# The production of distinction: A study of classed subjectivities in an international school in provincial India

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# Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been and will not be submitted in whole or part to another University for the award of any other degree

**Signature**

# Abstract

This thesis examines the production of classed subjectivities in an international school in provincial India. The relationship of schooling with social class is a relatively unexplored area in the Indian educational research context. Further, in addressing the everyday practices of an international school in provincial India, this study addresses a major research lacuna.

The thesis is based on an ethnographic study conducted within an International Baccalaureate school from August 2015 to May 2016. The chief participants were first year students of the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme in a school in Coimbatore district, a provincial region in Tamil Nadu. Its clientele comprised of professional, industrial and business families from the dominant caste groups of the region, including Gounders, Naidus, Marwaris and Brahmans. During the fieldwork I conducted extensive observations of classroom and wider school activities, as well as interviews with students, parents and school staff. I also used questionnaires to probe students' perspectives on their education.

The analysis of my ethnographic data drew predominantly on post-structural theoretical perspectives that understand class as discursively produced and intersecting with caste and gender. The analysis highlights how sophisticated disciplinary technologies were deployed in the school to produce a 'self-regulated' subject. It describes the different practices in the school through which students gained distinction. These included speaking English in de-indigenised ways, demonstrating mastery over technology and constructing a self-narrative which valorised the self through claims to various capitals. Through such practices, a 'good student' subject was produced, constructed as capable of successfully navigating the globalising world. Here, while identification with western nations was central to students' claims to distinction, the nation was conspicuously missing in their symbolic world. On the other hand, students' family contexts remained significant to their educational and occupational imaginaries. These were markedly gendered and conformed to the dominant caste regimes in the region. Students' aspirational imaginaries were also shaped by the dominant culture of privatised higher education in the region.

In addition to theoretical and methodological contributions, my study illuminates the educational practices of non-traditional middle classes in provincial India and

underlines the need to situate the academic narrative about the Indian middle classes in specific contexts. It powerfully highlights the misrecognitions at work in the ways schooling contributes to the production of privileged identities, by unpacking how social hierarchies get re-written in the language of individual abilities. In presenting an intersectional analysis, my thesis also contributes to a complexified understanding of how schooling is related to larger forces of the state, market and traditional gender and caste regimes. Finally, it highlights the shifting truth regimes in this context where an understanding of education as a market commodity is fast gaining currency.

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# List of abbreviations

AICTE - All India Council for Technical Education

B & M - Business and Management

CAS - Creativity Action and Service

CCTV - Closed Circuit Television

EE - Extended Essay

FRBM Act - Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Act

GER - Gross Enrolment Ratio

GII - Gender Inequality Index

GSDP - Gross State Domestic Product

HDI - Human Development Indicators

HL - Higher Level

IB - International Baccalaureate

IBDP - International Baccalaureate Diploma Program

IBO - International Baccalaureate Organisation

IIT - Indian Institute of Technology

INC - Indian National Congress

IPL - Indian Premier League

IRE - Initiation-Response-Evaluation

IT - Information Technology

ITGS - Information Technology in a Global Society

KI - Kovai International

LAN - Local Activity Network

MBBS - Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery

MIT - Massachusetts Institute of Technology

MNC - Multinational Company

NGO - Non-Government Organisation

NRI - Non-Resident Indian

PCB - Physics, Chemistry, Mathematics

PCM - Physics, Chemistry, Mathematics

PDF - Portable Document Format

PG – Postgraduate studies

PSG - Peelamedu Samanaidu Govindasamy Naidu

PTM - Parents Teachers Meeting

RTE - Right to Education

SL - Standard Level

SOP - Statement of Purpose

TOK - Theory of Knowledge

UG - Undergraduate

UK - United Kingdom

USA - United States of America

USD - United States Dollars

USMLE - Unites States Medical Licensing Exam

VIT - Vellore Institute of Technology

# Chapter 1  Introduction

Present-day India is besieged by social turmoil and political unrest (Aiyar, 2016). The aggressive pace of privatisation in the country and major economic developments across the world have rendered many communities vulnerable (Mander, 2016). Expansion of digital technologies has changed the workings of the public sphere, creating new grammars of power and newer forms of vulnerabilities and resistances (Damodaran, 2018; Dasgupta, 2018; The Times of India, 2018). The rise of populist Hindu nationalism has disturbed the very ideas of liberty, democracy and secularism, the foundational ideologies on which the nation was built (Varma, 1998; Visvanathan, 2014a, 2014b; Jaffrelot, 2018). Even as the state has legislated elementary schooling as a fundamental right (The Gazette of India, 2009; Nawani, 2017), with the unbridled expansion of private schooling since the 1990s (Nambissan, 2010), the landscape of school education has been rendered divisive and fragmented. The middle classes are implicated in all these developments, because the new normalcies of the present are fast being assimilated into the common-sense rationalities and everyday practices of the middle classes (Fernandes and Heller, 2006).

The 'cultural project' of becoming the middle class in present-day India is crucially pivoted on exclusionary educational practices (Liechty, 2003; Nambissan, 2010; Donner, 2017). Research over the past two decades has amply documented the myriad practices through which middle class families secure educational advantages for their children (Drury, 1993; Donner, 2005; Waldrop, 2004; De Neve, 2011; Upadhya, 2016). Studies have shown that children's admission to private, English medium schools is a critical step in this process.  While some aspirational middle classes have been able to use education to their advantage to successfully navigate the changing economic milieu (Upadhya, 1997, 2016), this is far from a uniform story. As the experiences of rural Dalit communities in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh show, the role of educational credentials in facilitating social mobility remains limited in a society which continues to operate through traditional power relations and social networks (Jeffery, Jeffery and Jeffrey, 2005).

For those who can afford it, the 'choice' today is not merely between a free government versus a fee-charging private school. The landscape of private schooling has itself undergone unparalleled change since the 1980s, mirroring the expansion of the middle classes in the country. Until a few decades back, there were no more than a few unaided

private[1] Indian schools, mostly in metropolitan areas. They were exclusive in nature, typically catering to minuscule numbers of elite sections of society (Ladousa, 2007). Since the 1990s, there has been an exponential growth of private schools across urban as well as rural areas (Majumdar, 2005; Kingdon, 2007; Ladousa, 2007; Scrase and Scrase, 2009; Nambissan, 2010). This includes on the one extreme, formidably expensive international schools catering to expatriate and Non-Resident Indian (NRI) families (Pushpandhan, 2013; Joshi, M., 2017) and at the other end a new category of low-fee private schools catering to the poor (Nambissan, 2012). Between the two polarities, there are several varieties of private schools reflecting the changing contours of the larger social order.

It is in this confluence of private schooling and the project of becoming middle class in contemporary India that I locate my thesis, an ethnographic study of classed subjectivities in an international school. My field site, Kovai International (pseudonym and henceforth KI) is an International Baccalaureate (IB) school in Coimbatore, a district in the southern state of Tamil Nadu.

## 1.1 The significance of the study

My study comes at a time when the terrain of Indian schooling calls out for more research attention. Conventionally, educational research in India has looked at access, teacher education, curriculum and textbooks among other issues. However, there remains a paucity of ethnographic studies which closely examine everyday practices of school life in India (Nambissan, 2013; Thapan, 2014). Within the few ethnographic studies of schools, those which have explored the micro practices of elite international schools remain limited (Rizvi, 2014; Gilbertson, 2014). In particular, there is as yet, no ethnographic study of an International Baccalaureate (IB) school in India.

Furthermore, despite the widespread understanding that the educational practices of advantaged groups establish dominant ideas of what constitutes 'good education', there are very few sociological studies on schooling practices of dominant communities (Nambissan, 2010; Sancho, 2015; Gilbertson, 2014). The few studies on schooling among the middle classes have largely concentrated on familial and parental strategies, rather than investigating the everyday of the school life. Given such a mapping of

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[1] In this thesis, I have used the term private schools to refer only to private unaided schools, i.e. schools with no funding support from the government.

contemporary research on schooling in India, the present study, an ethnographic account of an elite school is especially important.

In placing social class at the centre of my research interest, I engage directly with the theoretical question of how educational processes mediate social reproduction and change. Such an analytical lens is especially important in the context of educational research in India where, according to Velaskar (2013) even as the issue of inequality has been empirically investigated, the embeddedness of educational systems within larger social structures of class, caste and gender has gone largely unexamined. In a critical review of the field of sociology of education of inequality in India, Velaskar argues that existing studies on schooling are largely empiricist and atheoretical. She notes that the dominant research tradition in sociology of education has been shaped by statist and developmental agendas, rather than being guided by theoretical developments in the discipline of sociology. Further, the absence of theoretical discussions has rendered the discipline incapable of addressing the complex and dynamic realities of the present. The present study, which is guided by theoretical questions in the discipline of sociology addresses some of these gaps.

Furthermore, although my analytical lens privileges class, I do not pose the caste/class question in simple dichotomous terms (Sheth, 2014). Instead, I engage in an intersectional analysis to overcome the general 'static, decontextualized and fragmented treatments' (Velaskar, 2013, p.122) of class, caste and gender. Their intersections are also relatively unexplored territory in the Indian social science context (Velaskar, 2016).

Finally, the Indian middle class is not a homogeneous group and is often referred to in the plural. The middle classes are seen as consisting of older, established middle classes as well as emergent middle classes, some of whom originate in rural landowning peasant communities. The former groups comprise of professionals and bureaucrats with high educational credentials. They have a longer history of urbanisation, often traceable to colonial times; they typically reside in metropolitan contexts and are largely drawn from the upper castes. India's rural, landowning peasant communities on the other hand are recent aspirants and over the last few decades have been seeking to convert their economic capital into cultural capital. They are generally drawn from regionally dominant castes (Srinivas,1959; Oommen, 1970) and are often classified as 'Other Backward Castes' in the Indian constitution. As is the case with other aspirant middle classes, these communities also increasingly seek English medium education in

private schools to elevate their class positioning. (Chatterjee, 1993; Upadhya, 1997; Fernandes and Heller, 2006; Menon and Nigam, 2007; Jeffrey, 2010; De Neve, 2011; Joshi, S., 2017). I explore in this thesis the complex ways that educational capitals are secured through private education in provincial India.

My field site is in Coimbatore, a provincial region of the state of Tamil Nadu. As I describe in the next chapter, the region has witnessed a transformation of the landowning farming communities, Naidus and Gounders into industrial capitalists (Chari, 2004a; Damodaran, 2008). By moving beyond the metropolis, my study seeks to understand educational practices of social groups who are new entrants into the middle classes (De Neve, 2011), whose histories and encounters with modernity and the nation are different from those of the metropolitan middle classes (Menon and Nigam, 2007; Joshi, S., 2017). Furthermore, there are very few studies on schooling in provincial regions of India. To give an example, of the seven empirical studies collated by Thapan (2014), six are about schools in large cities, with most of them describing schools in Delhi. The seventh study is about Rishi Valley school, a residential school catering to urban middle classes from across India. There is at present no account of schooling in Tamil Nadu, and none, ethnographic or otherwise, that addresses the production of classed subjectivities.

To sum up, my study is a unique example of an ethnographic study of international schooling in provincial India, with a focus on its production of classed subjectivities. In foregrounding the question of class, it explores the relationship between schooling and wider social processes. In addition, my analysis intersects social class with caste and gender to generate analytical narratives that address the complexities of contemporary times.

With this introduction to my study, I now present the main research questions followed by an outline of the thesis.

## 1.2 The research questions

1. What are the regulatory discourses and disciplinary practices in this school setting?
2. How is social class produced in this school setting and how does it intersect with caste and gender?
3. How do these identity productions relate to wider societal discourses?

**1.3 Outline of the thesis**

Chapter 2, *An international school in an industrial region*, introduces the reader to the field site by describing the social world of Coimbatore, especially that of its elites and locating International Baccalaureate schools within the larger schooling landscape of India. I also introduce the site of my research, Kovai International in this chapter.

In Chapter 3, *Exploring class and schooling in the Indian context,* I examine the academic literature on class and middle class in India. I also discuss the centrality of educational practices in the making of the Indian middle classes. I present the theoretical approach of the study and discuss how my research overcomes some of the shortcomings of existing research in this field.

In Chapter 4, *Research Methodology*, I reflect on the methodological premises of the research and narrate the journey of my study. I present my ontological and epistemological positioning, provide a detailed account of my field work and unpack the analytical processes.

I present my analyses in the next three chapters. This analysis is focused predominantly on the IBDP students within the context of the larger classroom and school setting. Therefore, the analyses chapters also centre around the students of the IBDP programme. In Chapter 5, *Disciplinary regimes in the school*, I examine the disciplinary regimes in KI, students' resistance to these regulations and discuss the production of the self-regulated subject. In Chapter 6, *Performing social class in the school,* I examine the ways students performed their identities and made claims to distinction even while conforming to the regulatory powers of the school. I examine the various cultural capitals acquired in the school which inscribed the KI student as valuable and as a 'good student'. I also describe subordinate subject positions which resisted the dominant construction of the good student. In Chapter 7, *Beyond the school: classed subjectivities in the larger context,* I relate the production of classed subjectivities in the school to the wider social context, including the larger caste and gender regimes, the students' familial contexts and the privatised field of higher education in the region.
In Chapter 8, *Conclusions,* I summarise the thesis and discuss the knowledge contributions of the study.

# Chapter 2 An international school in an industrial region

## 2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I describe the regional context of my research and map the social landscape of schooling in the region. I begin by situating Coimbatore district within the larger Indian context. I compare Coimbatore with Tamil Nadu and India on key economic and social indicators. Next, I provide a caste, religious and linguistic profiling of the region. I discuss the history of industrialisation of Coimbatore and the role played by Naidus and Gounders in this development. I examine the construction of Coimbatore as an entrepreneurial powerhouse in popular print media.

My discussion of schooling begins with a description of the schooling system in India. I then discuss how privatisation has contributed to a highly differentiated schooling system in Coimbatore, and in the country at large. I locate the growth of IB schools in India within this larger trend of privatisation of school education. In the last section of the chapter, I introduce the school, Kovai International and its clientele, situating both in the larger regional context.

One limitation of this chapter is that the sources used here, i.e. journalistic and academic writings are all English language printed materials. Other narratives about the region, those circulated in the local languages and in oral traditions are largely missing from the chapter.

**Figure 2.1: Map of India[2]**



**Figure 2.2: Map of Tamil Nadu[3]**

[2] Source: https://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/india_map.htm (Accessed: 18 September 2019).
[3] Source: http://mystudyguide.in/select-district-tamilnadu-map-tnea-2015-cutoff-marks/ (Accessed: 23 September 2019).

**Figure 2.3: Map of Coimbatore[4]**

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[4] Source: https://coimbatore.nic.in/map-of-district/ (Accessed: 23 September 2019).

## 2.2 Coimbatore within the larger state and national context

Coimbatore district is part of a larger Kongu Nadu region, which is spread over eight districts of Tamil Nadu and also includes territories in the bordering states of Kerala and Karnataka. The district is surrounded by the Western Ghats mountain ranges on the west and north. Being on the foothills of thickly forested hill ranges and on upland plains, the region enjoys relatively moderate temperature when compared to neighbouring areas in Tamil Nadu. The region receives less than average rainfall and has a dry climate, which is conducive for cotton ginning and weaving, both of which have been traditional industries in Coimbatore since medieval times (Damodaran, 2008; Census of India, 2011).

Historically, Kongu Nadu claims a distinct regional identity. In historical records, the region can be traced back to the medieval times (Beck, 1968). It is well connected by road and railway to other parts of the state and country (Chakrapani, 2014). Coimbatore city also has an international airport with flights to major metropolitan cities of the country and to Singapore and Sharjah (United Arab Emirates). The well-established transport system is symbiotically related to the region's industrial development.

Coimbatore district is densely populated with a total population of 34.58 lakhs[5] spread over 4372 square kilometres. The population density is 731 people per square kilometre. With over 75 percent of its people residing in urban areas, the district ranks among the chief urban regions in the state. Coimbatore city is the district capital and one of the larger cities in Tamil Nadu (Census of India, 2011, p. ix). Reflecting its greater level of urbanisation, employment opportunities in non-agricultural sectors are greater in Coimbatore when compared to Tamil Nadu. The bulk of workers in Coimbatore (77%) reported their economic activity to be that of 'other workers' – a category which in the census includes industrial workers, service professionals and various business and commercial activities. Among those working, both men and women, a larger percentage reported to be main workers (92%)[6] as compared to the state average (85%) (Census of India, 2011, p. x). The per capita income in Coimbatore in 2011-12 at Rs. 77,975 is higher than the per capita income of the country (Rs. 63,996) and that of Tamil Nadu

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[5] Lakh is a unit in the Indian numeric system. I lakh equals a hundred thousand. 10 lakhs make 1 million.
[6] The definition of 'main worker' is the one who has worked for six months or more during the last one year preceding the Census enumeration. In contrast, a marginal worker is one who has worked for three months or less. A 'non-worker' is one who has not participated in any economically productive activity during the reference period (Census of India, 2011, p.19).

(Rs.74,838, State Planning Commission, Tamil Nadu, 2017, p. 36). Coimbatore ranks 6th among the 32 districts in Tamil Nadu on Human Development Indicators (HDIs, Government of Tamil Nadu, 2017, p.35). The sex ratio (females per 1000 males) is 1000, higher than the state average of 996 and the country average of 941 (Government of Tamil Nadu, 2017, p.147). The district literacy level is also higher at 84% than the state literacy level (80%) and the country literacy level (74%) (Government of Tamil Nadu, 2017, pp. 87-88). While the district fares favourably on specific individual HDIs, there remain considerable inequalities with respect to other measures, especially those related to gender and caste. On the overall Gender Inequality Index (GII), Coimbatore ranks 23rd among the 32 districts in Tamil Nadu (Government of Tamil Nadu, 2017, p.38). The male literacy rate at 89% is significantly higher than the female literacy rate at 79% (Government of Tamil Nadu, 2017, p.89). Female work participation rate at 28% is among the lowest in the state (Government of Tamil Nadu, 2017, p. 155)[7]. The Gini coefficient of urban inequality in Coimbatore (0.383) is also among the highest in Tamil Nadu (Government of Tamil Nadu, 2017, p. 79). Further, violence on the most oppressed castes continues unabated. According to newspaper reports, these are often spurred by love marriages between Dalit men and upper caste Hindu women (Ravishankar, 2015) and Dalits' non-compliance with traditional upper caste rituals (The Times of India, 2016).

**2.3 Religious and caste composition of Coimbatore**

A large majority of Coimbatore residents (88%) are Hindus, followed by Muslims (6%) and Christians (5.5%) (Census of India, 2011, p. 32). Marwari Jains, a prosperous business community, originally from Rajasthan, constitute a minuscule fraction of the district population (less than 0.5%, Census of India, p. 32).

With respect to overall caste composition, there is no information available from recent sources. The last caste profiling in this region was done in the 1960s (Beck, 1968). Beck studied the caste composition of a rural village in the Tamil Nadu region of Kongu Nadu and found it to be similar to the last undertaken census enumeration of castes in Coimbatore district[8] in 1921. In Kongu Nadu in the 1960s, Gounders were the most populous caste in rural areas. Being large landowners, they were also the most dominant

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[7] Work participation rate refers to percentage of workers (main plus marginal) to total population (Census of India, 2011, p. 20).
[8] The Coimbatore district formed in 1804 covered a larger region in 1921 than it does today.

caste group in terms of rural wealth and local power (Srinivas, 1959; Oommen, 1970). Following a successful representation to the government in 1975, they were classified as belonging to the 'Other Backward Classes' (Prasad, 2009). Beck found that Brahmans (the highest ranked caste in India) were a minuscule number in this region and were generally temple priests with ritual status but little wealth. Other castes listed by Beck include the Mudaliars, traditionally weavers, artisans and traders and the Chettiars - a caste associated with trade, finance and banking (Narasimhan, 2013; Govindarajulu, 2014). Beck also mentions that in the 1960s, Telugu speaking Naidus were already present in large numbers in urban centres where they dominated commercial activities. Coimbatore, having been part of important medieval trading routes between the west coasts and Tamil Nadu has historically had a linguistically diverse, heterogeneous population (Beck, 1968). Beck also noted that over the four decades since the last census, there were changes in caste names, their constitution and social ranking. Her description suggests a fluidity in the composition and organisation of castes, something also noted by others (Fuller, 1996; Dirks, 2001).

Coimbatore is also a successful industrial hub in the country. In the area around the school, continuous with farms, tucked away in the green fields and often unnoticeable from the main roads were knitwear mills, foundry units and poultry farms. Signs of rapid urbanisation were also everywhere – farmlands were fast being claimed for upmarket housing and billboards selling upmarket houses in gated communities dotted the highways. This growing affluence and industrialisation of the region was immediately evident to me when I commenced my fieldwork.

## 2.4 An entrepreneurial hub and industrial centre

> If you come here with a suitcase and an idea, Coimbatoreans will conspire to make you succeed.
>
> (Revathy, 2015)

These are the words of Hemlatha Annamalai, an entrepreneur who successfully established an electrical vehicles company in Coimbatore. The dominant narrative about Coimbatore being an entrepreneurial haven is not without material basis. Of the 50,000 industries in this region, many are micro, small and medium sized, indicative of the wide presence of small businesses (Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, 2016, p. 15). Further, Coimbatore's popular history foregrounds stories of successful entrepreneurial ventures, reiterating such an image. The first cinema theatre in south

India is said to have been set up in Coimbatore by a local resident, Swammikanu Vincent, in 1914. The popular lore is that Vincent acquired a touring cinema set from a travelling Frenchman. Resigning from his job as a clerk in South Indian Railways, Vincent toured with his cinema set to far flung places in Myanmar, Afghanistan and Pakistan. He returned to Coimbatore to set up Variety Hall Talkies and later also brought electricity to the city (Jeshi, 2011).

Another enduring symbol in the history of Coimbatore's industrialisation (Satyamurty, 2009a; Govindarajulu, 2014) is G. Doraisamy Naidu. He is credited with establishing an engineering ethos in Coimbatore. He began his entrepreneurial career by starting a bus service. Beginning with one bus in 1920, within two decades, he was running a fleet of buses. His main achievement was developing India's first electric motor in 1937 along with D. Balasundaram. He was said to have been a creative genius, an amateur scientist who invented nearly 100 gadgets. He earned the title of a 'miracle man', *adhisaya manidhar'* (Satyamurty, 2009b).

While members of different dominant communities were pivotal to the development of Coimbatore, it was the Naidus who are chiefly credited with the industrialisation of the region. According to Damodaran, the Naidu pioneers, 'fostered a culture of industrial research and shop floor innovation that has become a hallmark of Coimbatore' (Damodaran, 2008, p. 149). In subsequent decades, Gounders joined the Naidus in developing Coimbatore as an important industrial region in Tamil Nadu. Coimbatore's path to industrialisation is closely linked with its long history of cotton farming and handloom industry. Cotton was one of the cash crops grown in Kongu Nadu since pre-colonial times. Weaving was a traditional industry. Textiles, *dhoties*[9] and turbans produced here were sold both within India and outside (Damodaran, 2008; Govindarajulu, 2014).

It was the introduction of a new variety of cotton, 'Cambodia', in 1904-05, which made cotton farming very alluring for the local farmers. Cambodia cotton acclimatized to the local conditions, could be effectively spun using modern machinery and had an international demand. Around this time, Robert Stanes, an Englishman, set up the first spinning and weaving mill in Coimbatore (Srinivasan, 2012). But it was the local farming community, Kamma Naidus, who initiated the first wave of industrialisation in

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[9] *Dhoti* – It is garment worn by men, consisting of one garment draped around the waist.

Coimbatore. It began with farmers growing cotton for commercial purposes. The story goes that the Naidus never hired middlemen, always selling the cotton directly to the ginners. Kuppuswamy Naidu, one of the pioneers set up a ginning unit in 1905 primarily to serve the Stanes mill. Following this, other Naidus set up textile mills – Peelamadu Samanaidu Govindaswamy set up the first Naidu owned textile mill in 1922. This was followed by many others from the Naidu community establishing textile mills. Kuppuswamy Naidu's ginning mill also eventually grew into a textile factory in 1933. These early industries were supported by caste and kin members who helped with finances and supplied cotton. A series of fortuitous circumstances and the business acumen of Naidus led to the flourishing of the Naidu cotton industry through the first half of the 20th century (Damodaran, 2008; Munshi, 2014). During this period, while the majority owners were Naidus, Gounders had also started making inroads into this industry.

The Naidu industrial community subsequently diversified to other areas chiefly foundries, pumps, machine tools, sugar and paper mills, poultry and wet grinders[10]. Naidu business families also took the lead in establishing eminent educational institutes and hospitals, a tradition later followed by Gounders as well and which continues in the region even today (Govindarajulu, 2016). Since its early days of industrialisation, Coimbatore became reputed for its private higher education and healthcare services. In a 2016 survey, Coimbatore city was ranked 12th among the different cities in the country for higher education (Layak, 2016). The Coimbatore industrialists have also set up formal trade and industrial associations and a trading fair complex. They have been pivotal to establishing agricultural and textile research institutes, some of which are associated with the leading educational institutes in Coimbatore.

Gounders, like Naidus, were enterprising farmers, who directly traded cotton to the textile mills. They entered textile production much later than the Naidus, in 1935 when Vellingiri Gounder founded Gnanambikai Mills. However, the real flow of Gounder capital came only in the 1980s, when Tiruppur, a neighbouring district of Coimbatore emerged as a major knitwear export centre. The growth of Tiruppur has been exponential – by 2004, it became the country's leading exporter of knitwear. It is home to some of the largest Asian garment manufacturing companies and exports hosiery

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[10] Wet Grinder - A kitchen appliance used to make *idli/dosa* batter. *Idli* and *dosa* are staple part of the Tamil diet.

clothes worth more than Rs. 21,000 crores (Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, 2016, p. 17). It is chiefly Gounder enterprise which is credited with this astounding growth of Tiruppur (Chari, 2004a, 2004b; Damodaran, 2008). Chari has documented how an erstwhile farming community metamorphosed into capitalists within a few decades, how it successfully entered the textile business and came to dominate the export-oriented garment industry, supplying to global retailers like Marks and Spencer, Tesco and Walmart. Chari points to several factors which enabled the rise of this subaltern group - work practices derived from an agrarian past, principally the model of participant supervision, i.e. working alongside labourers in production units, the availability of finance through kin and caste support as well as bank loans and subsidies, and tightly-knit fraternal networks. Such mutual support in a decentralised production line operating through sub-contracting ensured that Gounders became dominant in textile manufacturing. Like Naidus, Gounders have also since ventured into other agri-business and engineering sectors.

Coimbatore district is now a flourishing manufacturing centre, with most of its industries owned by Naidus and Gounders. With a wide product range, the district is known variously as 'Manchester of the South', 'Light Engineering Powerhouse of India' and 'Pump City of Asia'. It is also an established gold jewellery manufacturing centre in India and a major poultry supplier in Tamil Nadu (Damodaran, 2008; Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, 2016).

Traditionally, businesses in Coimbatore drew capital support from caste networks. In recent years, many businesses have become corporatized with stocks being held by the public (Damodaran, 2008). While the earlier industries were family driven establishments, as the region became known for its favourable climate for manufacturing industries including the easy availability of skilled human resources. Multinational companies (MNCs) have also set up manufacturing units here (Revathy, 2015). The post liberalisation era ushered new developments such as Special Economic Zones (SEZs) which were set up in Coimbatore (Sujatha, 2010). Common facilities have been introduced to support entrepreneurs and small industrialists (Preetha, 2007). In recent years, Coimbatore has become a burgeoning Information Technology (IT) hub and a key software producer in the state. In 2011-12, it contributed 6% of the Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) (State Planning Commission, Tamil Nadu, 2017, p. 15). Today Coimbatore produces 80% of the country's textile machinery, 45% of

pumps in the country and nearly 20% of automobile components manufactured in India (Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, 2016, p. 15).

So far in this chapter, I have described the emergence of Coimbatore as an industrial hub with the presence of many small and medium scale industries. Its development parallels the rise of Naidus and Gounders as industrial capitalists. In the following sections of the chapter, I expand upon the second context of my research, the social landscape of schooling in Coimbatore, and in the country at large. I begin by presenting an overview of the schooling system in India.

## 2.5 The school education system in India

Education in India is the joint responsibility of state and central government. Besides the government, schools are financed and managed by religious and community groups, non-government organisations and private parties. Schools in India can be broadly classified into three categories – Government, Private-aided, and Private-unaided. Government schools are managed by government bodies. They do not charge fees, and offer free uniforms, books and other resources to students from disadvantaged groups, if not to all students. Aided schools are managed privately, but largely funded by the government, and are increasingly similar to the government system, in terms of teacher recruitment, salaries and student fee (Majumdar, 2005). Private unaided schools are profit-making, fee-charging schools.

Schooling in India is uniformly structured along a 10 plus 2 system (10 years of schooling up to secondary, 2 years of higher secondary schooling (see Figure 2.4). Children begin school at the age of six years. Elementary[11] schooling is for eight years. Since the passing of the Right to Education Act 2009 (The Gazette of India, 2009), education is legally both free and compulsory for eight years of schooling from age six onwards, or up to class eight whichever comes later. Until the tenth class, most subjects are compulsory. At the higher secondary level, students are segregated into one of the three major streams Sciences, Commerce and Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities.

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[11] Elementary refers to classes 1 to 8. Secondary refers to classes 9-12, 'lower secondary' is used here to refer to classes 9 and 10 and higher secondary refers to classes 11 and 12.
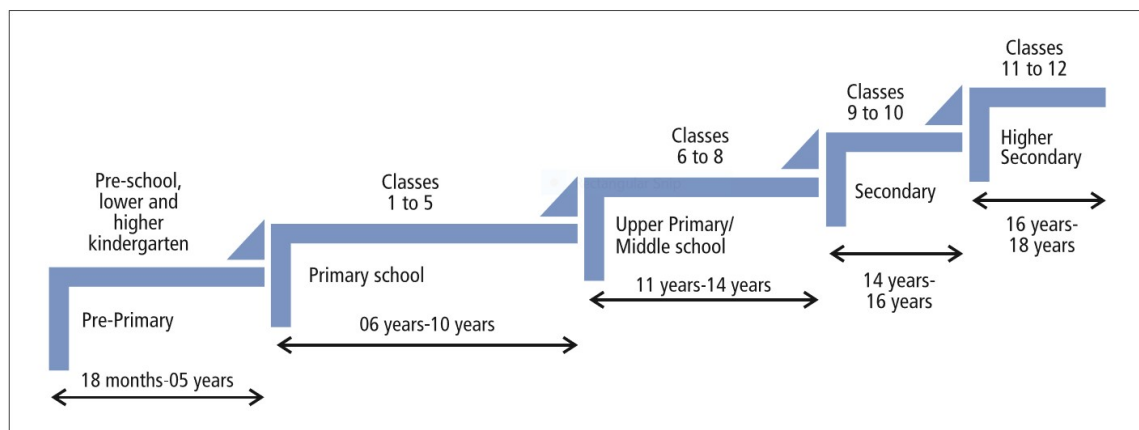
**Figure 2.4: Overview of levels in the Indian school education system (British Council, 2014, p.12)**

In general, private and government schools use the same curricula and textbooks. Students across different categories of schools are evaluated by common examination boards. There are today more than 30 education boards in India. These include state boards associated with respective states of the country, central boards which are autonomous bodies funded by central government and private boards. While state examination boards conduct examinations in their respective states, both central government and private boards have affiliation from schools from across the country (Institute for Studies in Industrial Development, n.d). Each examination board offers its own curricula, prescribes particular textbooks and learning materials, mandates specific infrastructural and resource requirements and teacher qualifications and has set specifications for medium of instruction and evaluation.

The International Baccalaureate Organisation (IBO) is an international private education board whose main office is in Geneva, Switzerland[12]. The International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IBDP) was developed by the IBO in the 1960s. It has been operating in India since 1976 (Joshi, M., 2017). The IBDP was originally designed to be a university entrance exam which would be internationally recognised. Over time, it evolved into an 'internationally recognised secondary school-leaving diploma' (Tarc, 2009, p. 235), aimed at serving the expatriate community. The term 'international' signified that the programme was recognised across national jurisdictions. As an international board, it is not within the jurisdiction of the India government (Chopra, 2015). Since 2010, there has been a rise in IB schools and at present there are a total of

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[12] https://www.ibo.org/ (Accessed: 20 June 2019).

138 IB schools in the country (IBO website). Since 1994, the IBDP has been accepted as entry qualification for Indian universities. The growth of IB schools in India is part of a larger story of growth of private schools in the country.

