race, gender, and social class, among other dimensions. It offers nuanced readings of everyday life alongside institutional forms of discrimination (Murjoi 2013) and difference (Mollett 2017) and avoids the risk of 'whitening and depoliticizing intersectionality' (Hopkins 2017: 6).

2.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, I introduced a broad body of social scientific literature—specifically geographic in scope—concerning precarity, space, time, youth, race, and citizenship, which I use to study everyday life of Muslim and non-Muslim Afghan refugee youths in New Delhi. I emphasized how these strands of theoretical work are united by relational structures of society. A theoretical perspective on relationalism in this context encourages rejecting forms of spatial totality and paying more attention to the structural processes that marginalise young people. As such, this theorisation advocates a conceptualisation of non-elite forms of space and subjects that have been neglected in geographical scholarship. I maintain that a relational perspective is useful for the study of Afghan refugee youths' everyday lives in urban India. This approach serves to address an empirical gap in current scholarly works whereby young people, and young refugees specifically, are often understudied spatially, and research has failed to capture the complexity of the experience of refugees. Thinking about precarity as related to mundane everyday lives and to the status of 'precarity' as a form of (legal) uncertainty, a relational approach toward understanding the social relations significant in young people's lives necessitates methodological techniques that trace their movements across space while unpacking the micropolitics of everyday lives.

Thinking in terms of precarity and relationality is not without its criticisms; for instance, intersectional approaches to understanding the way young people's attitudes towards precarity and living in the city is woven into the social reproduction of the everyday. Some social scientists warn against conflating precarity with precariousness, vulnerability, and risk to avoid jeopardising the 'analytical purchase' of the concept (Millar 2017: 1). However, I use precarity as a conceptual tool that can be studied in all contexts 'due to the heterogeneity and an intersection of complex identities *within*' (Waite 2009: 427). The following chapter considers the methodological approach to my research in the Indian capital city of New Delhi.

Chapter 3. Methodological Approaches to Studying Afghan Refugees Youths in India

3.1 Introduction: On Ethnographic Methodologies

The methodologies employed in this thesis were developed out of the theoretical framings sketched out in the previous chapter. The decision to situate the research within the contemporary theorisation of precarity across different social science literatures is critically reflected in the choice of qualitative and ethnographic approaches. A conceptualisation of precarity necessitates a qualitative and ethnographic approach because it allows us to see how social marginalisation is experienced, providing insight into the way people interpret everyday life in conditions that make living difficult. The heart of my approach to methodological inquiry is aptly worded by Oeppen and Shlenkhoff's assertion that 'every aspect of Afghan life is under-researched…there is a need to move beyond colonial understandings…and consider what it means to be Afghan in the twenty-first century' (2010: 6–7). With this in mind, I am reminded of the definition of 'methodology' as a 'broad theoretical and philosophical framework' that defines appropriate methods or 'technical rules' (Brewer 2010: 2). Crang and Cook explain that the intention of 'ethnography' is 'to understand parts of the world more or less as they are experienced and understood in the everyday lives of people who "live them out"' (2007: 1). It is, thus, crucial to connect in-depth understandings of Afghan refugee migration to India as a social process embedded in postcolonial structures of power and agency (Burawoy 2000). Hence, ethnographic approaches were applied as a research methodology as they allow us to reflect, observe, and learn how social lives unfold in the everyday.

I approach and understand 'ethnography' as a way of thinking 'about social science research that brings together a range of methods under a shared disposition' (Mills and Morton 2013: 4). As Mills and Morton indicate, 'No matter how intense these lived experiences, they can

only be communicated through writing. This is the paradox that sustains the ethnographic project' (2013: 3). It also involves particular ways of presenting evidence of social phenomena and practices through life histories and vignettes. Taking this viewpoint recognises an ethnographic approach as an embodied process that penetrates all practical stages of the research and, notably, grasps subjectivity empirically (see Das and Poole 2004). As such, I applied an ethnographic approach to qualitative methodology.

I conceived of New Delhi as something of a paradigmatic case in Flyvbjerg's (2006) terms, in which I adopted a case study approach to different pockets of the Indian capital city. In taking this approach, I sought to build context-specific, situated knowledge from the arena of the everyday (ibid: 2006). In discussing multi-sited qualitative research, scholars have been influenced by transnational ties and social connectivity in response to globalisation, which is characterised 'by complex mobilities and interconnections; a world where boundaries and borders are increasingly porous' (O'Reilly 2012: 145). The core of multi-sited research, as Falzon suggests, 'is to follow people, connections, associations, and relationships across space' (2016:1). It involves the ethnographer traversing complex spatial fields with conceptual practices 'by means of techniques of juxtaposition of data' (ibid: 2). In the context of refugee youths and their lived experiences, I follow Das (1995, 2006) and her arguments of not reducing the narratives of people subject to exclusionary practices simply as 'crisis narratives', but rather, I focus on forming a 'heterogenous totality' (1995: 11). That is, not only do I, as a qualitative researcher, engage with my subjective position in the city of Delhi as a site of fieldwork (discussed in Section 3.3), but also with Afghan Muslim and non-Muslim refugee communities. Indeed, there is a critical need to follow Das' ongoing call for a 'descent into the ordinary' to advance more nuanced awareness of how marginalised people and communities live (2006: 221). It is also equally crucial to pay attention to young people's practices of social life (O'Reilly 2015), particularly how young people's 'shared symbols, ideas and figures are

actively worked through, negotiated and challenged' (Das 2006: 217). Instead of simply applying a series of methods during my time spent 'in the field', the ethnographic process permeated my pre- and post-fieldwork preparations and stages of research. This approach is tied to Hammersley and Atkinson's (2007) idea that the ethnographer is an active research participant in the field, where, in contrast to research methods such as questionnaires, our interpretations are never static and continue to be constructed before, during, and after fieldwork. Thus, ethnographic methodologies can play a crucial role in obtaining more revealing insights about the meanings of critical and ordinary events in the everyday.

In the next section of this chapter, I clarify how I approached researching 'the everyday' lives of Muslim and non-Muslim Afghan refugees in India. I set out the conventional qualitative social science research methods I undertook in my research visits to New Delhi. This included a mixture of focus groups and semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders and officials affiliated with the UNHCR and NGOs, as well as Afghan youth groups and community members to examine a specific set of themes. The section also describes the relationships I built with young people through open and exploratory conversations that led to a series of gatekeeper-type roles, directing me to potential areas and Afghan refugee communities across the city. Turning to issues around positionality, the third section discusses my access to Afghan refugee youths and the wider Muslim and non-Muslim Afghan communities, as well as the ethical considerations involved in the research process. My research approach was primarily ethnographic, explorative in design, and field-based.

3.2 A Qualitative Approach: Interviews, Participant Observations, and Focus Groups

This thesis uses ethnographic narratives to explore the meaning of human experience and actions through multiple viewpoints (Fossey et al. 2002). Ethnographic methods are particularly useful in studying social transformations, stressing the importance of long-term

engagement with the topic of study. Ethnographic approaches also allow a researcher to gain greater understandings of changing histories, the circumstances in which people and communities live, and to examine how they make decisions based on these contexts. It is through this ethnographic practice that I documented emerging research themes and developed a grounded theory approach (Glaser and Strauss 1997) with more unstructured means of inquiry encouraged by postmodern scholars (Denzin 2000; Lincoln and Denzin 2005) to reflect on the volume of information that emerged.

Within the discipline of human geography, qualitative research is increasingly viewed as attractive, particularly in its flexibility, and it can be carried out in multiple sites (Hitchings and Latham 2020b). I follow other geographers who have applied qualitative research in human geography, increasing awareness of the 'embodied' nature of field sites (Crang 2003). In doing so, scholars in refugee studies and geography have called for more scrutiny in the way studies on refugees and their integration experiences are understood and experienced by refugees themselves (Strang and Ager 2010; Ehrkamp 2018). I also consider the problem of the institutional construction of field sites and methods as 'the uncritical mapping of "difference" onto exotic sites…as well as the implicit presumption that "Otherness" means the difference from an unmarked, white, Western "self"' (Ferguson and Gupta 1997: 15). In recent years, ethnographical research in geography has made great advancements in critical methods and decolonial approaches (see Ashutosh 2018) to avoid the exclusivity of a researcher fixing an 'ethnographic gaze' that undermines the great value of examining issues using this form of qualitative approach (Ferguson and Gupta 1997: 34). To circumvent this issue, I approach my methodology with 'emotional sensibilities' (Mills and Morton 2013: 5) and use an analytical approach based on grounded theory. I also follow other ethnographers who call for a systematic, yet flexible, approach (Holloway and Todres 2003) to analyse qualitative data through reflexivity (McGhee et al. 2007). Flexible strategies for collecting and analysing data

can enable ethnographers to conduct 'efficient fieldwork' to understand social realities and perspectives of belonging to a particular culture and/or community holistically (Heyl et al. 2001: 160).

Following this assertion, the methodology I employ draws from the intersections of grounded theory and ethnography as research paradigms. The grounded theory approach as set out by Strauss and Corbin (1997) is an inductive approach in which new findings emerge based on a continuing interplay between collecting and analysing data. This is in contrast to hypothesis testing, which is based on comparing findings to a programmed set of outcomes. Grounded theory allows for the powerful recognition of values of the informants—that is, the young Afghans—beyond their role as research participants (Pavlovskaya 2009: 17). Throughout my fieldwork, I remained attentive to interpretivist philosophies of positivism. I was influenced by my daily interactions with informants within the wider social, cultural, and political milieus of their everyday lives. Writing daily field notes and reviewing my research questions based on emerging themes from conversations and observations was significant to my research development on the ground. In this sense, the immersive experience of participant observation and daily visits to formal contexts (i.e., UNHCR offices and implementing partners, hospitals, Afghanistan Embassy) and informal environments (i.e., public gatherings, bazaars, malls, universities, places of worship) directly lent itself to an interaction with various subjectivities. These exchanges and, sometimes, engagements with cultural events were a result of my own awareness of existing institutions and socio-legal centres with which non-Muslim and Muslim Afghan refugees interacted (discussed below). I also developed linguistic comprehension in colloquial Hindu, Pashtun, and Dari to understand local interpretations, together with putting myself in similar experiences to those of my informants to understand directly the complex factors at play. In doing so, I shaped my research inquiry between powerful systems of meaning

and interrogating 'at the boundaries of civilisation, cultures, classes, races and genders' (Clifford and Marcus 1986: 2; but see also Denzin 2000).

This thesis evolved in two fieldwork stages, reduced to just under nine months as a result of practical problems in obtaining my Indian research visa.[11] Instead, I travelled to India under a ten-year tourist visa. While I was well aware of the fact that my tourist visa to India posed some restrictive circumstances, particularly interviewing Indian officials, dividing the research trips was useful for reflecting on valuable qualitative data and refining the research agenda accordingly. I chose the city of New Delhi as my field site based on my frequent return trips to India, specifically studying the circular/seasonal journeys of migrant road workers from Jharkhand and Nepal to the upper reaches of the Himalayas in June 2014. That particular master's thesis fieldwork trip sparked my interest in not only studying various aspects of mobility and migration in India, but also because the refugee shock of the era was created by the largest displacement of people (sixty million) in 2015 (see Betts and Collier 2015). As mentioned in the introductory chapter, New Delhi has attracted migrants and refugees for centuries. When I began my first phase of fieldwork (November 2015 to May 2016), refugees from Afghanistan constituted the second-largest refugee group and the world's largest protracted refugee situation under the UNHCR mandate.[12] To familiarise myself with the structures of the UNHCR's presence in India and the general refugee scholarship focusing on South Asia, I consulted reports examining the wide-ranging encounters between refugees and state in postcolonial India (see detailed discussion in Chapters 2 and 4). This was a good

[11] Despite applying for a student research visa in June 2015 with letters of institutional sponsorship by the UNHCR-India, Bosco, and the Institute for Economic Growth at the University of Delhi, as well as multiple enquiries about my pending application at the High Commission of India in London, I failed to receive any form of correspondence. Alas, my passport was returned, and no research visa materialised. Anecdotal evidence with other scholars coming from Western countries confirmed that I was not alone in experiencing problems with the Indian bureaucratic visa system (see Neelakantan 2 March 2007).

[12] 'Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees: Progress Report 2015-2018', United Nations Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Available at: https://www.unhcr.org/afr/562a44639.pdf. (accessed on 25 July 2020).

entry point into debates concerning issues of refugee settlement phases and identity, among other secondary sources, such as UNHCR-published reports readily accessible online. However, within a growing body of scholarship coming out of the Global South, the dilemma of Muslim and non-Muslim Afghan refugees has largely been understudied (with a few exceptions, e.g., see Anne-Sophie Bentz 2013, Warsi 2015, and Ghosh 2018). Due to the dearth of scholarly literature on the communities under consideration, specifically young people themselves, I depended largely on the primary data generated during two fieldwork trips.

The field research was conducted in two phases: the first phase covered about six months due to visa restrictions, from November 2015 to May 2016, and the second phase lasted from August 2016 to October 2016. Care was taken to tap each and every potential stakeholder and to overlap fieldwork with festivals such as Diwali (Hindu New Year), Nowruz (Persian New Year) and Vaisakhi (Spring Harvest Festival/Sikh New Year). This allowed for greater access to interviewees and field sites. It was a chance to observe and interact with families and communities outside the UNHCR and its partner NGOs. Additionally, prior to my arrival in New Delhi, appointments with the UNHCR, its partner NGOs (i.e., Bosco centres, the SLIC, and the HRLN) and bureaucrats (i.e., Afghan Embassy) based in New Delhi were scheduled to maximise the limited time.

Evans, Lo Forte, and Fraser call refugee youth the 'invisible' population (2013: 58). The authors note that young refugees are statistically counted as either children or adults (ibid: 15). As the number of young refugees aged fifteen to twenty-four in urban areas is expected to be more than thirty-five per cent of the global refugee population (UNHCR 2016), they represent an invisible segment (Evans et al., 2013). Over thirty thousand Afghan refugee families live in

poor neighbourhoods of New Delhi.[13] New Delhi is home to a dynamic and expanding (in)formal economy (Boeri 2018). Studying refugees in urban areas such as New Delhi is pressing as models for providing protection and services to urban-based refugees are less established than those that exist for camp-based refugees (WRC 2011). Ethnographers typically rely on participant observation—that is, a 'long-term, intensive, personalized, qualitative research method,' involving participation in the daily life of communities under study (Wright and Nelson 1995: 44). Although participant observation allows ethnographers to generate shared understanding with key informants through 'people's criteria of relevance,' there are limitations (e.g., negotiating positionality with key stakeholders) in the way researchers interpret data, together with what the research informants produce (Nelson and Wright 1995: 44). I kept field research journals, which were useful for describing meanings in the social lives of young Afghans through 'thick' analysis of situated practices (e.g., special social acts at particular moments in time and space, and what these practices mean to the people being studied) that prioritises the participants' perspectives. These empirical observations are aimed at understanding the effects that structural limitations have on subjects but are simultaneously transformed by the subjects themselves.

In terms of gaining access to the Afghan refugee communities, I forged relationships early on with a series of gatekeepers, mostly young Afghan refugees themselves, at the beginning of my first research trip through my contact with Bosco centres. These individuals were indispensable to my research and interviews. I engaged with local Afghan communities (both Muslim and non-Muslim) in New Delhi through 'hanging out' at local gathering places and at local establishments (e.g., cafés, public spaces, parks, malls/bazaars, and community centres) where news about politics and social life was exchanged. I attended four youth clubs, of which only

[13] For more information, see: http://www.unhcr.org/uk/urban-refugees.html.

one had a mixed group of both Muslim and non-Muslim Afghan youths as members (see Chapter 6). The trusting relationship with Muslim and non-Muslim refugees, the subjects of my research, was the most complicated and fascinating one, since they started from a position of marginalisation—legally, socially, and, sometimes, psychologically—more 'precarious' than my own experience with the Indian bureaucratic system. Conducting research with young people required careful negotiating practices and sensitive training in the spatial movements I undertook. I consider 'time' a crucial component in the negotiation between researcher, field sites, and subjects. I decided, during the first month of fieldwork, to prioritise time at youth clubs and associate myself with informants who had networks elsewhere across Delhi. This allowed me to immerse myself within the field and to build relationships with not only Bosco centres, but also, most important, young Afghan refugees. This qualitative approach also relies on the subjective verbal expressions shared by research participants as 'windows into their inner lives' (Lincoln and Denzin 2005: 21), which is fitting for this thesis.

Therefore, I conducted crucial fieldwork in various locations in New Delhi, including the neighbourhoods of Bhogal, Lajpat Nagar, Malviya Nagar, and Wazirabad, where most of the Afghan Muslims stay or work, and in Vikaspuri, Janakpuri, and Tilak Nagar, where the majority of the Afghan non-Muslims are located. These neighbourhoods were ideal settings to establish relationships among the youth, key stakeholders, and community members. Afghan refugees tend to live where they have established networks of relatives or friends, which results in rather geographically segregated refugee communities (see Chapter 1 on Afghan refugee migration to New Delhi). This concentration occurred because refugee assistance centres sprang up in South Delhi in response to the high number of other refugee nationalities, such as Somalians, living in areas such as Khirki Village in Malviya Nagar. These refugees settled there owing to their social networks. Typically, Muslim and non-Muslim Afghan refugees from the same community used to live in the same neighbourhood. When I returned to New

Delhi, I found that many Muslim Afghan families had moved to other parts of the city in search of better informal work opportunities and/or cheaper housing facilities. For the majority of Muslim Afghan refugee families, most of these reasons were due to landlord disagreements, suspicion, and discrimination based on perceived religious identity and/or ethnicity.

During the first phase of fieldwork, I started by interviewing individuals in group interviews via the youth clubs, which led to snowball sampling, and thus, allowed for more interviews with other respondents similar in demographics and ethno-religious backgrounds. To circumvent this limitation, I tried not to associate myself with the youth leaders entirely and reached out to individuals who were no longer a part of the youth clubs, such as university students and those whom I met in public and private spaces beyond the Bosco centres.

My approach towards participant recruitment was impart structured. Unhindered by domestic tasks and familial responsibilities, informants who were youth club members and university students were largely free during weekends and after class. Accordingly, arranging times to meet with young women and men was much more straightforward but required multiple meeting points around the city to be flexible. However, my movement across different Bosco sites warranted prior approval each day I would visit from the local managers. So, popular meeting points outside Bosco centres were favoured by my informants, including popular shopping malls, cafes, fast-food restaurants, and tea stalls across college campuses. Being located away from families and Bosco centres meant young Afghan refugees spoke much more freely and at length. My being a male often encouraged young women to make direct comparisons between their own respective experiences and those of young men in the city. I found that I became a sounding board for family-, Bosco-, and youth club-based tensions, anxieties, and future aspirations.

In my recruitment and selection of interviewees via the Bosco initiative, which is more broadly based on Salesian spirituality, I did run into tensions that emerged between what Bosco managers, directors, parents and refugee youths themselves prioritise in (not) accessing the youth club activities. Although Bosco centres did not directly, the organisation is an implementing partner for the UNHCR in India (and across other countries such as Kenya and Uganda). As such, the joint partnership between the UNHCR and Bosco is to promote direct engagement with youth as well as other services such as psycho-social support, vocational and language training, and health, social educational programs. Although not directly promoting Christianity and pastoral care to non-Christian refugees, Bosco does promote sensitive topics such as sexual education and issues around gender-based violence via the youth clubs. Observations in these spaces were crucial to understanding the dynamics between organisation and parent reactions and the sense of approval (or disapproval) for their children to attend such workshops or events. Different UNHCR field offices and partners (such as Bosco) engage with different sets of local actors; this engagement is often inconsistent, initiated only after a specific protection concern has risen multiple times (i.e., sexual violence). During these challenging situations and events, it was difficult to keep the scheduled interviews as young people were forbidden to either go meet with me at Bosco or attend the youth club events. In these occasions and site visits our relationships were grounded on a requisite reciprocity. Young Afghan women and men (and even older members/parents) were interested in my own perspectives on and experiences of higher education, personal and familial relationships, and employment as I was with theirs.

The data corpus comprises texts from transcribed interviews, discussions, and newsletters; UNHCR and implementing partners; field journal notes and memos; local and international newspaper articles sourced from the internet; and Bosco centre reports that detail cultural engagements, celebrations, and the scheduling of different seminars (e.g., health education

seminars) and notices (e.g., applying for different Indian documents, such as Long-Term Visa). Through the interactions and relationships, I developed with my informants during Phase 1 of my field research, the process of interviewing became more interactive beyond the confinements of the various Bosco[14] centres that house the youth clubs in impoverished areas of North Delhi and West Delhi (non-Muslim Afghans and Muslim Afghans) and neighbourhoods in South Delhi (Muslim Afghans).

I enriched the focus group discussions (FGDs) with ethnographic portraits (or 'vignettes'), which were a valuable ice-breaker. I use the genre of ethnographic portraits (Jeffrey and Dyson 2008), drawing on the perspectives of refugee youths, to provide better insight into the broader experiences of the wider demographic of which they are also a part. The focus groups included individuals 'selected and assembled' (Powell and Single 1996: 499; see also McDowell 2007 and Krueger 2014) to discuss and comment on personal experiences and insights to obtain a broad spectrum of views through interaction and 'negotiation of meanings through intra- and inter-personal debates' (Cooks and Crang 2007: 56). By introducing these vignettes, I depict the social experiences of Afghan refugee youths and draw on wider observational material in New Delhi to underscore how young people's everyday lives are transforming in response to broader social, legal, and educational transformations in India. Furthermore, I reflect on what this means for age and youth as socially constructed categories. Through actively locating myself within the text, ethnographic portraits enable a critical reflection on my positioning within the research process and make explicit the nature of my relationships with the informants (see also Romani 2015).

I included in-depth and semi-structured interviews around preidentified topics and broad themes for discussion, such as visions of life in India as refugees and youths; personal goals in

[14] Bosco is a refugee assistance programme and is an implementing partner with the UNHCR for the Bosco Self Reliance Programme (BSRP).

life; perceptions around higher education in India; insights on everyday life of identity documents and what they might mean in different situations and circumstances. For reasons outlined above it is difficult to determine an absolute number of interviews conducted over the course of my fieldwork in New Delhi. In order to determine a figure I have bounded my count to 58 repeat informants. I consider these groups as having constituted the core of my informant base (see Table 3-1 for a breakdown of key informants by Gender and Ethno-religious Self-identification).

Table 3-1. Breakdown of Key Informants by Gender and Ethno-religious Self-identification

Ethno-religious Self-identification	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
Non-Muslim Afghan Refugee	17	4	21
Muslim Afghan Refugee	24	13	37
Total	41	17	58

FGDs were also conducted during both phases of field research (N=10) in which all of my repeat informants overlapped from in-depth and semi-unstructured interviews. Of the ten focus groups, five were conducted across the Bosco centres at five youth clubs where a mix of youth club members and non-club members participated: (1) Bhogal (N=4 Muslim Afghan male respondents and N=2 female Muslim Afghan female respondents); Malviya Nagar (N=3 male Muslim Afghan respondents and N=2 female Muslim Afghan respondents); Vikaspuri (N=3 male Muslim Afghan respondents and N=2 female Muslim Afghan respondents); Wazirabad (N=3 male Muslim Afghan respondents and N=1 female Muslim Afghan respondent); and Tilak Nagar (N=4 male non-Muslim Afghan respondent, N=1 non-Muslim Afghan female respondent, and N=1 Muslim Afghan female respondent; see Chapter 6). The remaining five focus groups were conducted in interviews in shopping malls, cafés, colleges, parks, and more private settings in homes (c.f. Yates 2004).

In each interview and group discussion, I used informed consent forms, and to keep the identities of my subjects confidential, all names were changed and replaced with pseudonyms to ensure anonymity and confidentiality. In addition, I conducted interviews with key stakeholders (N=22), including the UNHCR Chief of Mission, local government officials, Afghan Embassy officials, university officials, and staff at UNHCR implementing partners. Additionally, I conducted interviews with older family members who were recruited via verbal notices during introductory meetings at Bosco centres and also through connections with youth club members and existing informants (N=7 Muslim Afghans [N=3 male respondents and N=4 female respondents]; N=10 non-Muslim Afghans [N=7 male respondents and N=3 female respondents]). The interviews lasted from forty-five minutes to two hours and were recorded (with the exception of N=2 non-Muslim Afghan refugee male respondents).

These conversations provided a broader social and cultural backdrop for my key informant interviews, developing an invaluable context for my analysis and observations. It is useful to note at this stage that, as indicated in Table 3-2, there was a gender imbalance in the research. In particular, because this thesis is largely centred around young men as the research progressed, I found that this thesis could also contribute towards thinking about masculinity. In doing so, my contributions could bring together theoretical engagements around framing the construction of young Afghan refugee men's gendered subjectivities, which shape their use of urban space, in a context of neoliberalisation and everyday sociality. Although I do not go into deep conversations about 'masculinity', I would like to briefly add that in the Indian context, masculinities are produced in and through various changing localised histories and socio-cultural structures resulting in multiple formations of masculinities (see Srivastava 2010; Kulkarni 2013). The fragmented nature of the social and cultural spheres in India, compounded by regional, ethno-religious, political, and historical differences, gives rise to the idea that there is no centralised idea of 'masculinity' or even 'sexuality' and 'femininity' in India.

I borrow from Srivastava's logic that these are all processes that are mediated in and through social flows and political forces which allows researchers to demonstrate the multiplicity of possibilities in understanding the fluidity of masculinities, femininities, and sexualities in South Asia and beyond. In addition, reconnecting with some key informants through social media platforms (during and after fieldwork periods) proved crucial since their status as refugees is constantly in flux due to the changing (geo)political and economic landscape of India.

3.3 'Where are you really from?': Negotiating Researcher Positionalities & Ethics

> Reflections on interview with Head of Khalsa Diwan Society, West Delhi: After countless exchanging of texts, fuzzy phone calls and two cancellations, I arranged a meeting with Mr. Singh. Interview was fine…got great background information on non-Muslim (Hindu Sikh) Afghan migration to India, but also what life was like in Afghanistan, particularly in the cities of Kabul, Kandahar, Khost and Jalalabad. Upon entering the room, I was greeted by a group of 6 men sitting in a semi-circle who all seemed to be over the age of 50. I sat next to Mr. Singh. Come here, "beta" (son). He noticed right away my "kada" (bangle) I wore. "Hindu?" I replied, "Yes." I could tell by his facial expressions that he was as equally questioning my nationality and contentedly acknowledging my religion. He asked, "Where are you really from?" I replied, "the US". "Returning to your land, like us. Very good. Come sit with us, beta (son), ask us anything you want."

For some time now, human geographers have brought to the fore the 'politics of position' (Smith 1993: 305) to recognise the implications of 'our own positionality' (Jackson 1993: 211), and to examine this self-reflexivity (McDowell 1992: 400). The significance of the researchers' 'life experience, biographies and complex identities' may have meaningful consequences for the type of data collected and the responsiveness of the research participants (Hopkins 2007: 387). It was critical to acknowledge and manage my research position while in the field. A degree of (self)reflexivity regarding being situated between powerful systems of meanings across diverse boundaries, genders, classes, and races allows researchers to 'negotiate various ways of seeing while investigating and "translating" cultures' (Jacobs-Huey 2002: 791). My positionality influenced how the research participants perceived me, and conversely, how I perceived them while reflecting on my own cultural biases. The cultural, social, and economic

differences and commonalities can be productively used in research as a means of 'working with – rather than attempting to overcome – difference' when conducting ethical research (Jacobs 2000: 403). I followed the methodological strategies laid out by Harvey (1996: 360) by constructing 'alliances' with the young Afghans and their respective communities through an established rapport and drawing on shared experiences and attributes. This was particularly evident when I initially conducted interviews at youth clubs at the Bosco centres in New Delhi by using my own South Asian heritage, familiarity with the Hindi language, Indian pop culture, and extensive travels to metropolitan Indian cities over the past ten years to navigate and form alliances with the young Afghans.

Feminist accounts of field research have been concerned with issues of representation, revealing some of the complications that arise when the researcher decides how to represent themselves to the research participants (Kondo 1990; Lal 1996; McDowell 1992; Srivastava 2006; Fisher 2018). Feminist accounts of fieldwork have demonstrated that the researcher's identity *does* influence and shape social relations and research itself (McDowell 1992; Smith 2003). My status as a student at Oxford opened new avenues of inquiry from respondents interested in higher education. I was acutely aware of the debates within anthropology and geography regarding the binaries of native/non-native and insider/outsider (see Forster 2012; Kusek et al. 2014). My research affiliations at the Institute for Economic Growth, Delhi University equally connected me with other senior stakeholders, such as at the Embassy of Afghanistan, and across a spectrum of institutions engaged or connected to Muslim and non-Muslim Afghan refugees in the city. Through these networks, I was able to build relationships to open other avenues of research inquiries.

I also raise ethical issues given the long-term, intimate ethnographic approaches I utilised in this thesis. Prior to undertaking field work I gained full ethical clearance from the Central University Research Ethics Committee (CUREC) at Oxford. In following the guidelines set

out by the University to ensure that research on human subjects is conducted according to the set guidelines, I ensured informed and willing consent on the part of all informants (see Appendices 1 and 2 for the oral information provided to informants and a sample 'Participant of Research Consent' form). In order to respect informants' requests for anonymity, I have anonymised informant names in this thesis. Further to this, all fields notes in electronic format were password protected whilst on my laptop and uploaded to a secure internet-based server for storage.

Whilst these frameworks are useful in covering issues around data protection, conflicts of interests and research accountability, the CUREC process is to facilitate broad ethical clearance across the Social Sciences Division. It should be noted that ethical research frameworks do not account for the risky relationship one has with 'data', and thus, cannot prescribe the particular ethical positions a researcher must actively negotiate during the research process (see Pryke et al. 2003).

Related to the ethical and pragmatic concerns around conducting fieldwork in the context of existing social tensions, the task of negotiating one's identity is further complicated. The scalar and spatial diversity of qualitative research influences the nature of individual relations with informants and perform identities throughout fieldwork stages (Cook and Crang 2007). Central to participant, for instance, is the development of relationships between participants and researcher through everyday encounters, events, and interactions (Van Maanen 1995). As Sennett posits, '…getting along with those that are different' begins with discovering more about them (2012: 230). Indeed, it is through a continuous process of identity construction that I realised certain aspects of my identity and positionality served to both facilitate and constrain opportunities for interacting with informants from various backgrounds across Delhi.

My positionality as a young, American-born male with Gujarati ancestry did not neatly fit into the categories straightforwardly. Rather, I found myself mobilising and foregrounding various aspects of my ancestry, immigrant background, religion, and ethnicity as I negotiated social interactions with informants with different social and ethnoreligious profiles across various spaces throughout the course of my fieldwork in New Delhi. Being of Indian origin, in addition to other aspects of my identity, also had positive and negative implications for the research. I have visited India on many occasions and come from an immigrant background myself, which was a useful starting point for casual conversations with young Afghan refugees as some related to my position of being away from home and what it meant to live in a joint-family household. However, at times, I was in conflict with my own identity as a first-generation South Asian researcher as I felt a responsibility to justify my 'Americanness', while at the same time feeling the 'political necessity' to include my 'Indianness/South Asianness' in my accounts of representation (Henry 2003: 232). This is not to discount how my 'Indianness' certainly opened up ways for (in)formal conversations with elders of the non-Muslim Afghan community at the Khalsa Diwan Society that otherwise would not have been easily accessible. Particularly, when visiting non-Muslim Afghan communities, I felt the need to construct and perform other aspects of my identity consciously, such as being a practising Hindu. In comparison, there was an apprehension of suspicion among Muslim Afghan refugees, particularly elders, who avoided strangers and did not interact with the public openly or hold extended conversations. Of course, the degree of avoidance was related to many factors, such as the kind of refugee I was speaking to; how long the individual/family had been in India; or the individual's socioeconomic status. The power differentials present (e.g., class, religious, socioeconomic status) manifested throughout diverse groups and spaces, as well as when maintaining routine contacts throughout the fieldwork process.

One limitation I had was the difficulty in meeting and interviewing young women from non-Muslim backgrounds (e.g., Hindu or Sikh Afghans). Although I was able to gain the trust of the elders from the non-Muslim Afghan community, I was unable to converse freely with young non-Muslim and Muslim Afghan women. This was due to my inherited positionality as not only a researcher, but also a male, a Hindu, and a foreigner, which made it difficult to engage with this cohort. This inevitably affected the nature of the fieldwork process and generated a set of observational data which was different from that which may have been gathered if I had not had the same 'baggage'. Of the Muslim and non-Muslim women I encountered, many were through youth clubs or had received special permission from the elders of their household to speak to me.

Due to the dearth of material available on the subject of this research, in addition to the time constraints, I was unable to contact other Afghan communities outside the city of Delhi (i.e., Chandigarh and Haryana). This lack includes the complete absence of interviews with the Foreigners Regional Registration Office (FRRO), one of the key players given the socio-political context, which could be a significant setback. However, an interview with officials at the Afghan Embassy and with the UNHCR Chief of Mission could be considered a significant success towards addressing that gap.

3.4 Writing and Analysis

As mentioned previously in this chapter, the fieldwork was not a smooth process. It advanced through wrestling with unforeseen difficulties, combined with errors of judgement and time and resource constraints. The analysis and writing processes are vital phases of qualitative research that communicate the fieldwork findings. My approach to data analysis is informed by grounded theory, in which great amounts of raw data are coded and mediated as a tool for obtaining and organising key themes (Saldaña 2015). Most of my interviews (written and recorded) were conducted in broken Hindi and/or English, and I completed most of my

transcriptions at the end of the same day, which normally took two to three hours. This process included supplementary material, such as observational notes on who my informants are and descriptions of my visits for that day. I did not use any organisational software tools for the complex data as I did not have any other large amounts of data, such as video recordings. Given that I was working with copious field notes and recorded interviews, I was attentive to the process of systematic coding (Emerson et al. 2001). I found it useful to write down brief 'scratch notes' in my journal and on my mobile phone (ibid: 2001). These were often reminders for locations, scheduling for the coming days, quotations, and contact information. Therefore, my writing analysis became central to every stage of the ethnographic process because, as researchers, we are 'constantly retracing our steps where something of interest becomes evident and where greater exploration might provide dividends' (O'Reilly 2012: 16).

