Middle Class Youth and Education in Neoliberal India

Submitted by

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This thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis by which I have qualified for or been awarded another degree or diploma.

No parts of this thesis have been submitted towards the award of any other degree or diploma in any other tertiary institution.

No other person's work has been used without due acknowledgement in the main text of the thesis.

All research procedures reported in the thesis have received the approval of the relevant Ethics Committee or a relevant safety committee if the matter is referred to such a committee.

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Abstract

Economic reform and structural adjustment in India has undermined state institutions through which the middle classes have historically reproduced their advantage. Education has been profoundly affected by increasing privatisation and a reduction in government subsidies, which in turn has implications for its accessibility, quality and utility. Given that education has historically been central to the processes of class formation for the lower middle classes, my primary concern is to analyse the capacity of this social group to reproduce their advantage through education in the neoliberal era. While I argue throughout that the Indian middle classes are a socially and culturally fragmented group, the major finding of this thesis is that these youth are experiencing increased hardship, heightened anxiety, and are confronting the reality of downward mobility. By demonstrating the contemporary challenges that youth living outside major metropolitan areas face, this thesis contributes to debates about the Indian middle classes as well as debates about youth and education in the Global South. Given the sheer enormity of the youthful population in India, theorising their trajectories is necessary for our understandings of Indian development more broadly.

Chapter One

Introduction

In July 2012 I went for an afternoon walk through a northern suburb of Dehradun, pondering my first experience of fieldwork. As I was walking, contemplating the interviews and observations I had made that day, I approached a small internet café with an advertisement of a private Engineering College printed on its side. The advertisement showed a young woman in corporate attire and was captioned "Think Global". Although a small building, there were about seven young men inside that appeared perplexed at the site of a dishevelled looking foreigner walking by. "Come friend", one of the young men said to me with a smile, gesturing that I meet his friends. Shortly after I went inside it began to rain. Akash, who owned and ran the internet café, said that the rain would deter customers, so he pulled down the roller door and he turned it into a makeshift cinema. For the next few hours we watched popular Hindi and Western films and listened to music, whilst drinking chai and eating snacks.

When I first conceived this research project, I wanted to investigate the accessibility of education for lower middle class youth[1], its quality, and whether or not they were able to get middle class jobs. Over time, by drawing upon the experiences of these young men and their families, I was able consolidate my research questions. The discussions I had with my newly found friends, their experiences, narratives and backgrounds gave this thesis its basis: here was a group of lower middle class youth, some currently studying, others graduates of university, watching and singing along with their favourite films and songs, occasionally taking time out to send a resume to a potential employer. The mood was a

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[1] Following the work of Pierre Bourdieu (1984) I argue that classes are formed through the complex interplay and exchange of economic, social and cultural capital. Various fractions exist within the middle class depending on the form and quantity of the capital that agents have at their disposal. In the Indian context, the lower middle classes are those salaried workers who have some educational capital (institutionalised cultural capital), but do not occupy positions of significant authority over other workers. This fraction consists of middle and lower level employees in both the public and private sector, such as clerical staff, office workers, teachers, and nurses (Fernandes & Heller, 2006, p.500). Unlike the upper fractions of the middle class then, the lower middle classes have limited stocks of economic capital but reasonable stocks of both social and cultural capital. I elaborate this theoretical framework in chapter three.

mix of excitement and anxiety, opportunity and shame: "This will be me one day", one of the young men stated triumphantly, during a movie scene in which a successful businessman drove a luxury car through crowded streets; "Yeah Sanjay", his friend retorted jokingly, "but you will be riding this", pointing to his bicycle, arousing laughter amongst the young men.

Like his friends, Sanjay was educated yet unemployed. The "free time" this afforded them contributed to the sense of idleness as we sat there for hours, the streets emptying as people sought shelter from the monsoonal rain. Yet that idleness was belied by an unspoken feeling of dramatic transformation, and the increasingly heavy storm. What the future holds for these young men is unclear, but it is obvious that their lives will not be like their fathers'. The point of departure that this thesis takes to theorise that transformation, is to analyse the capacity of lower middle class youth to reproduce their class position through education.

This thesis explores this theme through youth's[2] experiences in two regional urban locations in India, Dehradun and Darjeeling. Although I often highlight similarities between these areas, the purpose of making comparisons between the two is to explore the cultural differences amongst the middle classes, and shed light upon *what it means* to be middle class in contemporary India. Indeed public debate and academic scholarship tends to treat the middle classes as belonging exclusively to metropolitan areas, and therefore neglects the experiences of those living beyond them (for example, Fernandes, 2000, 2006; Fuller & Narasimhan, 2007; Nijman, 2006). One implication of this is that recent research implies that the middle classes are a culturally homogenous group, with singular histories and pasts, and singular aspirations. Highlighting the culturally fractured nature of the Indian middle class can also be seen as an antidote against popular understandings of globalisation, which often consider it to be a homogenising, top-down force (Held et al, 1999, pp.3-5; Martel, 2010, p.20). Exploring the lives of youth in these regional urban areas destabilises this assumption, deepens our understandings of how neoliberalism is lived and experienced and of how it is made concrete within regions where its dynamics have not yet been theorised. In turn, this data can be used to theorise the trajectory of neoliberal transformation, which is often assumed to be upward and linear ("development") without empirical verification.

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[2] I define youth as those between the ages of 18-30. See discussion in Chapter three.

Lower middle class youth in Dehradun and Darjeeling have grown up in India at a time of unprecedented social, cultural, political and economic change. In the early 1990s, the period in which most of my participants were born, the Indian government implemented processes of structural adjustment. These policies sought to align India's development trajectory with the principles of neoliberalism, which is often considered to be hegemonic on the global level (Gosovic, 2000). Advocates of neoliberalism maintain that human potential is best realised through the maximisation of entrepreneurial freedoms, in markets unencumbered by government regulation (Harvey, 2007). It is further argued that because material and social rewards are ostensibly distributed according to the hard work and merit of individuals, it is ethically appropriate for the state to reduce its fiscal contribution to social investments. Therefore implementing these processes in developing countries usually involves a combination of privatising state assets, such as education and infrastructure, minimising social expenditure, removing tariff barriers to enable free trade within the global economy and to attract foreign investment, and devaluing currencies to gear the economy toward exports (Amin, 2006; Harvey, 2005, 2007; Nuruzzaman, 2005). This formula is said to enable the entire populace to participate openly and freely within the economy, with any resulting inequalities the deficit of individuals themselves.

Although these new policies were given impetus by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund after a prolonged period of economic and political instability, they were nevertheless radical in the context of India (Corbridge & Harriss, 2000). When the country achieved independence in 1947, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru embarked on a path of development which sought to draw upon socialist and capitalist principles, which he felt converged around the Gandhian notion of 'self-reliance'. In this framework, the state played a strong role in the economy by subsidising expenses incurred by businesses, and regulating imports and exports to ensure domestic viability. It was contended that the growth of a strong manufacturing base in particular would provide widespread employment opportunities while welfare schemes would improve the lives of those living in poverty. In addition to this, significant expenditure in education was designed to facilitate the training of leaders within these industries, and fulfil roles within the bureaucracy needed to regulate it. Thus the development regime of the post-independence era and the role of the state therein can be seen as diametrically opposed to that of neoliberalism.

Although this approach never facilitated the equitable society that Nehru had envisaged, it nevertheless enabled the growth of the middle classes (Deshpande, 2003, p.131-40). Indeed on that first day in the internet café five of the seven young men there had fathers that worked in government posts. In Dehradun government employment was both a respected and desired destination for their fathers who had been educated at colleges and universities throughout the 1970s and 1980s. While the government sector never developed to the same extent in Darjeeling (Lacina, 2009, p.1002) the middle classes have historically depended upon education to consolidate their position and articulate their political demands (Chalmers, 2009, p.112). Despite limited employment opportunities in the local economy, for the youth in this study understanding themselves as educated was central to their position within the middle class.

Yet the hasty imposition of neoliberalism in the early 1990s has geared the economy toward the interests of the political and economic elite (Corbridge & Harriss, 2000, p.146). One of the most significant aspects of this for the middle classes is the dramatic transformation of the educational landscape. Indeed the extent of privatisation in the education sector, the increasing role of Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) and development agencies, is such that the state is no longer the main provider of education in India (Jeffery et al, 2005, p.41). This has resulted in a complex network of educational institutions of varying quality, each with differing social, political and economic interests. In addition to this, positive discrimination policies implemented throughout the same period necessitate that places be reserved for Scheduled Castes and Other Backward Caste peoples within government education and employment (Fernandes & Heller, 2006, p.504; Jeffrey, 2010, p.39). Taken together, these policies have undermined the middle classes exclusive access to educational institutions.

I wanted to know what this means for contemporary dynamics of middle class formation. In particular, for those that depended upon the state's provision to reproduce their social position. I found answers by spending time with youth at college and university campuses, private tuition centres, tea stalls, restaurants and internet cafés. I also conducted interviews with teachers, principals, and the parents of students. One thing that became clear in Dehradun was that the educational landscape has become significantly hierarchical over the last fifteen to twenty years as rates of enrolments have increased. One of the major arguments throughout this thesis is that the lower middle classes are marginalised within these emerging educational hierarchies. For example, elite social groups have created –

and then deployed their resources within – private institutions where the skills valued by corporate employers can be ascertained. These institutions, often invoking imagery of the Global in their advertisements and aesthetics, offer courses such as Masters of Business Administration (MBAs), Information and Technology (IT) and Engineering; the privileged students that attend them dress in uniforms that signify their distinction from the rest of the populace, and employers seek graduates from them because they have had already learned to negotiate the vagaries of the private sector: as one MBA student told me "to be successful you have to take risks and you have to be a leader…you have to be aggressive". In this way, elite social groups are able to ensure their educational credentials readily translate into employment opportunities.

Yet the vast majority of the populace in Dehradun, including the lower middle classes, attend government run institutions which are deteriorating significantly. Classrooms are overcrowded and drastically under-resourced, buildings are quite literally falling to pieces. Moreover, these institutions offer "traditional" forms of education, such as the natural sciences and arts degrees, and do not offer courses which are sought by youth aspiring to private sector employment. Lower middle class young men that attend these institutions told me openly that they do not go there for education. Rather, they go there to "hang out with friends", "be social", and "chase girls". Although many of their fathers went to the same colleges and were able to gain employment, young men that were currently studying were uncertain whether they would be able to get work. Their anxieties were hastened by the experiences of their peers and friends that received their credentials from the same institutions, yet were unable to find suitable employment. Nevertheless, lower middle class youth sought to mediate and contend this uncertainty by intensifying and diversifying their educational strategies, such as attending private tuition centres and increasing the amount of time they spend studying within the home.

Like Dehradun, the educational landscape in Darjeeling is particularly hierarchical. Government colleges in Darjeeling have all the characteristics of the proverbial haunted house: smashed windows, broken floorboards, and an endlessly leaking roof. These institutions are drastically underfunded, under-resourced and overcrowded, and students and teachers alike felt that there were myriad problems with them. Their varied criticisms (explicitly or otherwise) converge around the recognition that these institutions are struggling to meet increasing demands in the neoliberal era. One student told me that he regularly has to go to the lecturer's office to remind him that he has a class to teach, while

that same lecturer told me that his timetable asks that he be in two places at once. Alongside government institutions are elite universities and colleges that have religious affiliations. Some of these colleges are understood to be the best throughout India or "for the big shots" as some young people put it. Because they have additional sources of funding, as well as competitive entry examinations, they are able to shelter themselves from some of the negative aspects of neoliberal transformation. As such they were well resourced, highly sought, and were able to maintain their reputation through excluding those that did not have the necessary social, cultural and economic capital for entry. Thus the burdens of neoliberal transformation in terms of educational provision rest largely with one institution in the town centre. Significantly, it is this institution that many lower middle class youth attend[3].

With the hierarchical structure of education in mind, I decided not to investigate whether or not these institutions are "accessible" for the lower middle class, but rather, how they are excluded. This was an important ideological distinction to make: the former term, often used by development agencies, denies that there are agents involved in processes of marginalisation. Therefore, education could serve to eradicate social inequalities if everybody had access to it. What this position ignores is that there are dominant classes interested in ensuring access remains *inequitable*. Conversely, by conceiving of educational inequality in terms of exclusion, the task becomes not only to identify why people do not have access, but how others do not let them. The creation of a private subsector in Dehradun can be seen as one dimension of exclusion: it is precisely because of their expense that access to the skills on offer within them remains limited. I argue throughout this thesis that the main axis of inclusion within or exclusion from these institutions is one's social class position. This thesis explores how lower middle class youth *experience* this process, how they contest, subvert and challenge it, and concludes that they are facing the prospect of downward mobility.

Despite their experiences of class marginality, a somewhat paradoxical finding of this research is that youth in Dehradun have increasing aspirations. Indeed the internet café

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[3] While there is a long history of educated unemployment in India (Fallon, 1983; Navlakha, 1984), I argue that increasing enrolments, governmental neglect and heightened competition make for qualitatively different circumstances than those prior to neoliberal reform. In doing so the argument here builds upon recent debates (Ganguly-Scrase & Scrase, 2009; Jeffrey et al, 2004a, Jeffrey, 2010) that show how the imposition of neoliberalism has engendered new challenges and hardships for the Indian middle classes.

offered an interesting spectacle as unemployed young men would come and go dressed in styles that mirrored those of their favourite movie stars. If one did not know better you could be forgiven for thinking they were employed within the upper echelons of corporate business. Although currently not working, these young men have their sights set on global horizons; lowly government employment would simply not suffice. Interestingly, these aspirations were not isolated cases of adolescent egocentrism; rather they resonated with broader public discourses that celebrated the upward mobility of the middle classes. The advertisement on the side of the café mentioned earlier was just one of hundreds that could be seen in newspapers, television and billboards, most of which identified education as the key to success. It was clear from these advertisements that success in Dehradun meant corporate employment, integration with the Global, speaking English, and above all it meant capital accumulation. These visions of success were invested with social legitimacy through various popular media, such as the Hindi and Western films we watched in the internet café. Lower middle class youth in Dehradun aspired to lives which mirrored these, even though they were acutely aware that they had a decreasing capacity to achieve them. How these aspirations intersect with the realisation of downward mobility is interwoven throughout my analysis.

When I went to Darjeeling I naively anticipated that youth there would have similar aspirations. Yet what I encountered was a rather distinct set of social relations which produced and reproduced differing social formations. For example, one thing that I immediately found interesting was that young men in Darjeeling formed friendship groups that transcended, or rather completely disregarded, class divides. The sons of government workers and small business owners would spend time with those of porters and other manual workers. Furthermore, in universities in particular, men and women would socialise with one another freely. In Dehradun by contrast, the men in the internet café and those that I met more broadly, had friends which came from similar class locations. Moreover, young men in Dehradun would rarely socialise with women in public spaces. I argue that these social phenomena must be understood within the historical context of Darjeeling. Since the 1980s the dominant ethnic group, the Gorkhas, have been demanding that their ethnic distinctiveness be recognised through the creation of a separate state, "Gorkhaland". While these political demands are seen as a way of overcoming the historic marginalisation of the Gorkha people, this collective goal means that shared political interests mediate otherwise competitive social relations.

By exploring youth's educational strategies, I also argue that these social relations affect how youth interpret and contend their hardship. Whereas lower middle class youth in Dehradun have increased and intensified their educational strategies in the wake of neoliberal transformation, young men in Darjeeling do not spend large amounts of time at private tuition centres or studying at home. There are three interrelated reasons for this, all of which were related to the distinct social relations in Darjeeling. Firstly, although young people feel that they were unable to compete against those from elite institutions, there was a feeling that their exclusion is somehow "fair". Not only is it felt that educational examinations harness people's innate capacities, but it is also assumed that those selected would work toward the shared goals of the Gorkha people. Secondly, because the social, economic, and cultural deprivation of Darjeeling is thought to stem from broader processes of political marginalisation, young people feel that increasing one's individual capacities was of little use in terms of enabling "success". Thirdly, youth do not aspire to "corporate identities" like those forged in Dehradun. This is not simply because it was thought to be an unrealistic goal, but because it is thought to be the aspiration of "mainstream India", with which Gorkha youth do not always identify. In latter chapters I explore how these social relations – specifically the shared sense of ethnicity – affects dynamics of inclusion and exclusion within education, how they intersect with the aspirations of youth, and what affects they have on middle class formation. In doing so, I highlight the necessity of situating analyses of contemporary India in their social, cultural, political and economic contexts in a way which celebratory rhetoric and quantitative analyses do not.

While I predominately use a Bourdieurian framework for my analysis, I highlight the ways that neoliberal transformation is affecting patterns of middle class formation. For example, in Dehradun possessing stocks of economic capital is increasingly important given the extent to which social advantage must be purchased. This is marginalising the lower middle class because they have historically accumulated and deployed cultural capital, such as educational credentials, to reproduce their social position. I also highlight the need for broadening our conceptual framework to account for the ways that youth act in the world that do not correspond to their classed interests. For example, in Darjeeling, processes of middle class formation must be understood in conjunction with *ethnicity*, and how this produces and reproduces a distinct set of social relations. Indeed class conflict is mediated through this ethnicity even as acute class differences are reproduced over time. Nevertheless, in each of these contexts the lower middle classes are experiencing

downward social trajectories. Through an analysis of their (limited) capacity to reproduce their class position through education, this thesis shows some of the ways that this is taking place.

To conduct my analysis I have sought to grasp youth's social trajectories in three key ways, each relating to education. The first is the social construction of educational value. Lower middle class youth were ambivalent toward education: they felt that it was simultaneously "necessary" and a "waste of time". This was because they were no longer able to culturally distinguish themselves from subordinate social groups. I argue that the socially constructed value of education is changing amongst the lower middle classes precisely because they are unable to consolidate their advantage through it. Secondly, I analyse their educational strategies. Although young people questioned the value of education, they were nevertheless aware that to withdraw would mean losing their position within the middle class. This is demonstrated in Dehradun whereby young people intensify and diversify their educational strategies. I argue that young people have intensified their educational strategies because their class position is at stake. Yet as I have argued above, youth's educational strategies in Darjeeling are considerably different, precisely because they interpret their hardship in differing ways. Thirdly, I show that youth in Dehradun and Darjeeling are unable to get suitable work and thus face the prospect of downward mobility. Although there are important differences that I highlight throughout, the major finding tying each of them together is that the lower middle classes are experiencing downward mobility.

While theorising the social trajectories of lower middle class youth, it is important to point out what this thesis is not. Firstly, it is not an analysis of pedagogic practice. This means that I do not focus explicitly on what actually happens in the classroom or how teaching takes place. Rather, my focus is on how youth value their education, their educational strategies and how they make sense of them, and whether or not they are able to gain work. Secondly, although I try and incorporate the data about women and their lives, the primary focus here is on lower middle class young men. This is largely because patriarchal norms inhibited the extent to which I was able to speak with women. This is not only a limitation in terms of what I numerically exclude from the category of youth, but also because the data I did get suggests their experiences are considerably different from those of men. For example, the way that educated young women envisage living their lives and performing

their identities often conflicts with what is socially and culturally expected of them. Where my analysis does examine the lives of women I have made it explicit.

Despite these limitations there are several advantages of conceptualising my project in this way. Analysing youth's trajectories in India is timely given the sheer size of this demographic cohort. In 2010 it was estimated that 30.8 percent of India's 1.2 billion inhabitants were aged between 0-14 years (United Nations Statistics Division). The population is also growing at a considerable rate, with 17.64 percentage growth between 2001 and 2011 (Census of India, 2011). Thus the trajectories of the nation rest largely upon those of youth. Analysing the experiences of youth through education is doubly significant given the emphasis placed upon it in development discourses. International agencies such as the World Bank and the United Nations argue that education is a necessary tool for enabling informed choices of individuals, as well as harnessing the 'human capital' of the populace. Within human capital frameworks, education is conceived of as an intrinsic and measurable good: to increase the (quantitatively measured) levels of it necessarily facilitates development (Sen, 1999). In direct contrast to this approach, I consider education as a site of class formation, and thus of conflict. Through qualitative methodologies this thesis explores some of the ways that education itself serves to institute new forms of hierarchical social relations. As such this thesis can be seen as a critique against development frameworks within which education is considered a tool of upward social mobility and national development.

Having outlined the central themes of this thesis, the following chapter gives an overview of the relevant literature. The three main fields of research that I draw upon and contribute to are the sociology of education, youth and education in the Global South, and contemporary debates about the Indian middle classes. In chapter three I elaborate my theoretical framework to theorising middle class formation. I use a Bourdieurian approach but highlight the necessity of coupling this with theories which show how youth act in ways that do not always resonate with their classed interests. Within this chapter I also discuss how I conceptualise 'youth', which I identify as being between the ages of 18 and 30. In light of this theoretical framework I discuss my methodology in chapter four. I consider some of the contemporary debates regarding qualitative methodologies but also discuss their advantages in theorising global transformation. Chapter five discusses the settings, Dehradun and Darjeeling, giving particular weight to the historical processes that were significant for the middle classes.

Chapters six, seven and eight each discuss my results and are divided into the same structure. They each investigate a central theme, first in Dehradun, and then in Darjeeling, before discussing and comparing the two. Within this structure, chapter six explores the social construction of educational value and how youth imbue it with meaning. Chapter seven discusses how youth respond to their anticipated downward mobility through their educational strategies, while chapter eight discusses young people's attempts at finding work. As mentioned throughout, the diverse themes throughout these chapters converge around the finding that lower middle class youth are increasingly unable to reproduce their class position through education. I also highlight the cultural differences amongst this social group throughout. The concluding chapter elaborates my main findings and how they contribute to the existing literature. I also discuss the significance of my project, as well as its limitations and ideas for further research.

Chapter Two

A Review of the Literature

This chapter offers a review of the three primary fields of research that this thesis draws upon and contributes to. The first is the sociology of education. Analyses with the sociology of education show how education serves to reproduce and harness social inequalities rather than mediate them. I contextualise this argument in the Indian setting before arguing that these have inadequately considered neoliberal transformation, and how this affects processes of social reproduction. I then discuss the literature on youth and education in the Global South. By showing how youth use education to delineate boundaries between themselves and others, and how the value of education is understood differently in relation to socially constructed gender roles, this literature offers my thesis pertinent insights. Nevertheless its focus has been on poorer and minority social groups and has tended to assume that the middle classes are beneficiaries of education in the neoliberal era. Lastly I discuss contemporary debates about the Indian middle classes. While recent scholarship has undermined celebratory rhetoric by showing the increased hardships that this social group experiences, it has insufficiently explored the lives of those beyond metropolitan centres. Further, there is a paucity of literature focusing on the lives of this social groups' most numerous fraction, the lower middle class and their experiences within education. Therefore by exploring the capacity of lower middle class youth to reproduce their class position through education in Dehradun and Darjeeling, this thesis offers a modest contribution to these three fields of research.

Sociology of education in the Indian context

Western forms of education were first implemented in India during colonialism. Although the colonised subjects were first denied education, it was later contended that by educating elite social groups within India, the colonial project could be executed with greater efficiency and obedience. Within this framework, education was conceived as a way of cultivating moral beings that would work toward the ostensibly shared goals of both the coloniser and the colonised. To the extent that it was assumed that the colonised subject would accept and subscribe to society's norms and values, such theories parallel Durkheimian theories of the acting subject (Thapan, 2006a, p.4195). For Durkheim, the

individual was seen as a blank slate upon which society wrote its shared values. Through education in particular, individuals would necessarily be socialised into "good" citizens and their subsequent social action would converge around a harmony of interests (Durkheim, 1961; Lukes, 1985). From the Durkheimian perspective then, education was devoid of power relations and would work toward the betterment of society as a whole.

This depoliticised version of events has been reflected in historical analysis of the Indian society. For example, Misra (1961) argues that the British concept of education was "directed against the exercise of monopoly [and] based on the freedom of opportunity" (Misra, 1961, p.149). From Misra's (1961) viewpoint, it was "practical considerations" that demanded education be limited to the upper and middle classes of urban society (p.151). However more recent analyses of education during colonialism have brought attention to the ways that it helped to maintain British rule and attendant relations of power. For example in her influential text *Masks of Conquest,* Viswanathan (1989) shows how British literary education was inextricably tied to the administrative and political imperatives of colonialism. Viswanathan (1989) utilises Gramsci's notion of hegemony to demonstrate how education was used for social and political control while purporting to disseminate humanistic ideals (p.3). In conjunction with this, the British administration afforded the traditional ruling class a place within this bureaucratic structure which in part conciliated their displaced status. And it was through the education necessary to fulfil this function that elite were able to consolidate their advantage.

Although Viswanathan (1989) demonstrates the historical and postcolonial dimensions of educational inequality, by emphasising axes of power and control her work parallels many themes within the sociology of education (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984, 1990; Bourdieu & Passerson, 1978; Thapan, 2006b). For example, through an analysis of pedagogic practice Bourdieu (1977, 1984) argued that schools exacerbate and harness, rather than mediate social inequalities. Bourdieu (1977) insisted that because schools are organised around the cultural values of the middle class, students from privileged backgrounds experience schools as sites of *validation*; their manners, forms of embodiment and aspirations are certified, consolidated, and realised within educational institutions. At the same time, students from the dominated classes, experience schools as sights of *alienation*; for these people the school serves to isolate and eradicate their cultural ways of being, such that their only rational response is to withdraw (Nash, 1999, p.436). Yet because the school system is socially and culturally controlled by the dominant classes, it perceives the

marginalisation of these students as their own deficit, or cultural deprivation, and therefore legitimises their continued domination across generations. From a Bourdieurian perspective, the failure of schools' is their structural refusal to develop a pedagogy that is able to succeed with relatively unprepared working class pupils (Nash, 1999, p.436).

Since the emergence of Bourdieu's theory in the late 1970s and 1980s various scholars have sought to contextualise his arguments in the Indian setting. Consistent with his work, one of the central themes within the literature in the post-independence era is that education served the interests of the middle classes rather than facilitate an equitable society (Deshpande, 2003; Kumar, 1985, 1989; Navlakha, 1984; Scrase, 1993; Seshadri, 1976; Thapan, 2006a). For example, Kumar (1989) uses content analysis and symbolic interactionism to study pedagogical communication. He shows how education is intrinsically linked to wider social and cultural structures, and serves to legitimise established patterns of socio-economic relationships. Similarly, through an analysis of curriculum, Scrase (1993) shows how social class, gender and cultural inequalities are perpetuated through schooling textbooks in India (p.10). He argues that school knowledge is inherently ideological, and therefore reproduces the culture of the middle classes and the associated inequalities.