## 2.6 International Baccalaureate schools within a divisive schooling system

Private school education is a rapidly expanding sector in India (Nambissan, 2010). The last two decades have seen an unprecedented and exponential growth of private schools across urban as well as rural areas (Kingdon, 2007; Scrase and Scrase, 2009). This has created a stratified and fragmented schooling system in the country, with differently resourced schools catering to different segments of the population, including a new category of low fee private schools catering to the poor (Majumdar 2005; Kingdon, 2007).

As evident from the following tables, the social landscape of schooling in the country as well as in Coimbatore district is highly inequitable.

**Table 2.1: Distribution of schools in India across various categories and levels of schooling (Government of India, 2012)**

| Level of schooling | Type of School | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | Government including local bodies | Private aided | Private unaided | Total number of schools |
| **Primary** | 706,368 (86%) | 54,052 (7%) | 62,742 (8%) | 823,162 (100%) |
| **Upper primary** | 268,862 (73%) | 39,258 (11%) | 59,625 (16%) | 367,745 (100%) |
| **Lower Secondary** | 49,486 (40%) | 29,622 (24%) | 44,618 (36%) | 123,726 (100%) |
| **Higher Secondary** | 30,887 (46%) | 11,953 (18%) | 24,077 (36%) | 66,917 (100%) |
| **Total** | **1,055,603 (76%)** | **134,885 (10%)** | **191,062 (14%)** | **1,381,550 (100%)** |

This following data is about school provisioning in urban areas in Coimbatore. This data is based on my calculations of district level primary data about town amenities in Tamil Nadu as recorded in Census 2011[13].

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[13] See the Excel spreadsheets on Town Amenities in Tamil Nadu available at http://censusindia.gov.in/2011census/dchb/DCHB.html (Accessed: 20 June 2019).

**Table 2.2: Distribution of schools in urban Coimbatore across various categories and levels of schooling (Based on data from Census of India, 2011)**

| Level of school | Type of school | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Government | Private | Total |
| **Primary** | 489 (74%) | 169 (26%) | 658 (100%) |
| **Middle** | 229 (64%) | 129 (36%) | 358 (100%) |
| **Lower Secondary** | 119 (45%) | 145 (55%) | 264 (100%) |
| **Higher Secondary** | 82 (39%) | 127 (60%) | 209 (100%) |
| **Total** | **919 (62%)** | **570 (38%)** | **1489 (100%)** |

It is striking that the overall trend is the same in the district and the country. At the primary level, the number of government schools far exceeds the number of private schools. Even while the absolute number of private schools decreases as we move to higher levels of schooling, their proportion in comparison with government schools increase. These statistics reflect both the government's efforts since the 1980s to expand primary and upper primary schooling as well as the neglect of secondary schooling until recently (Biswal, 2011). Further, it can be seen from the tables that private schooling is more widespread in urban areas of Coimbatore district when compared to the country at large. This is partly because figures presented in Table 2.1 include rural areas of the country. In general, these figures underscore the penetration of private schooling in my field site as well as across the country.

This increased privatisation of schooling at higher levels corresponds with a steep drop in Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER)[14] from primary years to higher secondary. In 2015-16, the GER at primary level was 99.2, while at the lower secondary level it was only 80.0. At the higher secondary level, it was an abysmally low at 56.2 (Government of India, 2018, p.28). Research has noted that children from economically and socially marginalised groups are more likely to study in government schools, and to drop out earlier (Biswal, 2011; Majumdar, 2005).

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[14] Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) - Number of students enrolled at a given level of education, expressed as a percentage of the official school-age population corresponding to the same level of education.

Further, private schools themselves comprise a wide spectrum in terms of fees charged. Given the absence of data on this matter, I studied the information provided by the Tamil Nadu fee regulation committee, set up in 2009, whose mandate was to fix the school fees of private schools affiliated to the Tamil Nadu state board. Going by this committee's directives, the annual fees of private schools at the higher secondary level in Coimbatore for the academic year 2018-19 could vary from Rs.9,790 to Rs.52,745[15]. While this range is itself substantial, IB schools with an annual fee structure between Rs. 1.5 lakhs to Rs. 6 lakhs (in 2011, Khan, 2011) are positioned at the extreme high end of the fee spectrum. They remain inaccessible to the majority of the country's population.

Mirroring the changing landscape of the Indian school system is a shift in the dominant discourse of education. At the time of independence, nation building was a central concern for Indian educationists. For example, the founders of Doon school, an elite private school established in the 1930s were concerned with producing leaders for the nation (Srivastava, 1998). In the post liberalisation era, as the educational business became profitable, the discourse that school education can be sold and consumed as a paid service in a free, competitive market is fast gaining legitimacy (Kalra, 2007).

The growth of IB and other international schools in recent years reflects this growing commodification of educational provision. A study conducted in 2013 showed that IB schools were being established in the more prosperous western and southern states of India. It is telling that at the time of this study there were no IB schools in poorer states like Bihar and Uttar Pradesh (Pushpanadham, 2013). The study, commissioned by IBO, notes that 'the majority of the schools are located in semi-urban areas of metro cities, where socio-economic status of people is comparatively high and where expats reside' (Pushpanadham, 2013, pp. 54-55). Even today, as evident from the IBO website, IB schools are concentrated in metropolises and limited states.

However, this trend is changing with the massification of IB programme in India (Tarc and Tarc, 2014; Joshi, M., 2017). In the coming years, IB schools are expected to be established in smaller cities and in less developed states. This expansion is likely to correspond with a relatively lower fee structure, less than Rs. 3 lakhs per annum (Joshi, M., 2017). While this is lower level fees within the IB fee band, it is nevertheless a

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[15] This information was accessed at the following website http://tamilnadufeecommittee.com/fees/Coimbatore.pdf (Accessed: 20 June 2019).

formidably high amount, beyond the reach of most Indians. The corporate entry in this sector, such as that of the multinational conglomerate companies, the Mahindra Group and the Aditya Birla Group (see the IBO website), underscores the increased commercialisation of school provisioning in India (Srivastava, 2015).

Having introduced the regional context of my study and positioned IB schools within the larger terrain of schooling in India, I now introduce Kovai International, the site of my ethnographic research.

**2.7 An international school in provincial India**

Kovai International is in the eastern border of Coimbatore district which is in the northwest part of the southern state of Tamil Nadu (see the maps, Figures 2.2, 2.3). The school itself is locked in vast expanses of rural hinterland. *Cholam* fields[16] spread out in all directions. The school gate opens to a narrow village street, which is lined with *oet vitu*[17], traditional village hutments. Grazing cows and goats are a common sight, even flocks of sheep cross one's path occasionally. It is a curious and contradictory image of an international school, with all ultra-modern trappings including air-conditioned rooms, wi-fi, even a self-sustaining electricity generator surrounded by large stretches of agrarian countryside.

Kovai International (KI) is an example of a new genre of IB schools in India. The creation of an international school in a provincial region such as Coimbatore points to the prosperity of its industrial communities and the global expansion of their businesses. More specifically, KI's establishment can be linked to the changing educational practices of the dominant communities in the region. A longitudinal study of land-owning farmers (Gounders, Naidus and Chettiyars, with Gounders in the majority) in a Coimbatorean village showed that over the period 1981-82 to 2008-09, education was becoming increasingly important for these communities. The study noted the preference for private English medium schools and an increased importance of girls' education among these groups (Heyer, 2000, 2016). In a more recent study conducted in Tiruppur, a district adjoining Coimbatore and part of the Kongu Nadu region, De Neve (2011) traced the changing educational practices of the dominant industrial families. Based on interviews conducted largely with Gounders, and additionally with Mudaliars and Muslims, he

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[16] *Cholam*, a millet consumed by animals and humans is the largest crop grown in this area (Census of India, 2011).

[17] *Oet Vitu* – Local name for traditional houses, made of red tile roofs and mud walls. These days the walls are cemented. *Vitu* in Tamil means house.

concluded that while the earlier generation of these industrial entrepreneurs typically had little school education, since the 1980s they have sought private English medium schooling for their sons, followed by higher education in local universities. Since the 1990s, the trend has been to send sons to western countries for higher education. Educating girls up to university level has also become important for these communities; however, girls are not sent abroad for studies. De Neve points out that these educational practices are sought to strengthen the family business which have an increasing global reach. Further, he considers that these educational practices are part of the larger efforts of these communities to emulate middle-class cultural practices. The educational practices of the dominant communities of Coimbatore are in turn related to the changing landscape of schooling in the region and the accompanying shifts in the dominant discourse of education (Kohli, 2006a, 2006b; Chopra, 2010). It is in light of these developments that the establishment of KI can be understood.

KI is an English medium international school with residential facilities which serves over 1000 students. The total staff strength for the school and hostel is around 400, of which around 200 are teachers and the remaining include administrative staff, bus drivers, cooks, cleaners and security guards. The school was established in 2003 by an enterprising group of friends who belong to the dominant communities of the region. In the early years of the twenty-first century, they envisioned that there would be a demand for international education in a region which had witnessed first-hand the profitability of opening to global markets. The founders were keyed in to the changing cultural and educational practices of the local elites. Having themselves been to America and back, for the local communities they symbolized aspirational possibilities. Being from these very regions meant that the founders could be located within extended networks of kin and community, their biographies could be traced back to previous generations, all these lending the school a legitimacy and trustworthiness which would be difficult for a non-autochthonous entrepreneur to immediately acquire.

KI students came from families whose incomes were far higher than the district per capita income of Rs. 77,975. In April 2016, I asked the IBDP students to anonymously fill out a questionnaire, which included a question on family income (see Appendix 11). The eight students who responded to this question reported annual family incomes ranging from Rs. 6 lakhs to 2 crores[18], the first of these being over seven times the

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[18] Crore is a unit in the Indian numeric system. 1 crore equals a hundred lakhs, or ten million.

district average per capita income (it should however be noted that per capita income cannot be compared with family income). I regard students' reporting of family income as only indicative. However, teachers also corroborated that the KI clientele were indeed drawn from wealthy backgrounds. This is not surprising, given that the annual school fee in 2015-16 ranged from Rs 1.5 lakhs to Rs. 3.5 lakhs. While the school fees can be placed in the lower to middle range among international schools in the country, it is undoubtedly an exclusive school, accessible only to affluent communities.

From their response to questionnaire 1 administered in October 2015 (see Appendix 10), I inferred that the IBDP students largely came from professional and business families, including expatriate families. There were also a few children from agricultural families among the IBDP students. Such a student profile mirrors contemporary enrolment practices in international schools, where apart from the globally mobile, the clientele has expanded to regional affluent groups who are attracted to such schools for their prestige and perceived superiority (Hayden, 2011).

Although the school had residential facilities, student enrolment from outside the region was limited. Among the 45 IBDP students, nearly all were from Tamil Nadu or the neighbouring southern states (information gathered from questionnaire 1). In case of students whose parents were living outside the country, they originally came from regions near the school, and generally had family connections in the area. The one exception in the IBDP group was a student whose parents were Hindi-speaking north Indians who were both teachers in the school.

As I gathered over the course of fieldwork and verified from the schoolteachers, the KI school population, both teachers and students, were largely Hindus, followed by a significant number of Christians, especially among the teaching staff. The Christians were generally Malayalis from the neighbouring state of Kerala. Muslims (6% of Coimbatore population, Census of India, 2011, p. 32) were conspicuously absent in the school; there were none among the IBDP student group or the teachers with whom I interacted. Among students, there were many Marwari Jains, who constitute a fraction (less than 0.5%, Census of India, p. 32) of the total population of the district. KI students were largely drawn from among the Gounder community, the dominant caste in the region. Some teachers estimated that between 25 to 30 percent of students in the school are Gounders (interview, Bharati madam, February 2016). Naidus were also present in considerable numbers among the KI student group, along with a few

Mudaliars and Telugu speaking Vaishyas (traders, including jewellers). Scheduled castes were largely absent from the KI student community. Their presence in the school was mainly as low-ranking staff, *ayya ammas*[19] and *annas*[20], generally from the *Mathari*[21] caste.

The school community was also linguistically diverse, mirroring the wider society. While majority of the IBDP students were Tamil speaking, followed by Telugu speakers, there were among students and faculty, Malayalis, Kannadigas and Hindi speaking Marwaris (questionnaire 1, see Appendix 10).

The KI clientele was drawn from industrial, business and farming communities who do not constitute the traditional middle classes in India (Markovits, 2004, 2008; Fernandes, 2006, 2011; Jeffrey, 2010; De Neve, 2011). It is their cultural practices, including in the educational sphere, which mark them as being part of the emergent middle classes. This can in turn be related to the changing socio-economic currents in the country, including the liberalisation of the economy and the changing doxa in the field of education. I discuss these theoretical considerations at greater length in the next chapter and also examine contemporary research on schooling and the middle classes.

## 2.8 Conclusions

In this chapter, I have provided a social-historical grounding to the study. I conclude the chapter with few comments. The clientele of KI has a specific history which is directly linked to the industrialisation of the region. For many of them, the transformation to an industrialist class is not older than a few decades. Kinship ties, remnants of an agrarian past, continue to be important in their capitalist ventures. Given their successful recent ventures in global trade, it is not surprising that these communities are attracted to an IB school with its promise of global mobility and considerable local prestige. The second thread to the context of this study is the increased fragmentation and social divisiveness of schooling in the country and the region amidst a growing market for private schooling. Within this, IB schools with formidably high fees are located at the extreme end of the private school spectrum. The establishment of KI, an IB school in a provincial region of the country must be see in light of these larger developments.

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[19] *Ayya* refers to women workers who are sweepers and cleaners. *Amma* is a respectful way of addressing an older woman. In the school, *ayya-ammas* were women workers who did cleaning, cooking and nanny-work for younger children. If younger, they were called *ayya-akkas*; *akka* means elder sister in Tamil.
[20] *Anna* – Elder brother.
[21] Dalit community in this region.

# Chapter 3 Exploring class and schooling in the Indian context

## 3.1 Introduction

> 'Looking for a haven in this emerging market rout? Try India' - India's lower export orientation compared to its peers, and domestic demand delivered by a booming middle class gives the country relative insulation from external shocks.

> (Gokuluk, 2018)

A google search on middle class in India typically yields news stories like the above, applauding the robust consumptive capacities of India's expanding middle classes and marketing to multinational companies (MNCs) the endless possibilities for profit in India. India's liberalising political economy firmly locates the consuming middle classes at the centre of its expanding project. It is not surprising that large multinational companies and international organisations are continuously trying to understand the constitution of this group, given its considerable purchasing power.

But the Indian middle class is more than a politico-economic development. It is also about the changing dispositions, subjectivities and practices among diverse communities of Indians, located in different parts of the country and across the world, all responding in historically contingent ways to the insertion of globalisation and neo-liberalism in their lives. The project of becoming middle class in India is crucially understood in terms of shifting cultural practices (Liechty, 2003). Further, the Indian middle class is not seen as a monolithic entity; some Indian social scientists speak of the middle classes in the plural, while others refer to an internally differentiated singular middle class (Baviskar and Ray, 2011). The Indian middle classes are regionally, religiously and linguistically varied (Joshi, 2010) and represent 'a staggering diversity of socio-economic and cultural conditions' (Mazarella, n.d., p.3). Their significance in the Indian context is that historically the middle classes have been attributed a central role in the political, social and economic developments of the country.

In this chapter, I unpack the cultural project of the Indian middle classes. I trace the history of the middle classes in India from the colonial times to the present. I examine the role of colonial education in shaping the Indian middle classes and point to its continued impact on independent India. I discuss different theoretical approaches to the study of the class and middle class in India, arguing that theories emerging from western contexts cannot be unquestioningly applied to the Indian context. Throughout the chapter, I highlight the intersections of caste, class and gender noting that the

presence of multiple stratificatory systems in India calls for an intersectional analysis. I also note that the academic literature on the Indian middle classes has marginalised the social history of merchant communities. Finally, I present the theoretical approach of my study, critically review existing research works, and identify how my own work seeks to overcome some of their shortcomings.

## 3.2 Colonial rule and the emergence of the middle classes in India

Intense sociological interest on the Indian middle classes is a relatively recent phenomenon. In the decades following independence, it was Marxist economists and historians who examined the middle class within a larger study of the development of capitalism in India. Within sociology however, caste was assumed to be the defining feature of the Indian stratification system and class was understood as relatively insignificant (Béteille, 2001; Markovits, 2008; Joshi, S., 2017). To give an example, Ghurye's book, *Caste and class in India*, published in 1957 had only one chapter on class. Furthermore, even here he focussed on class formation in Britain, concluding about India that it was yet only in the early stages of transforming to a class based society (Ghurye, 1957). As I discuss later in the chapter, it is only since 1990s that a substantial body of sociological research on the Indian middle classes has emerged, the impetus being in part the neo-liberal reforms which are thought to have transformed the character of the Indian middle classes (Varma, 1998; Ahmad and Reifeld, 2001).

In the Indian context, the question arises whether capitalism and a bourgeois class could have emerged in India independent of the colonial encounter. Marx, writing about India in 1853 argued that colonial rule would be the catalyst without which India would be unable to transform to an industrial society (Marx, 1853). According to Ghosh (1985) and Chatterjee (1997), in his later writings, Marx revised these arguments, acknowledging that instead of unleashing forces of development, British rule had impeded the progressive elements rising in Indian society. Countering his earlier observations that Indian society was stagnant and unchangeable, Marx noted that in precolonial India, there were internal forces pushing towards structural changes in the economy. Marxist historians in India pursued these questions further. They argue that in the late eighteenth century, when Mughal rule was in decline, the socio-economic conditions were favourable for the growth of capitalism. They contend that during this period, there were mercantile groups with flourishing businesses. These traders, operating from large urban centres, sourced their goods from smaller towns which were

linked to rural farms. According to this view, this period saw the emergence of mercantile-capitalist and petit bourgeois classes. The latter, drawn from and continuous with a regional, communitarian base, consisted of rich farmers, middle-level peasants, revenue contractors and small traders, i.e. people connected with the trading networks (Stein, 1991).

Chatterjee (1997), however, argues that even if economic developments in precolonial India were conducive for the emergence of indigenous capitalism and a bourgeois class, this matter is merely speculative because colonial conquest abruptly stultified any nascent movement towards industrialisation in Indian society. Postcolonial historians argue that a middle class first emerged in India in late nineteenth century as a consequence of development of a capitalist economy, expansion of commerce, western education and administrative policies conducive to trade (Chatterjee, 1997; Joshi, 2010). Given the exigencies of colonial rule, the expansion of this middle class was limited. Because industrialisation was not developed within the Indian subcontinent, Indian society did not develop into a class based society. The bulk of those who might be considered middle class during this period consisted of government servants who were identified as the salaried classes. Where colonial administration policies favoured recruitment of the literate and the propertied classes, the few private businesses that thrived generally recruited from within their caste and kin groups. Further, governance and commerce centres were confined to presidencies and urban regions, limiting the geographical spread of this middle class. These administrative and business practices benefitted some social groups, typically urban and upper caste, the effects of which continue until today. In the colonial period, the middle classes were seen to be a small, powerful group of Indians distinct both from aristocratic classes above and from the teeming masses below. They were internally differentiated, an outcome of bureaucratic hierarchies and linguistic-regional-religious-caste differences which had characterised Indian society. They were a loosely homogenous pan-Indian entity, with English education becoming one of their key and common characteristics.

Postcolonial analysis developed in the 1980s and 1990s marks a radical shift from Marxist theory. Postcolonial historians present a powerful criticism of Marxist theory and question the fundamental premises of enlightenment thought. They argue that western models of capitalist development cannot be simplistically applied to the Indian context. The historical trajectory of Indian society cannot be assumed to progress in the same

direction of development as the west. The dominant political and cultural forms in India are very different from the west and require that new theoretical categories be evolved to understand them. Indian modernity is characterised by the existence of traditional practices alongside those developed in the encounter with the west. The latter must not be viewed as anachronistic tendencies which will disappear with time. Postcolonial thought questions a Euro-centric derivative model of Indian modernity (Chatterjee, 1997; Chakrabarty, 2002; Chibber, 2013). About the middle classes, they note that unlike their counterparts in the west, the Indian bourgeoisie failed to integrate the subalterns into a unified public sphere. In the Indian context, the elites and the subalterns constitute distinct social formations.

Postcolonial writers were influenced by post-structural philosophers like Foucault and Derrida. Thinking with Foucault (1977), they pursued a radical analysis by privileging the disciplinary power of the state apparatus which was seen as shaping the subjectivities of the colonised people. On the other hand, social scientists in the Marxist tradition identify commercial groups with ownership of capital as middle classes. Such an analysis restates arguments from British historical scholarship, where the eighteenth century mercantile classes were categorized as the middle classes and credited with transforming a medieval feudal society to a capitalist society (Ghurye, 1951). In privileging hegemony in the public sphere over means of production, postcolonial historians have overlooked important business and merchant communities like *Banias*[22] and *Marwaris*[23]. This neglect is problematic because these merchant and trading communities are powerful groups distinct from landowning farmers, educated middle classes, as well as the upper echelons of big capitalists in India, such as the Tatas and Birlas (Misra, 1951; Markovits, 2008). I discuss the history of these groups because there were *Marwaris* among the clienteles of KI and because studying these traditional business communities may help understand some of the cultural and educational practices of industrial communities of Coimbatore.

 Markovits, a social historian with neo-Marxist leanings argues that the cultural practices of traditional business communities have similarities as well as important differences with those of the salaried middle classes. Their negotiation with forces of modernity is markedly different from those of the salaried classes. Markovits argues

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[22] *Banias* - Hindu traders belonging to the merchant caste
[23] *Marwaris* - Traders of Hindu and Jain castes originating from Rajasthan.

that in the British era, a variety of developments such as the establishment of an extensive transport system, especially the railways, the commodification of agricultural goods and the collapse of previously existing trade routes were important in the formation of different trading groups. In colonial times, these trading communities served as intermediaries between the British and rural markets. They operated through tight caste-kin networks, building trading channels from the hinterlands to port cities. These communities prospered as a result of fiscal protection policies of the colonial government. Markovits considers their role to be pivotal in spawning industrial growth in the country and argues that these communities have shaped its character in many ways. These communities have also been known to shape regional public spheres in different ways, for example by supporting the vernacular press.

On the other hand, Markovits notes that while the professional middle classes have always been a loose pan-Indian association, consisting of a diverse mix of upper castes from across the country, the merchant classes were generally confined to their caste and regional groups. Traditionally, they did not feel the need to educate themselves in English. They largely operated in vernacular languages. They did not easily mix with the salaried classes; there were often linguistic and cultural differences between the two. For instance, in Bombay, the merchant communities were Gujaratis, whereas the educated middle classes were Marathis. Crucially, their economic activities centred around the family, whereas the educated middle classes were considerably more dependent upon the state and the market. Traditional business firms were family affairs, recruitments were from within the family or caste. To raise capital, they depended on state banks and extended familial networks and not public stocks. For these reasons, in case of the merchant communities, the public sphere was coaeval with the domestic sphere. Their sense of sociability was restricted to caste and kin networks. Markovits' point is that whereas the Macaulayan middle classes operated in larger spheres going beyond their caste associations, this was not the case with merchant middle class groups. He also identifies points of similarities between the two groups. Sexual moralities of both the educated middle classes and the merchant communities were conservative, not surprising given that they were both largely drawn from upper castes (Chakravarti, 2003). The merchant groups however remained unaffected by Victorian values, which the professional middle classes were compelled to negotiate with. Further, both communities traditionally decried conspicuous consumption. Marcovits

notes that merchant and business communities have been under researched within middle-class literature. On the other hand, research on these communities emphasized their caste identities, and did not seek to make links with the research on the middle classes (Joshi, S., 2017).

For postcolonial historians however, political power and cultural dominance, not ownership of capital is the marker of the middle class in the colonial period (Chakrabarty, 2002; Chibber, 2013). It is in the realm of cultural practices including the public sphere and domestic life they saw the formation of the middle classes. As I argue later, such a perspective facilitated an affinity with sociologists studying contemporary middle class formations (Liechty, 2003; Fernandes and Heller, 2006; Donner and De Neve, 2011).

From such a perspective, the middle class in colonial India was not merely about occupying specific slots in an occupational hierarchy. Their emergence in the colonial regime was:

> predicated on the creation of new forms of politics, the restructuring of norms of social conduct, and construction of new values guiding domestic as well as public life
>
> (Joshi, 2010, p.xvi).

Becoming middle class was 'a project of self-constitution with only indirect links to economic power' and 'social manners, morals and values' were central to the formation of the middle classes (Joshi, 2010, p. xxiii). Associated with the emergence of these middle classes is the emergence of a modern public sphere, and new aesthetics and moralities (Chatterjee, 1993). The middle classes in India were 'cultural entrepreneurs' (Joshi, 2010, p. 2), seeking to self-fashion themselves after the middle classes in Victorian England. Unsurprisingly, respectability was central to this cultural project. The Indian middle classes played a central role in social movements, religious reforms and feminist movements (Joshi, S., 2017). These progressive reforms also created new orthodoxies. They invoked scriptural writings to make claims about their cultural authenticity. Religious revivalism was a strong undercurrent in these cultural activities, latent beneath an overt secular sentiment.

The project of becoming middle class in India was about becoming modern and was as much steeped in internal contradictions as it was elsewhere in the world (Joshi, 2001). Because the middle class emerged in a context of colonial domination, the question of its derivative and inauthentic agenda coloured its moral landscape and continues to influence

its cultural ethos even today (Joshi, S., 2017). Chatterjee (1993) argues that a contradictory position as both elite and subaltern shaped middle-class subjectivities in the colonial regime. Unable to oppose colonial domination, they sought counter-narratives in the inner domains of familial and religious lives. This 'inner domain' was a more autonomous space where the colonial hegemony could be countered. These counter-hegemonic discourses were also markedly upper-caste (Pandian, 2002) and as I discuss later, engendered new regimes of patriarchy (Chatterjee, 1993). Joshi argues that the Indian middle classes which emerged in colonial rule strengthened, rather than rupturing traditional stratifications. While partaking of a modern rhetoric of egalitarianism and secularism, the middle classes held on to traditional values such as the inherent inferiority of lower castes, religious identity and communal feelings. These propensities continue to shape the cultural project of becoming middle class even today.

## 3.3 Education and the Indian middle classes

As I noted earlier, educational practices during colonial rule played a key role in shaping the subjectivities of the emerging middle classes. It was in the early nineteenth century that educational provisioning became a concern for colonial rule. The subsequent decades witnessed animated debates among the rulers regarding the nature of education to be imparted to the 'natives' and the medium of instruction for this education. The Wood's Despatch of 1854 ruled in favour of western education being transmitted in English language. It also encouraged private efforts to impart education. The impact of this educational policy was enormous, resulting in a near decimation of indigenous education systems. Thomas Babington Macaulay, a senior member of the British administration in mid-nineteenth century is associated with this severe policy, and those who partook in this English education are often referred to as the Macaulayan middle classes. As the colonial encounter ushered in new ways of life, the native schools were rendered fossilized remnants of a ruptured past (Misra, 1951; Ghosh, 1995; Srivastava, 2015).

By the late nineteenth century, the dominant view among the colonizers was one which constructed the Indian personality largely in terms of its lacking. Indian nationalism, when it turned to education in early twentieth century could not escape these discursive frames. The nationalists sought to create a subject free of the weaknesses they believed had come to besiege the Indian personality. They were also caught within the interpretive grids of psychological theorising which was then gaining ground in

educational practices. They appropriated the colonial discourse, overlooking the social-historical circumstances which had shaped the Indian psyche. The nationalists cultivated an educational ideal which was imbued with masculine symbolisms and sought to counter the colonial charge that the Indian male was effeminate. The educational ideals which emerged in this period invented a glorious Hindu past and sought ancient Indian scriptural writings to bring about an idealized postcolonial renaissance.

The Doon School, established in 1938 by the national elites, brought to life the spirit of the times (Srivastava, 1998). A residential school for boys who came from professional, business, and rural landed backgrounds, it was a site for experimenting with nationalist pedagogic discourses. Srivastava argues that the school's practices sought to advance a rationalist scientific subjectivity which was deemed appropriate for the statist agendas in the new industrializing nation. The Doon pedagogical project was founded on a notion of masculinity as bound up with a command over knowledges. Further, this elite masculine personality was seen in oppositional terms with its other, the teeming masses who were cast as unscientific, irrational and feminine. It promoted a vision of an upper-caste, modern male leading a nation of reluctant masses. In striving for secularism in the public space, the school organised its daily rituals and routines along secular principles and ideas of religious syncretism. Even so, this outward secularism masked a lurking presence of Hindu symbolisms. Mirroring the general practices of the national elites, the Doon school also unselfconsciously equated upper caste Hindu practices as Indian. It recast issues of caste, class and language into educational discourses that foregrounded individual ability, personality and pedagogy. The making of middle-class identity within the sphere of education did not signify an erasure of caste based fabric of life, but rather it was conjoined with caste in complex ways. Later in the chapter (Section 3.10), I return to the issue of education and examine literature on schooling practices of contemporary middle classes. Next I explore the role of caste in the making of middle-class identities.

### 3.4 The question of caste in the formation of middle-class identities

Following Dumont's (1970) monumental work, caste was understood to be a 'hierarchical system built around the opposition of purity and pollution' (Béteille, 1972, p. 7). It was characterised by endogamy, restriction in communal exchange and hereditary occupational specialisation (Gupta, 1991). Subsequently, Dumont's writings have been criticised on several accounts – for privileging the discourse of Brahman-Kshratriya dominance over subaltern viewpoints and ancient scriptures over the contemporary, for

assuming pan-Indian structures, thereby reinforcing uniformity over diversity and finally for assuming that caste has remained fundamentally unchanged since ancient times. Dumont's reading of caste is now seen to have echoed colonial practices. Contemporary understanding recognises that colonial institutions and discourses have played a key role in shaping caste into a rigid social phenomenon and specifically a 'form of Indian society' (Fuller, 1996, p. 6). The census enumeration in particular is understood to have set in motion a mobilisation and consolidation of castes, a movement which had the effect of fixing caste identities (Chakravarti, 2003). Until the colonial period, caste was a regional development, closely tied to local histories, land ownership and agrarian social formations. It was not a pan-Indian social morphology which remained unchanged through history. If anything, caste as a reified uniform structure which defines Indian society is a modern discursive production (Dirks, 2001).

Even as administrative practices of the colonial state produced caste as a reified uniform structure, for the emerging middle classes, who were largely from the upper castes, the matter of caste was problematic, a sign of a regressive way of life. Claims to modernity required that caste be expunged; denial of caste in the public sphere was a common practice among upper caste middle classes (Pandian, 2002). They constructed caste as happening elsewhere, not in middle class life, it belonged to others, not the middle class people themselves. For middle classes who espoused the values of universalism, caste and caste relations were re-encoded in language and rationalities that were acceptable to modern sensibilities, division of labour and hygiene practices, to name a few. They sought to justify upper caste practices and norms in the idioms of liberalism, rationality and modernity. Middle-class modernity was itself 'stealthily upper caste in its orientation' (Pandian, 2002, p. 1738). The obfuscation of caste in the dominant discourse served to perpetuate the domination of the subaltern groups. This register of talking about caste in an idiom where it masquerades as something else is a continued practice (Deshpande, 2003).

### 3.5 The emergence of new patriarchies

While middle-class modernity relegated caste to the background, the question of woman's identity was brought into the folds of the inner domain. The inner/outer distinction was mapped onto the binaries of woman/man and spiritual/material. Chatterjee (1993) considers that as the nationalism discourse became dominant, the middle class woman was brought under a new disciplining regime and sought to be

regulated by emerging patriarchies. The idealised imaginary of the new woman constructed her as refined and embodying spirituality, which was a marker of Indian autonomy from colonial domination. She was expected to be educated and capable of managing domesticity in a home where the man was busy with material pursuits. The woman was constructed as the upholder of the reconstructed and classicised tradition. The 'attainment by her own efforts of a superior national culture was the mark of woman's newly acquired freedom' (Chatterjee, 1993, p. 127). This middle class woman was marked as distinct from her uneducated predecessors, from degenerate lower-class women and from excessively westernised women, i.e. those who imitated English women, for example by pursuing activities marked as the exclusive forte of men. These overly westernised women were regarded as vulgar in popular culture. Chatterjee's argument is that the bourgeoise, middle class woman was disciplined in ways that were suited to the changing economic and material conditions. These hegemonic discourses also set limits to the constitution of legitimate womanhood.