Chapter 4. Paper(Less) Trails: The Material Politics of Precarious Citizenship and Racism Among Youth Afghan Refugees in New Delhi

4.1 Introduction

The Partition of 1947 on the Indian subcontinent became a defining moment for contemporary South Asian experiences of forced displacement (Jayal 2013). Partition displacement shaped the emergence of 'an ethno-religious understanding of citizenship in India' and the regulation of who counts as a citizen or refugee in the modern Indian state (Field et al., 2017:14; see also Roy 2010 and Jayal 2013). In the Indian context, citizenship is often discussed by political scientists and sociologists in relation to nationality, caste, and religion (Kumar 2010; Roy 2010) and post-Partition historiography on migrants and refugees (Sanyal 2008; Kaur 2009; Ghosh 2016). Citizenship in India has been marked by colonial continuities and rifts in which the very terrain of citizenship is characterised by multiple contestations linked to different historical periods and varying sociopolitical causes. During Partition, exclusionary and biased forms of citizenship emerged that created contested categories of citizenship (Roy 2010). Since its post-Partition inception as a state, identity documents in India have been marked by 'affective burdens of identity and self-identification' (Jayal, 2013: 53). Identification documents in India have a remarkable hold on everyday life and encompass a distinctive and 'unique subset of bureaucracy writing' (Sriraman 2018: 18; see also Chhotary and McConnell 2018). The materiality of these diverse documents, such as marriage certificates and certificates of naturalisation, has implications for the relationship between the state and the subjects/citizens that involve the production of distinct identities through 'differentiated citizenship'; that is, the use of social differences that are not the basis of formal membership to distribute rights differentially (Holston 2011). These historically contingent identity politics have, in many ways, shaped the state of India, produced multiple

identity categories, and implemented a documentary regime produced within state-led offices in New Delhi. In a de facto system of refugee protection in India, the FRRO issues 'renewable residential permits… on the basis of certificates issued by the UNHCR' (Sammadar 2017: 46), signifying the complex intersections between the nature of citizenship and the politics of labelling in this context.

In this chapter, I explore the material practices through which Muslim and non-Muslim Afghan refugees engage with bureaucracy regarding identity documents. I also challenge understandings of citizenship that are often subject to a legal- or place-bound identity, on the one hand, and performative and participatory dimensions on the other. Investigating the material practices enables us to challenge particular understandings of citizenship that produce a differentiated field of power. I develop a reading of precarious status as not simply a 'technical matter' (Barry 2001: 5) or a 'material matter' (Darling 2014: 485), but one that is also relational (Harvey 2009; Staeheli et al., 2012; McConnell 2013). I consider the ways young Afghan refugees make claims to 'citizenship' through a bottom-up approach by 'scrutinising relational processes' (Bloemraad 2018: 14) of temporary security through documentation and verification.

I trace the bureaucratic certification of various documents issued to Afghan refugees in India. The holders of these documents are confronted with experiences of anxiety and misidentification regarding questions of who they are and how they 'fit in' within the existing social and cultural settings in India. The disjuncture between legal reality and popular understandings of identity documents is further highlighted through nuanced constructions of 'refugee precarity' vis-à-vis citizenship. As an alternative to the binary models of citizenship and legality, I borrow from Goldring et al. (2009: 255) regarding my understanding of the precarious status of Afghan refugees (see discussion in Chapter 2).

India's identity infrastructure for refugees is shaped and based on not being party to the 1951 United Nations Convention on the Status of Refugees or the 1967 Protocol, and thus, there is no compulsion on India to formulate a national legal instrument. There is also no specific agency responsible for determining the status of refugees. This status is determined under domestic laws as it applies to aliens in India, such as the Foreigners Act, 1946, The Registration of Foreigners Act, 1939, Passport (Entry into India) 1920, The Passport Act (1967), the Extradition Act, 1962, the Citizenship Act 1954, and the Foreigners Order 1948. With no specific refugee policies, ad hoc decisions are taken by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), including other major governmental offices that deal with the management of refugees at the central and state levels.

Afghan refugees are viewed as 'foreigners' by the Government of India (GoI). Subsequently, under the UNHCR mandate protection, those who succeed in the Refugee Status Determination (RSD) procedure are recognised as refugees and issued smart ID cards. These smart cards include a picture of the holder and a smart chip that contains encoded information, such as biographical data, residential address, and date of registration with the UNHCR. The cards also enable refugees to acquire temporary residence permits from the Indian authorities via Stay Visas. I argue that increasing levels of bureaucracy add to the precarious effects of holding paper documents as partial and unstable, particularly when the GoI differentiates refugee populations according to religion, ethnicity, and race.

I structure this chapter as follows: after situating the Afghan refugee case in relation to broader scholarship on citizenship, I engage with theoretical understandings of racialisation, precarity, and materiality in the Indian postcolonial context. I then discuss the theorisation of the citizen-refugee divide, wherein a critique of citizenship is required to dissect the dialectical relationship of India's documentary state and the subjects it identifies. In the middle sections, I analyse the certification pathways in place and what different types of identity documents and visas mean

for Afghan refugees in New Delhi in terms of generating experiences of precarity as both a 'condition and possible point of mobilisation' (Waite 2009: 413). I stress that young Afghan refugees continue to experience multiple structures of precarity, positing that the legal status of refugees is not a fixed notion and that identity documents in their many interpretations and representations dismantle the notion of citizenship.

4.2 Conceptualising Precarious Status: Citizenship, Racism, and Materiality

4.2.1 Understanding Precarity and Racism as Postcolonial Legacies

Extant postcolonial scholarship emphasises those entangled relations that produce differentiated experiences of social reproduction (Rogaly 2015). This chapter extends and advances a critical geographical interweaving of citizenship with migration and refugee studies through a postcolonial lens, highlighting how postcolonial 'legacies' (Koh 2017) have long-lasting effects both in terms of refugee geographies and citizenship practices and interpretations by Afghan refugees in India.

I am interested in Stephen Legg's identification of the subaltern as a postcolonial marginal and 'as the non-elite, the immobile or the figure beyond the reach of the state', which promotes a new awareness not only of shared histories and struggles, but also regarding how the state and the subaltern view each other (2016: 793). Ratna Kapur further claims that the subaltern is not 'merely a marginalized subject or minority member…but [the subaltern] emerges in specific ways in which…imperialism operated during the colonial encounter, exposing the "dark side"…of its exclusionary potential' that is etched into dominant understandings of racial and religious norms (2007: 539). The invisibility of the subaltern (Spivak [1988] 2010) as marginalised groups leaves dominant understandings without a postcolonial imagining of the 'Other', according to the political motives of the signifier. Scholarly focus on subaltern studies in geography highlights work on spaces of differentiation in subaltern theory (Clayton 2011) and subaltern spaces of crisis (Chari 2012). The role of subaltern geographies (see also Jazeel

and Legg 2019) can be connected to this thesis to explicate the relationship between citizenship and refugeehood, recognising that, 'identities can be important political resources' (Pratt 2000: 386). In this way, subalternity and its diverse forms of marginality can be refigured and negotiated as political and legal identities. However, this does guarantee that individuals will automatically feel an immediate sense of belonging.

Citizenship debates in India are influenced by narratives of 'the 'refugee'' as central to the 'making of' and 'becoming of' postcolonial citizen-subjects (Kaur 2009: 429–30). Post-Partition practices of formalising the acquisition of identification documents for refugees are uncomfortable reminders of unequal (self)integration projects, symbols of discrimination, and challenges to one's social status, resourcefulness, and independence (Kaur 2009). Based on fieldwork on Untouchable refugees who come from a 'legitimate community of Partition migrants' in central Delhi, Ravinder Kaur observed their 'discursive and physical exclusion' (2008: 281). She reflects that 'distinctive state practices of settlement' were implicitly biased towards the 'archetypical Partition migrant', the Hindu refugee, between 1947 and 1965 (2009: 429; 2008: 282). Sanyal's (2008) work on identity formations among Dalit refugees implies different meanings for the different classes of refugees in the West Bengal context. For instance, while 'middle-class refugee families and colonies' mobilised well with the urban fabric, Dalit refugees were pushed into housing colonies at the margins, with very little socioeconomic capital and the fear of deportation (Sanyal 2008: 83). The next generation of Dalit refugees born in West Bengal are oblivious of the implications of their 'refugee' status (2008: 82) as hierarchies of new subjects are created and negotiated. Both Sanyal and Kaur agree that the nature of self-rehabilitation among upper-class refugees involved the forgetting of one's distinctive identity and the past. Kaur calls this process a form of 'distinctive citizenship' (2009: 431) in which the Refugee Card was an uncomfortable memory of the past and a continuance of assistance. Kaur (2009) argues that the Refugee Card had a duality for

refugees in that it had different significations of 'dependence, helplessness, and self-reliance depending on the subaltern location of the refugee subject' (2009: 442–43). The Refugee Card also holds some long-term impacts of Partition regarding complex identity formations (i.e., religious, regional, and caste) in postcolonial India (Kumar 2010). These impacts have implications for how refugees attempt place-making and confront and evade Indian authorities.

There has been a growing emphasis on majoritarian ascriptions of citizenship in which Indian descent has been a superseding consideration, as has Hindu identity (Umrigar and Rodrigues 2006). The forging of Indian citizenship according to cultural and religious identities is a product of the colonial past, in which the conflation of cultural identity with religious identity was perpetuated through divisions of gender, race, and culture. Postcolonial debates in India about inclusion and exclusion concern not only presumptions of language, caste, and ethnicity, but also race (Kumar 2010). In seeking to interrogate the precarity of young Afghan refugees' experiences of, and engagements with, a multitude of documentation processes for 'citizenship', my interest is in understanding the racism and time that allow the Indian state to consolidate its geopolitical and ethnic margins (e.g., Bayly 1999; Pandian 2001; Visweswaran 2010).

I am interested, too, in understanding the notion of racism regarding the variance of refugee precarity. I acknowledge that is there is tension between how racial and postcolonial categories are approached. I advocate for and understand these categories as not being subsumed by one another. Racism and citizenship have marked deeply coloured postcolonial struggles regarding who should belong to the nation and who should be excluded. The social realities of racism in the Indian context cannot be confronted without a discourse on postcolonial precarity.

As some of the most striking and exceptional characteristics of Indian society, categories of caste and race were reconstructed and reimagined under British colonial rule. The

institutionalisation of race and caste and the classification of such groups in the subcontinent became 'objects of policy' relating to key elements of governmental functions, including the regulation of religious spaces and education (Chatterjee 2004: 37). Susan Bayly (1999: 4), a postcolonial historian, asserts that 'caste is not and never has been a fixed fact on Indian life.' Dirks (2002), who studies pre- and post-British colonial rule, reaffirms Bayly's argument, stating that British governmental control forced the standardisation of categories into a hitherto fluid system that, in turn, produced the modern-day caste system. These administrative changes have crept into post-Independence India, particularly in the differential access to public programmes for identified marginal groups through the tools of bureaucracy and documentation (Dirks 2002). For instance, the category of caste undergoes hierarchal gradations such as during Indian census classifications that fashion contemporary India into changing 'diverse forms of social identity, community, and organization…' (Dirks 2002: 5). Often, these changes are legitimised through systemic national movements, social mobilisation, and reform initiatives (Dirks 2002). The instruments of epistemic rule, as Dirks (2002) argues, link postcolonial legacies that have been carried over into present-day discourse on identity, ethnic violence, and immigration, prompting the colonial fixing of such social categories.

Kamala Visweswaran (2010) goes further than other postcolonial scholars in avowing that the structures of oppression concerning caste in India also include race. Visweswaran references W.E.B. Du Bois from the American context to make sense of the category of race in India as a 'social experience of discrimination' (2010: 149). Pandian (2001) concurs with Visweswaran in emphasising that racial categories are social constructs of power and differential resource divisions that were consequential to British colonialism, which was an impetus for the consolidation of Hindu and Muslim identities, adding to the racialisation of communal identity (see also Ballantyne 2002). This point is useful for drawing out the daily references and

experiences of othering that are formed by the repetition of navigating a complex and time-consuming bureaucratic system that includes people or excludes people from pursuing meaningful citizenship (Srivastava 2012; Bakewell 2007).

The structures of postcolonialism in India have created and reproduced conditions of precarity in which precarity is unevenly distributed according to race and ethnicity. I advance the literature on postcolonial legacies to draw out the temporal structures of precarity with racism by considering postcolonial and national time in the documented regimes in place for refugees. The next subset of literature demonstrates that there is also a material precarity that is built on the citizenship struggle for marginalised individuals in the subcontinent as a consequence of postcolonial time.

4.2.2 On Materiality and Identity Politics

Critical perspectives on the relationship between materiality and citizenship have been particularly important in developing ideas about how marginal subjects experience 'material dimensions of bureaucracies' (Sriraman 2013a: 7; see also Corbridge et al. 2005). This chapter employs Darling's (2014: 485) understanding of materiality in relation to 'people, places and institutions', such as governmental interventions that emphasise decision-making (Good 2007), and exclusion (Tyler 2010) practiced via the production of paperwork, form-filling, and applications across bureaucratic channels. By adopting a material approach, I build on a body of literature that recognises that productive nature of material artefacts. The materialities of documents, certificates, and visas are an entry point for understanding state–society encounters.

For instance, in Emma Tarlo's study of housing resettlement in New Delhi, she argues that 'official papers embody social relationships: they have producers and consumers; they circulate between individuals and representatives of institutions; they are rich in symbolism and concrete in form' (2003: 9). The production and circulation of paperwork, signatures,

approvals (or rejections), and so on within bureaucracy and civil society are 'active in the creation and maintenance of those agents' (Hull 2003: 290). Viewed in this way, documents are constitutive of how bureaucracies function and the practices, ideologies, subjectivities, and policies they engender. In line with such a perspective on materiality, I consider documents, refugee cards, and certificates at the interface of state bureaucracy and individuals as constitutive of citizenship.

Scholars theorising the geographical, political, and anthropological possibilities of identification documents in the Global South stress the significance of the complex relationship between citizenship and identity documents (Bakewell 2007; Koster 2014; Sriraman 2013a, 2013b and 2018; Chhotray and McConnell 2018). Other important scholarly works on citizenship and legal status have focused on a state's administrative capacity or desire to certify people as citizens. For instance, in some Asian countries, unauthorised immigrants can access citizenship through an accumulation of local and national documents (authentic or fraudulent) that 'prove' citizenship without any naturalisation practices (Sadiq 2009). Kamal Sadiq illustrates that citizenship membership in non-Western states such as India is regarded as 'blurred membership' in which there is no institutional system to distinguish between 'citizen' and 'foreigner' (2009: 72).

The documentation practices of states, such as passport and visa regimes, determine who is part of, or who lies outside, a national community (Mai Chen 2012). By extension, such practices of documentation further point to the changing nature of the complex landscape of bureaucratic paper trails that accompany identity documents and, sometimes, make subjects who are particularly poor and marginalised 'visible to the state' (Chhotray and McConnell 2018: 117). Chhotray and McConnell (2018) agree with Jayal (2013), who clarifies that despite possessing documents, such as voter ID cards in postcolonial India, citizenship is not an entitlement. Instead, identity documentation and papers play a crucial role in legitimising and

verifying claims to citizenship in India, particularly in the context of the rise of right-wing majoritarian politics and the pressures of continuous migration as a result of war and persecution (ibid 2018: 112). To what extent then do identity documents have an instrumental (Jayal 2013: 98) *and* affective dimension (Sadiq 2011)?

This question is related to Sadiq's notion of 'documentary citizenship', which posits that this form of citizenship is contingent upon and necessitates the existence of both 'immigrant networks' and 'blurred membership' (2011: 102; 111). It also demonstrates how immigrants perform documentary citizenship through the 'process by which illegal immigrants gain citizenship through the acquisition of fraudulent documents' (2011: 102). Oliver Bakewell's (2007) work in rural Zambia is also informative regarding how individuals understand their nationality and national identity in very different ways. Official UNHCR and state-level support for repatriation are associated with the assumption that citizens hold what Bakewell calls 'heartfelt nationality'—that is, a static emotional bond and identification with the country of origin. The bearers of heartfelt nationality may redefine their nationality due to chance and the historical contingency of their birthplace or where they were raised. Others have what he calls 'handheld nationality', which is the refugees' fluid approach to nationality, and other indicators of belonging according to the availability of identity papers. These are changeable according to current policy responses or anticipated circumstances (2007). It is precisely in this space where self-identification 'var[ies] with the context' (Bakewell 2007: 17) and holding identity papers can also mean a more complex mechanism of control that can define and exclude the Other.

In Sadiq's view, this observation of citizenship is representative of countries in Asia, illustrating the path to citizenship in India, Pakistan, and Malaysia for undocumented immigrants that also unravels the state's capacity for control and monitoring. However, Sadiq's critique neglects narratives from refugees who, sometimes, come to India (among other neighbouring countries,

such as Afghanistan and Bangladesh) with no documents but later secure legitimate forms of documentation that are state-issued and/or by the UNHCR. As I uncover in this chapter, the materiality of identification documents does not just hold sociopolitical value. In contrast to Jayal (2013), Sadiq (2011) suggests that identity documents can also be interpreted with emotional meanings in the making of citizens (Chhotray and McConnell 2018). 'Citizenship' as it relates to this chapter is found in the 'fuzzy' contours of a precarious status that is materialised for refugees in India. While the idea of precarious status can include how refugees face difficulty in navigating 'new social codes and cultural norms' (Banki 2013: 8), I build on Landolt et al.'s (2011) extension of the concept, which considers the legal restrictions and immobilisation of refugees in a Hindu-majority country.

4.3 Situating the Rise of Hindu Nationalism with the Differentiation of Afghan Refugees in India

As per the Citizenship Act (1955), individuals from all countries without valid identification documents are regarded as 'illegal' immigrants and are not entitled to citizenship in India. Introduced in July 2016 by former Home Minister Rajnath Singh, the Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB)[15] proposes that *certain* minorities from neighbouring countries such as Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Pakistan are eligible to apply for Indian citizenship and that the naturalisation period be reduced from twelve years to six years. Although a positive step, the exclusionary definition of who constitutes 'the certain' minority is defined as:

> Persons belonging to minority communities, namely, Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan, who have been exempted by the Central Government by or under clause (c) of sub-section (2) of section 3 of the Passport (Entry into India) Act, 1920 or from the application of the provisions of the Foreigners Act, 1946 or any order made thereunder, shall not be treated as illegal migrants for the purposes of this Act.

[15] https://www.prsindia.org/billtrack/the-citizenship-amendment-bill-2016-4348.

Articles 6 and 7 of the Citizenship Act were drafted with two specific target groups in mind. Article 6 refers to Hindus who have fled Pakistan and sought refuge in India (Jayal 2013). Article 7, on the other hand, refers to Muslims who have fled to Pakistan and may want to return to India at a future date (ibid 2013). It is interesting that in the debates within the Assembly, the term for the Hindu groups was 'refugees', 'reflecting certain sympathy for their plight' (ibid: 58). The Muslims, however, were considered migrants during the Partition who intended to leave India at a future time (ibid 2013).

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who came into power in 2014 with his right-wing Bharatya Janta Party (BJP), ushered in new hope for Afghan refugees for obtaining Indian naturalisation, though the beneficiaries would mainly be non-Muslim Afghan refugees as a national priority. During a 2014 campaign rally, Modi, then Chief Minister of Gujarat, commented on the distinction between Muslim and non-Muslim refugees from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Pakistan, saying, 'We have a responsibility towards Hindus who are harassed and suffer in other countries. India is the only place for them. We will have to accommodate them here' (*Times of India,* February 2014). As reported by the *Times of India*, prior to the Lok Sabha elections in 2014, the leaders of the BJP were in full support of an amendment to the Citizenship Act that meant minorities without valid documents from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Pakistan could be granted Long Term Visas (LTVs). Some refugees are also eligible for the LTV scheme, meaning a provisional right to stay in the country, with added benefits such as the right to open a bank account. The legal status of Afghan refugees in India is a reminder that the conflict-displaced refugees for whom going back to Afghanistan is not a possibility live in India without the right to social security and formal sector employment. Without ID documents, it is impossible to apply for long-term Stay Visas. However, with its win in the national elections in 2019, Modi's government's efforts to legitimise the state as 'Hindu' could mean cascading consequences for its undefined refugee policies.

In this section, I am interested in the rise of *Hindutva*-infused nationalism and what the shifts in the politics of citizenship mean for Muslim and non-Muslim Afghan refugees in India. *Hindutva* is a core concept of Hindu nationalism that was introduced by Vinayak Damodar Savarkar (1969). In his text, *Hindutva: Who is Hindu?*, Savarkar writes that 'Hindu' means a person whose religion 'had grown in the Indian soil', including Buddhists, Jains, Sikhs, and Hindu sects. The very religion of Hinduism was instilled as the core of the imagined Hindu nation (Hansen 1999: 78–79). According to this definition, Christians and Muslims are outsiders because their 'holy lands' are outside India (ibid). This *Hindutva* ideology is no different from the comments made by prominent BJP politicians, such as the incumbent Home Minister Amit Shah, about the ongoing realisation of the CAB by implementing a National Registrar of Citizens (NRC; *Times of India*, October 2019). With Modi's ascension into office as Prime Minister, he has increasingly focused on the rhetoric of a secular state that has, in some ways, been as culpable of shaping the ideologies of Hindu nationalism as colonial power was.

In the Indian context, the racialisation of Muslim migrants and refugees in policies affords an understanding of the how Muslim Afghan refugees' experiences of racial intersect with religion, skin tone, language, and nation of origin. The *Hindutva* ideology of Indian nationalism consciously seeks to either exclude or include Muslims as a subordinate category. This implicit institutionalisation of named countries reflects India's growing majoritarian tendencies in the Modi era. The racial discrimination of Muslims in India is rooted in *Hindutva* ideologies, which right-wing political formations have attempted to bring into mainstream Indian discourse, especially after the BJP came to power in the 2014 and 2019 elections. In the following two sections, I illustrate how the *Hindutva* ideologies feed into an imagination of different types of precarious status for young Muslim and non-Muslim Afghan refugees through different bureaucratic channels.

4.4 Differential Inclusion for Different Documents

In this section, I am concerned with how young Afghan refugees in India are treated not only differently from other 'foreigners', namely those from Western countries, but also between other groups of refugees from the subcontinent. I also examine the way in which constant negotiations happen between the UNHCR and different Indian governmental bodies, such as the MHA, to secure what I call 'liveable lives' suitable for young Afghan refugees through refugee policies. I locate refugee precarity in the reproduction of everyday lives in which young Afghan refugees are concerned with their precarious status, which is often differentially distributed, meaning some youth refugee lives are more uncertain than others. This sense of precarity is generated by shifts in refugee policies and by young Afghan refugees' own efforts to improve the stability of their lives both economically and socially through obtaining identification documents that are sometimes out of reach.

4.4.1 Eligibility

The LTV scheme was first announced for Afghan nationals in India who come from minority backgrounds in 2011 (Field et al. 2017), although there were some procedural delays as many did not initially benefit from the governmental scheme. The GoI agreed informally with the UNHCR to issue recognised refugees LTVs. Since 2013, LTVs were issued only to non-Muslim Afghan refugees and Chin refugees from Myanmar by Foreigner's Registration Officers (FRO; ibid, February 2016). According to the UNHCR (2014), some refugees from minority communities from nations such as Pakistan and Afghanistan who are Hindu, Sikh, Jain, and Christian benefitted from LTVs. However, neither the SLIC, the HRLN, nor the UNCHR administrative members knew that Muslim Afghans were applying for LTVs as well, reflecting the issues in capturing the complexity of the evolving refugee status.

Afghan refugees are eligible for up to five types of documents depending on their ethnoreligious identities (Table 4.1). Furthermore, Afghan refugees can find themselves in

three precarious situations, depending on a variety of factors, such as their identification as either Muslim or non-Muslim. First, I met both Muslim and non-Muslim Afghan refugees who came to India without any legal documents and who have been staying in the country for decades. Many of their children were born in India but possess no documents. Second, many Muslim and non-Muslim Afghan refugees who have been staying in India on either short- or long-term visas issued by the FRRO stated that they hold UNHCR-issued ID smart cards, which are a prerequisite for applying for Stay Visas, including LTVs. The final precarious situation consists of non-Muslim Afghan refugees who are either (1) naturalised Indian citizens, (2) in the process of applying for naturalisation, or (3) have no interest in applying for Indian naturalisation.

Table 4-1. List of eligible documents for Afghan refugees in India as of 2019

Type of Document	Afghan Muslim Refugees	Non-Muslim Afghan Refugees
Refugee smart ID Cards	✓	✓
Stay Visa (short term) via Refugee Extension Form	✓	✓
Long Term Visa (LTV)	X	✓
Return Visa for LTV holders	X	✓
Indian Naturalisation	X	✓

While I could not access the RSD process, I was able to secure a meeting with a senior-level UNHCR RSD officer, Geeta Chopra, who outlined the process for me (interview in West Delhi, February 2016):

> Persons wishing to apply for asylum must register at the UNHCR here at the centre where they obtain a UNHCR registration form for India. They then receive a 'White Paper' with a UNHCR stamp explaining their new status as registered asylum seekers whose case is pending. They are then scheduled for an RSD interview and, with the kinds of information they provide, applicants might have two to three more interviews. In the case an applicant is rejected, they are informed through a letter and given the opportunity to appeal within thirty days. If successful, applicants collect their 'Blue Card'.

Before the introduction of the UNHCR-issued biometric smart ID card in 2011, Refugee Certificates were issued to UNHCR-recognised refugees in India.[16] The UNHCR in New Delhi renewed these certificates every eighteen months. Geeta said: 'This is to certify that (name) a national of Afghanistan is, based on available information, considered to be a refugee within the Mandate of the Office of the United Nations Commissioner for Refugees.' The UNHCR now provides recognised Afghan refugees with a smart 'Refugee ID Card', popularly known as the 'Blue Card'. After successful registration as a refugee, the Refugee Card is an essential document that entitles refugees to basic social services, such as state school education, employment, and basic healthcare services, among others. The document replaced the laminated Refugee Certificates in an 'attempt to make a positive difference in the lives of refugees' (interview with David Miller, Chief of Mission, South Delhi, April 2016). Maya, a twenty-two-year-old non-Muslim Afghan refugee, held her card and remembered this new material modification and expressed some initial hesitation with the switch (November 2015):

> I went with my sisters and brother to pick up the new cards at the office by our house. It was a weird feeling, yet exciting. I was glad to get any documents. I heard about other Afghani getting rejected but thank God we weren't. It is small, I can carry it in my purse and it won't get lost. But then the banks always ask for ID proof. I hoped this card would have helped. But no. The police do not know what this card is. The banks poked fun and looked funny when my father showed them the card. They told him, 'What is this? Come back with a visa.' I still keep my old [Refugee] Certificate in case I maybe need it…it is a reminder of being in India that I am here to stay. [translated from Hindi to English]

Afghan refugees initially confused the previously issued Refugee Certificate in lieu of the Refugee Card when applying for informal work or extending their Stay Visas, as Abdul (nineteen years old), a Muslim Afghan refugee in West Delhi, recalled (October 2015):

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[16] UNHCR certificates enable refugees to acquire temporary residence permits from the Indian authorities, meaning they have a right to stay in the country. Some refugees, such as non-Muslim Afghan refugees, also have assistance regarding the naturalisation process in addition to some subsistence allowances and basic healthcare services. Having UNHCR-recognised refugee status clearly puts individuals in a much better situation than refugees who are not recognised.

> [I] did not have an Identification Card, so we did not have ID proof. I am Afghani and this is my ID proof [showing the Refugee Certificate]. So, then I showed them my 'visa'. They said [the employer], your visa is expired. When you have ID proof—the Refugee Card—then come back. [translated from Hindi to English]

In another example, Sanjay (nineteen years old), a non-Muslim Afghan refugee, explained his precarious position in India with no documents at all (March 2016):

> We [my family] got the interview call. But we had to go from Vikaspuri to Vasant Kunj. It is difficult to get an auto for that many people in our family. Taking the metro is out ofthe question. We were late. We called back and said to reschedule but we missed our opportunity. We were rejected. They told us the reason was not only we were late, but also that my father had gone back to Afghanistan to get some documents and items left behind. We live without any proper documents. Some Afghani get rejected and leave, but some stay. How can my family go back [to Afghanistan]? We stayed. We cannot get help from the Afghan Embassy. I was born here. I am Hindu not Muslim. I can't even get an LTV and the Afghani *log* [people] can. Khalsa [Diwan] told us to go to Bhogal, there is an office, maybe one day I will do that. [translated from Hindi to English]

The new smart ID card was introduced by the UNHCR in an attempt to improve the lives of Afghan refugees with a more durable document that is more difficult to forge or manipulate. In addition, it was also intended to aid Afghan refugees in opening bank accounts, as well as being a safeguard to help individuals lead their everyday lives without fear of being questioned by local officials about their identity. However, Abdul, Maya, and Sanjay were still unable to open bank accounts based on the documents issued to them. This lack of ability to demonstrate agency in the Indian context results in Afghan refugees' transformation into undocumented economic migrants for whom the UNHCR is not responsible. Sanjay's story is important to juxtapose against young Muslim Afghan refugees as it demonstrates how institutions such as the UNHCR operate along a 'power gradient', in which those without access to social capital are not just inadequately prepared at navigating Indian bureaucracy, but also, ultimately, bear a greater burden in accessing it (Gupta 2012). In this way, the Indian state's perspective of the Afghan refugee greatly impacts lives and, as one UNHCR

representative reminded me early in my research, 'We are only responsible for identifying and registering refugees…there is only so much we can do…' (October 2015).

It seemed that Maya and Sanjay, who identify as non-Muslim Afghan refugees, were in a better legal position than Abdul. I argue that the reason for this is because Maya and Sanjay are perceived as having linguistic and historical ties to India. However, Sanjay, who is institutionally categorised as a 'Hindu or Sikh Afghan' (see Chapter 1), represents a unique case wherein refugee status is deemed invalid, creating new uncertainties even for non-Muslim Afghan refugees. Although previously issued documents, such as the Refugee Certificate in Maya's case, these are now deemed redundant, no longer hold any economic or legal recourse, and are predominantly symbolic. In Abdul's case, he was not issued the new Refugee Card for reasons unknown to him. Abdul reflected on non-Muslim Afghan refugees 'having an easier time in India', indicating that possessing any document, regardless of its currency, signifies a paradoxical interplay of both precarity and safety regarding their new status (interview, October 2015). There is a sense of internal colonialisation that can be found in the Indian state's approach and its use of regulation, such as LTVs, to exclude and marginalise (Afghan) Muslims further.

Through both social and economic capital, Abdul carried some duplicate documents to circumvent potential harassment from the police. He resided in New Delhi by using these documents yet demonstrated his inability to move in and out the boundaries of the city. Although Sanjay did not carry any duplicate documents, both Sanjay and Abdul no longer fit the 'refugee label' (discussion to be included in Chapter 1) according to the UNHCR. The existence of a non-structured refugee policy has enabled a complex and entwined eligibility criterion that is not outlined explicitly by the UNHCR, the MEA, or the MHA. Standardised categories of refugee identity are bureaucratically recreated and controlled. The source of anxiety in this context, regarding the perception that certain documents will help lead to either

Indian naturalisation or other visas, such as the LTV, stems from a sense of fear of what would happen if one misses an appointment or loses the documents.

In 2015, the FRRO's regulation for Stay Visas for refugees was accelerated for visa processing for Afghan and Rohingya refugee applicants. The FRRO offices open on the second and fourth Saturday of each month, and if the applicant is approved, they are awarded Stay Visas for one year with the option to renew the visa for up to five years (interview with Parveen Shah, UNHCR South Delhi Office, November 2015). Initially, the Stay Visa was considered synonymous with the LTV by Afghan refugees. However, the LTV is for foreigners of non-Indian origin and is classed as permitting the holder to *stay* in India for longer than six months continuously. On a case-by-case basis, LTV holders are also granted a ninety-day Return Visa (Table 4.1), meaning individuals can travel to their country of origin without being penalised.

An LTV means 'more than the Blue Card' (interview with a young Muslim Afghan man, twenty-two, January 2016) as it carries some social, economic, and legal benefits. The mechanisms of an LTV not only allow an individual the legal right to stay in India, but it also comes with a plethora of benefits.[17] In July 2016, the GoI finalised and approved a number of benefits, including permissions to (1) open bank accounts; (2) purchase property; (3) purchase SIM cards; (4) work in the formal sector; (5) attend school, namely technical universities and professional institutions, though based on admission as a 'foreigner'[18] without any specific permission from the state government or union territory administration; (6) hold a driver's licence, PAN card (Permanent Account Number), and Aadhar number; (7) move freely within India; (8) have the penalty waived on not extending short-term Visa/LTV on time; and (9)

[17] http://pib.nic.in/newsite/erelease.aspx?relid=147033
[18] Chapter 5 discusses this in greater detail.

apply for an LTV from the place of present residence when the applicant may have moved to without permission.

Individuals and/or families apply on a joint application with five crucial components: (1) passport photographs of each member; (2) proof of residential address; (3) landlord rent agreement;[19] (4) UNHCR refugee identification card copies for all members of the family; and (5) UNHCR letter of support. These 'paper packets' (interview with a young Muslim Afghan woman, twenty years old, October 2017) are first submitted online, then hard copies are printed for each member of the family and taken to a nearby, and all too familiar, FRRO. There is no guarantee of the application securing the LTV within an assured timescale. Typically, application-outcome waiting periods range from six months to one year but can be as short as three months for approval or denial. Most non-Muslim Afghan refugees and Chin refugees who apply, according to the team at the SLIC and the HRLN, are able to obtain the LTV.

The LTV application process is an arduous and lengthy bureaucratic practice that is outlined clearly on the website regarding who the *intended* applicant(s) should be and from where.[20] The peculiarity of the FRRO administration is embedded in less-than-clearly defined measures. Nevertheless, these documentation procedures remain in place, unsettling the boundary between inclusion and exclusion, obstructing extended or permanent 'stay' status. I now turn to the operation of the Indian state with its power gradients and the impact it has on young refugees' social lives through bureaucratic interactions.