Other scholars have sought to show how the Indian education system favours the elite from a broader perspective. For example, Kumar (1985) offers a critique of the liberal assumption that competition is the primary means through which success is achieved, and material benefit distributed amongst the populace. Drawing upon secondary data, he shows that the vast majority of those working within the Indian Administrative Service attended exclusive schools and colleges that most families simply do not have access to. Thus Kumar (1985) concludes that:

> The situation described by Parsons (1959) in which school – as a social institution – differentiates pupils strictly according to achievement never fully emerged in India because the contest among pupils was curbed by the pooling of pupils in different types of institutions according to their socio-economic background (p.1282-3)

Similarly, Seshadri (1976) argues that the increased enrolments of marginalised groups have done little to enable qualitatively richer lives, nor served as a mode of social and occupational ascent because of the political power of the middle classes. He argues that

"[t]he strong hold of the classes over the masses is stifling all national efforts for reform either in content or in structure of our education" (Seshadri, 1976, p.221). The central point to emerge from this scholarship is that liberal concepts upon which India's liberal-democratic political organisation is founded, including competitiveness, egalitarianism and educational opportunity, have little explanatory power in historical analyses of the Indian education system. Rather, educational contexts are sights that harness and legitimise existing inequalities.

Another important facet of this research is the discussion of the ways that the elite solicit the consent of dominated social groups. Bourdieu (1986) argues that when the strategies of social reproduction amongst dominant social groups become recognised as modes of transmitting power and privilege (such as caste discrimination), the holders of capital "have an ever greater interest in resorting to reproduction strategies capable of ensuring better-disguised transmission" (Bourdieu, 1986, p.55). Because the education system is "an instrument of reproduction capable of disguising its own function" (Bourdieu, 1986, p.55), by expanding access to all fractions of society, elite social groups are able to maintain their privilege whilst marginalised groups are duped into overvaluing their education (Bourdieu, 1984, p.155). In this way processes of social reproduction are ensured even as opportunities for benefit are perceived as equitable.

With this in mind, Kumar (1985) suggests that although the elite were the primary beneficiaries of India's educational organisation, "mass examination offers to the rest of society the assurance that status can also be achieved through competition" and that mass education "is a symbol of the possibility of change" (Kumar, 1985, p.1281). Navlakha (1984) argues that although the higher educational system has always produced educated people at a greater rate than the economy to absorb them, education is legitimated by its beneficiaries in several key ways: self-glorification; projection of self-benefit as national benefit; projection of self-problems as national problems; constant demand for increasing support from society and resentment over intervention from outside (p.260-2). Thus these scholars suggest that, in varying ways, education is accepted by the masses even though it actively serves to marginalise them.

Consistent with the work of these scholars, I view educational contexts not as sites of liberation, but as sites of social reproduction. Therefore increasing enrolments of students from all social fractions in India does not eradicate social inequalities, but institutes new

forms of hierarchical social relations. I explore the ways that universities and colleges serve to reproduce advantage in the neoliberal era. As well as this, keeping in mind the ways that elite social groups attempt to solicit the consent of dominated classes, how do lower middle class youth view education and in what ways are their views informed through their social, historical and cultural positions? Drawing upon the work outlined above I attempt to shed light upon some of these questions. I argue that lower middle class youth have historically been able to reproduce their social position through education, yet because of processes of neoliberal transformation they are finding it increasingly difficult to do so. As a result lower they are becoming ambivalent toward education because the institutions they attend are deteriorating and the credentials they gain are insufficient to gain meaningful employment.

Notwithstanding the insights that this scholarship provides, there are important ways in which my research differs. The first is methodological. With the exclusion of Bourdieu's (1984) work, most of the research outlined above suggests that schools reproduce privilege over time without including the viewpoints of those within them. One of the effects of this is to deny the agency of individuals in those schools, therefore reproducing some of the same conceptual flaws that the authors claim to be critical of. For example, although Scrase (1993) rightly points out that the curriculum reflects middle class interests, this need not translate into subjectivities in which those values are either fully accepted or rejected. Indeed youth as agential subjects do not simply embody and reproduce dominant narratives but interpret, contest and challenge them in meaningful ways. Without including the voices of young people themselves we cannot theorise the subtleties and nuances associated with the classroom and social reproduction.

Secondly, although I do not treat educational contexts as sights of liberation, I do not simply assume that reproduction takes place in an unproblematic way. Indeed given the dramatic social, political, economic and cultural transformations that have taken place since the 1980s and early 1990s, this thesis explores youth's *attempts* at reproduction, and asks the question: to what extent *can* the lower middle classes – historically beneficiaries of education – reproduce their advantaged social position in the contemporary era? Does education equip these youth with the status necessary to uphold their distinction? What are the contemporary challenges to middle class formation and in what ways do youth try and contest these? In doing so I contribute to the existing literature by highlighting some of the complexities associated with Indian education and theories of social reproduction.

Having discussed the sociology of education in the context of India I now turn to a review of recent literature on youth in the Global South and their experiences of education. The ensuing discussion points to the necessity of understanding education and what it means to be educated in relation to social, cultural and historical specificities and how these affect, and are affected by, gendered locations. It also demonstrates the ways that dominant social structures are reproduced *and* (partially) challenged by young people that receive education.

Youth and education in the Global South

There is a vast emerging literature that seeks to make sense of the experiences of youth in educational contexts in the Global South. Within this diverse body of work are two interrelated themes that are particularly relevant for this thesis. The first concerns the social construction of educational value (Crivello, 2010; Jeffrey et al, 2004a, 2004b, 2005; Kesologol, 2008; Levinson et al, 1996). One of the central themes throughout this body of work is analysis of ways that young people acquire status through their educational credentials, and use this to delineate boundaries between themselves and other social groups. For example, in their ethnographic study in rural north India, Jeffery et al (2004b) argue that educated, unemployed Muslim and Dalit (ex-Untouchable) men embrace education as a form of embodied cultural distinction rather than seeking 'traditional', 'indigenous' or 'village-based' identities (p.961). Through education, they construct identities whereby they see themselves as moral, civilised and developed as opposed to those who do not possess educational credentials. Despite being unable to find suitable employment, these men conceive of uneducated people as immoral, savage and undeveloped. Similarly, Jeffrey et al (2004a) demonstrate the ways that lower caste young men reflect upon their education in the face of poor occupational outcomes. Some young men respond to this by increasing their involvement in local politics, while others feel as let down by education and current visions of modernisation. While education has failed to deliver on the promise of gaining meaningful employment, they nevertheless value it as a way of producing educated identities so as to culturally distinguishing themselves from others, and thus challenge caste-based notions of difference (Jeffrey et al, 2004a, p.32).

Other scholars point to the gendered aspects of educated identities. For example, in her ethnographic work in Kenya, Lesorogol (2008) argues that while education equips young women with new skills and knowledge, it clashes with local cultural ideas concerning

femininity, women's capabilities, and gender roles. This sometimes creates social divisions between educated and uneducated women and thereby undermines social solidarity at the local level. In a similar vein, Arnot et al (2012) argue that educated young women in rural Ghana and India felt that they were able to make important decisions regarding their trajectories and solve life problems that they encountered (p.186). Nevertheless the agency of these women was constrained by salient patriarchal norms within which men were seen as the heads of families and breadwinners, whilst women were considered to be responsible for domestic chores (p. 185). Yet unlike Lesorogol's (2008) study in Kenya, Arnot et al (2012) conclude that by understanding themselves as educated, schooling enables young women to delay childbirth and marriage, and thereby partially reconstruct the meanings of femininity and adulthood. In this way, young women are able to make subtle, micro-changes in gendered relations that help fashion new social orders (Arnot et al, 2012, p.192). To the extent that this work focuses on the subtle ways that education facilitates new forms of hierarchical social relations, it can be seen as a critique of human capital frameworks that emphasize a positive correlation between levels of education and development (Bourdieu, 1986).

The relevance of this research for my thesis lies in the ways that it utilises qualitative methodologies to highlight the intricacies, transformations, and nuances associated with education and social reproduction in the Global South. Taken together, these scholars' work shows how the value of education is constructed within social and cultural milieu. Through in-depth interviews and participant observation in particular the authors are able to shed light upon what it *means* to be educated in ways that meta-narratives concerning social reproduction cannot. By drawing upon the same methodologies, this thesis explores what education means for young people in contemporary India, and how these meanings are implicated in broader societal transformations. I examine how lower middle class youth understand their education and investigate their capacity to produce identities through it that culturally distinguish themselves from subordinate social groups. I also show how gender intersects with class position to produce diverse valuations of educational experiences.

A second related theme which is important for my thesis demonstrates the inability of educated youth to gain stable employment and make transitions to adulthood. Some scholars suggest that one reason for mass unemployment amongst youth is because neoliberal development has undermined educational institutions (Cosentino de Cohen,

2003; Cross, 2009; Henales & Edwards, 2002; Hoffman, 2005; Jeffrey, 2008, 2010; Susanti, 2011; Torche, 2005). For example Cosentino de Cohen (2003) argues that in Argentina the growth of a private subsector in education, as well as the acute problems associated with overcrowding and limited funding in the public sector, is undermining the historic role of public institutions as facilitators of social and economic mobility. In these circumstances young people are graduating from public higher educational institutions with little chance of obtaining work. Simultaneously, the elite are able to reproduce their position because of their exclusive access to private institutions. Likewise Hoffman (1995) finds that in Africa the combination of increased enrolment and a decrease in government funding has resulted in a situation where most of Africa's universities are overcrowded and lack the capacity to meet the rising demand for increased enrolment (Hoffman, 1995). In this way attending poor quality institutions serves to undermine young people's chances of social mobility.

This literature not only emphasises unemployment, but also the how youth come to occupy poorly remunerated positions for which they are overqualified. This body of work shows that while educational qualifications are being devalued, the situation is compounded by hostile labour markets (Cross, 2009; Jeffrey et al, 2005; Jeffrey, 2008, 2010). In the Indian context, Cross (2009) examines how young men with secondary-level technical qualifications are employed to cut and polish diamonds in a Special Economic Zone (SEZ) in Andhra Pradesh. SEZs are championed to be engines of rapid economic growth, employment and social mobility within neoliberal India and young men consequently seek work in these zones with the expectation of secure salaried employment. These aspirations are met with the realisation that these sites are characterised by stagnation and immobility rather than mobility and progress. Through the devaluation of their education credentials and their failure to realise local visions of masculine success, young men are confronted with the prospects of long term marginality and poorly remunerated labour (Cross, 2009; Rogers, 2008).

Similarly, Jeffrey (2010) has shown how young men experience prolonged periods of higher education and temporal dislocation because of decreasing employment opportunities. He argues that for many educated young men in the Global South, waiting has become a common social experience as neoliberal transformation has led to crisis in white-collar employment generation. Yet unlike research that tends to identify youth as victims of contemporary social processes, Jeffrey (2010) argues that waiting is an

important basis for affirmative political action amongst youth. He also demonstrates the socio-economic strategies of the lower middle classes as they seek to reproduce their relative advantage, and shows how the micro-politics of class power play out in the North Indian context. In doing so Jeffrey (2010) emphasises the point that youth are key agents in contemporary transformation even though many of them remain excluded from meaningful, satisfactorily remunerated work.

Notwithstanding poor occupational outcomes, scholars have shown that young people continue to scramble for educational qualifications (Forbes-Mewett et al, 2010; Gewirtz et al, 1991). Surmising the contradictory situation for many youth in the Global South, Jeffrey (2008) argues that the spread of images of success stressing the importance of participation in schooling has encouraged parents to invest time, money and effort within it, yet at the same time neoliberal development has eroded the opportunities for educated youth to gain stable employment (Jeffrey, 2008). As he argues:

> Thus arises one of the most unsettling paradoxes of contemporary neoliberal transformation; at almost the precise moment that an increasing number of people formerly excluded from mainstream schooling have come to recognize the empowering possibilities of education, opportunities from many of these groups to benefit from schooling are disintegrating (Jeffrey, 2008, p.740).

Taken together, this body of work interrogates the capacity of education to translate into employment and focuses on the diverse ways that youth interpret, negotiate and subvert new hardships associated with neoliberal transformation. In particular they show how the dismantling of the welfare state has undermined the middle classes to reproduce their social position. Following these scholars, throughout this thesis education is seen as problematic social construction that must be deconstructed through qualitative methodologies and understood in relation to social, cultural, political and economic change. In doing so we are able to generate meaningful insights into the lives of youth in the Global South.

These dual themes, the social construction of educational value and poor occupation outcomes for educated youth, are the key ways in which I seek to assess the capacity of lower middle class youth to reproduce their social position in contemporary India. In many ways this research serves to problematize assumptions embodied within theories of social reproduction: it highlights the ways that educational contexts are being undermined by

neoliberal development and charts the experiences of youth as they negotiate their hardship; it questions assumptions about education and development and instead focuses on the diverse effects it has on lives of young people; it shows how education fails to confer on its recipients skills that are sought after in the work place. By using certain insights from this literature, we are able to highlight new challenges people face when attempting to reproduce their social position. In doing so we are able to attune theories of social reproduction to contemporary currents of global change.

While my research builds upon and develops the themes outlined above, it differs in one fundamental respect, namely, through an analysis of lower middle class youth. At present, the literature focuses almost exclusively on lower class and poor social groups. While this is no doubt related to the dramatic increase of enrolments amongst these people and attempts to gauge the effectiveness of education for them, it has precipitated a situation whereby the experiences of middle class social groups has been neglected. Keeping in mind the ways that Bourdieu (1984) conceives of schools as sites where middle class culture is produced and reproduced, the experiences of middle class groups in the contemporary era may be fundamentally different from those that are the first in their families to receive education. In this sense I explore the themes outlined above from the other side of the coin: are historically advantaged youth able to construct educated identities that cultural distinguish themselves from others? Is the socially constructed 'value' of education changing for them in the contemporary era? To what extent are these youth able to translate their educational credentials into stable employment? What challenges do they face in these processes and how do youth contest, subvert and challenge them? And finally, what does this tell us about middle class formation in contemporary India? By focusing on the lower middle classes, this thesis offers a modest contribution to debates about youth and education in the Global South. I now turn to a review of contemporary debates regarding the Indian middle class to situate my analysis.

The Indian middle classes: contemporary debates

Liberalisation of the Indian economy in the early 1990s was accompanied by a set of public discourses that celebrated the dramatic increase in the size of the middle class (Bhatt et al, 2010; Fernandes, 2000, 2006; Ganguly-Scrase & Scrase, 2009; Jeffrey, 2010). These discourses were circulated through various mainstream media and often depict young, urban consumers that are employed in the private sector, and have the confidence

to negotiate the global economy (Wyatt, 2005). In turn, such idealised notions of middle class lifestyle became new markers of success within contemporary India. With this in mind, the first scholarly and public debate regarding the middle class disputed the culture of consumerism that was said to be rampant amongst this social group. On the one hand it was argued (usually by older generations) that consumerism was a complete rebuttal of Gandhian notions of self-denial and amounted to all but turning one's back on the nation. On the other hand, it was argued that liberalisation and the consumption practices that accompanied it symbolised the arrival of India on the global stage, no longer subordinate but now a key player in the global economy (Varma, 1998). As such the initial academic debate regarding this social group was preoccupied with whether consumption was right or wrong. Such debates were largely irreconcilable, with subject's positions' generally reflecting oversimplified understandings of cultural globalisation and its trajectories.

Moving beyond the competing binaries of this debate, Fernandes (2000) argues that each of these positions shared the assumption that the middle classes were the primary beneficiaries of liberalisation. One of the outcomes of this was that analysis of their actual experiences had been neglected within the literature. By engaging with the middle classes as they sought to negotiate currents of global transformation, Fernandes (2000) was able to challenge the assumption that this social group is experiencing upward mobility en masse. Rather, in her study of the urban middle classes in Mumbai, Fernandes (2000) suggests that economic reform produced *contradictory effects* for various segments of that class. In particular she argues that the employment climate for the lower middle classes in the IT industry in Mumbai, for example, is one characterised by processes of retrenchment, increased job insecurity and a shift to subcontracted work, processes which reflect the historical experiences of industrial working-classes in western contexts (Fernandes, 2000, p.96). Thus Fernandes (2000) argues that the 'new middle classes' as represented in public discourse actually depict the upper echelons of that class and its 'newness' is constituted through its identification with a new economic sector – the private sector – rather than newness of its social basis. Such historical continuity of middle classness is seemingly at odds with idealised images propagating new avenues for upward mobility.

Building upon these themes, recent scholarship on the Indian middle classes has gone a long way in undermining the popular assumption that neoliberal policies have led to the dramatic expansion of a homogenous middle class. This body of work shows that the Indian middle class is an increasingly heterogeneous social formation. One of the central

themes emerging in this literature is that the lower middle classes have increasing aspirations on the one hand, and a decreasing capacity to satisfy them on the other. Through qualitative methodologies and engaging with participants this research has highlighted the new anxieties and hardships as they are experienced by the lower middle classes. For example, Ganguly-Scrase and Scrase's (2009) ethnography of the lower middle class in Kolkota spans such topics as consumption practices and household survival, the effects of structural adjustment on women's empowerment, the hegemony of English education and the impacts of globalized media on the middle classes morals, culture and identity. The central theme tying each of these diverse components together is that while opportunities have increased for this social group in these arenas, so too has their level of personal and financial stress. Despite this finding however, many of their informants remain optimistic about the future for themselves and their children. Indeed the major finding of this study is that "there is a stark contradiction between the rhetoric and reality of structural adjustment and globalisation for the middle classes" (Ganguly-Scrase & Scrase, 2009, p.3).

Further evidencing the fractured nature of the Indian middle class, Fuller and Narasimhan (2007) provide ethnographic sketches to illuminate the experiences of highly educated urban professionals. They find that while their work environments are characterised by high levels of stress, long working hours and strong competition, their participants do not regret their chosen career path because they feel a sense of empowerment, control over their workplace as well as the comfortable living standard that their salaries provide (Fuller & Narasimhan, 2007, p.128). This cohort of the population, the upper echelon of the middle classes, consider their status to be secure rather than precarious, and the principle means through which they endeavour to reproduce this status is through educational qualifications and professional employment (Fuller & Narasimhan, 2007, p.135). The point to emerge from this literature is that the Indian middle class is an increasingly fractured social group, and that while the upper echelons of the middle classes are able to consolidate their advantage in the neoliberal era, the lives of the lower middle classes are characterised by uncertainty, anxiety and hardship.

Given that the celebratory rhetoric and images of success surrounding the middle classes has become problematized within this literature, recent debates have examined the political significance of them (Fernandes, 2006; Wyatt, 2005). These scholars suggest that the proliferation of images celebrating a newly emerging middle class was designed to create

new subjectivities and aspirations that support the elite neoliberal project. For example, drawing upon the work of Bourdieu, Fernandes (2006) traces the intricate ways in which people pledge allegiance to the middle classes through symbolic practices. These vary from the acquisition of MBA credentials and other business education qualifications, to attending institutes offering "Personality Development and Communication Skills" (Fernandes, 2006, p.96). Together these are designed to prepare students for the distinctive corporate culture that characterises the service sector. Fernandes (2006) argues that although many fractions of the middle classes have experienced increased hardship, the discursive production of middle class success acts as a political construct which bolsters the legitimacy of economic liberalisation:

> The new middle class identity shapes both the valuation of different forms of social and cultural capital… and the nature of middle class responses to the shifts and uncertainties associated with liberalization. It is this new middle class identity that has begun to manage the intersections and tensions between the discursive images of the new middle class consumer on the one hand, and the restructured and differentiated character of the middle class [on the other] (Fernandes, 2006, p.136).

In this way Fernandes (2006) undermines the oversimplified assumption that people support economic liberalisation because it is in their economic interests to do so. Rather members of the middle class pursue hegemonic visions of success as they are produced in popular discourse, even if this means enduring increased hardship. The promise of future benefits mediates people's responses toward liberalisation and therefore limits the possibility of collective action.

While the research produced thus far has engaged with the Indian middle classes in various facets of social life, there are very few analyses of lower middle class youth and their experiences of, and strategies within, education. This is a considerable shortfall given that i) the Indian middle classes have historically depended upon education to reproduce their advantage and ii) elite social groups have sought to dramatically transform the educational landscape since the 1990s. By focusing on the lower middle classes capacity to reproduce their advantage through education, I contribute to debates concerning the middle classes in postcolonial nations.

Secondly, although recent scholarship has sought to demonstrate the fractured nature of the Indian middle classes as a socio-economic category, it has not thoroughly explored the

cultural variances within this group. This is in large part related to the fact that the contemporary literature rarely analyses the middle classes beyond major metropolitan centres. For example, Fernandes' (2006) suggestion that people pledge *allegiance* to the middle classes through symbolic practices, and that new middle class identity mediates people's responses to current hardship, implies cultural homogeneity amongst this social group. From this viewpoint, actors are denied agency as they necessarily value and strive toward hegemonic visions of middle class success. But what does India's integration with the global economy mean for those living on the cultural, social, political and economic periphery? How do their aspirations intersect and articulate with these dominant ideals? Overarching conclusions made from research based within metropolitan centres fails to adequately address these questions. Through qualitative modes of inquiry this thesis explores these questions and in doing so recaptures some conceptual space for areas excluded from dominant accounts of globalisation (Lee & Yeoh, 2005, p.1). By moving beyond analyses of major cities I am able to show that the contemporary middle classes in India are an increasingly heterogeneous social and cultural group.

This literature review has sought to situate my analysis within the existing scholarship, and also highlight the ways that this thesis contributes to it. I now outline by theoretical approaches to the Indian middle classes and youth in the Global South.

Chapter Three

Theoretical framework

Theoretically locating the middle classes

India's particular developmental trajectory, combined with the sheer heterogeneity of its cultural and social formations, make the middle class an elusive object of analysis (Deshpande, 1998; Fernandes & Heller, 2006). Unlike both the working-class, whose labour is reduced to the commodity form, and the bourgeoisie whose material well-being is relatively secure given its ownership of the means of production, the middle class reproduce their position through securing formal qualifications and drawing upon social networks (Fernandes & Heller, 2006). In this sense the middle classes are capitalistically exploited inasmuch as they are excluded from the ownership of the means of production, yet at the same time have interests opposed to subordinate classes because of their control of organisational and skill assets (Wright, 1985). As such the middle class typically hold contradictory interests with respect to the primary form of class struggle in capitalist society, the struggle between capital and labour. For this reason Wright (1985) argues that the middle classes may belong to more than one class simultaneously, and therefore occupy "contradictory locations within class relations" (p.43). The contradictory nature of middle class formation necessitates an exploration of the actual practices through which this class differentiates itself from other classes and through which its internal fractions are maintained and defined (Fernandes & Heller, 2006, p.499).

For this task the work of Pierre Bourdieu and his theory of practice offers indispensable tools. One of the central concerns within Bourdieu's sociological theory is to transcend the seemingly obligatory choice between subjectivism and objectivism, while at the same time avoiding the trap of treating conscious and deliberate intentions as a sufficient explanation for social action (Jenkins, 2002, p.66). Bourdieu overcomes this dilemma with his concept of the habitus. As he elaborates: "The conditionings associated with a particular class of conditions of existence produce habitus, systems of durable, transposable dispositions…[that generate]… things to do or not to do, things to say or not to say, in relation to a probable 'upcoming future'" (Bourdieu, 1990, p.53). Seen in this light, social

action cannot be calculated but must be understood in terms of the class habitus, "the practice-unifying and practice-generating principle" (Bourdieu, 1984, p.101). Given that lived experience is constitutive of class structure then, it becomes necessary to grasp middle class formation as an historical phenomenon, through an analysis of the creative strategies pursued by agents in social space.

Studying the middle classes from a Bourdieurian standpoint enables sensitivity toward objective analysis whilst paying attention to the ways in which the theoretical and empirical boundaries of this social group are forged through practice. However in order to conceive of how the practices of various groups exploit others, we must first discuss the various forms of capital that Bourdieu (1984) considers classes to be formed upon. Bourdieu (1984) elaborates three key types of capital: economic, cultural capital and social capital (1984, p.114). He views economic capital in the Marxist sense, as one's relationship to the means of production. As such it is the most fluid type of capital and can be directly convertible into money or institutionalised as private property. Cultural capital can be seen as cultural competency, and there are three interrelated forms in which it manifests: its embodied form, knowing the 'right' things to say and do within a given cultural field; its objectified form, such as art and other cultural goods; and its institutionalised form, educational credentials (Bourdieu, 1990, p.124). Social capital can be seen as durable networks that provide their members with actual or potential credit through mutual acquaintance, understood colloquially as "knowing the right people in the right places". Bourdieu (1984) argued that unlike traditional Marxists class analysis, it is necessary to take into account the interplay between these various capitals, because in differing ways they have their own structure of value that translates into social power, independent of economic resources or income (Bourdieu, 1984, p.179).

In the Indian context, Fernandes and Heller (2006) delineate three strata within the middle classes that are helpful for theorising the probable distribution of Bourdieu's (1984; 1990) various capitals. The dominant fraction exists of those with advanced professional qualifications or accumulated cultural capital. These workers typically occupy roles of significant authority in various fields and organisations and consequently have interest closely aligned with those of the bourgeoisie. The petty bourgeoisie is an intermediate category such as small business owners, merchants and wealthy farmers. Members of this fraction enjoy some material independence but engage in practices that seek to emulate the

dominant fraction. The lower middle class fraction, also the most numerous, is those salaried workers who have some educational capital, but do not occupy positions of significant authority over other workers. This fraction consists of middle and lower level employees in both the public and private sector, such as clerical staff, office workers, teachers, and nurses (Fernandes & Heller, 2006, p.500).

Bourdieu (1984) viewed society as made up of distinctive cultural fields characterised by social competition in which people deploy their resources and exchange capitals. He likened cultural fields to 'games' in which actors compete for a given outcome based upon their shared appreciation of what is at stake. To the extent that actors from various social classes accept the terms of the competition, those with greater social, cultural and economic capital stand to benefit the most. Furthermore Bourdieu (1984) argued that the 'rules of the game' are defined by the dominant classes, and it is through their power to define such rules that elite social groups reproduce their position. From this perspective, skills such as educational credentials do not have an inherent or intrinsic value; rather the dominant classes legitimise them as necessary for gaining white-collar employment because it is central to their own mode of social reproduction. This can be conceived in terms of exploitation inasmuch as to legitimise one's own culture (in this case scholastic attainment) is to discredit that of others (such as indigenous ways of knowing). Once a given culture is considered legitimate it is through the dominant class habitus that these resources can be stored and conferred across generations.