Even as Chatterjee saw normative femininity as a discursive production, in recent anthropological writings, following Butler (1990), the production of normative gender is understood to be intertwined with the regulations of sexuality and sexual conduct. Such a perspective considers that the larger field of power produces the gendered subject, usually within a larger compulsory heterosexual matrix, where heterosexuality is the norm and sexual desires are mapped onto a gender binary of male and female. Further, even as discursive power regulates desire and inscribes subjects as appropriately gendered, performativity introduces an element of constrained agency and a 'logic of iterability which make possible social transformation' (Butler, 1997, p. 147). Gender is something we do or perform, rather than a biological essence. It is 'more precarious and less straightforward than a status attained' (Osella and Osella, 2006, p. 29).

In India, caste is the ideological grounding through which the regulation of sexual activity and gender identity is sought. A caste maintains its ritual purity through endogamic marriages. This regulation is especially important for upper caste land-owning communities because inheritance is through the male lineage. Since maintenance of caste groups as bounded entities depends upon women, their sexual activity and the organisation of reproduction are both closely regulated. Arranged marriage is therefore the norm, and any violation becomes a cause for moral panic. Control of women's sexual activity is sought through coercion and also through the dominant discourses of honour

and chastity. Women in turn come to embody these values as markers of distinction. Chakravarti (2003) argues that caste and gender are closely tied and impossible to disentangle that to regard them as distinct institutions would be fallacious. Ethnographic studies also support the understanding that the heteronormative order in India is shaped by a 'doxic requirement of community endogamy' (Osella and Osella, 2006, p. 114). The societal regulation of sexual and gender conduct also intersects with class positioning. I have already discussed how the normative construction of a middle class woman within a larger project of nationalism sought to discipline women through new patriarchies.

In the post-independence period, the educated middle classes continued to dominate the public and political sphere. The general understanding suggests a continuity in the composition and character of the middle classes in the initial decades after independence.

**3.6 The middle classes in post-independence India**

Marxist historians enquired into the question of whether the interests of the big capitalists were subordinate to the interests of foreign capital, or whether their interests were aligned with the interests of the independent nation (Ghosh, 1985; Chatterjee, 1997). Marxist economists investigated the ideological-political constellation of different classes, the role of the state and the balance of class forces in independent India. In a study of the political economy of development of the country, Bardhan (1984) identifies the industrial capitalist class, the rich landowning farming class and the professional white collar workers as the proprietary classes of India. In a significant departure from traditional Marxist analysis, he argues about the professional classes that, 'It is not customary to include them among proprietary classes, but if physical capital can be the basis of class stratification, so can human capital in the form of education, skills and technical expertise' (Bardhan, 1984, p.51), and additionally that, 'In a country where the overwhelming majority are illiterates or drop-outs at the primary education level, the educated elite enjoy a high scarcity value for their education and profession' (Bardhan, 1984, p. 52). His analysis also points to the plurality of the dominant classes in India, who are marked as distinct from the subaltern masses. Bardhan further underscores the complexity of the Indian situation by highlighting that in rural India, class based alignments are difficult to achieve because of differences in caste identities. His analysis reflects a reworking of original Marxist concepts to accommodate the complexities of Indian society. It is in keeping with the general development of neo-Marxist theories which have altered their original

conceptualisations, in response to the complexities of late capitalist societies. These theories increasingly recognise the middle class to be a class in its own right, even if its boundaries are difficult to pinpoint. They deploy a plurality of criteria to identify the middle classes. They highlight the ownership of scarce abilities, monopolisation of credentials and control over organisational assets as key to the middle-class power and prestige. They recognise that the middle class is more than an agglomeration of occupational strata. It has a distinct ideology, culture and relationship to market and politics (Wacquant, 1992).

Even as the neo-Marxist class analysis emphasized the relations to means of production, it also recognised educational credentials as constituting capital. In general, social scientists from different theoretical persuasions noted that the professional, bureaucratic classes held considerable power in post-independence India because the state was directly involved in industrial development. The educated middle classes, the majority of whom were employed in government jobs, gained power because they were part of the expanding capitalist state machinery (Raj, 1973; Mukherjee and Mukherjee, 1988; Bardhan, 1989; Stein, 1991; Chibber, 2006).

For postcolonial historians, the salaried middle classes had dominated the political sphere in the colonial period. They were the elites who led the country to independence and to the violent partitioning of the subcontinent. They were also the cultural brokers for the state and capitalist classes, tasked with the translation of relations of domination into a language of legitimisation. According to this view, the Indian National Congress (INC), which dominated electoral politics in the first three decades after independence, primarily represented the interests of these middle classes. This perspective considers that after independence, the middle classes continued to be discursively constructed as invested in the project of nation building. In popular perception, the Nehruvian era is associated with a socialist-welfare state. On closer scrutiny, it becomes clear that it expanded and consolidated the interests of classes already privileged by the contingencies of colonial rule. It was the already advantaged groups who primarily benefitted from the economic and institutional policies and practices of the independent nation state. For instance, within an overall poor budgetary allocation on education, higher education received proportionately more funding than primary education. This worked in favour of the advantaged groups while simultaneously denying elementary education for the masses (Fernandes, 2011; Joshi, S., 2017).

Political values and practices in post-independent India have been extensively examined within the disciplines of sociology, politics and cultural studies. Further in the 1990s, as these disciplines came under the influence of post-structural writings and the larger 'cultural turn' in social sciences, they became increasingly tempered by postcolonial sensibilities (Chibber, 2013; Thakur, 2017). The study of the Indian middle classes in social sciences also comes under this genre of academic work. In continuity with postcolonial writings, these sociological works also exclusively identified the educated professional bureaucratic groups as the middle class (Verma, 1998; Markovits, 2008).

Sociologists note that the middle classes continued to dominate the public sphere in post-independent India and sought to develop it along a 'particular orientation towards modernity' (Baviskar and Ray, 2011, p.5). Being middle class signified being egalitarian, scientific, rational as well as financially prudent. And while the middle classes steadfastly held on to their historical privileges and mediated the reproduction of inequalities, they championed a meritocratic based social order (Baviskar and Ray, 2011). The contradictions which marked the colonial Indian middle classes continued to shape their practices in the initial decades after independence.

Within the field of education, notions of educational ideals were continuous from the colonial times. English retained its position as the dominant language, acquiring greater symbolic power after economic reforms. Hindu symbols continued to dominate school spaces where they passed off as Indian (Deka, 2014; Gilbertson, 2014). Education continued to be construed in utilitarian terms, and psychological lexicons continued to be deployed, resignifying material hierarchies in the language of ability and merit. Educational policies continued to endorse private provision of education.

However, the fissures in the cultural and political dominance of the Macaulayan middle classes began to deepen with time, shaking their hegemonic power in the political and cultural spheres. In the decades following independence, because of the contingencies of electoral politics, they were dependent on regional alliances with local dominant communities. Over time, these groups, consisting largely of rural landowning peasants, (the rural proprietary class in Bardhan's analysis) began to challenge the dominance of the salaried middle classes. The political ascendance of the rural elites as well as the strengthening of Hindu nationalist politics in the 1990s threatened the dominant liberal, middle-class political discourse. These developments also mark a shift from an older middle class to a 'new middle class' with an ideological leaning towards neo-liberal

regimes and Hindu nationalism (Joshi, S., 2017). The post-Independence era has witnessed the expansion of the middle classes with increased participation from the lower castes. These subaltern groups, unlike the upper-caste middle classes of colonial period, seek to assert rather than erase their cultural and caste identities. In doing so, they have significantly transformed the meanings of being middle class, bringing to centre stage questions of caste identities which were earlier silenced in the public sphere. Even as it became clear that the interrogation of class in the Indian context required a study of caste, sociological studies on caste also underwent a similar change, recognising its intersections with class.

## 3.7 Caste in contemporary India

Contemporary sociological understanding recognises that caste is a dynamic, flexible form of social organisation and examines its present-day political, cultural and social ramifications. The influence of postcolonial works on sociology, coupled with decades of field studies on caste by sociologists have unsettled the previously dominant Dumont's understanding of caste. Studies point to the disintegration of the traditional religion based social order, the devolution of the vertically integrated caste structure and the realignment of castes around the idea of difference (Fuller, 1996; Sheth, 2014). They suggest that increasing differentiation within each caste in terms of class (i.e. status, power and wealth) makes caste rankings difficult. They note that in present-day India, caste is often euphemised in the language of cultural distinctiveness which contains implicit evaluations of status and hierarchy. They point to regional differences and counter notions of uniform pan-Indian caste. They argue that in contemporary times, 'caste is a kinship based cultural community' (Sheth, 2014, p. 120) in constantly evolving social stratificatory systems. In some rural regions, hierarchical relations around land ownership are more salient rather than hierarchies around ritual purity. In urban centres, the dynamics of caste relations is changing in other ways. Caste continues to be significant among business communities which have witnessed consolidation of caste solidarities in recent years (Reiniche, 1996). In a nuanced economic analysis of business communities, Munshi (2014, 2016) argues that in case of these groups, larger community networks play an important role in economic activities and social mobility of individuals. He traces these practices to the agrarian past, where caste networks were known to be historically important; they provided mutual insurance to absorb unpredictable market fluctuations. Among groups such as Gounders and

Naidus, caste networks are known to have traditionally supplied business capital required for individual members to set up a new enterprise (Damodaran, 2008). Caste networks constitute organic networks of mutual trust which is crucial for business operations. Apart from credit, these networks also constitute tightly bound circuits of information, and restrict members' spheres of sociability (Markovits, 2004, 2008), a point discussed earlier in the chapter. Among merchant groups, individuals often draw upon larger community links to bootstrap their way into new occupational positions. Such mobility is often group mobility, advancing the life opportunities of the community as a whole.

Sociologists note that among professional middle classes in metropolitan cities, caste is becoming increasingly irrelevant in many spheres of life (Béteille,1991). Among these groups, social status is encoded by educational credentials and occupational status rather than caste membership. In these contexts, caste traditions are considered illegitimate and denial of caste is common (Fuller, 1996; Deshpande, 2003). Fuller argues that with the collapse of caste as a 'coherent, internally consistent ideology' (Fuller, 1996, p.26), a multiplicity of often contested meanings has emerged in its place. Sociologists recognise that caste has not been replaced by class; it continues to be an organising principle of familial and social life, regulating reproduction and sexual conduct. They also recognise that in present-day India, caste indexes multiple complexities of society, and is entangled with matters of gender as well as class. Fuller and Narasimhan (2014) have documented how Tamil Brahmans came to be an urban middle-class caste. They trace the history of this community from its rural origins in nineteenth century to its present avatar. They argue that that Tamil Brahmans have become an elite professional class dominating the IT industry in recent times. At the same time, they hold on to traditional values in different spheres of life and continue to practice endogamic marriages. Upadhya (1997) examines how the Kammas and Reddys of coastal Andhra Pradesh came to consolidate themselves into distinct castes while adapting secular aspects of cultural stylisation. Both these studies conceptualise class and caste as intersecting:

> Moreover, class and caste identities are interconnected in various and complex ways, and the nature of the interconnection certainly varies over time. One way to approach this problem is to view both caste and class as vehicles (though not the only ones) for the creation of social identities that are available for deployment by individuals and collectivises for various purposes…. The ways in which these types of social identity are defined and articulated with one another

(and with other axes of social differentiation such as gender) in concrete situations should be a matter for empirical investigation rather than abstract theorising.

(Upadhya, 1997, p. 171)

Even as postcolonial historians recognised caste as shaping middle-class subjectivities, sociological research on caste also acknowledged its intersections with class in present-day India.

## 3.8 The middle classes in the post liberalisation period

The liberalisation of Indian economy is often seen as an important moment of rupture in Indian social history. This marked the beginning of a period of expansion of the middle classes and the consumer market. This period also marks the beginning of sociological interest in the Indian middle class (Béteille, 2001). Starting in 1991, India embarked on a long-term programme of economic restructuring. Since then, the Indian state has gradually withdrawn from several sectors including healthcare and higher education, and progressively reduced entry barriers for foreign investors (Münster and Strümpell, 2014). The 1990s also mark the beginning of a new era of globalisation in the world at large. The term, closely linked with neo-liberal reforms, signifies a new era of international free trade (Tsing, 2000). It marks a period of internationalisation of production and financial operations. Globalisation is associated with new communication technologies and intensified circulation of money, goods and services, ideas and symbols and labour (Pakulski, 2004). This period has also witnessed the emergence of international regulatory mechanisms and the weakening of national sovereignty (Balachandran and Subrahmanyam, 2005). The Coimbatore industrial capitalists (the clientele of KI, see Chapter 2) were extensively involved in international trade even before the 1990s. Trade liberalisation accelerated the international expansion of their operations (Chari, 2004a; Carswell and De Neve, 2014).

As an economic theory, neo-liberalism reposes faith in the rationality of the market and privileges an abstract model of rational, human action (Bourdieu, 1998; Laval, 2017). However, it is more than just economic restructuring; it signifies new regimes of governance modelled after the market, diffusion of economic theodicies to other spheres of life (including education) and the making of market-responsive subjectivities (Münster and Strümpell, 2014; Venugopal, 2015). Over the decades, neo-liberalism and globalisation have become overstretched, reified concepts, used to explain a wide range of contemporary developments (Balachandran and Subrahmanyam, 2005). Laval (2017)

cautions against the tendency to construe capital as possessing an independent agency which can mechanically change the social order. Rather, it is political agents, bureaucracy and people who enable or resist any social transformation. Social analysts such as Deshpande (2003), Carswell and De Neve (2014) and Münster and Strümpell (2014) argue that instead of using neo-liberalism and globalisation as hegemonic categories, it is better to foreground the specific social, political and economic constellations within a region. They contend that only an empirical study that focuses on specific contexts can ascertain whether and how neo-liberalisation has made incursions into the lives of particular communities. Deshpande (2003), discussing the Indian context, reasons that researchers should seek to understand the continuities of tradition within which changes are assimilated. Further, globalisation has multiple, contradictory effects which cannot be captured in terms of simplistic trends. It introduces greater complexities in the inequality of life chances (Pakulski, 2004). If spatial mobility and cosmopolitan identities mark some people, others are ascribed identities that are stagnant and immobile (Tsing, 2000; Assayag and Fuller, 2005). Globalisation also introduces new discourses of class, requiring a redrawing of traditional class relations (Skeggs, 2004a; Fernandes, 2006). In the Indian context, this period marks the emergence of a 'new middle class', which as discussed earlier, is seen as distinct from the older middle classes.

Economic liberalisation in India is crucially dependent on an expanding consumer market, namely middle classes who have purchasing power. As a result, even though small in comparison to the population of the country, the middle classes who are large in terms of absolute numbers, are critical to the success of these reforms (Kohli, 2006a, 2006b). Fernandes (2006) argues that one of the consequences of liberalisation and accompanying social changes is the emergence of an idea of citizen as a consumer. She considers that the neo-liberal regime in India has shaped the construction of ideal citizenship in the image of a 'new middle class'. This new middle class is construed in terms of consumptive and aesthetic practices. These images are ubiquitous in visual media and are influential in shaping popular perceptions. Fernandes (2006) argues that a discourse of the new middle class has become hegemonic and normative. The 'newness' associated with this construct is related to a marked shift in the cultural and political dispositions they are assumed to possess. As a representational category, the new middle class signifies a class of professionals with credentials, skills and cultural resources

needed to navigate the globalising world. They are English educated, embody a global outlook and seen to seamlessly weave traditional values together with modern consumptive and aesthetic practices. Fernandes argues that these symbols and images help Indians at large in orienting themselves to the bewildering changes that have followed economic reforms. Images of new middle class also serve as normative ideals for aspirational communities such as rural land owning classes.

For social scientists, an important question is how processes related to liberalisation have changed the cultural project of becoming middle class. For one, those associated with this imaginary are largely from the historically privileged castes, suggesting continuity in social formations. However, their increased political disengagement and lack of concern for the issues of the nation marks the new middle class as distinct from the middle classes of the colonial and early post-independence eras (Fernandes, 2006). The middle classes seem to have abdicated their historical responsibility as an enlightened self-critical class (Mazarella, n.d, p.7). They embrace a transnational cosmopolitan ideal and show distaste for the whole gamut of others who fail to embody these ideals. Further, they are also implicated in the growing religious chauvinism in the country, betraying the secular, liberal outlook that the earlier middle classes brought to the public sphere. Changing characteristics of what being middle class means notwithstanding, social scientists also highlight historical continuity in middle-class values and practices (Fernandes, 2006; Donner and De Neve, 2011). In contemporary academic literature, the Indian middle class is understood to be an analytical abstraction, an ideological construction whose connotations vary over time and context (Baviskar and Ray, 2011; Joshi, S., 2017). These writings, which highlight the discursive production of the middle classes, point to the growing influence of post-structural thought and culturalism within sociology and allied disciplines (Fernandes, 2011; Thakur, 2017).

Earlier in the chapter, I noted that rich farmers constitute important proprietary classes in India whose political power has grown considerably since independence. They constitute aspirational communities whose adoption of middle-class practices is relatively recent. Examining the case of western Uttar Pradesh (UP), Jeffrey (2010) notes that as a result of pro-agricultural government policies, large landowning farmers made considerable economic gains from 1960s until the mid-1980s. This enabled them to venture into non-farming businesses, and further their financial gains. During this period, they also gained considerable political visibility and lobbied for their collective interests. Liberalisation

disrupted this process for varied reasons including reduced government control over agricultural subsidies and strengthening of private markets. Responding to these developments, the rich rural farmers, largely drawn from upper and middle castes, have adjusted their strategies, trying to establish cultural domination. Their practices, which include consumptive lifestyles and English education, mark these rural communities as aspiring middle classes. Jeffrey's observations are about Uttar Pradesh, but Fernandes (2006) considers that such practices are widespread among rich rural farmers. As discussed in Chapter 2, in the case of Gounders and Naidus, their transformation from farmers to industrial entrepreneurs was via a different trajectory and has a longer history (Chari, 2004a; Damodaran, 2008; Heyer, 2016). Further, De Neve's (2011) analysis about the changing educational practices of Gounder industrialists concur with Jeffrey's commentary about the transformation of farming communities in Uttar Pradesh. These industrialist communities are also increasingly turning to education to enhance their class status.

In the post liberalisation era, the ubiquity of consumptive culture and concomitant changing lifestyles have resulted in the merchant middle classes also adopting some of the practices of the professional middle classes, including providing English education to their children (De Neve, 2011). While Fernandes (2006) considers that these communities are also increasingly adopting middle-class practices, Markovits (2008) argues that they nevertheless remain distinct from the salaried classes. However, given the paucity of work on merchant middle classes (Joshi, S., 2017), more research is required into the shifting cultural practices and class aspirations of these groups.

Both the older and the newly emerging middle classes require more than access to material resources; psychic investment is needed for the cultivation of middle-class subjectivities. Researchers have examined different sites where middle-class subjectivities are produced, including the workplace, the home, urban spaces and educational institutions (Baviskar and Ray, 2011). Consumptive practice is a key concern in the contemporary research on the middle classes. The relationship of the middle classes with the state and their hegemonic role continue to be important areas of research (Fernandes and Heller, 2006; Jeffrey, 2010; Donner and De Neve, 2011). Many of these works position themselves as Bourdieusian, but some studies have interpreted Bourdieu in a limited manner. For example, some works have presented cultural practices in isolation from larger social, political and economic processes (Fernandes,

2011); others have sought to locate participants' class based on their occupational positioning alone, overlooking Bourdieu's relational understanding of class (Sancho, 2012; Gilbertson, 2014).

**3.9 Schooling practices of the Indian middle classes**

As already noted, schools play an important role in this cultural project of becoming middle class. They regulate the redistribution of cultural capitals which carry purchase in the larger symbolic and political economy. I have already discussed (see Chapter 1, section 1.1. and Chapter 2, section 2.6) the expansion of private schools in the 1990s, and the fragmentation of the Indian schooling system. These developments are a pointer to the expansion of the middle classes over the last few decades. The growth of IB schools in the country is also related to these social developments. There is, however, little research on changing schooling practices in the country (Thapan, 2014). This is partly because until recently, research in this field was largely informed either by statist agendas or by theoretical traditions where the study of schooling processes was not considered as particularly important (Nambissan, 2013; Velaskar, 2013). The few studies on schooling practices undertaken in recent years have broadly looked at issues of citizenship and nationalism, religious and gender identity and class. Studies have focussed on both government and private schools but remain restricted to metropolitan regions of the country (Srivastava, 1998; Benei, 2005; Jeffery, 2005; Nambissan, 2010; Sancho, 2012; Gilbertson, 2014; Thapan, 2014, 2015; Iyer, 2015). I focus here on studies which have directly or indirectly touched upon the issue of social class.

Researchers have observed that Indian middle-class parents strive hard to ensure their children's educational success. Studies have shown them to employ all possible resources to ensure their child's entry to premier schools, including using social networks towards these ends (Drury, 1993; Nambissan, 2010). Waldrop (2004) examined primary level admission process in five prestigious English medium private schools in Delhi. Each of these schools received almost ten times more applications than seats available. Their selection process included criteria such as parents' educational and occupational backgrounds. This resulted in a screening out of lower-class children. The schools' clientele served as symbolic capital for the schools, raising their market value. The selection process, mutually beneficial to the schools and their clientele conferred exclusivity and distinction on the schools and helped strengthen class groupings.

According to Kumar (2011), children's intense educational activities in and outside of school have transformed the role of family in relation to children's schooling. This is attested by Donner's (2005, 2006) study of middle-class schooling in Calcutta. She observed that in response to the heightened importance of schooling among the middle classes, child rearing has become an anxiety-ridden project. It has brought about significant changes in familial life; the mothers who participated in her study, spent a considerable amount of time organising children's school and after-school activities. They depended on their mothers-in-law to look after the households. Donner argues that in recent times, the demands of schooling have contributed to a trend of joint households.

Several studies have demonstrated that knowledge of English continues to be highly valued among Indians (Lukose, 2009; Scrase and Scrase, 2009; Gilbertson, 2014). Private schools in India have responded to this by largely offering education in the English medium. In his study of Varanasi, a northern Indian city, LaDousa (2005, 2006) observed that the implications of language medium went much beyond school education and become a key index of a family's social and occupational trajectories and even ideological dispositions about the nation. The participants of his study associated Hindi with the nation and English with a desire to move beyond the local, and even the national.

As noted by Ladousa, English is often perceived to index a hierarchy between India and the west. Such a binary characterisation sees the west as being more relaxed about cross-gender relations, and construes rebelliousness and consumptive practices as western. While on one hand, these practices are decried as loss of tradition, conversely the local/regional/Indian are construed as conformist, conservative and patriotic (Sancho, 2012, 2015; Gilbertson, 2014).

However, responses to English education are not singularly accepting of its supremacy. In one study, middle-class parents in a town in Maharashtra were found to perceive English language as a threat to their Maharashtrian identity (Benei, 2005). Lukose (2009) explored the world of students in a college located in the non-metropolitan town in Kerala, catering to a traditionally 'backward' community. She found that the student community had a complex attitude towards English. Speaking in English was strongly condemned in the college public space, where it was seen as a marker of someone who acts as though he is a White man/woman. In private pursuits however, students sought to master the

language. These studies suggest that while much premium is placed on English language, responses to English are also complex and contradictory.

Beyond competence in English, in general, studies have not examined what performative identities are privileged in different school settings or sought to relate these to the making of classed subjectivities. In her classical study of teaching practices in schools catering to different social classes, Anyon (1980) identified clear correspondences between the pedagogic goals and practices of the school and the social class background of its students. Further, she related the schooling practices to the larger political economy. In the Indian context, there is at present no comparable study which seeks to establish such a link between schooling practices and social class. Gilbertson (2014) pursues this line of enquiry to a limited extent. She notes that the learning goals in schools varied with the social class profile of their students. In her study, the school catering to lower middle classes focussed on rote memorisation to secure good examination results and was concerned with students' successfully entering higher education. The school catering to upper middle classes, emphasized holistic development, communication skills and exposure. Srivastava's (1998) observation about the masculine ideal in Doon school can be viewed as a specific, gendered construction of what constituted as valuable in the early decades of the school's history. A more recent study of Doon school suggests that the 'masculine ideal' in the school setting has considerably changed since the post-independence times. MacDougall (2005) noted that a vigorous sports culture in the school sought to build, 'the new, masculine Indian… upon a regime of bodily practices.. in field, in dormitory, classroom assembly hall, dining hall' (MacDougall, 2005, p. 123). He observed that the corporeal aspects including physical development, posture, gesture, dress and social behaviour were important. Brisk efficiency rather than speculative thinking was emphasized.

## 3.10 The theoretical approach of the study

So far in this chapter, I examined writings on the Indian middle classes from different theoretical and disciplinary perspectives. I discussed the works of postcolonial historians and noted that contemporary sociological research on the Indian middle classes shares theoretical affinity with these works. I presented research within caste and class studies which undertook an intersectional analysis and argued that these are better able to represent the complexities of the Indian social dynamics. In this section, I

pursue these questions more closely and articulate the theoretical perspectives through which I approach my research questions.

In India, there has been a decline of collective class action in the political sphere since the 1970s. Political activity in general has been displaced by the proliferation of Non-Government Organization (NGO) work. These activities have played an important role in altering the political lexicon in currency, resignifying the conflict of class interests in the politically neutered language of social development, good governance and similar vocabulary. Social movements also increasingly rally around questions of identity and issues such as environment and land, which in recent years have become urgent concerns for the disenfranchised. These new social movements make claims of 'universalist matrix of people's interest and notions of public good', leaving out in the process, the 'major axis of cleavage in Indian society, viz, class and caste' (Palshikar, 2001, p. 181). Such a situation signals the receding of any nascent class identity developing in groups such as industrial workers. For example, trade union activity has seen a decline since the 1970s. I point to these developments in order to counter Chibber's (2006) criticism that post-structural and postcolonial perspectives have altogether marginalised class analysis in the Indian context. My point is, given the social history of Indian society, class analysis of the kind undertaken in UK (Pakulski, 2004) does not readily make sense in this context. In the absence of sociological studies on class in Indian society, research on the middle classes is also not located within a larger matrix of class studies in India (Béteille, 2001).

The Indian middle classes do not fit into neat economic categories and do not constitute a 'middle' in a three-class model of society (Joshi, S., 2017). Further, 'most discussions of middle class in the Indian context take place without situating the subject in the context of class society' (Palshikar, 2001, p. 184). Within contemporary social science literature, the concept of the middle class is framed in discourses about elites versus disfranchised, the civic society versus political society, the ruling hegemonic bloc versus the subalterns. The middle class is positioned as a privileged, politically powerful and ideologically dominant heterogeneous community within a complexified conceptualisation of Indian social order (Chatterjee, 2008). As a theoretical concept, the Indian middle class indexes social hierarchies beyond class. A good illustration of this intersectional understanding is the conceptualisation of Tamil Brahmans as a middle-class caste, an example discussed earlier in the chapter (Fuller and Narasimhan, 2014).

*3.10.1 Class in the realm of everyday practices*

Classes are made and unmade through political, economic and ideological struggles and can be understood only by a close examination of social history (Wacquant, 1992). Even when material differences are present, it is human activity which transforms these paper classes into real social groups. The *'movement from theoretical group to practical group'* requires political work 'to impose a principle of vision and division of the social world, even when this principle is well-founded in reality' (Bourdieu, 1987, p. 8). Bourdieu's writings (1984, 1985, 1986a, 1986b, 1987) are particularly useful to understand the practice of class in contexts where there is no overt class conflict, and there is a relative absence of strong class based identities. For Bourdieu, class is made and unmade in the realm of cultural practices, in the everyday life. People produce classificatory schemes for their social worlds and make claims to distinction vis-à-vis each other. The struggles to establish class boundaries take place in the everyday, where individuals try to impose their representations of the world and themselves, as well as in collective, political efforts. Bourdieu's conceptualisation of social class is relational, continuously made and contested.

For Bourdieu, the social world is made up of many autonomous fields, each with its own doxic logics, i.e. regulative principles. The field is where 'the work of class making' (Bourdieu, 1987, p. 9) takes place. Bourdieu compares the field to the structure of a game. While there are rules to be followed, 'playing with the rule is part and parcel of the rule of the game' (Wacquant, 1992, p.18). The field of education plays an important role in the redistribution of valuable cultural capitals. Educational institutions effectuate the monopolisation of credentials important in the labour market, and crucial to the making of middle classes. It is in schools that dominant social groups legitimise their cultural competencies. These groups, 'give the educational certificate the value of a natural right and make the educational system one of the fundamental agencies of maintenance of the social order' (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 387). Educational institutions play an important role in the production of institutionalised cultural capital. They are particularly powerful in a neo-liberal occupational world, because of their power to legitimise skills required in the labour market. Bourdieu (1998) argues that:

> The generalization of electronics, IT and quality standards, which requires all wage-earners to retrain and perpetuates the equivalent of school tests within the enterprise, tends to reinforce the sense of insecurity with a sense of unworthiness, deliberately fostered by the hierarchy. The occupational world,

and by extension the whole social world, seems based on a ranking by 'competence', or worse, of 'intelligence'.

Bourdieu (1998, p. 109)

Bourdieu recognises that in a late capitalist society, power consists of more than just financial capital. Social capital is 'made up of 'social obligations' ("connections") which is convertible in certain conditions into economic capital' (Bourdieu, 1986a, p. 243). Cultural capital is more corporeal, linked to the body through a process of embodiment and incorporation. It requires, 'a labor of inculcation and assimilation, costs time, time which must be invested personally by the investor' (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 244). Capitals are integrated into the body through the habitus, which is the 'embodied sedimentation of social structures' (Wacquant, 1992, p. 19). It is the habitus which links economic and social conditions to distinctive lifestyles, which express differential class positions (Bourdieu, 1987).

In Bourdieu's theory, consumptive aesthetics make for one's class positioning and are also the organising principles for formation of class based collective identities (Bourdieu, 1987). Class position is not a permanently attained status, it is open to contestation and is in continuous negotiation.

Bourdieu's theoretical concepts are powerful for investigating the production of distinction in the different realms of life, including in the institution of school. They make possible the recognition of the exchange value of particular social networks and embodiments. They help understand that everyday practices of school life are related to macro politico-economic processes and dominant values in a particular society. They help understand how schooling works to legitimise as well marginalise identities. It is therefore not surprising that Bourdieu's theory has been deployed in empirical studies on the Indian middle classes (Upadhya, 1997; Donner and De Neve, 2011) and their schooling practices (Sancho, 2012; Gilbertson, 2014). However, Bourdieu's conceptual and theoretical apparatus is also limited for certain reasons. Firstly, habitus has been critiqued for being a reproductionist concept in an ordered world, inadequate for explaining change and resistance (Butler, 1997; Skeggs, 2004b). Butler's concept of performativity on the other hand, has greater potential to disrupt the social order:

> performatives do not merely reflect prior social conditions, but produce a set of social effects, and though they are not always the effects of "official" discourse, they nevertheless work their social power not only to regulate bodies but to form them as well. Indeed the efforts of performative discourse exceed and confound

the authorizing contexts from which they emerge.

(Butler, 1997, pp. 158-159).

Second, Bourdieu's conceptual vocabulary is unable to encompass the complexities of sexualities and gendered capitals and their intersections (Skeggs, 2004b). It has also not been reworked to conceptualise caste as practice. Finally, Bourdieu is unable to altogether break free of the antinomies of structure/agency and of the binaries of culture/nature. Bourdieu's 'subject' uneasily shifts between a rational subject who accesses universal principles of truth and normative subjectivities produced by symbolic power (Skeggs, 2004b). Skeggs' development of Bourdieu's writings are more useful to understand the Indian middle classes.

*3.10.2 The discursive production of class*

I draw upon Skeggs (2004a) to conceptualise social class as a discursive production. She writes in a context where class is no longer explicit and collective, but continues to operate tacitly as, 'cultural, individualized and implicit' (Bottero, 2004, p. 987). It is internal to the psychic landscape, is embodied, and is manifested in affective responses (Reay, 2005). Thinking with Bourdieu, she argues that struggles over moral valuations and legitimacy are central class practices. Like Bourdieu, she considers that the classificatory schemas of dominant communities shape the hegemonic discourse of social class. Her theoretical framework however extends Bourdieu's analysis. Drawing upon Foucault and Butler, she explains social class as a historically contingent, discursive production requiring continual reinstatement through practice. Discourses of social class intersect with race and gender. Her theory seeks to explain how social class is implicated in identity politics as well as academic discourses of mobility and cosmopolitanism.