4.4.2 The Know-How of Bureaucratic Engagement

> I accompanied Faisal, a young Muslim Afghan man in his mid-twenties, to Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport one winter morning via auto

[19] Many have noted that some landlords are reluctant to provide these documents, which hampers chances when applying for an LTV, while others pay landlords for their required signatures.
[20] For more information, see http://indianfrro.gov.in

> rickshaw. Dressed in skinny jeans with a bright yellow polo shirt and jumper, Faisal was ready to greet his friend's two brothers from Kabul, who had come to India to seek refuge from the Taliban. All four of us crammed into the vehicle. We went into an apartment complex in Lajpat Nagar, South Delhi and met up with Jalil. For the newly arrived, it was a relief for them to be in a familiar Afghan community by the look of their faces as we passed stalls of layered Kabuli burgers and kebabs. But this was short lived as Faisal guided the young Afghan men through registering at the UNHCR branch office in West Delhi, and subsequently, the local FRRO in South Delhi the next day. (Field diary, February 2016)

I followed Faisal and his work as a *tarjuman*, Dari-Urdu for 'interpreter' or 'guide', to understand better the legal position of Muslim Afghan refugees. I wanted to understand how non-Muslim Afghan refugees, as document holders, navigate securing a form for temporary residential status. As a *tarjuman*, Faisal helps newly arrived Afghans, including his friend Jalil, charging fees ranging from INR 300 to 1000, depending on the task.

Jalil, twenty-three years old, who grew up in the Kandahār region in southern Afghanistan, had spent most of his adult life outside the country, initially fleeing to Iran, then to Pakistan, and eventually to India. Jalil's perilous journey from one country to another is typical of the type young Muslim Afghan refugees make in the hope of securing a stable pathway towards legal status in India. Jalil's life in Delhi is regimented by the insecurities of a less-than-full status. As he explained (February 2016):

> I thought India was a brief stop for me. Eight years later, I am still here. I am waiting for my turn at the FRRO [for approval]. Last time they gave us approval, was only for a few days! You won't believe it. [*he shows me his application forms*]…I have to keep proving myself that I exist.

Jalil's Muslim Afghan friend Sara (eighteen) came to New Delhi from Kabul in June 2015 with her family. She discussed her period of waiting for asylum (February 2016):

> Now what do I tell you? The time has not come for an interview. I am still an asylum seeker. I got some information for some [education] scholarship for Afghani in Turkey, maybe I will try there if I do not get the chance here in India. [translated from Hindi to English]

Sitting in a classroom with some youth club members in South Delhi, a young Muslim Afghan refugee (female, aged twenty-five, January 2016) reflected on her 'Refugee Card':

> The police don't know anything about this card. It is like we are illegal. It is acceptable only to the UNHCR, not outside. Good thing is that Indian Government don't do anything when we show the card now, sometimes they do, most times they don't because they recognise our face. We are refugees. Better sometimes people don't know we are refugees.

Sitting next to Sara was Abdul, who also revealed his everyday life in India, sometimes without any documents (October 2015):

> As you can see here in Bhogal, we are scared of the police [he points to a poster]. They are everywhere, especially by the Jangpura train station. Posters are hung up all over in Hindi: 'BE AWARE! Please report any suspicious activity or terrorist activity to police.' We are always watched. One time I was stopped right outside Bhogal [UNHCR] office. Thankfully I had another [stay] visa that was stamped 'still valid'. They let me pass. [translated from Hindi to English]

For young Muslim Afghan refugees such as Jalil, Abdul, and Sara, it was helpful to have *tarjumans* like Faisal to aid them in settling into Delhi in pursuit of a liveable life. One of my main insights from the UNHCR side of handling RSD procedures echoed Jalil's frustration. When asylum seekers are given the 'White Paper', the back of the certificate has two columns of boxes that are stamped, signifying dates of renewal and expiration within six to twelve months. Young Afghan refugees are 'programmed to get papers stamped' multiple times (Jalil, February 2016). It is uncommon for young Afghan refugees who live in poorer Muslim neighbourhoods in South Delhi, such as Bhogal, to pay bribes in order to deal with harassment by the local police. Increased security issues when approached by local police officials who, often, do not recognise the Refugee Card as a 'valid' document in India meant potential questioning and detention. Many Afghan refugees also have a Stay Visa, which requires a valid UNHCR Certificate to apply for, in addition to residence/address proof.

The GoI has provided Stay Visas to 'some Afghan refugees' (interview, UNHCR, November 2015), and within the hierarchies of identification documents and certificates issued to Afghan refugees, each new visa scheme becomes a higher mode of obtainment. Talking with the UNHCR-India's former Chief of Mission David Miller (interview, South Delhi, April 2016), he stated the UNHCR's success in securing LTVs for refugees in India:

> India has been generous by keeping its borders open to people who come looking for safety and shelter. This also encourages refugee-friendly policies. A proof of the same is the granting of stay visas to refugees, including access to livelihood. As you know from my colleagues, the LTV was introduced in 2011, which helped expedite the visa process. This was a huge step forward for the protection and safety of refugees in India. It is more than we thought was possible.

Possessing an LTV can open up new possibilities of Indian citizenship, job prospects in the public and private sectors, and eligibility for obtaining other state-issued biometric technologies (i.e., PAN card and Aadhar card). As of 2015, the LTV application scheme shifted to a partial digital infrastructure and was implicitly opened to Muslim Afghan refugees, though this change was initially concealed (interview at Bosco, January 2016, New Delhi). For both Muslim and non-Muslim Afghans, the FRRO is the first point of contact. I was curious about my experiences with local FRRO officials. Jalil had mentioned an address in R.K. Puram, South Delhi, where I could go and see for myself the 'chaos'. I went to a building with dark blue walls; trees shaded the signage as I observed from afar the bureaucratic maze.

In a postcolonial setting such as India, the notion of control is a constant (Gupta 2012). For instance, young Afghan refugees, who form a marginalised set of the population, find ways to experiment with the (in)dispensability of visas and documents they may or may not be eligible for, such as the LTV: a 'better version of the Stay Visa' (SLIC administrator, November 2015).

The first account of a family applying for an LTV was told to me very early in my research during a youth group meeting in November 2015 at a Bosco centre in Bhogal. Roxana's (one of the youth leaders) family applied for the LTV in September 2015, though they were hesitant

to apply since it was 'something new' for Muslim Afghans as they had only previously been granted short-term Stay Visas. Around the Bosco centres, the LTV is a common term that 'everyone says' (interview with Roxana, February 2015). Learning from those who applied, word spread to the other centres around Delhi of its availability. Roxana stated:

> [The] waiting period for approval is maybe three to six months, we are not sure. We applied recently for November 2015 for LTV. We learned about LTV through Bosco. With LTV, what is different from refugee status…you have the permit to live, permit to work, if something happens to you, you have the legal stay in India. You can start your own business with that…But that is according to UNHCR, I don't think we will get it, let's see. For us, now, if we get [Refugee] Card we take visa. For those who do not receive the [Refugee] Card, they are asylum seekers still, because you can receive LTV with Refugee Card; without that it is impossible. We do not know [the] waiting process. It takes time, but it is not so clear. It depends on [the] FRRO office. It depends on their decisions. Everyone has applied with no fees and free of charge. For us it is free of cost, but for the UNHCR, I do not know if [they] have a deal with the government. In India, the only main thing is LTV for refugees. The problem with us is that we came two years back, and our visa already expired. We need a valid visa to study in here. Now, if we have LTV, we can study and find work. [With just a] Refugee Card, you cannot do these things because they would not accept it.

Roxana's friend Suzanna, who applied for the LTV after taking advice from Roxana, told me (nineteen years old, female, Muslim Afghan refugee, November 2015):

> It is important to take a visa. Without visa, we are zero. Nothing. But here in India we cannot do anything. But, what is this Refugee Card? Nothing. It is nothing. *Mushkil* [Hindi for 'Tough']. Some women here don't take visa. If we show visa, they trust us. If we show them Refugee Card, they don't trust us. One time, going to City Mall, there is so much *pareshani* [Hindi for 'difficulty' or 'trouble'] I came home and cried. I do not know how many years I will have to wait longer.

In February 2016, Roxana and her family were granted an LTV. She exclaimed proudly:

> I feel powerful! I got it just two weeks ago. Before, I was afraid of doing anything. When you have visa, no one will say anything to you. You can go to university, get a job. You're safe.

Suzanna, sitting with a group of friends, commented (February 2016):

> Without it, you cannot do anything. I heard it [the process] takes almost one year. But I am afraid to get it. UNHCR says go to FRRO. We are scared of them and don't want to go there. I am scared of FRRO; they can take passports. It can be risky. But we see Roxana, and she did it. Maybe more of us will apply. As long as we have the UNHCRbeside us, I am not afraid. But yes, if they don't support, it is tough.

The improvement in the LTV's availability to not only non-Muslim Afghan refugees was a welcome change. While refugees from other countries might be entitled to stay in India, they do not have access to employment or higher education (see Chapter 5 for further information). However, despite Roxana's family obtaining the LTV, there remained the fear of rejection as it is dealt with on a case-by-case basis. Apprehension of the unknown meant that young Afghan Muslim refugees were unlikely to initiate a process so new and experimental. Moreover, the GoI could also retroactively suspend or amend the application process due to the shifting nature of right-wing politics. The data provided by the UNHCR-India on the number of refugees issued with LTVs are flawed (Table 4.2). In personal correspondence with the UNHCR (email with UNHCR representative, 2017), the true yearly statistics were unknown, as grantees were told to report directly to the UNHCR regarding their outcome. Union Minister of State for Home Kiren Rijiju added, 'During these years, LTV applications have been processed both in the offline and online modes and, therefore, the state-wise data is not centrally available' (*India Today*, 5 February 2019). Although in previous years the GoI was not issuing LTVs to Afghan refugees (Warsi 2015), this new update, albeit temporary, signalled a shift to include both Muslim and non-Muslim Afghan refugees. The efforts of the SLIC and the UNHCR to assist Afghan refugees in the citizenship process was to obtain other documents such as LTVs.

From the example of Jalil living in India for an extended period, the legality of refugees and the relevant policies are far from clear. Such anxieties regarding securing a legal position within the host state are common among the newly arrived (Al-Ali et al. 2001) because the prospect of rejection is almost always anticipated. This period of uncertainty also reflects the tendencies

of colonial administrations (Dirks 2002) in which the contestation of the place of Muslims in Indian identity is manifest in exclusion from the Citizenship Bill's ambit. This policy is reminiscent of the categories of race and caste and how they were produced through documentary regimes that allowed Muslim and non-Muslim Afghans to carve out experiences of and to confront differential inclusion and precarity.

Table 4-2. Number of LTVs issued to active persons of concern (PoC) in India, 2016

Persons of Concern (PoC)	Number of LTVs Issued	% of LTVs Issued
Afghanistan	620	17.9
Myanmar	2,815	81.1
Somalia	1	<0.0
Other	36	1.0
Total:	3,472	100

Documents issued to marginalised populations reinforce the state's authority and legitimacy. This is evident in the racial subjugation of refugees, which reinforces colonial inequality because the conditions of people may be understood to change over time but not in a progressive way. In the context of Afghan refugees in India, regarding the notion of postcolonial time, dominant temporalities do not map out neatly with each other in their differential inclusion. The politics of certification reinsert postcolonial time when material objects, in this case, document verification and processing measures by the FRRO/FRO, exist across time. This puts futures on hold and creates entanglements with postcolonial temporalities and citizenship through power dynamics. In the first instance, Muslim Afghan refugees are restrained by the documentary regime that has emerged as a result of the blurred legal zones they fall into between migrant, foreigner, and *de facto* refugee. 'The Long Term Visa scheme was never meant for Ethnic [Muslim] Afghans,' stated Jitesh Kumar, Deputy Coordinator at the SLIC part of the HRLN (interview in New Delhi, February 2016).

According to the Manager of the SLIC, Farhan Khan, the process of applying for an LTV was 'less of a hurdle' for recognised refugees (interview in New Delhi with Farhan Khan, March 2016). Within this relationship, the boundaries of authority and legality are constantly negotiated. The existing practices of the Indian state regarding being hospitable towards refugees as an integral part of Indian culture (Samaddar 2003) are, on the one hand, the provision of hospitality; on the other hand, they are merely practices that are not fortified by law. With a lack of refugee legislation, I argue that the Indian state reproduces its own version of colonial violence, which is racism rendered invisible and undergirds the temporal illusion of what a contemporary state should look like.

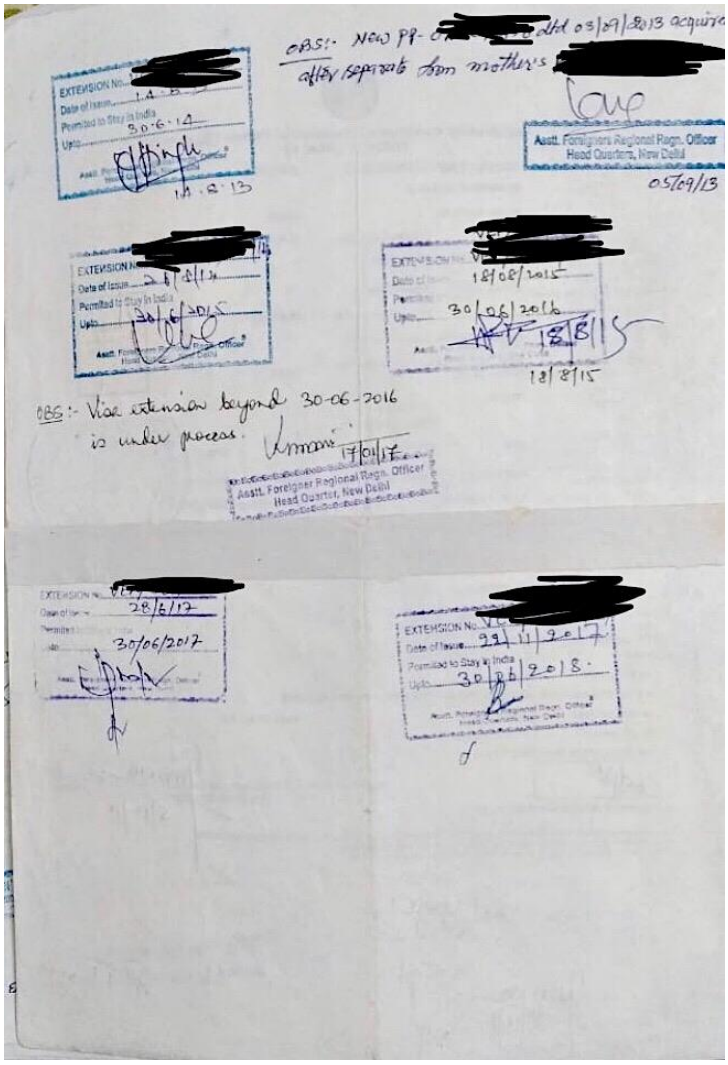

Figure 4-1. Example of LTV application form approved for a Muslim Afghan refugee family from August 2012 till June 2018.

Identification documents create conditions of 'possibility'; young refugees view these documents as temporary moments of relief, especially when documents for a longer stay are approved. Yet, the governmental practices that shape the effects of precarity among young Afghan refugees are sustained through institutions (Paret and Gleeson 2016) that create individual identification practices. As one young Muslim Afghan, Nasib (aged twenty-two, male Muslim Afghan refugee, South Delhi) told me out of frustration: 'I wonder why they call it a Long Term Visa. For securing this visa, we have to provide rent agreements which landlords don't give us easily because the moment we tell them we are Afghans, they think we're terrorists.' Nasib reflected on the changing systems in which refugees apply for LTVs and showed me, unsolicited, the LTV application (Figure 4.1).

Some young Afghan refugees complained about the non-digitisation of the LTV application in comparison with the physical look of the Aadhar card: 'One reason for hating the visa process is this LTV paper…Maybe it doesn't look bad in image, but it's really bad when you touch it…I think it looks like it is more than ten years old. The FRRO officer, who knows our family by now, he stamps it.' (Figure 4.1). In a recent correspondence with Nasib (February 2019), he noted that the updated stamps stopped at June 2018 as the application is 'still in process' for reasons unknown to him. The documentary record of precariousness is clear in Nasib's and Jalil's papers, in which the registered stamps' validity expired within days and, ultimately, ceased to exist (Figure 4.1). Thus, 'holding' or 'owning' such documents and verifications is not always secure (Hammar 2018: 241). In precarious circumstances, they may be stolen, lost, confiscated, or destroyed. Through the never-ending verification and renewal of paper build-up for young Afghan refugees, the process becomes a type of bureaucratic artefact that is not only produced by technologies of administrative control (Hull 2012), but also results in continued interactions with local NGOs, such as SLIC and FRRO officials.

As of early 2019, the LTV was 'practically suspended for most refugees', and the UNHCR, which aided with support letters and the application process, relied on refugees to report on their success rate (email correspondence with UNHCR-Delhi staff, February 2019). Now that the LTV is not issued as much, the UNHNCR finds it difficult to track exact numbers. Applicants now need an Indian 'guarantor' that offers additional support to the application. Young Muslim refugees whose families rely on them to secure some form of stay in India, which is vital to support not only access to higher education, but also daily life, are left repeatedly attempting to apply whenever possible, even if it means likely rejection. I looked further into this matter via the link supplied by the UNHCR, New Delhi, where refugees go to apply for the LTV.

In previous years, there was an option on the application page to select the eligibility category as 'Afghani national who has come to India with valid travel documents, who is eligible for grant of LTV'. However, currently, the 'LTV service is only for PAKISTANI &

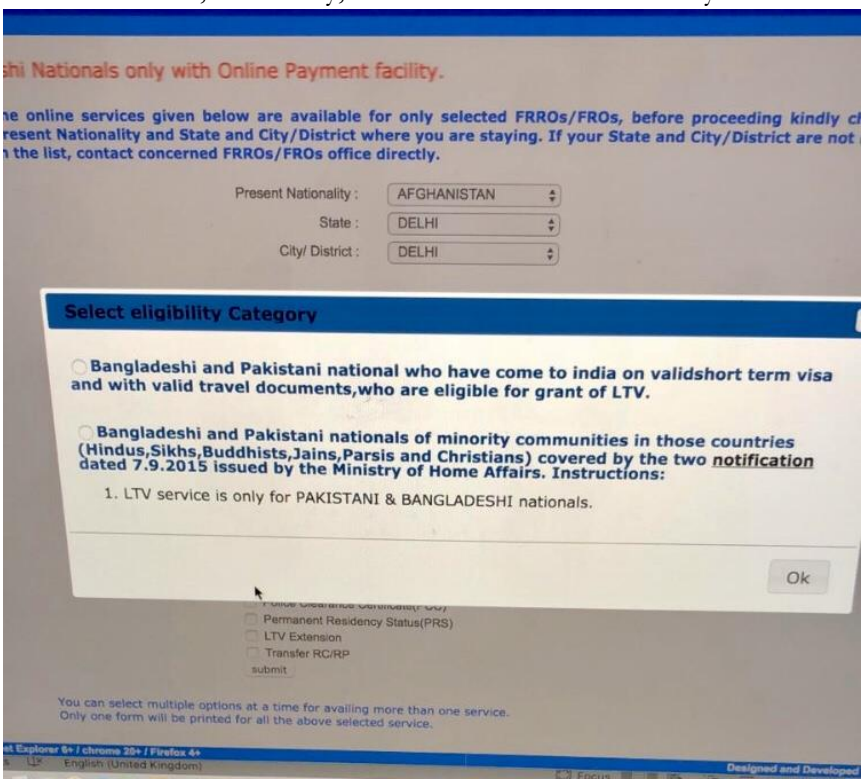

Figure 4-2. Example of an attempt by a Muslim Afghan refugee who wanted to reapply for LTV application on behalf of his family on the MHA website in February 2019. Screenshot of photograph given to author by the applicant via a messenger app correspondence.

BANGLADESHI…nationals of minority communities in those countries (Hindus, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians) covered by the two-notification dated 7.9.2015 issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs…' (website, Ministery of Home Affairs, Image 4.1).[21] More recently, the Minister of Home Affairs changed the LTV regulations, neither announcing its policies nor warning the UNHCR in India of the possibility of losing the status given to refugees. Afghan refugees are now left without the security of potential work in the formal sector and education across all Indian institutions. Nasib's family consulted their local FRRO, which is only available every second and fourth Saturday of every month to receive and process the applications of refugees. The family reapplied for what is now the 'Refugee Visa Extension Form' (Table 4.1) and 'we did not argue…although we now lost track…they kind of twisted the law to favour minorities of neighbouring countries' (February 2019).

Regarding the Indian state's relationship with the poor and marginalised, Gupta (2012) demonstrated that individuals without access to social or economic capital are inadequately prepared for navigating bureaucracy. In many ways, Afghan refugees bear the burdens of navigating and accessing Indian bureaucratic systems at nongovernmental and governmental levels. A representative from the SLIC indicated that the organisation 'sensitises them [local authorities and FRRO officials] on refugee problems and rights…the police have been very cooperative with Afghans in this area' (South Delhi, November 2015). For the SLIC representative, it was more important to differentiate his role from that of the UNHCR, indicating that, 'as far as I am concerned, they have Refugee Cards…they're getting access…if they don't have identity cards, that is not our concern…' (South Delhi, November 2015). The harsh comments made by the SLIC representative allude to the limits of what the organisation can do. This attitude is reflected in the inadequacy of the documents issued by the UNHCR

[21] For further information, see https://mha.gov.in/PDF_Other/AnnexVI_01022018.pdf.

and the GoI to young Muslim Afghan refugees since the UNHCR can only provide limited de facto protection.

The above situation demonstrates the frustrating practice of the (re)registration and (re)validation of documents (Hammar 2018) in India for Afghan refugees. The local FRRO is not seen in a positive light by many Afghan refugees because the documents submitted are then handed to an officer who further inspects the applications, giving individuals and families a sense of mistrust, insecurity, and 'not feeling relaxed'. Furthermore, there are random routine checks conducted by the FRRO to ensure that the Residential Permit addresses match where the individual or families are residing. The constant patrol and reverification of documents even after submitting produces a set of conditions that creates not only anxiety, but also accentuates contradictory tendencies of certification. The materiality of identification documents gives meaning to, determines, and provides limits on the identity of Afghan refugees and defines their subsequent rights and privileges (i.e., movement and access to resources) or lack thereof (c.f. Anderson 1991; Scott 1998; Torpey 2000). It is up to the individual to hand in their completed application with their identification documents to the FRRO/FRO officials for approval, keeping in mind the operational hours of the respective local offices. I reveal how former refugees treat their documents and applications in their material form and how examining these practices reveals an unending interplay of safety and uncertainty. The documents become a tool that mediates and produces real changes to the lived experience of Afghan refugees.

The Refugee Card is the only form of identification document that attests the holder is a refugee *and* recognised by the UNHCR in India. It is the first piece of officialised paper 'recognised refugees' obtain in the Indian capital. Through new knowledge of other forms of certificates and documents that may be available to refugees in India, the material functions of documents continue to shape and feature multiple forms of obtaining citizenship documents.

The ethnoreligious understanding of citizenship in India and the state's technocratic policies are implications of Partition that motivate bureaucratic classification (Agamben 1998). As such, bureaucratic classification can be viewed as a mark of document reproductions that is attributed to the complexity of 'authority-certification-citizenship nexus' (Hammar 2018: 239).

It is clear that visas have their own set of hierarchies for refugees living in India. These documents require young Afghan refugees to be engrossed in their verification and approval to enact certain subjectivities, and it is through these that the bureaucratic state is brought into young people's everyday lives (Navaro-Yashin 2012). The individual and community networked efforts function on several levels. What it means to be a refugee in India is shaped by transnational legal definitions of refugeehood (see Chapter 2) via the practices of the UNHCR, Bosco, the GoI, and other interactions with bureaucratic structures. The refugees initiate the visa application process. With the UNHCR efforts, Afghan refugees' visa applications are strengthened through support letters. The bureaucracy of identification documents and their variations explain the exclusions inherent in the process. The possession of, or lack of, identification documents is acutely important. It is not just the undocumented who have a difficult time, but those who possess visas also face the gruelling administrative process of the ever-changing forms of identity documents. The materiality of diverse documents and certificates has consequences for the relationship individuals have with the documents they possess, as well as the state's epistemological impact on the lives of refugees. In the following section, I reflect on how the naturalisation scheme for non-Muslim Afghan refugees has impacted lives on hold for a new generation of 'to-be Indians'.

4.5 'Fast-tracking': Indian Naturalisation for Non-Muslim Afghan Refugees

Rahul, a twenty-three-year-old non-Muslim Afghan refugee, guided me into a *gully* (Hindi for 'alley' or 'backway') with shops, which led to an entrance of a multistorey apartment complex in Janakpuri West. The area is named after my namesake and is adjacent to the main Bosco

centre in Vikaspuri, which is also the main location where Afghan refugees go to renew their refugee cards. 'Do you know about Janak Raja?' Rahul asked teasingly. I replied, '[laughter] Father of Goddess Sita…', then Rahul interrupted and stopped me from explaining the reference to the popular Hindu epic, *Rāmāyanam* (September 2016). '*Maan*!' (Hindi for 'Mom'), Rahul exclaimed in broken Hindi and Dari, 'Janak Raja has come to visit us!' While Rahul placed his backpack in a nondescript room, I was offered some traditional Afghani green tea called *kawah* with a side of jaggery. Rahul returned from the dark room, which was next to a temple consisting of framed pictures of Hindu deities, including the founder of Sikhism, Guru Nanak, mounted onto the chipped pastel blue painted wall and positioned above the lit *diiyaas* (Hindi for 'earthen lamps').

Rahul brought an off-yellow quilt that was secured with brown jute twine string. The quilt was made from yellow armbands that the Taliban forced those of non-Muslim ethnoreligious backgrounds (i.e., Hindu and Sikh Afghans) to wear (interview, Jagjit Singh, February 2016). With rising Islamic fundamentalism (Emadi 2012), non-Muslim Afghans in Afghanistan during Taliban rule in 1994 were forced to wear yellow bands to distinguish themselves from Muslim Afghans. Rahul's mother explained that the yellow bands with stars on them symbolised harassment and loss of economic security for non-Muslim Afghans. Rahul revealed a bundle of paper documents that spanned over a decade. The documents consisted of certificates and other documents for Indian citizenship, but also included some Afghan documents for various family members. Rahul's mother, sitting down, was looking at a picture of her husband, who died in a suicide attack upon his return to Afghanistan. The family still had a few months to wait to receive Indian citizenship. They were unaware that once an application is submitted, the applicant(s) may not leave India. Following his father's death in July 2016, Rahul and his mother's Indian naturalisation applications were still 'in process'.

Rahul's case provides an interesting example in that even though non-Muslim Afghans' state of 'origin' is Afghanistan, this group is presumed to be 'coming home' to India. The UNHCR felt that this group was mostly integrated into Indian society and had little desire to return to Afghanistan (Bose 2004). The UNHCR considered non-Muslim Afghan refugees' desire to remain in India to be sincere and undertook efforts to make Indian citizenship possible for them as naturalisation is often the 'best long-term solution, if they can overcome obstacles like the long and complicated application process' (UNHCR 2005). As the Secretary of the Khalsa Diwan Welfare Society, Mr Singh stated (interview, New Delhi, April 2016):

> Citizenship is the biggest problem for us in India…People here are struggling for citizenship for the last twenty-five years. Thousands of files have been made but the process is still slow…We are already 'citizens'!...We now have a whole generation of Afghan Sikh refugees who grew up in Delhi. Their future is in India.

Rahul, like countless other young non-Muslim Afghan refugees, is a product of Partition, during which his parents' family fled the Potohar region of newly formed Pakistan, which resulted in an interfaith marriage between his parents in Afghanistan (interview, September 2016). In the case of non-Muslim Afghan refugees, demonstrating ties to India or even eligibility does not ensure the ability to become a naturalised citizen. Mr. Singh explained that the 'UNHCR citizenship scheme' was a byzantine process, requiring cooperation from not just the UNHCR but also government bureaucracy in both India and Afghanistan (interview, New Delhi, April 2016).

It was the UNHCR that attempted to make Indian naturalisation available to non-Muslim Afghan refugees by negotiating with the GoI. This attempt was made on the basis that non-Muslim Afghan refugees had the 'natural desire' to be in India, as opposed to Muslim Afghan

refugees, 'whose cultural difference hindered "ethnic"[22] Afghans from integrating' (UNHCR representative, December 2015). For David Miller, non-Muslim Afghan refugees are well equipped to integrate culturally and socially into the 'Indian way of life' as they share religious and cultural ties to the wider community, which is a predominantly practising Hindu nation (Interview, April 2015). The UNHCR regards the non-Muslim Afghan community as belonging to the larger 'Indian' community grounded in the Indian nation. However, an SLIC administrator was irritated by how the UNHCR portrayed non-Muslim Afghans as immediately belonging into Indian society. At the legal level, the SLIC's efforts to assist refugees in the citizenship process is bureaucratic. At the individual level, the application process creates files and documents through which refugees must demonstrate themselves as eligible to be citizens.

The Indian naturalisation process is arduous and includes multiple paper documents. Non-Muslim Afghan refugees need to stay in India for fourteen years. Under Section 6.1, the following steps are needed: (1) an LTV (since 2012 for non-Muslim Afghan refugees); (2) provide all previous addresses of residence in addition to Residence Permit; (3) speak at least one Indian language listed in the Constitution, such as Hindi or Punjabi (for this, a language certificate is usually needed from an institution such as the local place of worship or the Khalsa Diwan Welfare Society to certify that the individual can read, write, speak, and understand the language); (4) an advertisement in a newspaper announcing that one has applied for citizenship and if anyone objects they should contact the FRRO; (5) an affidavit by two Indians by birth known to the applicant; and (6) formal declaration in the newspaper in the form of a small ad, also meant a sense of insecurity due to its visibility in the public. For instance, a notice would

[22] Non-Muslim Afghan refugees, often separated into Hindu or Sikh refugee labels by institutions and 'ethnic' categories, were contextually discussed and problematised in Chapter 1.

be placed in a local newspaper, such as *The Statesman*, in which an ad of notice for citizenship might read:

> NOTICE is hereby given that (name), s/o (L) (name), r/o (residence, Vikaspuri, New Delhi 110018, of Afghanistan is applying to the Secretary of the Government of India in the Ministry of Home Affairs for Naturalisation, and that any person who knows any reason why Naturalisation should not be granted should send a written signed statement of the facts to the said Secretary.

There is an initial Rs. 1500/- fee for applying for citizenship. The forms are submitted to the Subdivisional Magistrate Office (SMO). Then, the application is sent for further verification to the local FRRO. Subsequently, the files are passed to local police for verification, then back to the FRRO, then returned to the SMO office, and finally to the MHA. The MHA either rejects or accepts the application. As Farah Khan explained (November 2015):

> This administrative 'back-and-forthness' can go on for an additional 2 to 3…4 and 5 years. [The] government channel is complicated and SMO officials are sometimes transferred; the person dealing with the citizenship cases gets transferred and the process of bureaucratic hurdles. At final state, (which is often the hardest) renounce Afghan citizenship. They have to go to the Embassy of Afghanistan and take [the] Oath of Allegiance before [the] District Magistrate to get citizenship. [The] Minister [for the] Home Office ask[s] for [a] valid passport which most of Hindu Sikh Afghans do not have; those who have [a] valid passport it is difficult to get renewal and [they] don't have the financial strength to renew. [Their] present nationalities as Afghans are a major issue. Costs 100s of dollars to get passport renewed. The Indian Citizenship Act drastically increased processing fee to Rs. 13, 750/- though, there is some UNHCR financial support to Hindu Sikh Afghans. The system is mismanaged.

From 2004 to 2009, the SLIC aided in processing 5,000 applications for the naturalisation of non-Muslim Afghan refugees, of which only 800 were processed successfully. The dynamics of such a 'citizen-making process' for non-Muslim Afghan refugees are telling of the context in which the applicant whose application is genuine sought to be seen by the state as a means of recognition. Although there is a glimmer of hope, as new legislation was passed in the Lok

Sabha to 'fast-track' Indian naturalisation for non-Muslim Afghans in January 2019.[23] Rahul's family's case presents an ambiguity that lies between categories of belonging, rejection, memory, and aspiration. The bureaucratic 'back-and-forthness' (see McConnell 2013) captures the temporal, legal, and spatial challenges this particular community faces.

For instance, Rahul's cousin Jassi moved from New Delhi to Chandigarh, Punjab with her family because her father had work opportunities on a wheat farm and other odd jobs. Jassi was visiting Rahul for Vaisakhi, the Sikh New Year celebrated in April, as well as to renew her papers. She described her precarious status as being 'on hold' (twenty-five years old, North Delhi, April 2016):

> It is much harder to be a refugee in Punjab than Delhi. All of my family members have their visas and certificates issued on different dates. Since our papers expire every twelve months, we must visit Delhi once in three months along with everyone in the family for renewal. We are all tired of this business. Sometimes it is hard because if you have a job, the boss lets you go since you leave so often in two or three months. They want somebody who leaves less. They already come to know we are Afghan. It is hard sometimes to find guarantors…we need two for the LTV. [translated from Hindi/Punjabi to English]

Jassi's father, who fled religious persecution in Afghanistan, was torn between his identity and livelihood. The family was entangled in a messy maze of paper(less) trails and had lost track of their documents. Most important for Jassi's father was his daughter's impending marriage:

> I am twenty-five. Who is going to marry me at twenty-six…twenty-seven…thirty? Indians get suspicious that we come from Afghanistan; they are concerned that since we do not have Indian citizenship, what happens to the marriage in case we are deported? Does not matter if this [is] our *desh* [Hindi for native land/natural homeland]. Sometimes FRRO ask us to renew our passports, for which we have to risk going to the Afghan Embassy. There is so much *pareshani* from FRRO, who sometimes do not see us as Indian, and also keeping papers in order is hard when you go city to city. Delhi is not down the

[23] Lok Sabha (or 'House of the People') is the lower house of India's Parliament, with the upper house being the Rajya Sabha (or 'Council of States').