This is an important theoretical advance for which earlier analysis of middle class formation failed to adequately account. For example, Wright (1985) considered the possession of skills as an axis of exploitation however was unable to show how the possession of skills exploited subordinate classes (Savage et al, 1992, p.15). In Bourdieu's (1984) schema, it is not the skill itself that exploits others, but the power to construct the legitimacy of the cultural field within which a given skill has value (Savage et al, 1992, p.16). In addition, it is the power to ensure that a given skill remains scarce. As Bourdieu (1984) states "What is at stake in the struggles about the meaning of the social world is power over the classificatory schemes and systems which are the basis of the representations of the groups and therefore of their mobilization and demobilization" (p.479).

Developing Bourdieu's (1984) argument of how the dominant classes legitimise a particular cultural field, Deshpande (2003) argues that the main function of the middle class is to build hegemony. Through the strategic use of cultural capital the dominant fraction realise psychological benefits, the capacity to exclude others, and the ability to confer these privileges across generations. For Deshpande (2003), each fraction of the middle class plays a differing role in this process: while the dominant fraction produces ideologies, the subordinate fractions engage in the consumption of ideologies, thus investing them with social legitimacy (Deshpande, 2003). From this perspective, the self-assertion of the dominant fraction interacts in intricate ways with other strata within the middle class: on one level the cultural and social barriers within the dominant fraction of the middle class are significant and aggressively enforced. At the same time, the dominant fractions' identity shapes the aspirations of the lower classes (Fernnandes & Heller, 2006, p.501). For my analysis I draw primarily upon Bourdieu's concepts of habitus, capital(s) and field to assess the capacity of lower middle class youth to reproduce their advantage.

Yet while Bourdieu's work is particularly relevant for research on youth in the Global South (Jeffrey et al, 2004a, p.4), and various scholars have drawn upon it for their analysis (Fernandes, 2006; Fernandes & Heller, 2006; Jeffrey et al, 2004a; Jeffrey, 2010), there is an emerging body of literature that uses a broader analytical framework to conceptualise social reproduction and change (Dyson, 2010; Jeffrey, 2008, 2010). In part this can be seen as a response to criticisms of Bourdieu's work. For example, although Bourdieu insisted that the habitus was malleable and can transform over time, as Nash (1999) points out, "the theory allows no recognition of self, or choice or action" (p.434). Furthermore, as Jeffrey (2010) argues, "Bourdieu's writing does not fully anticipate the possibility that lower middle classes may in certain circumstances seek common cause with the poor…in ways that partially escape class logics" (p.22). In light of such criticism various scholars have drawn upon aspects of Paul Willis's (1977, 1982) scholarship to inform their analysis.

Willis's (1977) work in the Midlands of the United Kingdom sought to grasp not only how middle class kids get middle class jobs, by why working class kids let them (p.1). Undermining the liberal assumption that schools mediate social inequalities, Willis (1977) argues that schools precipitate oppositional cultures amongst youth from poor and working class backgrounds, which in turn prepare them to accept low-paid manual jobs. Although these oppositional cultures generate negative results for the working class in a broad sense,

the process of developing a working class identity is experienced as "learning, affirmation, appropriation and as a form of resistance" (Willis, 1977, p.2). Thus Willis (1977) argues that working class youth accurately recognise some negative aspects of their marginalisation, such as the exclusion of their cultural forms from the schooling context. Yet because they glorify and largely accept other facets of their marginalisation, such as manual labour, their resistance and appropriation of the dominant culture is only partial. Developing this concept, Willis (1977) argues that "penetrations" of the dominant culture can be understood as "impulses within a cultural form towards the penetration of the conditions of existence of its members and their position within the social whole but in a way that is not centred, essentialist, or individualist" (p.119). Yet these penetrations meet "limitations", the "blocks, diversions and ideological effects which confuse and impede the full development and expression of these impulses" (Willis, 1977, p.119). When these penetrations and limitations interact in and through culture, a "partial penetration" occurs (Willis, 1977, p.126). In this way Willis (1977) accounts for both the positioning of working class youth within dominant social structures, but also the possibility of changing that positioning.

One of the reasons that such a framework is important for analysis of social reproduction is because it is able to take into account the creative ways that youth contest, subvert, and challenge dominant structures even as they (to varying degrees) reproduce them. In the Indian context, Dyson (2010) utilised this framework for an analysis how young girls "generate critique and novel practice and at other moments mirror and reinforce dominant structures" through friendship networks (p.484). Dyson (2010) argues that friendship formed the basis for effective cooperation and imaginative cultural projects that challenged and reinforced local social and cultural relations. Similarly, Jeffrey (2010) draws upon a similar framework to discuss the innovative cultural and political actions of educated young men in Meerut. He argues that such an approach "encourages a search for youth practices that are orthogonal to class or that undermine class power in addition to those that perpetuate inequalities" (p.23). In doing so Jeffrey (2010) adopts a critically minded Bourdieurian framework that lends itself to diverse interpretations of agency and resistance. Such a framework is particularly important in the context of Darjeeling given the ways that youth seek to realise their classed interests, but also broader goals related to a shared ethnic identity. The crucial addition that Willis's (1977, 1982) insights offer to a

Bourdieurian approach then, is the ability to theorise the agency of youth in ways that do not correspond to a narrowly defined class interest.

Notwithstanding these productive developments in class analysis, various scholars have challenged the validity of class as a conceptual category in late modernity (Beck, 1992). Some have even gone so far as to pronounce the death of class (Paluski and Waters, 1996). It is argued that because of rapid social transformations associated with globalisation, class is becoming increasing redundant not only as a socio-economic category, but also as a cultural identity. Further, because identity is conceived "not as something fixed and coherent, but as something constructed and always in the process of becoming, but never complete, as much about the future as the past" (Storey, 1999, p.135), it is suggested that fixed categories such as class are inadequate to explain the diversity and complexity of the contemporary social world. This is compounded in the Indian context given the tendency of postcolonial critique to decentre class analyses, and the assumption that Western constructions of class are of limited explanatory value there (Ellis, 2011, p.70). Within postcolonial accounts and in the context of late modernity more broadly, the concept of identity is replaced with *identities*, of which class is but one facet. As Hall (1992) argues:

> No single identity…could align all the different identities into one, overarching 'master identity', on which a politics could be securely grounded. People no longer identify their social interests exclusively in class terms; class cannot serve as a discursive device or mobilizing category through which all the diverse social interests and identities of people can be reconciled and represented (p.280).

This is an important recognition in the context of India given the sheer diversity of its social and cultural formations and historical trajectory. Various ethnic groups within India continue to fight for recognition and autonomy as Hindu nationalism is simultaneously revived; vast populations continue to be marginalised by structures of repression and domination similar to those of the colonial period, while images of success and global competitiveness continue to circulate through mainstream media. Indeed globalisation is a highly uneven, inequitable set of intersecting, cross-cutting and dislocating processes and actors negotiate, respond to, reproduce and transform them in myriad ways. Given these diverse and often competing systems of meaning, Butler (1990) argues identities cannot simply be read off from classed (or gendered) positions. Rather they emerge out of performances, including the ways that people dress, speak, and use their bodies. In this

way identities and subjectivities do not emerge as expressions of essential social roles and positions, but should be seen as fluid, "power-laden performative practices that have possibilities for subversion, play, and expressions of agency and resistance" (Lukose, 2008, p.139). By utilising this conceptual framework, we are able to reveal, deconstruct, and undermine the discursive and ideological legacies of colonialism whilst recovering the experiences of the colonised (Ellis, 2011, p.71).

However written against the position that class is becoming a redundant analytic category in the context of late modernity, other scholars have highlighted its resurgence (Aronowitz, 2003; Harvey, 2005, 2007; McNall et al, 1991). As Jeffrey and McDowell (2004) argue, social class "continues to be a major social division in all societies, as it structures young people's experiences of school, post-school education, and the search for work" (p.133). Beyond analysis of educational institutions, other scholars highlight the ways that contemporary processes of neoliberal transformation have led to the growth of transnational elite, as functionaries of colonialism within and beyond the West have consolidated their position within the new global economy (Amin, 2006; Makwemoisa, 2002; Nuruzzaman, 2005). This research points to the continued importance of class even as globalisation continues to drastically transform the social world.

In spite of the seeming paradox between the undermining of class on the one hand, and its resurgence on the other, a social world characterised by discontinuity, fragmentation and rupture need not imply the dismissal of meaningful class analysis. As Jeffrey (2010) argues, Willis's (1977, 1982) class analysis anticipated many of the themes within poststructuralist accounts. For example Willis's (1982) notion of cultural production defined as the "creative use of discourses, meanings, materials, practices and group processes to explore, understand and creatively occupy particular positions, relations and sets of material possibilities" (Willis cited in Dyson, 2010, p.484) recognises that cultural practices do not simply correspond with fixed identities, but are forged and contested in contradictory ways. Further, Willis (1977; 1982) directed attention toward analysis of embodied behaviour and subjectivity, such as "feeling, bodily practice and demeanour" (Jeffrey, 2010, p.22). Thus by coupling insights of Willis' (1977) work with a Bourdieurian approach we are able to develop meaningful insights that bridge the dichotomy between material and structural analyses of class on the one hand, and subjective and individual identity performances on the other.

In summary, middle class formation in contemporary India is an ambiguous phenomenon. Yet an emphasis on how this ambiguity manifests in the educational practices of the most significant fraction within the middle class, the lower middle class, has been largely ignored by sound ethnographic research. By drawing a framework that is sympathetic to both structural and materially based analysis of class, as well as how these identities are subjectively and individually forged, this thesis explores the ways that lower middle class youth attempt to reproduce their social position through education. While my primary focus is on the practices of this social group, for operational purposes I define the lower middle classes in the same way that Fernandes and Heller (2006) do, salaried workers who have some educational capital, but do not occupy positions of significant authority over other workers. In Bourdieu's (1984, 1986) terms, this group can be seen as possessing little economic capital, but having reasonable stocks of both cultural and social capital. One of the central aims of this thesis will be to examine the ways that the lower middle classes deploy their various capitals in the field of education as they try to reproduce their social position. Through my analysis I will attempt to shed light upon the effectiveness of otherwise of their doing so. I will now outline my conceptualisation of youth before elaborating my methodological approach.

Defining 'youth' in the Global South

Development agencies such as the United Nations conceive of youth in terms of biological age, on the basis that the physical and emotion transition from childhood to adulthood has been completed (Mabala, 2011, p.157). However literature from various disciplines within the arts and humanities emphasises the social construction of life-stages. In his classic study *Centuries of Childhood*, Phillipe Ariés (1962) demonstrated how childhood was a bourgeois invention of the eighteenth century. Rather than being related to one's biological age, childhood was a social construct that was embedded within broader processes of social, cultural, political and economic development. Similarly, the concept of 'youth' emerged in western countries at a time when the mode of production was changing, and young people engaged in extended periods of education before entering formal employment. Thus while youth came to be understood in mainstream discourse as a period in one's life characterised by being either partly or fully dependent on others for material support (Tyyskä, 2005, p.4), from a scholarly standpoint it was thought of as a social construction, embedded within relationships of class, ethnicity, community and status (Hall & Jefferson, 1976).

Understanding youth in this way implies that they are configured as social actors in quite different ways (Reguillo, 2009, p.22). Thus an important facet of constructionist perspectives is that conceptualisations of youth vary significantly between cultures and historical epochs. Indeed what constitutes 'youth' and what it means to be young in one context may have little relevance in another (Wulff, 1995, p.6). For example, some scholars have noted that the idealised, carefree ideals of childhood in western countries are not only middle class constructs (Ariés, 1962; Bourdieu, 1984), but such a life stage cannot be said to exist for the majority of the world's poor. Paradoxically, other scholars note a temporal *extension* of youth as rising levels of unemployment make it harder for young people to make successful transitions into paid employment and thus adulthood (Jeffrey, 2008; 2010; Jeffrey & McDowell, 2004, p.135). The point to emerge from this scholarship is that notions of youth may vary as much within a given society as between them, and biologically defined conceptions of youth fail to account for cultural and historical diversity.

Theorising youth in this way enables analysis of the agency of actors assumed to belong to a given category. From this perspective, being young is not simply an ascribed identity or something that one *is*, but rather a performance, something that one *does*. By acknowledging the ways that young people shape their day-to-day lives and challenge, contest and reproduce what it means to be 'youth' in the process, we are able to reject ahistorical functionalist accounts of social action that deny young people agency (James, 1995, p.45).

Given that our understandings of young people and the categories used to make sense of them are embedded within broader social currents of social change, contemporary understandings of youth are almost inseparable from globalisation. Thus in the same way that understandings of a singular identity have been displaced by more complex theorisations of *identities*, rigidly defined transitions between 'life-stages' have also been problematized. Thus rather than conceiving of straightforward transitions from schooling, work then retirement and their social corollaries child/youth, adult and old-age respectively, scholars emphasise the partial, fractured nature and multiplicity of *transitions*. As Leccardi (2006) argues, "[t]oday, biographical narrative seems to have lost its anchorage in this form of institutionalization of the life course, and the dimension of continuity associated with it" (p.15). Thus the emphasis of recent accounts is upon the ways that traditional, linear models and paths through life are being ruptured, reconfigured

and negotiated in conditions of late modernity (Dolby & Rizvi, 2008; Holm & Helve, 2005; Leccardi & Ruspini, 2006).

The implications of global transformations are acutely felt by young people. As Leccardi (2006) argues, these "…new characteristics of social time and their reflections on the construction of biography reverberate directly on the condition of youth" (p.15). For example, the dismantling of the welfare state, the permeation of neoliberalism and the hegemony of market logic has often constrained the agency of youth (Jeffrey, 2008, p.246). The significance of this is compounded for those excluded from the material benefits of globalisation. For example, in various parts of the Global South youth are simultaneously understood to be the 'promise of the future' and demonised as a threat to social order (Makwemoisa, 2002; Mabala, 2011). In such circumstances youth often resort to violence as a means of asserting their rights and regaining control in the face of uncertain futures. Furthermore, in postcolonial and developing nations young people have recently been exposed to new cultural influences and new ways of performing identities, yet at the same find it increasingly difficult to achieve hegemonic visions of success (Fernandes, 2006; Ganguly-Scrase & Scrase, 2009; Jeffrey, 2010). In the Indian context, the promise and potential of India as a new global superpower is invested largely on its youthful population (Lukose, 2008, p.133), at the same time as traditional avenues to mobility are being eroded (Jeffrey, 2010).

What it means to be young in the world is transforming dramatically (Giddens, 1991; Jeffrey & Dyson, 2008). However in the Global South constructions of youth have added dimensions of complexity. What does it mean to be young and to be forging identities at the intersections of tradition and modernity, development and consumerism? How do youth interpret and give meaning to the world around them? How are transitions to adulthood for lower middle class youth being affected by contemporary social transformations? Throughout this thesis I adopt a social constructionist conceptualisation of youth to address such questions. For operational purposes I define youth as those between the ages of 18 and 30, however in light of the foregoing discussion I do not consider this age spectrum to encapsulate "youth". Rather this age bracket was employed as a way of limiting my sample group such that meaningful comparisons can be made and conclusions drawn. Having identified my theoretical approaches to the Indian middle class and youth, I now elaborate the methodology of this study.

Chapter Four

Methodology and Settings

The starting point of my research is the epistemological assumption that the role of social science is not about arriving at a singular truth, but discovering how different people interpret the world in which they live (Grills, 1998; Marcus, 1998; Walliman, 2005; Willis, 2000). As such human behavior cannot be understood in a mechanical way, and therefore analysis cannot be sought through causal linkages and manipulation of variables (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p.3). Rather we must use a methodology that is able to take into account the activities, perspectives, relationships and understandings of self that mark the practical accomplishment of social life (Grills, 1998, p.16). Qualitative and ethnographic methods are particularly suited to this task. These forms of analysis enable the researcher to embed the experiences and narratives of individuals within broader processes of global change whilst avoiding problematic generalisations about the social world.

The ambiguity of this research method has meant that approaches to ethnography have varied significantly and the contested nature of ethnography therefore elides a singular definition (Grills, 1998, p.15; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). This does not undermine its value as a research tool but rather lends itself to rich interpretations in different contexts. For instance the ambiguity is manifest in the various forms of data collection that ethnographers use. Both quantitative and qualitative data are used for the analysis, however participant observation as well as informal conversations usually take precedence over quantification and statistical analysis (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p.3). This helps facilitate an in-depth, often small scale study, which interprets the meanings, functions and consequences of human actions and institutional practices, and how these are implicated in local and broader contexts (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p.3).

In light of recent criticism of ethnographic practice, one of the principle concerns of the researcher is grasping the tacit ways in which s/he participates in the construction of the social world that they seek to research. As Davies (1999, p.5) states:

…the relationships between ethnographer and informants in the field, which form the bases of subsequent theorizing and conclusions, are expressed through social interaction in which the ethnographer participates; thus ethnographers help to construct the observations that become their data.

This recognition problematizes the notion of objectivity naively sought by earlier positivist ethnographers and extends a long standing anti-positivist stance within sociology (Becker, 1963; Goffman, 1969). Importantly, it necessitates reflexivity on the part of the researcher. In a broad sense, reflexivity can be defined as an appreciation of the researchers' connection to the social world and recognition of their effect upon it (Davies, 1995, p.5). The reflexive researcher is able to negotiate postmodern and poststructuralist critiques which encourage the incorporation of various standpoints, problematize the intellectual tyranny of meta-narratives and recognise the implications of the authorial voice (Davies, 1995, p.5). Indeed by recognising that the lives of the researcher and researched alike are embedded within multiple contexts, and that people act at multiple points, times and places, a person's identity must be understood as an assemblage of thoughts, feelings, memories, ways of doing things which is always a compromise, always pragmatic, constantly in flux and never pure (Crang & Cook, 2007, p.10). Thus while the researcher can develop strategies to minimise the effects of reactivity on the part of informants, it must be emphasised that objectivity cannot, and should not, be the purpose of research.

However it is not only paying attention to the fractured, fluid and nuanced identity of the subject that is important for the ethnographer, but also recognising the same characteristics of the culture itself. As Crang and Cook (2007) state "No 'culture' can legitimately be ring-fenced from large-scale, political and economic processes because the global is not 'out there', intruding annoyingly on the study, but it is always 'in here', only existing through variously connected localities" (p.12). Similarly Marcus (1998) argues that the multiplicity of contexts is not only important for how we understand how subjects are constructed, but also for how systems wherein those subjects act are constructed (p.80). Through his conceptual development of a "multi-sited ethnography" researchers are able to problematize the distinction between, lifeworld/system, by undermining the singular conception of a system (Marcus, 1998, p.80). In addition, a multi-sited ethnography enables the interpretation of influences that construct the lifeworlds of variously situated subjects while they simultaneously construct aspects of the system itself. Such an analysis does not rely on strict dichotomies and static conceptions of particular systems, but is able

to elucidate the interplay of related historical and experiential factors (Ganguly-Scrase & Scrase, 2009, p.10).

Within this framework, the re-composition of time and space relations through globalisation does not threaten the role of ethnography, but rather places the researcher in a privileged position, from where one can "shed light on the fateful processes of our age" (Burawoy et al, 2000, p.5). For Burawoy et al (2000), this enabled an analysis of external forces, connections between sites and an appreciation of the imaginations of daily life. With regards to understanding the lived realities of neoliberalism, Kingfisher and Maskovsky (2007) advocate this perspective because it enables ethnographers to move beyond abstract and totalising forms of research. Rather, by stressing neoliberalism's instabilities, partialities and articulations with other cultural and political-economic formations, ethnographers are able to address the ways in which culture, power and government practices come together to form government regimes and patterns of inequality. In this way, ethnographers are able to probe the limits and boundaries of neoliberalism by treating it as a process rather than as something that simply "acts in the world" (Kingfisher & Maskovsky, 2007, p.118).

Despite the fruits offered through ethnographic research there is little micro-level ethnographic research that explores the nuanced effects of economic reforms on communities and local groups in India (Ganguly-Scrase & Scrase, 2009, p.16). Indeed most of the existing literature examines macro-economic processes and neglects the social consequences of the changing economic relations. In a modest attempt to part with these analyses, I conducted fieldwork in Dehradun and Darjeeling to elucidate the complexities, contradictions and nuances associated with middle class formation in contemporary India.

Prior to commencing my fieldwork I established contacts in both Dehradun and Darjeeling. I had written to these contacts with information about my projects' design and aims and discussed it at length upon my arrival. Through these initial contacts I was introduced to various stakeholders in the education community, including principals of colleges and schools, teaching and administrative staff, as well as students and their parents. In each location I also had a research assistant that lived in these respective areas and so was able to identify lower middle class neighbourhoods. Being introduced to people in these neighbourhoods from someone that lived within it meant that my presence was not met with any suspicion. On the contrary people were often eager to discuss my project and

help in any way that they could. The assistance they gave me varied from inviting me over for meals with their families, taking me to tourist locations on weekends, making various concoctions designed to alleviate an upset stomach, and of course, agreeing to participate in my research. Spending time in the neighbourhood and becoming a familiar face facilitated a rich data collection environment where people knew why I was there and trusted me as a result.

Having established myself within the region I started conducting interviews with people that I had got to know. These interviews were predominately conducted with male students within college-level education and took place in various locations of their choice, including college campuses, tea stalls, restaurants and their homes. On average these interviews lasted between twenty to thirty minutes, however I interviewed my informants multiple times and often for up to one hour. Although I was able to conduct some interviews with women the majority were with lower middle class males. I was interested in finding out how they value their education and what their viewpoints tell us about neoliberal reform and its effects on education. I started my asking rather open ended questions like "How have things changed around here?" I found this seemingly innocent question to be a good starting point for a rich discussion. As Becker (1997) argues, asking 'how' rather than 'why', gives participants the opportunity to explain their viewpoint without feeling as though they have to come up with a 'correct' answer. Asking 'why' can sound like an accusation and participants may feel like they have to defend their position or actions, rather than simply explain them. Furthermore, it is precisely because this question does not assume anything (with the exception of change) that participants may discuss phenomena that the interviewer has not previously considered (Becker, 1997, p.58-60). In this way I was able to ensure that there was a democratic relationship between what I thought was worth asking, and what participants thought was worth telling.

To supplement my interviews with male students I also conducted interviews with their parents and teachers. The interviews with their parents were particularly useful for interpreting dynamics of intergenerational transformation between youth and their elders. It was here that I began to see a sharp disjuncture between how these generations valued education. It was also useful for gaining rich data about the families and their backgrounds; about their ancestors, about 'how things used to be' and about how they feel about contemporary changes within India. The interviews with older teachers were useful for gaining an understanding of how neoliberal transformation has increased their

workloads and undermined educational institutions. While younger teachers were not able to speak so much about change in their jobs, interviewing them was interesting in terms of discussing the trajectories of educated youth. Many of these young people became teachers not because this was what they aspired to but because "there were no other options". These interviews were conducted on college campuses and in their homes after I had discussed with my research intentions with the principals. While I had a group of eight key informants in each location, the data considered here comes from a total of sixty interviews. All interviews were transcribed and then manually coded before generating results.

Interviewing various stakeholders gave me a rich understanding what education *means* for the lower middle classes in both Dehradun and Darjeeling. However this data collection method was interwoven with long periods of participant observation in which I would write field notes. Through participant observation I was able to further build rapport with my informants, and in doing so develop insights that other methodologies do not enable. As Moerman (1993) states "Culture's form and content appear in interaction's time" (p.97). By 'hanging out' and socialising with these youth I was able to get closer to the meanings which youth imbue various social phenomena. This was particularly apparent when drawing comparisons between the aspirations of youth in Dehradun and Darjeeling. For example, in Darjeeling I was walking with some friends past an advertisement of a young male dressed in corporate attire. It was advertising an agency that organised working visas in other countries. The young men laughed at it wryly and I queried why they were doing so. One of the men, dressed in clothes like those of his favourite heavy-metal rock band answered, "Do we look like this?" Another man reasoned that people do not really want to leave Darjeeling, but do so because they have to. So he felt it ironic that they were trying to make migration seem a desirable thing to do. Conversely, in Dehradun neoliberal public discourses in which corporate employment is valorised, met very little resistance but rather was almost always aspired to. Through such participant observation I was able to deepen my analysis such that I had a firm basis from which to interpret my data and draw conclusions.

Taken together, my methodological approach was designed to facilitate linkages between individuals and the classroom, schools and the wider public and policy communities, as well as elucidate how perceptions of education pattern and influence informants' involvement in it (Pole & Morrison, 2003, p.36). By focusing on middle class formation,

my methodology was also designed to gain an understanding of the new ways that elite social groups define and maintain barriers to the middle classes and how this affects lives of lower middle class youth. Having outlined the theoretical and methodological approach of this study I now discuss the settings before proceeding with my analysis.

The Settings

Dehradun

Located in the north of India, Dehradun is the capital of the state of Uttarakhand. The city is situated in the Garhwal region in the Doon Valley which is bound by the foothills of the Himalayas in the Northeast, the river Yamuna and the Ganges in the Northwest and Southeast respectively (Bandyopadhyay & Shiva, 1984). Dehradun was first brought under the control of the East India Company when the British defeated the Nepalese in the war of 1816-14. After the war and the ceding of the territory to the British in the Treaty of Sugowli, Dehradun was used as a centre of agriculture that supplied raw materials to other parts of the colony and abroad. As the colonial authority hastened its control of the area and the population grew (Pathak, 1997), Dehradun became a centre of excellence in terms of training and research. Throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century in particular, institutions such as the Forest Research Institute (formerly the Imperial Forest School) and the Indian Military Academy were built to cultivate excellence in the fields of forest research and military training. Throughout the pre and post-independence periods, several schools were also developed that attracted students from all over India. Most notable among these is The Doon School which was founded in 1935, but other schools such as St. Joseph's Academy helped consolidate the reputation of Dehradun.

Despite the repute of these institutions they nevertheless served the interests of elite social groups. Indeed opportunities for upward mobility amongst the rest of the populace remained extremely scarce. This was particularly the case for those living in rural areas who suffered the effects of internal colonialism, managerial failure and governmental neglect most acutely. Such processes have often led to the socio-economic dislocation of people and the loss of their traditional cultures and livelihoods (Pathak, 1997, p.909). Against this backdrop of marginalisation, poorer fractions of society in rural areas protested their exclusion from development agendas throughout the 1970s. Most notable among these protests was the Chipko movement which began in 1973 as commercial

exploitation in the hills threatened environmental sustainability and the livelihood of local industry (Mawdsley, 1998, p.39). To prevent the felling of hundreds of trees by a large corporation, employees of smaller businesses and local residents decided to intervene by placing their bodies between the axemen and the trees. This in turn gave rise to the name Chipko, which translates in Hindi to 'adhere' or 'stick to', or more colloquially as 'hug' (Mawdsley, 1998, p.39). Although subsequent protests that comprised the Chipko movement varied considerably according to the particular circumstances in which they took place, the state's management of forestry, the degradation of ecology and the impoverishment of already marginalised populations were common themes throughout (Mawdsley, 1998, p.40).