I recognise that Skeggs is writing about the late capitalist society of England, a context very different from that of India. It is further problematic that her analysis of the discursive production of class in English society is silent on the history of the empire's colonisation of large parts of the world. Even in the context of the contemporary, she fails to take adequate note of the internationalisation of capital, and the more powerful position held by England in this regard. Despite these limitations, I draw upon Skeggs for the following reasons. First, there is no comparable post-structural theoretical work on class in the Indian context. Skeggs locates class within a larger imaginary of discursive power, including in her analysis, politico-economic considerations such as

ownership of property. Her theorisation of class facilitates an intersectional analysis, particularly useful in the Indian context. At present, apart from Velaskar (2013, 2016), there are very few writings in the Indian context on how to conceptualise class, caste and gender. I draw upon Skeggs also because her post-structural perspective is well aligned with existing writings on the Indian middle classes, which have similar influences.

Skeggs incorporates Bourdieu's concepts within analytical narratives of the production of the subject within larger discursive formations. Bourdieu's concepts of embodiment and distinction are captured in the concepts of inscription, performativity and self-propertization. These constructs identify the production of the self as central to the making of classed subjectivity and have considerable explanatory power. Skeggs argues that in the process of becoming a self, classed interests come to be inscribed onto people's bodies (Skeggs, 2004a, p. 6). She explains how bodies become marked as valuable or conversely rendered marginal. Following Butler, she conceptualises habitus as performative and agency as constrained. In the context of United Kingdom (UK), Skeggs argues that with reduced mediation of the state, the market becomes the primary reference point for development of the self. She considers that the neo-liberal regime has compelled each person to become an 'entrepreneur of himself/herself' in which they must constantly strive to market themselves (Skeggs, 2004a, pp. 73-76). Today's labour market requires people to not just have skills, but also certain personality dispositions, for example a capacity for ethical self-control. This in turn compels an individual to accrue value onto their own personhood, their own body. It is this process of accruing value to oneself (the propertization of the self) which is central to 'individualisation'.

Beyond this, the person himself or herself becomes a property with both exchange and moral value. Self-ownership is a process, whereby a person stands outside himself and has a propertial relationship to himself. Self-production is a continuous process undertaken in all spheres of life. Through such accruals of property, commodities and of an object self, a person's body comes to be inscribed with value. Accumulation is key to this self-formation.

However, accruing value to oneself is founded on privilege. It requires access to material and cultural resources. These are unevenly distributed across social classes. This inequity results in the middle classes being able to cultivate a self which is morally valued and economically 'propertizable'. Working classes, unable to cultivate such a self, become

disenfranchised. The difference between the powerful and powerless is that the former actively draw upon exclusive cultural resources to build up their selves. The latter find themselves fixed in negative identities. Class, in Skeggs' writing is related to production of differently valued subjecthoods.

The nature of the individualising process is an important theme in western studies but is largely missing in Indian studies of the middle classes (Giddens, 1991; Beck, 1992). In Skeggs' analysis, the individualising process is directly related to the making of social class identities. It is also to conceptualise the individualising process of embodying different cultural capitals to make claims to distinction, that I turned to Skeggs.

In keeping with my broader theoretical perspective, I also conceptualised schooling through a post-structural lens.

### 3.10.3 Conceptualising schooling

Schooling is a modern institution whose regulatory practices have been integral to the normalisation of particular subject formations (Foucault, 1977; Youdell, 2006b, 2006c). Schooling is a supra-local institution, which mediates between the immediate social milieu of the student and larger national and global contexts.  Framed by the logics of neo-liberalism, present-day schooling practices are characterised by increased marketisation, institution of consumer satisfaction as a measure of accountability and accentuated individualisation of the learning process (Levison and Holland, 1996; Youdell, 2006c).

Within social science literature, the institution of schooling is seen to have a complex relationship with social class. Liberal theories construe schooling as a leveller, where social hierarchies get redrawn along the lines of meritocracy (Blackledge and Hunt, 1985; Levison and Holland, 1996; Thapan, 2015). Theories within the Marxist traditions argue that schools socialise students for assimilation into a work culture which demands docility, passivity and individualism. They draw attention to the form of schooling practices as central to the school's reproductive function. Neo-Marxist theories offer a more complex analyses and view education as a partly autonomous field. Bourdieu's (1984, 1986a) writings (discussed earlier) draw attention to the role of education in social reproduction and in legitimising the cultural practices of dominant classes.

Besides theoretical debates, ethnographic studies of schools have also been influential in drawing attention to the cultural dynamics of schooling (Blackledge and Hunt, 1985; Levinson and Holland, 1996). Willis' (1977) classical study of working class boys was a turning point in schooling studies. It paved the way for an imagination about the school environment as a complex, contradictory landscape. It enabled the dismantling of a simple relationship between schooling and class reproduction. Even though he exclusively focussed on class, his ethnographic imagination showed the way forward for a nuanced study of class which could intersect with other vectors of power (Levinson and Holland, 1996). Since Willis' classical study, the ethnographic tradition in schooling research has developed considerably, accommodating to the changing character of social class in western countries, recognising class to be implicit and entangled with racial, sexual and gender identities (Reay, 2005, 2010; Youdell, 2006c).

In keeping with my larger theoretical perspective, I conceptualise schooling practices as linked in complex ways to larger social, economic and political processes. Similarly, I recognize that market forces and the larger social imaginaries permeate the boundaries of the school, influencing its institutional practices (Youdell, 2006c). These in turn produce multiple, contradictory effects in the school. Drawing upon the works of Foucault (1977, 2000) and Butler (1990, 1992, 1997), I recognise that dominant discourses are reinstated as well as resisted in the space of the school. I conceptualise school as a materially constituted distinct field with its own regulative principles (Bourdieu, 1984; Wacquant, 1991; Youdell, 2006c).

Following Foucault, I consider modern schooling a key institution where disciplinary technologies are mobilized in historically contingent ways to normalise particular subject formations. In the present times, these are often informed by corporate management techniques (Youdell, 2006c). I also note that, first through processes of colonialism, and later through international development agendas, modern 'western' schooling has been institutionalised in ways that are recognizable across many different contexts.

**3.11 The present study**
So far, I have explored key theoretical issues and important research studies concerned with the present study. I traced the emergence of the Indian middle classes in colonial times and noted the centrality of education in the cultural project of becoming middle class. The liberalisation of the economy and other social developments in the 1990s

resulted in changing the character and composition of the middle classes. This period marks the emergence of the 'new middle class', who are noted to be strikingly different from their predecessors.

The Indian middle-class identity is closely conjoined with caste identity and the making of normative gender subjectivities. Sociologists locate the contemporary Indian middle classes within a society stratified along multiple, contradictory axes of power. They recognise the new middle class to be a hegemonic construction which captures the desires and anxieties accompanying economic changes. However, the dominant narrative about the Indian middle class has marginalised the social history of merchant communities. In present-day India, consumptive practices in different realms of life are seen as central to the making of the middle classes. However, in the field of education, there is very little work on the everyday life of school, and very few studies in provincial India. With a few exceptions, research has not directly examined the question of schooling and social class.

In my research, I have drawn upon the understandings developed from existing writings on middle classes and schooling practices in India. I have also tried to overcome some of their shortcomings. Specifically, I have been cautious about not using theory:

> as a blunt instrument to hammer home pronouncements about Nationalism, Modernity and The Middle Class, without closely focussing on the actual practices of being and becoming middle class, practices that exceed or uneasily fit the grand narratives of theory

(Baviskar and Ray, 2011, pp. 9-10)

Second, studies on Indian schooling practices have so far not attempted an intersectional analysis. In weaving class, caste and gender into a singular analytical narrative, my research is better able to address the complexities of contemporary schooling practices. Third, many studies on schools often marginalise the primary activity of school life which is classroom teaching (see for example, Sancho, 2012). My analysis locates classroom teaching and peer interaction *in the school* at its centre. Fourth, school-based studies often do not attempt to link the micro processes in the school to larger social, political and historical process. Madan (2013) argues that educational institutions should be investigated in their relation to the larger social world. He contends that without studying this relationship, the question of social reproduction and change cannot be addressed. In my study, I have related schooling practices with larger social discourses. Finally, there is an absence of theoretical engagement in research studies on

schooling. Dominated by an empiricist orientation, research in this field has failed to take cognizance of the theoretical and methodological changes in wider social science disciplines. There is today a 'dearth of genuine sociological research grounded in sociological theory and concepts' (Velaskar, 2013, p. 119). The present study addresses this lacuna by undertaking a theoretically informed analysis. The post-structural approach of the study is also in keeping with my larger epistemological and ontological positioning. I discuss this in the next chapter where I also elaborate on the processes of my research.

# Chapter 4 Research Methodology

## 4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I present my journey through the research. I begin by articulating my post-structural positioning on the questions of how knowing becomes possible (epistemology) and what kind of reality such knowing presumes (ontology). Following an elaboration of my methodological approach, I discuss the difficulties in adopting a post-structural approach and explore the many ways in which my research is also shaped by humanistic sensibilities. Next, I elaborate on my fieldwork and describe how I recorded and organised the field data. Thereafter, I explain the different interpretive grids which framed my analyses and elaborate on the process of data analysis. This is followed by a discussion of various ethical concerns I grappled with during the research. In the last section of the chapter, I describe both my ambivalence towards examining caste and how a post- structural approach helped me to overcome an analytical impasse. Through this example, I illustrate how a post-structural lens was useful in working through complex data.

## 4.2 Assuming a post-structural stance

Post-structural sensibilities suggest a specific positioning vis-à-vis ontological and epistemological issues (St. Pierre, 2000). In the previous chapter, I articulated how this leads to particular rendering of social class, gender, caste and schooling. Here, I extend this discussion to metaphysical issues of what constitutes our social realities and truth and the limits of knowability. I use the term post-structuralism loosely and with full awareness that clubbing a range of theorists within a single umbrella term risks being reductive (Butler, 1992; St. Pierre, 2000). I use it provisionally, to help signal my approach to questions of knowledge and reality, especially as drawn from the writings of Foucault (1984,1988, 2000) and Butler (1990,1992,1997).

A Foucauldian perspective understands social reality as a complex network of relations of production, communication and power. In sharp contrast to the meaning-making emphasis of phenomenological approaches or the reasoning emphasis of dialectical approaches, power relations are core to a Foucauldian view of social reality (Foucault, 2000). Such power is discursive, instituted in material and symbolic practices, including but not limited to language (Rabinow, 1984). It is diffuse, pervasive and circulates through the entire social body in a capillary movement which flows from larger structures to lower levels (Foucault, 1977, 1984; Hall, 2001). Intrinsic to its ways of working, such

power does not work by coercion or physical force. It seeks to govern by directing the conduct of its people. It 'induces desire, forms knowledge, produces discourse' (Foucault, 1984, p. 61). Resistance to such power is simultaneous with the exercise of the power. For Foucault power relations are agonistic, characterised by 'mutual incitement and struggle' (Foucault, 2000, p. 342). Social reality is a terrain marked by permanent, continuous struggle between exercise of power and concurrent, anarchist resistance.

For Foucault, truth and knowledge are both entangled with power. It is not just that power recruit's knowledge, or that it produces specific subjectivities, but it also imposes its 'regime of truth' (Foucault, 1984, p. 73). The discursive practices, especially those encoded in language including the perceptive categories, the network of concepts and the logic of classifications hegemonic in an epoch set the grounds for establishing 'truth'. Together, they act to create the everyday reality as obvious and establish the basic premises for scientific thinking.

For Foucault:

> truth isn't the reward of free spirits, the child of protracted solitude, nor the privilege of those who have succeeded in liberating themselves. Truth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by virtue of multiple forms of constraint... Each society has its regime of truth, its "general politics" of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth.

(Foucault, 1984, pp. 72-73)

A post-structural approach unsettles the grand narrative that reason can lead to truth, for there is no position outside of one's social-historical context from which one can know with certitude. Claims to universal truths are always suspicious (Rabinow, 1984; Kritzman, 1988; Butler, 1997; St. Pierre, 2000).

Such a perspective construes the research enquiry in specific ways. I have already presented my research questions (Chapter 1, Section 1.2), which are framed through a post-structural lens. I probed these questions by adopting an ethnographic approach, which I now discuss and destabilize from a post-structural perspective.

## 4.3 Disturbing interpretive ethnography

Historically, ethnography has drawn upon the interpretive tradition. It assumed that representation of cultures being studied is relatively unproblematic, that participants have stable identities and that the researcher can capture social reality and represent this

in her written accounts (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). Post-structuralist sensibilities unsettle these foundational premises (Britzman, 2000; St. Pierre, 2000). Both, Foucault and Butler consider identities to be an ongoing production, truth to be a chimera and academic knowledge to be bound up with regimes of truth (Foucault, 1984). Ethnographic representation of an orthodox kind is no longer possible (Clifford, 1986).

These premises once disrupted, post-structuralism does not offer, or even desire, clear, singular alternatives (St. Pierre, 2000; St. Pierre and Pillow, 2000). Among the different strands of 'post' approaches, many raise questions on how ethnography may at all be possible and what may be its objectives when 'transparent', realist representations are no longer possible, when reified structures have been put into question. They argue that ethnography should be less concerned with establishing authority, and more with the archaeology and genealogy of its own production. They call for an ethnography which questions the very ground on which its own truths are established (MacLure, 2013).

When I think through these writings, they lead me to recognise that all participants of my study, students, teachers, of both genders, even myself, are constituted by and in turn recite particular discourses.  We are caught up in multiple power relations which frame our subjectivities even as we continually resist them. It becomes irrelevant to pose the question of a prior subject or intentionality around any of my participants; what is important is the enduring nature of certain subjectivities in the context of my study (Rabinow, 1984; Jackson and Mazzei, 2012). The field no longer stable or fixed becomes a fluid site, a confluence of multiple and contested discourses. Structural categories of class, gender and caste become slippery and complexified. They are no longer a priori givens, instead they constitute sites of continuous struggle.

What I can access, and even then, only partially, are discourses encoded in language, conduct and material practices. These in turn are historically contingent and cannot be easily abstracted into essential categories; post-structural sensibilities resist universalizing tendencies and a striving for cohesiveness (Kritzman, 1988). A Foucauldian perspective draws attention to the penetrative effects of state power within local contexts (Rabinow, 1984). In keeping with this, while examining micro practices within the school, I also invoke the larger political economy of neo-liberalism as it has influenced the local context (Chari, 2004a). Rather than working analytically upwards from participants' experiences, my approach assumes their world to be already affected

by these macro socio-economic-political processes (Miller, 1997). Text construction becomes:

> the crucible for integrating the macro into the micro, combining accounts of impersonal systems into representations of local life as cultural forms both autonomous and constituted by the larger order.
>
> (Marcus, 1986, p.170)

With these sensibilities, the purpose of this research is, therefore, not to uncover a superimposed ideology to reveal a truer version of reality. I listen to the data (Doucet and Mauthner, 2011) and trace the competing regimes of truth which circulate in this local context to identify how these regimes of truth become 'neutralized as knowledge' or reality (Brtizman, 2000, p. 38), to ask what makes certain subjectivities intelligible, privileges some and renders others impossible (Britzman, 2000; Youdell, 2006a).

Within such an approach, ethnography is no more than another set of discourses and practices (Britzman, 2000). I am aware that my analytical narratives stand alongside other competing discourses. In a 'post' world, ethnographic writing is decentred and does not enjoy any privilege of authorial superiority. Ethnographic truths are 'inherently *partial* - committed and incomplete' (Clifford, 1986, p. 6). Further, meanings that can be drawn from any ethnographic text exceed those imputed by the author. The reader may resignify my narratives differently, may deconstruct the text and read between its fault lines (St. Pierre, 2013).

Practising post-structural ethnography however proved to be difficult. I now narrate how I struggled with appropriating such ideas in my research.

## 4.4 Caught in the grips of humanism?

The disciplinary fields governing my research have a long legacy of logical positivism and phenomenology. My initiations into academia and my repertory of conceptual tools were shaped by these established traditions (Wacquant, 1992; Lather and St. Pierre, 2013). Even though I attempt to decentre myself via a reflexive practice (which is doomed to fail, since I cannot stand outside of my context, MacLure, 2013) and disturb meta-narratives on class, class and gender, I fell back upon a representational logic that is deeply sedimented in many conventions of academic research. Post-structural writing cannot be willed, 'creative evolution does not spring ready made out of the brow of the individual thinker' (Davies, 2010, p. 60).

Traditional research (and the production of a thesis) requires the knowing subject to give it shape, volume and being (St. Pierre, 2013). A post-structural rationality on the other hand destabilises a static, identity-based 'I'. The question therefore arises, whether as a researcher am I a 'subject-of-will' (Davies, 2010, p. 54) or a post-structuralist ~~subject~~ whose agency as knower is also dislodged, entangled with the larger reality? Is my research then a product of deeply entrenched institutional practices working themselves through me (Davies, 2010)? As a researcher, I was caught up in a contradictory situation, where even as I was questioning the dominant norms of academic knowledge production, I had to comply with these normative practices of thesis production. Further, as I discuss in the next section, this ontological decentring proved difficult, especially during fieldwork. I now turn to an exposition of my research processes.

## 4.5 Conducting fieldwork, recording and organizing data

### 4.5.1 Reconnaissance and finding a field site

My search for a suitable research site took me to many schools in Delhi, Chennai, Salem and Coimbatore. During this reconnaissance period (July-August 2015), I met principals, ex-principals, teachers and conducted observations in two schools. I shared with the schools what my research was about, what all I would be doing in the school and for how long (see Appendix 5 for my letters to the schools seeking access). Many of these schools fitted my criteria of being privately funded and catering to a middle class clientele. I narrowed down on Kovai International (pseudonym) where, according to the gatekeeper who introduced me to the school authorities, *"the well- heeled and professional families"* send their children. I have described the school and the regional context in Chapter 2. As discussed in Chapter 1, one of the reasons for selecting KI was that there are yet only few school ethnographies in provincial India and none so far in Tamil Nadu. Also, having received a warm welcome in KI, I sensed that Subbu Sir[24], who negotiated my entry to KI carried considerable weight there. Logistics such as living expenses and travel were more easily negotiable here as compared to metropolitan cities. I decided to take a chance. Like other ethnographers, my decision exceeded logical, propositional thinking (MacLure, 2013). The sections below now

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[24] In keeping with the customs of KI, I refer to senior teachers as Sir and Ma'am.

outline my ethnographic research processes in detail, involving extensive observations as well as interviews and questionnaires.

### 4.5.2 Practising traditional ethnography

My fieldwork, over a period of nine months, from August 2015 to May 2016, drew heavily upon traditional modalities of ethnography (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). In my lived experience while doing fieldwork, while I sensed my understanding to be always partial, I could do nothing other than committing myself to my immediate experience in the field (Britzman, 2000). Overcoming the ontological premises of humanism proved to be enormously difficult, because the effects of humanism 'envelop us every moment and have become ''natural''. Humanism is the air we breathe' (St. Pierre, 2000, p. 478). These contradictions between 'lived experience and the afterthought of interpretive efforts' (Britzman, 2000, p. 32) also characterized my research.

In keeping with standard ethnographic practices (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007), I presented myself as an engaged researcher and developed good rapport with my participants. It was not difficult to develop a camaraderie with teachers once they realised that I was not interested in evaluating their teaching practice. Students, curious at first, soon took me for another 'ma'am', even if somewhat different from their regular teachers. In addressing me as 'ma'am', they positioned me as an older woman to be treated with respect.

### 4.5.3 School visits and observation processes

From August 2015 to April 2016, I spent many days in the school and conducted over 70 hours of classroom observations. I conducted observations mainly in the months from September to December 2015 when I visited the school thrice a week, staying for two to five hours each day. Appendix 9 provides a comprehensive record of the dates, times and other details of classroom and school observations.

My observations focussed on first year students of the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IBDP). The mainstay of my efforts during this period (September to December 2015) was taking copious notes of routine happenings such as subject teaching, students' activities during 'free' classes (i.e, when students were not under the immediate supervision of teachers) as well as special occasions like sports festival and

children's day[25]. I observed teaching in all IBDP subjects, with the exceptions of Information Technology in a Global Society (ITGS), and French (see Table 7.1, Chapter 7 for a list of subjects offered in the IBDP). The exclusion of ITGS was an oversight which I noticed only in January, by when my energies were increasingly focussed on getting access to parents and conducting interviews. The decision not to observe French classes was on the other hand a conscious one. After attending one class, I realised that I could not comprehend the interactions which were largely in French language.

I also participated in a four-day educational excursion, (from 30th January to 4th February 2016) with the IBDP students and some faculty members. During this period, as part of the school team, I attended workshops with the students and teachers, went out dining and shopping with them, and generally hung out through their mundane routines.

As I spent time with the students, I tuned into their cliques, heard their everyday gossip, laughed at their jokes, joined in the moments of mirth and merriment and sympathised with the burden of their school tasks. In general, girls shared more readily about their lives than boys did. They spoke about personal matters and offered their opinions about classmates. With teachers, I learnt to adjust to the hierarchical order among them, for example by addressing the senior teachers as *Sir* and *Ma'am*. I generally kept company with the junior staff. Over the months, I assimilated into the milieu of the school and became a close witness to the everyday life of this group of students and teachers (Goffman, 2011).

With time, I grew into the practices of the school, just as my participants got accustomed to me. I learnt when to switch from English to Tamil and vice versa, to dress as per the local customs and to eat in the vegetarian dining hall as was expected of me, given my caste. I developed 'deep familiarity' (Goffman, 2011, p.126) with the setting. Some participants, including both students and teachers, became key informants (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). As the fieldwork came to an end, I turned to them for answers to my emerging queries about the school.

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[25] Children's day - 14th November, the birthday of Jawahar Lal Nehru is celebrated as Children's Day in India.

*4.5.4 Recording and organizing the data*

While taking notes in the school, I followed the principle of being indiscriminate, and noted down as much as I possibly could. Taken down on small sized notebooks, these notes were hurriedly written, often consisting of no more than abbreviated words and incomplete sentences. On the many occasions when I was part of the interaction, for example during students' free classes and lunch breaks, I noted the key points after the end of the interaction. I tried as far as possible to note down the conversations (which were in English and Tamil) in verbatim. While observing teaching, my attention was mainly focussed on the teacher and the main discussions going on in the class. However, sitting alongside students, generally in the last row of the class also gave me access to parallel activities and hushed tone conversations among the students sitting in my vicinity. In my notetaking, I tried to capture these as well. I recognise that even if voluminous, my notes are at best only a partial account of the activities of the first year IBDP group. I have provided a sample of my notes taken in school in Appendix 6.

My thrice weekly school observation routine afforded me plenty of time to record and organise my observations. I elaborately fleshed out my observations within a day or two, lest I should forget what transpired in the school (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). Realizing that expanding on my notes by writing it down was time consuming, within a few days of fieldwork I shifted to voice recording my observations. Instead of writing down my daily experiences and observations, I narrated these in detail to the audio recorder on my computer. Subsequently, I got these audio notes transcribed. In Appendix 7, I have presented sample excerpts from these transcribed fieldnotes. In other words, very much like the self-regulated students of KI (see Chapter 5), I diligently recorded my fieldnotes, had them transcribed and maintained a regular record of what data I had generated (see Appendix 9 for a comprehensive tabulation of my observation data). In these matters, I was practising traditional ethnography, seeking to gather data and record it in within preset writing practices (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). In addition to these records, I also maintained a personal diary, where I wrote about my experiences in the field and vented my reactions to happenings in the school. With no friends and family to share the daily struggles of fieldwork, the diary provided a cathartic outlet.

*4.5.5 Other research processes: interviews, questionnaires and student journals*

In addition to observations, I also conducted interviews of parents, students, teachers and other school staff in the period from January to May 2016 (see Appendix 8 for a sample of my fieldwork log entries during this period). Through interviews I sought information which could not be gathered through observations alone (for example, students' higher education plans, as discussed further below and detailed in Appendix 13). These interviews also enabled a verification of my emerging analysis based on my observations of the field (Agar, 2011). Most of these interviews were conducted in English. However, some interviewees including students, lower cadre school staff and mothers conversed in Tamil. With the interviewees' consent, I recorded interviews directly on a Dictaphone, and later had the English interviews transcribed. I translated the Tamil interviews myself.

With regard to students, my initial plan was to interview only around 15. I had shortlisted students, so as to represent the different cliques in the class and include those students whose mothers I was interviewing. But once I started conducting student interviews, an expectation was generated among the first year IBDP group that I would interview all of them. Many approached me and as a result my interview sample increased to 31 students. I interviewed students in a quiet cabin in the library or in a vacant classroom. Many students wanted to be interviewed along with their friends, and often two or three students (always from the same gender!) would jointly answer my questions. In these interviews, there were some standard questions which I ran through with all the interviewees (see Appendix 13). I asked the interviewees to describe themselves, discuss their educational plans after finishing school and their occupational aspirations. I also asked them to describe their typical on weekdays and weekends. The last question served to provide for the information which I had originally sought from student journals (see below). In addition to these questions, I also used the interview opportunity to broach specific issues with individual students. For instance, I discussed an incident where some students had consumed alcohol in the school (which had occurred before my fieldwork) with the girls involved (see Chapters 5 and 6). Another example is my discussion with the rowdy[26] boys about their conduct in the school (see

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[26] Rowdy - In Tamil movies the rowdy is the archetypical anti-hero character.

Chapter 5). As a result, the interviews varied somewhat in terms of the questions I asked (Appendix 14 provides an excerpt from a student interview).

I also asked students to complete two questionnaires. The first of these (see Appendix 10), which I administered in October 2015 aimed at generating a demographic profile of the IBDP group, understanding their schooling histories, how many were boarders/day scholars, mapping their subject choices and their educational and occupational aspirations. Of the 45 IBDP students, 44 returned the questionnaire. I administered the second questionnaire in April 2016 (see Appendix 11). I included questions on family income, religion and caste, and students' self-identification in terms of social class. I also sought answers to questions which had emerged during fieldwork relating to students' subject preferences, their individual school timetables and about the relative role of English versus mother tongue in their lives. I asked students to fill this questionnaire anonymously, and made it clear they could leave out questions they did not wish to answer. Only 32 students returned this questionnaire, and of these, only 14 students provided information on their caste and eight on family income (24 students said they did not know their family income). Further as I discuss later in the section below, while I was giving out the questionnaire, a brief, tensed conversation on caste broke out, reinforcing students' hesitation to provide information on this.

In October 2015, I had sought student volunteers to maintain a daily/weekly diary, where they would record routine as well as interesting aspects about their daily lives (see Appendix 12). Although 15 students showed enthusiasm initially, eventually none of them kept a journal. I therefore incorporated some of these questions in the student interview schedule.

I also conducted 21 interviews with IBDP teachers and other staff members of the school, including four senior administrative staff. I asked the teachers questions related to their educational backgrounds and prior experiences, their understanding of the IBDP curriculum, especially in relation to their own subject and about the group of students who constituted the primary participants of my study. To the four senior administrative staff, I asked additional questions related to the organisational structure of the school, teacher recruitment and training practices, the school's vision and policies related to discipline and surveillance and the fee structure of the school. The four lower cadre school staff I interviewed were – one laboratory assistant, one cleaner, the school kitchen in-charge, and a staff member whose duty was to oversee purchases. The

questions I asked in these interviewees with the school staff are presented in Appendix 15.

Getting the school's permission to meet parents proved to be a hurdle for reasons which remain opaque to me even today. While I was never once questioned as I went about my daily routine of school observations, whenever I made a formal request to meet parents, the school administration turned me down without offering any explanation. After several weeks of such efforts, an opportunity for direct contact with parents arose when a Parents Teachers meeting (PTM) was scheduled in January 2016. It was to be held in a large hall, with each teacher being allotted a table so that parents could privately talk to him/her about their child. Taking cue from this arrangement, I arranged a table for myself and displayed a poster stating that I was a doctoral scholar at University of Sussex. On the advice of a senior teacher, I wore trousers and a formal shirt which I was told would impress parents. I had already requested individual students to ask their parents to meet me. During the PTM, I distributed a letter, requesting parents for a personal meeting (see Appendix 16). Most parents were encouraging, and many agreed to meet me. Using 'native wit' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p. 41) to gain access to parents, I was now easily able to conduct interviews with mothers. The school posed no further problems, thus strengthening my suspicion that their only purpose in stonewalling me was to assert authority and this too was only half-hearted.

Over the next four months, I interviewed 11 mothers in their homes and offices. In these open-ended interviews, I sought to understand the students' family backgrounds, the region to which they belonged, the educational and occupational trajectories of students' parents and grandparents and parents' aspirations for their son/daughter. I also sought to understand why the families had chosen to send their children to KI, and how parents/family members supported their child's education on an everyday basis. (see Appendix 17 for the interview schedule I used). I interviewed four mothers a second time in the end of April. This time I directly sought their opinions on specific issues such as gender and caste. I also asked them about marriage practices in their respective communities and whether they considered themselves as middle class. That I could interview only mothers, points towards the dominant norms around gender in the region and my complicity with these. Even in cases where I met fathers in Parents Teachers Meeting (PTM), they directed me to their wives. Having managed access to parents

after some difficulty, I did not want to take any chances, and therefore did not explicitly ask to meet fathers either.

In selecting my sample for interviewing, I ensured that there were mothers of both boys and girls and tried to include mothers from two distinct groups of the school clientele, those who had lived abroad for several years, some of whom had a foreign nationality, and 'local' parents, typically from families with established local businesses.

Towards the end of April, as initially promised, I made a presentation based on my initial analysis to a gathering of students and teachers. I presented my work in clear terms, but I also steered clear of controversial topics. My presentation notwithstanding, barring a few teachers and students, I am not sure that I could convey what my work was all about. This was partly because the idea of research in Social Sciences was as distant to them as it was to a lady I met in Chennai, who bluntly opined that research happens only in science laboratories.

To recapitulate, my data collection consisted of observations (mostly in the period from September to December 2015), interviews (in the period from January to May 2016) and questionnaires. This information is summarily presented in the table below.

**Table 4.1: Summary of fieldwork processes**

| Time Period | Nature of fieldwork | Further details |
|---|---|---|
| August 2015 - first week | Reconnaissance visit to school | |
| August 2015 to April 2016 | Classroom and school observations and hanging around with students and teachers | Over 100 hours of recorded observations, with over 70 hours of observations on classroom teaching, (see Appendices 6,7 and 9) |
| October 2015 | Student Questionnaire 1 | See Appendix 10; 44 responses (98 % response rate) |
| October 2015 | Students were asked to keep a weekly journal | See Appendix 12 |
| End January to End April 2016 | Interviews with mothers | 11 mothers were interviewed; I interviewed 4 of them again; duration ranging from 11 minutes to 45 minutes (see Appendices 16 and 17) |
| February to May 2016 | Interviews with teachers and other school staff | 13 teachers, 4 administrative staff, and 4 non-teaching staff were interviewed; duration ranging from over a few minutes to 45 minutes<br><br> (see Appendix 15) |
| February to May 2016 | Interviews with students | 17 boys and 14 girls were interviewed; durations ranging from twelve minutes to over an hour (see Appendices 13 and 14) |
| End January – early February | Educational excursion with students | 4-day trip with IBDP students and teachers |
| End April | Student Questionnaire 2 | See Appendix 11; 32 responses/71 % response rate |
| End April | Presentation | |

*4.5.6 My positionality*

All through fieldwork, there were many moments when I acutely felt the class difference between students and myself. In school, this was somewhat balanced by contesting discourses, for example, respect for adults, and my general alignment with teachers who resisted the dominant discourse around social class. However, meeting mothers in a one-to-one setting offered no such safeguards. One example is when mothers shared their plans for their children's foreign studies. As I examine in Chapter 7, some families were planning not merely to finance the cost of their child's foreign university education, but parents were also preparing to move to that country so that their child would have continued parental care. In these encounters, it was not just the material differences which struck me; what also impressed upon me was the immense differences in life chances such resources effectuated.

I often felt vulnerable, acutely perceiving class differences and on account of being a woman. When I started interviewing parents, I was googled 16 times within a month, most of the searches from the Coimbatore region. In my face-to-face encounters, I was continually sized up – students, teachers, generally though not exclusively women wanted to know my age, my marital status, about why I wore no insignia as was expected of married women and *'any kuttis'*[27]? I did not feel altogether powerless though and in some respects even enjoyed a privileged position – for instance, when it came to caste. Participants gauged my caste early on, both from my association with Subbu sir and when I spoke Tamil with a Brahmanical inflection. Studying in UK also secured for me considerable cultural capital, boosting my class positioning. Participants also saw me as someone from Delhi, a city most of them had not visited. On my part, my schooling experiences in Delhi in the 1980s and 90s were reference points for understanding KI schooling practices during fieldwork and analyses.