> road. My sister, who just had a baby, one time told the [FRRO] officer at least accept her! It is not possible.

An examination of the materiality of bureaucratic domains (Gordillo 2006) reveals how actual material processes for Indian naturalisation are much more multifaceted than the UNHCR or the SLIC described.

For instance, residential permits are equally as important as visas as the permit only lasts six months and requires special permission from the MHA to obtain. This process, in relation to obtaining visas and Indian naturalisation, is the same in terms of visiting the local FRRO office and being monitored by the local police. There is no available documentary evidence for governmental bias against Muslim Afghan refugees; however, Baujard (2008) states that the GoI communicated to the UNHCR in 2001 that, following the collapse of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, it would adopt a policy of only providing residential permits to non-Muslim Afghan refugees, excluding Muslim Afghan refugees. These actions underscore the exclusion of refugees who come from different ethnoreligious backgrounds, reflecting the particular contextual dynamics of citizenship.

I saw the exhaustion on the faces of the respondents. This was echoed in their voices when telling me of their countless journeys to verify various documents and get them stamped. The material documents presented to me as examples almost became unrecognisable due to the nature of their renewal, with fresh stamps printed on older ones, indicating, sometimes, months and years since the last time authorities checked the document. With few expendable resources, the hardships of starting the application process again also require energy, which is lost through the passage of time. Indian naturalisation for non-Muslim Afghan refugees is not formalised as there has been a decade long block on citizenship despite procedural attempts to solidify policy development and implementation. One of the biggest delays for pending applications is that while the papers should take nine months to one year to complete, 'there

are constant changes in the SMO and FRRO officers handling the documents. With such frequent changes within the internal MHA administration at local branches, applications are inevitably put on hold.' (SLIC representative, November 2015). The process for Indian naturalisation (described above) requires that each applicant proves themselves eligible for citizenship. The physical traces of legal documents also prove non-Muslim Afghans and their children's existence and, in some ways, this reasserts their 'belonging' to a country where their legal status is incessant and precarity remains a continuity.

The wait for naturalisation has also impacted how a new generation of Afghan refugees view paper documents and Indian bureaucracy. For instance, many young non-Muslim Afghan refugees, such as Rahul, decided not to apply for Indian naturalisation, in his case following his father's application being stuck in a state of pending. Many of the interviewees recognised that they 'will never get full Indian citizenship', at least in the near future (Rahul, September 2016). Sneha, a twenty-three-year-old non-Muslim refugee, supported Rahul's decision (October 2016):

> 'Kya fayda?' (Hindi for 'What's the point?'). The last process is the hardest when you take citizenship, did you know? I left my application in the middle. My cousins had much trouble. The main problem for citizenship is the 'No-Objection Certificate' [NOC]. I remember my cousin…this was in 2009…she was sent to the Afghan Embassy with her passports with a request to change her status. The Indian Government required that we had no criminal background or such issues back in Afghanistan. This was impossible as the [Afghan] Embassy did not care to grant these certificates or delay them, saying, *unka mamla hai* (Hindi for 'it's their [the Indian Government's] business). These certificates need to be approved all the way from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the president's office. What is the need for this when my cousin came to India at the age of three?! [Translated from Hindi to English]

The material politics that non-Muslim and Muslim Afghan refugees experience in India and Afghanistan are not only complicated, but also a process that is prolonged and gruelling for months, such as in the case of the NOC. The lives of Afghan refugees in New Delhi are initially made secure with an ID card issued by the UNHCR that derives its authority from a treaty

India has not ratified. Non-Muslim Afghan refugees expressed resentment and impatience with the GoI, as well as at being left in the cold by the UNHCR without any suitable action or response. This bureaucratic hurdle was heightened by applicants having to provide an NOC to ensure they had no criminal convictions or outstanding debts in Afghanistan. This variation in the naturalisation process for non-Muslim Afghan refugees indicates a reality of demonstrating themselves as not only deemed worthy of eligibility to the Indian state, but also seeking permission from the Embassy of Afghanistan. Prior to 2008, Afghan passports were sent to the Embassy of Afghanistan in New Delhi for the certificate to be granted. However, as Rahul noted, 'Both India and Afghanistan turned a blind eye…we belong neither here nor there…' (October 2016). The subjectivity of the Muslim and non-Muslim Afghan refugees is maintained through the various visa and naturalisation schemes, which are not only shaped by the postcolonial context of the state, but also through organisations such as the UNHCR. There is also an underlying assumption that all non-Muslim Afghan refugees can be eligible for citizenship, which is based on the presumption of their not belonging to Afghanistan. However, as the stories above indicate, citizenship processes reimagine and reshape young Afghan refugees' diverse material ties that capture an evolving citizenship.

In January 2019, the Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB) was passed in the Lok Sabha to 'fast-track' pending naturalisation cases for non-Muslim Afghan refugees in India. This meant that the twelve to fourteen years' requirement of living in India decreased to seven years (SLIC correspondence, 2019). The CAB is also a 'violation of Article 14 of the Constitution which provides equality before law and equal protection to "any person" within the territory of India' (*India Today* June 2019). The Minister of State for Home, Kiran Rijiju, said that more than thirty thousand people belonging to minority groups and on LTVs would benefit from this amendment (ibid June 2019). Thus, the beneficiaries of the LTV scheme excluding Muslims. New postcolonial narratives of young refugees emerge that have ambivalent political,

temporal, and material effects. These postcolonial narratives are a consequence of the Indian state postcolonial mode of governance and the young refugees' relationship with the state to become more visible.

4.6 Conclusion

I argued in this chapter that the many (un)official statuses and documents that Afghan refugees hold are a reminder that the mechanisms of citizenship and identity formation are ever-evolving, shifting, perilous, and relational. The precarity faced by Muslim and non-Muslim Afghan refugees cannot be separated from ongoing debates about citizenship in the Indian context. The notion of precarity is not a new experience or condition unique to contemporary times or particular neoliberal spaces. The structural forces that shape spaces of precarity should be considered closely, together with how citizenship—as status, practices, and acts—is understood through grounded examinations of neoliberalised institutions and social power (Castree 2017).

The concept of precarious status captures the bureaucratic production of multiple forms of 'less-than-full' non-citizenship that are negotiated between individuals, between individuals and groups of individuals, and between individuals and the state. I also recognise the nonlinear pathways through different categories of status and that these decisions are made in accordance with Indian government legislation, which determines who enjoys entitlements such as access to material resources. Thus, precarious status is also understood as the way in which refugees carry with them irregular statuses subject to control through techniques of state and humanitarian governance involving refugee registration, legal documentation, and frequent (sometimes unannounced) security checks.

I contend that the everyday precarities of young Afghan refugees are a result of institutional delays and regulations of stay regarding Indian government-issued documents, such as the temporary visa extension schemes and naturalisation certificates. These constrict the

experience of mobility and social benefits and widen the absence of participation, temporal orientations, and legal protection. Young Afghan refugees are placed in a difficult condition in which holding documents do not eliminate precarity and, instead, remain as material legacies of postcolonial and racialised overtones.

Unsurprisingly, the messy identity and material politics at play in India, such as acquiring LTVs and other documents, are burdened with anxieties, fear, and emotions (Hull 2012). In this chapter, I focused on the role of identification documents in drawing connections between refugee experiences at the margins and the changing boundaries of citizenship through new political currencies. How one identifies and is identified in relation to ethnoreligious affiliation are also crucial in reproducing inequalities and disadvantages in one's material negotiations with local- and state-level bureaucracy.

As I demonstrated, precarious status in India for Afghan refugees is not entirely an automatic transmission of entitlements. Legal and non-legal scholars now recognise the importance of interdisciplinary definitions of citizenship and that legal definitions risk providing an unfinished representation of 'the granular reality of what citizenship looks like for the poor' (Chhotray & McConnell 2018: 112). I captured some nuanced aspects of Afghan refugee precarity in India through sociopolitical, economic, cultural, and legal lenses.

The conditions of 'precarity' as a result of Afghan refugees' social and legal status in India permeate their everyday lives. In this chapter, I emphasised that there is no singularity of citizenship in India in light of the recent regulatory changes. The reproductions, extensions, and reverifications of identity documents open up spaces for contestation, disruption, and (re)interpretation. In theory, holding a Refugee Card is a prerequisite for applying for the LTV, and an LTV is a precondition for applying for Indian citizenship through naturalisation. Over time, for Afghan refugees in India, the value of the Refugee Card has diminished as it is not widely recognised by state and local institutions in India. This chapter's analysis considered

documents beyond their legal contents and incorporated affective politics and material ties of going through the motions of being accepted, rejected, or left in limbo.

The history of Indian documentation processes is a fervent reminder of how notions of class and caste pervade (Abraham 2014), as well as indicating that the meanings and forms of social relations are anything but static. As sociodiscursive constructs, identity documents are open to scrutinisation. Indian bureaucracy reveals a deeper sensitivity of the cognitive dissonance with which Afghan refugees live and the everyday encounters that are imbued with affective and political meanings. At the same time, the institutional practices of documentation are an attempt to reshape ideas about how racism is reproduced and expressed as Afghan refugees lead deeply precarious lives. The case of Muslim and non-Muslim Afghan refugees in India is much more complex, prolonged, and nonlinear with a defined end-state. In the next chapter, I build upon my arguments regarding the changing nature of identity documents for Afghan refugees which is seen as multifaceted and complex. In the following chapter, I also demonstrate the precarity of higher education for Afghan refugee youths who go through their own sets of unequal power relations in the university admissions process where the materiality of documents do not disappear.

Chapter 5. The Role of Higher Education in Young Afghan Refugees' Negotiation of 'Regularity', Temporalities, and Race

5.1 Introduction

A large advertisement hanging on a wall caught my eye before entering a meeting with some DAFI[24] scholars in a Bosco centre in West Delhi. The poster read in bold letters:

NIOS ADMISSION 10TH AND 12TH

Failed in Class 9th or 11th

Pass 10th or 12th

Open School is your BEST OPTION!

I was new to the Indian educational system, including the educational services and resources provided and available to refugees. I later asked the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) coordinator, Hitendra, why the NIOS was the 'Best Option' for refugees in India.

Hitendra, who was in charge of the five Bosco centres in New Delhi, explained the available educational services for refugee families wishing to enrol their child(ren) into the NIOS system. The classes at NIOS revolve around two semesters for the academic year. This is the system the Bosco Project Manager thought was appropriate for the students to complete their English and computer competencies. As proficiency in English increased among Afghan refugees, so did their educational aspirations, prompting Hitendra to help set up the NIOS system within Bosco, wherein 'it [all] clicked together' (interview, April 2016). However, the majority of students interviewed seemed unenthusiastic with the administrative decision to combine 10th and 11th standards as many had already completed one or the other class in

[24] DAFI is the German acronym for the Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative.

Afghanistan and needed to repeat in order to move to class 12: the final stage before university. The NIOS is one example of a type of 'distance learning' format, which is an alternative education system with an alternative curriculum that allows refugee students to study at their own pace rather than attending a government school where enrolled students would need to keep pace with the structured curriculum.

This chapter explores the extent to which young Afghan refugees' experiences of higher education are gendered, racialised, and entangled in unequal power relations. Higher education for refugee students is accessed via the DAFI Initiative, which marked its twenty-fifth anniversary in 2017 and hosts scholars from fifty countries (UNHCR 2018). Administered by the UNHCR, this programme is separate from the broader UNHCR education policies and strategies and only reaches 2.4 per cent of refugees globally. For Afghan refugee students, it is crucial to acquire adequate marks in postsecondary education if their family can afford tuition fees for Delhi public schools or, alternatively, successfully complete class 10 and class 12 national examinations provided by the NIOS. The NIOS-administered examinations are recognised by Indian universities. A student must be at least fourteen years old to be enrolled in class 10, and at least fifteen years old to be enrolled in class 12 (Hitendra, April 2016). The age of the average Indian student enrolled in class 10 is fourteen to sixteen years old (class 10), with national examinations at the end of secondary levels. The majority of the NIOS-enrolled refugee students I interviewed were well over the minimum age. In the case of NIOS students, successful completion of these national examinations put Afghan refugee students in automatic consideration for the DAFI scholarship, whereas students who go through Indian school channels have to apply separately. The DAFI scholarship is the only option available that covers higher student overseas fees.

The distance education system was first developed in India at the prestigious University of Delhi (DU) in 1962. The University of Delhi is recognised as a dual-mode university in which

an institutional system operates with a campus-based degree in addition to distance-learning programmes (or 'non-traditional') that is flexible as regards style and timing of teaching. The growth in the infrastructure of single-mode universities, such as the popular Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU),[25] and dual-mode universities has increased to well over 300 institutions.[26]

Often, Afghan refugee students leave behind their educational certificates or come to India in the middle of their education. This situation leaves them with no option but to repeat class 10 if a prospective student wishes to be in the NIOS system, as this is the cheapest and most flexible educational option. As one young female Muslim Afghan told me, 'I have to repeat my classes as I forgot my school certificates back in Kabul. I come to NIOS to upgrade my skills from class 10 and…my education' to progress to an Indian university (interview, April 2016). As a senior leader within the NIOS and Bosco organisations for ten years, Hitendra has seen the number of enrolled students increase significantly. In 2007, the number of students expanded from two[27] to over a thousand students, with the majority coming from Burma and Afghanistan, as well as some from Somalia and Eritrea. The process of setting up a NIOS-style system within the Bosco administration was difficult because the educational infrastructure was not in place and each centre has a 'different character' in terms of demographics of refugees and location in and around Delhi.

For many of these students, the meaning of formal education has changed after coming to India as their expectations of the 'student experience' (i.e., teaching and course quality, support networks, and reputation of school and university) are no longer fixed (Holdsworth 2006).

[25] IGNOU is a central state university founded in 1985 that coordinates distance education systems and programmes throughout the country (c.f. Chapter 4 in Zawacki-Richter, Olaf., 2019).
[26] According to the Distance Education Bureau (DEB), student enrolment increased from 1,112 students in 1962 to over 400,000 students in the past decade,26 with twenty-five per cent of the Indian student population enrolled in the open distance learning (ODL) system (see DEB 2017).
[27] The first two students to enroll in the NIOS programme were Muslim Afghan girls.

Instead, ideas about higher education are charged with the messiness and discomfort of the prospect of obtaining education in an Open and Distance Learning (ODL) system in which student identities simultaneously reshape, overlap, and interact with each other.

Placing the narratives of youth at the centre of my analysis, I demonstrate how Afghan youths negotiate choices about their higher education pathways. I am interested not only in the deeply embedded social processes of barriers to education, but also in the temporal aspect of lives-lived-in-waiting, which can be unsettling. Viewing tertiary education as a vital site of social reproduction (Jeffrey 2011) opens up ways to examine the fluid, multiple, and relational identities of young refugees, as well as how they and their families imagine different and better futures (Holloway et al. 2011; Cuconato and Walther 2015). 'Time' in higher education for refugees in the Global South remains a contested terrain that privileges the 'traditional' experience of higher education (Bennet and Burke 2018). I develop the sociocultural components of time that frame young refugees' uneven higher educational experiences in India. I also examine the way race undergirds the experience of time and inclusion/exclusion by developing the notion of 'regularity' to aid in understanding how Afghan refugee youths experience racialisation. These experiences might differ from those of other young people in the city, including students from North-Eastern states and Kashmir who migrate to cities such as Delhi for their higher education (c.f. McDuie-Ra 2012 and 2016; Smith and Gergan 2015).

Young Afghans first hear the word 'regular' in the halls of the Bosco learning centres, and the term spills into their everyday vocabulary and is ingrained into the mindsets of their communities. To be a 'regular' student means to go to a 'traditional institution and to be a "traditional" student means to be a "regular" student' (NIOS administrator at the Bosco centre in West Delhi, 2016). The narratives of young Afghan refugees reveal the striking division of being institutionally categorised into either 'regular' or 'non-regular' students based on the type of institution they attend. Scholars have listed 'non-traditional' (or 'non-regular') students as

first-generation, ethnic minorities, and, often, mature (over the age of twenty-one), and from disadvantaged backgrounds (e.g., socioeconomically; Bowl 2003; Holton 2013). These students' limited knowledge of the workings of higher education results in less chance of being able to attend a traditional university (Christie 2007). I define (non)traditional students as '[one of] the first in their family to enter higher education, low-income families, members of minority ethnic groups, mature age students…' (Field 2012: 7). The binaries of 'non/traditional student' and 'non/regular student' fail to consider the differences in a student's experience of, and unequal participation in, higher educational access, retention/success, and outcomes (Gorad et al. 2006). However, I use the terms stated by my informants and interviewees as either 'regular' or 'non-regular' students in order to use and interpret their own meanings and experiences of higher education in India.

I structure the remainder of the chapter as follows: In the next section, I engage with social science literature on refugee studies, temporality, youth, and higher education, with a focus on theorising notions of racism and choice in university spaces. In the section after that, I underscore the significance of how 'student status' identities play out for students from different ethnoreligious communities and at different types of university. Then, I contextualise traditional and non-traditional experiences, explain Indian university admission processes and different college choice systems as they relate to Afghan refugee youths, and the extent to which these 'spaces of choice', decisions, and actions are (un)regulated, gendered, and racialised. In the conclusion, I consider the wider implications of the ways refugee students negotiate their temporal experience of higher education, as well as broader debates surrounding social reproduction, identities, higher education, and life course in the Global South.

5.2 Conceptualising Student Geographies, Time, and Race in Higher Education

In this section, I provide an overview of scholarly work on higher education, temporality, and space. A significant body of youth scholarship in geography and sociology has considered young people's future orientation and student transitions in higher education. For instance, Furlong, Woodman, and Wyn (2011) argue that the last years of schooling are the most pivotal in shaping the economic and social relationships of young people's futures. Adam (2010) contends that the construction of the future for young people is orientated with elements of aspirations, idealisations, predictions, and imaginaries. I engage with debates on 'student geographies' and 'geographies of education' (Smith 2009; Holton and Riley 2013; Holton 2017) as they relate to how Afghan refugee students engage with ideas about time and race. I break away from extant literature that emphasises 'time' in higher education as institutionally structured and, instead, discuss how complex inequalities of higher education interrelate in young people's student experience of being racialised others with their decision-making processes.

5.2.1 Understanding Student Geographies

In recent years, the literature on 'student geographies' (Smith 2009; Holton 2013) and 'geographies of education' (Collins and Coleman 2008) has explicated the experiences of higher education students, including their 'movements, [im]mobilities, and identities' (Holton 2013: 61). The challenge for India as a post-1947 nation was the expansion of higher education 'for youth and disadvantaged sections of society' (Garg et al. 2019: 2). This led to the creation of what Christie (2007) defines as 'non-traditional students' or the 'new student' (Leathwood and O'Connell 2003), who are typically first-generation higher education students from minority and working-class backgrounds. Other scholars have blurred the boundaries of this terminology regarding students experiencing transitions in higher education by interrogating normative routes to university (Reay et al. 2010). I add to existing geographical writings on

youth who are conceptualised as 'sites of accumulation' (Katz 2008), by providing new materials in the form of locally specific student narratives about how young people tackle anxieties over social mobility. In this context, 'higher education' for young people exists with possible apprehensions that question how social mobility within educational spaces enhances a student's chances to develop 'educational capital'. I borrow from Bourdieu's (1977) notion of 'capital' as it relates to education to understand how educational capital can be 'embodied in an individual person, objectified through cultural artefacts, and institutionalised in academic qualifications and credentials' (Waters 2009: 404). Extant scholarship on educational capital has claimed that this is a useful concept to understand the relationship between cultural and educational capital in the analysis of young refugees' pursuit of education and mobility in New Delhi. For instance, Waters and Brooks' (2011) focus on how the socioeconomic status of students in Europe accrues 'capital' through educational policy schemes, such as Erasmus, could drive student mobility within mainland Europe (see also Holloway et al. 2010).

Formal schooling is a significant driver of the aspirations of young people, their parents, and their communities, and is an important aspect of the neoliberalism responsible for the structural problems regarding youth participation in educational change (Dryden-Peterson 2012; Jeffrey and McDowell 2004). There has been a growing surge in anthropological and geographical attention on tertiary education, everyday youth lives in India (c.f. Jeffrey 2010; Deuchar 2014; Smith and Gergan 2015; Krishnan 2016; Patel 2017), and international student educational mobilities (c.f. Madge and Raghuram 2015). It is also being increasingly argued that students are multiple-positioned subjects (i.e., students, workers, refugees, and family members) and articulate varying degrees of social, economic, and political agency (King and Raghuram 2013). Studies of educated elites who occupy privileged positions in the global competition for educational capital tend to be more focused on by researchers than accounts of educated nonelite youths (Waters 2008; Cheng 2014). In other important work, Fiddian-

Qasmiyeh (2015) offers rich accounts on Cuban and Libyan South-South scholarship programmes for refugees. Providing refugees with educational opportunities not only empowers refugees to become leaders in their communities (Dryden-Peterson and Giles 2012), but also helps preserves cultural traditions (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2011). Fiddian-Qasmiyeh's (2015) research on South-South education migration for refugees is critical to exploring the alternative education pathways to the recognised educational support that is offered by Northern states and organisations. The matter of choice for refugee students is additionally telling as a paradox emerges from Fiddian-Qasmiyeh's analysis from South-South education initiatives on Cuban-education Sahrawi youth who left the refugee camps in search of employment in Spain where their medical degrees are recognised. Although the intention of the education programme was to combat the legacies of colonialism and lessen ties with the Cubans' and Sahrawis' former colonial master, Spain, Sahrawi youths reinforced dependence on Northern state donors through their choice of studying medicine and finding work outside Southern states. Indeed, perspectives of young refugees, such as highlighted in Fiddian-Qasmiyeh's work, rarely form the centre of analysis in studies of youth in higher education contexts (Ramsay and Baker 2019). In addition to the critical examination of how social inequalities are reproduced within higher educational restructuring, emphasis also needs to be given to the ambivalent relationship with educational capital and negative stereotypes among refugee students in India.

The concept of 'youth transitions' (see Chapter 2) has been problematised among sociologists, anthropologists, and geographers, which has led to a challenging of the normative understandings of transitions as a linear process in the life course from childhood to adulthood (Skelton and Valentine 2003; Hopkins 2006; Wyn et al. 2011). Instead, youth transitions are associated with complex and contested negotiations (c.f. Wyn et al. 2011) and are characterised as reversible (Walther 2006). Walther (2006) distinguishes these as 'yo-yo' transitions in which

young people expand their levels of higher education with fragmented uncertainties around their future career trajectories postgraduation. Educational choice becomes a process of forming or opposing subjective identities that revolve around uncertainty, emotional pressure, and collective inputs from family and communities. The progression to higher education is not always achieved through a 'step-by-step' plan or by 'jumping straight from school to a degree course at university' (Brynin and Güveli 2012: 288; but see also Forsyth and Furlong 2003; Christie, 2009). Within these processes, there is evidence of the reproduction of old and new inequalities, hierarchies, and exclusions. As changing economic and social conditions have given rise to new university student experiences (Holdsworth 2005 and 2009), I position young refugees' identity-making processes in and through university spaces (Holton 2013 and 2017) as access to higher education is increasing despite the realities of marginality posed in Indian metropolitan life. These ideas are particularly useful for understanding how young people understand their interactions and experiences to make (un)expected decisions and choices in the social milieu of the university.

I acknowledge the challenging lexicon of 'regularity' and what refugee student labelling could 'convey… [about their] status and their situation' (Zetter 1991 and 2007) in ways that disguise and mislead regarding the diversity of refugee students' experiences and their 'status' as students. There is little research that celebrates the success of students who are classified in such dualistic terms of being either from 'regular' or 'non-regular' backgrounds, with some exceptions by scholars in the sociology of education (i.e., Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992; Reay 2004) and geographies of education (i.e., Holton and Riley 2013; Brooks and Waters 2011).

I respond to Holton and Riley's suggestion of problematising the dualistic vocabularies that label students as being either 'traditional' or 'non-traditional' (2013: 68) by using the experiences of refugee students in India and their own expressions that identify with being a student. I also reiterate Roger Zetter's argument that, via the systematic creation and

application of labels, it is possible to examine how 'patterns of social and cultural norms […] are mediated, impacted and ultimately controlled and reformulated by institutional agency' (2007: 173). This marker of being a non-traditional student continues with refugee students when applying for university in India's higher education system, as well as how higher education and institutional labelling/student status is a form of liminality (Field 2008). I problematise these terms to unpack and shed light on the complex heterogeneity that exists with different types of students within student spaces and communities. While emerging geographical scholarship on children and young adults continues to be fruitful, there is a need to examine the liminal position of young people (Valentine 2003) and the temporality of education (Field and Morgan-Klein 2013).

5.2.2 Refugee Temporalities and Educational Time

In terms of migration and refugee studies, there has been productive engagement with the concept of liminality. Liminality is defined as a state of 'in-betweenness' and 'waiting' (Turner 1987) between two prescribed social statuses. The concept of liminality in relation to young people's educational experiences is furthered by their interactions with agencies such as universities and schools, which fuel precarity (c.f. Zeus 2010). Lisa Malkki's (2012) analysis of the 'structural invisibility' in which Hutu refugees operate showcases the social and political importance of refugee status. In doing so, the author explicates how Hutu refugees in Tanzania subvert classified categories and create new ones (2012). Although Malkki does not discuss education per se, her research is important in that it supplies a framework to understand the taken-for-granted experiences in Western societies in which individuals do not have to contend with issues of higher education access and citizenship. In another use of the liminality concept, geographers Torres and Wicks-Asburn (2014) explored liminal citizenship to understand how the liminal nature of legal status shapes and regulates undocumented high school students' lives in rural North Carolina. The study fails, however, to examine the everyday educational

life of university-going refugees and studenthood. In this study, I approach the liminal character of being refugee students by capturing how individuals experiment with their temporary student identities and how they view university as not always having a linear timeframe (Field 2012).

I also engage with literature on liminality in regard to asylum and refugee situations where there can be multiple points of vulnerability and precarity linked to factors of arrival to host country and previous experiences of loss of parents and negotiating immigration and asylum systems (Hynes 2011). This not only compounds the situation but generates a system of mistrust and added risks during the process of waiting for status resolution as described by Hynes (2011) in the UK context where UK asylum seekers are especially prone to experiences this limbo as they are subjectifying through an asylum system that routinely denies normal procedures due to policy-imposed liminality. This fragility of everyday life for migrants and refugees can also be understood as what Johnson-Hanks (2002) calls vital conjuncture; that is, 'a critical duration in which several critical futures is at play' (Liversage 2009: 121). Johnson-Hanks defines vital conjuncture as a 'socially structured zone of possibility that emerges around specific periods of protentional transformation in a life or lives' (2002: 871). This outlook is important in concentrating on the narratives of youth refugees' perception and retelling of life stories on their social navigation of youth as a liminal status. The decisions and practices of young people navigating this space also opens up a reading of liminality as fluid and shifting the social experiences of navigating the diverse experiences of vital conjunctures.

It is, therefore, important to consider the heterogeneity of temporalities among young Afghan refugees as they participate in the act of *going to* university. This helps frame how 'university studenthood is a liminal process' that influences the newcomer's agency in the higher education system (Field 2012: 10). This approach not only directs attention to the 'particular and temporary configuration of structures that becomes relevant in specific situations', it also

'opens up analysis of social agency' (Jeffrey 2010: 502). This enables us to dissect how studenthood is formulated and experimented 'by further experiences of risk, uncertainty and continuing transition' (Field 2012: 10) that vary between different types of university and within different programmes and disciplines offered within universities (Field and Morgan-Klein 2010: 4).

Comparative studies on youth transitions (c.f. Boyden and Crivello 2012; Morán and de Mosteyrín 2017) and 'geographies of education and aspirations' (Thiem 2009; Holloway et al., 2011) have drawn on higher education pathways for young people in global contexts and have emphasised education as a key site of social reproduction for young people and their families to experience positive social advancement and prospects for better futures (Holloway et al., 2011; Waters 2015; Stambach and Hall., 2017). Participating in higher education is, thereby, a way for young people to foster 'the capacity to aspire' (Appadurai 2013), to 'figure the future' (Cole and Durham 2008), and to broaden their future horizons by advancing their skills (Stambach and Hall 2017). Scholars have also noted that higher education can constitute a period of stasis in terms of high graduate (un)employment (c.f. Bourdieu and Passeron 2000; Jeffrey 2010). I follow Cole and Durham (2008), who advocate a greater focus on temporality when unpacking how young people create new social geographical meanings and 'embody locally variable relationships with time, especially the future.' (ibid 2008: 3). In particular, the temporality of education is rarely examined (with notable exceptions such as Allan and Lewis 2009 and Jeffrey 2010), yet it is a critical aspect of unfolding as student futures 'emerge on different horizons' across different spatial and temporal scales and planes (Stambach and Hall 2016: 9).

5.2.3 Time in Higher Education

In the previous discussion, I stressed the importance of developing an intersectional reading of liminality that opens up space for young refugees' voices on educational time. I now rethink

conventional ideas of temporality/time in higher education and how time within higher education is also 'gendered, classed and racialised and tied to unequal power relations and socio-cultural differences' (Bennett and Burke 2018: 2). Race, gender, and time are vital in the lived experiences of youths in the Global South as these concepts remain in tension with one another owing to (post)colonial legacies (Patil 2011), which can deepen constraints on opportunities such as access to higher education. While there is a burgeoning literature on race and racism in India (c.f. Baber 2010; Baruah 2013; see also Chapter 2) and comparative studies of race and caste (c.f. Goodenough 2009), anthropologist Duncan McDuie-Ra's (2013) study on North Eastern migrants opens up ways to examine the structures of racism in contemporary India. The author suggests reasons for using the heuristic of race in his case study of migrants from North East India in the city of Delhi.

McDuie-Ra (2013) defines the experience of disempowerment, violence, and racialisation of North Eastern migrants based on subjective dimensions of undeniable 'feelings'. The experience of racism is expressed through the derogatory and racialised term 'chinky' (ibid: 90; see also Smith and Gergan 2015) used by Indian locals to categorise and exotify the characteristics of migrants. The migrants themselves felt unable to convey their own ethnic identities because of their treatment by the locals (ibid 89–90). Instead of defining what racism is in the Indian context, I borrow McDuie-Ra's (ibid) viewpoint to examine how racist structures exert their effects at the level of the everyday, including spaces of higher education.

Past debates have recognised that young people in the Global South are more likely than their counterparts in the Global North to undergo a series of complex, longer, and interrupted transitions due to changes in family structures, labour market, and education (Biggart et al. 2001). Higher education remains a strong factor for migration for youths who come from North East regions and Kashmir despite their negative experiences of racism and exclusion. For instance, Smith and Gergan (2015) reference McDuie-Ra (2013) when examining how

marginalised youths from the Himalayas cope with the temporal dynamics of movement to urban Indian cities and look to higher education to secure better lives. Smith and Gergan (2015) suggest that the physical characteristics of Himalayan migrants were seen as 'less' than the 'conventional' Indian, leaving minority youths feeling an additional 'burden of racialised social exclusion' (Brown and Chu 2012: 534; see also McDuie-Ra 2016). This chapter takes forward ideas about how young refugees in India might experience racialised time in higher education that influences to the way unequal power relations sustain the operations of racial imaginaries and *feelings* (in McDuie-Ra's terms) of racialised difference. This is done through theorising the notion of 'racialised time', wherein the (un)conventional notions of time for refugee youths are shaped and affectively charged by experiences in and through higher education. My focus on Afghan refugee students differs because I employ perspectives from students from different ethnoreligious backgrounds. Moreover, I attempt to strengthen the analysis of racial frameworks in the Indian context by analysing an overlooked population of refugees and migrants in Delhi through the voices of college-going men and women.

In the following sections, I examine Afghan refugee students at different junctures in their education journey through shifting dynamics between social and spatial changes, such as insecurities regarding fitting in among unfamiliar peer groups. In showing how Afghan refugee students are navigating the temporal terrains of higher education in India, I add to the discourse on the scrutinising time in the literature regarding (education) migration (c.f. Griffiths et al. 2013) and race (c.f. Smith and Gergan 2015; McDuie-Ra 2012, 2015). Starting from these conceptual considerations, the following section highlights the dynamism of admission processes and university choice, which reiterates the notions of 'student status' and 'regularity'.

5.3 Envisioning Studenthood and Geographies of Difference

The Afghan refugee student perspective of India as more of a world-class destination for education than Afghanistan is an important one that requires unpacking. For many young Afghan refugees, India has a premier postsecondary and higher education system within the subcontinent. This was an important view among the young people I spoke with and their families regarding the higher educational opportunities available in India compared with Afghanistan. First, young Afghan refugees recognised the broader demands of educational capital, in addition to their personal anxieties regarding the competitive nature of Indian university admission procedures, as well as post-educational employment while reflecting on their own (legal) status in India. Afghan refugee youth trajectories in India have meant that the period of youth is extended beyond that of previous generations (Ramsay and Baker 2019), and students from refugee backgrounds and identities have specific needs that may not have been met through past and current in/formal higher educational structures (Dryden-Peterson and Giles 2012; Sladek and King 2016). In this section, I present the overlooked multidimensionality of young Afghan refugees' education positions and motivations, articulating an alternative discourse of 'studenthood' in India (Holloway and Pimlott-Wilson 2011).

5.3.1 Situating 'Regularity' and Pathways to Higher Education in India

I first met Zameer in April 2015. He was in his early twenties and lived in a less-than-well-off neighbourhood in South Delhi. He was a finalist, studying for a B.Com degree (Bachelor of Commerce) at the School of Open Learning (SOL) established under DU. His mother initially moved to Wazirabad village on the outskirts of Delhi in the late 1980s, where India's capital begins to fade away, before moving to South Delhi when her husband was released from jail in Afghanistan. For twenty-seven years, Zameer's family, who come from an ethnic Afghan

group called the Pashtuns,[28] had been living in New Delhi as de facto refugees; that is, not formally recognised by the GoI (see Chapter 1). Zameer followed in the footsteps of his two older brothers, who both received their business degrees in India: one at a 'regular' university in New Delhi and the other at SOL. Both of Zameer's brothers moved back to Afghanistan as job prospects were looking better in accountancy in Afghanistan than in India despite increased security threats from the Taliban.