Notwithstanding the discontent of these peoples, infrastructural development in regional centres, as well as the growth of schools and government offices did allow a small portion of the populace to forge a middle class lifestyle. Many of the families that I interviewed in Dehradun had migrated from rural areas throughout the 1970s and 1980s and had been able to gain salaried work through their educational credentials. For these people government universities and colleges were the primary sites through which they consolidated their advantage. As with other parts of India, becoming educated enabled clear pathways for them into government posts which were provided by the Nehruvian model of state-led development (Deshpande, 2003, p.131). For the middle classes then, the development agenda of the post-independence era and its legacy in Dehradun enabled upward mobility and a relatively comfortable life.

Yet in line with broader currents of social transformation throughout India, certain developments throughout the 1980s and early 1990s have eroded the historic avenues to mobility for the middle classes (Ganguly-Scrase & Scrase, 2009; Fernandes, 2006; Jeffrey, 2010). Of particular importance in the context of Dehradun is this issue of caste reservation. In 1994, the then Uttar Pradesh government sought to impose the twenty-seven per cent reservation quotas for backward castes within educational institutions and government employment (Kumar, 2001). This decision sparked mass protests in the Uttaranchal district of the state, because backward castes were said to comprise just three percent of the population. To reserve twenty-seven percent of government posts for these people was therefore thought inimical to the interests of those that were seeking employment in an already hostile labour market. It was also contended that this decision would encourage backward caste peoples to migrate *en masse* to the area, which would

precipitate other social problems. The issue of caste reservation was linked to social issues peculiar to Uttaranchal such as forestry management, and it was argued that the specificity of these issues could only be adequately addressed if a separate state was created (Kumar, 2001, p.4692). In the wake of these protests, the state of Uttarakhand was carved out of Uttar Pradesh on 8 November 2000. Despite the success of these movements in achieving statehood, reservation policies implemented since then have undermined the middle classes' exclusive access to government education and employment. Further, it has meant that competition for government positions amongst the middle class has increased because there are fewer on offer.

Coupled with the pressures associated with caste reservation for the middle classes are hardships related to structural adjustment. For Uttarakhand in general, liberalisation of the Indian economy has had negative impacts on rural employment, eroded government welfare provision, and has had limited impacts in terms of alleviating poverty (Dyson, 2010, p.485). Liberalisation has also led to a crisis in white-collar employment generation and concentrated employment in metropolitan areas (Jeffrey & McDowell, 2004, p.134). Furthermore, although Growth State Domestic Product (GSDP) nearly tripled to over 10 percent when Uttarakhand became a separate state, agricultural production has decreased and urban poverty increased (World Bank, 2012). At the same time, the role of the service sector in the economy has become greater which favours those who hold higher educational credentials (World Bank, 2009, p.116). Taken together these trends raise questions about the equitability of economic growth in Dehradun and suggest the increasing polarisation between social groups.

Although this implies that the lower middle classes may be able to consolidate their advantage, the particular educational institutions they have access to have been undermined by neoliberal transformation. According to statistics from 2010-2011, there are 178,733 higher education universities and colleges in Uttarakhand with just 1,677 teachers between them (Government of Uttarakhand, 2011/2012). This equates to an average student teacher ratio of 107:1. The principal of the largest college in Dehradun which many lower middle class youth attended said that there was between 30,000-35,000 students enrolled there with just 300-400 teaching staff. Furthermore, although education remains the largest category of public expenditure for the Uttarakhand government, the annual increases of 3-4 percent investment (World Bank, 2012) do not match the growth rate of enrolments within them. This suggests per capita disinvestment in educational

institutions. Similar to patterns identified in diverse contexts, the overcrowding of classrooms and government disinvestment in Uttarakhand have had negative effects on educational institutions.

There are two further related aspects of educational transformation that are significant for an analysis middle class formation in Dehradun. The first is the creation of a private subsector in education. Over the last ten to fifteen years private institutions offering technical qualifications such as engineering and business degrees have proliferated. These private institutions range from well-resourced elite institutions with exorbitant fees, to poor quality institutions of minimal expense. Students from the upper fractions of the middle class that attend to elite colleges said that they simply "would not go" to government institutions in the local area and refused to attend private institutions without a "good" reputation. Many of these students even said that attending the universities or colleges as their parents was no longer worthwhile because they would not get the skills necessary for work in the private sector. By creating and then deploying their resources within this private subsector, dominant social groups are able to shelter themselves from the negative effects of neoliberal transformation, such as overcrowding. In doing so they are able transmit privilege across generations by ensuring that access to the skills and competencies valued within the global economy remains limited.

The second important aspect of educational transformation for the lower middle classes in particular is heightened competition within government examinations. Although neoliberal transformation has undermined government educational settings in a broad sense, there are many throughout India considered centres of excellence. Arguably most notable among these are the Indian Institutes of Technology (IIT) of which there are twelve throughout the country. Many youth from the lower middle classes aspire to entry into IIT and comparable institutions. For the majority of the populace that do not have the economic resources and social ties necessary to get into elite colleges, government examinations offer their only chance of accessing quality education. Yet because seats within these institutions cost a nominal fee and the quality of education imparted considered very good, competition for admission is extremely intense. As such the educational strategies of almost all fractions of society in Dehradun are centred upon succeeding, indeed exceeding, with entry examinations. Whereas the upper fractions of the middle classes are able to purchase entry to elite colleges should they not succeed with these tests, the lower middle classes compete with large numbers of the populace in order to secure their futures.

Alongside private tuition centres are "coaching clinics" that are designed to equip job aspirants with the skills to succeed within recruitment processes. The traits emphasised within these included "Effective communication" (read speaking English well) and "Personality Development". This latter, rather uncomfortable term, usually means ensuring that subjects value and behave in ways that are suitable for the neoliberal project. In this sense a "developed personality" is one in which subjects endeavour to "work hard", "work efficiently" and obey the often extreme demands of their ostensibly benevolent employers, such as working long hours. A bad personality is one in which people question the legitimacy of doing so. "Good personalities" were developed during group discussions and mock interviews. Although these clinics offer no formal qualifications, all the lower middle class youth that I spoke felt that attending these is "necessary" if one expects to gain employment.

To explore how lower middle class youth seek to reproduce their social position within this redefined educational landscape, I conducted fieldwork in various settings. The majority of the youth that formed my sample group were attending or had attended a large government-aided college in the centre of town which had been acutely affected by contemporary economic and social transformation. As I mentioned previously there are currently 30 000-35 000 students enrolled there, and according to the principle enrolments had more than doubled in the previous decade. When I asked administrators of the college for exact figures they said that they did not record them because they could not "keep up" with the rate of enrolment. Physically the campus is in a state of disrepair, with once grand buildings and statues dedicated to its founder literally falling to pieces. Newer buildings are in desperate need of coats of paint and classes often take part in rooms which have no glass in the space left for windows or without doors to separate oneself from distractions outside (including rioting students and monsoonal rain). The overcrowding of classrooms and their physical neglect demonstrates poignantly the contradictions engendered within neoliberal change.

I also spent time in several private tuition centres that sought to equip students with the skills necessary to succeed in government examinations. Many of these have started operating in the last ten years as competition within examinations has increased. Like formal educational settings these vary significantly in quality. However those which lower middle class youth's families could afford entry to are of a marginal standard. For example, in one of these institutions that I frequented none of the people in teaching roles

had any formal teaching qualifications; I sat in on many classes where 'teachers' would dismiss the questions of frustrated students as they asked for a particular point to be explained; "You just need practice" was a common response, stated as if that was the answer to students' enquiry. The young people that attended these were discontent but felt as though the few skills they did learn were important for their futures. As I have found, youth in this study draw creatively upon the resources at their disposal and develop their educational strategies between colleges and universities, private tuition, coaching clinics and study within the home.

Having gotten to know young people within educational settings, I was often invited to their homes where I was introduced to their families and friends. Most of those that I came to know well live in the northern suburbs of Dehradun where the contradictions of neoliberal development were increasingly visible. These were highly stratified villages which had grown over the last twenty years as people that had been displaced in rural areas moved to Dehradun in search for work. Poor people within them often lived in temporary shacks, without electricity and potable water. Infrastructure was poor, electricity would often be disconnected for long periods throughout the day, the roads were neglected and government projects that had been started remained unfinished. For example, in one village the construction of a new bridge had commenced to replace an older one which was considered dangerous. Although the bridge was near completion, funding for the project was said to have run out. At present it lies unused, except by children for whom it is a novel addition to their evening games.

Set against this backdrop of governmental neglect were "gated communities" and flats being built by the elite. They looked rather peculiar, often reaching more than ten stories into the sky and built rather sporadically upon an uninterrupted landscape. These spaces were said to offer "modern living" and residing within them served to socially and physically separate oneself from subordinate social groups. In the evening they were quiet neighbourhoods, with guards out the front monitoring people's comings and goings, serving as a symbolic reminder that access could be and was limited. Occasionally a car would pass through the front gates, interrupting the otherwise eerie stillness. Other than the occasional entry or exit there was very little movement, the lighting inside the only reminder that these spaces were indeed inhabited. There were no children playing games to be seen.

The lower middle classes live between these extremes. Typically they own single storey homes with three or four rooms. Often siblings share bedrooms and families use single rooms for multiple purposes, such as sleeping, studying, watching television and eating meals. I was fortunate enough to be invited around for many lunches and dinners which usually consisted of rather large serves of dhal and rice with one or sometimes two vegetables on the side. The rainy season meant that there was no shortage of mangoes for dessert that the children collect on their way home from school. Their houses were sparsely furnished yet comfortable, and were clustered together in areas that were relatively homogenous in terms of the socio-economic status of their owners. Many of the families within them work in lower level positions within the public sector and earned joint household incomes of between 25,000-35,000 Rupees per month. Some earned similar incomes working in comparable positions in private firms.

Although these families take pride in the presentation of their homes and they are generally well kept, the status accorded them through home ownership is being undermined by the growth of elite neighbourhoods. We often discussed this together after an evening walk, when we sat in a chai stall that is across the road from a building site where "modern flats" are being constructed. Some of the men are optimistic about these buildings arguing that Dehradun was a rapidly developing area, what were once empty paddocks were beginning to "look nice". Others resent these buildings because they felt that they symbolised westernisation, and the loss of Indian culture. Despite being unable to agree upon whether these developments are right or wrong, there is a consensus that government employment is no longer sufficient to realise middle class aspirations[4]. For these men and their families, the once comfortable and relatively predictable lives that their parents forged in Dehradun throughout the 1970s and 1980s are being transformed by the neoliberal project as it privatises historic avenues of upward mobility.

Exclusion from the forms of housing that signify cultural and social distinction within the contemporary era is just one source of ambivalence, uncertainty and alienation for the lower middle classes. Feeling as though they were unable to compete within other realms of social life, such as labour markets, meant that they faced the prospects of downward mobility. The burdens of this were acutely felt by young people, who aspired to inclusion

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[4] This finding has been recognised in broader literatures concerning the Indian middle classes, such as the observations made by Ganguly-Scrase and Scrase (2009) and their study in Kolkata.

within the upper middle classes yet had lost the supports granted by the state to help them achieve that position. It was through education that they sought to mediate this uncertainty. They would often study well into the night long after their younger siblings and parents had gone to bed in order to secure their futures. There was a strong sense that life was changing dramatically for these people, and through an analysis of youth's experiences in education this thesis sheds light on some of the ways how.

Darjeeling

Darjeeling is located in the Northeast of India in the state of West Bengal. The region was first developed by the British in the early nineteenth century and was seen as a strategic location from which to monopolise trade and commerce. Yet because of its geographical location power over the area was heavily contested between other countries including China, Tibet, Bhutan and most notably Nepal. The years 1814-1866 were the period in which this conflict was its most intense: 1814 being the year that the Nepali war broke out and 1866 marking the date that the conflict along the Bhutanese border came to an end. Within this period, the British used their military might and political strength to varying degrees to defeat their adversaries and forge the current shape of Darjeeling.

Coupled with advantageous circumstances for trade, Darjeeling had been recognised by colonial functionaries as having health benefits, such as a cool climate to offer refuge from the heat of the plains (Kennedy, 1996, p.23). Although conflict continued within the area the British set up sanatorium in the early part of the nineteenth century. Yet it was not until the latter part of the same century that the development of Darjeeling was hastened. In particular the rapid growth of tea plantations, the establishment of a military corps, and the growth of trade and commerce encouraged rapid migration to the area (Chakrabarty, 2005, p.175). It was also around this time that elite government schools such as St. Paul's School, The Victoria School and St. Josephs College were set up to educate the domiciled European population (Dewan, 1991). While the government initially denied the local populace education, various missionaries, whose influence in the area is still strong today, set about elaborating a system of vernacular education. Of these missionaries it was Reverend William Macfarlane that was the most successful, establishing twenty five primary schools functioning with six hundred and fifteen pupils receiving instruction in 1873 (O'Malley, 1907, p.171-2).

Despite the attempts of these missionaries to educate the local population, the particular administrative and employment opportunities available in Darjeeling necessitated their exploitation and subordination. Indeed tea plantations were the primary source of employment at the end of the nineteenth century (O'Malley, 1907, p.23). Nevertheless as education spread and industry gradually developed, the local population protested their marginalisation and began to articulate recognition for their separateness and distinct identity (Chakrabarty, 2005, p.176). Despite the cultural and linguistic diversity of the largely immigrant population, these demands were consolidated as Nepali became the *lingua franca* of the district and the Nepalis' identity superseded that of other ethnic groups. Throughout the early twentieth century this emerging social group discussed issues of social reform and the material and spiritual uplift of their people in newspapers, journals and various literary works that were proliferating at the time (Chalmers, 2009). Although taking place in Darjeeling, the extent and the influence of these works constitute part of what has been called the Nepali Renaissance (Rai, 2009, p.254).

Despite the emphasis within this literature on what the growing population shared, the emerging public sphere was an exclusionary one and participation within it largely depended upon one's social class position (Chalmers, 2009, p.112). This stifled the efforts of the Nepali middle class as they fought for recognition in ways that could theoretically enable social mobility. For example, one outcome of their various political demands was that Nepali was included in the syllabi at the University of Calcutta and was used as the medium of instruction at middle schools as of 1930 (Chakrabarty, 2005, p.176). Yet because there were few opportunities within the local economy that necessitated formal education, these political concessions did little to mediate inequalities that existed between social groups. The important factor here then is that acute socio-economic and class differences persisted in colonial Darjeeling even as the populace was mobilised under the shared premises of a common identity.

Although the structures of domination and subordination that this middle class sought to overthrow were set up by the British, many of the problems that inhibited Darjeeling's development prior to achieving independence continued well after 1947. These included inadequate infrastructure, increasing unemployment and governmental neglect more broadly. For the majority of the local population educational opportunities remained poor even as Darjeeling was home to some of the most prestigious institutions throughout India (Dewan, 1985). The neglect of the Gorkha people was evidenced most potently by the

repeated denial of the Indian Congress to cede the requests of various political parties that Darjeeling be recognised as a separate state. From the Gorkhas' perspective, which was also championed by the Communist Party of India (CPI), social problems would continue as long as the West Bengal government refused to acknowledge the linguistic and ethnic specificity of the Darjeeling people. Thus whereas a strong public sector necessitated a significant portion of the populace be educated for local government positions in major cities and regional areas throughout India, governmental neglect in the Darjeeling Hills inhibited the development of the region in general, and the growth of a strong middle class in particular.

While underdevelopment and ethnic discrimination had long been a source of protest and conflict in the Hills, it culminated in fully fledged violence in the mid-1980s. The relatively stable political situation was undermined when the leader of the All India Gorkha League (AIGL) passed away. This created a political opening which was filled by the Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF) who adopted a more militant approach to promote the demands for autonomy (Lacina, 2009, p.1007). The demonstrations and protests that followed led to many fatalities, which in turn put pressure on the West Bengal and Indian governments to ease the violence. This violence continued intermittently until 1988 when the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council (DGHC) Act was drawn. Although the Act did not meet the demands of separate statehood, it provided an institutional framework in which Darjeeling became a semi-autonomous region, such that it had both legislative and administrative powers over local matters (Lacina, 2009, p.1007). While there have been broad based criticisms of the 1988 Act regarding the extent to which it granted autonomy to the region (Chakrabarty, 2005, p.185), it did facilitate some degree of political stability in the area. Notwithstanding the political situation remains a precarious one, in which democracy is starved by local autocracies (Lacina, 2009) and the demands for separate statehood have not been met.

This set of circumstances intersects with processes of neoliberal transformation to create a distinct set of challenges to, and patterns of, middle class formation peculiar to Darjeeling. For India more broadly the dismantling of the welfare state has had negative effects for the middle classes that depended upon government employment to reproduce their social position (Fernandes, 2006; Jeffrey, 2010). Yet in Darjeeling the public sector prior to the 1990s was little more than a strong military presence (Lacina, 2009, p.1002). According to statistics from 2001 the number of employees in State Government Offices was just 19,

306 out of the total population of 1,609,172 in the same year (Government of West Bengal, 2004). Thus in Darjeeling the downsizing of the state has not in itself undermined employment opportunities for the middle classes – precisely because they never really existed. This situation is compounded by the continued economic marginalisation of the region. For example, the West Bengal government has retained its control of state forests, which in turn denies the DGHC access to tea and timber, inhibiting its capacity to generate its own resources (Chakrabarty, 2005, p.185). An associated effect of underdevelopment in the region is rising unemployment. Indeed from 1996-97 to 2000-01 there was a 68 percent increase in the total number of recipients the Government West Bengal's unemployment assistance scheme (Government of West Bengal, 2004). Since the 1990s and early 2000s then, the economic situation in Darjeeling has deteriorated, thus making it increasingly difficult to forge a middle class lifestyle.

One aspect of neoliberal transformation that Darjeeling shares with other parts of India is the undermining of educational institutions. For example, in 1999-2000 there were 9,272 students enrolled at 12 separate General Degree Colleges in the Darjeeling District. In 2003-04 there were 13,943 at 15 separate General Degree Colleges (Government of West Bengal, 2004). This amounts to an average increase of enrolment of 20 percent per institution. Furthermore, while there has been an *increase* in the amount of institutions from 12 to 15, there has been a *decrease* in the amount of teachers within them from 516 in 1999-2000 to 308 in 2003-04 (Government of West Bengal, 2004). This means that the student teacher ratio in General Degree Colleges has increased from 1:18 to 1:45. Furthermore, although Darjeeling is considered a centre of educational excellence, the number of students enrolled in educational settings decreases significantly between primary, higher secondary and the college and university levels. For example, in 2003-04 there were 16,015 students enrolled in Darjeeling Municipality at the primary level, 5169 at the higher secondary level, and 3,825 at the college and university level (including both Professional and Technical Colleges and General Degree Colleges and universities) (Government of West Bengal, 2004). One plausible explanation for the dramatic decrease after the primary school level is that children who have boarded at elite primary institutions leave Darjeeling and return to their families. The same process undoubtedly occurs when students finish their higher secondary studies and migrate to the plains to continue with their education. Others may discontinue their studies and search for work in the local economy. Whatever the reason that such few students study at the university and

college level, these patterns suggest that there is little scope for realising middle class aspirations in Darjeeling through educational credentials. This point is compounded by the fact that there are limited places available within colleges.

These figures become even more significant when they are considered in relation to the differentiated structure of education in Darjeeling. Although a private subsector has not been developed at the college or university level to the same extent as Dehradun, the educational landscape in Darjeeling Municipality is nevertheless hierarchical. While I was there I boarded at a college that had a good reputation and was well resourced. Like other colleges in the area it has religious affiliations through which it receives funding. As well as this it was relatively expensive and the fees charged subsidised expenses incurred by the college. Through these varied sources of funding these colleges are able to mitigate some of the negative effects of neoliberal transformation. Furthermore, because they are still able to impart what was considered to be quality education, students come from various parts of India and neighbouring countries to attend this college, and are typically from upper middle class backgrounds. They are the sons and daughters of fathers whom held jobs within the higher tiers of government office or successful businessmen. While the fees to these colleges are not exorbitant, they are nevertheless enough to exclude the majority of the populace. The lower middle classes are on the cusp of exclusion and inclusion in relation to these colleges, the fees demanded are a stretch for them to afford. It is clear that this and comparable institutions have been able to consolidate their reputation despite broader transformations affecting the educational landscape in Darjeeling. And it was because they have been able to do so the negative effects of structural adjustment are concentrated heavily on one institution in the town centre.

It was that institution that the key informants of my study attend. They are the children of lower level government employees, small businesses owners and employees. Their college had many smashed windows, broken floor-boards, and when it rained heavily the roof would leak. As I got to know some of the students there I found that the administrative functioning of the school was also problematic. Students felt completely neglected by their teachers and would often not go to class for that reason. At the same time they felt that meeting the requirements of examinations could be achieved with relative ease because the tests had been made easier so that more people would pass. Yet teachers themselves were clearly unable to meet increasing demands. One teacher even told me that at some points throughout the week his timetable demanded that he be in two places at once. The effects

of neoliberal transformation on this college were particularly adverse, and the lower middle class youth that were trying to realise their aspirations through it had understandable concerns for their futures.

Coupled with the localised difficulties of reproducing ones social position are broader hardships related to ethnic discrimination. Despite their marginalisation the majority of youth in Darjeeling today continue to identify as Gorkha which they feel discursively separates them from "mainstream" India. They feel indifferent to dominant discourses of national development and the dreams and desires of the ostensibly homogenous Indian nation are subordinated to the specific demands of the Gorkha people. This added an interesting dimension to an analysis of middle class formation in the area: although people's classed interests were inherently divisive, the shared sense of ethnicity bound segments of the population in interesting ways. For example, unlike Dehradun where elite neighbourhoods were clearly distinguishable from those of poorer groups, in Darjeeling government workers would live in houses not unlike those of labourers and drivers. This shared sense of ethnicity also meant that young people forged friendship networks that bridged class and caste divides. Indeed my key informants referred to each other as "cousins" because according to them their respective families have been in Darjeeling since it was founded, and therefore they must have been directly related at some historical moment. Thus divisive socio-economic differences intersected with a binding ethnic identity to sometimes mediate the more acute effects of class conflict. This reinforced the point that the middle classes in contemporary India are a culturally heterogeneous social group.

Like in Dehradun, my fieldwork began by spending time at colleges and universities getting to know staff members and students. As I befriended many of the students we started spending time together after class and on weekends. We would hang out at popular tourist destinations in the centre of town, smoke cigarettes and occasionally – if certain that we were beyond the purview of adults and peers – drink alcohol. I also spent time at their houses with their families. Because my study was not an analysis of educational processes, it was when we were off campus that I gathered my most substantive data. It was then that the hardships of the present and uncertainties of the future were most readily and honestly discussed. These young men felt that the prospects of finding employment within Darjeeling were bleak and therefore anticipated migrating to the plains when they finished their studies. Yet this was an anguished decision because leaving the region meant

being unable to work toward the development of the area. Further, because these people felt that their education was of poor quality, there were no certainties that they would be able to get meaningful work if they were to migrate. And most significantly, leaving Darjeeling meant leaving a social and cultural milieu within which they belonged and were accepted, the discrimination they anticipated facing in the plains heightening their anxiety. Lower middle class youth in Darjeeling had to negotiate these competing aspects of social life as they sought to reproduce their class position. This thesis explores how so they attempt to do so through education.

Chapter Five

The Social Construction of Educational Value

The aim of this chapter is to explore the social construction of educational value amongst lower middle class youth. By drawing upon semi-structured interviews, I explore the historical and social circumstances in which young people imbue education with meaning. I show that while lower middle class youth generally reflect critically upon their education, their perceptions are structured by (and in turn reproduce) classed, gendered and cultural specificities. The youth in this study are acutely aware that educational institutions structure varying opportunities for their futures. For this reason the 'value' of education is changing amongst them. I start with a discussion of how adults in Dehradun came to value education and then make sense of how these attitudes have changed amongst youth today. Unlike their parents, male youth are unable to cultivate educated identities that socially distinguish themselves from the rest of the populace. I also point to the differing cultural phenomena that precipitate diverse valuations of education between genders. I then discuss the meanings that lower middle class youth attach to their education in Darjeeling. I show that youth who attend religious institutions are content with their education whilst those who attend government ones are not. Further, whether or not one attends a religious institution is a more significant variable when valuing their education than gender. By highlighting the diverse meanings that youth attach to their education we are able to elucidate the complexities associated with educational transformations. We are able to show how these transformations are *undermining* the capacity of lower middle class youth to reproduce their advantage in the contemporary era and how this is subjectively experienced. Indeed the value of education is in question precisely because it is no longer certain that it will translate into future benefits. In the following chapter I discuss how the meanings youth attach to their education translate into strategies within it.

Dehradun

Reflecting upon the value of education: the views of parents

I arrived at Rakesh's house in the early evening one day in June. Despite the monsoonal gloom, punctuated by an eerie grey sky and the imminent threat of rain, the neighbourhood was a rather colourful, well-kept one. The houses were similar in size, shape, and design, yet the owners of each keen to express their individuality; freshly painted in various bright colours as they were. Rakesh lives on the northern side of town, where the Doon Valley meets the foothills of the Himalayas. His father moved there in the late 1970s from a village in the mountains and his family inherited this piece of land, as Rakesh says laughingly, "Because no-one else wanted it". Like his father before him, Rakesh works in a government post, his income modest yet valued because it is a secure position, with a handsome pension paid for life upon his nearing retirement.

Like many parents of the youth that I spoke to, Rakesh views education in a positive way. This was because he was able to translate his credentials into secure salaried employment. He reflected upon his time in education as a period of intellectual development, characterised by ease and a sense of "knowing where one was going". Indeed many lower middle class parents that I spoke with aspired to such "respectable" roles such as teachers and police officers. One recently retired teacher from a local government college reflected upon his experiences like this:

> Before, I mean in the '70s and '80s we would graduate and then straight away we would be employed. Actually before you finish you had a job lined up. I finished my studies one day and I am working the very next day! So education was very good for us…

Yet becoming educated served not only as a way of securing employment, but as a means of 'cultural distinction' through which they used embodied and objectified forms of cultural capital to physically and symbolically delineate boundaries between themselves and 'others'. Thus through education the middle classes forged identities that were integral to their continued accumulation and reproduction. Often during their nostalgic recollections, older men in particular discursively separated the worlds inside and outside educational contexts, romanticising the former and dissociating themselves from the latter:

> We would be walking through the streets on our way to school in the morning… we could not wait to get there. We would come to school and spend all day there. We would be laughing and playing but studying very hard also…we were very

disciplined. Everybody knew that we went there, and people also knew who did not…

Thus by attending educational contexts young people acquired an aesthetic disposition, or a habitus through which the lower middle classes socially separated themselves from subordinate social groups. Indeed for the older generations that I interviewed it was the dual processes of obtaining employment and cultural distinction which were the primary benefits (the latter often implied) of receiving education. Within this context, education itself came to be understood as an intrinsic good, seen in isolation from the intricate web of circumstances which afforded its recipients privilege.