Even as I grew to be an insider, every once in a while, a sense of unease resurfaced. There were times when I wanted to 'jump into' the conversation, to intervene and even teach students. I always refrained, instead finding a release in my personal diary. And while for the most part, I felt so much to be an insider that I became amnesic about how exclusive this school was, there were moments when the sense of overfamiliarity with the school slipped off. One such occasion was in March 2016, when I was set to attend an orientation program for prospective parents and students. The teachers conducting

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[27] *Kuttis* - Children in Tamil.

this program did not know beforehand that I had procured the necessary permissions. And since they were from the primary classes, they did not recognise me either. When I tried to walk into the seminar room to attend the programme, they would not let me. Their cold looks and curt behaviour clearly conveyed that I didn't have the right. While this matter soon got resolved with the timely intervention of a senior IBDP faculty member, I caught a brief glimpse of the exclusions that lay at the boundaries of this community school. I was momentarily overwhelmed with a sense of unease and an intense awareness that perhaps, outside of the special circumstance of my research and the access secured by Subbu Sir, I might not have gained entry to this milieu.

My relationship with the school whose practices pivoted on multiple points of inclusion and exclusion remained fluid and shifting. While the school authorities had obstructed my meeting with parents and hesitated to let me attend an 'open' orientation, they also invited me to join an educational excursion to Kerala. True, they were running short of female chaperones, but even so this points to the ambiguities in their attitude towards me. During these four days, I began to feel like any other teacher, was overcome with a sense of responsibility for the students, even outsiders took to me to be one of KI's staff. My transition to an insider was now 'complete' but would be shaken by experiences such as the orientation programme described above, which occurred a month later.

My research journey was also marked by theoretical shifts before, during and after fieldwork. Given my previous educational trajectory, I began the research from a psychological perspective, seeking to study the 'social construction of intelligence' in a private school catering to the Indian middle classes (Miguel, Valentim and Carugati, 2010). As I started reading theoretical writings and empirical studies on the educational practices of the middle classes, the notion of any individualised intelligence signifying inner characteristics became increasingly suspect (Bourdieu, 1984, 1986a, 1987, 1998, Nambissan, 2010; Reay, 2005, 2010). Bourdieu's writings helped me to recognise social class as relational and as manifested in everyday practices. While conducting fieldwork, my predominant concern was on the question of social class. Therefore, even as I gathered data other issues like teachers' analysis of the IB curriculum and the knowledge content of pedagogic transactions, my analytical lens did not include these. Further, while doing fieldwork, my initial conceptualisation of social class was Bourdieusian. It was only during the writing up phase that my theoretical positioning

became post-structural. During this period, I participated in reading groups which focussed on the works of Butler (1990,1992,1997) and Skeggs (2004a), among other feminist post-structuralist writers. This experience played an important role in shaping my theoretical positioning. As I discuss next, a post-structural lens allowed me to take up the intersections of class, caste and gender in my analysis.

## 4.6 Developing a post-structural analysis and writing up the thesis

A post-structural approach sensitised me to the importance of being reflexive and as far as possible, examining my positioning throughout the research process. Reflexivity however is more than awareness of one's social positioning. It involves accountability in terms of being open about one's epistemological, theoretical, institutional, ontological, pragmatic and personal positioning. Further, such attempts are necessarily limited, because one's intentions and emotions are often not fully accessible even to oneself (Doucet & Mauthner, 2011).

Along with developing careful records of my research experiences, I began processing and examining my data during fieldwork itself, as I became progressively sensitised to the pedagogic practices and norms of the IBDP classroom. Subsequently, after I left the field, I engaged in systematic analysis. This involved an iterative process of reading and re-reading my data transcripts, simultaneously making notes and developing initial analytical commentaries. My first analytical themes were related to the temporal and spatial regimes of school life and the use of surveillance techniques (see Table 4.2 below). I was interested in understanding what kind of subjectivities the disciplinary practices of the school sought to produce. I studied the operation of tacit power in pedagogic activities and noted that the teacher-student relationship was characterised by continuous struggle and contestation. Having undertaken a similar exercise in my previous research (Iyer, 2013), I drew upon Foucault's writings to narrativize the disciplinary practices in the school. My attention to students' resistance was the result of both my methodological stance (Foucault, 2000) as well my field observations which were replete with instances of student resistance.

After disciplining practices, I turned to the question of classed subjectivities, the central problem of my research. I entered the field with a prior idea that social class would be manifest in the everyday of school life (Willis, 1977; Anyon, 1980). Drawing upon the literature on social class (Bourdieu, 1984) and the Indian middle classes (Lukose, 2009; Liechty, 2003), and research in school settings (Sancho, 2012; Gilbertson, 2014), I

typified some identity performances as classed practices (for example, students' consumptive practices). My early line of interpretation followed a Bourdieusian tradition, commonplace in Indian academia (Fernandes and Heller, 2006; Jeffrey, 2010; Donner and De Neve, 2011; Sancho, 2012; Thapan, 2014). However, I needed a larger theoretical vocabulary to describe in a more nuanced manner the specifics of the various cultural capitals which the IBDP students embodied. When I came across the concepts of propertization and self-authoring (Skeggs, 2004a), I immediately recognized them in my field data. Skeggs also relates her theorisation to a neo-liberal polity; and even while my research context is different, the issues at stake were similar. Also, Skegg's analysis draws upon a larger body of post-structural writings, making it possible for me to interweave her writings with those of Butler and Foucault, and ultimately to weave gender and caste into my analysis. In comparison, Bourdieu's ideas could not be seamlessly assimilated into these post-structural works. I needed theoretical tools to deal with the body/subject and practices within micro realities which these writings provided.

I also referred to postcolonial writings on the Indian middle classes (Chatterjee, 1993, 1997; Joshi, 2001, 2017). Had I looked beyond the Indian context, I would have referred to the works of postcolonial theorists who have articulated how the colonial encounter shaped dominant gender regimes in Latin America and Nigeria (Oyěwùmí, 2005; Lugones, 2007). Homi Bhabha's writings on the complexities of social change and ensuing hybridities could also have helped to develop my analysis from a postcolonial perspective (Bhabha, 2004). Similarly, I could have drawn upon Stuart Hall's articulation about the complexities of social identities (Hall, 2000). From research on educational settings, I could have engaged with the work of Dunne and Adzahlie-Mensah (2019) who have critically examined school curricula and pedagogic practices in a postcolonial context.

However, the time constraints of the doctoral research meant that I had to limit the focus of my analysis. At the same time, I do not wish to close down the analysis and hope to engage with the larger body of work of postcolonial writers in future.

My selection of theorists/ concepts was therefore not a rational choosing from an exhaustive list of alternatives; there were incidental and accidental contingencies at play (MacLure, 2013). This is also somewhat true regarding my selection of data from the voluminous fieldnotes, much of which has not been utilised in this thesis. Chance

occurrences made some data 'glow' (MacLure, 2013). For example, a chance comment by a Sussex faculty member about the veg /non- veg[28] segregation of food in an Indian university canteen alerted me to a phenomenon so familiar that I might have otherwise missed it altogether (Dunne, personal communication).

The themes I developed to signify classed performatives in the school included consumption practices, appropriation of English language in specific ways, ease with technology, self-authoring and the discourse of the 'good student' (see Table 4.2). These themes evolved through an iterative process of reading relevant literature (especially but not limited to Bourdieu, 1984, 1998, 2004 and Skeggs, 2004a) and simultaneously studying fieldnotes. The analytical exercise was a continuous, dynamic play between my data, prior research questions and ongoing readings (Jackson and Mazzei, 2012). It also involved several cycles of re-organisation of the chapters in order to deepen my arguments and develop more compelling narratives. My analysis narrativizes a spectrum of student identity performances in the school setting, rather than describing particular student identities and sub-cultures, as has been done in some ethnographic studies of young people (Willis,1977; Sancho, 2012).

Furthering the question of students' claims to distinction, I re-examined my fieldnotes to understand whether some student identity performances were privileged and legitimised and others marginalised (Youdell, 2006a). The re-reading of fieldnotes indicated that the school was not a gender neutral setting. I reasoned that the question of gender, absent in the initial research questions could not be ignored. To understand how gender was performed in this setting, I turned to the writings of Butler (1990) whose works were at the time being intensely discussed among my colleagues. Closely studying my data along the gender axis alerted me to the privileging of certain masculinities and the subordination of female students in the school space. I noted, for example that some boys embodied 'geekiness' in ways that remained largely unavailable for girls. Butler's writings also helped me to go beyond what was voiced and examine silent embodiments (Youdell, 2006a). The analytical categories which I developed to understand gender performatives in the school were around the themes of dominant and subordinate masculinities and femininities (see Table 4.2). After writing a separate chapter on gender performatives, I strove to weave gender into my other

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[28] Veg refers to vegetarian. Non-veg to non-vegetarian. Both these are colloquial categories with links to ideas of purity-pollution.

chapters. This involved intersecting gender with the question of classed subjectivities. Reading interview transcripts and examining questionnaire data also drew my attention to gender differences in subject choices and aspirational imaginaries. In addition, parents' and teachers' interviews helped to extend my analysis beyond the world of the school – to familial practices and the larger social world in which students' lives were embedded. Interpreting this data, I developed analytical themes around gender differences with respect to subject choices and higher education and occupational imaginaries, the role of extended kin relations and the privatisation of higher education in the region (see Table 4.2).

Once I had overcome my initial hesitation to study caste (see below), the operation of caste discourses became key to my interpretation of students' lives as well as the everyday of the school. Intersecting class with gender and caste, I came to interpret the schooling practices as being strongly framed by normative gender discourses and regulatory caste practices (Chakravarti, 2003; Sheth, 2014; Velaskar, 2016).

The following table presents my research questions, examples of corresponding analytical themes and the primary chapter(s) where the analyses relating to the questions are presented.

**Table 4.2: Research questions, analytical themes and corresponding chapters**

| Research question | Examples of analytical themes | The main chapter(s) where this research question is addressed |
|---|---|---|
| What are the regulatory discourses and disciplinary practices in this school setting? | Temporal and spatial regimes, surveillance, normative discourses of gender, dining practices, pedagogic control, self-regulation | Chapter 5 |
| How is social class produced in this school setting and how does it intersect with caste and gender? | Ease and entitlement, family status and social capitals, consumption practices, appropriation of English, self-authoring, the 'good student', colourism, the geeks, subordinated femininity | Chapter 6 |
| How do these identity productions relate to wider societal discourses? | Occupational imaginaries bound within familial regimes, embeddedness within familial -kin relations, normalcy of 'paid seats', consumptive practices, the school's adoption of the IB vision | Chapter 7 |

In the analysis chapters of the thesis, field descriptions are interwoven with the analytical narratives. Additionally, I present selected illustrations from my field data. As per ethnographic conventions, in case of longer excerpts, I have presented them in separate paragraphs, in italicised and indented form. Where there are no more than one or two sentences, I have incorporated the field note into my main text in italicised font. I have referenced all the excerpts from fieldnotes/interview transcripts. In case of summary understandings inferred from field observations, I have pointed to the data sources from which I came to such an interpretation.

I have referred to the young participants of my study as girls and boys. Alternatively, I could have referred to them as young men and women. I chose the former because these

terms were more appropriate to their local social positioning, in particular their situation of being tightly regulated by their parents and other adults of the family (Osella and Osella, 2006). I use the term 'community' in my thesis to broadly refer to caste based groups. However, following Chatterjee (1993) and Markovits (2004), in my thesis, the term 'community' also suggests a larger social collective, and contains the idea of locality, regional affiliation and territoriality.

Besides theoretical ideas, my emerging interpretations were also shaped by my everyday experiences during the period of my research. Living in a village, among land owning Gounder farmers while observing a posh, air-conditioned school provided direct points of comparison. I came to see how my neighbours' lives were continuous with the aspirational possibilities KI offered. Among these farming families, there were young men and women who had moved on to high paying Information Technology (IT) jobs. I witnessed first-hand the rapid urbanisation in this area – modern housing, industries and educational institutes were fast mushrooming (Heyer, 2016). These experiences impressed upon me that these communities were making rapid social advancements in these vital, promising times.

Subsequently, I returned to the University of Sussex, and continued my data analysis in a space far removed from my participants and my field. It was here that I worked on my analysis and finalized my main themes. The distance from the field helped me assume a privileged position over my field-data. The silences so far hidden from view now showed up between the lines of my fieldnotes. In the last year of my PhD, I returned to Delhi, to full-time work. The socio- political turmoil that the country was going through now caught up with me. I felt compelled to make my research relevant in these changing times. I strove to relate the processes within a somewhat insulated international school to the larger social dynamics in the region.

Finally, a post-structural methodological lens helped me to recognise my own role in the discursive production of the field setting. I examined the participants' world critically and sought to locate their experiences within larger social-political processes. I acknowledge that my representation of my participants' lives in the school may be divergent from their own articulations of their realities (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). More significantly, I understand that in foregrounding class (intersected with caste and gender) and the incursion of neo-liberal logic in my analytical narratives, I have marginalized other themes, for example, friendships and compassion which lie

beyond the world of consumption, commodification and capital. Their presence in my thesis is only in the passing. Social relations, including those in school are 'messy, irrational and full of contradictions' (Skeggs, 2014, p. 13) I recognize that the narratives that I have generated in this thesis reiterate those very metaphors of the human subject (i.e. relating to social class) they simultaneously critique.

## 4.7 Ethical concerns

Ethical considerations in research is ongoing and cannot be fully addressed prior to the research. I had secured ethical approval from my University, but I was also aware that participants' consent is ongoing in ethnographic research, based on their partial understanding of the final research outcome (Miller and Bell, 2011). Also, in keeping with the local customary practices, I had sought permission and access primarily from the school. These considerations required me to be especially sensitive to my young participants' privacy. Throughout the fieldwork, I remained sensitive to issues of privacy and consent. I treaded with caution when it came to spending time with students during free periods. Aware that they may not want to include me in all conversations, I withdrew to the library on sensing any unease. At other times, I candidly asked them if I could stay and listen to their conversations. Like other ethnographers, I also had to negotiate and renegotiate access to individual participants throughout the research (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). Finally, I never asked students direct questions on private matters or sought to meet them outside school or on online forums. This was not the mandate of my research.

Writing also involved taking ethical decisions about how to create anonymity. I have followed the general practice of giving pseudonyms to the school and all the participants. But ethical decisions in writing were more than just about anonymising individuals. I do not want the reader to be able to identity the school. Further I do not want my student participants to be easily recognized by other fellow participants. Such anonymisation is however easier said than done. Therefore, in certain cases, I have fictionalised some information about my participants. The idea after all is to point to certain practices which I witnessed, not to represent individuals.

The last issue I consider in this chapter is my engagement with caste. Through this, I demonstrate how a post-structural approach helped me to work through the contradictions in the caste-related discourses observed in the field. I also hope to

convey to the reader how my shifting positions vis-à-vis caste were generative of different kinds of data.

**4.8 'No ma'am, we don't believe in caste'**

During fieldwork I remained ambivalent about whether or not to examine caste, the refrain not to discuss caste in Tamil Nadu would often echo in my ears (because of the history of its powerful anti-Brahman movement, Dirks, 2001; Fuller and Narasimhan, 2014). When I began fieldwork, I often wondered about encountering anti-Brahmanical sentiments. Simultaneously, I was conscious that it would be difficult to disentangle caste issues from class issues. In my own life, caste was confusingly both pervasive as well as non-existent (Deshpande, 2003). Further, I have grown up with the idea that talking about caste is unethical because it is a private matter. More importantly, I had yet not developed a theoretical lens with which I could understand caste. I was aware of the existence of several decades of academic writing on caste and unsure of how my research would dialogue with these. In more practical terms, I was worried about the ethical aspects of dealing with a contentious issue. All through fieldwork, I was hesitant to broach the issue of caste with my participants. Further, I was apprehensive that by writing about caste as a contemporary issue, I might strengthen an orientalist, non-modern, image of India in a UK university department.

Yet, despite my 'unwillingness' to discuss caste, individually in and outside school, people talked about caste. Throughout my fieldwork, people candidly talked to me about how caste shaped their lives in a myriad of ways even though I never directly brought up the topic myself (except towards the end of fieldwork). People shared local stereotypes about various castes, for example, that Brahmans are weak because they don't eat meat. One mother, a Gounder, shared with me that an increasing presence of lower caste children in government schools had led parents in her community to turn to private schools. Social practices were also shaped by caste, for instance having identified me as an Iyer (Brahman caste) my host family feared that I would not eat from their kitchen where chicken was regularly cooked.

At the same time, there was no direct reference to caste in my observational data. It appeared that caste-related practices were absent in the school setting. Some students and teachers also directly claimed that caste did not matter. This assertion was very pronounced when in the last week of fieldwork, I asked students to fill out Questionnaire 2 (see Appendix 11) in which I asked them to identify their community (I used the

euphemism community, instead of the word caste). Ashok asked me *"What is community?"* I replied *"caste"*. Immediately, Ashok pronounced, *"No ma'am, we don't believe in this caste – we won't answer the questionnaire"*. I recoiled defensively, wondering if my efforts at identifying students' caste backgrounds had misfired. At a later point, I came to recognise that such responses also constitute important data. Most students left the question blank, two wrote *"theist"*, some wrote *"don't know"*.

For a long time even after I started writing up my thesis, I was doubtful whether caste was a relevant axis point for analysis. It was much later that I could recognise that my confusion was because I was ambivalent and further, in this setting, there were in fact multiple and contradictory caste practices (Pandian, 2002). Reworking my understandings of caste through a post-structural and a postcolonial lens enabled me to go beyond caste as an identity marker (Chatterjee, 1993; Fuller, 1996; Dirks, 2001). I ventured to examine practices informed by ideas of purity-pollution even if caste remained tacit and unspoken. I could see that kin relations, while generally constructed as familial could extend to caste collectives. I recognised the heteronormative regimes of the school and the region as emanating from anxieties about inter-caste marriages (Chakravarti, 2003). I took a committed decision that even as my fieldwork remains inadequate in relation to questions of caste, not to consider it would amount to its repudiation and denial (Pandian, 2002).

A post-structural approach afforded analytical tools to understand ambivalences, silences and interrupted discourses. When discussing the disciplinary regimes in the school (see Chapter 4), I narrate how dining practices encoded caste valuations of vegetarian food being pure and non- vegetarian food being polluted. This was a complex array of institutional norms and individual conduct, not amenable to easy categorisation or simplistic interpretations. Post-structural frameworks enabled me to recognise fluidity (rather than posit stasis) in the negotiation of caste practices and to see that regulatory discourses can themselves be perplexed, uneven, contradictory and caught up in particularities of historical contingencies. The question is not whether caste practices are there or not, but instead how these discourses are embedded within regulatory institutional practices, how these discourses position participants within power relations, and how they are resisted and re-signified.

**4.9 Conclusions**

I started this chapter with a discussion about my methodological stances. I traced my influences to the writings of Foucault and Butler and discussed how I attuned to a post-structural approach. I argued that such a perspective posits the questions of social reality and truth in ways that renders traditional ethnographic research difficult. Moreover, these positions run against the grain of common sense which dictate our everyday perceptions of reality. I discussed in detail the difficulties in assuming a post-structural stance, especially while doing fieldwork. I wondered how much I have drawn upon humanist traditions which are so deeply embedded in research cultures.

Through a discussion of fieldwork, I tried to demonstrate that this experience cannot be understood as if a linear movement towards greater depths of understanding. Even in terms of becoming an insider, it was shifting and uneven. I described my fieldwork in detail and presented how I recorded and organised my field data.

Compared to the fieldwork period, my analytical processes drew upon post-structural understandings to a much greater extent. I described in detail how I arrived at my analytical categories, noting that this was an iterative process, and involved continuous reading of fieldnotes and relevant literature. While I have tried to be reflexive about my fieldwork and analysis, I acknowledge that this reflexivity is also limited, because I cannot stand outside of the discourses which frame and limit me. I discussed the different ethical considerations with which I engaged while conducting fieldwork and while writing up the thesis. In the last section of the chapter, I illustrated the usefulness of a post-structural lens through a discussion of my ambivalence about whether to include caste in my analysis, and how my positioning shaped the analytical narratives.

With this discussion of the research methodology of this study, I now present my analysis in the next three chapters.

# Chapter 5 Of surveillance, normative codes and self-regulation: Disciplinary regimes in the school

## 5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss how the institutionalised practices of KI regulated the conduct of its students and teachers. I begin by examining how the temporal rhythms and spatial organisation of school life induced specific forms of conduct, and question whether the school could be considered progressive. I discuss how the KI schooling practices sought to regulate eating and dining practices, followed by a discussion of regulation of sexual and gendered conduct, especially in relation to students. In the next sections, I discuss the deployment of hi-tech surveillance technologies to continuously monitor students and teachers in the school. Following this, I examine the disciplining of subjects through pedagogic practices. Then, I discuss the neo-liberal ideal of the 'self-regulated' subject which was privileged in the school.

A Foucauldian perspective recognises agents to be conduits of power while simultaneously offering continuous resistance (Foucault, 1977, 2000). In keeping with this understanding, I have largely presented acts of resistance (e.g. the rowdy boys and girls) as seamlessly interwoven in the discursive practices through which power is codified.

## 5.2 Kovai International, a 'progressive' institution

A 'progressive' institution is one which is learner-centred, where the unique inner capacities of the individual learner are nurtured and which is less preoccupied with establishing normative differences between learners (Dhankar, 2015). During the initial period of fieldwork, KI seemed to me to be a progressive institution which had subverted many regulatory practices common to Indian schools. There were no school assemblies requiring students to group in rows and keep bodily still, a tradition which IB schools have bypassed (Institute for Studies in Industrial Development, n.d). When teachers entered the class, students did not have to greet them by standing up and chorusing *"good morning/afternoon madam/sir"* – some would say *"hi"* sitting on their chairs, some would say nothing at all, only take out the related books from the bag, or adjust their seats to face the teacher. Teachers seldom used a 'high pitched teacherly tone' which is common in Indian schools; instead teaching in KI seemed to be unusually conversational. The culture was one of mutual camaraderie, not one of fear. Teachers reproached students; but the tone was one of cajoling, not shaming. As a matter of principle,

punishments were avoided. When a group of girls experimented with drinking, no punitive action followed; instead they were asked to study about and organise a day long workshop on alcoholism (fieldnotes, September 2015). Monitors, known to wield considerable disciplinary power in Indian classrooms were conspicuously absent (Sharma, 2014). Students did not appear wary or apprehensive; in general, they exuded confidence. When they ran into teachers in corridors, even younger ones would greet them with enthusiasm, sometimes opening a brief conversation. It was not unusual for students of other classes to stop me in the corridors and make friendly enquiries about which class I am teaching, how long I have been in the school, or to simply greet me with a familiar smile or a *"hi ma'am"*.

The teaching staff saw KI as a place where *"children came happily to school"*, where *"parents did not have to push the child to school every morning"* (interview, Pankajam madam, May 2016). Pankajam madam, a senior teacher in the school told me that the teaching methods used here were more attuned to the present generation of students who are exposed to technology. According to her, student-led learning and plenty of non-academic activities which were integral, not extra to the curriculum made KI much sought after both by foreign-returned parents and among those local parents who are aware of curricular options. She added that in KI, students explored, experimented on their own and were free to make mistakes. According to Sheena madam, *"The teacher will not give up on weak children. There is no segregation. People don't lose hope on this, that is, they do not lose hope on the weak children"* (interview, February 2016). Such pedagogic philosophies are seen as gaining popularity among schools with international pretensions (Gilbertson, 2014). However, what is interesting is that alongside the claim that there is '*no segregation'*, the reference to the '*weak student'* indicates that a strong evaluative gaze is still in place.

Students also exulted in the 'more western' atmosphere they enjoyed in the school. Sudha, a girl who had returned from America opined that in this school mores about girl-boy conduct were more liberal than elsewhere; no one raised eyebrows if you held hands with a boy. I noticed that young girls were free to wear lipstick, nail polish or colourful accessories. According to Pankajam madam, dressing up was fine *"so long as it is not garish"* because *"dressing up unless one becomes obsessed with it"* does not interfere with studies. Later, I realised that faculty opinion on this was uneven. For example, dressing up was seen as less innocuous when it signified bold assertion of femininity. As

I illustrate later in the chapter, in such instances, teachers did not hesitate to reprimand the concerned girls.

Compared to other schools in the area, KI was perceived to be a haven by students, parents and teachers. Though I never visited other schools, I heard plenty about state curriculum schools which were marks obsessed and severely punitive. Students shared scary stories about schools in Namakkal, a district famous in Tamil Nadu for schools which produced secondary school 'pass outs'[29] with unbelievably high scores. I heard stories of how students admitted there were scarred for life; some became mentally ill, some attempted suicide, so severe was the school regime. The following incident recounted by Bala's mother illustrates that KI was placed in a different league. Bala's mother shared an incident when a state board 12th standard boy woke up one day and asked, *"When did Kalam die?"*. Abdul Kalam was a former Indian president, a figure much revered and loved in Tamil Nadu who suddenly died on 14th August 2016. The boy was so buried in his books that he didn't know about Kalam's sudden demise until after several weeks. Comparing her son and his friends to this boy, she said:

> *"My son and his friends went through 10th jolly-aa[30] and now they are jolly-aa going through 11th - 12th. They don't even feel the pressure of being in board classes"*

(interview, February 2016)

However, such initial impressions did not last very long. As my fieldwork rolled into weeks and weeks into months, I began to see there was a fully functioning disciplinary machinery in place. I first felt the weight of this discipline when I stayed for a week in the residential accommodation. Having no kitchen, I had to tune myself to the timings of the dining hall, morning tea at 6 a.m., breakfast at 8:00 a.m. and so on. When I walked outside the school gates, to my surprise I had to provide an explanation; later I learnt that other women staying on campus without their families had to do the same. It was neither safe outside, nor was it customary for women to venture out alone for a stroll. As I discuss later, a powerful heteronormative discourse regulated women's (and men's) conduct. It became increasingly clear to me that its 'progressive' status notwithstanding, disciplinary machinations were well instituted in KI.

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[29] Pass out - In colloquial English, it refers to graduates or the process of graduating.
[30] Jolly - The English word 'jolly', now part of Tamil colloquial language means to be light-hearted and without a care.

**5.3 The temporal regimes of school life**

Aligning oneself to the dictates of clock, an inward notation of time, and an internalised sense of urgency are important dispositions for contemporary neo-liberal times. KI practiced rigid temporal routines which organised students' lives in the minutiae. These temporal regulations can be viewed as significant in training the students to comply with the requirements of industrial/post-industrial linear time and setting in place appropriate habits of docility required for work life in this contemporary era (Foucault, 1977).

The time schedules in the school were severe. Coming from Delhi where schools, even secondary schools wind up by 3:30 p.m. or so, I found KI's timetable punishing. Students and teachers could be picked up from their homes as early as 6.30 a.m. Brought in busloads to the school by 8:10 a.m, IBDP students would leave not before 5:00 p.m. Some students reached home as late as 6:30 p.m.

School began with a compulsory breakfast, served in different dining halls depending on whether you had paid for 'vegetarian' or 'non-vegetarian' meals. This segregation of dining spaces, commonplace in India is examined later in the chapter. On a typical day, breakfast was followed by class after class until the lunch break at 12:50. A twenty minutes lunch break, once again served in different dining halls, was followed by further classes. A ten minutes snack break at 2:50 was the only interruption to classes which would go on until 4:40 p.m. The bell which announced the change of classes sounded uncannily like the sirens from the nearby factories! On each day there were a total of nine classes in the timetable. Except for Creativity Activity and Service (CAS) which took over four periods on Thursday and games for which one period was allotted on Tuesday, these classes were all for teaching of the prescribed curriculum subjects. Even CAS and games could go, if subjects required more classes. Many times, I witnessed games periods being converted to Mathematics classes. From their responses to questionnaire 2 (see Appendix 11), I learnt that individually, students could have anywhere between one to five periods 'free' over a single school day, but they were expected to utilise these for studies. Also, they had to stay put in vacant classrooms or the library as these were the spaces specifically delineated for free periods.

Hostellers' lives were framed into an even tighter schedule. They were required to wake up by 5:45 a.m., exercise (yoga and aerobic classes were scheduled at 6:00 a.m.) and put in a few hours of studying before commencement of classes at 8:30 a.m. As exams grew closer, they were held back in school for supervised study which meant they were free

only by 7 p.m. As a rule, hostellers could not go back to their rooms until the end of the school day. There was even a fixed time slot, 7-7:30 p.m. for talking to family members. Outside of this slot, special permission had to be taken. While the school had a five day schedule, when needed, students and teachers were called for extra classes on a Saturday, in case a teacher had not covered the syllabus or to tutor students who showed less than satisfactory performance.

At least some students found this schedule very demanding. They would be exhausted by the time they reached home/hostel rooms. Assignments required that they stay up late and work. Some students shared in their interviews that they would rather watch TV or play games or surf the internet once they reached home. Rajat, a hosteller who was struggling to get good scores in his assignments and examinations found the schedule very stressful. As he explained in an interview:

> *Rajat:  Yeah, we have a tight schedule but the thing is after evening I plan out everything but then the plan never works, it's always 50% working...that's it, other 50 just goes to waste...I am supposed to be revising my portions everyday but then with the time factor I have, it's really tough...because of these 5-7 classes they disrupted me like literally. I had this plan after my exams... I really did a bad job in the previous exams and after those exams I had a plan, laid out perfectly well, everything was so smooth until these 5-7 classes came in and destructed everything and after 8 o'clock...after having dinner and things I have to work on my explorations [assignments]and also keep in contact with my family and on top of that I am supposed to… look at my sleeping time because they expect us to wake up at 5.45 in the morning. All together this thing comes up to 12 o'clock or 1 o'clock in the morning and then I only get like four hours or three hours of sleep but may be like five by luck...*
>
> *Suvasini: What do they do between 5-7 p.m., can't you opt out?*
>
> *Rajat: 5-7 p.m.they force you to do this one specific worksheet on this subject…I am not complaining about that thing…it's good, fine but then it disrupts everything…don't ask me how but...it's kind of hard to follow. What I used to do was I used to go for swimming from 5-6 p.m, okay? I was learning swimming…I was getting better at it and then these classes come in and then everything goes off. What used to happen during the 5-6 classes was all my stress was taken to the waters, that's it... but then now I don't even have time for games....*

<div align="right">(interview, March 2016)</div>

It is interesting that even as Rajat struggles with the time regimes of the school, he is largely compliant with it. He has already internalised a need to regulate himself according to this temporal order, pointing to the productive power of the regulatory practices of the school.

Weekends, even if classes were not held, offered no respite for hostellers. During my fieldwork there were no weekend outings or film screenings. With limited options for recreational activities, Saturday and Sunday was more of the same – studies and hanging out with co-hostellers.

The daily time regime organised students' conduct, when they studied, when they rested and so on, but there was more – the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IBDP) experience was quite engulfing. Its two years were steered towards the grand finale of the final examinations. Throughout my fieldwork, I saw teachers steadily gearing up for the exams. They tried to cover the syllabi as soon as possible, sought submissions earlier in the year so that more time was available for exam preparation; teachers wanted to spend the last eight months exclusively on revisions and mock examinations. Coaching students for exams was part of their responsibilities. All this changed students' daily lives in significant ways; for many, life was reduced to homework, assignments and preparation for exams.

Students frequently relayed this discourse of time being valuable and that it should be utilised for studying. Notions of hard work and wasting time were central to this discourse. The following example is illustrative. Here, Nandini is being asked to describe herself, and offers an explanation for why her studies have suffered, a self-evaluation which is also telling. Her reasoning is worded in terms of inappropriate use of time.

> *Nandini : I have something which I always want to do, read, like I love reading comic books, and so I end up reading comic books instead of like doing my work, every time and so like that it affected the studies and... this is one part of myself...*

(interview, Nandini and Vaishnavi, March 2016)

In the above excerpt Nandini demonstrates an internalisation of the need to make gainful use of time, well aligned with the discursive regimes of the school. Like Rajat, she too has faith in the practice of organizing one's time and complies with the normative ideal of the good student (see Chapter 6, Section 6.6). Even as they recited these values, students also continuously resisted such impositions. I provide examples of students' resistance later in the chapter.

**5.4 Regulating conduct through spatial organisation**

Organising space is one of the means through which disciplinary power is exercised. Modern schools arrange their spaces in order to enable some behaviours while prohibiting others. Typical practices include segregating students into separate classes and designating spaces for specific, restricted set of activities.

The boundaried physical environment of KI engendered certain behaviours. The very site of the school ensured that there were no ready attractions in the vicinity. Located in a rural landscape amidst *Cholam* fields, the nearest bus route was a kilometre away, and the nearest town was 14 kms away. Once inside the premises, students and teachers were largely dependent on school buses which ran only as per schedule, mainly to pick up and drop students.