Sitting with his friend Zayeed, who is a fellow DAFI scholar, Zameer described the distinction with distance-learning education within one of India's most prestigious university:

> You see, the Open School is *always open* [laughter] so we come and go, 'chill' as the teachers don't really care if you show up or not. When you join a university, especially at the age of eighteen, and till the end of it—the journey—the amount of people a 'regular' student interacts with is much higher as compared to [a] 'distance' student. There is a teacher over *there* who guides them; they can undertake multiple internships over their college campus. And these things are somehow not available to every university student in India? This makes me a 'non-regular' student. I am 'un-regular'. I want to become a 'regular' student.
>
> Eating a Parle-G biscuit, Zameer interjected disappointedly, '—that is our *halat* (Urdu for 'case') …*humari* (our) *student status* [sigh]. But *yaar* [pause] seriously (informal direct address to a close friend in Hindi) …I hope I pass my exams.' Zayed, sitting next to Zameer, his fellow DAFI scholar, reassured his friend: '*Insha' Allah* (*God Willing*).' (February 2016, New Delhi)

The distinction between regular and irregular students is made early on during registration with Bosco, wherein the majority of students in the NIOS system in India are officially considered 'distance learning students' (or 'non-traditional', 'non-regular'), and the NIOS defines its mission as providing access to the unreached and most disadvantaged sections of society (Jha et al. 2016). The NIOS administration at Bosco stated that they do not see a large difference between the examinations taken by refugee students and those taken by Indian nationals. As

[28] Pashtuns are the largest ethnic group in Afghanistan. Descriptions of other ethnic groups from Afghanistan are included in Chapter 1, which also includes a brief migration history of non-Muslims to India, illustrating the rich pre/post-Partition narratives.

explained by Hitendra and reiterated by NIOS teachers at Bosco (interview with Hitendra, April 2016):

> I do not see quite [a] difference, except that the subjects are made simpler than regular school, the subject for NIOS is made simpler. Regular students cannot compare with distance learning that way questions are also set up, if the person goes through book, the person can score eighty to ninety per cent, the exam is set up that way for the students to score higher. The books we have are self-explanatory, if the person is able to read and write and if the person goes through the book once or twice, he can definitely score sixty [per cent].

There is an inconsistency in the way NIOS administrators and teachers view Afghan refugee students compared with Indian students who study a traditional syllabus of schooling. On the one hand, the NIOS educational system has addressed the need for a viable education option for young refugees at a minimum cost. On the other hand, a differentiation is created between NIOS students and the quality of education given at non-NIOS schools, where students are expected to acquire adequate marks to secure admission into non-ODL institutions. Interestingly, the pass mark for NIOS is only forty-five marks out of a possible one-hundred per subject. This mark is not 'high enough to gain admission into a regular school or even distance school…how am I going to get out of this system…finish my education…get [the] full result…if the [NIOS] exams do not match Indian college criteria?' (Male, non-Muslim Afghan aged nineteen, September 2016). These issues are pertinent in the case of Afghan refugee students whom NIOS administrators and teachers view as having lower educational capital than Indian students regarding succeeding in higher education, which reinforces the social inequity within the Indian educational system (Bourdieu 1986). Afghan refugee students face specific challenges beyond doing well in examinations; they must face unconscious bias that is disguised in the educational system.

Complications in Zameer's life began to emerge before he received his B.Com degree in winter 2016 when he turned eighteen.

> At the age of eighteen, my visa got separated from my mother and I was issued a different passport. I do not have a birth certificate. Since I am not an Afghan national, I am not allowed a *tazkira* or Afghan identity certificate.[29] I can go for an Indian document [certificate], but that must be [a] very scary thing to do because if one gets caught [not applying as a 'refugee' or 'foreign' student], one might get deported or not get any long-term visa. It is wrong if you're ditching the Afghan Government and if officials (e.g., FRRO/FRO)[30] find out you're a Muslim, a 'terrorist tag' might get attached. That is stopping me from going through with it. Most people do not recognise me as Afghan at university because I speak Hindi fluently and converse in Hindi and Punjabi. They didn't ask, and I didn't tell. But my closest Indian friends do know I am Afghan. I feel like an Indian. [pause] *I am* Indian, but when I look at the documents, no. I am an *Indian Afghan*. I even applied as an Indian national instead of a foreigner for university...It is good I have more than two different personalities. That was the beginning of everything.' (Interview, September 2016)

What emerged from the interviews with Zameer is an individual who constantly renegotiated shifting identity boundaries at different moments of his life. At the age of eighteen, many young Afghan refugees, often Muslim, can no longer support their education and work at the same time. Compared with non-Muslim Afghan refugees, who are often in a better economic position in Delhi, Muslim Afghans rarely own businesses or have a religious-cultural base such as the Khalsa Diwan association formed by Hindu and Sikh Afghans to help their community (e.g., pay school tuition fees for non-Muslim Afghan refugee children; Bose 2010). The frustration for many Afghan students lies in the very notion of being categorised as a 'non-regular' student, which forms a sense of alienation and a failure to gain admission to regular universities. Students such as Zameer may lack the educational capital that is symbolically legitimised by educational institutions, and this absence contributes to their marginalisation in India. The binary view of 'regular' and 'non-regular' captures how student-refugee identities are shaped by schooling experiences and cultural exchanges in New Delhi.

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[29] The Afghan Government stopped issuing the 'taskera' or 'tazkira', which is a twenty-page identity document, and replaced it with a tazkira certificate in 1990 or 1992, which is one page that includes the minimum essential information: name, father's name, grandfather's name, date of birth (according to the Hijri calendar), and birthplace. Until the age of eighteen, the child's tazkira is attached to the mother's identity document (c.f. United Nations High Commissioner of Refugees, Ottawa, December 2007).

[30] Foreign Regional Registration Office/Foreign Registration Office

Informal and formal educational spaces become integral for young Afghan refugees as they develop and make sense of their imagined futures and the pressing processes it takes to achieve such aspirational demands. University aspirations and the motivation to think about their imagined futures for Afghan refugee students might mean greater university awareness, choice, and social experiences both on and off campus settings. For example, the Afghan refugee students I talked to felt there was a sense of social exclusion not only from their teachers, but also from their Indian peers. The common issues of low expectations to succeed from their peers and teachers, as well as cultural and religious discrimination, were part of their everyday college life. Furthermore, Afghan refugee students grappled with unfixed class schedules, which placed some constraints on their daily routine. Moreover, upon completion, NIOS classes offered no guarantee of a linear transition to university. Outside the classroom, refugee students cultivate a motivation to act in the present and to connect their past and current experiences with their educational goals. Informal spaces such as malls, cafés, and small office-like rooms in Bosco become key sites where young people meet.

For instance, Masooda, a nineteen-year-old female Muslim Afghan refugee (interview, February 2016), wished to continue her educational journey by going outside her home confinements at Bosco and malls to educate herself not just with textbooks, but also with what she called *duniya experiences* (or world experiences).

> At first, when I came here, at Bosco, they told us admission [for the NIOS] is closed. You can come in three months. Three months?! I had to do something to study more, get ahead. I found old books in the classrooms, laying around…I would sneak into my friend's classes…go to [the] café with them on break or weekends…things like this. Every day I am preparing for hours…I go to DU time to time just to see the kids there outside, what it would be like to be a *regular* student, but I have pass NIOS first.

Masooda's account demonstrates how student spaces (e.g., cafés, university entrances, hallways) may be important for cultivating the regular/non-regular binary. Despite waiting to enrol in NIOS classes, her narrative exemplifies the desire to go to an Indian university.

Masooda quickly learned to distinguish the educational differences of the NIOS system versus Indian government schools, highlighting the mobilisation of educational capital to fulfil her desire to go to a university such as DU by charting her own higher education pathway. This way, she gained widespread exposure to learning materials and educational pathways that are spatialised by means of 'imagination, perception, experience, or materialisation' (Brosius 2012: 16).

It can be argued that the institutional distinction of student categorisation as regular or non-regular is born out of the concepts of ODL that are tied up with 'distance education'. The philosophy of 'open learning' is situated around flexible learning in an alternative education institution that is accessible to individuals in geographically challenged areas in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, as well as studying while in employment (Dibiase 2000; UNESCO 2015), whereas the idea of distance education conveys more of the techniques and format of student-teacher interactions 'that are separated from time or place' (Gaskell and Mills 2014: 192). The two function together with the NIOS mission at Bosco, which has sought to make higher education a more inclusive environment.

The NIOS headquarters are in Noida, a planned city outside of the Indian capital. The examinations can be taken for two years, and enrolment into the NIOS system is valid for five years. Missed examinations administered at Bosco centres and receiving failed marks mean travelling 'too far and risky especially for a Muslim girl' outside the city limits into another state in India to retake the papers (interview, female Muslim Afghan aged twenty-one, February 2016). Many students skip retaking examinations and 'stay and repeat the NIOS system without taking admission to college' (interview, NIOS English teacher at Bosco, April 2016). The examinations are held in April and May and in October and November. If a student fails their exam(s), it is possible to retake 'on-demand examinations' and the student chooses their respective subjects. However, there is a fee for taking 'on-demand examinations' of around

250 Indian Rupees per exam. Young Afghan refugees take advantage of the opportunities presented to become possible university students. Flexible admission requirements at institutions such as IGNOU require 'some entry qualifications although these are not that high as in conventional universities in India' (Gaskell 2017: 2), such as DU (the exception being Open School at DU, discussed below).

Refugee students at Bosco who have successfully completed classes 10 and 12 apply for distance learning from DU and IGNOU. To be a 'regular student' at DU, one needs a cut-off mark of ninety-nine per cent in subjects such as science, economics, and commerce; however, only sixty per cent is typically needed to be a distance-learning student at the Open School at DU (NIOS administrator, April 2016). Distance-learning universities such as DU and IGNOU are popular choices with refugee students for the brand name and prestige they hold, not only in India, but also worldwide.

Credible records of previous studies in school and university are needed to apply for Indian university admission and the DAFI scholarship. In situations in which certificates are not original or older than three years, the candidates must complete their studies in the host country. The credibility of certificates is a dilemma for many Afghan refugees who have left most of their schooling documents in Afghanistan, whose documents have expired, or who have come to India 'without proper visas and no proper passports…Either we ask them to go for class 10 and 12 again. They…have no choice [but to retake the classes]' (UNHCR administrator, Delhi, September 2016). One such case was Leila, a Muslim Afghan (twenty-one), who was due to finish her undergraduate degree from a reputed Afghan university in the field of public health.

> I got a bit of depression seeing my friend's graduation pictures in their gowns and dresses [on social media]. I completed everything. I had to leave before my graduation because of some threats. Without graduation, there is no diploma even if you finished. The university [in Afghanistan] refused to give me the certificate and told me to collect it in person. That is not possible. I used to

> take NIOS classes, beginning with class 10, but what is the point of repeating the classes? …*Meri life saab barbad ho gaya/My whole life is wasted* (in Hindi). I will keep trying. Maybe I will finally take and pass my exams and apply for DAFI. If I don't get this then my dreams will be broken. (November 2015)

The existing educational programme of the UNHCR is limited to an age group, which negatively affects the potential career trajectories of refugee youths in India. The 'over-aged refugee'—that is, those above fourteen years of age, as per the permissible admission age of Indian schooling under the Right to Education Act—find it extremely difficult to access regular government school admission, meaning they are either compelled to leave their studies or pursue the NIOS system till 12th standard. For those able to complete their studies via the NIOS or regular government schooling, there is no further concrete assistance available for advanced studies except the highly competitive DAFI Scholarship Programme.

As seen with Leila, refugee students in the process of starting, completing, or continuing their higher degree studies and who wished to attend university in India experienced the transition process as stressful, problematic, and discouraging. Leila felt 'out of place' with the cultural change of being in NIOS classes, which she regarded as a downgrade, a mismatch, and a situation beyond her control. Many young refugees like Leila must cope with the challenges of having their previous Afghani school certificates, or lack thereof, assessed. This process is not only complex and complicated, it also remains a barrier that some fail or else find themselves 'stuck [in] place' (Land et al. 2008: X), and uncertainty abounds. When critical documents are missing or left behind because the student had to flee, there are many stages a student needs to complete that are bureaucratically cumbersome. While the DAFI scholarship application is fairly straightforward, the Indian university admission process is not as clear-cut for refugee applicants.

Zameer, Zayeed, and Leila echoed the frustrations of other Afghan refugee students who are institutionally categorised into either 'regular' or 'non-regular' students based on the type of

institution they attended. Being a 'non-regular' student is internalised at an early stage in a young person's journey toward achieving a higher degree in education in India. The students often reminded me of the complex hierarchies of attaining 'proper' educational capital suitable to Indian standards and their decisions to invest in their higher degree education through often additional and alternative means to 'get ahead' in their studies. Some 'regular' university students come from the same disadvantaged backgrounds as distance students, who went through similar experiences in higher education in India. The following section illustrates how choice plays a role in navigating higher education, particularly when financing for higher education in India is limited to the DAFI scholarship for young Afghan refugees.

5.3.2 Becoming Eligible: 'DAFI was the only choice'

Since the programme was introduced in 2001, India has become one of the largest DAFI countries in Asia, and some 350 refugees have been educated under the DAFI scholarship (UNHCR 2018: 29). As long ago as 1983, Dodds and Inquai found strong pragmatic and economic reasons for providing higher education to refugee youth. Only with higher education can refugees adapt themselves to their new surroundings, integrate into their host society, and become self-reliant; 'without it they will inevitably remain outsiders and a permanent drain on the resources of the host community' (1983: 12). This view is in line with the UNHCR's rationale for investing in refugee tertiary education through the DAFI scholarship programme: to enhance the qualifications of individual refugees, thereby creating preconditions for the attainment of self-reliance, and to contribute to the overall assistance and solution strategies aimed at overcoming a given refugee problem (UNHCR 2007: 2). However, as clarified by the 2007–2009 UNHCR Education Strategy, the programme 'only makes tertiary education [available] to the most deserving refugees', defined typically as 'special needs, such as physical disabilities; the student's proven academic performance…commitment to community support, voluntary work…students who had to interrupt their studies due to flight, and who possess

proof of previous university or college studies in their country of origin' (DAFI Guidelines 2017).[31] The primary focus of the DAFI programme is a group of young Afghan refugee men and women pursuing their degree education from Indian universities (Skelton and Gough 2013). The DAFI implementing partner in New Delhi is Bosco, which provides individual counselling and guidance to prospective applicants regarding their choice of study. For many Afghan refugee students, this path is a means to secure a form of economic livelihood in a competitive social and academic environment.

For the past five years, there have been 156 DAFI scholars in India. Sixty-three enrolled in 'regular' (or 'formal') universities, and ninety-three in distance learning. Out of this profile, fifty-three per cent are women between the ages of twenty and forty, with the largest group aged between twenty and thirty-four years. The average acceptance rate of Afghan refugee applicants for the DAFI scholarship in 2017 was 46.5 per cent, compared with thirty-seven per cent selected in India by the DAFI scholarship board the previous year. Despite the growth in the acceptance rate of refugee students, the selection for the DAFI operates as a 'weeding-out' process and chooses students based on qualifications and characteristics of succeeding in a competitive academic environment and economy.

The DAFI scholarship criteria prefer students who choose 'shorter and inexpensive courses' with a high likelihood of employment upon graduation (e.g., computer studies, commerce, teaching professions, etc.; DAFI Guidelines 2017). Prospective applicants should also be able to express lucidly their personal reasons for having chosen a particular course of study and relate their choice to future prospects of employment in the host country to the committee, which comprises representatives from the Embassy of Germany, the UNHCR, and Bosco.

[31] For complete application guidelines, see also https://www.unhcr.org/dach/wp-content/uploads/sites/27/2017/09/FAQ-DAFI-Website.pdf

For many, repatriation is not an option, nor is a prospective applicant's desire to study full-length courses in medicine and the sciences.

Qualifications for Afghan refugee students do not stop when they have completed class 12 in Afghanistan. To prove one has 'cleared class 10 or 12 in Afghanistan', an 'equivalent letter' from the Afghan Embassy is required. This certificate allows direct enrolment in class 12 or directly into college.

> The possibility is there. Last year, we had one case of this one, he got the equivalent letter, he had cleared his class 12 in Afghanistan, but when he got the equivalent letter, it showed he cleared class 11. Class 12 in Afghanistan is equivalent to class 11 in India, so we got him admitted to class 11. So, one year already lost. There's no other choice for them. First of all, they have left their certificates and letters back home, they come with no proper visas and no proper passports. If they have to approach, let's say they are in college in Afghanistan and would like to continue here, and when we ask them if they have certificates, they do not have anything, and in that case, we are helpless. We ask them to go for either class 10 and 12 again, they find we have no choice. If they wish to. We do not force them. [Interview, UNHCR, September 2016]

The possibility of 'going to' university in India is a persistent reminder that an academic qualification for refugees is tied to other bureaucratic demands that could delay admission and the start of classes. Tamana (twenty-two), a young Muslim Afghan refugee and DAFI recipient from 2013 to 2016, explained her application process in securing a place at DU (interview, March 2016):

> I applied to many, many places to increase my chances of admission. But I did not want to go to Open School…that was not meant for 'regular' students. I got into schools thankfully like Amity [University] and Jesus and Mary College. When applying, there is no category for refugee, I had to consider myself as a foreign student. You know it is a little harder being non-Indian. So, here in Delhi, it is difficult to get into good colleges, because you need higher percentages, so it is like so much more competition, so many intelligent girls…(she laughs)…it was the best experience though. But, the application process was horrible. I was completing by myself without any help from Bosco or parents. I entered Jesus and Mary College (JMC) in 2013. It was difficult. But before starting, I faced some troubles. I had to go to North Campus by metro and auto in the heat, you know, forty degrees outside, get a 'foreigner's form' a yellow form (or 'equivalent letter') because I am from Afghanistan, since the Embassy [of Afghanistan] wanted proof. It is different for, you know, for Indians. Because I am an international student, I have to take this form

> from the Embassy to my college, all documents, including refugee status certificate, stay visa (she shows me her Refugee Card), passport, my school documents, and *tazkira* (birth certificate) …I had to prove that I was Afghan and applying as a foreigner. Admissions marks for JMC is like ninety-eight…ninety-seven per cent. I did not get those marks (she laughs). I got five per cent lower concession for being a foreigner. Because our score is less than [the] Indian criteria, my classmates in school said that it would be easier for me to get into Delhi colleges, but they did not tell me I [would have] trouble at the Afghan Embassy. They [Embassy officials] troubled me there, asking me, 'Are you really Afghani?'

The 'equivalent letter', referred to by Tamana as the 'yellow form', is an essential document for Afghan refugee students wishing to pursue higher education in India, but it is not always easy to obtain. As Hitendra explained, 'It actually depends on [the] person, because in Afghanistan, there is a lot of trouble, because many people cannot approach the Embassy.' When applying for university, DAFI applicants apply as a 'foreigner' as there is no 'check box' for identifying as a 'refugee'. The status of foreigner and the process of applying to university are not clear-cut, and they present many obstacles for young Afghan refugees. Young Afghan refugees from both non-traditional and regular student backgrounds bring a personal habitus to this disposition (Puwar 2004). These attitudes can be acquired through the experiences and activities of everyday life. Educational opportunities (or lack thereof) cultivate an awareness of the educational spaces in the city, leading to young Afghan refugees' higher education experiences and the duration of time spent to achieve such aspirations in New Delhi. Young Afghan refugees apply to a diverse set of Indian universities, mostly as foreign nationals, except for unique cases, such as Zameer's, and a very small number of non-Muslim Afghans who have obtained Indian citizenship.

Tamana had a better Indian secondary education than most Afghan refugee youths. Her parents, who worked multiple jobs and drew on savings, enrolled Tamana and her sister transferred from the NIOS school system during the 10th standard to finish their secondary schooling at a better public school in an affluent area of South Delhi. There, Tamana embraced her aspirations, which were reinforced by the notion of 'being regular', and she chose not to

apply to distance-learning universities. Unlike Tamana's family who identiy as Muslim Afghan refugees, non-Muslim Afghan refugee families, such as Rajeev's (twenty-five, male), did not expect their children to enrol in tertiary education and pursue further education in India.

> I want my community to understand the importance of an education and what it means to be a professional. I do not want to be like the other guys who sell cell phones and calling cards in shops. This is my first step. I want to even give my sister the courage to study further, though my parents did not want her to…
>
> Gurmeet (nineteen), sitting next to Rajeev, cut in, '…In my culture, girls get married at sixteen. I came to India when I was only one year old. I have no brothers. I only have a mother who needs support. I want to encourage them to study and I want to show them how, with a degree, I can earn and later support my family. (Interview, October 2016, West Delhi)

Gurmeet was doing her bachelor's degree part-time at the School of Distance Learning (DU) as she was working as a beautician to support her family. She hoped to be a role model for other young women and girls to study further. Both Rajeev and Gurmeet were awarded the DAFI scholarship and did exceptionally well in their NIOS examinations. The prospect of higher education was not possible for non-Muslim Afghan refugees until the scholarship scheme at Bosco in West Delhi was introduced. The older generation of non-Muslim Afghan refugees was less likely to have obtained a university degree in Afghanistan, so educational choice was never fully there or expected of their children. Despite overcoming challenges to educational access, Afghan refugee youths still face the political turmoil that has shaped life on college campuses across New Delhi. This, in turn, relates to issues of haste and the temporal insecurities that come with taking on the burdens of a heavy NIOS course load to apply to university upon the successful completion of the required exams.

Some interviewees felt familial pressures to balance school with work, particularly young Afghan Muslim women. As Soha, a twenty-two-year-old Afghan Muslim woman, explained (interview, February 2016):

> I do have pressure at school and at home—to help my mother and also find work, but my parents do not have high expectations for me to be the top of my class as I am a refugee. Even my teacher, who discovered I was a refugee when I told her I lived in Lajpat Nagar, said 'Oh, I am shocked, I thought your people were not as educated.' A student next to her replied, 'Afghani are terrorists, aren't they?' In my mind, I was surprised that two educated people would say this aloud to me. I got into college with the same grades as everyone else. I took the same exams. I go to a regular school.

Young Afghan refugees demonstrated a high motivation to pursue post-educational trajectories. When discussing university and parental support, or lack thereof, as well as some structural constraints, being a student—either regular or non-regular—meant more opportunities for young Afghan refugees to experience new social and spatial domains that emerged as influential in shaping their future trajectories.

The educational journey of young Afghans in India is shaped through calculated efforts to achieve notions of becoming 'successful'. Education is an important resource and site of social worth for young Afghan refugees, as evidenced in their narratives of building futures amid growing economic and social uncertainties. The cultural and local norms that surround education are layered on the walls of the Bosco centres with posters and hammered into the minds of young people when back at home, which is why some young Afghan refugees struggle with, as well as draw on, ways to legitimise and value student subjectivities as part of their youth transitions.

5.3.3 Transitioning to University

> A young Muslim Afghan man was playing a guitar to the notes of a trending Bollywood chartbuster, Sanam Re, which echoed into the room next door in South Delhi. I was sitting with some young Afghan youths—all Muslim—who were beginning to think about applying for university admissions in India. Mary, who was a Bosco youth club administrator across all centres in Delhi, opened up the Indian Express newspaper that was on the table next to some unfinished posters. Mary read out loud to the room: 'Home Minister Rajnath Singh said "If anyone raises anti-Indian slogan, tries to raise questions on the country's unity and integrity, they will not be spared. Stringent action will be taken against them"' (February 2016, Indian Express). Handing the newspaper to a curious young Muslim Afghan woman, Mary added, 'This is a very serious

> thing at JNU and across India. You have to be very careful when and where you apply for college.' (Field diary, February 2016)

The ongoing neo-liberalisation of higher education in India has seen transformational shifts within a highly competitive field (Nakassis 2013), and having enough 'time' to complete a degree has become one of the most stressful components of university learning (Bennett and Burke 2018). The article from the *Indian Express* refers to the intensification of student protests across India, and specifically at Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) in New Delhi, one of India's most prestigious public institutions for higher education. The protests at JNU in 2016 resulted from a group of students who protested against the hanging of Afzal Guru in 2013, a Kashmiri who masterminded the Indian Parliament attack of 2001. These protests led to a sedition row and the detainment of seven students. The movement was also stigmatised as 'anti-national' by the prevailing BJP government (February 2016, *The Telegraph*). Since Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 2014 election victory, there has been a growing intolerance of forms of political interference in the internal affairs of universities (Banerjee 2017). Religious and ethnic minorities from North East India, people belonging to Other Backward Castes (OBCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), and Africans have been attacked, which has created dissonance between different sections of Indian society (Bandyopadhyay 2016).

Visibly upset, Gulshan (twenty-one), a second-year Afghan Muslim student at SOL, reacted to the article and protests:

> I am frustrated because of this incident. Now my little brother and sister will find it difficult to maybe apply to college [in India]. We have always been called 'terrorists…Al-Qaeda…*Taleban log*' before, but now Admissions will see our name is not Hindu and maybe they will think twice if they will accept or not. It is unfair; studying is what keeps me going. [Interview, New Delhi, April 2016]

Mary interrupted Gulshan: 'But listen, *na*, this is why I am urging you to all apply as quickly as you can after you complete your [NIOS] exams. You never know when the policies will change. There are many options other than JNU or DU. Choose one and go.' I do not delve

into the controversial and deep politics of student movements and campus activism on Indian universities. While these areas are interesting and could open up more nuanced ways of exploring studenthood, I was limited regarding my fieldwork time to engage adequately in these topics (see Chapter 3). Instead, this section illustrates how refugee youth navigation of applying to university is not only shaped by student decision-making understood through student choice of university selection processes, but also the experience of time. This perspective also developed the concept of 'regularity'. What struck me with Gulshan's situation is that it offered a glimpse into some of the ways Afghan refugee youth navigate their learning in university, together with the circumstances Afghan youth face that are beyond their control. Gulshan's frustration and alarm over current anti-Muslim sentiment is an entry point into some of the ways Afghan student refugees navigate the workings of the university. This, in turn, has affected how young refugees' experiences of discrimination and marginalisation can be intensified in response to ongoing Indian politics in urban locales and on university campuses. This situation not only creates a feeling of racialised exclusion, but also reveals how the experience of higher education is mediated by other factors of a competitive and complex educational system.

Despite higher education expansion in India, young Afghan refugees in the past two decades would have been 'unlikely' to engage in higher education processes in India (interview, NIOS Coordinator, 2016). Yet, despite the low enrolment of Afghan refugee students in India compared with Afghan student migrants, they continue to pursue and imagine 'better' forms of educational capital (Brooks and Waters 2011; Cheng 2014). I met a few Afghan migrant students on university campuses. They were quick to distinguish themselves from Afghan refugees, noting that being labelled as an 'Afghan' was synonymous with being labelled a 'refugee' in New Delhi. One young Afghan migrant student stated (Field Notes, New Delhi, September 2016), 'We have *legal* paperwork…we are sponsored by the ICCR [Indian Council

for Cultural Relations]…'. Afghan migrant students are largely funded by joint ICCR and Afghan Embassy efforts or self-fund themselves for a degree at an Indian university vis-à-vis securing a student visa. Afghan refugee students' situation is not as financially sustained in comparison to their peers. As one respondent stated: 'We need something to live for…to get out of the system. Otherwise, I am stuck in the NIOS classrooms, there is no way out but to university. That is what I see when I pass by the colleges and see my friends enjoying life.' (nineteen years old, Muslim Afghan refugee, February 2016). The educational journey of young Afghans in India is shaped, sometimes, via calculated efforts to achieve notions of becoming 'successful'. It is not surprising, then, that both Muslim and non-Muslim Afghans choose a university where they feel comfortable, where there are 'people like us' (Bourdieu 1990), but where they also felt alienated by Afghan migrant students who wanted no social relationships with them. The following section elaborates on the ways young Afghan refugees interact with the field of university that shapes their tertiary experience and college choice.

5.4 Negotiating Race and Choice in Higher Education

> You cannot give the university the Blue Card (Refugee Card)[32] [for admission]! We are pretty much left without a support system through DAFI and [the] teachers in college. It was like here you go, here's a scholarship, and then we were left blind, and sometimes I felt alone. But this was the only way to get a degree as a refugee in India, so I am grateful for that. (Tamana, interview, February 2015).

There is some sense of inequality regarding how the notion of 'running out of time' fuels the ideas of regularity and choice and making choices. Despite there being a scholarship scheme in place for those who are eligible, in many ways, refugee students such as Tamana are left to navigate an unknown university admission process. Afghan refugee youths construct their choice of university based on financial, academic, and religious factors. Reay et al. (2005: 27) suggest 'choice is at the heart of habitus' and that the everyday experiences of educational

[32] For further explanation of the 'Blue Card' or 'Refugee Card', see Chapters 1 and 4.

choices for Afghan youths are operated, in part, through the bureaucratic mechanisms that steal or add time for students through external circumstances, opportunities, and constraints.

During my spare time at the youth clubs, I spoke to a friendship group of three young Afghan Muslim women who were DAFI scholars. All three went to different universities and belonged to different tribes. Miwa went to Jamia Millia University and was studying English. The university has a predominantly Muslim student body. Students at Jamia Millia University who identify as 'Indian Muslim' receive quotas for financial aid when applying. Marjan studied English at Bhagad Singh College – University of Delhi, and Rukhsaan studied Business Administration at Mahatma Gandhi University. All three women noted inequalities of education in Afghanistan, particularly for girls, and felt privileged to receive DAFI scholarships. The young women felt a sense of gender equality, or, as one noted, 'we are now 50/50'. For the first time on their respective campuses they can mix with their male counterparts. However, describing the process of applying to university as 'horrible' was common among young Afghan refugees. For instance, Miwa noted that there is no quota system for Afghan Muslims. One reason she went to Jamia Millia University was because it allowed her to be closer to her faith with similarly aged students. However, she was considered a 'foreigner' who had to pay overseas fees despite identifying as a Muslim. Miwa's educational aspirations turned into frustrations, albeit she appreciated the Islamic atmosphere of her university without a Hindu-majority student body. In particular, she said that Jamia Millia was a safe space to be a Muslim and was really the only way she could be allowed to go to university as her parents would not accept any other option besides a Muslim-dominated university.

5.4.1 Living with Racism in the City and at University

> I exited an Afghan bakery in Lajpat Nagar Colony of South Delhi. My informants and the local Delhites referred to it as 'Afghani Nagar' for its popular streets filled with Afghani and Indian street food, coconut water stalls, bakeries and apartments and hostels housing Afghan students, guests, refugees, and medical migrants. There, I met Mina, who after countless exchanges of e-

> mails found a good time that fit into her busy schedule. She was sitting at a bustling bakery/café filled with Afghan students who were mostly on student visas and would return to Afghanistan. However, Mina, who was orphaned at the age of nine, plans to stay in New Delhi after her studies from DU with her refugee status. She also plans to pursue a master's degree anywhere she can gain admission to in the city or elsewhere in India, but she stresses that Delhi is all she knows. '…**chinki** chameli, chup ke akeli aayi…' (Agneepath 2012)[33] was facetiously mumbled by some Indian men passing by the bakery, which abruptly interrupted our conversation. The men were singing portions of a song from a popular Bollywood film and changed the lyrics from chikni to chinki. The adjective 'chikni' means 'sexy' in Hindi, and 'chameli' referred to the actress the song is picturing, who 'has come all alone/chhup ke akeli.' I was caught off-guard and not knowing how to react or console Mina in this situation. Mina, who comes from the Hazara ethnic community, commented after the men had passed the shop: 'It's tough being a single woman in Delhi. Even more, if they come to find out you are Afghan. As you can see, it does not bother me anymore like it used to maybe ten years ago when I first came to India.' (Field diary, September 2016)

Mina is an accomplished young Muslim Afghan refugee who received a DAFI scholarship to study sociology at DU. She was wearing round glasses with jeans and a sweater. She placed her book bag onto the floor next to her chair. 'It has gotten worse, even in places like Lajpat Nagar, say since 2012 when I first came to India.' Since the Delhi Rape case, a study by Indian economist Girija Borker (2017) highlighted that women in New Delhi are choosing to go to less prestigious colleges than men to avoid harassment and sexual predators. Women are willing to choose colleges in the bottom fifty per cent rather than the top twenty per cent to avoid risk (ibid, 6). As Mina stated,

> I applied to Lady Sri Ram in my colony [Lajpat Nagar], and I wanted an all-women's college near my house. My aunt and uncle did not want me to go to college far away. I have noticed the attitude of men has changed [negatively]…Autos (rickshaws) are no longer safe. Some guys used to follow me. Some call me names. It has gotten worse. They eat our food yet make us feel dehumanised.

[33] Malhotra, Karan. 2012. Agneepath. Produced by Karan Johar and Hiroo Johar. 'Chikni chameli' is a popular Bollywood song from this film.

A DAFI recipient, Iqbal (twenty-four), a young Muslim Afghan refugee student at DU's Ramjas College, spoke about the discomfort he felt when entering (non)academic spaces at university, such as canteens and common rooms (interview, February 2016):

> I do sometimes feel a sense of discomfort. I kind of look Kashmiri because maybe I am Hazara[34] and we look like sometimes Chinese or Kashmiri. I do not really engage in debate. I tend to open my books [in] class and close my books in the night and stay away from these talks about protests and terrorism. I come from a country full of terrorists. In canteens and in classrooms, a Muslim student might be singled out and called a Pakistani or the Taliban. It might be said as a joke, but it's not. It actually is bullying and upsetting. You even know, sometimes Afghani students who are not refugees poke fun at us for leaving Afghanistan, as if it was our choice.

Tamana, who also went to all-women's college, in comparison with Iqbal's university experience (though she went to a Christian-based institution), was frustrated at her differential treatment for not only being an Indian national, but also not being Christian (interview, March 2016).