Yet it was precisely because education was exclusionary that it enabled the middle classes to secure scarce employment opportunities and forge identities through it that were distinct from the rest of the populace (Deshpande, 2003, p.131). However as increasing numbers have access to government institutions, they have been labelled by dominant social groups not as sites of middle class privilege but pathologised and stigmatised as being incapable of meeting students' demands. Labelling these institutions in this way enables the dominant social groups to devalue the credentials of those that attend these institutions. Simultaneously, they valorise new forms of education available at institutions where access can be controlled – such as private institutions – so as to reproduce their privilege through time. It is within this new set of circumstances that youth attach meanings to education.

Contemporary perceptions of education amongst male youth

The lower middle classes occupy a precarious position within the redefined cultural field of education. Because access to elite private institutions is predominately determined by stocks of economic capital, they are often (but not always) excluded from these. When I discussed with them how they felt about the institutions they have access to, many young men reflected upon their experiences within the classroom to highlight their discontent:

> We are told these days that it is all about education. Education, education, education! They say that if we want success then that it is what we need, this is what India needs! So everybody comes to school and college and you think that this is the right thing to do. But tell me, look at this classroom, how can it be that important? Why do I need this? Often we have to go and get the teacher and tell

him that he has a class on. One teacher came in on the first day of the year and put the syllabus on the desk and said "There, good luck in the exam". We did not see him again. I cannot see why I need to be here…

Similarly, another young male student of a government college emotively said to me:

What is the point of us going to class? Suppose we went and the teacher is there and he is teaching us and I go to ask a question or something. I say "excuse me sir" but he will just keep talking. And so if you miss one thing, then it is very hard to follow the whole thing, he just keeps talking. There is also a lot of people there and this makes it harder I think. But still he doesn't care about what we say…

The disengagement of teachers is one of the most common criticisms amongst male students. Many young people feel that education is becoming redundant because they do not "learn anything" and that their "teachers do the bare minimum they have to". They also feel that there are not sufficient resources for everybody. Yet by speaking with teachers themselves, I found that rote learning was a strategy that teachers largely adopted because they felt they had no other options in overcrowded, under-resourced circumstances. Thus young people's criticisms of teachers and the value they subsequently attach to education must be seen within the broader socio-political context within which structural adjustment policies (ushered in by and intended to serve elite social groups) have undermined government institutions.

Although young men attach meanings to education in historical and social circumstances completely unlike those of their parents, there were important continuities between generations. In particular, receiving education and being seen as educated amongst peers remains central to middle class membership and local visions of masculine success. Yet for the youth that I interviewed, this served to exacerbate their ambivalence:

I know that education is very important. If I want to succeed this is what I have to do, without it you cannot get a big job, it will be hard to get married, and people will think that you are a failure. But my problem is that I do not enjoy it anymore. It is very hard to enjoy it because I cannot see what is the point. It's like…everyone says it is the most important thing, but at college no-one really cares.

Aniket's comments were typical of the changing attitude of lower middle class male youth toward education in Dehradun. On the one hand he feels as though he "knows" education

is important but simultaneously questions whether it will be useful for him. Furthermore, because the lower middle classes are unable to access elite institutions within which the newly valorised identities and habitus's are acquired and forged, their capacity to cultivate distinction through education is at stake. Often young men resent this because they know that the presence of "undesirables" in the government institutions was undermining their prestige. Without being able to produce status through education lower middle class youth are unable to shore up their position within the middle class. Indeed the meanings which male youth attach to education in Dehradun are perhaps best understood in terms of ambivalence: youth feel that it is both "necessary" and "a waste of time".

Contemporary perceptions of education amongst female youth

Although males are disgruntled with formal education at the college level, attitudes of lower middle class youth intersected with gendered positions in important ways. Whereas education is seen as essential for achieving employment and local visions of masculine success, for female youth education has different meanings. While it is fundamental for their status as members of the middle class, they are less concerned with its capacity to translate into employment. This is because education is seen by women as a means to challenge cultural and familial expectations. These expectations are such that women are still largely expected to carry the burden of domestic reproduction by their parents. From their parent's perspective, education is important for women to the extent that it will enable them to "marry well". Some parents I spoke to evidently felt this way but were reluctant to admit it:

> AD: You said that you will support your daughter through education "no matter what".
>
> Father: Yes…
>
> AD: So in the future what opportunities do you think this will provide for her?
>
> Father: Oh lots of opportunities. She will be able to look after her family.
>
> AD: How?
>
> Father: She will be able to work if she has to, and in other ways.
>
> AD: What other ways?

Father: This is not just my thoughts this is all of Dehradun, almost all of India! She must still raise the family.

In this exchange we see that paid work is not something that is considered desirable by this father. Significantly, paid work is subordinated to her primordially constructed duties of raising a family and household reproduction; this is a "must".

Yet for female students themselves, education is an important space within with they could earn some autonomy and institutional recognition independent of their families and the home. The resulting tensions culminated in conflict in the home rather than disgruntled attitudes toward education itself. One young woman put it this way:

My father has worked as a policeman for many years, he has a good education. My mother is also educated but she never had a job, she is a housewife. She wants the best for me and so does my father, but they do not see things the same as me you know? India is changing now. All young women they want to go to school and get a job now, still we can raise a family and do these things around the home, but that is not *all* we want to do…

Thus in contrast to male youth, who feel that education is not going to be effective for them, for women education itself is seen as important for challenging cultural expectations. While they still plan to translate their education into suitable employment, challenging patriarchal norms in large part overshadowed concerns related to that process. For this reason women are satisfied with the education they are receiving.

In this sense educational contexts were an important site for women articulating their sense of self. Indeed many women felt a sense of pride in coming to college. One twenty-one year old female said this to me:

We are here now, and this is a big improvement. Not just for me here but for girls all over India, especially in rural areas. India is not so backward looking anymore and I feel very lucky to be here. Globalisation has brought this change…

For this woman, and the other females in the group when I spoke to her, the best part about education is the 'being there'. They feel like it is a space where they were respected for doing what they want to do, rather than obeying the wishes of others.

Nevertheless there is a major contradiction underlying all of this: these women sought institutional recognition within educational contexts by displaying forms of behaviour that are associated with conservative gendered norms, such as diligence and obedience. In turn, this translated into social practices within educational sites that reinforced rather than challenged patriarchal codes of authority. For example, female students would often spend their free time between classes studying in small groups away from the front gates where males congregated in large numbers. In this way, it reinforced locally salient attitudes toward public spaces where men actively colonise larger spaces while women retreat into smaller clusters. Furthermore, from the teachers perspective, males "do not take their studies seriously", whereas the females "listen and study hard". In these ways the actions of females are validated to the extent that they behave in ways that accord with notions of respectable femininity.

Darjeeling

The value of education: between religious and non-religious institutions

In Darjeeling, the value that the lower middle class youth attach to education varies significantly between the types of institution one was attending. For example, in religious institutions, almost all students that I spoke to are content with their education. They speak very highly of their Fathers and professors and feel they need to work hard in order to repay their indebtedness:

> The Fathers and the professors here are very good. Everybody respects them a lot because they do a good job for us, our teachers they are very knowledgeable. We must show that we are grateful by working as hard as we can.

This is a typical response from students that attended religious institutions, most of whom identify as Christian. For students attending these institutions there is a consensus that all the staff are doing a good job on their behalf. Not only does this mean that students seek to repay this 'debt' through hard work but it also meant they were optimistic about where their education was taking them:

> Of course now I cannot see exactly which job that I will get, but I know that the Father's here are doing the best for us. We know that we will get a job because this education is very good quality.

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In religious institutions it is because of a sense of trust invested within their teachers that students feel that their education will afford them employment. In this way youth's Christian identifications serve to bolster and consolidate discourses that reify the importance of education.

This is not to say that students are completely content with their education. Some of these colleges are very strict and many students resented and subverted rules which they feel are not directly related to their education. For example, in most colleges students are not allowed to smoke, and in one college in particular they are not able to use mobile phones and are only allowed to speak English. Thus when students arrived at college they have to abide by rules which directly counter their practices outside it. While youth often broke these rules unbeknownst to staff, the students do not completely reject them because to do so would be to jeopardise one's position within that college. This would mean losing out on what was widely conceived to be quality education. Although youth feel that these rules often constrained them, their criticisms are not directly related to education itself, nor those who delivered it. This is because of the authorial identity of the teachers as well as the colleges' broader historical affiliation with Christianity.

These colleges' Christian affiliations also affect youth's perceptions of education in a second sense. Through these affiliations these universities have additional sources of funding, which meant that they are able to shelter themselves from the negative effects associated with government disinvestment. For this reason there is a sense amongst the students of continuity rather than change, and they feel that their education will deliver them what it did for their parents:

> My father worked very hard in his early years, and this same college gave him everything that he needed. Now I am here and I must work also. Everything is here that I need so if I work hard then I will be okay I think.

In short, the perceptions of education amongst youth in institutions with religious affiliations are positive for two main reasons. Firstly because students respect the religious authority of their teachers, and secondly, because funding arrangements within them are such that neoliberal development has not undermined what those institutions have historically been able to do: transmit privilege across generations.

The meanings attached to education by youth in institutions without religious affiliations are far more ambiguous. Students, regardless of whether or not they identify as Christian, feel like education was important for their futures, but their experiences within it have challenged the assumption that it is necessarily positive. Whereas religious institutions have been able to shelter themselves from the funding pressures of neoliberal development, government institutions have been unable to do so. This means they are burdened with the pressures of increasing enrolments while the government is reducing its expenditure within them. This contradiction manifests in the physicality of these colleges – once grand buildings in desperate need of repair – as well as the views of youth toward their education within them. For example, Prayash is a twenty-two year old student that had tried working in call-centres in Delhi but could not receive promotions without college level education. His father had always encouraged him to go to college but he did not initially want to. After his experiences in call-centres he chose to go to a local government college in Darjeeling because this is where you go if "you can't get in anywhere else". He described the situation like this:

> Everybody is saying that you need education to succeed, because you can't get a good job or you can't get a promotion. I know this because I worked in Delhi for a few years, and they would promote people just because they had this piece of paper [a degree], even if I was better at the job. So I decided to come here and get the piece of paper, I am learning about and critiquing what some guy wrote four hundred years ago [Prayash is an English literature student]. Actually this is interesting you know, but learning is by yourself at this college. The teachers don't come to class. If they do they don't want to be there and you have to remind them to come, etcetera. They are just standing there writing on the board and you have to copy what they are writing and there are a lot of people in these classes you know…

Quite obviously Prayash was critical of his education. Furthermore, unlike students in religious colleges, he is prepared to be critical of the staff. His concerns also reflected the ways that a lack of resources constrains and impinges upon classroom practices. Prayash also noted that his is a "general college" by which he meant that it was one of considerably poor quality.

Admittedly not all students are as critical as he is, but many were uncertain. One nineteen year-old female student said this to me:

> To be perfectly honest I am not sure what is the point of education. So of course education is important because without it you must become a driver or a porter or a housewife, that is all. So I know that I do need it for my future. But still there are a lot of problems here and I don't know actually what we are learning, you know, how is this important if teachers are not coming and students do not do the work?

For youth that attended these colleges their discontent largely concerns the lack of resources which the colleges have on offer. This causes tension as familial and cultural expectations reinforced the importance of education as colleges are unable to deliver what students themselves wanted. For many students within these institutions there is uncertainty about the validity of education. The competing views of youth between these institutions highlight the cultural legacy of Christianity in Darjeeling and how this continues to affect the lives of youth. Indeed the shared discontent amongst many youth in government institutions in both Dehradun and Darjeeling demonstrates the far-reaching, negative impacts of neoliberal transformation on them.

Overlapping value of education between genders

Although youth in Darjeeling view education in differing ways between institutions, both males and females within them view it in similar ways. That is, students' views on education correlate more strongly with the type of institution they attend than with their gender. This is because for female students in both religious and non-religious institutions, autonomy from the domestic sphere is not something they feel they have to carve out for themselves through education, but something they expect:

> I know that my parents will support me with whatever choices I make. So in the future maybe I will become a housewife, maybe I will work, maybe a little bit of both, probably this last one [laughs]. I have an older sister; she is married and is also working in the private sector in Kolkata. I don't know if this is what I want but still the choice is there…

In this sense female students do not view education as a site of autonomy from the domestic sphere, because they assume (relative) autonomy in both. This being the case, women are in a position which they can be critical of their education. I asked many

students how they think their education could be better. Like their male counterparts, female students at non-religious colleges were often critical of its quality:

> We come here so that we can ensure we have a good future, we want to work, we want many things. But when you get here you think "Is this really what we need?" I mean you come to classes and we write a lot, we do lots of work, but we do not really engage you know? We never have to answer any questions. This is frustrating because in the future when we get a job this is not what we will be expected to do. In your job you cannot just sit down and write but you have to communicate and think for yourself. There needs to be more of these things in my college…

Rather than emphasising the 'being there', females in Darjeeling have many suggestions about how educational contexts could be improved. Their concerns spoke of the ways that under-resourced government universities are struggling to cope with the pressures engendered within neoliberal reform and how this impacts upon the ways they are taught, and what they learn. Indeed the fact that female students are prepared to be critical of their colleges and thus state power (and voicing these concerns to a male researcher), spoke of liberal gender relations on the one hand, and the ways that youth feel their experiences within college structure opportunities for their futures. Indeed male and female students were acutely aware that differing institutions facilitate varying opportunities and this is the primary – although often implied – criticism amongst male and female youth at government funded institutions.

Although males and females are often critical of education itself, their overlapping perceptions of it can be seen as the embodiment of relatively liberal gender relations in Darjeeling in general, and in colleges in particular. These liberal gender relations are further evidenced by localised social practices within the college that challenged broader societal norms. Inside colleges, and in close proximity to them are canteens where both males and females would go to drink tea and eat during their breaks. Within these sites men and women share space and interact in ways that are not always permitted around family members, such as flirtatious interaction. As well as in canteens, male and female youth spend time together during their breaks playing games such as table tennis, badminton and karemboard. Within these spaces youth developed friendships and networks across which they share space, time, food, tea and cigarettes in ways that

challenged gendered, as well as class divides. This parallels the findings of other scholars that have recognised spaces within which novel cultural forms are produced by youth that contest and subvert broader societal structures (Dyson, 2010; Nisbett 2007). Of course this is not to overemphasise the extent to which gender relations are liberal within Darjeeling. There are still practices that are bound up with conservative ideals, such as the use of public space, and popular depictions of Gorkha identity all but deny the existence of women. But it is nevertheless important to highlight meaningful ways that societal norms are challenged by youth within educational contexts.

Discussion and comparisons

In line with findings from research in comparative education (Henales & Edwards, 2002; Jeffrey et al, 2004a, 2004b, 2005; Lesorogol, 2008), I found that the attitudes of youth toward education and the meanings they attached to it are complex, contested and often contradictory. They vary significantly between generational, classed and gendered positions and are produced by (and in turn served to reproduce) a mosaic of social and cultural specificities. For example young men in Dehradun are particularly critical of their education and their experiences within it have undermined cultural assumptions that it is necessarily beneficial. In particular, they feel that the teachers are unhelpful and completely disinterested. At a general level, these findings resonate with those of other scholars who argue that young men are increasingly ambivalent toward their education in the Global South (Cross, 2009; Mains, 2007) and that neoliberal reform has undermined educational institutions (Crivello, 2010; Hoffman, 2005). My findings also suggest that for lower middle class young men, their ambivalence is fostered *within* educational settings. This was because they have historically valued education as a means of reproducing their class position, yet find themselves unable to access educational institutions which they view as reasonable. In this sense youth did not overvalue education as some scholars have noted (Bourdieu, 1984, p.155), yet nor did they withdraw their resources from it as research on lower caste groups has highlighted in other parts of India (Jeffrey, 2008). By highlighting the subtleties and various meanings attributed to education we are able expand scholarly understandings of educational marginality.

One of the ways that I sought to highlight how the meanings youth attach to education are articulated with social and historical circumstances was by showing how they have changed between generations. While parents that attended school in Dehradun throughout

the 1970s and 1980s reflected positively on their educational experiences, male youth's experiences in the contemporary period are particularly negative. Yet their criticisms of teachers and their institutions in general must be seen within broader currents of global transformation and the ways that state neglect has *created* problems within educational contexts. Of course this is not to oversimplify the myriad problems of Indian education. For example, it is not to say that increasing resources would eradicate problems of pedagogic practice. Indeed rote-learning has long been a cultural phenomenon in Indian educational contexts and increasing funding may exacerbate rather than nullify this issue. Nor is it to suggest that cultural problems do not exist amongst workers within government educational settings and the public sector more broadly. But my analysis underscores the necessity of situating an understanding of these issues within a framework that takes global transformation into account. Failure to do so would be to echo neoliberal rhetoric in which youth and or teachers are held exclusively accountable for educational failure. Such arguments deny the broader processes in which education fails to enable upward mobility.

I also found that the meanings that young people attached to education were highly gendered. For example patriarchal norms in Dehradun are such that women sought institutional recognition independent of the home through their participation within education. For this reason they highly value education, and celebrate it rather than speak critically of it. For these female youth, concerns with translating their education into employment are overshadowed by their attempts at carving out a space of autonomy from patriarchal control. Paradoxically however, women seek to gain this autonomy by submitting to gendered expectations within educational settings. In some ways my findings bolster those of other scholars who demonstrate how women are discriminated against in educational settings and the workplace. For example, in exploring the lives of female academics in the context of South Africa, Walker (1998, p.336) argues that women find their identities validated or otherwise by those (men) with institutional and social power. Nevertheless attention must be paid to ways that women are able to forge new social orders through education (Arnot et al, 2012). Indeed the divergence in my findings between Dehradun and Darjeeling bolsters this point and highlights the necessity of writing against overarching theories of gender discrimination.

Highlighting the heterogeneous ways that youth thought about education can also be seen as an antidote to strands of research within development academia that view education as an intrinsic good (Sen, 1999). In contrast to assumptions embodied within neoliberal

discourses and human capital frameworks, youth in Dehradun and Darjeeling are acutely aware that varying educational experiences structure opportunities and that access to elite institutions is not based on dominant ideals of merit and egalitarianism. On the contrary, youth often felt that they are "forgotten" or being "left behind" in a polarising social world. This reinforces the findings of scholars that argue that increasing educational participation is unlikely to provide a linear path to development (Bourdieu, 1986; Jeffrey, 2008), but rather institute new forms of hierarchical social relations. In addition to this, by highlighting the diverse meanings youth attach to education we are able to incorporate their voices within lines of research that have shown how socio-economic advantage is harnessed within educational contexts and inequality reproduced over time (Kumar, 1985; Scrase, 1993).

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the diverse meanings that youth attach to education and the social construction of educational value. For the majority of the lower middle classes in government colleges in Dehradun and Darjeeling, education is fraught with uncertainties. In Dehradun youth are unable to forge identities through it which culturally distinguish themselves from others and so resent changes that have taken place in the educational landscape. I also found that gender is a significant factor in Dehradun while the cultural legacy of Christianity strongly affected youth's perceptions of education in Darjeeling. In terms of how the value of education is socially constructed within these locales, the sheer diversity in meanings highlights the culturally fractured nature of the Indian middle classes. This is one aspect of the emerging literature on middle class formation that has not been thoroughly explored. Yet perhaps the main argument tying these discrepancies together is that for lower middle class youth in these sites, the cultural field of education is as a contested, ambivalent and unstable terrain. The significance of this for middle class formation is that the lower fraction of that social group is becoming alienated from the central mode of reproducing its privilege. These findings therefore problematize assumptions with theories of social reproduction: specifically, that the lower middle classes experience educational institutions as sites of validation. Rather, these young people are becoming increasingly ambivalent to education as it fails to satisfy their expectations. Indeed this is a historically new phenomenon for lower middle class youth in Dehradun and Darjeeling and through my analysis I have sought to show the subjective dimensions of educational marginalisation. Yet before we can hypothesise whether or not

this equates to downward mobility, we must first analyse how youth contest, subvert and challenge their uncertainty. I now turn to that task through an analysis of their educational strategies.

Chapter Six

The Educational Strategies of Lower Middle Class Youth

This chapter will analyse and discuss the educational strategies of lower middle class youth. Drawing predominately from semi-structured interviews and participant observation, I explore the ways that young people seek to contest their perceived sense of marginalisation. Interestingly, the meanings that youth attached to education do not translate into educational strategies in straightforward ways. Thus although male youth in Dehradun and Darjeeling view education in similar ways, their practices within it are considerably different. For example, while youth in Dehradun are ambivalent toward education, they do not withdraw from their studies but rather intensify their educational strategies. Conversely, youth in Darjeeling devote very little time to their studies both within and beyond college. Their strategies are designed simply to pass examinations. I make sense of these differences by discussing the ways youth strategies are formulated through their understandings of their lifeworlds. In doing so I emphasise the necessity of appreciating cultural differences when theorising the Indian middle class, but also write against popular discourses that associate the lives of middle class youth as characterised by ease and upward mobility. On the contrary, my findings suggest that the lives of lower middle class youth are marked by uncertainty and hardship. The particular focus of this chapter is on how they negotiate these feelings through their educational strategies.

Dehradun

The educational strategies of lower middle class males

Although many lower middle class youth in Dehradun feel that the quality of education they are receiving is unlikely to translate into suitable employment, they have intensified, rather than withdrawn their resources from educational contexts. This presented itself to me as an interesting paradox so I was eager to understand how youth made sense of this. One of the main reasons given was that lower middle class people would not engage in forms of employment available which did not require educational credentials:

I don't know if I will get a nice job because of my education. I don't know. But if I leave now then there will only be a few jobs that I can do, become a driver or labourer. But people like me could never do these jobs you see.

Although youth feel that their education is "worthless", and the possibility of gaining suitable employment unlikely, young people continued with education because although a narrow hope, it was their only one.

Another related reason that young people do not withdraw from their studies is that it is a familial and cultural expectation that they achieve college-level education. Even when young people want to leave they felt that they cannot because this would amount to complete rebellion against parental authority. Indeed becoming educated remained central to middle class accumulation and status despite the uncertainty of it translating into employment.

Often feeling as though they are on the verge of failure, government examinations are seen as the only way of realising one's aspirations. For that reason youth's educational strategies in Dehradun revolve entirely around success within them. Given the importance of these examinations, they are a conscious, almost omnipotent source of anxiety, which they seek to colonise by deploying considerable amounts of time and money in educational contexts. For example, students enrol in subject-specific private tuition centres that are explicitly designed around success within examinations. Many students attend these classes for two three hour classes, six days a week. They do not go to any classes at college but only attend when the examinations are held. In this way they ensure that they receive formal qualifications, whilst trying to maximise what they actually learn. Ashish was one such student. He studies political science and has ambitions to work for the Indian Civil Service or as a political analyst but knows that he will have to go very well in the entry examinations for these positions. Like many other young men he does not feel as though college would give him the education he needs to succeed. At the same time, he needs the formal qualifications that college affords him. He explained the rationale to me like this:

I cannot go to a reputed university, those are the hard ones to get into, you need to have the money, the fees... And when I go for the job the person will see my qualifications and say "Oh, he went to [name of college]", this will not be good for

me I think. So I must prove that I am able to be successful…so I go to the tuition to learn the best I can.

Outside of exam time, when students do go to college it is to "hang out" rather than further their education:

It is good to come here, your friends are here and you can be social. But people are not here for education… We know this, and teachers know also. So we come here to see friends, and go to tuition for the education. Tuition is where we learn…

Although administrators and teachers within colleges said to me that all students must have a seventy percent attendance rate to sit their examinations, students like Ashish said that attendance records have never been kept in any classes. In this sense the college is complicit in such strategies of youth as it struggles to cope with increasing enrolments.

Spending money and time in private tuition centres whilst remaining enrolled in colleges is a common strategy of lower middle class males. This strategy is often coupled with spending large amounts of time studying within the home. Tanmay's study load in the home is typical of many youth from the lower middle class. He wakes between five and six in the morning and studies for two hours. He then attends his private tuition and returns home for a two hour period in the middle of the day for a meal and to take some rest. After his evening tuition classes, he returns home and studies for another three to four hours. He does this six days a week with Sunday being a holiday where he listens to music and spends time with friends. He feels as though he is always studying, and often wants to take breaks, but does not because this is considered wasted time:

I wake up, and I do the study, I come home and eat, sleep, and then study. Eat, sleep, study all the time, this is my life most of the time [laughs]. But for us there is no choice. If you want success then this is what you have to do. I do not have spare time…

Significantly, one of the major reasons that lower middle class youth have taken to studying at home and in private tuition is because it is a space which they felt they have control over. Some of the lower middle classes resent the fact that "anybody can go to education these days", and prefer studying at home because they can do so free of interruption. There is a perception amongst lower middle class youth that "timepass" (or "wasted time" / "hanging around") on and around campuses by subordinate social groups

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are the main reason that their colleges are becoming stigmatised. For this reason increasing one's workload at home is seen as a means of distancing oneself from that reputation. One young man said it to me thus:

> Okay I go to [name of college], but I do not really go there. Do you see me going to classes? No! I am not there, I am at tuition, I am studying at home. This is where I do my work.

Heavy workloads at home are part of maintaining one's middle class status by *dissociating* oneself with increasingly stigmatised institutions. In these various ways male youth in Dehradun seek to mediate the uncertainty of their futures, and shore up their position in the middle class. The central factor unifying their diverse educational strategies is the intensification of them.

These educational strategies also reflect broader dimensions and dynamics of middle classes reproduction and accumulation. Youth in my study implied that "you can never be too prepared for an exam" and so studying is seen as a continual process rather than a fractured one. The pressures associated with middle class reproduction are such that youth feel as though they do not have much in the way of "free time". The continual "cramming" of students on more or less an all-year round basis is unlike those in Jeffrey's (2010) study, who felt like they had an "overabundance of time" (p.75). Lower caste unemployed young men in the Indian city of Meerut "imagined many of their activities as simply ways to pass the time" (Jeffrey, 2010, p.4). Jeffrey (2010) argues that although youth often experience timepass as a sense of social and temporal dislocation, it is also "a mode of self-fashioning and self-expression" (p.92). For Jeffrey (2010), young men congregating in public space is a means of producing distinctive masculine cultures which can be seen as a "defiant public admission of failure" (p.93). By making their physical presence felt these young men not only acquired knowledge and skills about the contours and rigours of city-life, but as Jeffrey (2010) argues, they "seemed to proclaim more or less explicitly "we've nothing much to do, but we're here and you must notice us"" (p.93). In this sense timepass can be seen as a basis of political action for lower caste young men.