The school was spread over a six acres site, which was formerly agricultural land. Erecting high walls with raised fencing cut it off from the outer world, literally and metaphorically. The school design was a total contrast to the rural surroundings where hutments were often one storeyed with mud walls and red tiled roofs (*oet vitu*). At total odds with its immediate surrounding, once you entered the school building you were transported to a new world. You could as well have been in another region, another country even. If the heat outside could leave you feeling parched in a few minutes, inside you were always in a moderate temperature zone. With central air conditioning you were always cool, even while using the toilets. With the school buses also having air conditioning, the journey was a preparation for this near total cut off from the surrounding area. The material and symbolic 'gatedness' of the school seems typical of many international schools (Tarc and Tarc, 2014)

The school building was not an imposing structure. Efficient utilisation of space rather than majestic structures seemed to be the intent. The school gates were unremarkable, and one could well miss the school while passing along the road.  As one entered the main premises, there was a central reception office. The reception desk was staffed until 9 p.m. and *ayya -ammas* were always around serving water to the visitors. This building housed various administrative departments. The school itself was a mix of open areas and completely enclosed buildings. These open spaces either served as parking spots for the 30 plus buses or were covered with tall trees. The buildings were all three storeyed. Central air conditioning meant that once inside a building there was no opening, windows were permanently sealed; passages connecting one building to another were also closed

off from the outside environment. The internal designing of the school was such that there was no designated space where one could rest. While there were well-equipped, designated sports, music and dance areas, there was no staffroom, no canteen or cafeteria for students or teachers.

IBDP students occupied the top floor of the last building beyond which was a large sports ground. The IBDP floor had laboratories and large classrooms equipped with computer-projector and white boards. A small office for the two administrative staff and several teachers' cabins were also located here. There was also a dedicated library with closed cabins, hot desks, reading corners and a lounge. I spent most of my time in this part of the school, sitting along with students as they attended classes and spent their free time.

Both boys' and girls' hostels, two separate buildings adjacent to each other were located inside the campus. There were also flats, single and shared rooms for unmarried staff members. The residential buildings were arranged in keeping with local gender norms.

While the school structure was not a panopticon design, various cadres of school staff were present everywhere. Security personnel guarded the gates, *ayya ammas* were always seen around mopping, sweeping the corridors and toilets or simply sitting near their assigned areas of duty and wardens kept a close eye on hostel gates. Teachers did not have a staff lounge; they were given cabins along the length of the corridor which they occupied either individually or in small groups. Most of these cabins were glass fronted ensuring that everyone could keep an eye on the other. Students had nowhere to hide if they wanted to miss classes. When missing classes, they would often spend time in the library for want of a better space. Ganesh sir, an administrative staff member in the IBDP team would soon round up errant students and bring them back to class. Phones with intercom made the communication across rooms very simple. Ganesh sir would make a phone call to the library and order the students to march back to classes.

It is interesting that in this international school, eating spaces were partitioned in keeping with traditional caste values that construct vegetarian food as being pure.

## 5.5 The segregated dining spaces

In KI the dining hall was divided into two sections, vegetarian and non-vegetarian. Non-vegetarian is a neologism coined by vegetarian India (Arunima, 2014). Separating vegetarian dining spaces from non-vegetarian dining spaces is commonplace in India, a practice whose origins lie in traditional Brahmanical coding of vegetarian food as pure

and meat products as polluted (Gorringe and Karthikeyan, 2014). Depending on what their parents had paid up for, KI students were expected to dine in either vegetarian or non-vegetarian sections.

Cautious about the matter of caste during fieldwork (see Chapter 4, Section 4.8), I never directly probed if students from particular castes went to one section or another. However, I knew of students from non-vegetarian families who strictly avoided the non-vegetarian meals in school because they were doubtful about the quality of chicken served in the school. There were also occasions when students from vegetarian families were tempted to explore non-vegetarian foods. Shreyas' mother (they were *Vaishyas*) shared in an interview (April 2016) that her younger son would often have omelette, and though she had tried to explain to him how this was 'unhealthy', he had remained recalcitrant.

Beyond eating practices, what was at stake for at least some parents was the cooking practices. The school had committed a 'sacrilegious' act by appointing a *Mathari* woman as the head cook. This was tantamount to polluting the food. In the traditional caste order, Dalits are untouchables whose bodies are marked as polluting. Even though practising untouchability is a crime in India today, prejudices against Dalits persist, especially around practices of commensality. Moreover, parents were doubtful whether different utensils were used for vegetarian and non-vegetarian cooking. Even as the kitchen in-charge maintained that different utensils were used for non-vegetarian cooking (interview, March 2016), some parents were not convinced. Shreyas' mother along with other parents had confronted the school authorities on this matter; they feared that the vegetarian food items could get infected if cooked alongside meat preparations. The school management had told them off, stating that, "*Vaishyas and Marwaris[31] were difficult to satisfy*".

The differentiation between vegetarian/non-vegetarian food is historically bound up with caste-related sensibilities of purity/pollution (Arunima, 2014; Gorringe and Karthikeyan, 2014). The practices in KI were internally contradictory because while on the one hand the dining area was segregated (reinstating the Brahmanical idea of purity of vegetarian food), on the other hand in employing a *Mathari* cook, the purpose of this segregation was defeated. There is no straightforward answer to the question of whether Brahmanical caste values were reinstated in the disciplinary regimes of the school. The practices in KI

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[31] *Vaishyas* and *Marwaris* are upper castes who practise vegetarianism.

suggest that caste-related discourses pervaded institutional practices, even as they were disrupted and also re-signified in multiple ways. Undoubtedly, discourses which describe vegetarianism in the language of health serve to signify caste as something else. They pass off Brahmanical values as modern practices, acceptable in contemporary, institutional life (Pandian, 2002; Deki, 2014; Gorringe and Karthikeyan, 2014).

The incursion of caste based practices into the institutional life at KI is one example of how local traditional practices enter the school spaces and shape its discursive frames. In incorporating dominant, local values into its disciplinary regimes, the school lends further legitimacy to these discourses while simultaneously transforming them (Youdell, 2006c, Deki, 2014). Next, I discuss the sexual and gender regimes in the school, where the influence of dominant local values was even more pervasive.

## 5.6 Anxious control over the heterosocial conduct

Butler argues that hegemonic heteronormativity engenders the production of normative sexualities and a taken for granted conflation of gender and sexuality (Butler,1990). As already discussed, in the Indian context, caste is a key operative power in this field. Caste values insert additional concerns about potential exogamous marriages, over and above the anxieties about unregulated sexual activities and non-normative genders (Chakravarti, 2003). Power is especially exercised over women whose conduct is construed as potentially bringing dishonour to the community. These anxieties in turn forge a tightly regulated field of heterosexual and heterosocial conduct (Iyer, 2015).

Students and teachers were tightly bound by these regulatory practices. Compulsory heterosexuality was the norm in the school and outside; during my nine months of fieldwork, I never heard anyone talking about non-heterosexual desire. The only exception was Aishwarya who went so far as to write in response to 'any other information' in Questionnaire 1 (Appendix 10) that *"I respect lesbians, gays and transgenders because they stand for what they are no matter what the society thinks about them"*. With this exception, the more general silence partly mirrors my own positioning in the field as aligned with normative expectations. It also suggests that the discourse of compulsory heterosexuality was pervasive.

The regulatory practices categorically identified students as boys/girls and teachers as men/women, i.e. the gender segregation was binary. Further, the regulatory order sought to suppress any expression of even heterosexual desire. If attraction for opposite sex was

occasionally tolerated, and permitted, because as Aishwarya's mother pointed out, it was normal in teenage years, acting upon this was strictly forbidden. Both Shreyas' and Ajay's mothers weaned their boys from the company of Ashok and his friends, the rowdy group of boys (discussed later in the chapter), because among other things this group was also friendly with girls, which the mothers considered improper. Ajay's mother elaborated on this as follows:

> *"He.. he is bold (Ashok)..as far as he is concerned he.. likes the girl… talks to the girl..when he has these boys near him/ when he hangs out with these boys he will talk to the girl including them.. [i.e. they will be part of the inter-gender exchange]… in our community.. if someone sees a known boys… sees the pachengaal[32] it will cause total damage . His name. go around nearly everyone in Coimbatore will know… it will go to (spread to) our native place.. it will become a big name… will know it will go to our native place.. if a boy is roaming around with a girl.at this age...  they will say at this age only they (parents) have left them.. loose/free"*

<div align="right">(interview, April 2016)</div>

It is telling that among the 16 -18 years old students, there was only one boy and girl, Ashok and Amrita who publicly identified themselves as being in a romantic relationship. I heard about a few other boy/girl relations, but always in private conversations or secret whispers. Amrita was exceptional in not being shy about having a boyfriend. She often talked about Ashok with her friends. Even my presence did not restrain her. Like some other girls in the class, she also painted her nails, wore lipstick and colourful hair clips. But unlike some other girls who were not admonished for this, I saw teachers chastising her about dressing up, which perhaps they linked to her relationship with Ashok. In one class, the teacher demanded *"Why were you late? Were you brushing your hair?"*. On another occasion, Amrita was asked by a teacher, *"Do you think if you are pretty, you will get away?"* Ashok told me that teachers often talked about him with Amrita, not the other way around, *"because they can't handle me, so they talk to Amrita"* (fieldnotes, September/ November 2015).

Peer reactions to their relationship was mixed. Some students were in awe of the two; others looked upon them contemptuously. Her friends also sought to discipline Amrita. Surabhi told me of how on several occasions, she and others tried to convince Amrita to end her relationship with Ashok. Surabhi shared that Vidya, Amrita's hostel roommate colluded with her mother, reporting back about Amrita. The argument to persuade her to

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[32] *Pachengaal* –boys and girls

end the relationship gave priority to the demands of her studies and constructed her relationship as an unnecessary distraction (fieldnotes, December 2015). In this setting, when it came to cross gender relations, teachers, students and parents – all joined in to frown upon any hetero romantic relations outside of marriage.

These regulatory practices were continuous with the moral discourses and practices in the larger community. Regulation of cross gender interactions was driven by anxieties which were deeply entrenched in the social psyche. At its core lay the terrifying, unbearable possibility that one's child would marry into another caste[33]. The following excerpt from interview with Ajay's mother reflects the moral discourses around marriage practices:

> *Suvasini: Do people marry within our own caste in this region?*
>
> *Ajay's mother: parents.. they are hesitant, how we can manage these relations… they are afraid..nothing else.. someone from outside.. how they will see us.. that is a fear that is all..[if their children marry outside the caste] wont make a big deal.. if children settle nicely [after marriage]..[they think] our child desires this.. leave it .. don't do anything.. but basically.. if we see parents, they would like.. within their own [caste] think it would be best*
>
> *Suvasini: What about young boys and girls these days? Are there many incidents of love marriage, outside the caste?*
>
> *Ajay's mother: Not much, maybe two or three percent.. these days the young boys and girls themselves understand. that they should not marry [outside the caste] that as far as possible we should marry within our caste. They leave it to the parents to arrange the marriage..it is not about love marriage per se apart from caste..they leave it to parents' choice..around the time they finish studies.. come to the marriageable age.. they leave it to parents.. to let them decide.*

(interview, April 2016)

Inter-caste marriages could affect the entire family. It could lead to loss of social status and effectuate material losses as well. One mother shared that the president of a local, caste based (Naidu) club had to tender his resignation because his son had married into another caste. Entire families could be weighed down by shame if a son or daughter ventured into a relationship, outside of (i.e. before) marriage, especially when this was outside his/her caste. Several times during fieldwork, Surabhi, an IBDP students and one of my key informants lamented on how her older sister's relationship with a boy from another caste had hugely crippled her family life. Her father, a highly-regarded

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[33] During my fieldwork, I came across one young couple, both from the same caste (Gounders)whose romantic relationship had fructified in marriage. In this case, the couple had remained quiet about their relationship, and had instead urged their families to enter a "arranged" matrimonial alliance. As one mother indicated, romantic relationships within the same caste are increasingly accepted by parents. Such relationships get accommodated within the customs of arranged marriage practices.

industrialist, had lost status in his community. Her parents were devastated. Surabhi was also deeply affected. She was continually concerned about her parents. In questionnaire 1 (Appendix 10), under any other information, she wrote, *"Never want to hurt my parents with my behaviour"*, as if her dutiful conduct would compensate for her sister's ill demeanour.

These diffuse and deep-rooted anxieties pervaded the regulatory practices in the school. There was an anxious prohibition on students' heterosocial conduct. In KI there was a near complete social distance between boys and girls. Because the dominant discourse constructs the woman as the repository of community honour, the girl, therefore, becomes in need of 'protection' (Rogers, 2005). During the educational excursion (see Chapter 4), I witnessed how young girls were held within a 'protective embrace'. While teachers keenly enforced this, students largely complied with such interpellations. When students were taken to the marketplace and given some time to shop, Anthony sir repeatedly directed boys to keep a watch over girls. They were to make sure that no group of girls ventured anywhere without a male chaperone. Even I was extended this protection! The discourse about protection of girls was not disguised in polite language. Radhika, the female teacher accompanying the group straightforwardly stated that they feared that the girls would get raped. On the first day of the tour, it was late evening, students were in the hotel lawns working for their next day presentations when the news arrived that a group of vacationing men were planning a bonfire. Panic broke loose and suddenly the teachers were in a tearing hurry to rush the girls to their rooms. Vani was in the middle of procuring a paracetamol for herself. Anthony Sir firmly ushered her to her room, promising that he would soon get back with the medicine. Then, Radhika and I went to the girls, strictly instructing them to lock the rooms from inside and not to step out or open the door to any stranger. While there is a fantastic dimension to this fear which construes male sexuality as aggressive and young women as requiring protection, there is also the reality of widespread sexual violence against women in India. This dramatized episode invokes both.

The social construction of rape in India centres around the violation of honour of the woman, which is seen as the honour of her community. Such a discourse positions the girl/woman as vulnerable and boys as 'protectors', thereby reciting the patriarchal discourse of women being possessions of and subordinate to men.

*5.6.1 The normative practice of gender segregation*

Osella and Osella (2006) note that gender segregation in varying degrees is a commonplace practice in India, with south India being more conservative on this matter than other regions. In KI, I noticed in large classes that boys and girls occupied spatially distinct areas. Occasionally I could draw a line demarcating the two groups. Over time, I realised that they were in fact sitting among their friends; this gendered outcome was produced because friendships were invariably with same-sex peers. Even Ashok and Amrita, who occasionally publicly expressed romantic feelings for each other sat apart with their respective friends. Niranjan once showed me photographs from a day when he had gone out with a group of friends, both boys and girls. When I saw the photographs, what struck me was that girls stood together on one side and boys on the other. During the educational excursion, when asked to pose for photographs, boys and girls spontaneously segregated themselves into same gender groups! Such gender segregation has been noted in other school ethnographies as well (Sharma, 2014).

Such a regime of control put a near end to heterosocial relations. It was uncommon for a boy and a girl to spend time talking one-to-one. I did see larger groups of boys and girls sitting together for lunch, but this too was not the norm, only a few students sat in mixed gender groups. When Nitya, who had grown up in Australia tried to subvert this regulation, she was told off by teachers for sitting with boys. I present below excerpts from her interview where she talks about sitting with boys:

> *Nitya: Well here like...here they kind of tell you not to sit with certain people, it's like so for me I usually like...for most of my friends...my friends are guys, I have been called many times you should not be sitting...*
>
> *Suvasini: Oh not to sit with guys.*
>
> *Nitya: Yeah a lot.*
>
> *Suvasini: By whom? By teachers?*
>
> *Nitya : By teachers...yeah ....Once, I was like in lunch with one of my friends with a guy and they were just like so we think there's something going on blah blah blah...*

(interview, March 2016)

Not just among students, even among teachers a social distance was maintained between men and women. The customary practice was that men addressed women with the prefix ma'am/madam; women addressed men likewise as sir. This language served to create a social distance between the genders. The prefix sir/madam was used within the same

gender to code age and hierarchy; younger and junior staff addressed older/senior staff as sir/madam.

The regulatory regime engendered specific gendered interactions, and a construal of the girl/woman as subordinate to the male. Students' gendered performatives suggest a complex negotiation with these regimes. As I argue in the next chapter, the dominant discursive regimes afforded different avenues for masculine and feminine identity performances.

I now examine how cameras and online surveillance were deployed for disciplinary purposes.

## 5.7 The new age panopticons: camera and online surveillance

The school did not have a panoptical structure. It did not require one because cameras were fitted everywhere, in the corridors and hallways, in classrooms and (as I learnt from students) even in boys' hostel dormitories. To my knowledge, only toilets and the girls' hostel rooms were spared. Cameras were placed to keep as much a watch on teachers and other staff as on students. Some students falsely believed that these cameras did not work. Teachers on the other hand did not doubt that management had real time access to the happenings in class. It was known to them that if a student complained about a teacher, the Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV) recording would be retrieved. I heard accounts of teachers being questioned, even fired; recordings providing evidence of the teachers' faulty behaviour. During my fieldwork, one case of theft (a student's hard drive went missing) was solved when senior staff looked at the recording. Amrita told me of some boys who had covered the camera in their dormitory room. But in general, students were not opposed to being under surveillance. They seemed to be easy about it, even the boys living in the hostel. Being under parental and community scrutiny all the time, cameras were perhaps only more of the same. Teachers understandably were more fearful about cameras. They saw it as an infringement on their privacy. One teacher shared with me that she felt embarrassed while adjusting her saree, for it would have been captured by the camera. When I interviewed a teacher in his cabin, he made sure that the glass door was tightly shut lest our conversation get caught in the camera. In the following excerpt from fieldnotes in Theory of Knowledge (TOK) class, the teacher tries to steer a discussion on CCTV towards surveillance, she wants to draw a link between surveillance and human rights:

*Teacher introduces the topic of surveillance.*

*Teacher: What about surveillance? Not camera. Do you agree with it or not?*

*Student: Destroys privacy of student.*

*Teacher: Friends, friends, not talking about public places in school.. Cameras used to monitor students and classes…Talk about positive- negative….How many say (cameras) great, should be there? Raise hands.*

*Student: I don't want high definition.*

*Students laugh at this funny remark. Those voting for cameras are eight to ten, those against are four to five. Most students as yet do not have a clear opinion on the matter.*

*Teacher: May I know a statement why do you think looking at someone, staring at you, 24X7"…aaa… you know, they….*

*Student: ..How it prevents unethical activities from taking place. Aaa… it is a psychological deterrent.*

*Student: Helps maintain students from doing anything wrong.*

*One student says, Guides students to do the right thing.*

*Student: Prevents, impedes expression of thought, knowledge.*

*Teacher: Impedes, but what else?*

*Student: Can actually in a way, another people looking at camera can come to see what we have learned in the class.*

*Student: Surveillance. …surveillance… decreases crime rate.*

*Student: On the whole… on the whole, infringes on human rights.*

<div align="right">(fieldnotes, September 2015)</div>

It is striking that some students recited the institutional discourse of needing cameras to maintain order. When it came to parents, at least some of them felt positively about cameras in the school. Shreyas' mother told me about a private school in the region where due to bullying in boys' toilets, the management was planning to place cameras in the common area of boys' toilets. Her tone was one of concern about teenage violence, not one of being aghast about installation of cameras in so private a space.

Once I learned about the cameras, I too became cautious. Over the months this was somewhat offset by the management's complete indifference to my presence. Not even once did the school management ask me what I was observing or what were my thoughts about the school. This emboldened me considerably. Also, because I hung around students, like them I also became less conscious of the cameras. For teachers though, the cameras were something to be apprehensive about, for it further reduced their autonomy in a work culture where they were already subservient to a powerful management.

*5.7.1 Regulating conduct in the online world*

I now discuss about the online surveillance practices in KI, a panopticon gaze far more penetrative than what Bentham could have conceived, more so than even the cameras.

The school provided IBDP students and teachers with a personal laptop each. It had a dedicated server and wi-fi in the campus. All the IBDP materials were stored in the school server, available for instant access. Teachers communicated to students through email; students also sent their assignments to an online dropbox. Teachers and students referred to the internet extensively, often during classes. All this of course came with a catch – the school closely watched and regulated online activities. You could visit only certain sites, filtered in by the school authorities. The school also kept a tab on students' and teachers' foray into the world wide web. For instance, as some teachers shared, students attempting to enter pornographic sites were immediately identified and ticked off. The school had a dedicated IT department to look into these matters.

Both teachers and students complained about these controls and restrictions. Students were angry at being stonewalled from useful, educational sites. Some claimed that these restrictions made it difficult to study while living in the hostel. Sudha cited this as one reason for her leaving the hostel. She was frustrated at not being able to read newspapers such as *The Guardian* and *The New York Times*.

For teachers, the matter of online surveillance was not as playful as it was for the students. They were not allowed to change their official email password without notifying the IT department. I heard about a teacher landing in trouble with the management when she did an online job search. Some teachers were resigned to the surveillance, rationalising that, *"it helped that there were no distractions, one can be more efficient"*, and that *"there is a lot of bad stuff on the net anyway"* (interview, March 2016). Some teachers decided not to take the laptop on offer and used their personal internet connection.

As compared to teachers, students were more able to subvert the system; boys often navigated around the school server to access online gaming sites. Their actions would soon come to light and the IT department would close off this access; they would find other routes and so on. Not just the gaming boys, but students in general managed to browse sites which had little relation to their studies. I saw students viewing latest automobiles, Kollywood[34] star profiles, Manga comics and foreign university sites. These

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[34] Tamil cinema industry.

online activities were incessant and ceaseless, often running in parallel to classroom teaching, but they were also under cover and low key. They could be shushed off by teachers, and only occasionally required punitive action.

On the matter of online surveillance, I identified with the teachers. Like them, I did not understand how online surveillance worked. I was careful, never bringing my laptop to school, never logging in through the school server and only once did I access my email from the school computer. I changed my password later that very day!

**5.8 The agonistic terrain of teacher-student interactions**

Teacher-student interactions constituted the mainstay of school life. I discuss these here as well as in the next chapter. Across subjects, lecturing was one of the chief modes of pedagogy in KI's IBDP. While this was teacher-centred, I also observed many student centred activities in the school. Besides attending to lectures, students also conducted experiments, worked on group projects, wrote individual essays and made presentations. For Creativity, Action and Services (CAS), they learned musical instruments, raised money by setting up food stalls and helped organise cultural and sports events in school, all under close teacher supervision. Pedagogic interactions disciplined students in different ways, regulating their conduct as well as encouraging specific performances which produced them as distinct in this context. In this section, I focus on how teachers asserted power over the students and their continuous resistance of teachers' authority. In the next chapter, I provide further analysis of the class based tensions in the exercise of teacher authority. I also examine how pedagogic practices encouraged cultivation of specific practices, for example using language in an abstract decontextualized register.

I noted that generally teachers taught to a class of 20-25 students, but in case of English, TOK and Physics, the group consisted of the entire first year IBDP group comprising of 45 students. Most classes were taken by one teacher; some classes were jointly conducted by two teachers, and in case of guest lecturers, one regular teacher sat along to keep a vigil on the students. Every room was equipped with a white board and a projector with a computer. As mentioned earlier, teachers and students extensively used materials on the school server and on the internet.

The teacher was clearly in command and control of the class. During lectures, she/he did most of the talking. Giving explanations, providing definitions and other information, demonstrating on the board the solution to a mathematical problem, breaking down a

problem (for example a logical problem) into simple steps, simplifying a concept and giving instructions were the typical pedagogic practices. Teachers often addressed the whole class, asking questions to no one, and being satisfied when students responded with a chorus answer. Sometimes, a question was only rhetorical, answered in due course by the teacher herself. Teachers also directed questions at individual students, sometimes leading her to the answer, providing cues and prompting her. These forms of pedagogy are commonplace in mainstream Indian schools (Iyer, 2013; Thapan, 2014). They involve initiation-response-evaluation (IRE) sequences which are teacher-led, with tokenistic pupil responses. In KI, students' classroom participation during lectures was generally framed by the teacher. They asked questions and added to ongoing discussions, responded to questions posed by the teacher. When a teacher worked out a problem on the board, the students would get animated, prompting him on the next step, pointing out any errors he had made. In the excerpt here from a Physics class, the conversation is in the form of the teacher posing questions, and students answering en masse:

> *Teacher: Last class, last class, we defined what, what is current? Electrical current defined as ……." [writes on board] "Electric current is defined as rate of flow of charge. The word rate means?*
>
> *Sameer: Time.*
>
> *Student chorus: Per second.*
>
> *Teacher: Simply mean that charges are flowing per second. What is the formula?*
>
> *Students answer in chorus.*
>
> *Teacher: If you read Chemistry, you know how many electrons at different level? K level?*
>
> *Students answer in chorus: 2*
>
> *Teacher: L level?*
>
> *Students: 8 electrons.*

<div align="right">(fieldnotes, November 2015)</div>

Supervision of students was integral to teaching. Bringing back inattentive students to the folds of the class, making ongoing assessments during class to ensure that students were following the classroom lecture and monitoring their written work, which was in plenty; all this was seamlessly woven into the lectures. Moreover, exams always lurked on the horizon. Few days went by without exams being referred to. What topics were likely to come as questions, what mathematical algorithms could procure good marks, what were the assessment criteria and decoding these, the spectre of examinations hovered over

IBDP teaching practices, affecting both students and teachers. Such pedagogic impositions sought to mould the student into a compliant subject, always attentive, always learning and yielding to an uninterrupted evaluative gaze. They sought to inscribe on the body of the student an obedience to the adult-teacher who was after all the knowledge provider.

Students' resistance was simultaneous to the imposition of teacher authority. The ethos of the IBDP class was paradoxical. Depending on whom I talked to or when I was observing, the class resembled either a well-greased engine, or it was a complete chaos, with students challenging any attempts at maintenance of order. The teacher-student relationship was complex, shaped by multiple, contradictory discourses. Tradition required students to respect teachers who were older, and because they were '*gurus*', the knowledge givers. Further, the learning context demanded respect for teachers. The subjects were difficult to understand, and it was the teachers who could make them accessible. In the absence of a coaching culture among this group, even disinterested students were forced to seek out their help. Further, teachers' assessments also contributed to the students' overall IBDP scores, a practice which formally sanctioned their power over students.

On the other hand, students came from more affluent families than teachers, and the relative class difference afforded students a sense of power over the teachers. Also, teachers were the direct mediators of the school's disciplinary regime. Therefore, the teachers' regulation of student behaviours provoked regular resistance, sometimes overt, sometimes more covert.

When teachers taught, especially to large classes, at least some girls and boys could be found surreptitiously engaged in other activities. They could be busy on their laptops, secretly reading a story book, or engaged in whispering conversations. In unmindful moments, a girl could be grooming herself, colouring up her lipstick or arranging her dishevelled hair. All this could make a teacher see red. In private conversations with me, some teachers expressed annoyance with the students for being rich and spoiled. John sir dejectedly told me that some students do not even greet him on chance meetings outside the school. Radhika, expressing her annoyance with some students' misbehaviour in class, shared the following:

> "The attitude is like come what may .. I, I have a feeling like you know whatever we do, yes, come what may! What this teacher is going to do? After all, he will

*be like or she will be like scolding us! That's it. I am not going to throw this….you know, she is not going to throw me out of the school, definitely that is not going to happen. So, that kind of attitude is there and yes, I have enough money. So, wherever I go, I will be, my parents will be getting a seat for me. So, that kind of attitude for few students."*

(interview, April 2016)

In the class, they expressed annoyance, exasperation, helplessness, and issued threats, often warning students that laptops will be seized. Sometimes, teachers resigned themselves to the situation, ignoring inattentive students. More often, teachers would confront students. Students generally relented and at least for a while the class could proceed in an orderly manner. They would slip back into the same routine the next day, or even within a few hours and the negotiations would continue, generally mild in tone but occasionally piqued.

Alongside paying attention in class, assignment submissions were also a matter of bargaining. Only a few students stuck to the deadlines; for the rest, teachers had to argue, plead and threaten them with dire consequences. As can be seen in the excerpt below, students knew how to cajole teachers for more time and to persuade them to refrain from punishment:

*It is just after Navaratri[35] holidays, and the teacher discovered that Krishna's work was pending. What ensued were negotiations which continued through the course of the 50 minutes' class. The teacher ultimately relented, perhaps worn out by his obstinacy, or in keeping with the general practices of the school. Another occasion, the same situation might have ended differently.*

*When confronted Krishna defended himself, "I went to a marriage."*

*Teacher: That's not my problem. What were you doing on Saturday morning? [i.e. before he went for marriage]… Told this on Friday, [to finish the work]. Get up, write an apology letter. This time you get it signed Radha madam [Head of IBDP]. Next time, we will get it signed by the Principal.*

*Krishna: Last sorry. [i.e. student is requesting her to accept his sorry one last time]*

*Teacher: Not first time letting you to complete.*

*The student then changes his stance, claiming he didn't know that submissions were to be done today. He says, "I didn't know. You didn't tell me."*

*The teacher: Well, I announced it in the whole class that you were supposed to do it. Am I supposed to come to you individually and tell you?*

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[35] *Navaratri* is a ten-day Hindu festival, celebrated at the end of autumn every year.

*Teacher: Look, which day did I give you the work? Hmm. And you are telling me after the Pooja[36][i.e. Navaratri] holidays.*

*Teacher has been asking them for the past two months to do the work.*

*Krishna now expresses disagreement with when this work was assigned. The teacher consults the class and they tell her that the work was given on 20th August – two months back. Teacher tells Krishna, "I am right".*

*Krishna: Give me time till afternoon.*

*Teacher: Whose fault is it? Don't make it look like it is my fault.*

*As the class continues, Krishna promises to submit the work soon and convinces the teacher not to report this to higher authorities.*

<div align="right">(fieldnotes, October 2015)</div>

Such conflicts were the mainstay of IBDP school life. Frequent conflicts notwithstanding, a sense of camaraderie brought together the students and teachers, perhaps they were dimly aware of being subjected to the same forces. Together, they sought escapes from the drudgery of the situation. Humour offered moments of relief, interrupting the sombre atmosphere of the class:

*In one class, when Ajay is about to make an excuse for not bringing some work, other students jest, "Now don't tell that your grandmother has died, because earlier you already said that your grandmother has died".*

*To which Ajay replies, "No, my kollu patti[37] died, and my grandfather was very happy!"*

<div align="right">(fieldnotes, October 2015)</div>

One incident which even today brings a smile to my face happened towards the end of a long day, when Murugan Sir was teaching Mathematics.

*Students were then in the midst of exams. The topic being studied in this class on that day was calculus. They had started integration, and they were solving problems. As students struggled to first understand and then solve the questions, the teacher was going around, looking into students' work and helping them. The air was taut, as everyone was strained to work out these problems.*

*Then Murugan Sir advised, "Go home and practise." It was Friday, and he wanted students to solve similar questions before the next class on Monday.*

*Students protested, "Sir, we have physics (exam) on Monday".*

*Murugan Sir replied, "When you take a break from studying physics, at that time practice these sums".*

<div align="right">(fieldnotes, October 2015)</div>

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[36] *Pooja* – festivities and prayers; referring to *Navaratri* festival.
[37] *Kollu -patti* – mother's grandmother, and grandfather's mother-in-law.

The laughter that ensued was so refreshing, both Murugan Sir and I spontaneously joined in.

To sum up, conventional teacher-led pedagogies were widely used in KI along with other forms of group activities (project work, experiments). However, teacher authority was ambiguous, and was undermined by students' higher social standing in the larger community life. In class, teachers' admonitions were regularly challenged, in ways that often suggested a sense of entitlement in the student. Finally, the agonistic relations between students and teachers were also interrupted by moments of mirth and laughter.