> …it's a Christian college and priority is for Christian[s]. I did not have this admission, there was this girl at DU, she helps with [the] application centre, and [she was] giving me trouble, maybe [because] I was Afghan, and she did not take my application. She tells me, 'You have low marks, you are Muslim, you should go to another college.' But I told her my name was on the admit[tance] list and [I] needed more documents for the Embassy. I did not know why I was not given a 'roll number' before, I have no idea. After getting admission, they knew I was [a] foreigner and needed more documents. I had to write my application to [the] Sister (of the college)…at the end she was helpful. But I told another lady in the office, 'I do not know what your problem is with me'. I told her at the end. The next time I [saw] the Sister and told her the lady was giving me trouble. Sister stood from chair and sat on computer and told her to chill out. I needed roll number as proof of acceptance. They already knew I was foreigner. It is crazy. I think it is the protocol maybe. They gave me the letter and everything, thank God. I did not go into that office anymore. If I was Christian and Indian, things would have been different.

Tamana's case of being misidentified by a university staff member is similar to other Afghan refugee students who indicated their feelings of feeling 'out of place' as 'illegitimate' members

[34] Please refer to Chapter 1 for a detailed explanation of different Afghan ethnicities, including the Hazara minority community.

of university. They reported feeling dehumanised, angry, alienated, and annoyed when faced with direct conflict regarding what was presumed to be equal access to higher education and the assumption that all students are afforded a supportive student–teacher relationship that cultivates academic success. For Iqbal, Mina, and Tamana, incidents in which Indian and Afghani students are stereotyped and sometimes seen as poor and uneducated are a form of discrimination. Although Iqbal did not explicitly state that it was a racist remark, his sentiments revealed a tension of everyday structures of racism. The social mores, particularly for Mina and Tamana, are challenged, resulting in an ethnically, racially, and gender-specific constrained position of agency. These students' voices help us understand their experience of being in a type of liminality while simultaneously balancing what a typical university student should be and validating peer approval. Unlike Afghan migrant students, who stay in college hostels or private accommodation across the city, Afghan refugee students are not afforded these luxuries. Often, Afghan migrant students discriminate against Afghan refugee students as being anti-nationalists and *leaving* their *watan* (Pashtun for homeland, Iqbal, February 2016):

> We got into the same college. We are both foreigners. We are all Muslim. It hurts to see them view us in this way just because we are refugee. We have to stay in India while they go back. Do you not think I want to go back [to Afghanistan] as well?

McDuie-Ra (2013) documented the migration of North Eastern youths and their 'seeking refuge from the frontier culture of violence…' (20). Smith and Gergan's (2015) study on the educational migration of people from the Himalayan region who attend universities in urban India found that they are considered part of the 'nonelite' since they often face racism, even if they were born in the same country as their counterparts. In the South Asian context, the scholarship has long emphasised religion and caste (and occasionally ethnicity), but not race. The emergent debate on race in South Asia indicates new imperial continuities in the post-colonial nation-state's relationship with communities at its geopolitical boundaries. The tensions between racial identities and subaltern categories needs to be addressed and reclaimed

from the margins in the construction of race and engaging with debates on critical perspectives on racial difference, everyday ethnicity, and identity politics (Osuri 2012, 2017). Indeed, Pandey (2013) demonstrates that caste discrimination reproduces 'stereotype threats' effects; that is, the expectation of negative judgements about worth, educational ability, and the fear of conforming to the stereotype. Hence, DAFI scholars' possible impact of self-confidence and college performance. Like any identity, race is also performative. Race and ethnicity categorisations are thus made enduring through their impact on agency as well as institutional effects of inclusion/exclusion and blocked mobility.

On the other hand, as mentioned above, race, like any other identity, is also produced interactively (Latour 2005). Identity is relational and exists between networks; but identity is also a site of struggle of taking one's future in control and to secure a sense of stability. As Pandey (2013: 27) argues, for the subaltern citizens 'for whom the promise of freedom, of equal opportunity and an equal share in the fruits of modernity, has long been constantly renewed, and constantly deferred.' This logic by Pandey (2013) brings into perspectives around the way in which DAFI scholars and other Afghan refugee college students negotiate dominant understandings of inclusion and articulate shared experiences of being on the outside intersect with their ethno-religious backgrounds, gender, and their parents' educational status. Afghan refugee youths place themselves within the narrative of the Indian state but also at the margins. Thinking of this youth in the context of higher education and youth subjectivities helps us to attend to how their forms of identities as well as their interpellation by others (and institutions) has shaped religious and racial identities in complex ways. This is often at the intersection of other axes of subjectivity such as gender and caste.

It is expected that new entrants at Indian universities feel marginalised by their positions and perceived cultural and racialised differences. The way time and space are experienced by Afghan refugee students is gendered and racialised and tied to sociocultural and religious

differences and unequal power relations. New refugee students face additional difficulties when adjusting to university, which impacts how they negotiate their alienation by forging ties to elements of the university space and city, such as malls and parks or their DAFI community. The student experience of higher education for Afghan refugees is structured just in a different way to other groups at the university, regardless of whether they are enrolled in traditional or distance-learning universities across Delhi.

5.5 Conclusion

For young Afghan refugee students in India, attending an institution of higher education is a turning point. It is an intense and complicated experience in an urban city but is also a means to get ahead in life. Higher education for young refugee students adds to the complex experiences of happiness, discrimination, and unease that shape the way young people come to terms with their place in the world. This is, however, not to discount how racialised and ethnic minority refugee students face extra challenges regarding accessing higher education in India. I contend that higher education, together with spaces of learning such as at Bosco and Indian college campuses, must be considered as a central site for young people in their relationship with one another.

The primary aim of this chapter was to reflect on how Afghan refugee youths navigate life transitions under uncertainties due to the existing and un/anticipated economic, political, and social conditions affecting their educational routes. This chapter argued that although young Afghan refugees' life course transitions are bounded by structural inequities of age, gender, and class, young people constantly reconfigure and reproduce sociocultural norms and adopt strategies to resist marginalisation within the social spheres that exist in the household, community life, and civil society. The lens of refugee education in the Indian context is an important one through which to consider issues of social reproduction and youth that form a critical period in young people's lives (Jeffrey 2010). Like McDuie-Ra (2013), I did not attempt

to 'fix' racism, nor did I 'prove' racism exists in India. Instead, I analysed the racialised experiences of Afghan refugee students that could aid in rethinking the historicising race in (post)colonial Indian contexts without relying too heavily on readings of Western political ideologies of race-thinking, as McDuie-Ra does with his reliance on Agamben's (2005) critique of race as 'exception'.

I examined the link between the bureaucratic demands of waiting and the barriers faced by young refugees who seek higher education to access and that are often rendered 'invisible'. I argued that higher education in contemporary India not only complicates the 'student experience' (c.f. Holdsworth 2006) for young Afghan refugees, but also that this, in turn, relationally regenerates identities and inequalities as young people continue to express degrees of agency in their decision-making processes when navigating university admission.

In New Delhi, young Afghan refugees envisioned their time in university as a place where multiple imaginings of their futures were negotiated, contested, and transformed. In the social landscape of the city, young Afghan refugee students find themselves having to redefine their future horizons through educational choice that is often characterised and positioned in relation to cultural and social capital to negotiate transitions to a higher education system that was unfamiliar. Certainly, neoliberal influences on higher education (Patiniotis and Holdsworth 2005; Holloway et al. 2010; but see also Finn and Holton 2019) in India continue to transform and increase the delivery of education to more diverse and marginalised student populations. This chapter calls for a shift away from problematising this student group in higher education (Holton 2017).

The narratives of Afghan refugee students reveal the importance of adapting to shifting circumstances in order to 'plan ahead' for unanticipated futures due to the educational change and restructuring that takes place 'at different speeds and in highly geographically and socially uneven ways' in contemporary India (Naafs and Skelton 2018: 3). Afghan refugee students are

acutely conscious of the barriers they face in seeking postgraduation employment despite succeeding (and, sometimes, failing) to accumulate degree credentials even from some of the most prestigious universities in India. The findings presented in this chapter also serve as a reminder that while the educational trajectories of refugee children and youth partially depend on the UNHCR's education policies, approach, and resources, they also rely on young refugees' resilience in facing up to these challenges in India.

More broadly, this research adds to wider studies in contemporary human geography regarding the impact socioeconomic transformations have on young people's reflections, aspirations, 'everyday strategies', and 'the terms they use to theorize their lives' (Jeffrey 2010a and 2012; Dyson 2008). This chapter adds to the expanding literature of 'student geographies' and youth transitions regarding the situated experiences of young people in the Global South. As I waited for my taxi at the gates of Jamia Milia Islamia University, one Muslim Afghan respondent (male, aged twenty-two, March 2016) bid goodbye to me in broken English and Farsi and remarked, looking at his university campus, 'If we don't go to study or university, our future will not become…we only want a *zindagi khob* (or good life) and *ayenda dorokhshan* (or bright future)' despite being at odds with the bureaucratic systems in India.

I contribute to broader emerging debates on student geographies by drawing attention to the tactics young refugee students use to negotiate the boundaries of higher education in India. Using student narratives, I highlighted that the implications for the 'possible futures' and aspirations—often uncertain—may be linked with pre- and post-educational trajectories. The complexity of *feeling*, *becoming,* and *being* 'non-regular' or 'regular' initially arises from their 'status' as de facto refugees, since India is not a signatory to the 1951 Geneva Convention. The idea of understanding 'student status' as being an 'institutionalised status' (Field and Morgan-Klein 2010: 3; see also Turner 1987) is shaped by young Afghans' shared sense of liminality regarding the processes of identification and agency within contemporary Indian higher

education. I argue that this negotiation shapes these youths' perceptions and urban experiences of being racialised as 'foreign' and is predicated upon their liminal encounters with students and administrators at various Indian education systems. This situation also complicates notions of educational choice to demonstrate that young refugees across New Delhi are operating within institutional models that constrain and expand their choices in times of opportunity and rapid social and political change. In the next chapter, I extend the discussion on the urban experiences of Afghan refugee youths in other parts of the city where friendships are built through urban encounters.

Chapter 6. Urban Encounters: Youth Clubs, Friendship & Generational Change among Afghan Refugee Youths in New Delhi

6.1 Introduction

Early one morning in November 2015, I met with a few young Muslim Afghan refugee men outside a Bosco centre in Bhogal, a colourful yet chaotic neighbourhood of Jangpura in South Delhi. Before we walked four kilometres to the park grounds of Lodi Gardens, situated in a more affluent part of the city, the young men first stopped to pick some snacks from the local Afghani bazaar, a sort of local anchor in Jangpura. The young Muslim Afghan refugees bought bread stuffed with lamb or chicken and vegetables. They had skipped their NIOS classes for the half-day to plan for their next youth club sports meet while also enjoying some friendly football. Aamir, one of the two male youth leaders in his early twenties, said to me, 'We Are travellers. Our "gang" is called "Immortals". We are about four…five boys in this "gang". We go cycling. We do stupid stuff like walk from one city to another. We go for adventures with our friends. We need each other.' He proudly displayed the back of his black shirt depicting the logo of the youth club he belonged to called 'Yuva' (see Image 6.1). *Yuva* means 'youth' in Hindi. When discussing the image, Aamir explained his attitude towards the terminology of *yuva*, describing his role as a youth club leader as a way of 'taking charge of life' (interview, November 2015). Aamir proudly pointed out the flaming torch on his t-shirt, which highlighted the pillars of what all ten youth club missions managed under Bosco embody: sport, education, and health (Image 6.1).



Image 6-1. Logo of YUVA Youth Club. The inscriptions on the torch say: 'UNSTOPPABLE REFUGEE Sports Education Health'

Youth clubs for Muslim and non-Muslim Afghan refugees are the centre of social life in New Delhi. The logo of Yuva Youth Club encompasses some of the activities in which young Afghan refugees participate: athletic events, volunteering at elderly homes, and curating health awareness campaigns. The expansion of youth clubs into other sections of the city at the Bosco centres was due to the need for physical space to accommodate the growing social and educational needs of Afghan refugee youth who lived in different areas of the city. The youth clubs are based on the ethnoreligious makeup of the young refugees. There are ten youth clubs in Delhi, of which four are designated for young Muslim Afghan refugees and one for young non-Muslim Afghan refugees. The other youth clubs are for youth refugees from countries such as Somalia, Myanmar, Iran, and Iraq. As discussed in previous chapters, the growing aspirations of the Afghan refugee youths themselves were rooted in the challenges of generational and social change to realise their ideas in their urban everyday life. These aspirations resulted in an increase in young people's social, cultural, and educational engagements with youth club activities despite their limited socioeconomic and educational prospects.

In the late afternoon, I headed back to Bhogal with the young men. Some took their YUVA youth club t-shirts off and changed into nondescript tops. 'Some of us have to change back to *normal* clothes. My parents do not like me being a part of *this*…they pass comments if I am out too long outside or at the club: *ee Che awaragi ast* [in Pashtun] … means "that is the wanderer"…it's a serious scolding' (interview, November 2015). The Farsi word for *awaragi* means wanderer, vagrant and/or vagabond. The notion of *awaragi* is in tension with *yuva*. *Yuva* is a term borrowed from Hindi by some Muslim and non-Muslim Afghan refugees to capture their aspirations, interests, and moods, which reflect their everyday encounters in the complex urban life of New Delhi. In contrast, *awaragi* has negative connotations. For Aamir, his participation in the youth club meant being identified with the language of *awaragi* by some in the Afghan community who view the social processes of membership and activities as 'wasted', and that the 'new generation was wanting more modern things' (Aamir's mother, forty-six, interview in South Delhi, August 2016). Examining ideas about *yuva* and *awaragi* helps to illustrate the complex and relational nature of friendship and the management of generational change through the lens of encounters. In this chapter, I examine observations regarding the spaces of youth clubs, which critically considers these encounters as crucial for understanding the development of friendship through 'new patterns of social interaction' that drive interethnic and intercultural exchange (see Amin 2002: 971).

In the previous two chapters, I examined young Afghan refugees' pathways to higher education and the everyday legal precarities attached to the processes of acquiring and holding (and not holding) identity documents. I now turn attention to the function of friendship as a form of urban relationship for young Afghan refugees in the city of New Delhi through the spaces of youth clubs. The nature of friendship and its centrality in young people's sociality is crucial for understanding the broader processes of social ordering and transformation. Long and Moore define sociality as a process that is a 'dynamic relational matrix within which human

subjects are constantly interacting in ways that are *coproductive*, continually plastic and malleable, and through which they come to know the world they live in and find their purpose and *meaning within it*' (2012: 41, emphasis added). I examine how the sociality of young refugees is entangled in the ever-shifting contours of generational difference in contemporary urban India to reveal the emotive and quotidian aspects of youth lives. By focusing on non-kin forms of sociality, such as everyday friendship within and beyond youth clubs, I investigate how Afghan refugee youths construct friendships in order to negotiate and perform intersecting gender, age, and race/ethnicity identities. I consider how urban spatialities act to 'nourish complex geographies of human lives' (Bunnell et al., 2012: 504). Young Afghan refugees in India encounter the experiences and challenges of numerous complex transitions from childhood to adulthood, particularly when confronting generational differences. For this *new* young generation in India, the experience of 'being social' in a fresh set of social experiences and encountering new urban spaces has profound effects on the intergenerational perspectives of youth, who face a dilemma regarding challenging the structures in place of an older Afghan generation.

How do Afghan refugee youths think differently compared with their parents, and through which terms? I consider the effects of refugee migration to, and 'growing up' in, India for Afghan youths as indicative in this regard, and I am interested in the tension and the potential misunderstandings created across generations as a result. I draw on the notion of 'encounters' to deploy a flexible conceptual framework that links the social and spatial reconfigurations of friendship in understanding the possibilities and challenges of urban life in New Delhi. In tracing the physical locations of the youth clubs, I also examine how the city both constrains and orients the way it is navigated by young Afghan refugees. Examining sociality and encounters is a useful way to understand young people's self-reflexivity and collective conscious as not only refugees, but also youths. I engage with an elastic idea of friendship as a form of 'sociality'. My use of 'friendship' in this chapter is not necessarily bounded by strong

ties between individuals but includes how intense enactments of urban friendship in contemporary New Delhi are not only formed, but also how they generate intimate bonds between youth refugees. This chapter contributes to geographical work on youth and agency by emphasising how this group of youths in India confronts generational changes. It also deepens thinking about how a 'new refugee generation' in India renegotiates and reimagines themselves (Jeffery 2010; Mains 2012) through a perceived cultural and racialised difference in the city.

I first identify social science scholarships that underscore the significance of friendships and encounters that are important for producing and shaping space in the everyday lives of young people (Leitner 2012). This is done through extending several underdeveloped areas of geographical enquiry, such as spatial understandings of young people's ideas regarding friendship, spatiality, and generational relations. In the first empirical section, I begin by situating the subjectivities of young Afghan refugees, particularly in the youth clubs scattered throughout metropolitan Delhi. I then outline how youth clubs offer new spatialities of friendship. Finally, I reflect on wider *inter*generationality through young people's practices of sociality to unpack the complexities of these lived experiences. This is partially done by challenging the labels that scholars often attach to this cohort as either the 'refugee warrior' (Zolberg et al. 1986 and 1989; Lischer 2005; Salehyan 2007 and 2008) or the 'lost generation' (Bhutta 2002; Krasteva 2016). I conclude by considering my findings with reference to the wider literature on the fluid intersectionality of space, identity, and generational reconfiguration that can complicate and nuance recent discussions of youth in a postcolonial world.

6.2 Framing Encounters: Spatialities, Friendship, and Generation

6.2.1 Geographies of Encounter

The theoretical use of 'encounters' by geographers has been through understanding this concept as the nature of contact between individuals or groups of *difference,* in which an absence of commonality is assumed and negotiated in the everyday (Valentine 2008; Leitner 2012; see also Wilson and Darling 2016). More specifically, encounter theories have been used to examine understandings of positive difference, overcoming social prejudices, and unease in the present (Valentine 2008; Askins and Pain 2011). In her reflections on 'geographies of encounter', Gill Valentine (2008) contends that an increasing amount of literature on urban citizenship and urban encounters idealises public interactions as optimistically forging new ways of belonging. She posits that not all urban encounters are experienced as positive, emphasising the different ways that potential is mobilised in different contexts. Amin (2002) traces this factor in urban neighbourhoods in England and Scotland, where meaningful interactions with difference are not only mixed, but also 'hyper-diverse' and develop in sites of 'micro-publics' recognised as youth centres, school, and workplaces.

Following Valentine (2008), other geographers have conceptualised encounters as a way to think through the events or goings-on at 'contact zones' (see Pratt 1991: 7) or 'meeting points'. For example, Letiner (2012: 836) examined how immigrant encounters in a small Minnesota town shaped relationships of power through encounters in which '[c]ultural and racial differences were not only remarked on but evaluated as inferior.' Her work highlights the dynamics that are recreated through practices of belonging and not belonging, wherein White residents felt a sense of fear and expressed discomfort associated with their encounters with immigrants of colour. Elsewhere, scholars have paid attention to 'spaces of encounter', such as in institutional spaces of education (Wilson 2013), leisure and community (Neal et al. 2015; Parks 2015), and streets and public plazas (Pikner 2016). Even within one locality, young

people place themselves within very different webs of social relations that exist in space and time and are mediated through different spaces of social life that are, sometimes, composed of routine and repetition (Crang 2005) for young refugees. Massey (2005) argues that urban space is a product of a range of encounters that are always under construction. For others, encounters are what give the city its distinguishing character, making urban life a site in which particular individuals are identified as 'strangers' and differentiated through 'social collisions' (Stevens 2007).

I concur with Wilson (2017), who argues that encounters enable people from different backgrounds to meet and provide new opportunities for exchanging ideas and relating. Since I focus on everyday youth refugee encounters in the city through different friendship groups, the idea that encounters generate difference is crucial as it exposes the entanglements of encounters that accumulate 'to gradually shift relations and behaviour over time – to both positive and negative effect' (Wilson 2017: 463). As Wilson (2017) suggests, despite the wide use of encounters, particularly in geographic work on urban diversity and sociocultural difference, it remains under-theorised. However, recent work on refugees and migrants could provide greater focus on friendship regarding understandings of everyday encounters in urban dense settings (Bunnell et al. 2012; Cronin 2013).

6.2.2 Theorising Encounters Through Geographies of Friendship

Geographers have stressed that the conceptualisation of friendship, in addition to its embodied and affective dimensions, can offer novel insights into ideas about sociality and encounters that cut across social differences (Bunnell et al. 2012; Cronin 2013; Wilkinson 2014). In particular, there have been calls within human geography for more consideration of the meanings of friendship (Bunnell et al. 2012; Philips and Evans 2016), especially in the context of everyday urban coexistence (Kathiravelu 2013; Kathiravelu and Bunnell 2018) beyond the English-speaking world (Bunnell and Marginganti 2010). Geographical inquiry into friendship

reinforces the everydayness of friendship and 'the types of friends that are important with particular space-time settings' (ibid: 2). An everyday framing of friendship encounters is also attentive to diverse social and personal characteristics (e.g., gender, age, and race/ethnicity, among others).

My focus on friendship encounters exposes how social interactions are reconfigured by the spatial practices of friendship. My relational approach to the concept of friendship is located in spaces of encounter, such as youth centres, and hangout spots, such as outdoor plazas and rooms, where friendship relations are created. I do not presume that all friendships are formed through these specific spaces but seek to understand the specificities of how spaces of encounter in the city are multiple in form. In lieu of reducing friendships to a set of interpersonal and private relationships, I seek to understand friendship through social similarities and social differences upon which friendship ties and frictions are built (Wilson 2017; Hall 2017).

For instance, regarding geographies of social difference, Askins (2016) draws on encounters between refugees in North East England who feel insecure due to fears of deportation and lack of employment, but who reconcile these fears through interdependency and their desires and practices of informal befriending, which can be a part of 'the wider political processes of living together' (2016: 525). Other scholars have positioned the productivity of friendship in urban spaces that shape migrant newcomers and other marginalised populations (Malyutina 2018; Robertson 2018), where a small city in Australia allows for more unexpected encounters compared to larger cities (Lobo 2018). The focus on relationships of friendships also points to their not being always neatly charted onto local conceptions of kin and non-kin. Instead, as Michel Foucault (1997) points out, friendship is an important social formation as it suggests the possibility of functioning outside normative discourses such as marriage. Friendship is also fluid and located in other forms of social relationships, such as the nuclear family (kin; see also

Bunnell et al. 2012; Desai and Killick 2010). These scholarly examples reiterate the metaphor of 'social glue' (see Spencer and Pahl 2006: 213), through which friendships are joined by different viscosities and emotions, especially in diverse city neighbourhoods across ethnoreligious and racial differences that increase social interconnection. Thus, relational geographies of friendship encounters also extend to generational and familial relations that are also constituted of everyday fabric. It is to this notion that I now turn.

6.2.3 Youth Sociality and 'Generation'

Scholars have denoted familial relations as sites where young people negotiate intergenerational relations and that young people also have agency in influencing older generations (Vanderback and Worth 2015; Punch and Woodman 2017). Long and Moore (2013: 2) proposed a theoretical revitalisation of human sociality and suggest studying sociality as not merely 'formal patterns of social relations' and 'products in either social relations or social interactions' but, more important, as a 'process'. Hopkins and Pain (2008) describe (inter)generationality as the relations and interrelations across generational and age groups. Understanding the nature of young people's sociality in relation to this definition of intergenerationality helps to understand how everyday friendships and the intergenerational transmission of social identity manifest at the level of the individual (Jeffrey and Dyson 2008; Dyson 2019). A temporal understanding of youth sociality in the Global South has been developed; for example, Jeffrey (2010) researched young Indian men's period of waiting (referred to as *timepass*), in which educated young people mobilise outside their existing power structures to enhance their employment prospects in society (see also Glasius and Pleyers 2013). It is not a new idea that young people contest, negotiate, and disobey familial expectations and 'rules of the house' (Katz 2004; Ehrkamp 2013). A conceptual fuzziness remains, however, regarding understanding intergenerational differences and inequalities, such as across class, and scholars have often ignored intergenerational commonalities (Woodman

2016). What remains underexamined within this strand of literature is how space both facilitates and constrains generational relations, especially in the context of contemporary structural problems such as generational inequalities and giving a voice to the agency of young people (Valentine 2019).

In the construction of intergenerationality (Vanderback 2007; Cooke and Waite 2015), I am particularly concerned with including the distinctive experiences of young people, who are often overlooked or marginalised (Weller 2006; Evans 2008). An intergenerational approach is, thus, valuable when thinking about youth within wider geographical studies of family life (Valentine and Hughs 2012).

I develop a generational viewpoint for understanding aspects of youth sociality by critically focusing on not only youth as a 'generation in transition' (Wyn and Woodman 2006), but also by recognising the significance of familial relations (Cole 2011) and intergenerational relations (Hopkins and Pain 2007). It is, then, crucial to interrogate and conceptualise the intergenerationality of young people's urban encounters in times of social change, which create new risks, demands, and opportunities. Rather than prolonged encounters, young people are situated in and through multiples spaces of negotiation in their everyday lives. Thus, it is impossible to separate generational relations from youth experience of 'growing up' in an environment with rapid social change (Morrow 2013). By making these relations an entry point, I bring together a way of thinking about generation with youth that can provide a window on the social nature of young people's actions and attitudes and the importance of exploring interconnected experiences of youth sociality and generational change in India.

6.3 Navigating the City

In this section, I focus on the experiences of young Afghan refugees and how they become involved in youth clubs in New Delhi. I share the perspectives of selected young Afghan refugees, their parents, and youth club counsellors to highlight the role of spatiality in

influencing friendship formations and encounters animated in youth club spaces. The selected narratives in this section reflect the social and ethnic diversity of the club members. The most salient characteristics among the social practices of Afghan refugee youths in New Delhi were found in the forging of friendships between different ethnic groups in spaces such as youth clubs. By navigating different urban terrain in India, young Afghan refugees' new social and spatial spheres across peer groups begin to form, starting at the youth clubs.

6.3.1 Spatialities of Youths and Clubs in Delhi

I met Sara Gonzales, Project Manager at the head office of Don Bosco, India early in my fieldwork. The building was like a four-storey university hall filled with rooms, offices, and hallways. Sara's office contained a trophy case to the left of her desk. The trophies showcased the spirit of 'youth club' achievements from the annual Youth Meets event held during World Refugee Day (Image 6.4). She advised me, 'Why not start with the youth clubs? If you want contact with young people, it is a good way to meet these kids and the supervisors that run them.' Sara went on to discuss the evolution of the youth clubs across the four Bosco centres in New Delhi.

> You see in Delhi, these kids from Nairobi … Somalia … Myanmar … Afghanistan are often the most vulnerable and most neglected. We don't want to see wasted potential among these kids. A bundle of belongings is not the only thing they bring here in India… they come to a new country with of course their own hopes, dreams and aspirations…they have a set of skills…there is much more to a refugee…apart from the trauma that one has gone through. That is what the purpose of the youth club is: to not waste potential. (Interview, October 2015)

A deep understanding of the experiences of young refugees who fled to cities such as New Delhi instead of refugee camps has influenced the development of youth clubs with the support of the UNHCR and Bosco administrations. As Coe et al. (2011: 1) note, although some young people have experienced 'everyday ruptures' in their lives as a result of violent conflict and uprootedness, their social life persists in a seemingly contradictory process. In this

way, 'everyday ruptures' are shaped in tandem with the breaks and mundane consistencies of the everyday. Leaders at Bosco regard youth clubs as offering the potential for refugee youths to participate in community interaction, particularly by educating their own refugee community on human rights issues and rapport-building with the local Indian community through schools, landlords, and neighbours. Sara, with her colleagues at the UNHCR and Bosco, sought to engage 'young people [who have been] most neglected' in activities such as promoting sexual and reproductive health and education and social skills development that could influence their respective communities to also learn from young people's experiences at youth clubs.

Since 2002, when Bosco came into partnership with the UNHCR, refugee assistance centres have sprung up around New Delhi as a result of refugees coming into the capital. I visited four Bosco sites, in Bhogal (South Delhi), Vikaspuri (West Delhi), Malviya Nagar (South Delhi), and Wazirabad (north of Delhi city limits). In 2005, youth clubs were created for refugee youths over the age of fourteen. There are currently two thousand members in twelve youth clubs divided unevenly across the four Bosco centres and the Khalsa Diwan Welfare Society in Vikaspuri. The ethnoreligious makeup of the youth club members reflects the locations of the Bosco centres. For instance, while Khirki Village in Malviya Nagar has stalls of Afghani, Iraqi, and Somali food, Vikaspuri in West Delhi is full of samosa and other *chaat* (savoury snacks) stands owned by non-Muslim Afghan refugees. In this chapter, I focus on the youth clubs with a majority of young Afghan refugee members but which might include some mixed membership with other young refugees from countries such as Somalia and Myanmar. These include the youth clubs known as Yuva (Bhogal), Champions (Vikaspuri), Arya (Malviya Nagar), and Youngistaan (Vikaspuri and Wazirabad).

With ambitious plans to engage refugee youths in India socially, Sara recognised the importance of having refugee youths at the forefront of the Bosco centres. The youth club members motivate refugee youths to be positively engaged with community issues and to

support one another. They also encourage young refugees to 'enjoy their lives' and to make the most of the opportunities available to them in India by capitalising on the educational DAFI programme and Bosco courses. Being elected a youth leader increased the chances of obtaining a DAFI scholarship to attend an India university, as youth club leaders most also complete the relevant courses to gain admission to college.

Sara's colleague Sushmita, who is a programme officer across all the youth clubs, called young refugees the 'troubled youth' and echoed Sara's sentiment of supporting refugee youths to organise and form clubs, including giving them the power to exercise independent decision-making and the ability to 'identify issues and resolutions themselves'. In part, youth clubs were formed to have activities on the premises to minimise the risk of young people getting into trouble with local police or in situations in which risk and crime were high due to the nature of where many refugees lived in New Delhi. Sushmita stated:

> They [Afghan refugees] have a lot of trouble here in India. Coming alone sometimes to India, leaving loved ones behind, lack of proper education, terrible financial situation, you name it. The purpose of the youth club was also about making a space for young people to come together. To not get into bad habits or with bad people. Through this, we promote awareness and the chance to also interact with the Indians here and Afghans also, especially those who are disabled and elderly refugees. I help the clubs do this. But we do have our share of challenges, particularly funding and dealing with angry parents sometimes! But it is great for young people, they [youth club leaders] are paid Rs. 1000 per month. But the budget of Rs. 2000 [to run each club] is not enough. They are paid a small amount which is not at all sufficient. (Interview, January 2016)

As Sushmita highlighted, refugee populations are particularly marginalised and face a number of cultural and language barriers, bureaucratic distrust, and stigma. The incentive for young Afghan refugees to consider applying for youth club leadership positions means a chance to earn money for their work; employment in the formal sector is unattainable for refugees due to their legal status in India. Each youth club typically has two male and two female leaders responsible for coordinating a meeting in the first week of every month at their respective local

refugee assistance centre. Larger general meetings encompassing all youth clubs happen less frequently and on designated days that are planned in advance. For many young Afghan refugees, youth club meetings are their first chance to have organised encounters with other Afghan refugee youths from different parts of New Delhi. The general meetings are a chance to highlight the accomplishments of each club, such as activities and their collaborations with different NGOs. A typical youth club meeting's agenda involves announcing new leadership positions in the youth clubs and to set out ways of becoming 'leaders' in their respective centres.[35] I accompanied Sushmita to a general meeting held at the Bosco centre in Vikaspuri one November morning in 2015. It was my first of many general meetings. Sushmita introduced me to Raj, her colleague and comanager for youth clubs.

The journey to Janakpuri West Metro Station, located twenty-two kilometres from South Delhi, took nearly one hour. Sushmita was anxious throughout the train journey as she sent text messages to the youth leaders. As she explained to me:

> I am trying to reach some youth leaders coming from Wazirabad and some from Malviya Nagar. Transportation is always an expensive cost. And we do not have budgets for everyone to come by metro. Most walk or take autos [rickshaws]. I always tell them to travel by groups. This is the hardest part of my job, sometimes…It is hard because of their ethnic differences, trying to bond them together. Trying to disseminate information to the participants at the same time and getting them to work together. It's tough sometimes. Getting their time. You have to go according to their schedule. Sometimes you have to boss them around…Malviya [Nagar] centre is actually [more] hectic than the other centres…so many things come first. [November 2015]

I first visited the Malviya Nagar centre (Image 6.2) in November 2015 (see Image 6.1). Sushmita was not joking when she referred to the centre in Malviya Nagar as chaotic and hectic. For one, the Malviya Nagar centre is located just across from one of New Delhi's busiest malls, Select Citywalk Mall. As I made it across the main road, I stood next to an

[35] I return to this in the next section.

unnamed intersection where a lane turned into Khirki Extension, a South Delhi village tucked away from the crowd (also referred to as Khirki Village). The area is inhabited by thousands of refugees mainly from Afghanistan and East African nations. Social encounters among youth refugees seemed more relaxed inside Bosco refugee assistance centres compared to places like homes and other public spaces such as bazaars as visitors were not allowed without permission.

Fatima, a middle-aged female manager at Malviya Nagar centre, confirmed Sushmita's sentiment of working in a very busy centre:

> We get almost five-hundred to six-hundred people come here a day. Imagine that?! As you saw, you jumped through security at the gate. That is why you cannot just come here without an appointment; you have to let us know in advance even if you go to Bhogal or elsewhere. As for the youth clubs, overall, we have about two thousand youths…from as little as seven years old to as old as thirty…who go to these clubs, and each club differs depending on the activities and location. We do not keep count as such, but some clubs are more popular than others. (Interview, November 2015)

Security is an important concern for the administrators of Bosco refugee assistance centres. An incident in January 2014 was all too fresh for Fatima, who described the sporadic nature of xenophobic mob attacks in the neighbourhood led by the former Law Minister of New Delhi Somnath Bharti against foreigners considered 'outsiders', namely the Ugandan and Nigerian population living in the village. These encounters not only led to hostile interactions between the host and refugees/migrants, but the mob attack also produced a type of urban precarity for African migrants and refugees and for a stream of refugees from within the Indian subcontinent (Negi and Taraporevala 2018). With the GoI recently using anti-Muslim refugee rhetoric to promote India as a 'Hindu country' with a 'Hindu identity' (Flåten 2016), ideological contestation from the BJP has paved the way for an anti-Muslim law, the CAB, making Indian naturalisation for Muslims more difficult (discussed in Chapter 5). In the South Delhi neighbourhoods where Bosco centres are present, surveillance posters written in Hindi are pasted on nearby market buildings telling people to report any suspicious behaviour to the

local police. Muslim refugees were advised by Bosco centre managers to 'lay low' and keep an invisible profile. Physical buildings such as Bosco centres are places for youth refugees to socialise and go to classes. However, outside of these times and spaces, there is no other designated place where young Afghan refugees can come together in a support system provided by the UNHCR and Bosco.