Yet timepass must be viewed as a highly stratified social practice: while it is a salient feature of social life in Dehradun, it is precisely because such timepass is seen as the arena of subordinate castes and classes that the lower middle classes do not participate. Although these young men "hang out" at college for short periods throughout the day, to do so for

long periods is seen as participating in "lowly culture". Rather than spend time in sites of "tough male sociability" (Jeffrey, 2010, p.94), these young men seek to colonise their free time by filling it with study. When they do spend time "being social", for example on Sundays, it was a conscious decision to avoid places where they may encounter subordinate social groups. These young men go to restaurants and other social sites that exclude such men, such as western fast-food chains and shops with relatively large prices. Although they rarely buy any expensive items, simply being let in by the guard at the door symbolises their distinction to themselves and others. In this way the timepass of the lower classes and castes gives the lower middle classes a social counterpoint against which to demarcate the boundaries of middle class membership. Thus for the youth in my study, timepass in general is seen as time-wasted, and not suitable for lower middle class youth attending college.

Generational transformation of educational strategies

While lower middle class youth feel that their strategies are necessary to maximise their chances of getting a job, it is nevertheless hard for their parents to make sense of. It is in comparing the educational strategies of youth with those of their parents that the extent to which they have changed becomes apparent. Parents that had successfully gained middle class jobs after completing their studies "in their day", which ranged from the early 1970s to late 1980s, remembered their youth as a period of freedom, when they felt like they had a lot of time on their hands. According to most parents, private tuition centres did not really exist, although some teachers would have classes at their homes after formal schooling had finished. While they would study after class, they felt that it was much less intense and the likelihood of getting a suitable job was never really at stake. One man with a nineteen year old son in a local government college reminisced like this:

> Every afternoon, we would be outside. We would be playing games with neighbours, everybody was there. Often members of my uncle's family would come and stay with us, this was a good time. But you see things have changed. Now my son comes home, and it is study, study, study! This is even the case for the young children! It is hard for my son I think, I don't think that it should be like this. But even if he did decide to see his friend, he would be studying; everybody is about their own progress. So what other options does he have?

In this sense youth as well and their parents feel as though the contemporary era has brought about increased hardship for them. As this man's comments allude to, relations between middle class families are increasingly characterised by competition, which has have led to a decline in the amount of free time one has. Yet youth and their parents feel that they are unable to opt out of such competition, because to do so would be to guarantee downward mobility.

Another man reflected upon his youth with as a period characterised by ease:

> In those days, it was slower I think. We would come home in the evening, my mother and father would be there, my brothers also. Of course we would still study, actually I did this together with my brothers, my father was a teacher and he would help us when we had problems. This was enjoyable, easy. There was not this sense of hurry, hurry, hurry! We had time, and this worked for us…

This sense of ease and freedom which was central to parent's understandings of their own youth had been replaced with a sense of intensification and change amongst their children.

Compounding the perceived need to spend long hours devoted to study is the anxiety associated with college choices. Many lower middle class families cannot afford to pay the fees necessary for enrolment in private colleges. And as many families suggested to me, the "official fees" are only a small proportion of the total amount one has to pay. Large cash payments also have to be made to administrators and student leaders to guarantee one's seat. Although I was unable to verify this – college officials obviously denied such processes – it is a real source of anxiety amongst parents. Feeling as though they are unable to access the institutions they would like to, youth further intensify their study loads in the home.

Although youth and their parents resent the amounts of time one has to devote to study these days, there is a shared sense between them that "hard work" is the key to overcoming hardship and reproducing their relative advantage. In turn, and paradoxically, this results in the perpetuation of the educational strategies that they are critical of. These new educational strategies of youth in Dehradun can be seen as a response to an institutional climate wherein the responsibility for success and employment has been transferred from the broader socio-political context to individuals and their choices (Misook & Apple, 1998, p.272). In this sense it can also be seen as the embodiment of privatisation. Within

this climate, youth feel heavy burdens and responsibilities which they attempt to alleviate through spending long hours devoted to study. For these reasons there has been a significant intensification of time devoted to education even as the trajectories of its recipients are increasingly uncertain.

Darjeeling

Educational strategies of lower middle class males

As with Dehradun, the educational strategies of youth in Darjeeling are not directly related to how they feel about education itself. For example, although youth's attitudes toward education vary between religious and non-religious institutions, they perceive the class structure in Darjeeling to be quite polarised, and this affects their educational strategies. There is also a feeling that education is quite hierarchical, and perceiving it this way has a greater impact on their educational strategies than whether or not they are content with their particular institution. Students that do not attend elite institutions that largely cater for the upper middle classes "do what they have to" to pass examinations. They feel that unless you go to one of the best institutions it will be hard to get a well-paid job, but as long as you pass your examinations then you will get a job "suitable for us". Because they perceive the class structure as both hierarchical and rigid, none of the youth that I spoke to devoted large amounts of time studying over long periods. Rather they engage in "cramming", where students spend up to ten hours a day reading and memorising facts close to exam time. Lower middle class youth at both religious and non-religious institutions reflect upon this practice in similar ways:

> When it is exam time I study very hard. All day I am studying, morning and night. If you do not pass this test then the whole year is a waste and you have to do it again. So there is a lot of pressure. Still we know that if we study hard for three weeks maximum, then this should be enough. We will pass the test and then we will get the normal job…

Cramming is a common practice among students that feel that they will get suitable employment through their education, yet considered "higher jobs" out of their reach. It should also be noted here that because students conceive of college education to be "rote learning", cramming is seen as a suitable way of studying. This is because students often feel that exams measured people's capacity to "memorise facts" rather than one's

"wisdom". Related to this, students disengage from learning because they feel like it is "boring". In terms of class formation, such practices are seen as ways of ensuring the reproduction of their relative advantage whilst doing no more work than they felt they have to. Doing more than this is often considered to be time wasted, as one student of a government-funded college said to me:

> Darjeeling is one of the best places in all of India for education. But actually there are some big differences between the places. You see my college is for… maybe we can say general people and then there is others for the big shots. This is the most important thing in Darjeeling, it depends *where* in Darjeeling you are going…You can be the best student at the general college, but still the student at the reputed college will get the job. I will get my qualifications also, but it is not worth [my] time to spend all day studying to go the best I can…

The fact that students do not feel as though they can traverse rigid educational hierarchies also meant that they did not engage in private tuition. This is not something that students are opposed to all together but are not prepared to devote large amounts of time and money to:

> See again we think that as long as we are doing enough for the tests then this is okay. So near exam time some of us will go to the tuition, especially if you are having some difficulty with a subject. There are a few places you can go. But really this costs money, and most people cannot afford it. So if you think that you can pass without this then we will not go.

The educational strategies amongst the lower middle classes reflect a sense of ambivalence toward it, a feeling of being "left behind" by contemporary processes of educational transformation in Darjeeling. They feel as though choosing to do little in terms of study is their way of "sitting on the fence" – not withdrawing altogether, but also not to "waste time" by devoting too much energy to it. Thus lower middle class youth formulate these educational strategies because they feel they are unable to traverse rigid, hierarchically ordered class boundaries.

Another interesting facet of youth's educational strategies in Darjeeling is that they are similar between the upper and lower middle classes. I naively expected upper middle class youth to spend large amounts of time devoted to their studies, yet on the contrary, these

youth are rather relaxed about the quality of their education and where it will likely take them. Their educational strategies are similar to those of lower middle class youth, precisely because they do not perceive their class location to be threatened. One young man from Bhutan explained his position to me like this:

> Everybody knows that the education here is very good. Actually some of the royalty of Bhutan have come here also. My father came here many years before and my older brother also. He is working in Delhi for a company and his salary is very nice. It is very important that we pass our studies so that we can achieve this also. So when it is exam time you do not see people around like this outside and enjoying their time. But as soon as it is over then things are back to normal and everybody is back roaming [walking around town with groups of friends].

This young man feels that as long as he passes his studies, and does the work necessary to do so, he will follow the pathways of his family members. While he does take his studies seriously, there is also a sense of ease as he made his transition to adulthood. He does not perceive there to be any threats to their envisaged trajectories and so is relaxed about the time and effort he commits toward education. These sentiments and strategies are shared amongst upper middle class youth that attend these institutions.

The educational strategies of the upper middle classes reflect the fact that neoliberal reform has not undermined their privilege, because elite institutions in Darjeeling continue to cater for them. In terms of educational strategies, anticipating trajectories similar to those of their parents also means that the elite have not moved to redefine the cultural field of education and valorise new forms of it. Thus rather than deploying their resources within private institutions offering courses such as MBAs and technical degrees, the institutions in Darjeeling predominately offer 'traditional' forms of education only. Again this is precisely because the elite did not need sites through which they could delineate boundaries between themselves and other: education continues to do this for them. One young student put it quite simply: "I don't think that we need these courses man. If you come here and you do your studies then you will be okay".

Educational strategies and ethnicity

As we have seen youth in Darjeeling from varying fractions within the middle classes have similar educational strategies, albeit for different reasons. Yet one binding factor that

traversed class divides and factored into educational strategies is a shared sense of Gorkha identity. While not all youth identified as Gorkha, the continued subordination and exclusion of these people in terms of social, political and economic development nurtured a strong sense of shared regional ethnicity amongst those that do. This means that youth do not feel as though they are competing against one another for upward trajectories, but rather seek to work together in order to facilitate the development of Darjeeling in its entirety. Education is seen as a necessary tool for doing so:

> We are not studying these fancy degrees, MBAs. No! We are studying what we think will be good for our land. If you look around in Darjeeling, you do not see the high-rise buildings. You see this road here actually, this is national highway 61a. Does this look like a highway? [A narrow road, un-kept road, with countless vehicles at a standstill]. What Darjeeling needs is development, this is what we want here. So some of us we want to get into politics and fight for this place. Others would like the small government job just to do your little bit you know? This is what we want here I think and this is what we are studying for.

Here we see that localised aspirations and ambitions for Darjeeling are important for youth as they chose courses which they feel are suitable. Many youth speak of "Doing something for our people" and view education as a means of achieving this. Nevertheless the demands for separate statehood being denied, youth that identify as Gorkha feel a sense of ambivalence toward mainstream India. For lower middle class youth, this means that their accumulation strategies are not only formulated against a backdrop of class marginality within Darjeeling, but a broader sense of alienation and exclusion:

> Our forefathers came here and worked for the nation. Before they came here there was no one here. So this land is our land… it belongs to us *and* the nation we say, which is why we want our own state *within* India. Still they [the government] are saying that we do not belong here and this is what we do not agree with. So this fight it has been going on for a long time…We know that we are different. So when you see that they are saying "Oh India is a world super power" and that India is "Globalised" we do not think these things because we are different… In education we work towards the things that we want…

This young man chose to study political science so that he can work toward the material and social uplift of Gorkhas. He does not aspire toward employment in the private sector

per se, because he feels like this is the aspiration of mainstream India, with which he does not identify. Thus while lower middle classes feel that aspiring toward popular depictions of success in India – corporate employment in particular – is "unrealistic", pursuing traditional forms of education is seen as carving out a space of autonomy.

Of course this is not to say that relations amongst Gorkhas are devoid of conflict. Many youth told me that they felt competing views between Gorkha political parties have been counterproductive. For example the recent murder of a leading political figure by a rival Gorkha party member is said to have hampered relations with the West Bengal government. Despite this conflict, a broader trend that I found which intersected with middle class formation in Darjeeling is that a shared sense of ethnicity at the local level served to sublimate class divides. For example, while many youth question where education is taking them, and very few anticipate upward mobility, most feel that their exclusion is somehow "fair":

> They have the entry tests and anybody can sit these… I sat them, we all did you know. We are all studying very hard before these but still we did not get in. Only the best get in, and for those that miss out it is bad luck, you have to come here [a government funded institution]. But I think "What else can I do?" I missed out, this is not good for me but you know some people have to miss out. *Still we will work together for our people…*

Amongst this man's friendship network, none of them passed the entry tests to elite institutions. Yet he does not resent this because entry processes are seen as objective and he felt that those selected for them had shared goals. Of course it is problematic to conceive of educational institutions as objectively harnessing people's innate capacities. As various scholars have shown these sites are a repository of middle class culture and the scholastic attainment required to be granted access to them corresponds with the cultural arbitrary of dominant social groups (Bourdieu & Passerson, 1978; Bourdieu, 1984; Nash, 1999). While this acted as a means of exclusion, the hegemony of the dominant groups is maintained by offering limited inclusion to elite institutions, but also by emphasising the shared mutual interests of the Gorkha people. This has the effect of mediating some of the more divisive expressions of class conflict, whilst simultaneously perpetuating and legitimising class divides.

Discussion and Comparisons

The educational strategies of lower middle class youth in Dehradun and Darjeeling are imbued with complex meanings. As we have seen, mutual ambivalence toward education amongst these youth does not translate into withdrawal from these contexts but rather precipitated rather diverse educational strategies. These strategies must be understood in relation to local processes of middle class reproduction, the inequitable effects of neoliberal development, and cultural specificities. Like other studies that have sought to apply aspects of Pierre Bourdieu's theory of social reproduction to the Indian context (Fernandes, 2006; Fernandes & Heller, 2006; Jeffrey et al, 2004a), I found his ideas particularly useful for shedding light upon contemporary dynamics of class reproduction in Dehradun and the educational strategies of the lower middle class. For example, as increasing numbers have gained access to educational institutions, the forms of cultural capital acquired through them have been discredited by elite social groups. Simultaneously, elite groups have legitimised new forms of cultural capital (such as MBAs and technical qualifications) available at institutions where exclusion can be maintained. The primary means of ensuring exclusion from these is the excessive fees needed for entry. By developing these new conversion strategies, the elite are able reproduce their privilege over time, upholding their employment prospects and cultural distinction in a period of dramatic transformation.

However given that access to these institutions (and thus cultural capital) costs considerable sums of money, the relationship between economic and cultural capital has intensified. Because the lower middle classes possess relatively small stocks of economic capital, their access to "legitimate" forms of cultural capital has become problematized. Yet although youth realise their educational credentials have been devalued, they nevertheless seek to reproduce their social position through education. This is because the cultural distinction afforded through government institutions is central to their position within the middle class. For many youth this is a considerable source of anxiety, which they seek to mediate by intensifying their participation within education so as to succeed within government examinations. The large amounts of time that students devote to their studies can be seen as a response to perceived trajectories of downward mobility. Thus these findings bolster those of other scholars that demonstrate how the elite project of neoliberal development has marginalised the lower fractions of the middle class (Fernandes, 2000; Ganguly-Scrase & Scrase, 2009), as well as poorer fractions of society (Cross, 2009; Rogers, 2008). At the same time, my findings demonstrate the ways that

youth's practices are a response to broader socio-political shifts within which responsibility for one's social location is placed solely on individuals and their choices (Misook & Apple, 1998; Harvey, 2007).

Yet at the same time, young people in Dehradun are not passive recipients of broader transformations but are key players in these processes. Youth contend their hardship by developing new conversion strategies of their own. For example, while the elite fractions of the middle classes deploy their resources in the private sector (Fernandes, 2006), lower middle class youth in Dehradun negotiate *both* the public and private spheres in order to increase their chances of success through education. For example, students invest most of their time and money in private tuition centres that are designed to prepare people for examinations, whilst simultaneously enrolling in government institutions so as to ensure they receive recognised qualifications. In this way private institutes have *enabled* (limited) opportunities for the lower middle classes even as their very presence is emblematic of class struggles within which they are marginalised. By demonstrating the ways that youth's educational strategies in Dehradun are bound up with struggles over various forms of capital – particularly cultural capital – we highlight the relevance of Bourdieurian theory in parts of the Global South.

Yet although Bourdieu's (1984) theory of social reproduction is useful for understanding youth's educational strategies in the context of Dehradun, in Darjeeling the validity of his ideas is somewhat limited. There were two interrelated reasons for this. Firstly, lower middle class youth feel that the class structure and educational institutions are hierarchical and rigid. They view themselves as marginalised within these structures because they do not go to the "right" institutions. To work harder than one needs was seen as "foolish", and people devoted only as much time to education as they felt was necessary to pass examinations. This resonates with Bourdieu's (1984) theory inasmuch as young people make rational calculations in relation to a probable upcoming future, yet to the extent that members of the middle classes feel marginalised through education, it does not. By highlighting the fraught relationship between education and middle class formation in Darjeeling, we point to the necessity of appreciating historical specificities in our understanding of social reproduction. Despite Darjeeling's reputation as a centre of educational excellence, considerable portions of the (relatively advantaged) populace continue to be excluded from its benefits.

Secondly, and perhaps more significantly is the strong sense of shared ethnicity in Darjeeling through which youth interpreted their social world. Through their educational strategies young people seek to realise their class interests *as well as* broader collective social goals. Significantly, seeking to reproduce their collective goals necessarily destabilises the logic of neoliberal public discourses, in which an individual's success is paramount. Although there is also a strong sense of regionalism amongst young people in Dehradun, this was not something that came through strongly in my data. One reason for this is because the political agitations in Dehradun have been based, if not always explicitly, on socio-economic issues such as internal colonialism (Mawdsley, 1998). In addition to this, having being ceded their political demands for separate statehood, my findings show that young people in Dehradun are actively pursuing their *class* interests. By contrast, in Darjeeling issues of socio-economic marginalisation are bound up with broader discourses of ethnic discrimination, and this latter factor remains a considerably binding force amongst people that identify as Gorkha. Moreover, although (and arguably because) their political demands continue to be denied, young people remain committed to the cause. Thus "doing something" for development and the Gorkha people is a priority for youth, and their educational strategies are often designed toward this end.

Of course this is not to say that class differences do not fundamentally affect young people's lives in Darjeeling. I have sought to show above how emphasising shared ethnicity in fact consolidates class divides. Yet it is to point to the necessity of broaden our framework in our attempts to explain social action and challenges to social reproduction. In line with other recent scholarship on India (Dyson, 2010; Jeffrey & Dyson, 2008; Jeffrey, 2010; Nisbett, 2007), my findings highlight the need for a conceptual framework in which dominant social structures are reinforced, yet at other moments critiqued and challenged. In Darjeeling the dominant structure of class reproduction is subverted, contested and simultaneously reproduced through youth's understandings of their ethnic identity and their attendant educational strategies. In this sense Willis' (1982) notion of cultural production, "[the] creative use of discourses, meanings, materials, practices and group processes to explore, understand and creatively occupy particular positions, relations and sets of material possibilities" (Willis cited in Dyson, 2010, p.484) resonates with the ways that Gorkha youth in Darjeeling interpret their position in the social world. Yet because young people simultaneously pursue their class interests, this notion attains more explanatory value when coupled with insights from Bourdieurian social theory.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the diverse educational strategies of young men in Dehradun and Darjeeling. I have shown how these strategies are formulated through youth's understandings of their lifeworlds. For young people in Dehradun educational strategies are largely about succeeding within government examinations, and thus reproducing their class position. In Darjeeling, young people's educational strategies are attempts at reproducing their class position *and* championing the rights of Gorkhas. In this sense educational strategies are imbued with significantly different meanings between locations. This serves to reiterate my argument that we cannot generalise about what it *means* to be middle class in contemporary India. Rather social, cultural and political considerations must inform our analysis. Yet it also serves to demonstrate how hardships experienced by the lower middle classes transcend the immediacy of a given locale, and resonate in other parts of contemporary India.

In this chapter I have also sought to develop my analysis of the trajectory of lower middle class youth. I have argued that youth's educational strategies are a response to *anticipated downward mobility*. In Dehradun this response is to intensify one's strategies and in Darjeeling it is a semi-withdrawal in which people do only what is necessary. In both circumstances these strategies are thought of as appropriate given the uncertainty that the future entailed. Yet because youth's perceptions of education and strategies within it reflect an *anticipated* trajectory of downward mobility, I was interested in whether or not their anticipations eventuated. Further I wanted to see how their social trajectories (upward or otherwise) are experienced as a *process*. To explore this question I examined the extent to which lower middle class youth are able to translate their educational credentials into employment. Thus the following chapter charts educated youth's attempts at making transitions in to labour markets.

Chapter Seven

Transitions to Employment?

So far I have discussed the social construction of educational value and the practices of lower middle class youth within it. In each of these realms lower middle class youth anticipated downward mobility. Yet it is in their transitions to employment that their struggles to reproduce their class position became most acute, the tensions most real. For male youth who are expected to marry and become breadwinner's employment is necessary for transitions to adulthood. However for lower middle class youth in Dehradun and Darjeeling, this transition is an extended one, marked by anxiety, hardship and uncertainty. Young men who struggle to make this transition often feel a sense of hopelessness, shame and sometimes resentment. Despite these shared aspects of their experiences, young people interpret them and respond to them in different ways. In Dehradun, one of the ways that youth contest their hardship is by equipping themselves with skills and competencies that are perceived to enable pathways to employment. Attending coaching clinics that claim to specialise in "group discussion skills", "English language" and even "personality development" is one such way they do this. In Darjeeling, equipping oneself with skills and competencies is seen as having limited value because of broader societal processes within which they are marginalised. This chapter is going to discuss the experiences of youth as they seek to gain employment. The main finding is that for educated lower middle class youth in both of these contexts there are few employment opportunities and they therefore experience downward mobility.

Dehradun

Seeking employment, enduring hardship

Aniket graduated from a local government college with a commerce degree and was looking for employment in the town centre. He sat an examination to get a government job in the banking sector but did not get the marks that he needed. As a result he decided to try and find a comparable job in the private sector. Although the private sector has historically been frowned upon by the middle classes in India, in recent years that status has begun to change. Contemporaneously, employment within its upper echelons (particularly in IT and

business) has been redefined by the elite as synonymous with success. It was such a job that Aniket had in mind when he graduated just over two years ago. However in those two years he had had three different jobs, as well as five months of unemployment. As he tells me, finding stable employment is very hard:

> Every day I am going to the internet café, sending the emails, making calls. I am always trying to update my CV. I send it off to all the places, sometimes you hear back, sometimes not. I have been for many interviews also, I dress nice, and I think that this goes well. But there are too many people going for the job, everyone is going. And I aim high, I go for the big job, but you have to go for the job that you can get…

The employment that Aniket was able to secure was unstable and poorly paid. Although a graduate of commerce, he has recently finished work for an events management company. He took the opportunity because it was the best one that he had at the time and was promised a pay rise after six months if he proved reliable. After working for six months he asked for the pay rise but his employer told him that he was unable to pay it. Aniket said that he would not be able to continue working on the wage that he was earning (Rs. 4500 per month) because he would not be able to marry and become independent of his own parents. After being unable to reach an agreement with his employer Aniket decided to leave:

> You see, for me, I cannot do this work, if I am earning ten thousand, fifteen thousand then I can do it, but four and a half thousand! These are the things, there are so many people, I will go and a fresher will take my place…

Aniket's employer insisted that he only employed college graduates, yet would pay them a very small wage. For graduates that had not had any experience such offers were seen as stepping stones to better paying, more stable jobs. Yet as Aniket's experiences show, opportunities do not necessarily unfold over time, as had been hoped.

Underemployment and poorly renumerated labour is a common experience for educated lower middle class youth. Many youth find themselves in jobs they are overqualified for, or jobs that bear no relation to what they actually studied. For example Deepak had studied Engineering at a private college. It was not one of the "reputed" colleges but a smaller one on the northern side of town. After failing to get a job in the government he sought

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employment in the private sector. He currently works as an administrator at a newly opened coaching clinic, where he also occasionally teaches English classes. I asked him how he ended up working in this job:

> I finished my studies and I was looking for the job. Every day I am looking. I used to come here as a student to learn the skills, and now I can speak nice English. Still it is hard to get a good job. The sir here offered me this position because he said that I am one of his best students. I took this opportunity…I like the work here also, but I do this because I have to you know? I cannot do this for a long time I don't think…

As the comments of Deepak and many other youth that I spoke to suggest, suitable jobs are hard to secure in Dehradun. The scarcity of such jobs and the overproduction of college graduates have precipitated a situation which plays into the hands of employers rather than employees. Many youth spoke of having to take opportunities well below those which they had anticipated, only to find themselves being replaced by "freshers" – new graduates – who were willing to work for less. Thus young men in Dehradun have increasing aspirations on the one hand, and a decreasing capacity to satisfy them on the other.

Hopelessness and shame

This paradox has precipitated new tensions in the lives of lower middle class males in Dehradun. Youth who aspired to middle class positions within employment but had not as yet secured them often felt like they had "failed" or had let others down:

> I have been educated, this is important for me I think. Now I must get a job, if I don't, then what is the point? There will be many things that I cannot do in my life, and there are people that expect these things, and I want these things also. I must do this for my family but still it is hard…

For young men the difficulties associated with finding employment often manifest as feelings of failure, hopelessness and shame. Many youth in their late twenties envisage being dependent on their parents for many more years and consequently being unable to marry and have a family of their own. For some the inability to find suitable work is causing tensions within the home. Further, because the lower middle classes will not engage in forms of work that would threaten their middle class status, they often endure long periods of unemployment. One man describes the situation like this:

I am in my late twenties now, since I was twenty-three I have been looking for a good job. When I was younger I thought that I would be working the nice job by this time… you know, in the office, driving a car. But I am still living with my mother and father. Everybody around here knows this, they are saying "Oh does [Vipin] have a job?", they are not just saying this about me, they are saying it about my friends also. If I get a small job, this will even be worse for me! I want to get the big job so they will say "Vipin is having the big job". I will dress nice, maybe I could have a girlfriend and buy her nice things [laughs]. These are the things that I want you know. But I do not have these things, this is not good for me and my family.