## 5.9 Producing the 'self-regulated' subject

The ideal, entrepreneurial subject in a neo-liberal world is one who is able to manage her time effectively and take charge of her productivity (Skeggs, 2004a). The disciplinary regimes of KI sought to produce such a 'self-regulated' subject. Students being in charge of their success in the IBDP was a central principle in the school's vision. While students had little control over assessment criteria or subjects on offer (see Chapter 7, Section 7.2), a key message conveyed to students was that they should strive to manage their conduct so that they would maximise their productive potential. An example of this is an orientation programme for prospective parents, where the teacher described the assessment practices in the primary years of the IB programme as a self-regulatory exercise. The teacher stated that each student would begin the term with a full score of 100 marks. These were distributed across academic and behavioural parameters for example, 20 marks for punctuality, 10 for discipline etc. If a student failed a submission, some marks would get deducted. She could then work her way upwards and try to regain them. The idea was that students would be in control of how they scored in the programme. Similar to the report card the primary class students were asked to keep, IBDP students were also asked to maintain a personal log through which they were encouraged to regulate themselves:

> *It was the day after the mid-term exams; some hostellers were grumbling about why more day boarders weren't absent [which they believed would grant them many free periods] when the class was asked to gather, and Kesavan Sir addressed all the students,*
>
> *"You, you must maintain a personal log, a notebook. It must have your name on it and you must write it's my personal log. First of all, it should have your time-table, which classes you attend and when you are free....You can be creative. From, second page, day-wise account of what you did in school, every class you attended, for example: first period English, note down what the topic taught in*

*the class, what activity you did, not elaboration or what you learnt. One line only. Ok….*

 *If there was an assignment given, write that. If there is a deadline, write that. Third period: free period, on that day. What did you do in the free time? Go to library, did an assignment, this you must maintain for each day. At the end of the day, show it to your parents. If hostel students, show it to your tutors, get their signature. Monday morning, sharp at 8:45, must be submitted to my table."*

(fieldnotes, October 2015)

The teacher was instructing them on how to take charge of their work. This was a lesson in self-regulation. Further, the regulative discourses were often cast in the language of yogic practices. It was as if the narrative derived greater legitimacy when it integrated the symbolisms of yoga. Therefore, for example, an external Resource Person who was invited to conduct a yoga workshop explained how in his understanding, yoga was a means to maximise one's performance through greater control of mind and body. Drawing upon the analogy of a computer, he alerted students that, *"If you have a weak body, in 20 years of time, your body will completely shut down."* Further arguing that *"Mind, is the cause of all actions and it is the mind which is in control of the body"*, he urged them to learn how to control the mind. The Resource Person went on to teach students some breathing and postural *asanas*[38]. In his articulation, yoga was assimilated into a narrative of control over self, resonating with the school's discourse of self-regulation for academic success. As the Resource Person promised, the rewards would be immediate:

 *"If you breathe properly for two and a half minutes, the mind scores. Ok. Then something happens, your score becomes high. Students who do these exercises in the evening, and test after that, when they do, it's 30 to 40%, and their scores go up."*

(fieldnotes, September 2015)

It is not surprising that the Resource Person mentioned above was a Human Resource Development specialist and regularly invited by corporates to conduct such workshops. Similar practices have been reported in other schools with progressive claims (Gilbertson, 2014). Fuller and Harriss (2005) note that there is today a reinvention of Hindu practices and beliefs in the idiom of modern-day life to suit the needs of the present. They point out that this theme is popularised by contemporary holy men. They observe that these

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[38] *Asanas* - Yoga postures.

holy men adopt the language of individual self-help and present Hindu (generally Brahmanical) scriptural ideas as useful tool-kits for success. Their lingo is also remarkably similar to the parlance of corporate sector (Fuller and Harriss, 2005; Arabandi, 2011).

In KI, self-regulation was made integral to academic success. To illustrate this, I present an example of a PTM where students were instructed to take responsibility for their assessment results. The PTM was held in October 2015 soon after the board results of the previous IBDP batch were declared. The board results were dissatisfactory, disastrous according to some students. Anticipating that some parents may be confrontational, teachers had in advance asked the students to fill out a self-reflection form. It had many columns with questions asking the student to reflect on various aspects of her work, *"Are you doing daily revision? Are you understanding the concepts in the class? If not, are you going to the teacher to clarify your doubts?"*. Students were asked to answer in yes or no, and these were now shown to parents. Some questions also required students to rate their studies-related behaviour, in ways that ensured students were held accountable for their learning. This form facilitated a shift in the conversation from 'Where did the school go wrong?' to 'What can students (and parents) do to ensure satisfactory marks, because after all they are in charge'. Once these sheets were handed out to parents, Kesavan sir went on to stress how it was time now for students to execute upon their *"honest reflections"*. If not studying every day, then it was time to start. Teachers would soon hand out the assignment calendar, which would help students plan their submissions in advance. Teachers also emphasized that students should set their own targets for what marks they aimed for in their final IBDP examinations. These targets could in turn help students in strategizing their exam preparation. Kesavan sir explained what kind of score distribution across subjects would help students get an average score of seven (the highest score in the IBDP evaluation scheme). Once such a narrative was established, the IBDP was construed as a field requiring astute planning on how to score high. This necessitated recruiting a particular kind of self-regulating subject, one that conformed to the IB assessment regime, as relayed by the teachers. The discourse of the self-regulating student also obscured the responsibilities of the teachers. The critical question of why the predicted scores (prior to the final exams, teachers provide predicted scores based on students' academic performance through the year) of the previous year's students were so off the mark was not raised. This discursive framing contributed to the production of

a disciplined, self-regulated student subject, as well as to the obfuscation of the responsibility of the school towards the students' success in the IBDP examinations.

As already discussed, students continuously resisted disciplinary regulations, but this was largely contained within the dynamics of the teacher-student relationship. The exception was the one group of boys, the rowdies, who were so rebellious that they came into direct confrontation with the school authorities. As I describe below, these boys performed their gender identities in ways that I would categorise as hypermasculine.

**5.10 The rowdies**

In Tamil cinemas, the rowdy is an archetypical anti-hero character who confronts authority. The rowdy identity performance is noted by researchers to be part of a subversive Tamil youth culture. Rogers (2005), writing about the rowdies in a Chennai college notes that marginalised Dalit boys performed these hypermasculine identities to counter the dominant masculinities accessible only to boys from more privileged class and caste backgrounds. Through the rowdy performance, they made alternate claims to distinction and countered the dominant narrative of privileged masculinity. In KI, the rowdy boys were similarly subversive. They countered the discourse of the good student and offered a powerful alternative to the privileged geek masculinity (see Chapter 6, Sections 6.6 and 6.7). They also came into frequent confrontation with the school authorities.

Ashok, Sameer and a few other boys were identified by some of their classmates as *"rowdy"* and *"macho"* (interview, Nandini and Arushi, March 2016). They often engaged in good humoured play-fighting, teasing, pushing and slapping each other. Such horseplay signified friendship and bonding between them, because, as Sameer shared*, "You can't slap a random person, he will beat you back. You can slap a friend, he doesn't do anything, just laughs and goes away"* (interview, Sameer, Ashok and Suresh, March 2016). Other studies on Indian schooling have made similar observations, identifying masculine performativity with a jesting male sub-culture, where teasing and 'friendly' repartees make for bonding and camaraderie among boys (Sharma, 2014).

However, these boys were known to bully other boys, both their classmates and juniors. Their relationship with teachers was also marked with conflict. Nitya told me of how Ashok got annoyed when a teacher asked him not to sleep in the class. He angrily walked

out of the classroom, banging the door behind him. On one occasion Pankajam madam alleged that they had roughed up a junior boy, Sandeep, in the toilet. He had suffered serious injuries. When I confronted the boys while interviewing them, they however maintained that no blows were exchanged; what had happened was that Sandeep spread rumours and swore at them and all they did was call and confront him. Sandeep made the *"small problem big"* and falsely complained that they beat him. Their version notwithstanding, Ashok, Sameer and Srinath were suspended for a week, which Amrita enviously reported they were thoroughly enjoying!

Rogers (2005) notes that transgressive sexual conduct, which questions the normative moral code on sexual conduct is central to the rowdy's claim to distinction. Ashok's open heteroromantic relationship (and in general, his more open heterosocial conduct than sanctioned by local traditions) was integral to his rowdy identity. In KI, girls were often the reasons for provocation of fights involving the rowdy boys. This observation concurs with Roger's observation that because the woman is the repository of male honour, fights between men are often caused by any violation of 'their' women's honour by other men. In the incident described above, the fight started because, according to Ashok, Sandeep had made a disrespectful comment about Amrita. Another fight gained notoriety in the IBDP group; students talked about it for many days afterwards. Vinod had teased Srinath, saying that he was in a relationship with Ankita. This infuriated Srinath and they broke into a fierce fight. Soon, Srinath's friends joined in, expressing their support. Then Rajat entered supporting Vinod. The fight continued for a while, with many students watching. Finally, teachers had to step in to tear the boys apart. This episode suggests that even as one group of boys was distinctly marked as rowdies, there was a wider circle of boys (those who joined in the fight as well as the admiring observers) who could readily engage in a highly masculinised assertion of physical force.

Gang culture among young boys has been noted to be a safe space where they experiment with different masculine identity performances (Osella and Osella, 2006). Outside the school, the rowdy gang of boys were part of a larger, *"whole, big, gang"* who called themselves *"Vikings"*. They had more frequent outings as compared to their classmates; popular activities were paintball, laser tags, movies, roaming around in car and bikes, and sleepovers. It was rumoured that they experimented with deviant behaviours like smoking and drinking, not drugs though, for as Nandini observed even they, *"are not that cool and all they don't have that much guts"* (interview, Nandini and Arushi, March 2016). In their

group interview, Ashok, Sameer and Suresh denied even smoking or drinking because, *"we are a decent gang"*. This reference to 'being decent' suggests even as the rowdy identity afforded power and status, it also caused anxiety.

In my interview with this group, I directly asked them, *"Do you think you have a macho image?"*. They all laughed affirming that they did have such a reputation. Ashok responded, *"No not a macho image, but that is the effect we exude outside"*. Suresh added, *"eilarume abdin nanekaranga naange nadaka bod"* (Everyone thinks like this, when we walk). They walked in stereotypically masculine way, chests wide and their arms spread out. Rowdy masculinity in KI as among the Chennai college students was enacted through show of physical strength (Rogers, 2005).

Some girls also embodied an aggressive subjectivity that challenged dominant imaginaries of proper female conduct. One girl, Ankita gained notoriety for being rebellious. Ankita proudly shared the following incident with me. Several months back, the students had attended a house party after which, Sumati had spread a rumour that Ankita had spiked her drinks. Whereas in fact, according to Ankita, Sumati had come to the party already drunk. The class believed Sumati and for several weeks no one spoke to Ankita. Initially this bewildered her. When she found out, she was so incensed that she went and punched Sumati, settling the matter. Like the rowdy boys, Ankita also came into frequent conflict with the school authorities.

There were also limits to the clout of the rowdy performativity. While Ashok and his gang might have been intimidating for some younger boys, not all were taken in by it. In their joint interview, Arushi and Nandini deconstructed this rowdy persona. While they characterised these boys as cool, they also punctured their machismo image, pointing out that when alone, Ashok the gang leader would *"backfire"* (they meant withdraw from a fight). Having known these boys for several years, Arushi and Nandini fondly remembered their earlier, less hypermasculinised selves. The rowdy subjectivity was evidently a new way of self-presenting. Also, as Nitya pointed out, since her family knew Ashok's socially, he had to conduct himself nicely with her. Social regulations also bound rowdy behaviour within limits. Even though it was a powerful performative, self-presentation as a rowdy was not easy, and the rowdy boys also acquiesced with the normative expectations of the larger society.

**5.11 Conclusions**

In this chapter, I have examined the disciplinary practices of KI. These consisted of specific temporal and spatial regimes. The daily timetabling of students' lives was severely restrictive, regulating students' lives in the minutiae. The architectural and internal design of the school were such that students could not easily escape adult scrutiny. The disciplinary regimes included regulation of eating practices in keeping with Brahmanical values of purity and pollution around food. Even while the practices around food and eating were themselves caught up in contradictions, they also generated an obfuscation of their origins in Brahmanical discourses. When it came to controlling sexuality and cross-gender interactions, the discourses in the school were remarkably continuous with those in the wider society. The schooling practices were firmly lodged within a larger framework of compulsory heteronormativity. They were patriarchal and recited values of caste endogamy. These wider discourses in turn shaped the conduct of boys and girls. Not only did students not openly explore heteroromantic relations (there were few exceptions), even heterosocial relations were restrictive. The moral panics about sexuality relayed caste-related discourses of women's chastity and honour and constructed girls and women as needing protection. These discourses located women as subordinate to men and worked against the autonomy of girl students.

The surveillance technologies through which disciplinary power was exercised were ultra-modern, more penetrative and pervasive than Bentham's panopticon architectural design. The pedagogic practices sought to produce a student who would respect teachers' authority, and subjected students to a continuous evaluative gaze. The spectre of the final IBDP examinations loomed large, urging students to organise their present towards this end. Students both complied with as well as resisted these discursive regulations. Perceiving the teacher as the embodiment of these disciplinary practices, they often channelized their resistance towards the teachers.

It is not incidental that self-regulation was at the heart of the disciplinary practices in KI. Self-regulation, as I discuss in the next chapter, is the starting point for propertizing of the self, for accumulating capital onto the body (Skeggs, 2004a). The notion of the self-regulated subject is discursively embedded in a larger symbolic economy and has much purchase in a neo-liberal world. It is related to the new work culture, especially in the IT sector where workers are required to take control of their individual work (Arandandi, 2011).

While students' protests against the disciplinary powers were largely low key, in the embodiment of the rowdy subjectivity, some students, mainly boys, forcefully resisted the regulatory regimes instituted in the school. They drew upon a hypermasculine counter-culture drawing upon archetypes in Tamil cinema. However, this resistance was not easy and even the rowdies were caught in the normative discourses of the school and the larger social world.

The incursion of dominant local discourses in the institutional practices of school is a recurring theme in this thesis. The dominant practices in wider, social circulation were relayed in the school setting by the participants, students and teachers themselves. Gender regimes and caste based practices are illustrative examples. Subsequent chapters provide more examples of the local culture-international school dynamic.

The foregoing analysis also indicates that the construction of any national imaginary was missing in the discourses of the school. It is significant that KI's regulatory practices did not seek to inculcate in the student any notion of citizenship. It was instead a highly responsibilised and self-regulated subject that was constructed as the ideal. Studies on a diverse set of Indian schools have documented that typically, regulatory practices seek to induct the student into a sense of belonging to the country (Thapan, 2014). In the case of elite schools, the efforts are to create leaders for the masses who are in this process constructed as the Other (Srivastava, 1998). In schools that cater to the less privileged, disciplinary technologies have been seen to produce obedient students who would unquestioningly accept their position within larger class and power structures (Benei, 2005). Such a positioning of students within a larger national imaginary was not evident in KI's schooling practices. The subsequent chapters develop this theme and demonstrate how a particular kind of internationalism, framed by an American imaginary, came to dominate the symbolic lives of the students.

When students resisted the disciplinary regimes of the school, they drew upon various sources of power. Student resistances, then were also simultaneously positive assertions. In the next chapter, I reverse my analytical vantage point, and examine these resistances as claims to distinction.

# Chapter 6  The production of distinction: Performing social class in the school

## 6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss the various ways in which the KI students performed their social class positions. In the previous chapter, I described both the specifics of the disciplinary regime imposed on the students, and how they continuously resisted these impositions. I pointed out that students' resistance to disciplinary power drew upon their sense of entitlement which in turn was sourced upon their familial and social background. In this chapter, I expand further on this theme and address the central question of my research, i.e. how classed subjectivities are shaped in the school. I begin by providing examples to illustrate that students' sense of entitlement drew upon their family background and consumptive capacities. I draw attention to how these classed performativities affected the teacher-student interactions which in turn became a site where class struggles were enacted.

Next, I discuss the opportunities the school offered to the students to accrue cultural capital. Drawing upon Skeggs' (2004a) notion of the possessive individual, I discuss students' appropriation of these capitals and the differences among the students in terms of how they did so. While a normative discourse of the 'good student' was in circulation in the school, this was not always the most dominant narrative. I examine how the good student, a relatively gender neutral subject position, was transformed into the geek, a typically masculine performative identity. I examine how the notion that fair complexion signified ability and,  was how fair complexion was conflated with the good student imaginary. I discuss one girl's fleeting attempt to resist the dominant discourse of the good student. And finally, I study the performativities of a large group of boys, who embodied a less esteemed form of masculinity, which I argue also constituted resistance.

I begin the next section with two vignettes. The first demonstrates how IBDP students embodied ease in the school space, drawing upon cultural and social capital sourced from their familial-social backgrounds. The second shows teachers infantilising the students. I chose these vignettes because they point to some of the competing discourses which circumscribed students' struggles for acquiring value and distinction in the school setting. While on one hand, student claims to distinction could unsettle teachers' authority, on the other hand, institutional practices and social norms positioned teachers as more powerful.

## 6.2 Being entitled and at ease (but also bound by social norms)

*At ease*

*It was Deandra madam's English class. There were around ten students in the room. She was discussing the use of logos and colours in advertisements.*

*It was several minutes into her class when Bala entered. I noticed that he opened the door and simply walked in. He came in, pulled up a chair, and just as easily walked out. The teacher and students continued with their discussion, not letting this brief interruption distract them.*

*No more than a few minutes had passed when another student entered. This time it was Priya – she strolled in, lifted a chair and walked out of the door - no permission seeking, no greeting the teacher.*

*More students came in, one at a time, pulled out a chair and walked out. In due course, I learnt that their teacher was absent, and they wanted to sit in the adjacent room which had no more than a few chairs. Some students sought permission before entering, some innocently claimed they didn't know that a class was going on, none left without taking a chair.*

*Diandra madam was fast losing her patience. She ordered a student to lock the door from the inside. This however did not deter the ones outside. Students continued to come, this time knocking the door loudly.*

(fieldnotes, September 2015)

This episode is not dramatic. In the months to come, there would be several similar incidents, where the teacher's authority would be openly challenged. I would come to accept this as 'the normal' of the school life. On that day though, only a few days into my fieldwork, all this was new to me. This was not in keeping with my own schooling experiences and it shook me up a little. Why were the students so impudent? Why was the teacher not strict enough? Clearly, they were disrespectful, and the teacher appeared helpless.

Students walked about the school as if they owned it. Uninhibited, they seemed unaware that their conduct bordered on violating teachers' authority. This was a space they felt entitled to; they were at ease, their habitus in perfect harmony with the field, like a 'fish in water' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 127). For the teachers, such encounters produced a sense of disquiet and helplessness. They were bound by management rules prohibiting punitive actions against students and an acute awareness of their relative lack of power vis-à-vis the wards of rich and influential parents.

These practices were framed by multiple, competing discourses which were at play in the school. Customs long sedimented in modern schooling, for instance, those requiring

students to be obedient, were disrupted by students' privilege in wider social contexts. To counter the latter, teachers sometimes used infantilising practices reinforcing customary age hierarchies. During the educational tour, I witnessed one incident where students were interpellated into a childlike subjectivity. On the last day of the educational trip to Kerala, students were in a euphoric mood because they had won many prizes. After dinner at Papa Jones and Domino's, the group decided to celebrate around a bonfire. As we gathered around the fire, there were suggestions on what to do next. Students started a game of 'truth and dare'; but soon this fizzled out and no one was sure what to do next. I describe below what happened next:

> *To my surprise, Anthony sir stood up and ordered the students to stand in a circle. What followed this was even more astonishing. With him leading, students chorused a song about a fisherman. The song being in a foreign language was unfamiliar to the students. But they happily participated, repeating words and actions after Anthony sir. There was not even a momentary hesitation. When this song was followed by the nursery rhyme, Fruit Salad, students were even more enthusiastic. After all they could now understand the words. In a child-like manner, they made fruit shapes in the air and swirled their bodies to make the fruit salad.*

<div align="right">(fieldnotes, February 2016)</div>

The students readily yielded to a call to become little children, even if only momentarily. I was both puzzled and amused by this. It was only a few minutes back that during the game of 'truth and dare', Divya had described her crush, boldly asserting her nascent adulthood. It was not too long back that Sriram had mocked Radhika madam believing her to be ignorant about Baskin- Robbins, a high-end ice cream brand, effectively implying her lack of cultural capital. And yet these students just as easily slipped into a child mode and spontaneously complied with the teachers.

However, the incident made sense when I considered how in this region social relations were cast in familial-kinship terms, which coded adult-child relations as hierarchical. While in the school students addressed me as *"Ma'am"*, outside I was often called *"Akka"*[39]. Within the school, only the teaching and managerial staff were designated as *"Ma'am"* and *"Sir"*. Students addressed other staff as per local customs. Elderly women were *"Amma"* and younger women became *"Akka"*. Men in turn were *"Annas"*. Reciprocally, teachers also addressed the students as *"Beta"*[40] or *"children"*.

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[39] *Akka* - Elder sister; *Amma*- Amma means mother and is a respectful way of addressing an older woman; *Anna* – Elder brother.

[40] *Beta* - Child in Hindi used for both boys and girls.

Such a relational code set limits to KI students' exhibition of entitlement. Further, in the Indian context, all boys and girls under thirty years of age are infantilised and treated like children until they reach parenthood (Osella and Osella, 2006). It is therefore not surprising that the KI students could be moulded into compliance by beckoning the child in them. The local relational codes influenced social interactions in the school because a sense of living in a shared community permeated the ethos of the school. The school's popularity among local communities was partly because they identified the founding members as locals. Parents entrusted the school with their children, because they perceived the school to be an extension of kin and social networks. Parents often approached the teachers to counsel, advise and even reproach their child. People knew each other beyond the school boundaries. This is not surprising because often students and teachers entered the school via known networks. In keeping with local traditions, students were compelled to behave respectfully with teachers and other school staff because they were older. After all, *'maryadai'[41]*, respect, was enshrined in the Tamil language and culture of Kongu Nadu, and the local people, including IBDP students took great pride in this (interview, Bharati madam, February 2016).

Students' embodiment of entitlement was bounded by these traditions. Within these limits, however, students sought to position themselves as distinct from others. In the next two sections, I describe how different students derived distinction on account of their family backgrounds, social relations and consumptive capacities.

## 6.3 Claims to distinction through family and social networks

Many IBDP students came from traditional business and industrial families – there were children of industrial magnates, children from families which owned retail chains in Tamil Nadu and students whose families had business interests and property in foreign countries. Those whose parents were professionals were also generally from larger families with established businesses. On the other hand, there were also students whose parents struggled to educate them in this school, for example children of schoolteachers. My observations suggested that such students generally did not embody the same sense of entitlement as their wealthier peers. Anand, the son of a doctor couple, did not demonstrate the sense of ease that his wealthier classmates embodied. Though among the highest scorers and expected by his classmates and teachers to have a very bright

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[41] *Maryadai* – in Tamil it means respect. Kongu Nadu Tamilians take pride over their language. They consider that *Maryadai* or respect is inbuilt into the local language and culture.

future, his comportment was markedly restrained. He would not bang doors, conjure excuses for not completing work or jest around. But as I present later in the chapter, the school context also offered several other avenues for accruing value. Here I describe how students claimed class status by invoking familial relations and social networks.

In general, the boys and girls I encountered had a vital and dense relationship with family members. Family included parents, siblings as well as extended members, grandparents, uncles, cousins etc. Even while living in nuclear families, students talked about visiting their relatives who generally lived nearby. From my interviews with mothers, I gathered that these communities were largely regionally confined; the diasporic expansion to other parts of India or the world was only a recent phenomenon. For my participants, young people and adults alike, embeddedness within a larger familial-kinship network was the norm. Shared business interests within the extended family was also one reason for continued strong familial-community ties (Chari, 2004a; Markovits, 2004; Damodaran, 2008).

For many students, their family was a source of much pride. In an interview where there were no direct questions about family, Surabhi found an occasion to mention that her father was president of the local football club. Gopalan shared that his family was well known in this area since they owned a popular chain of hotels. He narrated a story about how his grandfather had played a key role in introducing Maruthur Gopalan Ramachandran, popularly known as MGR, an erstwhile Tamil film star, to an established film director. Because of their families, students were connected to powerful social networks, and accessed an exclusive resource of social capital. Tapping these resources was a logic ingrained in the local way of life, an established norm. Ravi's mother shared that an acquaintance knew someone influential in a local college and her son would, therefore, get a 'paid seat'[42] for less than the going market rate. Accessing a university laboratory (made possible because the student knew someone there), playing golf at regional or international level (because father was member of the golf club), exhibiting art work in a local gallery (made possible due to social connections) and being selected for modelling for television advertisements (through a local dance school; the dance teacher knew some media people), acting in movies (through known people got connected to the film industry); such activities were made possible because of familial and social

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[42] Paid seat – Admission in private, higher education institutions through payment of high amounts of money.

connections. While talking about them, students did not recognize them as privileges accessible to them due to their social positioning. Rather, the social networks themselves were an unproblematic source of pride, as if they characterized their extended selves. Social life was organised such that embeddedness in familial and extended social networks was an established order, as opposed to isolated individualism. As I discuss in the last chapter, this is an example of the endurance of older, agrarian, caste based ways of life among business communities in India (Chari, 2004a; Markovits, 2004)

## 6.4 Claims to distinction through consumptive practices

Consumptive practices are closely linked to claims about one's class. This is especially so for the middle classes, who pursue consumptive activities to distance themselves from the working classes (Bourdieu, 1984). The literature on the Indian middle classes also identifies consumption as a key practice (Liechty, 2003; Fernandes, 2006; Lukose, 2009).

In KI, conspicuous consumption was coded in contradictory and ambivalent terms. Like Tamil Brahmans (Fuller and Narasimhan, 2014), flaunting material wealth among these communities was also considered culturally inappropriate. At least some students nobly shared that, *"we are also okay travelling with normal government bus"* because, *"we don't...our parents and us you know...we don't really have a feeling that oh we are rich so we can show off with our costly cars, big houses or something...we are okay with anything."* (interview, Priya, Surabhi and Nandini, March 2016). During the Kerala trip, teachers pointed out students' backgrounds to me and identified them in terms of whether they were *"simple"* and *"acted normally"* or had *"head weight"* – a colloquial metaphor to describe snobbish behaviour. The latter was unsettling, as evident in the examples described below.

Radhika was from Kerala and had settled down in Coimbatore after marriage. Having studied in Kendriya Vidyalayas[43], she found little satisfaction in teaching rich kids. She acutely felt the class difference and was quite affected by the following incident which she narrated to me. This happened in Kerala, a few hours before the bonfire described earlier in the chapter:

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[43] Kendriya Vidyalaya – This is the Hindi term for Central Schools. These are government schools which are meant to service Central Government employees who typically have transferable jobs. They are considered to be best among government schools in the country.

*After dining at Domino's and Papa Jones, teachers decided to treat students to desserts. Finding a Baskin- Robbins (BR, an upmarket brand of ice cream) shop, the bus stopped. Students were asked to get down if they wanted to have ice creams. At this point, Sriram, son of a local business magnate asked Radhika, rather offensively, "Do you know how costly BR is?", as if telling her that it was beyond the school's budget and she wouldn't probably know this since she must have never visited Baskin- Robbins in her life.*

(fieldnotes, February 2016)

As she narrated this episode to me, Radhika expressed that she felt slighted by this remark. Even among peers, an act of conspicuous consumption by one student could be unsettling for others. During my interview, I asked Shreyas about large fancy wrist watches which I saw students, especially boys, wearing. He was initially hesitant to talk about this, perhaps in keeping with the ambiguity towards conspicuous consumption. At a later point though, he shared a longer story. Five years back, when they were in 7th class, Ashok first sported a big watch. This caused some excitement amongst his classmates. Showing off his watch, Ashok soon gained popularity among his pre-teen peers. Now others also desired such a watch. When Shreyas asked his parents, they were furious that a student had brought such an expensive accessory to the school. Over time they relented, and he too got a watch. The big watch trend picked up over time. In 2015-16 when I was there, many students were sporting Fitbit smart watches and similar wrist accessories too. Shreyas now wants a smart phone, although not just any phone, only an iPhone. For these boys and girls, customary prohibition notwithstanding, material status was marked through the possession of expensive branded items.

Undoubtedly, students' lives were affected by the region's growing consumption culture and its symbolic economy. Over the last ten years the landscape of Coimbatore towns has undergone a rapid change (Revathy, 2015). Malls, coffee shops, ice cream parlours, amusement parks and gaming centres were sprouting everywhere, indicative of a bourgeoning consumer culture. A paint ball gaming centre was a favourite among the IBDP students.

Another consumptive activity which bestowed status was having travelled to foreign lands, especially western countries. This can be seen in the following conversation which took place while the Theory of Knowledge (TOK) class was ongoing:

*Amrita and Dhanush were exchanging notes on where all they had travelled. Amrita had been to Dubai and Singapor,e but not America. Whereas Dhanush had been to America. Then Dhanush said, "If you haven't been to America, you*

*should not be in the Kovai International".*

<div align="right">(fieldnotes, September 2015)</div>

He was bluffing of course, but quite right in underlining that in this social milieu, foreign travel was an asset that conferred distinction.

Not just students, the school also participated in the construction of a consumptive culture as valuable, as illustrated in the matter of students' uniform. In doing so, it offered further legitimacy to these practices. In the next section, I examine students' uniforms within the larger dress regimes of KI.

### 6.4.1 Encoding class distinctions through the dress regime

11th and 12th standard students, both boys and girls wore the same uniform - a khaki coloured T-shirt and black trousers. Students sported branded black sneakers with the label standing out conspicuously. Their school bags were the same, once again branded, the company logo visible. The school provided these uniforms and bags to all students, for a cost of course. The branded companies were not local or Indian, they were high-end MNC brands.

The KI uniform was strikingly similar to the latest office wear in IT industries (Kim, 2014; Trak.in, 2015). The uniform gave students an air of informality. Among KI students, this uniform was coded as *"western"* or *"international"* in contrast to Indian attire which was seen as *"traditional"*. When I was preparing for the upcoming PTM, hoping to recruit some parents for one-to-one interviews, I consulted a senior teacher about what to wear. She was categorical that I should wear trousers and a formal top. According to her, this would surely impress parents. I took her suggestion and it worked well for me. Clearly, western attire had a premium value in this community. When the Kerala educational tour was being planned, once again there was a discussion on what students would wear. The teachers finally decided on formal black suits for both boys and girls, a decision with which they were much pleased later, since they felt that the students looked *"dignified"* and *"graceful"*. Further, giving girls and boys the same uniform signified dissolution of any gender difference. It symbolised a gender-neutral studentship, even as the dress itself inscribed masculinity. It is noteworthy that none of my participants discussed this unusual uniform, radically different from what is considered typical uniforms in Indian schools. It had become the normal, merging with the school milieu so as to be rendered imperceptible to the insider.

Students' uniform was part of the larger dress regime in the school. While students wore casual T-shirts and expensive shoes, female teachers wore *salwar kameez, sarees*[44] or trouser-shirts. Senior faculty members were expected to wear sarees only. Teachers told me that they could be fined if they dressed otherwise. Male teachers and senior staff wore more western attire, formal shirts and trousers. Some lower cadre staff had uniforms which was different for different workers; drivers had a blue trouser-shirt combination as did security guards. Male and female sports teachers, lower in rank among the school staff wore black T- shirts and khaki trousers. *Ayya-akkas* and *ayya-ammas*, female helpers whose work profile ranged from cooking food in the mess to cleaning toilets wore inexpensive synthetic sarees. The dress codes were so effective that within a few weeks' time looking at their dress alone, I could correctly identity staff members according to their roles and duties in the school.

In the corporeal life of the school, social class, occupational hierarchy and gender were encoded in the dress related practices. With branded items being an integral part of the school uniform, market symbolism forcefully entered the school space, and a market or consumer logic became legitimised. This is noteworthy because traditionally in India, even in private schools, frugality and restraint are the principles on which uniforms are chosen (Deki, 2014; The Times of India, 2014). Furthermore, this practice unquestionably stamped upon the students, a social status directly related to their consumptive capacities. Casual wear as uniform produced students as professionals-in-the-making. High-end branded accessories inscribed their bodies with market value. Consumptive practices, therefore, became incorporated into the fabric of everyday school life.

The school, however, was more than a field where status claims were made by invoking familial, social networks or consumptive capacities. As I discuss next, it played a generative role in students' accumulation of various cultural capitals.

## 6.5 The possessive individual: acquiring cultural capital

Bourdieu (1984) and Skeggs (2004a) identify the body and the self as central to processes of capital accumulation. They consider that class distinction in a neo-liberal

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[44] *Salwar kameez* - Traditional Indian dress for women. It consists of loose pants, a long tunic and a long scarf. It was originally from Punjab and parts of north India. Over the years it has become popular across India, including in Tamil Nadu. As with other traditional attire, today designs available are chic and contemporary.
*Saree* - Traditional Indian women's dress. It consists of a six-yard piece of cloth which is draped around the body. In this area this is what women, especially married women wear.

world involves propertization of the self. A similar process, 'self-branding' is observed in IT industry wherein individual workers accumulate useful knowledge, skills and experience to be able to successfully market themselves in a labour market where competition is high, and jobs are insecure (Arabandi, 2011).

Schooling practices in KI instituted and legitimised specific performativities which worked together to mark individual students as distinct and valuable. In this section, I analyse several such practices. I begin with a description of how students learnt to speak English, in a western accent, and thereby appropriated an exclusive symbolic world associated with English.