The Bosco centres became safe spaces for community-based youth groups, with several annual events aimed at engaging all ages of refugee youth and children. For Fatima, youth support structures were also important for children aged as young as seven to fourteen. Sushmita and Fatima both recognised their own limitations in managing children and young people from different refugee backgrounds who come together in a single space, but they articulated the benefits of participating in youth clubs and being a youth leader. It was at the youth club general meeting in Vikaspuri where I observed the social dynamics of such shared encounters between young Afghan refugees from different sections of the city.



Image 6-2. Entrance to a Don Bosco Centre located in Khirki Village, South Delhi, November 2015

We reached the Vikaspuri centre tucked away in a residential *gully* (alleyway) where a mix of Chin and Afghan refugees lived. The building was secured by two large steel gates with no signage. The security guards standing outside handed me a UNHCR Visitor's badge. Raj,

Sushmita, and I went to the rooftop and waited for youth club leaders from various areas of Delhi to congregate. '*Chalo* ('Let's go' in Hindi). It is [a] very discreet and secretive [location]. All centres are similar. Some have boards welcoming you…others such as this one and also in Wazirabad do not. This is for the safety of the refugees…' Sushmita said as she directed me (Field diary, November 2015).

Reaching the rooftop after four flights of stairs, I could not help but notice the congestion of a sea of mixed residential buildings layered amid an eye-watering smog. I would have been lost if Sushmita had not met me at Lajpat Nagar Metro Station near my flat. On the left side of the rooftop, a local chef was preparing Indian dishes of lentil and cauliflower *sabzi* and chicken biryani. The rooftop slowly filled with youth leaders, who welcomed each other with hugs, handshakes, and smiles. I chatted with some Afghan refugee youth leaders, mostly about their discontent regarding how much spicier and oilier the food is in India than in Afghanistan. After the general meeting was finished, I went outside to call myself a taxi as Sushmita and Raj had to stay late in Vikaspuri. Some young Somali and Afghan refugees were 'stuck' and needed to get back to Wazirabad, a journey that included multiple buses and took nearly two hours by public transport. Auto-rickshaws refused to take them, not only because their destination was too far, but also because of who they were: Afghan refugees. Sometimes, some Afghan youth refugees can pass as Indians due to their street-smart conversation in Hindi. Farzaneh, a nineteen-year-old Muslim Afghan refugee and female youth leader from Wazirabad, complained about getting back home in time before her parents returned from a mosque service:

> I hate when these meetings are scheduled so far [away]. But we are a few [in] number [in the youth club], so usually people do not want to come! People in Delhi are lucky…here [in Vikaspuri] they have actual space, rooms. We fight for our meetings in Wazirabad and most parents do not like such things. But you know, I love the autos and seeing Delhi, the buildings…I get to meet my friends from Bhogal and Vikaspuri! I miss them; we hardly get to 'get out', so this is our chance sometimes. I get the chance to get out. But it is not always a safe city, so we have to be careful. (Interview, November 2015)

Wazirabad is considered a village on the banks of the Yamuna River located north of Delhi in the National Capital Region (NCR). In the area, there is only one bus stand with minimal public transport routes. Farzaneh's anecdote of her mundane daily life in the city resonates with an understanding of the 'everyday sites of interaction' (Hou 2013: 12). In the case of Farzaneh, encountering the city through travel came not only with anxieties of navigating from one point to another, but also regarding overcoming social and cultural differences and turning them into opportunities through informal social interaction. Encountering the city as a means to get to the youth club meeting encouraged Farzaneh to negotiate multiple forms of informal intermingling, such as hailing and directing an auto-rickshaw driver to the meeting location. The open space of the Bosco rooftop acted as a place for planned youth club meetings. As such, the rooftop provided a space for interacting recreationally and becoming more familiar with their surroundings and peers.

Farzaneh's youth club colleague Yasmin, a twenty-year-old Muslim Afghan, was forthcoming about how city life has been tough, especially when discussing her resentment of having meetings far from Wazirabad despite the sense of adventure that accompanied her trips.

> As a single woman refugee, I face [a] tough life sometimes in Delhi. I am at times afraid to jump into an auto or bus…sometimes men follow me inside the bus, sometimes to my house. I do not know who to turn to for support. My parents keep telling me [to] stop this club stuff. But I am lucky to have met her (she points at Farzaneh). (Interview, North Delhi, January 2016)

(In)security in the urban context was a frequent reminder among Afghan refugee youths that New Delhi encouraged urban life that presented them with a vast array of potential for interaction and association with other young people. However, Farzaneh's and Yasmin's imaginations of the city were limited and did not always allow for them to go beyond the city. The young women's feelings of insecurity were somewhat assuaged through the everyday encounters of friendship. Despite living at opposite ends of the city, their monthly meetings at a designated Bosco centre allowed their friendship to remain intact through social and

emotional support. In some ways, friendship encounters occupied central positions for Afghan refugee youths through intimate spaces such as the rooftop, where friendships grew and youth refugees managed the complexities of daily urban tensions that come with navigating the city. At the beginning of this chapter, I described how the attitude of *yuva* among the young Muslim Afghan refugee men I accompanied attached considerable value to the city milieu regarding their social life. The spatiality of *yuva* culture for the young Afghan refugee men was an extension of the youth clubs into the city, where they could meet, relax, and hang out. However, this relationship for the majority of young Afghan refugees is quite different.

The vignette at the start of this chapter suggests that the young men adopt peripatetic spatial practices of *yuva* culture, which involves wandering around the city instead of sticking to the confinements of the Bosco centre. In this way, the group's identification and practices of *yuva* construct their idea of a 'friendship gang' as 'Immortals'. Their spatial construction of friendship encounters forms a tactical arrangement to avoid places with strong police surveillance, such as outside the Bosco centre in the area of Jangpura. Whereas, at other times, *yuva* as a site of friendship is a creative outlook of spare time that is productive in the left-over spaces inside Bosco, such as a balcony meeting space in Malviya Nagar (Image 6.3). This observation is similar to a study by Warsi (2015) on young Afghan Muslim migrant men in New Delhi, in which friendship groups were based not on a cohesive Afghan community but rather on small, tightly-knit groups of friends. However, according to my observation, friendship encounters were not just 'brief' or fleeting, as viewed by Warsi (2015: 13), but also ranged to more frequent and intentional encounters via youth clubs, where friendships, sometimes, were durable.

> We go to other places besides the park. There's the mall also across from the [Malviya Nagar] Bosco. In Bosco, we'll just find somewhere, a bit out of the way, like the balconies or small classrooms that are for storage…whatever…like the back of this classroom or somewhere many people don't go. But those places are hard to find here in Delhi, but maybe parks are best as we are hidden, and it is not too open. We find our way back

to Bosco when we need to. (Interview, Farah, eighteen-year-old Muslim Afghan woman, West Delhi, January 2016)



Image 6-3.Balcony located outside classrooms at Malviya Nagar Centre, which was also a popular 'hangout' spot among refugee youths, South Delhi, March 2016.

This spatial experience of *yuva* and youth clubs was not the same for all young Afghan refugee men and women. For young Afghan Muslim women like Farzaneh, Farah, and Yasmin, their limited sociality can be regarded as their inability to experience everyday life in the city with their friends and locals (Watson 2006) beyond the structures of youth clubs that brought the two young women together. However, there is some value among young Afghan refugees regarding the less frequent or light sociality that can be found in spaces in and around youth clubs. Even in those spaces in Delhi which were not largely defined as leisure hangout spots, such as malls, young Afghan refugees recast them, as well as ordinary places inside Bosco, as

sites of fun, friendship, and security. Some of the improvised spaces also became secret locations known only to the young club members – a tactic to keep away older adults and community members from meddling in their meetings and activities. The unknown spaces of New Delhi challenge the precarious spatial arrangements regarding meeting other Afghan refugee youths who are unfamiliar with youth club happenings. There is also sense of social tension in the halls of Bosco, particularly for newcomers, with attention being drawn to establishing friendships in the early stages of youth club life.

One day, I caught up with Mati, a twenty-two-year-old Muslim male Afghan refugee and a member of Youngistaan club. 'You can tell they are "freshers" in India,' commented Mati during a lunch break. Looking at the newly arrived group of mixed-ethnic Afghan students[36] 'not knowing the [Bosco] systems' of being enrolled for NIOS classes in the office adjacent to the teacher's office, Mati remarked: 'You can see it in their faces. Still innocent. The *rang* (Hindi for colour) has not even come off their skins yet' (Field Diary, March 2016). Mati later admitted that he too 'felt fresh' when he first came to India. He went on to express his desire to go beyond his neighbourhood and village in West Delhi.

> From the day we came to India and till now I haven't been anywhere. Most of my friends went to Taj Mahal [in] Agra. And some other famous places like Qutub Minar. Of course, I too, want to go to these places. But you know my father is a person who always has tensions, he tells us. It is too hard for me. I am only twenty-one/twenty-two and I have all these problems?! I get up at five in the morning. First of all, we are Muslims, and we recite the Holy Qur'an. At nine o'clock, my Mom cooks them breakfast, after that we come here [Bosco Centre, Vikaspuri]. We come to UNHCR by walking. Fifteen min…twenty min…twenty-five min. Krishna Park is very far to Vikaspuri. But one day, I took the roads and shortcuts. When I come from the main road, there [are] some apartments, between the apartments there is a road that carries straight to Don Bosco. I lost my way just like that one day. Then I see those apartments and came out and saw Don Bosco I was really happy. I found that way. It is like an accident. Now I go there every day; it's a safe route. Nothing interesting about the walk, but I found my way. I sometimes go to the balcony if I am

[36] The idea of Muslim and non-Muslim Afghan refugees in India being religious and sociocultural minorities is further discussed in Chapter 1.

> bored or sick, I go outside. You know guys here listen to music. They don't have problems so that is why they keep listening to music…one day I will maybe become a [youth club] leader in the future and not by listening to music. [Interview, March 2016]

The spatial configuration of youth clubs in each Bosco centre allows for young people to be a part of a collective refugee community in New Delhi. Each Bosco centre is different in its physical layout and location, but, in general, each refugee assistance centre includes NIOS classes, low-service health clinics, and legal assistance services related to refugee status and processing for renewal for stay visas (see Chapter 4). Within these more serious and administrative spaces, young Afghan refugees carve out their own hubs, as Mati did in the Vikaspuri centre on the balconies. Other spaces young Afghan refugees encounter within the centres as 'hangout spots' are more visible in the stairwells adjacent to the classrooms (see Image 6.3). Amin's thinking is useful in this case in the sense of repetitive routines through which spaces become a 'patterned ground' (2008: 12). The dimensions of visible hangout spots, such as the stairwells, can be recognised as sites of sociality that involve members of the youth club becoming familiar and being placed in contact situations with new social groups. However, young Afghan refugees like Mati, who are relative newcomers and still figuring out their 'membership' in a youth club, attempt to negotiate their own social positioning in and across spaces of Bosco. For Mati, living a long walking distance from his required educational and social needs in Vikaspuri was striking as it produced certain risks through experimental encounters. Mati's elucidation of the barriers to entry that may be present to particular kinds of youth club encounters at Bosco evokes a sense of the burden that young Afghan refugees carry. Nevertheless, walking to the refugee assistance centre became a mundane activity tackled by Mati. Adjustment to an urban city for individuals such as Farzaneh and Mati comes with frustration at not being able to see India as their peers have, but also with the tension they express because of the expectations in their households to help with siblings. This is especially true for Mati and his difficulty balancing his social life, which is entangled with the idea of

becoming a youth club leader. The socio-political experience of non-Muslim Afghan refugee youths, as discussed in Chapters 1 and 4, complicates how this group of youth club members fit into the spaces of Bosco.

For instance, there was only one designated youth club for non-Muslim Afghan refugees, called Champions, which was informally at the Khalsa Diwan centre in West Delhi, about 2.3 kilometres from Vikaspuri Bosco Centre. Champions, although formally recognised by Bosco as a youth club, was not officially part of the Khalsa Diwan mission, which focused on the social and economic needs of the non-Muslim Afghan refugee community in New Delhi. The leader of Khalsa Diwan, Mr. Singh, disapproved of young non-Muslim Afghan women participating in Bosco-sponsored activities, except for performing traditional dances at a handful of events, such as the Youth Meet**.** Funding cuts at the UNHCR also made it easier for the organisation to 'step away from their responsibility towards Hindu and Sikh Afghans' and direct their economic resources and attention to Muslim Afghan refugees because non-Muslim Afghans were seen as 'already belonging to India' (UNHCR representative, December 2015).[37] These funding cuts at the UNHCR, which sponsored youth clubs jointly with Bosco, also meant institutions like the UNHCR and Bosco regarded non-Muslim Afghan refugees as belonging to India (see Chapter 4). The funding cuts from the UNHCR for non-Muslim Afghan refugees led to a change in opinion. This decision affected how young non-Muslims Afghan refugees view the overall UNHCR and Bosco organisations. Such sentiments were recounted by a twenty-year-old male youth club leader for Champion named Ajay:

> I joined as a Champion! We work on performing and supporting *yuva*. But, Khalsa don't take us seriously. It is not open at all hours like Bosco is, that is what we miss. Sometimes there is information…like jobs of college or sporting events…We sometimes go there [Vikaspuri] to hang out with some friends and to feel like we have a youth club. But sometimes, the guys there poke fun and

[37] The splitting of the Afghan refugee identity labels into 'ethnic' and 'Hindu-Sikh' is further discussed and problematised in the introductory chapter.

> tell us, 'Oh, why have you come here? Don't you have your own space?' (Interview, November 2015)

Ajay's attitude towards the spatial context of the Champions' youth club in Khalsa Diwan is associated with how young non-Muslim Afghan refugees live and interact with their community members. Unlike Bosco, which has an external hierarchy of Indian administrators who advise the youth clubs, Khalsa Diwan's senior leader, Arjun Singh, is a refugee himself and leads the non-Muslim Afghan community in New Delhi, including the daily supervision of members of Champions. A common refrain among the Champions youth club members when describing Arjun Singh was that he was 'the Boss', who dictated the events the youth were to be involved in and where they were allowed to host their meetings, usually in the abandoned classrooms at the top of the building and only for a few hours in the afternoon on weekends. This meant it was difficult for Bosco managers like Sara or Sushmita to coordinate outreach or collective youth club activities. Non-Muslim Afghan refugee youths socialise in complex ways given their nuanced experience of having limited access to Bosco resources and administrators. The Champions youth club was informally incorporated into the youth life of Khalsa Diwan and formally funded by the UNHCR after discussions with Arjun Singh. Sara recalled,

> It is hard for us to go to Khalsa just unannounced. He [Arjun Singh] does not believe in some of the cultural events we promote or activities, especially the girls and young women, we engage our children [in] at Bosco. We had to deal with a lot of angry parents, we are lucky there is at least a youth group for them [non-Muslim Afghan youths]. (Interview, February 2016)

This sense of limited social and spatial encounters with other youth club members demonstrates how the Afghan refugee community in New Delhi is not necessarily coterminous with shared and contested notions of national origin. For some, their differences are also based on the identities of social groups. Despite Champions youth club's perceived absence from everyday Bosco youth club life, young non-Muslim Afghan refugees often alluded to how the

youth club facilitated and expanded friendships. Young non-Muslim Afghan men carved out time to hang out with each other and participate in Bosco activities, often without the approval of Khalsa Diwan, and displayed their strong sense of agency (see Worth 2009) through planning their outings, whether to the mall, park, or Bosco centres. This observation made me recollect Askins (2016) idea that friendships can be fluid and found across different proximities, yet 'tensions' among friendships are built up as a result of social differences as well as similarities. There is, however, a conceptual unity created among the youth clubs and their members despite living in different corners of the city. Young people's sense of developing their reciprocity and familiarity through encounters is intertwined with informal interaction and spatialised norms around the different kinds of support being offered. A spatial perspective of youth clubs helps us to understand that youth refugees experience continual interaction between their network of friendships, which offers an idea of how youth refugees are included and excluded across New Delhi. Some members, such as Mati and Ajay, also felt a sense of spatial disconnect. However, the youth club, as a collective, is an extension of the city, where a spatial and conceptual unity is created. It is significant that the youth club spaces at Bosco centres and at Khalsa Diwan operate because of young refugees' interest in furthering friendship in close proximity to daily life. Youth club sites, although often informal, connect the city space of Delhi with youthful ideas and imaginations of having something for themselves in India and being associated with *yuva*.

In this section, I introduced the purpose of youth clubs and located them in relation to the city of Delhi. In addition, I hinted at the spaces of encounter found in Bosco centres that facilitated youth sociality. The absence of such spatial encounters is also equally important as it enriches our understanding of how the 'light-brush encounters' (Nayak 2017: 291) of youth club members are particularly informative for understanding opportunities that lead to

longstanding friendships. I now unpack how youth clubs facilitate an understanding of the actual building of friendship among Afghan refugee youths.

6.4 Imagining youth clubs

In the introduction to this chapter, I highlighted the striking term *yuva*, or 'youth' in Hindi, which is indicative of the energy and drive of my conversations with the youth club members. It became clear that the youth clubs were more than just a recreational outlet for young people. Their association with *yuva* manifested into a pursuit to develop some familiarity and friendship between other youth club members across Delhi. However, as I demonstrate in this section, there are times when friendship can be a source of social connection as well as fragile and anxious experiences among Afghan refugee youths.



Image 6-4. Youth club members from different youth clubs gather for World Refugee Day in a Delhi park. Source: Bosco Newsletter, June Issue 2016.

6.4.1 Becoming and Being 'Potential' Leaders

Walking through Bhogal centre in South Delhi, there were undesignated rooms where the walls were covered with posters illustrating health awareness campaigns such as for HIV/AIDs, drawings of families by children, and posters advertising the DAFI scholarship with a couple of success stories from previous recipients. The DAFI posters displayed the ultimate goal and proclamation that anything can be achieved in the halls of Bosco through

leadership and education via the NIOS (see Chapter 5). I thought I had finally found the room reserved for youth club leaders. Instead, I entered a room filled with Muslim Afghan women. I quickly exited and was greeted by Yuva youth club leaders who whisked me to the fifth floor of the building via a concrete-floored staircase. I know why Sushmita referred to her youth club leaders as 'superstars' in their communities: they embodied the characteristics of trust and respect and were exemplars for others to follow.

Zoya (twenty-four-year-old Muslim Afghan refugee), one of the female youth leaders for Yuva, echoed the values of being a part of the youth club:

> Actually, it [Yuva] is part of our life. Not just the meaning of 'youth'. We are Yuva. Because we really did so many things and really enjoyed [them]. We have lots of memor[ies], two year[s of] memor[ies], two years of my life [in India] ... [Before Yuva] I used to sit and I had only classes and this was awful for me, just come home and sitting at home. Only my brother works. I am the second oldest in my family (Interview, South Delhi, January 2016)

Ali (twenty-one-year-old Muslim Afghan refugee), one of the male youth club leaders, sitting next to Zoya, chimed in:

> I worked as a travel agent in Bhogal. I stopped it. I worked for six months. They finished the company, it closed down. Yuva is my job now. It is my responsibility.

Zoya agreed with Ali:

> Of course, we have so much responsibility. Actually, I do not know about [whether] other club leaders…take this leadership so seriously. It is not like a part-time job. I am thinking that I am working somewhere regularly, and I need to work. So, we are taking it very serious[ly], and we [are] all working together very seriously. We even don't even think we [are] working there voluntarily…We like to work, but happily instead of seriously. If you are working with your best friends [she points at Rohina, a young Muslim Afghan woman and youth club leader] it is easier.

The examples of youth leaders like Zoya and Ali are instructive. The performative and social practices of being designated as youth leaders in their communities not only came with responsibilities, but also their share of challenges, including working together and coordinating

with project leaders and managers on a variety of events. Youth club leaders are expected to be role models for other young people in the Bosco centres, and it is in this dimension of flexible space where friendships are created. Friendships among youth refugee leaders are formed because the time spent in adult-supervised but unstructured flexible spaces facilitated friendship with peers. The youth clubs function as institutionalised safe spaces where time spent allowed young Afghan refugees to feel a sense of purpose and degrees of agency. They are also places where 'everything happens'; places where one can meet friends on a daily basis. The surrounding neighbourhoods did not offer many suitable activities or access to private sports clubs and gyms due to high fees. However, this strong sense of belonging and sociality also means that new club members may find it difficult to become a youth club leader since Bosco managers who lead the clubs are focused on their efforts to mentor older youth club members to be the next leaders.

The process of becoming a youth leader at Bosco is strategic in terms of being familiar with who the Bosco managers are, going to NIOS classes, and positively interacting with teachers to be nominated as a youth club leader. One morning, Zoya and Ali went into great detail when outlining the selection of youth club leaders.

Zoya (Interview, South Delhi, January 2016):

> First of all, you must have connections with all the members and people here and know them. Also, I think you also need to participate in the programmes, and it is not so hard. If you do this, then you can be a leader. There is no long process. So first, they took my interview and then I was [in] an advanced class. I finished my advanced class, they offered me this youth club leadership position. I told them, I don't have any idea about it. They said, 'It's OK, you come…' and that was the thing I started.

Ali had a similar experience, in which he was scouted in his computer class at Bosco (interview, South Delhi, January 2016):

> If a leader wants to come out, the staff starts to manage inside classes and search [for] someone who is good and can manage as a youth leader. After

> that, they decide that Ali is good for this position. So, they approach you and [ask] if you want to join and I said yes. Of course, it is better than sleeping at home [laughs]. It is fun. Um, working with other people you know and other youths. Also, I learn how to communicate, how to do things. We have many courses and training, for me it is very good. When you talk, for example, I was afraid of talking to people in person. Now, I am not afraid. Hardest part [is] when we have a big meeting: sport meet…youth meet. We have so many things to do. We must make video and skits; like too many things. Sometimes we are here from six in the morning and six at night. Like sports meet, we wake up at six a.m. and go for training. It is something good. I don't take it like a 'Oh, I have to do this', I take it like 'Oh, this is good, I am going to do sport today, so I will go to volleyball' in Bhogal. So that time and this time, it's a lot. There is actually lots of pressure from every job and every leader. This time is most pressure.

Rohina, a twenty-year-old Muslim Afghan and female youth club leader at Arya youth club in Malviya Nagar, outlined the process to me and echoed Zoya's and Ali's description of it as a 'job':

> Like they are not troublemakers and help people. Youth clubs need these kinds of people. Actually, Fatima, the central manager, and teachers come together and talk about who they think will be a good leader and choose them. They go to the teachers and ask the students if they want to be a leader. It's like a nomination. Students are interested to be a leader because being a leader is better than doing nothing. Doing something new. We are learning something new, gain some experiences. (Interview, South Delhi, February 2016)

Notwithstanding other important aspects of youth club leader life, my focus here is on how opportunities in new spaces for young Afghan refugees influence their ideas regarding what a 'good' leader is through their encounters in the city. Being a youth club leader is not just simply about 'seeing the city' or 'the chance to get out' for individuals like Farzaneh; her leadership position as a youth club leader is bounded by fulfilling her role and coming to every scheduled meeting. Youth clubs offer not only places to be, but also someone to be. For Farzaneh, such a space proved to be positive for her identity development through her close association with the youth club members and Bosco administrators, which fostered a strong sense of self. The above examples indicate more than just aspirations; they involve factors such as young Afghan refugees' social experiences and broader structural factors such as their de facto refugee status

and present circumstances that lead to opportunities during times of precarity. The youth clubs enable the formation of such potential in and through space via social interactions with other community members. The reward for youth club leaders is a remuneration of Rs. 1000 per month. Zoya showed me her monetary incentive with pride and said, 'With this, I will pay for my *Baba's* (father in Farsi) medication and maybe go to McDonald's with my little brother!' (interview, January 2016). The monthly remuneration for youth club members is one of the reasons young Afghan refugees apply for the post. However, most important is the chance to expedite their selection for a coveted DAFI scholarship and attend an Indian university. The dimension of 'work' in the role of youth club leader can also be regarded as a motivational factor, which is underlined by a combination of exposure to a NIOS educational foundation at Bosco and a strong perception of support from Bosco managers and teachers. However, not every youth club member had a positive experience in becoming a youth club leader.

Walking outside the Malviya Nagar Bosco Centre, Munir, an eighteen-year-old Muslim Afghan refugee, messaged me to meet him outside Select Citywalk Mall, so his NIOS teachers would not catch him missing his classes.

> I applied for the spot at Arya [youth club], but I did not get it. There are some politics, you can say. You can say people have strategies and need recommendations. You have to be wise, educated, face people, [know] when to say 'No', control anger. I was thinking I was good at all these things. But I was, unfortunately, not good enough. I did not complain and did not even ask why I was not selected. I got to know the politics behind it. Politics from recommendations. The management team who were before the other leader group, there's politics. I applied in December. I wanted to serve my community…be a leader…go to university. I thought I had the qualities to be one. I have the knowledge to be a leader. As my future goes, I want this experience…I wanted to somehow start from here. You can say also chance, maybe it is not my time. (Interview, South Delhi, February 2016)

Unsuccessful at becoming a youth leader, Munir's frustration was with the Bosco administration. Young Afghan refugees like Munir recognised the importance of widening their scope of socio-spatial encounters. David Harvey (2006), in thinking about a relational

understanding of space-time, contends that 'influences get internalized in a specific process or things through time' (2006: 272). In the case of Munir, internal politics from within the Bosco centre prevented him achieving his dream of becoming a youth club leader. Munir's barrier, despite his involvement with youth club activities, seemed to be a combination of internal politics and his academic position at Bosco. However, that did not stop him from having the conviction to further his involvement in the youth club in a meaningful way and thinking beyond present circumstances. Munir explained: 'My best friend is a youth leader; he teaches me sometimes and we always go to meetings together.' In this way, theorising encounters through youthful spaces indicates a type of validation for youth refugees via teacher and peer support. This validation is internalised and influences young Afghan refugees such as Ali, Munir, and Zoya to achieve their desired trajectories, even if that means not obtaining the status of youth club leader. Self-realisation is a continuous purpose, but especially for youth club leaders that the direction is life-changing to their future lives in India as educational prospects, for example, increase due to insider knowledge and support from Bosco staff. For instance, being a youth club leader can lead to being chosen as a DAFI scholar. This step reflects how young Afghan refugees transform their experiences in the youth club into educational capital (see Chapter 5). The expectations of becoming and being a youth club leader also create novel practices of 'doing' friendship through social encounters. I now turn to the perspectives of young Afghan refugees and the dimension of unexpected friendships across ethnicities, gender, and generation.

6.4.2 Generational Politics of 'Doing' Friendship

In this section, I foreground the heterogeneity of Afghan refugee youths' construction and performance of identity and friendship, reflecting on how they conceive of social encounters that feed into broader cultural participation. As discussed above, each youth club has two male and two female leaders. I went back to Vikaspuri to hang out with a group of young non-

Muslim Afghan men at their local bazaar, which was located three blocks from the Khalsa Diwan centre. It turned out we were waiting for Hamida, a nineteen-year-old Muslim Afghan refugee, and the only female leader of Champions. Harpreet, one of the male leaders of Champions, was texting back and forth with Hamida, who, in the end, decided she could not come to their part of town to help them coordinate a dance for the annual youth club meet. Harmeet clarified (interview, West Delhi, February 2016):

> Actually, you see, Mr. Singh discourages girls to participate in all youth club things besides doing *bhangra* because we always win first prize. He [Mr. Singh] likes to display these trophies around Khalsa to show Sikh Afghani pride. So, we kept Hamida a secret [from] the rest of the community or else there would be lots of *tamasha* (Hindi for 'spectacle'). We treat her like she is our sister. She is also Afghani.

I met with Hamida the following week at the Vikaspuri Bosco Centre to understand her sense of membership at Champions rather than at a youth club that is all Muslim Afghan.

> Um, before this, I was [a] leader in Youngistaan. So, you can say, I switched sides from Youngistaan to Champions because when I was in Youngistaan, there were the families did not allow girls at that time to do activities. Like whole thinking, 'Oh the club leaders are only doing dance and song'. So, when I came to [the] youth club, I observed that it is not like that. I tried to educate them [the parents to understand] that youth club is for all refugees, which are living here. And promote skills and that is why I wanted to become a youth leader. Like if we research among our refugees: there is very, very much high skills they have. Some of them have talent in painting, good singer. Like these types of skills and youth club is a great opportunity to promote that. From beginning till now in India, my family became open-minded. But my parents [asked] me that why I join[ed] Champions instead our own. They do not approve. It's really great actually because you know I get to experience with both 'Ethnic Afghan' and 'Hindu Sikh Afghan', to get to know their ideas of each other and all. I know mostly refugees and refugee friend circles. (Interview, West Delhi, February 2016)

While one type of life would undoubtedly be without the fear of living under a Taliban regime, another would be that of the 'first place I can improve myself… go freely to malls and even play sports,' recalled Hamida. The contrasting lifestyle exposures in India compared with Afghanistan were widely discussed in group conversations. Hamida, a former youth leader for one of the Bosco centres in South Delhi, became particularly vocal during the exchanges as

she expressed some of the benefits of living in India. She was commonly seen within the Bosco and Muslim Afghan communities as an 'idealised' symbol of what young refugee women can aspire to be in India. Multiple Bosco staff members observed that many young Afghan refugee women—both Muslim and non-Muslim—rarely apply for or participate in youth clubs. I discovered from Hamida that her work at youth clubs resulted from the very reason Jaspreet (eighteen years old), a former female Champions youth club member, left to join Youngistaan.

> Actually, this was very difficult. I have not told my parents yet. They do not know I joined another youth club. They're having zero idea. When they ask me where I am going, I only say: 'Bosco' and then they do say nothing. My Mom always tells me, 'You are doing these useless things? Go find a job and study more, not these useless things.' When I am at Bosco, I go to be challenged. Free from class. It depends on distance when we go. Not for the boys' gang though. We are girls, we have to be careful and our parents won't allow [us] to go that far. In Afghan community, rules are actually really restricted for girls. We have no choice sometimes. (Interview, West Delhi, February 2016)

Hamida and Jaspreet changed this barrier, inspiring other young women to break traditional norms. Other young refugee women began to view them as role models and were encouraged by their cohort to apply. What is striking about Hamida's and Jaspreet's accounts in constructing an imagined India is their own encounters and reflexivity with the city of New Delhi. That is, Hamida positioned herself in a dubious state of belonging to a new country and a fast-paced city through her encounters with youth clubs. This situation opens new competencies for young Afghan refugees reworking their futures. This, in turn, sparks an imagination of untried potentials that is different from those of their parents (Naafs and Skelton 2018). Parents and young Afghans attach different currencies to what it means to be youth club leaders and members. Increased participation among young Afghan refugees in youth clubs is changing the nature of everyday sociality. These practices differ from and are negotiated across older Afghan generations, which also complicate how encounters are mediated.

Huddled in a room upstairs in one of the Sikh temples belonging to the non-Muslim Afghan refugee community, which is colloquially called *Kabuli Gurudwara* (Sikh temple of those coming from Afghanistan), one parent of three young children told me, when asked about today's Afghan youth in India and about belongingness:

> What do I tell you about today's generation? Though our children are born and brought up in India, they have never seen Afghanistan. Their status as refugees keeps on reminding them that they are not the citizens of the country where they are staying since their birth. Not even most of their parents are the citizens of India. A sense of belongingness is missing, so they look for belongingness with the people in a similar condition or from a similar background. Even if we are Sikh, they call us Muslim?! We do not want that for our children. (Interview, West Delhi, January 2016).

The above description demonstrates how non-Muslim Afghan refugee parents experience their sense of belonging as engendered and sustained through emotions, experiences, and memories. They counter the idea of non-Muslim Afghans 'coming home' to India. However, the young non-Muslim Afghan refugees showed how they were aware of the many types of inequalities, as well as identities, when the refugee youths go to the youth clubs. The generational divide between older non-Muslim Afghan refugees and younger non-Muslim Afghan refugees is reflected in the older generation's experience of divisions in different periods of migration to India and the changing regulations during these phases (see Chapter 1). The divisions did not prevent the older generation from making a life in India, however, and this reiterates, as discussed in the previous section, why Champions youth club was never formally recognised or was looked down upon by older members of Khalsa Diwan. The parent above, at the end of the interview, exclaimed, 'They are children of Afghans, but are now fully Indian!' In Jaspreet's case, intergenerational relations were significant to her sense of an imagined future. Her internalised perceptions of lack of family and community support directly influenced her willingness to go beyond her comfort zone to engage in friendship and leadership aspirations at various scales. Yet, there are restrictions that define the gendered

nature of young Afghan refugees' everyday lives that are significant within and across generations.

Scholars have developed the idea that young people recollect their milieu (Bucholtz 2002) in relation to understanding sociocultural and intergenerational relations—that is, 'the connections between different age groups or generations and the contingency they have for each other's social, political, economic and spatial lives' (see Hopkins et al., 2011: 314). My point is that the generational experience varies from one segment of young Afghan refugees to another, even when they come from the same country. This reveals how these processes are critical for young Afghan refugees to become a part of, and be engaged with, the practices and formations of friendship. In turn, friendships are pertinent for evaluating critically the formation of group-based identities across generations.

6.5 Conclusion

Encounters and friendships have traditionally occupied a marginal position within human geographical inquiry. In this chapter, I developed understandings of how young people find new ways of living a 'city life' through urban encounters of friendship while renegotiating the intergenerational expectations of their parents and gender relations in a context of societal shifts. I argued that such encounters enable meaningful social interactions that are not only enjoyable and supportive, but also, sometimes, uneasy. It is through negotiating friendships and generational change in a new city that new interpersonal encounters and understandings may be cultivated and friendships fostered across public and private spheres. Although the youth clubs provided some degree of autonomy, often without the formal approval of parents, there were aspects of negotiation regarding the choice to be a part of club activities. This was particularly true for the generational divide with young non-Muslim Afghan refugees, in which they grappled with the challenges and changes to the society around them.