Having not achieved what are understood as institutionally legitimate ways of spending time, young men feel as though they have failed to make the most of opportunities afforded them. Feelings of shame and hopelessness are one of the ways that failure is embodied and individualised amongst youth in Dehradun. Such feelings have intensified amongst youth in Dehradun as the costs of social reproduction have been transferred from the state to individuals and their families (Jeffrey & McDowell, 2004, 131-2),

Despite this transformation in the broader socio-political context, young men's understandings of "life-stages" were anchored within locally salient ideals of masculinity. This was in large part because they feel it necessary to realise localised visions of masculine success in which men, like their fathers, are expected to be breadwinners and thus gain middle class jobs. All the young men that I spoke with said that they would like to have stable employment before they turn thirty years old, or preferably earlier. In this sense the temporal dimensions of transitions to adulthood have remained relatively stable in the space of a generation. Yet at the same time their parent's lives are not considered a reasonable point of reference for their own lives because of aspirational transformations which have taken place:

For my father it was different. He went to school, he went to college and got a good education and then he got a nice job. Not a very high job but it was a good one for us [government clerk]. This has not worked for me though – I went to the college, actually it was the same college, but still I cannot find a good job. So obviously there have been some changes… Also now this job is not good actually…we are looking for the higher jobs…

This man's comments allude to crisis in the generation of white collar jobs, the inability of young people to translate their educational credentials into employment, and the changes in aspirations amongst youth. The parents of the youth I interviewed often worked lower level government jobs and many were also teachers. From their perspective, such employment was seen as highly desirable and suitable for members of the middle class. Yet in the current climate government positions are socially discredited by the elite in favour of corporate employment. Lower middle class males aspire for corporate employment yet are excluded from such opportunities. Although structural transformations have in large part precipitated this situation, being unable to convert educational qualifications into employment is internalised and personalised as an individual sense of failure, where youth felt it was themselves that are to blame. In line with findings of other scholars (Ganguly-Scrase & Scrase, 2009, pp.106-30) conceptualising the problem in this way precipitated a situation in which youth intensify their own schedules as a means of attempting to counter their present realities.

Contending unemployment

Although educated youth struggle to find suitable employment, they had various strategies for trying to further equip themselves with the skills to facilitate this transition. One of the main ways in which they do this is attending coaching clinics. As I have mentioned throughout, elite groups in India have redefined particular forms of white-collar employment as desirable, which are considered necessary for middle class status and success. Elite fractions within the middle class have attempted to hoard access to these positions by maintaining boundaries to the institutions within which necessary skills can be gained (Fernandes, 2006). In the context of Dehradun, private educational institutions with exorbitant fees can be considered one case in point. Although most people are excluded from these institutions, there is a broad based demand amongst the lower and lower middle classes for spaces in which they can acquire comparable skills. To satisfy this demand, coaching clinics have emerged which are designed to cultivate skills amongst individuals that will prepare them for corporate employment. These clinics can be differentiated from private tuition centres to the extent that the latter focus on education within a given subject, while the former focus on the "overall development" of job aspirants. Thus their focus is on facilitating such attributes as "group discussion skills", "effective communication" and "personality development". Again we can see the emphasis on the skills set of the individual and the denial of structural inequalities that

have marginalised youth. Nevertheless, like private tuition, coaching clinics are considered "necessary" by all that attend them, and are seen as a way to ensure a smooth transition into the labour market.

I was interested in how youth made sense of the skills which they feel are on offer through these coaching clinics. The following responses were typical and came from both males and females:

> Student 1: You see, these days you need leadership qualities; you have to make decisions, and take risks. You have to be a leader, but still you have to work in a team.

> Student 2: Employers are looking [for] the people that can communicate effectively, that are assertive but not too aggressive.

> Student 3: You must speak good English, this is a must. When you are working in a team, when you are dealing with other companies in India, and other companies abroad this is a must, business is globalised now…

As these comments highlight, youth attend these coaching clinics with the intention of equipping themselves with a certain version of cultural competency assumed to be valued within the field of corporate employment. Yet despite the time and money that youth dedicate to these clinics there are no formal qualifications on offer, although many employers favour graduates who have done such courses. Nevertheless, many youth I spoke to have enrolled in multiple coaching clinics over long periods of time without gaining work. One man in his late twenties had spent the last three years attending two separate coaching clinics. He spoke English fairly well but is unable to get a job which pays an acceptable salary. He discussed his experiences at a "Group Discussion" class where students were asked to speak about what sort of employment they wanted to do in the future:

> When I was a young boy, I thought about going abroad. Actually Dubai, this is the only place that I had heard of. I finished my studies and I was looking for the big job, abroad or in India...Now that I am older, I don't think this will be an opportunity for me. Many times I have tried to become a government officer, but I think that it is too late now. I am currently working in a private publishing company as a clerk. So this is not what I want to do, the money is not good there,

but I have to do it while I search for another job…but finding the good job is very hard.

Although devoting considerable time and money to coaching clinics, and having a firm grasp upon the skills which are considered to broaden one's opportunities, this young man has been unable to convert them into employment and thus economic capital. For unemployed and underemployed youth in these circumstances, there are growing anxieties about realising and reproducing societal expectations. One young man wryly described the feeling as being "all dressed up with nowhere to go".

Migration for employment

Another strategy for gaining employment that male youth engage in, or feel they will in the future, is migration. For youth residing in regional, semi-urban India, I found that migration to the metropolis is often imagined as a potential solution to their localised difficulties. It is a site that was imbued with hope and desire as youth sought to escape their marginalisation. In the Indian context, the metropolis is bound up with historical discourses of (masculine) national identity. As Srivastava (1996) points out:

> …the metropolis…[is] a settlement of the mind: an imagined configuration of desires and comforts, hopes and projections; a specific way of viewing the unfolding of both every day human life and the more distance future in which these lives may find their destinies (p.404).

In this way the relations of power and exploitation that characterise life in the city are transcended, and life in the city becomes synonymous with opportunity. The metropolis becomes a fetish (Srivastava, 1996, p.404).

The triumph of the metropolitan model of national (and middle class) identity has been consolidated in the neoliberal era as popular depictions of success exclude those living on the periphery, beyond the major centres of trade and commerce. Invoking these ideas, some scholars have highlighted the ways that migration to major cities both within India and abroad is seen as a way of realising visions of manliness, such as Osella and Osella's (1999) study of youth in Kerala. Despite conceiving of the city in this way, youth's experiences of migration belie their imaginings. In my study, many male youth have moved to nearby cities in search of greater opportunities; yet often experience prolonged periods of unemployment or are forced into types of labour that would have been available

in Dehradun. Further, the living costs associated with cities such as Delhi meant youth would often live in overcrowded apartments with rudimentary amenities. Similar experiences of youth in other parts of India and the Global South point to the widespread structural inequalities associated with neoliberal globalisation (Jeffrey, 2010; Mains, 2007)

For the men I interacted with, migration meant leaving familial and peer supports and embarking on an extremely uncertain search for employment. Further, it was not something they did because they have an abundance of choices, but because they have very few. This is an important distinction to make in contemporary India given the association of upward mobility with metropolitan areas and internal and external migration. For male lower middle class youth, experiences of migration and living in metropolitan areas were significantly unlike neoliberal discourses that associate their lifestyles with consumerism and high standards of living.

While patterns of migration often fail to translate into employment for young men, it was when discussing the intentions of young women to migrate that patriarchal codes of authority became visible. For female youth, migration is not something they had considered, because their parents "would not let them". Receiving formal education and the opportunities that are anticipated through this were constrained because females do not feel as though they are in a position to challenge parental authority. As such these women often find themselves in positions considered "appropriate" for females even when they have qualifications that could potentially enable greater opportunities. For example, out of twelve teaching staff at one coaching clinic that I frequented, nine were women. All had postgraduate qualifications, with six of them holding MBAs. I asked them how they ended up working at this coaching clinic:

> We finished our studies and we are looking for jobs. And it's like, you can't leave Dehradun, so straight away we have less jobs I think. This place needed some teachers and I came here because I think it is a good start for me. I do not want to be a teacher in the future but experience will help…

Another young woman spoke more explicitly about how cultural mores restrict the choices one can make and the material differences this precipitates:

> I have an older brother he is living in Bangalore. He is an MBA holder and is working in a multinational corporation. My father is proud of this and says that it is

good for the family, he is earning nice money. He knows that I would want to do this also but we do not talk about it. So I am here, working. Actually it is nice here, the people are nice. My father is very happy with me working here, but if I want to leave Dehradun then I don't know what would happen.

For these young women there was a sense that disobeying parental authority increases the uncertainties associated with getting work. Therefore it is not only problems with conversion strategies and the local economy they have to contend, but with patriarchal cultural norms. In this sense the attitudes toward the uses public space that I discussed earlier have a broader dimension. Because these patriarchal discourses validate young women to the extent that they are responsible for domestic reproduction, migrating beyond the home was seen as inappropriate. This is particularly the case for woman whose fathers resented what they perceived to be the erosion of Indian values. Thus lower middle class women leaving home would amount to a complete rebellion to parental authority, or even excommunication from the family. Understandably, this is not something that the young women I spoke to in Dehradun are prepared to do. As such young women within this context feel that their opportunities for the employment in the future and realising their aspirations beyond the home are somewhat limited.

Darjeeling

Local economy and limited opportunities

Youth from the lower middle classes have many anxieties about making transitions into labour markets. While youth's educational strategies and identities are often attempts to work toward the social, political and economic uplift of the Gorkha people, these youth face the stark reality of limited employment opportunities in Darjeeling. Because of enduring economic problems in the local area, there are few jobs available beyond the tea and tourism industries. Furthermore, the few white-collar jobs that are associated with these industries, such as clerical and administrative positions, are perceived to be inaccessible for those without the necessary social connections. As such youth feel that applying for local positions within the government is pointless "unless you knew the right people". For example, Nischal is an English literature student whose father works in a local government office. He chose this subject because he felt that having a good command over English would enable various opportunities for him. I asked Nischal if he

felt that his father's position would also help him secure a similar one in the future. He said that he would like a comparable position but felt it was unlikely:

> Of course I would like to work for the government when I finish my studies. But lots of people want this and not everybody can get it. My father is there so it might be a little easier, but everybody's family is wanting these positions. So there are two main ways that you can get the jobs. Family connections is one, but they need to be high up. That is the first thing. If they are not high up then you need money, if you can pay a big bribe then you can get the job also.

For these reasons youth felt that the already limited opportunities are only accessible for the elite because they have sufficient social and economic capital to gain them. The situation is compounded by the increases in enrolments that have taken place since the early 2000s, and the subsequent over-production of college graduates seeking employment. This heightens the anxieties of youth from varying fractions of society as they attempt to translate their educational qualifications in employment.

Many educated lower middle class men that I spoke to who do not want to leave Darjeeling found themselves in poorly remunerated positions for which they were overqualified. Such work is also highly seasonal and therefore insecure. For example Rahul had graduated from a government university in Darjeeling. He had lived in the area all his life and did not want to leave. Despite speaking English very well and having a Bachelor's degree, Rahul is unable to find employment. His father owns a small shop in the town centre where Rahul occasionally helps out but there is not sufficient business to employ him on a full-time basis. Furthermore, working within this context is more about assisting with the costs of household reproduction than pursuing upward mobility. Faced with these circumstances Rahul often works with a friend whose father owns a few vehicles. These are mainly used as taxi's that travel daily between Darjeeling Municipality and Siliguri. Rahul sits in the passenger seat and calls out to pedestrians to try and fill the car before leaving the town centre. During the tourist season Rahul is able to make considerably more money because business is steadier and they are able to charge higher prices. In general however, such work does not pay very well and Rahul does it more as a means of "killing time and having fun" than earning money.

Given that lower middle class youth in Dehradun would not engage in types of jobs that they felt were "not suitable" for them, I was interested how Rahul, coming from the lower

middle class in Darjeeling, made sense of his work. I found that for educated youth in Darjeeling the status associated with a particular occupation is not adopted by, or ascribed them in straightforward ways. For example, although people know that Rahul is educated, working as a driver (or driver's assistant) is not seen as necessarily degrading to his status because it was generally thought that better opportunities exist for him beyond Darjeeling, should he want to pursue them. In this way Rahul's decision was seen as almost a sacrifice, and so he felt his status was upheld because of his decision to remain "loyal" to his homeland. Notwithstanding, the status conventionally associated with driving is considerably low and he often got frustrated with not being able to realise his own aspirations through his credentials. Thus on the one hand working within Darjeeling is culturally valorised, particularly among his friends and peers, yet on the other hand Rahul himself is frustrated with not being able to gain more suitable employment. This resonates with the findings of Jeffrey (2008) who argues that youth often gain status at the local level through their education, even as they struggle to convert their credentials into employment.

Although status was not simply accorded to educated youth based upon the particular occupations they pursued, most youth did not want to work in positions that they felt they were overqualified for. Yet because many white-collar jobs are seen as inaccessible for those without the necessary social connections, there are few other opportunities in the local economy. Given these circumstances youth often seek work in a popular shopping mall in town as a means of biding their time and waiting for more feasible work. Although such employment pays very little, they conceive of working within the mall as slightly higher status than those "outside". This is because the mall is seen as being associated with the west – it sells foreign-branded clothing, it is where young people go to the cinema, and there are western fast-food chains within it. It was also a site where young people go "dating" and develop heterosexual relationships. For employees it is also a space where one could develop English skills and gain experience that will be helpful for gaining other forms work. Thus to work within the mall is to be discursively separate from the outside – "the rest of Darjeeling" – and young people work in these sights as a means of subjectively transcending the grim realities of the local economy.

Yet because these positions are predominately performed by the lower classes, there are temporal limits for lower middle class youth as to how long one can work within the mall *and* uphold the status associated with being educated. For these youth such positions are

only suitable to the extent that they were "short-term", working within them until better opportunities were available. By conceiving of their work as being "in transition", young people dissociate themselves from the lowly status accorded to lower level service employment.

Hopelessness, shame and resentment

The inability of lower middle class youth in Darjeeling to make transitions into suitable employment precipitates feelings of hopelessness and shame. This is because young men often feel as though they have done everything that they can in order to find work yet have failed to do so. While these youth did not regret getting their education, they are understandably uncertain about their employment prospects for the future:

> See me, I have been looking for a job for almost two years now and still there is not one. So now I have the education but still I cannot get a job. If I stay in Darjeeling I have to wait and see what happens, see if there is change…

This young man's comments convey the sense of delusion often came across in my conversations with lower middle class youth. There was a sense of idleness, where young people had to "wait and see" what happens rather than actively forge opportunities. This was also because young people feel that the prospects of being granted separate statehood seem unlikely. Until such change takes place lower middle class youth feel they will remain unemployed or in poorly renumerated positions. They expect to be "left behind" in a rapidly transforming India.

Like the experiences of young men in Dehradun, for male lower middle class youth in Darjeeling one of their main concerns with unemployment is that they will not be able to become independent of their parents. Youth feel that without stable employment one cannot marry and move out of the family home. Thus failure to realise cultural and familial expectations within which men are expected to earn money and contribute financially to domestic reproduction meant that young men in Darjeeling sometimes felt "useless" or "worthless".

However unlike youth in Dehradun there has not been a dramatic transformation in aspirations between generations. Rather youth in Darjeeling share their parents' aspirations of getting "stable jobs" in the local area. This is not only because these positions are scarce but because they afford their recipients considerable status as they are understood to be

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contributing to the development of Darjeeling. Indeed through their shared sense of ethnicity youth and their parents' forged aspirations that are distinct from hegemonic trajectories associated with mainstream India. In turn, because these youth conceived of their unemployment as part of the Gorkha's broader political struggle, their feelings of hopelessness and shame are sometimes mediated by feelings of parochialism.

Yet because youth understood their hardship as related to the marginalisation of the Gorkha people, they often have feelings of resentment. This resentment was channelled toward the federal and state governments whom youth felt are responsible for their current predicament. Thus from the lower middle classes point of view, the lack of employment opportunities within Darjeeling was just one expression of the myriad social problems that the area faces. Some youth even suggested that colonialism was a better time for the Gorkha's because there were jobs created for them within which they were respected, such as the army.

By interpreting their hardship in this way, youth did not view themselves as entirely to blame but rather identified broader processes of marginalisation through which they were denied opportunities. One of the effects of this was that youth did not to contend their hardship by attending coaching clinics or going to private tuition; "up skilling" was seen as having limited value in this context. Yet at the same time because of the repeated denial of Gorkha's rights particularly since the 1980s, collective political responses were considered to be of little use. As such these youth find themselves unable to gain employment through their educational credentials yet simultaneously unable to affect the situation through collective mobilisation. Faced with this predicament, migration is considered the only feasible to solution to realising their aspirations.

Migration for employment

Migrating for employment is often a decision that youth made reluctantly. As I have mentioned throughout, many youth in Darjeeling wanted to work toward the development of their homeland. Yet this ambition is subordinated to the necessity of gaining work. This is an uneasy decision to make as they not only leave their family and friends, but submit to structures within India which they felt were responsible for their marginalisation:

> When we finish our studies then we will have to leave Darjeeling. Of course we
> would like to stay here but there are no jobs here man. And you go and you leave

home, you have to leave everybody you know, to find work in the plains. Some people can be very successful in the cities but for us this will be very hard. I do not really want to do these things but we have to go there and try to earn money…

Pravin also felt a degree of guilt about going to the Indian plains because he felt like this was turning his back on his family and friends in Darjeeling, and also the shared cause of the people that remain there. Going to the plains was seen as a kind of surrender to the economic, political and social processes of "mainstream India" which many Gorkha youth often sought to distance themselves from.

Of course this is not to say that all youth saw migration in a negative light. Indeed many youth felt that major cities would be able to provide employment opportunities that are simply not available in Darjeeling. For these youth, most of whom have not lived or worked in cities previously, there is a desire to gain corporate employment and work toward more hegemonic visions of success. By doing so youth try and combine what they viewed as their "individual aspirations" as well as broader aspirations for collective development:

> If you leave here it doesn't mean that you don't care about this place, not at all. This is what we have to do so that we can succeed. If you have success then you can do something for here, but without success you cannot do anything.

For Yogen the metropolis is a place where success was easily achievable. He saw the exclusion of Darjeeling's people from development almost exclusively in geographical terms. That is, he felt that Darjeeling was underdeveloped because it was "too far away" from the hubs of technological development. By migrating to these areas people would be able to take advantage of the opportunities on offer.

Yet for the youth that have had experiences in metropolitan areas migration to them is not eagerly anticipated. Some young men that I spoke to told me of their experiences of marginalisation through processes of class reproduction. For example, their credentials from government universities are not recognised as sufficient for gaining reasonable employment and the types of jobs they envisage requires qualifications that they simply cannot afford. In these circumstances youth are forced into poorly paid jobs that they are overqualified for. Yet in addition to, and overlapping with, marginalisation through processes of class reproduction, these young men are often discriminated against because

of the ways they perform their ethnic identities. For example, they often have disagreements with their employers because they do not dress in the "correct" way or embody "respectful" forms of bodily comportment. Indeed Gorkha youth perform their identities in ways that do not correspond with those validated by the elite who seek to delineate access to corporate employment. For lower middle class Gorkha youth that have lived in metropolises previously, migration was seen as a process characterised by uncertainty, hardship and anxiety through which they are alienated from employment opportunities.

Yet the discrimination that Gorkha youth face throughout India is not always based on the performance of their identities but often simply because of the way that they look. Youth from varying fractions of the middle and lower classes spoke of harrowing experiences of verbal and physical abuse because of their ethnic identity. They feel that this discrimination is institutionally validated and expressed in the decisions of government to deny them statehood:

> The Gorkhas, we are not welcome in this country man. That is why you hear that we get beaten in India. Personally I experienced this in my previous college. A group of guys were ragging on me every day; they even got a motorbike and ran over my feet. The police and the government do not do anything about this, they say that these things are wrong but still they do not give us what we want…

Binesh's comments allude to both structural processes of discrimination, and those experienced in everyday life. He also suggests that there are linkages between the two: arguing that the violence against them is allowed to happen because the police often ignore it, and that this is sanctioned by denying Gorkha's a separate state. Thus educated Gorkha youth that are searching for employment have to face the dual processes of limited opportunities in Darjeeling *and* discrimination beyond it. This increased the hardships that lower middle class youth face as they struggle to make transitions to employment.

Discussion and comparisons

Lower middle class youth's experiences of employment within and beyond Dehradun and Darjeeling resonate with the findings of other scholars that suggest neoliberal reform has increased hardship and uncertainty in the workplace (Fernandes, 2000; Ganguly-Scrase & Scrase, 2009) Jeffery et al, 2004; Jeffrey, 2008, 2010). As well as this, my research

resonates with scholarship that highlights unemployment as a common experience of youth in the Global South (Jeffrey et al, 2004; Jeffrey, 2008, 2010; Mains, 2007; Makwemoisa, 2002). Furthermore, to the extent that lower middle class youth's experiences of searching for and gaining employment are characterised by stagnation and diminishing opportunities, their lives resemble those of the lower classes (Cross, 2009; Jeffrey 2008) to a greater degree than the elite upper fractions (Fuller & Narasimhan, 2007). This suggests downward mobility amongst the middle classes at the same time as neoliberal ideologues circulate discourses that paradoxically celebrate their upward trajectories.

The hardship that young men living in these areas encounter when searching employment also demonstrates that neoliberal social reforms have hastened for global and regional imbalances in access to secure salaried employment (Jeffrey & McDowell, 2004, p.137). Thus for youth that live in areas outside of major metropolitan centres labour markets are characterised by diminishing white-collar opportunities. This is evidenced in my findings as educated youth from both Dehradun and Darjeeling struggle to find suitable employment in the local economy and are often forced to migrate in search of work. For youth in each of these contexts transitions to employment are marked by uncertainty: they endure longs periods of unemployment, and work in poorly remunerated positions for which they are overqualified. This precipitated feelings of hopelessness, shame and sometimes resentment amongst these youth as they failed to realise visions of masculine and middle class success.

Although drawing upon the similarities of youth's shared experiences of making transitions to the workplace, by highlighting the differences in the ways that youth interpret their experiences I have also sought to contribute to debates about the fluid, fractured nature of modernity. Indeed there is a paucity of research that focuses on regional variations of youth's experiences of neoliberal transformation in contemporary India. My research has sought to show these different experiences and make sense of them through the narratives of youth themselves. One interesting finding is the divergent ways in which people understood their middle class status. For example, in Dehradun middle class men do not engage in "degrading" work because this undermines the status that is associated with their social position. In contrast, youth in Darjeeling do not feel that status is accorded them directly from the type of work they do, because opportunities are assumed to exist for educated people beyond the local area. In this context, youth are accorded status because their decisions not to migrate are seen as a subordination of one's own interests to those of

the Gorkha people. This reflects a broad difference in social relations between the two areas: in Dehradun relations between middle class members are characterised by competition. Therefore it is important to acquire status in ways that differentiates oneself from others. In Darjeeling some of the more acute expressions of class conflict are mediated by shared sense of ethnicity and the plight of Gorkha people.

These differences in social relations also affect how people contend their hardship. In Dehradun, the cultural capital that the lower middle classes have historically deployed and embodied to hoard resources (particularly educational qualifications from government institutions), has been redefined by the upper fractions within that class as out-dated and redundant. For this reason, lower middle class youth attempt to reorganise their stocks of cultural capital through attending coaching clinics to realign themselves culturally – and thus socially and economically – with the dominant fractions. Yet as Bourdieu (1984, 1986) reminds us, social reproduction and upward mobility depends upon the stocks of *various* capitals that people have at their disposal. Thus while coaching clinics can be seen as cultivating the marketable skills (cultural capital) that will be necessary for success within corporate employment, unless families have economic and social capital necessary to consolidate these skills, conversion strategies are problematized. Despite having sought to increase their stocks of cultural capital through attending coaching clinics, youth that do not have sufficient economic and social capital are marginalised within labour markets. Conversely, in Darjeeling increasing one's individual levels of cultural capital is seen as largely unimportant because youth identified broader societal structures within which they are discriminated against.

The importance of appreciating cultural specificities amongst the middle classes was particularly apparent when exploring how young men interpreted their hardship. It was when discussing their exclusion from labour markets that their aspirations were most clearly articulated. Whereas young men in Dehradun feel a sense of failure because their lives do not correspond with hegemonic neoliberal visions of success, in Darjeeling these same visions are not always considered desirable. This was because Gorkha youth have interests which they considered quite distinct from the rest of the nations'. This serves to problematize Fernandes' (2006) argument that the production of middle class identity mediates political responses to neoliberal transformation. From Fernandes' (2006) perspective, current hardships and political opposition to them are eclipsed by the promise of future benefits conveyed within images of middle class success. Yet for youth in

Darjeeling these images serve to exacerbate their sense of exclusion and marginalisation from the social and cultural mainstream. At the same time young people in Darjeeling feel that achieving separate statehood is unlikely even though they continue to work towards this end. Thus the relative political calm that prevails in Darjeeling is more related to the repeated denial of the Gorkhas' political demands than with the mediating influence of popular discourse.

Although youth in Dehradun and Darjeeling relate to hegemonic visions of success in different ways, there are some similar themes between these locales that mediate political resistance. For example, the fact that many youth view migration as a solution to their current difficulties implies that they see their hardship as corresponding to a particular location. By interpreting hardship as *spatially* limited, youth's current circumstances are seen as easily transcended by moving to the metropolis. For those that have had experiences migrating for work, the realities of it belied their imaginings: living in metropolitan areas served to hasten rather than alleviate their uncertainty. Nevertheless, these young people view their hardship as *temporally* limited and therefore share the view "things will get better". Although for different reasons, the mutual outcome of each of these positions is that collective mobilisation "here and now" is nullified by the assumption that opportunities "lie elsewhere".

Conclusion

While the educational institutions lower middle class youth can afford to attend have been undermined by neoliberal transformation, it is in their attempts at making transitions into labour markets that they are confronted with the reality of long term marginality. Although their experiences differ significantly, the overall hardships that lower middle class youth encounter, such as underemployment, resonate with those of poorer fractions of the populace (Cross, 2009; Jeffrey et al, 2004a, 2004b, 2008). Because economic opportunities have deteriorated in regional areas, forging a middle class lifestyle has become increasingly difficult for the lower fraction of that class. As a result the sons of lower level government employees often work in insecure private sector jobs for which they are overqualified and poorly renumerated. Because these young men are excluded from forms of employment and the varied benefits of this, such as living independently and marriage, they have been unable to attain cultural understandings of adulthood. As such there has

been a temporal extension of "youth", which heightens the anxiety of young people in these areas.

As competition within education and employment markets has intensified, the capacity of the lower middle class to secure their advantage within them is decreasing. Importantly, this does not imply a fairer, more meritocratic society. On the contrary, my findings support those of other scholars that argue that the Indian education system serves the interests of elite social groups and marginalises those without stocks of cultural, social and economic capital (Kumar, 1985, 1989; Scrase, 1993; Seshadri, 1976). Indeed the current situation favours employers as opposed to employees, particularly given that *increased* enrolment in education has coincided with *decreased* opportunities within local economies. By demonstrating the increased hardships of the lower middle classes when searching for employment, I have accounted for the ways elite social groups are *hastening* their control of educational competition and thus labour markets.