In this chapter, I signalled how young Afghan refugees' identities as youth club members and leaders are produced across space and generations as they reproduce and appropriate the social and cultural practices of their communities, the values learned at Bosco, and the outside experiences in the city. These perspectives are underpinned by how practices of sociality enable young Afghan refugees to negotiate friendship relations in youth clubs and deal with intergenerational tensions while engaging with broader youth discourse characterised by agency, earning leadership qualities and power, and real-world capital such as educational prospects. Youth club members also can mediate between Bosco centres and their communities within the city with a degree of cultural versatility (Osella and Osella 2006).

For me, a working definition of 'friendship' is significant and intimate social relationships that are formed often through complex and layered characteristics between individuals. I attempted to offer, through the idea of encounters, more nuanced understandings of what young refugees get out of their time spent inside and outside youth clubs with their peers in the city. These relationships are not bounded but flow depending on different aspects of friendships in urban contexts. This definition is not only fluid, it also helps to articulate the complex social connections around everyday youth sociality that are useful for thinking about diverse aspects of young people's social practices that are expressed as they move through different spatialities. In the final chapter of the thesis, I develop the importance of enriching scholarship in the South Asian context that counters the spatial fixity of Afghan refugee youths. I critically examine the ways in which young people reproduce, transform, and undermine the social identities they encounter. I do this by developing a set of distinct yet interrelated geographical debates around young people's subjectivities. The three empirical chapters collectively signal how the broad social and cultural effects of globalisation in contemporary India are transforming the social lives of Afghan refugee youths. It is this that I turn to next.

Chapter 7. Conclusion

Based on nearly nine months of qualitative research using ethnographic approaches, I examined how Afghan refugee youth negotiate their refugee status in urban India to secure liveable lives in conditions of precarity. In this thesis, I provided a situated account of the relationality implicit in young Afghan refugees' everyday lives. The preceding chapters unpacked a range of aspects of the everyday precarious lives of young Afghan Muslim and non-Muslim refugees through the social spheres of citizenship, race, and identity. Collectively, these chapters signalled how wider political and socio-cultural consequences of globalisation in urban India are transforming the everyday social lives of young Afghan refugees. Although extant studies on Afghan refugee youths, especially those informed by ethnographic approaches, have provided valuable insights into the multiplex nature of youth and citizenship production, several vital queries remain underexamined. The purpose of this final chapter is two-fold: first, to pull together the arguments made in the empirical chapters; and second, to draw out the broader theoretical implications of this thesis. To work through these, I return to the central research aims set out in Chapter 1:

(i) to examine how Afghan refugee youths negotiate citizenship pathways in a context in which different precarious (i.e., social, youth) statuses are in place that further contribute to inclusion/exclusion due to postcolonial regimes of documentation and racialisation;

(ii) to examine how young Afghans work tacitly and strategically to secure opportunities that might affect their aspirations and agency in key spaces, including their communities and schooling/education;

(iii) to examine how refugee temporalities are entangled with 'youth time' and 'postcolonial time' in the lives of young people to understand how social relations based on friendship are changing and articulated both within and across generational encounters.

Attending to the first aim, this chapter begins with my interest in the way young Afghan refugees negotiate their identities around the complicated nature of bureaucratic documentation that could enable state-level services, such as access to accredited education in

urban India. I then turn to understanding the nature of agency, reflecting on how social forms of action among Afghan youth refugees are managed amid social insecurities and intensified forms of educational capital. Following this, I broaden the perspective on youth sociality and sketch out the implications of the research for thinking about how alternative understandings of precarity and youth can inform broader debates within and beyond geography. Finally, I offer a series of recommendations for further research and outline a concluding argument.

7.1 Precarious Geographies of Young People

Across all three empirical chapters, the theme of precarity ran through the way young Afghan refugees live in the city of New Delhi today. The study of young people's precarity has been a longstanding focus in youth geographies and is gaining significance in the field of geography. Precarity, as it relates to this thesis, is born out of the temporal anxieties, frustrations, and uncertainties of and with the abrupt changes in youth refugee lives, from the feeling of being unsettled due to new demands in a new city, to feeling the convolutions of 'refugeeness' as a state of being and common experience that transcends country of origin and individual circumstances (see Lacroix 2004).

The empirical chapters highlighted the centrality of time and space to the experience of precarious everyday life in urban India for young Afghan refugees. I argued that young Afghan refugees are caught up in a web of negotiations regarding the construct of identity. By understanding these complex realities characterised by precarity, I envisioned new ways of identity formation among Afghan refugee youths that help to reconceptualise the spaces of precarity. In India, the refugee label, created by bureaucratic and legal institutions, is controlled through the process of the RSD, in which the Afghan refugee label is then split along ethnoreligious lines. The process does not stop at the RSD; the identities of young Afghan refugees continue to be recreated. The institutional processes of creating these identities for young Afghan refugees indicates not only the nature of citizenship in India, but also draws

attention to young people's lack of agency, but who, at the same time, are encouraged to act by the UNHCR and Bosco to pursue their interests in youth clubs and engage in NIOS classes for the small possibility of winning a DAFI scholarship. For decades, the parents of these young people have been stuck between two worlds. Like their parents, Muslim and non-Muslim Afghan refugees have had to alternate between various identities just to 'fit in' in, not only in various spaces across the city, but also across the country. This point counters the normalising tendencies that plague the representation of youth refugees. In this thesis, I attempted to depict how young Afghan refugees—often in liminal positions—reproduce conditions of precarity in their everyday life. In doing so, I borrowed from the literature on the precarity of young people's transition to work and the precarity of young people in the everyday.

The extant scholarship has contributed to understanding the contemporary dynamics of youth in precarious conditions of work. Undoubtedly, these studies provided a foundation for this thesis regarding incorporating how precarity for young refugees in the urban setting fluctuates through time, across space, and in particular localities. As discussed in Chapter 6, young Afghan refugees created informal spaces of inclusion within the Bosco centres across New Delhi. These spaces offered a sense of immersion in the city, where young people can participate in activities such as being club leaders and cultural dance events. Ash Amin's thinking is useful in this case in the sense of repetitive routines through which spaces become 'patterned ground' (2008: 12). The dimensions of visible hangout spots, such as corner rooms and entryways, can be recognised as sites of sociality that involve members of the youth club to add a shared functional and social dimension. However, within spaces of inclusion, newcomers to the area or youth club had to negotiate urban encounters of friendship while renegotiating the intergenerational expectations of their parents and gender relations in an intensifying context of societal shifts.

The final empirical chapter advocated an understanding of how Afghan refugee youth identities are negotiated and performed differently across space, underscoring their spatiality-situated and highly uncertain nature. Focusing on non-kin forms of sociality, such as friendship practices among Afghan refugee youths, highlighted the critical value of a theoretical and empirical focus on understanding how young Afghan refugees form connections with one another, and the extent to which these practices of friendship enable them to not always negotiate and pacify intergenerational relations and tensions while engaging within broader youth discourse characterised by the ability to appropriate and reproduce different types of personal relationships. A lack of empirical focus on youth refugees in the Global South, and in particular on Afghan refugees in India, reflects the prevalence of an analytical gaze on studies focusing on this segment of the population. This, in part, was reflected in my focus on how the gendered nature of access to youth clubs and education opportunities for young women is perpetuated via generational learning and permission. Young Afghan refugee women, even those who went to university and those who became youth club leaders, seemed to not fully engage with all the types of sociality prevalent among young Afghan refugee men. This is not to discount the powerful stories of individuals such as Tamana (see Chapter 4), who felt a strong sense of agency upon obtaining an LTV. My observations in this thesis extend discussions in the three empirical chapters to suggest that participation in youth clubs, higher education, and navigating local- and state-level bureaucracy engenders nuanced forms of youth and generational differentiation. This novel set of social practices reproduces exclusionary (and inclusionary) ideas about racism and gender, particularly the relationship between the urban marginalisation of refugees and young Afghan refugees' ability to live and belong in New Delhi outside the legal limitations imposed by the Indian state.

The precarity of young Afghan refugees also shifts in status, from being de facto refugees to recipients of precarious social entitlements such as access to state-sponsored education

(Chapter 5). These experiences of aspirations and hopes among young people shape the possibility of building better futures against conditions of precarity. As discussed in Chapter 5, university-going refugee students engage with and negotiate binary notions of what it means to be a 'regular' student. By exploring a complex and diverse social group, in which many are the first to attend college in their families, I focused attention on the notion of student identity among young refugees and what that constitutes within contemporary Indian higher education. The 'new' student identity for young Afghan refugees may come with alternative ways of gaining qualification through distance learning and more traditional pathways that diffuse interpretations of the identity of the student refugee in comparison with their Indian peers and Afghan migrant students (see Chapter 5). I argued that such student geographies should include the voices of refugee students to reconceptualise the shifting patterns in the terrains of higher education. In line with other geographers and social scientists, I found that marginalised young people negotiate difference or 'draw on diverse repertoires to produce counter-hegemonic forms' (Deuchar 2019: 1390). In some ways, precarity among this group acted as a continuum that represented the temporal structures of young people's everyday life linked to the social pressures of changing labour and educational patterns in the subcontinent.

7.2 Citizenship, Contradictions, and Inequality

It is through placing these theoretical strands in conversation with each other that this thesis contended that the multiple ways of being Afghan refugee youths in New Delhi are not just indicative of belonging in the city, but also reflective of the social context of the city and broader issues of urban life in India. Citizenship emerged as a major theme throughout the thesis, which is indicative of the wider issues of being refugee youths in New Delhi today. With broadening economic liberalisation in India, especially since the 1990s, research interests on urban contexts of India have expanded to the areas of increasing political, economic, social, and demographic importance of cities (Lama-Rewal and Zérah 2011). The recent remodelling

of the city of New Delhi declared its aspirations to be a global city that transforms the way people mobilise, move, and socially interact in informal and formal spaces, such as malls, parks, and bazaars. Appadurai (2001) presents the city as a site of 'deep democracy' where people come together through community-driven and grass-roots levels to contest Indian national imaginaries of belonging, reinforcing the 'drama of citizenship' (Appadurai and Holton 1996: 200). What is meant by 'drama' is understanding the fallacy of citizenship as always guaranteeing an entitlement to political and social rights and social inclusion.

Butcher's (2011) geographical work on New Delhi's development, aimed at creating a 'global city', underscores the changing practices embedded in the city, indicating increasing social division and exclusion along connected boundaries of religion, caste, race/ethnicity, and socioeconomic class. Exploring how Afghan refugee youths take issue with notions of being in an urban city afforded another insight into matters of citizenship. As discussed in Chapter 4, Afghan refugees in New Delhi are not considered to hold legal rights to belong to the city. Thus, Afghan refugees are conceived as being relative to particular legal constructions of citizenship. Their designation as *de facto* is exploratory where their ideas of citizenship is also ambiguous, yet also at the same time regulated by state bureaucracies according to different types of document verifications. This point was particularly addressed in Chapters 4 and 5, when I examined different constructions of the category of the Afghan refugee based on ethnoreligious identities and the experience of obtaining various documents, such as the LTV, that could enable certain rights, such as obtaining a bank account and applying to university. To remind the reader, the Indian Parliament passed the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) in December 2020, which gives non-Muslim minority refugees originally from neighbouring countries a quicker path to Indian citizenship. Although some Afghan refugees, particularly Muslim Afghans, might not possess legal citizenship rights, they are often engaged in practices that substitute for acquiring certain legal and social rights (see Sadiq 2011; Jayal 2013), albeit

always temporary. In this sense, the negotiation of entangled citizenship claims for regulating the mobility of Afghan refugees is constantly redirected, countered, and negotiated in and through the everyday.

The experiences of non-Muslim Afghan refugees, as discussed in this thesis, especially in Chapter 4, confirm the heterogeneity of the youth refugee experience. However, this heterogeneity complicates the notion of non-Muslim Afghan refugees as a diasporic community with origins in India. The history of Indian documentation processes is a fervent reminder of how notions of class and caste pervade (Abraham 2014), suggesting that the meanings and forms of social relations are anything but static. Historical studies on non-Muslim Afghan refugees who come from Hindu and Sikh ethnoreligious backgrounds explicate how non-Muslim Afghans have integrated into the Central Asia region and beyond due to the history of trade (Hanifi 2011). To quote one non-Muslim Afghan refugee parent of three children (interview, September 2016):

> Although our children are born and brought up in India, they have never seen our land in Afghanistan. Their status as refugees keeps on reminding them that they are not the citizens of India where they are staying since their birth. Not even we are citizens of India. A sense of belongingness is missing, so they look for belongingness with the people in a similar background. We are neither recognised as Afghans nor Indians…it is a type of heartbreak.

Young Afghan refugees looked to the wider surrounding communities, namely through Bosco centres, to interact with their communities with a sense of belongingness. I have added to the literature on the historical importance of non-Muslim Afghan migration by focusing on youth refugees from this community to highlight a perspective missing from the literature. This focus reiterates the idea that non-Muslim Afghan refugees generally consider themselves indigenous to Afghanistan but with religious connections to India. Therefore, regarding non-Muslims Afghan refugees in India as a diasporic community requires understanding how this segment

of the population 'belong' to India despite India's status of 'homeland' not necessarily being given.

I explored what it means to 'belong' as non-Muslim and Muslim Afghan refugees in relation to discourse on citizenship (Chapter 4) and friendship groups (Chapter 6), which helps explain the contemporary urban context in India. I used literature from postcolonial perspectives, in which racism intersects with ethnic, class, and religious hierarchies (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 2005). It is clear that India's response to an unofficial refugee policy emphasises access to the city and citizenship. The frames of who counts as an 'insider' and 'outsider' take on complex meanings; for instance, institutionally, when official bodies determine who is a refugee and their concomitant entitlements. As my analysis in Chapter 1 revealed, the distinction of *de facto* refugee is complex and often slippery. These fluid and unfixed status ascriptions have, for example, led to a type of rationalisation for the ethnoreligious and spatial reconfiguration processes that seemingly entitled certain groups privileges and rights and inscribed the refugee identity with ethnoreligious markers. Underlying the bureaucratic elements of an ethnoreligious understanding of citizenship designed to resettle the displaced were ethnonationalist questions of whether Muslims could ever be 'Indian' and which groups have the right to reside in urban areas.

The experiences of Afghan refugee youth reinforce the historically contingent identity politics, urbanisation, and state-making processes in New Delhi that have contributed to the socioeconomic marginalisation of Afghan refugees and made them subject to the politics of exclusion. There is also a complicated status hierarchy in which, I have argued, it is often unclear exactly what refugees are entitled to, such as LTVs, and how these entitlements are racialised between groups. The notion of precarity is not a new experience or condition unique to contemporary times or particular neoliberal spaces. The structural forces that shape spaces

of precarity should be considered with how citizenship—as status, practices, and acts—is understood through grounded examinations of neo-liberalised institutions and social power.

7.3 Contributions of Theoretical Advancements

This thesis adds important layers to the study of refugee youths in the Global South. As such, this thesis made key interventions in geographical and social-scientific writings regarding precarity via three empirical chapters that addressed the specific gaps in research on geographies of youth, higher education, and citizenship. Though Afghan refugees are spread across the globe, academic discourses tend to focus primarily on their experiences in Iran and Pakistan. For the first time, perhaps, an attempt was made to study the experiences of Muslim and non-Muslim youth Afghan refugees in India: another significant country in the region where Afghans have taken refuge.

As discussed in the contextual sections of Chapter 1, what made the Afghan refugee youths in India particularly different from their counterparts in the rest of the world is that the majority of Afghans in India belong to the non-Muslim ethnoreligious. However, while most of these non-Muslim Afghan refugees arrived in the 1990s, the intensification of insurgency in post-2005 Afghanistan brought many Muslim Afghans to India (see Chapter 1). According to the UNHCR New Delhi office (interview, September 2016), refugee migration among Muslim Afghan refugees was increasing in India towards the end of my fieldwork in 2016, with the Afghan refugees and asylum-seekers registered in India comprising the second-largest community, at twenty-seven per cent of the refugee population. Therefore, examining Afghan refugee youths who do *and* do not identify with different ethnoreligious backgrounds and who begin to coexist in during the fieldwork made this doctoral research on these groups even more interesting. Using this approach, I attempted to remedy the dearth in the literature by not only expanding on the experiences of youth refugees in the Global South, but also those

of non-Muslim and Muslim Afghans as persecuted minorities of Afghanistan, which have been neglected by wider scholarly attention.

My research provided a qualitatively sensitive account of refugee youth practices that furthers a nonlinear picture of youth and identity construction in this context. This is one of the first studies to capture geographical research on Afghan refugees in India from the perspectives of the youth themselves. While also contributing to the study of urban life in India, I added to the broader discussions of relationality by bringing together insights from geographical research on the everyday practices and spatial aspects of youth. I conceptualised young refugees' social practices as more than just transitory fun or waiting (see Nisbett 2007; Jeffrey et al. 2008), but as a set of temporal and spatial tactics, contributing to current theorisations of youth as a category of social experience. My analysis then examined these social practices more closely via scholarly writing on higher education and sociality.

I contribute to the existing literature on social-scientific studies on youth and thinking about whether the nature of adulthood itself has experienced a transformation, reflecting the 'changes in the way people are learning and living in the 21st century' (Wyn 2014: 5). As I suggested in Chapter 5, the changing educational landscape for refugee youths in India has resulted in an expansion of the notion of 'youth', both in terms of age and social sphere. This is due to Afghan refugees who wrestle with existing institutional structures and advance their understanding of themselves as individuals, developing different considerations of what it means to be an Afghan, a student, and a refugee in New Delhi. I also make an important contribution to a nascent body of geographical scholarship on friendship, bringing together insights regarding how young Afghan refugees spend time together as youth club members. In doing so, I highlighted the role of social relations across different spaces that produced differentiated experiences.

By the nature of its qualitative and ethnographic approach, the thesis drew on and contributes to studies on Afghan refugees and migration in South Asia more broadly. In doing so, I followed contemporary trends in research for studying Afghan society at the local, national, and global scales (see Oeppen 2010; Marsden and Hopkins 2012). I moved beyond the national framework for studying Afghan society to examine how young people navigated social relationships and bureaucratic hurdles at the scale of the everyday in the city of New Delhi. As illustrated in Chapter 2, wider research on Afghan migration is predominantly shaped by Alessandro Monsutti's work on kinship and Hazara migration (2007; 2014). His ethnographic accounts illustrate how (in)voluntary migration is not always clear, and for the Hazara, migration can be understood as a coming-of-age rite (2007). In other important work on youth refugees, Homa Hoofdar (see Chapter 4, 2010) examined the experiences of youth Afghan refugees in Iran through a differential, intergenerational lens. Their work adds to the literature on how forced migration and prolonged conflict can impact the lives of refugee youths and their families. Consequently, I added to this literature on migration and refugees in South Asia more broadly.

7.4 Limitations and Potentials for Further Research

It is instructive to note that my research relied on young Afghan refugees as the primary locus of my case study; therefore, my findings are not generalisable to other youth refugees in India who identify with other races or ethnicities. I presented a series of findings about the nature of precarity and the everyday lives of Muslim and non-Muslim Afghan refugees in urban India. The absence of a clear legal framework demonstrated the complex and varied responses from institutional actors regarding the dichotomies and dualisms applied to refugees. Although not feasible given the scope of doctoral research, the findings would benefit from a longitudinal viewpoint to examine the long-term implications of naturalisation processes, particularly non-Muslim Afghan refugees eligible for Indian naturalisation. Similarly, longitudinal research in

the same subset of young Afghan refugees would help reveal the extent to which particular articulations of youth discourse are reflected in interrogating the construction and performance of young people's identities within broader processes of social change.

This last point has particular significance regarding the changing meanings of citizenship and youth in India. During the course of my fieldwork, I realised that a significant number of asylum applications for Muslims (and non-Muslims) living in India have been rejected or are in a state of limbo. Protection by the UNHCR in India is the only way Afghan refugees can be shielded. The field of youth studies and refugee studies in South Asia could benefit from qualitative research into the specific nature of young refugees' urban interactions with other youths in New Delhi. Relatedly, and reflective of the ethnoreligious divide among Afghan refugee youths, while I was able to converse freely with Afghan Muslim and non-Muslim young men, my inherited positionality as a researcher from a practising Hindu family, my self-identification as a male, and identity as an NRI (Non-Resident Indian; discussed in Chapter 3) made it difficult to talk to youth Afghan refugee women.

Additionally, my case study provided some initial thematic cues for future research regarding the complex geographies of refugee youths, particularly in the realms of higher education in India and beyond. The extent to which young people in other geographical contexts are embroiled in similar educated nonelite positions is a potential area for further examination. Thus, as I demonstrated in this qualitative research, expanding our empirical gaze to engage critically with more variegated forms of precarity eschews a narrower consideration of what it means to be and belong as an Afghan in a contemporary urban context in India. Despite the recent spatial turn in research toward South Asia, which has approached the city and its spaces as a context to understand wider processes of governmentality (Chandavarkar 2009), national belonging, and citizenship (Sanyal and Desai 2012), little attention has been paid to the space of the city as a lens to examine migration in India (but see Sanyal 2014). Therefore, future

studies can add significant research on South Asian migration and postcolonial movements of people by examining how the experiences of Afghan refugees living in the city both reflect and shape the city.

7.5 Final Notes on Everyday Precarity

I hope, in this thesis, I have done justice to the complex depiction of what the 'everyday' is like for young Afghan refugees who are living in an extraordinary state of precarity and attempting to navigate their way to building liveable lives. This past decade has witnessed India's rapid urban population growth. This trend is not only contributed to by the simple urban transfer of labour populations, but also a complex process of changes in the characteristics of human settlement due to internal migration (Bhagat 2020) and significant levels of forced migration. The final factor has been particularly true for India in the twenty-first century as Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs have fled violence, much of which was a result of September 11. India continues to be thought of as a 'safe haven' for Muslim and non-Muslim Afghan refugees who face an uneven social, political, and economic landscape in which a framework for governing refugees remains ad hoc (see Chapter 1). The shared challenges faced by Muslim and non-Muslim Afghan youths underscore their potential inaccessibility to preferential educational opportunities, and their inability to integrate may take generations to overcome. The observations presented in this thesis attest to a growing cohort of Afghan refugee youths in New Delhi.

Returning to the idea of the 'good life' (*zindagi khoob*) expressed by Rahim in Chapter 1, this thesis is not just about existing precarities produced as a result of political and bureaucratic forces, it is also concerned with how youth refugees' experiences in New Delhi reveal wider social contexts of precarity in which new forms of broader-based struggles against precarity emerge. For instance, Afghan refugee university students' sentiments of feeling socially excluded from Afghan migrant students illustrate how, in one sense, community 'is never

simply the recognition of cultural similarity of social contiguity but a categorical identity that is premised on various forms of exclusion and construction of otherness' (Ferguson and Gupta 1997: 13). Thus, despite a shared nationality with Afghan migrants, the feeling of exclusion is marked socially in the everyday lives of Afghan refugee youths. Of course, the accounts and contexts examined in this thesis depict only a segment of a variegated set of refugee communities living in the city. As I discussed in Chapter 6, Afghan refugees also demonstrated the symbolic nature of friendship as based on flexible logics of identity (see Cohen 1985). Afghan refugee youths are not necessarily coterminous with shared national origin; they can also reflect distinctions based on identities of, and interactions with, different social groups, individuals, and communities.

As discussed in Chapters 5 and 6, the making and unmaking of precarities in Afghan youth refugees' social lives have unequal structures of power (Featherstone 2008) within households, educational spaces, and communities that transform how the role of friendships among marginalised groups can also be empowering. Young Afghan refugees' lives are penetrated by different institutions and structures that generate diverse experiences and struggles with precarity, such as the stripping of fundamental rights (Sassen 2006). The present heightened phase of religious nationalism in India, particularly since Prime Minister Modi's win in 2014, is causing additional legal insecurities to the lives of young refugees. The intergenerational impact of exclusion and marginalisation is a constant reminder of the subjectivity of the Afghan refugee that is maintained and entrenched by the political context of India and the global and local politics of the UNHCR. During my final meeting with Rahim, in September 2016, he reiterated to me that, despite the 'pressures of life…', he continues to reimagine his *zindagi khoob*. It is not clear yet, at this stage in the early lives of many Afghan youth refugees, whether the type of 'good life' exists in the kind of world they imagine for themselves and their communities.

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Appendix 1. Oral Research Information

Name	Yasmin	Milad	Miwa	Tamana	Hashim	Hasib	Rohina	Masooda	Munir	Rahim
Age	20	19-25	18	22	19-25	21	20	19	19-25	21
Sex	F	M	F	F	M	M	F	F	M	M
Country of Origin	AF	AF	AF	AF	AF	AF	AF	AF	AF	AF
Location of Interviews	Malviya Nagar (South Delhi)	Bhogal (South Delhi)	Bhogal (South Delhi)	Bhogal (South Delhi	Bhogal (South Delhi)	Malviya Nagar (South Delhi)	Malviya Nagar (South Delhi)	Malviya Nagar (South Delhi)	Malviya Nagar (South Delhi)	Malviya Nagar (South Delhi)
Date(s) of Interview(s)	22/01/16; 26/01/16	19/02/2016	03/04/2016	19/02/2016; 07/04/2016 (follow-up)	18/02/2016	Casual Conversation: 05/02/16; 11/02/16 (interview)	02/12/2016	02/12/2016	02/12/2016	02/12/2016

Wali Ahadi	Ali	Hasib	Mina	Zoya	Farzaneh	Wahid	Mati	Marjan	Rozana
26	18	19	18	18	19	18	18	19	20
M	M	M	F	F	F	M	M	F	F
AF	AF	AF	AF	AF	AF	AF	AF	AF	AF
Khirki (South Delhi)	Bhogal (South Delhi)	Andrew's Ganj (South Delhi)	Bhogal (South Delhi)	Krishna Park (West Delhi)	Krishna Park (West Delhi)	Krishna Park (West Delhi)	Krishna Park (West Delhi)	Krishna Park (West Delhi)	Malviya Nagar (Haus Rani)
14/03/2016	19/01/2016 (interview)	15/02/2016 (interview)	19/02/2016 (interview)	03/01/2016	22/02/2016 (interview)	22/02/2016 (interview)	26/02/2016	26/02/2016	15/3/2016

Najeebullah	Muzdha	Shareef	Hamida	Yama	Leila	Abdul	Jalil	Sara	Faisal
19	21	19	19	18	19-25	19	23	18	20s
M	M	M	F	M	F	M	M	F	M
AF	AF	AF	AF	AF	AF	AF	AF	AF	AF
Malviya Nagar (Haus Rani)	Malviya Nagar	Malviya Nagar	Krishna Park (West Delhi)	Wazirabad	Vikaspuri	Malviya Nagar Centre	South Delhi	South Delhi	West Delhi
02/03/2016	15/3/2016	15/03/2016	02/10/2016	16/3/2016	01/11/2015	10/10/2015	02/15/2016	02/15/2016	02/04/2016

Aamir	Iqbal	Rukhsaan	Zayeed	Zameer	Soha	Gulshan	Javed
20s	24	20s	20s	20s	20s	21	20s
M	M	F	M	M	F	F	M
AF	AF	AF	AF	AF	AF	AF	AF
South Delhi	South Delhi	North/South Delhi	South Delhi	South Delhi	South Delhi	South Delhi	South Delhi
04/11/2015	Feb-16	Sept 2015/; 02	Feb-16	Feb-16	Feb-16	Apr-16	Apr-16

Harmeet	Sandeep	Jassi	Prem Kumar	Achpal Singh	Ajay	Sandeep	Jaspreet	Gauri	Rahul
	22	25	18	19	19	21	18	21	18
M	M	F	M	M	M	M	F	F	M
AF	INDIA		AF	AF	AF	AF	AF	AF	AF
Jankapuri	Tilak Nagar	West Delhi	Khalsa Diwan	Tilak Nagar	Khalsa Diwan	Tilak Nagar	West Delhii	West Delhii	West Delhii
02/10/2016	04/07/2016	04/13/2016	04/09/2016	04/09/2016	04/09/2016	15/11/2015	04/09/2016	Jan-16	Apr-16

Sanjay	Pardeep	Maya	Rajeev	Gurmeet	Anand	Kunal	Dharmesh	Ramesh	Vikas	Rajesh	Sukhveer
19	23	21	25	20s	18	22	20	23	25	20s	20s
M	M	F	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M
AF		AF	INDIA	INDIA	AF	AF	AF	AF	AF	AF	AF
West Delhii	West Delhii	West Delhii	West Delhii	West Delhii	West Delhii	West Delhii	West Delhii	West Delhii	West Delhii	West Delhii	West Delhii
Nov-15	Nov-15	11/02/2015	Oct-16	Oct-16	Nov-15	Feb-16	Feb-16	Nov-15	Jan-16	Jan-16	Oct-16

Appendix 2. Participation of Research Consent

SCHOOL OF GEOGRAPHY AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Supervisor: Dr Fiona McConnell (SoGE); Email: fiona.mcconnell@ouce.ox.ac.uk

Janak N. Padhiar, D.Phil Candidate
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An invitation to take part in a research project on the life course transitions of young refugees in New Delhi

Title of the Project: Understanding Life Course Geographies of Young Refugees in New Delhi

Name of Student: Janak N. Padhiar, DPhil Candidate

About the Research Project:

I am a PhD candidate at the School for Geography and the Environment at the University of Oxford in the UK. Two professors at the University supervise my research. The School for Geography and the Environment has reviewed my research project and they have approved me to come to India to conduct research on behalf of my PhD. For my research, I am studying how young people understand their futures in New Delhi and how they confront their daily challenges to build a good quality of life. I would like to understand how young people access and use social networks in different places such as at home, in the community, and workspaces.

I am going to give you information and invite you to be a part of this research. You are being invited to take part in this research because I feel that your experience as a young people can contribute much to our understanding and knowledge of migration and social networks. If you would like to participate in this research project, I will give you a consent form to sign. The consent form is a way of you giving me formal permission to include you in the research study and protecting your rights. This consent form may include words that you do not understand. Please ask me to stop as we go through the information and I will take time to explain. If you have any questions later, you can ask them of me. The University of Oxford requires research to be conducted in a fair, open, and ethical way.

I would like to interview young people in the refugee communities of New Delhi to understand how social, cultural, and economic transformations affect everyday life in the city. I would like to become engaged with the refugee communities and be immersed in urban life. Also, I would like to interview community members about their experiences of living in New Delhi. The research that I would like to conduct includes interviews in the form of casual conversations, formal interviews, and voice-recorded interviews. Sometimes I would like to arrange for a group interview. Although this research does not have any immediate benefits to you, it has long-term consequences on social policy and refugee policy in India that could help future young people lead better lives.

What to Expect from Janak:

I would like to conduct research on the transitions of young people in New Delhi, India. I welcome any ideas or suggestions that you might have for my research as well as any ideas for collaboration.

I will spend time in your community and participate in activities when possible. I would like to be active in supporting the work of the community because it helps me to understand the role of young people in the refugee community. With your permission, I may take photographs or write in my journal about the experiences I have or what I am learning about. Every month, I will send a report to my university about my research.

Some questions that you might have:

Will you tell anyone what I say?

Everything that you say will be kept confidential. It will go into an archive so that people in the future will be able to understand the role of young people in India. Your identity will be protected at all times.

- Will the research be published?

The University of Oxford is committed to the dissemination of its research for the benefit of society and the economy and, in support of this commitment, has established an online archive of research materials. This archive includes digital copies of student theses successfully submitted as part of a University of Oxford postgraduate degree programme. Holding the archive online gives easy access for researchers to the full text of freely available theses, thereby increasing the likely impact and use of that research.

If you agree to participate in this project, the research will be written up as a thesis. On successful submission of the thesis, it will be deposited both in print and online in the University archives, to facilitate its use in future research. The thesis will be published with closed access.

- What will you do with the photographs, and other visual materials?

Also, your photographs will be stored in the archive. You may also want to get a copy of these for yourself.

❖ Will anyone reading the book or articles be able to recognize me?

No, because you'll have a different name. You can help me choose it.

Who is organising and funding the study?

This project is primarily self-funded with additional support from Jesus College (Oxford University) and the Radhakrisan Memorial Bequest, Oriental Institute (Oxford University). I am an American student based at the University of Oxford.

❖ Who do I contact if I have questions about the study or I wish to complain?

If you have a concern about any aspect of this project, please speak to me and will do my best to answer your query. I will acknowledge your concern within 10 working days. If you remain unhappy or wish to make a formal complaint, please contact the chair of the Research Ethics Committee at the University of Oxford who will seek to resolve the matter in a reasonably expeditious manner:

> Chair, **Social Sciences & Humanities Inter-Divisional Research Ethics Committee**; Email: ethics@socsci.ox.ac.uk; Address: Research Services, University of Oxford, Wellington Square, Oxford OX1 2JD)

My contact details in the UK are:

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My e-mail is:

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India Phone Number: +91 8527-705273

Consent Form for Doctoral Research

STUDY TITLE **Understanding Life Course Geographies of Young Refugees in New Delhi**

RESEARCHER DETAILS: **Janak Padhiar, DPhil Student**

Address in UK:
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UK Phone: +44 07887 506535

E-mail:
Janak.Padhiar@ouce.ox.ac.uk

India Phone Number: +91 8527-705273

Participant initials each box

I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project. ☐

I understand that this project has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, the University of Oxford Central University Research Ethics Committee. ☐

I understand that my taking part is voluntary; I can withdraw from the study at any time and I do not have to give any reasons for why I no longer want to take part. ☐

Use of the information I provide for this project only

I understand my personal details such as phone number and address will not be revealed to people outside the project. ☐

I understand that my words may be quoted in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs. ☐

I consent to being audio recorded. ☐

I consent to be photographed. ☐

Use of the information I provide beyond this project

I understand that other genuine researchers will have access to this data only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form. ☐

I understand that other genuine researchers may use my words in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs, only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form. ☐

So we can use the information you provide legally

I agree to assign the copyright I hold in any materials related to this project to [name of researcher]. ☐

_____	_____	_____
Name of participant [printed]	Signature	Date

_____	_____	_____
Researcher [printed]	Signature	Date