Having discussed the social construction of educational value, the educational strategies of youth and their (problematized) transitions to employment, I now reflect upon and elaborate my main findings. The purpose of the concluding chapter is to theorise the capacity of lower middle class youth to reproduce their advantage through education.

Chapter Eight

Conclusions

This thesis has explored the capacity of lower middle class youth in Dehradun and Darjeeling to reproduce their advantage through education. I have done so by focusing on the ways that these young people value their education, develop novel strategies within it, and attempt to make transitions to employment. I have situated my analysis within the broader social and political transformations, focusing specifically on how changes in educational contexts are experienced by youth. An overarching theme which resonates with the work of other scholars in developing countries (Cosentino de Cohen, 2003; Cross, 2009; Henales & Edwards, 2002; Hoffman, 2005; Jeffrey, 2008, 2010; Susanti, 2011; Torche, 2005), is that educational institutions have been undermined by neoliberal change. Indeed lower middle class youth in Dehradun and Darjeeling are educated in deteriorating conditions and as a result have come to question the value of education. Of course youth are not passive in the face of their apparent marginalisation (Jeffrey, 2010, p.171). I demonstrated this in my study by highlighting the novel educational strategies that youth developed to contend their hardship. Notwithstanding, they experienced myriad difficulties when attempting to gain work. As such the major finding of this thesis is that the lower middle class youth in this study are experiencing downward mobility. In this concluding chapter I want to elaborate my main findings and the ways that these contribute to debates about the middle classes in India, theories of social reproduction, and analyses of youth and education in the Global South. I end with a discussion of the significance of this study, and with some ideas for further research.

Middle classes in neoliberal India

As I outlined in my review of the literature, structural adjustment policies were accompanied by public discourses that celebrated upward mobility amongst the middle classes. It was contended that the liberalisation of the Indian economy facilitated various opportunities for this social group, which enhanced their standards of living. Significantly, this social group was said to be expanding dramatically in size, while new consumption patterns that characterise membership within this class became new markers of success. Thus to be global in outlook, to obtain corporate employment, and purchase commodities

associated with the west was to have achieved upward mobility. Since the early 2000s, when debates about the middle class shifted from analysing the moral underpinnings of consumption to examining the extent to which it actually took place, scholars have problematized the assumption that liberalisation equates to middle class success (Fernandes, 2000, 2006; Ganguly-Scrase & Scrase, 2009; Jeffrey, 2010). In particular, these analyses have shown how the lower fraction of that class is experiencing increased hardship and are facing downward mobility. I have sought to add to these debates by focusing explicitly on youth and their experiences within education. While my findings resonate with these scholars to the extent that youth in Dehradun and Darjeeling are facing downward mobility, I have shown how young people are indifferent toward education and how it fails to translate into employment. These are historically new aspects of social life for the lower middle classes and it is here that I have added to the existing literature.

In addition to this, the research produced so far has marginalised the experiences of those living beyond major metropolitan areas. Indeed major contributions to debates about middle class formation have taken place in areas such as Mumbai (Fernandes, 2000, 2006, Nijman, 2006), Bangalore (Fuller & Narasimhan, 2007) and Kolkata (Ganguly-Scrase & Scrase, 2009). Again with the notable exception of Craig Jeffrey and his colleagues (Jeffery et al, 2005; Jeffrey et al, 2004a, 2004b, 2005; Jeffrey, 2008, 2010), whose focus is a small city in Uttar Pradesh and surrounding rural areas, very little is known about the regional dimensions of middle class formation. One of the ways that this thesis has contributed to these debates is by focusing on the cities of Dehradun and Darjeeling. I found that *what it means* to be middle class in these areas varies significantly according to social, political, economic and cultural specificities. For example, amongst lower middle class youth in Darjeeling, their shared ethnic identity mediates aspects of class conflict. In particular, rather than competing with one another in order to access and hoard resources (economic, social and cultural capital), relations between these youth were characterised more by collective interests than by competition. This was reflected in their living arrangements, friendship groups, educational strategies, and also in their aspirations. They viewed themselves as culturally distinct from other Indians, and for this reason did not identify with dominant narratives of national development. This was an interesting contrast to those living in Dehradun who pursued their class interests more rigorously and thus divisively. This has important implications for our understandings of the development trajectory of India. Not only are the middle classes increasingly fractured as a socio-

economic category, but my research demonstrates the divergent cultural aspirations of middle class youth. Thus even if material wealth were to be distributed in a more equitable manner, this would likely exacerbate the cultural *heterogeneity* of that nation. By highlighting these cultural differences this thesis has contributed to debates that demonstrate the layered meanings and fractured nature of middle class social life in India.

Social reproduction in the Global South

Drawing comparisons and contrasts between Dehradun and Darjeeling enabled an exploration into theories of social reproduction and their relevance in India. As others have argued (Fernandes, 2006; Fernandes & Heller, 2006; Jeffrey et al, 2004a; Jeffrey, 2010), Pierre Bourdieu's theory of middle class formation enables considerable insights into social reproduction in the Global South. In the Indian context, scholars have drawn attention to the ways that the middle classes use cultural and social capital to reproduce their position. I found this approach to have particular relevance for the lower middle classes in Dehradun. Historically, their stocks of cultural capital readily translated into employment opportunities precisely because the majority of the populace was excluded from education. Yet caste reservation policies and increasing enrolments have undermined the middle classes exclusive access to these sites. Therefore the types of cultural capital that students possess, in its embodied (English language), objectified (school uniform), and institutionalised (credentials) forms, are becoming increasingly common. As such lower middle class youths' capacity to cultivate distinction through education has deteriorated. At the same time, the upper middle classes have created and deployed their resources in the private education subsector, which ensures that access to the dominant forms of cultural capital remains limited. In this way they are able to reproduce their distinction through time and thus maintain their privilege.

With these processes in mind, there are two important considerations when contextualising theories of social reproduction in India. Firstly, because the dismantling of the welfare state has transferred the economic costs of social reproduction to individuals and their families, the lower middle class, who possess limited stocks of economic capital (Fernandes & Heller, 2006), are marginalised. Indeed to the extent that cultural capital of the dominant classes is acquired through private institutions with exorbitant fees, the relationship between cultural and economic capital has *intensified*. Thus in the neoliberal era, the cultural capital of the dominant classes *must* be purchased. Secondly, through

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qualitative methods I showed that because the lower middle classes are excluded from sites where legitimate cultural capital can be acquired, they are increasingly indifferent toward their education. Building upon this, I was able to show how fractions of the middle classes are alienated through schooling and how this is subjectively experienced. This is a significant contribution to analyses of social reproduction that aims to complement previous studies exploring educational inequality in India (for example, Kumar, 1985; Scrase, 1993; Seshadri, 1976). However, whereas these analyses tend to treat the middle classes as a relatively homogenous group, which reproduce their social advantage through education, my research shows that this is not necessarily the case even though they intensify their educational strategies. In other words, I contend that when considering the application of theories of social reproduction in India, it is necessary to recognise the overall supremacy of economic capital, and how this has *increased* during the neoliberal era.

Yet cultural specificities in Darjeeling served to problematize aspects of Bourdieu's theory of social reproduction. Indeed it was precisely because youth in Darjeeling did not exclusively pursue their classed interests that I had to broaden my framework to theorise their agency. Like other scholars before me (Dyson, 2010; Jeffrey, 2010), to do this I borrowed concepts from the work of Paul Willis (1977). In particular I found his notion of cultural production useful for theorising the social practices of youth. To recall, Willis defined cultural production as the "creative use of discourses, meanings, materials, practices and group processes to explore, understand and creatively occupy particular positions, relations and sets of material possibilities" (Willis cited in Dyson, 2010, p.484). This provided a rich conceptual space to interpret how young people made sense of their social world and how they reproduced dominant societal structures, even as they contested and challenged them. For example, youth in Darjeeling responded to their marginalisation by forging ties and networks that bridged class divides to challenge their subordination. This meant that the dominant contradiction in capitalist society, that between capital and labour, was mediated by shared interests. Of course this is not to say that class is a redundant category in Darjeeling. On the contrary it was precisely because this conflict was nullified that it was reproduced over time. Yet if scholars wish to contextualise Bourdieu's (1984) theory of class formation in Darjeeling, *ethnicity* and its varied implications must be interwoven with analysis of capital(s) and their exchange. By highlighting the nuances and intricacies of middle class formation in Dehradun and

Darjeeling, this thesis has enhanced our understanding of social reproduction in the Global South.

Significance of research

This thesis has found that the lower middle classes in Dehradun and Darjeeling are unable to reproduce their class position through education. As a result of this they are experiencing downward mobility. Various scholars have found that the vast fractions of the populace are marginalised through education in the contemporary era, which belies the celebratory rhetoric in popular discourse. The findings of these scholars are reinforced by those of The United Nations World Youth Report (2011) which demonstrates similar problems on a broader scale. For example, it states that young people's participation in the labour force fell between 1998 and 2008 from 54.7 percent to 50.8 percent (p.15), despite increases in educational enrolments over the same period. It shows how these problems are particularly acute in developing countries, highlighting delayed transitions from school to work youth experience, and how they come to work in poor conditions. Thorough analyses of youth's trajectories timely in the context of India given the sheer size of this cohort and the extent to which it is expected to grow. Indeed in 2010 it was estimated that 30.8 percent of India's population were aged between 0-14 years (United Nations Statistics Division). Yet whereas the existing literature, including that of the United Nations, has concentrated on the experiences of minority and poor social groups, my thesis has demonstrated how youth from historically privileged backgrounds are experiencing downward social trajectories. Therefore my findings show that the current development framework is an elite project in which lower middle class youth will join the ranks of the world's poor if their trajectories continue. By focusing on this cohort this thesis has made an important contribution to debates about education in the Global South.

Another significant aspect of this research is highlighting how the beneficiaries of education reproduce their own position and exclude the rest of the populace. Conceptualising the problem in this way has significant implications for development frameworks. While the United Nations and other development agencies point to the "lingering global economic crisis" (The United Nations World Youth Report, 2011, p.11) to explain the current situation, my thesis has demonstrated how the downward trajectories of youth have their historical antecedents within processes of neoliberal transformation. Indeed the dismantling of the welfare state which commenced in the 1980s, the

privatisation of the state's assets and the neglect of educational institutions, has systematically undermined the capacity of youth to reproduce their social position. This can be seen as a critique against human capital frameworks which emphasise a positive correlation between levels of education and levels of development (Sen, 1999). In this framework, education is seen as an intrinsic and measurable good: to increase the amount of it in a given country is to increase one's social opportunities, facilitate informed choices and enable the upward trajectory of the country more broadly. What this position does not consider is the ways that education and development discourses serve to institute new forms of hierarchical social relations (Radhakrishnan, 2007). This thesis has shown the ways that lower middle class youth are excluded from privileged positions within educational hierarchies and how these hierarchies differ with cultural specificity. In doing so I have brought attention to the social, economic, political and cultural processes that must be considered in conjunction with analyses of education. This calls for a more thorough investigation of the how education is *experienced*, an exploration of how neoliberal transformation favours the elite, and finally a reconsideration of development frameworks. If such changes do not take place social and economic inequalities will exacerbate rather than converge.

Limitations of this thesis and ideas for further research

While this thesis was concerned with youth's experiences within education, my primary focus was to analyse the capacity of lower middle class youth to reproduce their social position through it. As such I gave weight to their perceptions of education, their strategies within it, and finally their capacity to gain work. What this approach overshadowed was an analysis of *what actually happens in the classroom*, specifically, pedagogic practice. Nevertheless I often sat in classrooms and was able to see how teaching takes place. In the institutions that the lower middle classes attended, classrooms were often nothing other than chalkboards and desks. Teachers would dictate to classes of between forty and sixty students, whilst they would simply write what the teacher said. Although I have argued that this is largely because teachers have few resources to work with and their classrooms are overcrowded, there is nevertheless scope for analyses of pedagogic practice and who the beneficiaries of this are. Not only are such ways of teaching grounded within out-dated theories of cognitive development, but Bourdieu's (1977, 1984) contention that the middle classes benefit to a greater degree within schools than other minority groups is an accurate observation in this context. The cultural capital the middle classes bring with them, their

regard for scholastic attainment, and their respect for the authorial teacher therein, lends itself to academic success. Conversely, the cultural values of minority social groups are not included within schools, and are thus discredited. The subtleties of this process could be teased out and analysed more affectively with fine-grained ethnographic work within classrooms. Beyond analyses of pedagogic practice alone, ethnographic work of the kind championed by Thapan (2006b), its analysis of the complex dynamics of the *whole* school, the relations of power, ideology and culture within them, are able to shed light upon what education *is*, and *what it means* to be educated in contemporary India.

Related to these social inequalities within schools, this thesis has explored the *classed* – and to a lesser extent gendered – capacities of youth to access quality education and utilise knowledge to enable upward mobility. My findings can be seen as a rebuttal against development frameworks and also the scholarly position which denies the importance of class as a social category in the neoliberal era. On the contrary I have argued that class is becoming an increasingly important marker of social life in India. This is particularly the case given the importance of economic capital in enabling (private) educational opportunities. While financial and time constraints limited the extent to which I could explore the varied aspects of class formation, more ethnographic studies of various class fractions will generate insights into dynamics of change and patterns of inequality. Incorporating the voices of those excluded within discourses of development would provide a much needed dimension to analyses of it. Such research would be able to show who the beneficiaries of neoliberal transformation are and their relationship to the rest of the citizenry.

At the same time, analyses of how youth resist, subvert and contest neoliberal transformation, and the ways that they paradoxically adhere to its logic, is a drastically under researched field of inquiry. This thesis demonstrated youth's hardships in attempting to gain employment, but it has not sufficiently investigated the myriad ways in which young people contend their marginalisation. What political strategies do young people use to counter their hardship? What does this tell us about the relationship between youth and the state in the neoliberal era, and newly emerging dynamics of political engagement? And what do the answers to these questions tell us about the development trajectory of India and the Global South more broadly? Although I have argued that class is a major conceptual category in understanding the lives of youth, theorising their agency and understanding how they act in the world, is fundamental to our understanding of

contemporary India. Such research could be part of a broader attempt to show how youth creatively engage with processes of development, and therefore destabilise the assumption that they are simply a 'problem to be solved'.

Yet the major limitation of this thesis, and existing analyses of pedagogic practice, class, and youth's political strategies in India, is that it has insufficiently explored the lives of women. I sort to overcome this by integrating the limited data that I was able to get into my analysis. Nevertheless I was unable to obtain sufficient information so as to develop an understanding of the gendered aspects of class formation. This was in large part because cultural mores inhibit women's capacity to speak with men (particularly foreign males), so most interviews I conducted with women were in the company of their fathers. While this obviously inhibited what women were prepared to say, it sometimes led to interesting encounters and fruitful conversation: when I first entered houses as a 'guest', women were expected to be subservient, men would sit in the front room as tea and various snacks were served. Yet as interviews turned lengthy and conversational, and my status changed from 'guest' to 'researcher', women often became less concerned with their primordially constructed domestic duties and more interested in what it was I was researching. Discussing the educational backgrounds and aspirations of young women made for interesting conversation, as they spoke enthusiastically whilst sitting next to their all-of-a-sudden reluctant fathers. One young woman in particular told me how she had studied environmental science at the Forest Research Institute – one of the most esteemed institutions throughout India – only to secure a clerical job in a government bank, as per her father's wishes. While these encounters were too few in number to make generalisations about class formation, there is nevertheless scope to incorporate their narratives within poststructuralist and postcolonial critiques (similar to the manner in which Jeffrey & Dyson (2008) conducted their research). Moreover, the obstacles to meaningful research inherent within conservative gendered norms can be largely overcome by developing respectful, working relationships with women and their families. Lengthy periods of ethnographic fieldwork are needed to facilitate this process and generate much needed research.

Concluding remarks

When structural adjustment policies were implemented throughout the early 1990s, there was considerable optimism amongst scholars and economists, and popular discourse more

broadly. It was contended that this new economic and political approach to development had unleashed India's entrepreneurial capacities by significantly reducing government regulation within the market and by minimising social expenditure. Much of the optimism was said to be realised through the upwardly mobile middle classes. This social group were understood to be growing drastically in size, and came to symbolise India's emergence as a global superpower in capitalist markets. Yet processes of neoliberal transformation systematically undermined institutions through which the middle classes historically reproduced their advantage. Specifically, educational contexts have been neglected by governments at precisely the same time as increasing numbers enrol in them. Indeed, within the neoliberal era, the state no longer assumes the primary responsibility of educating its citizens (Jeffery et al, 2005, p.41). Rather, private institutions as well as international agencies have come to play a dominant role in educational provision. This has facilitated new modes of exclusion and inclusion within education.

Given the celebratory rhetoric of middle class success on the one hand, and the transformation of the educational landscape on the other, I have sought to shed light upon the actual experiences of structural adjustment for lower middle class youth. The major finding of this thesis is that youth in both in Dehradun and Darjeeling are experiencing downward social trajectories. Yet although sharing experiences of class marginality the *processes* of it are somewhat divergent. Thus I have argued that the middle classes are increasingly fractured as a socio-economic category *and* as a cultural formation. Further, by focusing on lower middle class youth in Dehradun and Darjeeling I have demonstrated how 'development' is experienced beyond metropolitan areas. In doing so, I have made contributions to debates about social reproduction in the neoliberal era, youth and education in the Global South, and debates about the middle classes in contemporary India. Taken together, my findings highlight the persistence of development frameworks and economic reforms prioritising the interests of the elite over broader social investments (Corbridge & Harriss, 2000, p.146). In turn this inhibits the possibility of sustainable economic growth and equitable social opportunities.

Appendix One

Ethics Approval Certificate

Dear Tim and Andrew,

Ethics Register Number: 2012 121V
Project Title: Youth, education and identity in neoliberal India

This email is to advise that your application has been reviewed by the Australian Catholic University's Human Research Ethics Committee and confirmed as meeting the requirements of the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research.

Whilst the data collection of your project has received ethical clearance, the decision and authority to commence may be dependent on factors beyond the remit of the ethics review process. For example, your research may need ethics clearance or permissions from other organisations to access staff. Therefore the proposed data collection should not commence until you have satisfied these requirements.

If you require a formal approval certificate, please respond via reply email and one will be issued.

Decisions related to low risk ethical review are subject to ratification at the next available Committee meeting. You will only be contacted again in relation to this matter if the Committee raises any additional questions or concerns.

This project has been awarded ethical clearance until 31/08/2012 and a progress report must be submitted at least once every twelve months.

Researchers who fail to submit an appropriate progress report may have their ethical clearance revoked and/or the ethical clearances of other projects suspended. When your project has been completed please complete and submit a progress/final report form and advise us by email at your earliest convenience. The information researchers provide on the security of records, compliance with approval consent procedures and documentation and responses to special conditions is reported to the NHMRC on an annual basis. In accordance with NHMRC the ACU HREC may undertake annual audits of any projects considered to be of more than low risk.

It is the Principal Investigators / Supervisors responsibility to ensure that:
1.   All serious and unexpected adverse events should be reported to the HREC with 72 hours.
2.   Any changes to the protocol must be approved by the HREC by submitting a Modification Form prior to the research commencing or continuing.

3.   All research participants are to be provided with a Participant Information Letter and consent form, unless otherwise agreed by the Committee.

For progress and/or final reports, please complete and submit a Progress /
Final Report form:
http://www.acu.edu.au/about_acu/research/staff/research_ethics/

For modifications to your project, please complete and submit a Modification form:
http://www.acu.edu.au/about_acu/research/staff/research_ethics/

Researchers must immediately report to HREC any matter that might affect the ethical acceptability of the protocol eg: changes to protocols or unforeseen circumstances or adverse effects on participants.

Please do not hesitate to contact the office if you have any queries.

Kind regards,
Gabrielle Ryan

Ethics Officer | Research Services
Office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research)
Australian Catholic University

THIS IS AN AUTOMATICALLY GENERATED RESEARCHMASTER EMAIL

Appendix Two

Ethics Progress Report 1

Dear Timothy Joseph Leslie,

Ethics Register Number : 2012 121V
Project Title : Youth, education and identity in neoliberal India
Data Collection Date Extended : 31/12/2012

Thank you for returning the Ethics Progress Report for your project.

The Deputy Chair of the Human Research Ethics Committee has approved your
request to extend the period of data collection. The new expiry date for
data collection is the 31/12/2012 .

We wish you well in this ongoing project.

Kind regards,
Gabrielle Ryan

Ethics Officer | Research Services
Office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research)
Australian Catholic University
Locked Bag 4115, Fitzroy, VIC, 3065
T: 03 9953 3150 F: 03 9953 3315

THIS IS AN AUTOMATICALLY GENERATED RESEARCHMASTER EMAIL

Appendix Three

Ethics Progress Report 2

Dear Timothy Joseph Leslie,

Ethics Register Number : 2012 121V
Project Title : Youth, education and identity in neoliberal India
Data Collection Date Extended : 30/06/2013

Thank you for returning the Ethics Progress Report for your project.

The Deputy Chair of the Human Research Ethics Committee has approved your
request to extend the period of data collection. The new expiry date for
data collection is the 30/06/2013 .

We wish you well in this ongoing project.

Kind regards,
Gabrielle Ryan

Ethics Officer | Research Services
Office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research)
Australian Catholic University
Locked Bag 4115, Fitzroy, VIC, 3065
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THIS IS AN AUTOMATICALLY GENERATED RESEARCHMASTER EMAIL

Appendix Four

Consent Form

Professor Tim Scrase

Associate Dean (Research)

Faculty of Arts & Sciences

CONSENT FORM
Copy for Researcher / Copy for Participant to Keep

TITLE OF PROJECT:
Youth and education in India

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Professor Timothy Scrase

STUDENT RESEARCHER: Andrew Deuchar

I .... *(the participant)* have read (*or, where appropriate, have had read to me*) and understood the information provided in the Letter to Participants. Any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this research project and am aware that interviews will be audiotaped. I am also aware of the length of time that my commitment will take. I realise that I can withdraw my consent at any time without adverse consequences. I agree that research data collected for the study may be published or may be provided to other researchers in a form that does not identify me in any way.

(Please tick)

□ I consent to filling out a questionnaire, taking approximately 30 minutes.

or

☐ I consent to being interviewed taking approximately 1 hour

NAME OF PARTICIPANT:……………………………………………………

SIGNATURE ....DATE.......................................

SIGNATURE OF PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR (or SUPERVISOR):…………………..

DATE:……………………

SIGNATURE OF STUDENT RESEARCHER:…………………………………………

DATE:.......................………

Appendix Five

Information Letter to Participants

Professor Tim Scrase

Associate Dean (Research)

Faculty of Arts & Sciences

Australian Catholic University
250 Victoria Parade East Melbourne
VIC 3065
Locked Bag 4115 Fitzroy MDC VIC
3065
Telephone 613 9953 3842
Facsimile 613 9419 8188
Email Tim.Scrase@acu.edu.au
www.acu.edu.au

Information Letter to Participants

TITLE OF PROJECT: Youth and education in India

RESEARCH PROJECT SUPERVISOR: Professor Timothy Scrase

STUDENT RESEARCHER : Andrew Deuchar

Master of Philosophy (Sociology)

Dear Participant,

You are invited to participate in a student research project concerning education in India. A student research project is one that is conducted by a student under the supervision of a professional academic. Many large-scale studies have shown how education in India has changed in recent years, for example by highlighting that more people are going to school than in previous times and are achieving better results. However most of these studies do not take into account the views and opinions of those that attend schools, colleges and universities and therefore neglect valuable information. This study will be a chance for participants to be involved in a research project concerning them and their futures and will be aimed at 18-24 year olds.

One of the reasons that this information is valuable is because it can shed light upon how people themselves experience education. Do people consider education important? Why or why not? What subjects do people think are important today? Are students confident that

they will get a good job once they complete their studies? These are just some of the questions that can only be answered through the viewpoints of individuals. The answers to them are very important because they may give us information that has not been considered previously. Gathering such information is the purpose of this study.

Therefore involving people in the research process is important because it may provide new information to policy makers and educators. The people who participate within this study will be approached in public places. If you choose to participate in this research you will be interviewed. This will take a maximum of one hour, or longer if you wish. The interviews will take place at a time and location that is mutually convenient for the participant and the researcher. The results of these will be written up into a report and will be made available at request to the participants. The results are also likely to be published.

Some research projects involve possible risks and inconveniences to participants, however this one is straightforward and simple. The only inconvenience will be the time that you spend during the interview. The interviews will be conducted with people aged 18-24 and these people can choose if they want their parents there or not. An audio recording of these interviews will also be made. If you agree and then change your mind you can withdraw without being asked any questions.

The purpose of these interviews will be to get more thorough information about the choices and decisions young people make regarding education. The questions that I ask will be simple. For example, do you consider education important? Do you enjoy receiving education? What would you like to do when you finish your education? The answers to these questions can be as long or as short as you like. You can also talk about issues that you think are important.

Because this research project will be asking for information about people and their opinions, one of the important factors is confidentiality. Confidentiality means that you can say what you like and answer questions honestly without other people finding out who you are. This will be ensured during the interviews by using a different name. This will mean that your opinion will be counted without other people finding out who you are. Once the research is completed all participants will be able to get feedback on the results of the project.

The Human Research Ethics Committee at the Australian Catholic University has approved this research project. Of course if you do have any questions about the research you can contact the Research Project Supervisor or Student Researcher directly. Below is their contact information.

Research Project Supervisor:

Professor Tim Scrase

Street address

250 Victoria Parade

East Melbourne VIC 3065

Australia

Postal address

Locked Bag 4115

Fitzroy MDC VIC 3065

Australia

Student Researcher:

Andrew Deuchar

S00139511@myacu.edu.au

Faculty of Arts and Sciences

Street address

25A Barker Road

Strathfield NSW 2135

Postal address

Locked Bag 2002

Strathfield NSW 2135

If you have any complaints or concerns that either of these people has not been able to satisfy, you may write to the Chair of Human Research Ethics Committee at the following address:

NSW and ACT: Chair, HREC
C/- Research Services
Australian Catholic University
North Sydney Campus
PO Box 968
NORTH SYDNEY NSW 2059
Tel: 02 9739 2105
Fax: 02 9739 2870

Any complaint or concern will be treated in confidence and fully investigated. The participant will be informed of the outcome.

If you agree to participate in this project, you should sign both copies of the Consent Form, retain one copy for your records and return the other copy to the Student Researcher.

Professor Timothy Scrase   Andrew Deuchar

…………………………...   ………………………………………

Research Project Supervisor   Student Researcher

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