### 6.5.1 Appropriating English

In the Indian context, competence in English maps onto a differentiated socio-economic landscape and indexes starkly different cultural realities (LaDousa, 2005, 2006). There is today in India, 'a hierarchy of Englishes' (Tarc and Tarc, 2014, p.39) and students at KI sought to position themselves at the upper end of this hierarchy, comfortably distant from the masses.

English was the medium of education in the school. Most students had studied in English medium for many years, either here or in other private schools they attended before coming here. The way they spoke English, not all, not even the majority but a sizeable number, intrigued me. The accent was from somewhere else. Some had picked these accents from international and American schools in the Middle East and Korea. Others had retained these intonations many years after having left western countries. Others had consciously cultivated it, as Priya who had grown up in Tiruppur candidly told me. While interviewing her with Nandini sitting by, we started talking about her desire to study in UK:

> Priya: Well, as far as what I know about London is, like pretty......as far as I have heard about it...I like London, I like British accent...
>
> Suvasini: You like British accent...
>
> Priya: Yeah.
>
> Suvasini: Why?
>
> Priya: I don't know it's kind of like different, it's difficult, it's kind of like the pure English accent.
>
> Nandini: And she tries, tries to do that.
>
> Priya: I try to do that actually.

*Suvasini: How? How do you do that?*

*Nandini: She's doing right now.*

*Suvasini: How can you...how do you pick up an accent...?*

*Priya: You go, you talk to people, you talk...*

*Nandini: Watch movies...*

*Priya: Yeah watch movies...*

(fieldnotes, December 2015)

In her narrative, the British accent was rendered esoteric and objectified. It is doubtful whether Priya's rendition of the British accent will carry much purchase in western countries. However, within their own context, being able to perform English this way would enable the social distancing of KI students from the teeming masses who increasingly speak English.

Beyond the accent, English also served as the means to access and appropriate a motley range of cultural symbols, drawn from dominant cultural industries across the world. Through this, the IBDP students ventured into a larger youth culture. Boys referred to each other as *"dudes"*. Initially strange sounding to my ears, over time I got accustomed to it. In euphoric moments, they pronounced *"hallelujah"* to express their excitement, a usage picked up by Arun during his stay in United States of America (USA) and circulated in this group. The students' symbolic world included Manga comics of Japanese origin, UK musical bands, Korean and Hollywood films, American TV shows, online multiplayer games where they communicated with people across the world (always in English), and the enormous world of the internet, once again accessed in English.

Languages map onto cultural terrains (Ladousa, 2006); in appropriating English this 'de-indigenised way' (Fernandes and Heller, 2006, p. 513), the students assumed a cosmopolitan identity (Skeggs, 2004a), sought proximity with the west, embodied cultural capitals which inscribed them as international and claimed exclusivity.

True, English was not their mother tongue, but the majority of IBDP students expressed that they were more at ease in English than in their mother tongue, especially when it came to reading and writing (see Appendix 11, Questionnaire 2). It did not matter that their English vocabulary may have been limited, that reading English novels was not a popular pastime (only a few students read material outside of the school syllabus), or that English literature was not the favourite subject of many; most laboured through it, that at

least some students misspelled simple words. English was their language; this was the symbolic world in which they lived, and they owned this world.

An accented English bestowed upon the students' prestige among their peers from other local schools. In an inter-school debating competition, one of markers of distinction of the IBDP students was their ease with English language. Along with their deportment and attire, it cast them as elite among other students from schools located in the region. A teacher from another school even expressed that he wished his students would learn from KI students. He was from a school which largely catered to rural, landowning families and he felt that his students lacked the articulation and conversational skills which KI students had.

*6.5.2 Ease with technology*

During fieldwork, I noted that students managed complex technologies, which were integral to their learning. As already mentioned, the physical learning environment was equipped with plenty of modern gadgetry. Students each had a laptop which they had to compulsorily bring to school. The internet was routinely accessed as part of teaching-learning. Students also brought scientific calculators to school. Each room was fitted with a projector and computer. Further, laboratories were equipped with hi-tech equipment such as digital stop watches and cameras with capacities to record high velocity movements. As part of routine pedagogy, students were taught how to work with these.

I present here excerpts from Kesavan sir's class, where he teaches students how to record and analyse the data on Excel spreadsheets. Algorithmic teaching took on an altogether new meaning when deployed to teach in such a technologically enriched environment. I present here excerpts from his class:

> *[Students previously conducted experiments on spring oscillation and have now entered their data on Excel spreadsheets. The teacher is instructing them how to analyse this data by writing equations, plotting a graph – all on Excel]*
>
> *Teacher: Have data from the experiment. Okay… Learn to use equation editor. Try to use equation editors. Enter all ... How many masses you have put? You want to put in kg, you can.*
>
> *[There is some talk about conversion of mass from gram to kilogram]*
>
> *[ Students fill out data on their respective Excel sheets. Teacher shows on the white board how the graph is to be plotted.]*
>
> *Teacher: Make marker small. [That is, the teacher says there are data points which come on the graph.] You want, you can make it small by clicking on it and*

*decreasing the size. Ok. [he is teaching them how to reduce the font size of these points on the graph]*

*Teacher: Understood? Got it? You all done it for your data? Right click, go to data range. Go to data series, add x values. Select cells. Now y values…See two additional values. There are two points on the graph. … Next, right click, insert the line, show equation... can give a name. That may be maximum line. Ok. Get it. …*

*Teacher: This is how graph looks like. ...Important for exams. Access in, insert titles. Overall title for graph. Graph between mass and time sequence. X axis. Once again, always write unit g.*

(fieldnotes, October 2015)

Through repeated practice, students became adept at using devices such as the calculator, the laptop, computer software and at navigating the internet. One image which struck me was how easily the students handled their laptops. The way they held their laptops symbolised their embodied integration with this machine world (Lupton, 1995). I present here a constructed depiction of this, which was developed through the course of fieldwork:

*Laptops are often animated with colourful stickers, each student marking her laptop with distinct, personally meaningful insignias. Unzipping their backpacks, they pull out their laptops, sometimes with only a single hand. With a swing of the arm they place it on the desk, open it with the other as if flipping a book and turn it on. In an instant, they can be seen nimbly typing away, or having logged on to the net, browsing different sites. As they would be working away, one of them would noiselessly pull put a cord from another's laptop and attach it to hers.*

*When they carry their laptops, it is often on their sides, their wrists firmly gripping the laptop and swinging it in rhythm with their own movement. The laptop is an extension of their own body. A free period in an unsupervised room is quite a sight – some working on their assignments (on laptops), others randomly browsing the net, others playing games, two or more students watching a favourite movie - huddled together, sharing one set of ear plugs – their occasional bursts of laughter interrupting an otherwise silent room. When they play, their coordination is admirable. Not wasting a moment one student sets up the server, others open their computers, those requiring charging quickly plug on, in no time they are organised in opposite teams. Some players can even be sitting in other rooms. On one occasion, a game was on – the mood was very animated, when out of nowhere Kesavan Sir entered. In a moment, the game vanished from the screens which now sported PDF book pages and other similar stuff.*

(fieldnotes, December 2015)

For me, this visual was very powerful and suggested that KI students had developed a personal, embodied relationship with their computers. It was as if the boundaries between

their bodies and the laptops had blurred, as if the laptops had grown into an extension of their selves (Lupton, 1995). Such performativity signified the students as technologically competent. This technological material culture inscribed their bodies, and was integrated into their shared, symbolic worlds. This is evident in the following example, a moment of playfulness:

> *It was a B &M class* [Business and Management]*; Amrita had forgotten to bring her calculator. When the teacher pressed her to somehow get on with the work, Amrita asked around, if someone had brought 'an extra calculator'. She meant for this to be amusing and it was. She was imitating a commonplace practice in Indian classrooms. When a student does not have a pencil, he asks around, 'Does anyone have an extra pencil?'. Amrita meant it in jest, but she tacitly knew that this joke made sense only in such a milieu!*

<div align="right">(fieldnotes, November 2015)</div>

*6.5.3 Talking, reasoning and analysis: Language practices privileged in KI*

In the previous chapter (Section 5.8), I described how lectures were often teacher-centred and required only tokenistic participation from students. I also mentioned that I observed other pedagogic practices which were student-centred and required their active participation in the class. Some of these were compulsory and undertaken by all, for example, making presentations. However, when it came to open classroom discussions, especially sought by teachers teaching TOK and English, not all students participated. Since there were nearly twice as many boys (29) as there were girls (15), the question of whether class participation was gendered was at first not easy to answer. A larger group of boys remained silent in the class and at least some girls actively participated in the discussions. This dynamic changed significantly in smaller classes, where participation was more widespread. In their interviews, the majority of the teachers suggested that there were no gender differences with respect to class participation among this IBDP group. However, a re-reading of my fieldnotes led me to note that it was typically one group of boys, the geeks (whom I discuss later in this chapter), who dominated classroom talk.

The pedagogic practices opened a space for students to jest, wit and banter. Being humorous carried an unsaid premium in this setting. Amrita's pretend enquiry about an extra calculator can be read as a claim to distinction. Classroom discussions on subject matter were often opportunities for cultivating a specific form of reasoning which I summarily describe below. Always in English, the argument was developed through linguistic-logical deconstruction. It did not require one to refer to or engage with real situations, or actual social-historical contexts.  An example is the analysis of the textual

form such as those in advertisements, fiction and passages. Such analysis was core to English teaching, as illustrated in the following excerpt:

> *When returning student's assignments about a passage written by Bono about Dylan (taken from a magazine), the teacher gave them many cues on how to decode the text. She pointed out that a celebrity (Bono) is brought in order to render the "viewpoint more authentic" (i.e. viewpoint about Dylan). She directed them to the information in the extract which revealed the time period, "When you look at the extract, try and think what is the time period they are referring to and take clues from the extract. Here in the abstract, they are talking about record player and all. So, what's the time period?". The answer was 1950s, 60s.*

<div align="right">(fieldnotes, October 2015)</div>

The point is neither Dylan nor Bono mattered; the passage was important only to train students in decontextualized thinking. Studying *Animal Farm* required students to understand the literary techniques used by Orwell. In Pranav's presentation on *Animal Farm*, he discussed the plot of the story (standard, effective) and stylistic techniques – foreshadowing, magnification, setting etc (fieldnotes, October 2015). Such pedagogic practices advantaged skills of articulation and formal, abstract reasoning. They obscured the need to engage with issues in their own socio-historic contexts. Research on IB schools notes that they aim to develop generic competences in students, for example thinking and problem-solving skills, rather than teaching accumulated knowledge which is implicitly regarded as obsolete (Cambridge, 2012).

While returning assignments and discussing examinations, teachers often unpacked the evaluation schemes of the programme, thereby strengthening students' logical deconstruction skills. In an English class, the teacher brought a senior student's recorded commentary on a passage from text. Students heard this recording followed by among other things, a discussion on the marks the senior student scored. The intent was to decode the recorded commentary and closely scrutinise it according to assessment rules. These reasoning practices were an explicit part of the learning goals of the programme (especially in the course, TOK) and therefore, needed to be cultivated and rehearsed. When I was attending the previously mentioned inter-school debating competition, I sensed early on that KI students would bag many prizes because they were at so much ease, specifically with the requirement of performing the abstract decontextualized register privileged in this setting. My judgement was validated by the comments of a

teacher from another school about their articulation, which I described earlier. I end this section with a vignette which further illustrates my point:

*Students had organized a game of Pictionary as part of their one-day workshop on alcoholism. There were two teams of students and a bowl with lots of chits. From each team, one student had to come forward, pick one chit and draw the picture on the white board. Other team members had to guess the word in the chit. As I watched the game proceed, I noted that the pictures drawn bore little resemblance to the correct answers. For example, a downward pointing arrow stood for depression. The following was the sketch for aggressive behaviour.*
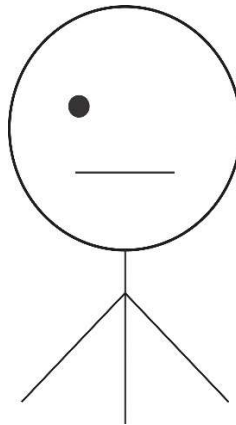


**Figure 6.1: Aggressive behaviour**

*Despite this, students were able to guess the right answer. There was no discreet lip reading or any other form of cheating going on. What was happening here? Then it struck me finally. Nineteen chits had been picked, drawn and guessed about. When the twentieth chit was picked, the IBDP team repeated a word they had been saying for a while – cirrhosis. For every drawing at least a few of them would say cirrhosis. As it turned out, this slot, the twentieth did read cirrhosis. The student whose turn it was to draw had not even picked up the pen yet. The team had already arrived at the correct answer.*

*It struck to me that somewhere down the line, some students had decoded the rule of the game. The rule was that the words were all related to alcoholism and had perhaps been mentioned in the sessions held earlier in the day. Students were just pulling out from a pool of limited words. As the pool was fast emptying out, there were fewer words to guess from. The pictures were no more than cues associated with limited words. And no wonder that as the game proceeded the repertory became smaller and even visual cues were not needed.*

<div align="right">(fieldnotes, September 2015)</div>

Even though this example is of an extracurricular activity, it illustrates well the decoding skills which the IBDP students were being encouraged to acquire. The privileging of such decoding skills is noteworthy especially because, during the workshop, there were very few discussions on the social context of alcoholism in the region. In the example

presented above, the issue of alcoholism was transformed to an apolitical, decontextualized problem-solving mental game.

*6.5.4 Learning to market and sell*

As part of their CAS programme, students organised different activities generally within the school premises but occasionally outside too. Through these, they sought to raise money for local Non-Government Organisations (NGOs). Whenever there were cultural activities, IBDP students were asked to assist, or take the lead in organising the event. During an inter-school sports event held in October 2015, I saw students preparing dishes from home and managing a food stall. It was evident that they were accustomed to taking decisions on costs, managing large sums of money, arranging suitable packaging and even increasing sales, some students went around the stadium promoting their stall. As I discuss in the next chapter, many students talked about becoming an entrepreneur after studies. Through such activities, students could play at being businesspersons in a protected and privileged space. During the event mentioned above, Santosh realised that he had priced *kathi rolls*[45] at a lower price than its cost value. A quick calculation revealed that the team had incurred a loss of a few thousand rupees. When the senior teacher learnt of this, she assured them that there would be no negative consequences. The school was a risk-free environment to develop one's entrepreneurial skills.

In another example, when Anthony sir discussed a trip in a nearby tribal area, he suggested that students raise some money so that the school could donate some useful goods to the tribal community (fieldnotes, October 2015). During this class, I was sitting next to Rajeshwari and Sitalakhsmi. On hearing this, they became all charged up and started making plans about washing cars in their neighbourhood. They discussed the finer details – they would charge Rs 100 for a small car, and Rs 300 for a large car. Surely, they could build up Rs. 3000-4000 in this manner. I also got taken in by this novel idea of two young girls in small town in Tamil Nadu offering car wash service, for I have seen this happen only in American films!

These practices conjured an 'other' out of the less privileged. Students learnt to relate to these 'others' from a position of a greater resourcefulness. This construction was central to the discourse of becoming entrepreneurs, an idea popular among these students, and discussed in greater detail in the next chapter. After all, this was Coimbatore, an

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[45] *Kathi Roll* – Similar to tortilla wraps with vegetable or meat inside.

entrepreneurial hub (Revathy, 2015), and many IBDP students came from Gounder and Naidu families, known for their business acumen (Damodaran, 2008).

*6.5.5 Self-authoring in the classroom*

Self-authoring is considered as central to individualisation in the neo-liberal world (Skeggs, 2004a). I have already discussed in the previous chapter (Section 5.9) how the self-regulated student-subject was the apogee of disciplinary practices at KI. Core to this subjectivity was self-authoring, a practice which afforded students considerable cultural capital and distinction. Narrating the self is important because it is through telling that we gain recognition and legitimacy. When an individual creates a self-narrative, this attests to her capacity for self-cognition. The knowing self implies an interiority, a marker of the legitimate self. Interiority involves looking at oneself as an object, and in the process, commodifying the self. Neo-liberal logics mandate that one continuously engages in increasing the marketable value of this commodity. Finally, self-authoring also serves to create misrecognitions about the material privileges on which such a self is founded.

In this section I describe how some students appropriated school subjects in their self-narratives through claiming to have particular expertise and authority in them, and by linking them to aspirational university careers. This is illustrated in the excerpts presented below:

> *I was talking to Arun on his participation in the Google science fair. Arun had developed some type of mouse. As our conversation was drawing to a close, his friend Badri joined in. Badri had heard Arun say that his project suffered since he did not have a mentor. Badri offered generously, "I could have been your mentor". Then we started talking about marketing the product. I said, "Well you could have asked him (Badri) to market it". At this Badri replied, "Yes my work is on economics, marketing is my area". I knew Badri was planning on studying Economics after school.*
>
> (fieldnotes, October 2015)

> *In another class, I overheard Dhanush, Gopalan and Sameer chatting. Gopalan shared that he was interested in archaeology and they started discussing the subject. Turning to me, he asked if in archaeology they study Deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA). I answered, "No, not in traditional archaeology, there they study only fossils. But I am sure new branches have come which are looking at DNA and using DNA to understand the evolution cycle". Nitya overheard us and immediately volunteered, "Oh! Biology, biology that is my area". Nitya wants to pursue research in biology. I turned to the group and said, "Yes, you should ask Nitya, she would know".*
>
> (fieldnotes, December 2015)

For Badri and Nitya, these subject choices were '*their areas*', and were core to their burgeoning identities. They invested in these subjects, read much more than mere syllabi requirements, talked about their work animatedly and laid claims to expertise in the school subject. Like Arun, whose interview I present next, they also wanted to go to elite western universities to develop these interests and their capitals further.

In this extract, Arun describes himself. In his narrative, he constructs a self of high value which is closely identified with expertise in particular school subjects and is projected onto a future at a premier American university:

> *Suvasini: Describe yourself.*
>
> *Arun: Okay, I feel I am relatively hard working. I tend to do what I am told if I believe in the person who is telling me. And yeah I like basketball, math and physics and generally comic books and stuff like that…I tend to take… like doing well in school, sports, teams, any challenge that I get, I tend to take it seriously…when I take up a project I want to see it through to the end...to the best of my ability...I can't just not half-heartedly do something.*
>
> *[He wants to go to Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) for undergraduate studies. I ask him why MIT.]*
>
> *Arun: Yeah, okay. Well… probably the reason I want to go to MIT is because for one thing, at least when I visited there, a lot of the people seem to be like me, or like the people who are like the person who I want to be...they are all, they seem to be very focussed, very passionate about what they are doing, be it Economics or English or ...whatever it is...all of them, people are very-very passionate...so that's one thing which I want to get...I don't know what field I will be going into but whatever it is I want to be very passionate about it and I want to be surrounded by other people who are equally as passionate and who...might be able to you know, come up with the ideas so that we can take things further...*
>
> (interview, April 2016)

Arun's narrative is reminiscent of the Statement of Purpose (SOP) which applicants are required to write when applying to American/UK universities. In his narrative, the emphasis is on his individual personality and his 'passionate' commitment to his area and towards his self-development. His narrative constructs himself as valuable and imagines a future trajectory to MIT, a premier western university.

It is significant that some students were able to articulate these identifications so fluently. It points to considerable contribution of the school environment (and their wider family environment) in making it possible for students to assume and perform such narratives of distinction.

I now describe the normative discourse of the good student which circulated in the school and which was also a source of distinction for some students.

## 6.6 The normative discourse of the 'good student'

In KI, students' claims to distinction could be classified into two analytically distinct (and densely related) categories; the first was based upon family, social networks and consumptive capacities, and the second upon cultural capitals acquired and cultivated through schooling practices. As indicated above, the latter included the following: speaking English in de-indigenised ways, appropriating a symbolic world sourced from the global culture industry, an ease with technological devices, reasoning in an abstract decontextualized register, an entrepreneurial subjectivity and a self-narrative with an imagined future trajectory into elite western universities. While all these practices afforded a student considerable status, it was particularly the latter set of practices which accrued value in this scholastic field and gained the student recognition as a 'good student'.

The evaluative schemas around which students were judged in terms of their competences were routinely reflected in a recurring discourse of the good student. While this was a powerful discourse in the school, it was not particularly overbearing upon students. Teachers did not openly categorise students. I learnt of these labels only in private interactions. Because of the progressive practices adopted in the school, the good student construction did not take on a severity that it might have elsewhere (Iyer, 2013). Further, the good student was more than just a docile, obedient subject (Benei, 2005; Iyer, 2013). They not only complied with the disciplinary regimes, but also embodied the various cultural capitals privileged in the school. Good students invested in their studies and aspired for undergraduate education in foreign universities.

The antithesis of the good student was the *"kevallam"*[46] student. When I was getting ready for the educational trip, one teacher assured me that only the good students were going. The *kevallam* students had not volunteered for the trip, a self-censoring which confirmed and further entrenched the discourse of the good student. Such students were perceived by teachers as content with their social standing and having little desire to advance themselves. This pejorative judgement can be seen in John sir's comments to me about Krishna which he made in front of the whole class, including Krishna himself,

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[46] *Kevallam* – in Tamil it means useless. It can be used in derogatory or teasing manner.

*"Ma'am I have to tell you a secret, this Krishna he wants to quickly settle down and marry"* (fieldnotes, February 2016). In this setting of an international school, where an aspirational imaginary of global mobility was valued, the idea of settling down quickly suggested that the individual was lacking in the much valued dispositions.

However, as mentioned above the discourse of the good student was taken up in very different ways and not absolutely dominating. It was contested by at least some students, who outright rejected the positive valuations of the good student. As Ashok, identified as a rowdy boy (See Chapter 5, Section 5.10) advised me about the studious, brainy students of the class:

> *"Ma'am why are you interviewing them. They are very boring. There is nothing to write about them. You can finish them in these words, 'they eat, they sleep, they study, they shit -repeat-repeat-repeat". From the laughter that followed, I knew this was a shared sentiment among this group of students."*

> (fieldnotes, November 2015)

Notwithstanding the above comment, the good student was a privileged subjectivity in this setting. The good student identity could be performed by both boys and girls. Some boys who performed well at being good students were also identified as geeks, a masculine performativity which had much purchase in this setting.

## 6.7 The Geek

The geek is a term for a subjectivity that is constructed as intelligent, socially-awkward and obsessed with unconventional fields, often related to latest technology. The geek is typically a male subjectivity, attesting to the historical association between science and masculinity. The geeky masculinity is also deemed to be deficient with respect to social skills, and geeks are negatively valued, and ridiculed in popular culture (Zekany, 2011).

In KI, a geek was a student who scored well in exams, was smart and passionate about something. Pranav defined geek as:

> *"A person who is heavily interested in something to do with popular culture. Here you would have like a science fiction geek, someone who is obsessed with you know, starwars and that kind of thing and or you could even have… there are even fashion geeks who are actually considered popular kids".*

> (interview, April 2016)

Such a viewpoint overlapped with Zekany's observations about geeks in western societies, while conferring positive valuations onto the geeks. KI students differentiated geeks from nerds, who were basically hard-working bookworms and had little interest in

matters outside school related work. Geeks, on the other hand were smart even if they studied a lot. Zekany notes that geek communities differentiate between geeks and nerds, even if the terms remain interchangeable for outsiders. In the following excerpt, Alok and Raghu elaborate on the characteristics of a geek, giving the example of Badri:

> *Alok: If I am comparing Badri and Ashok, I would say Badri is a geek because he studies a lot, he's really good at it, but then he can also do things which Ashok can do like being social, being really social Ashok can do that, so can Badri. In his own way he can be really social.*
>
> *Raghu: He's an economics geek, he's an economics geek. Yeah they are like normal people but they are addicted to a certain something.*
>
> *Suvasini: And they are good at it?*
>
> *Raghu: And they are good at it.*
>
> *Alok: And especially at arguing.  Yeah, I would say Badri is the best at arguing.*
>
> *Raghu: Badri is an economics geek, I think so.*

(interview, March 2016)

Clearly, being a geek was appealing. Geekiness was most dramatically performed when boys came together to play computer games. I describe below one such gaming session. Thirteen boys had gathered in the seminar hall; each had brought his laptop along. They were playing Minecraft, a multiplayer online game involving 'exploration, resource gathering, crafting and combat' [47]. I was told that the school IT department had unblocked this site, because as part of CAS activity, these boys were organising a gaming competition for the younger classes. On this day though, there was no pedagogic intent, they were simply having fun.

> *Each boy is on his laptop. Raghu has set up the server. He is going from one boy to the next, correcting the computer settings and assisting students. Presumably some are still learning the ropes. Raghu starts the game, assigns students into one of the two teams – Red or Blue. The room is buzzing with excitement - boys are chattering away. I can't identify who is speaking*
>
> *"Testing... .... Ok".*
>
> *"Ok. Everyone gets ... Vinod blue .... has joined red. I will give random. Who started the match? Select panninte" [I have selected].*
>
> *"Red is in 'de[48]'...class select pan panno"[select class]*
>
> *Seated facing their laptops, they are excitedly moving their mouses and typing on the computer keys. While physically near each other, they are communicating in and about an online world. They are talking simultaneously. And fast. In a flash, they move from English to Tamil and back - I can barely capture their*

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[47] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minecraft (Accessed: 6 April 2017).
[48] *De* is a Tamil expression which expresses one's attitude/emotion. Different intonations of *de-* signify different emotions. It is generally a suffix. *De* is generally used only in close relationships.

*words – their references are baffling - the world of this game is unknown to me. Their actions – on the screen, in cyberspace are inaccessible.*

*"Shreyas, what is artillery? What, the thing infiltrator? Come on Sameer. Wicket teriyum? [you know the wicket?] Light …."*

*"It's lagging for me. Who is this? My team, myself, lagging….go go go ..for me…go back to the dot.. back crimson back… not dead, not dead… kill. Oh, I have got a role. Centre ka Ponnum" [need to go to the centre]. "Odumaat yeth dead line?" [Why is that the deadline?] "Is that the point"*

*They yell together, "YAY!"*

*"Shiiiit… that hurts… kill them… kill them… start opening… get it somebody… red… thanks…. points to one spy on… hey seize an arrow… remove… you are gone."*

*"Do I know? Ow… capture it…yes… ow. First…. and then comment. Dayyyy[49], do, don't. Spill it. Right next to you man! Yevryda! Gajab![50] All red!"*

*"How, How is it? Group 1. Guys, group up! I am near the point. Group up! Quick! I am coming. Suresh, Vinod, wait… Go after Vinod. I am back! Somebody go in. Leftile [towards the left] . Somebody kill me. Aeyyy[51]…slash, kill. Went inside. Great. Near the part. Holding the outside. Shit re. Kill the [unclear word] dude first. Testing kill him. Kill them. Yes, yes…".*

*"I see. What now? Capture. Can you not do this too? [In Tamil] Someone go inside. We captured second point. Yes. Done. People are coming here. Be ready. Krypton, why kill me? Kill somebody else. Common. Capture. Somebody take care of this. Push. Capture, capture! Raghu, capture!"*

*"What? Let it go. Let it not be, guys. Someone coming. Capture pannada". [Do capture] Oh, common, come down. Capture the flag. [In tamil] Oh come on somebody. So close, so close! Everyone go to township now. Join township."*

(fieldnotes, September 2015)

The atmosphere was charged, the excitement palpable. The quick shift between the languages was telling of how unrestrained the boys were. This was a moment of intensified homosocial bonding (Osella and Osella, 2006). The game evidently stirred the passions of these cyberspace geeks, who momentarily became one with the machine. It is significant that competition and violence were core to this geek performativity. In contrast to the rowdy, geek masculinity did not require an outward display of physical prowess, but now it was dressed up as technological savviness. The collective performance resignified hypermasculinity as geekiness and articulated geekiness as attractive. When I

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[49] *Dayy*y - Same as *De.*
[50] *Gajab* is a Hindi word – an exclamation meaning Great!
[51] *Aeyy* – a Tamil utterance of exasperation.

asked boys why they enjoyed online games, their responses were, "*it keeps you excited*", "*makes you hyper*", "*keeps your adrenal thing going*".

Rajat was more articulate. In the following excerpt, he explains why he enjoys Smite[52] so much:

> "*You play as a God, you have the power to you know destroy other online players. Yeah, and it's basically about using all your tactics, and strategies...like how you would plan out... to bring down something...yeah, everything...personally I think it's because you vent your rage... it's something...like I told you... there's no more swimming and I can't you know let go of my emotions and thing, rage I have to let go of...so when it comes to shooting and I kill this virtual people kind of vents me up... and it's fun at the same time...*"

(interview, March 2016)

It is telling that while the school authorities did not outright sanction online gaming, they did not proscribe it either. During their interview, when I asked Raghu and Alok how they could host Local Area Network (LAN) servers and play while at school, their reply was cryptic, "*No comments*". On probing, they said, "*...everybody plays, everybody knows, nobody is doing anything about it so…*". Before the Kerala trip, teachers were giving last minute instructions when some students came up to Radha Madam and asked, "*Will there be a slot for us when we can do online gaming?*". The laughter that followed meant that permission had been granted; that teachers did not expect any different from these boys. While the hypermasculinity of the rowdy was proscribed, when performances of hypermasculinity transformed into geekiness, it was acceptable, even valued positively.

It was difficult for girls to gain recognition as a geek. This is not surprising because historically, the geek has been a masculine figure, and women have been generally excluded from (or when included, marginalised in) homosocial geek associations (Zekany, 2011). In KI, even girls like Nitya who demonstrated all the dispositions of the good student could not transform into geeks. Anitha played online games, she even joined the boys for late night gaming sessions, yet the gaming boys did not confer upon her the status of a geek. In this setting, geekiness was largely a masculine performativity. It conferred a privileged status upon a group of boys. It was this group which dominated discussions in large classes. They constituted in large part those students recognised by

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[52] Smite is a 'third person, multi-player, online battle arena video game', https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Smite_(video_game) (Accessed: 6 April 2017).

the teachers as good students; unsurprisingly they were among the boys who had volunteered for the educational excursion.

In KI, the constructs of the good student and the geek were embedded in a discourse which entailed exclusions of other subjectivities, including feminine subjectivities. Geekiness reshaped the good student into a masculine performativity, in this process the great majority of girls were excluded.

**6.8 Fair complexion conflated with the 'good student'**

In this section, I discuss the conflation of fair complexion with good student, a construction-which circulated in the school and in the larger society. Skin colour is something you are born with; aggressive advertising notwithstanding, no amount of fairness cream can alter it. However, the significations (positive and negative) around skin colour can become an enduring part of one's habitus, including within the negotiation of highly structured fields such as education. In this region, the moral significations around being '*karupa*'[53], black, were considerably significant (even though not absolutely dominating) that one could not ignore it. Teachers and students, girls and boys alike, participated in circulating such discourses. I learnt during my fieldwork that there was a widespread obsession with fairness in this region, as elsewhere in the country. *Fair and Lovely*[54], a skin lightening product was very popular here. Since Tamilians are generally dark-skinned, Kollywood[55] films regularly rope in fairer actresses from North India as heroines and they are immensely popular. My participants openly shared how both boys' and girls' skin colour come up quite overtly as a bargaining point in arranged marriages (see Mishra, 2015).

Students and adults at KI were caught up in this discourse of skin colour, seemingly unconscious of its larger import. Students jibed at each other about being black, but this teasing was often seen as friendly since it occurred in an atmosphere of camaraderie. Those targeted joined in the laughter, perhaps because it was easier to do so rather than stage a protest. On the bus ride to Kerala, students were playing with a hat, throwing it around and trying to lodge it onto each other's heads. When Anitha instructed Badri to pass the hat to her, he demanded in playful defiance, *"Why should I listen to you? You*

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[53] *Karupa* – Black/ dark complexion.
[54] Fair and lovely - A fairness cream very popular in India, manufactured by Hindustan Unilever Limited. People refer to fair and lovely as if it were a generic product name, not a brand name.
[55] *Kollywood* -Tamil film industry.

*are black"*. Since Badri was himself very dark complexioned, the bite of this offensive comment was somewhat blunted.

The significations of being black went beyond beauty. Blackness created expectations of amorphous deficits, as the following comments of one teacher about a colleague suggested, *"Even though he is black, he is able to impress parents"*. Similarly, one particularly bright IBDP student commented about another student, *"Even though he is so dark, he speaks so confidently"*. These comments reflect a prejudiced sensibility about a person's worth and status in the field, such that they may have to struggle disproportionately to overcome such positioning and achieve recognition as a teacher or a student. Darkness was something one had to surpass. One dark-skinned teacher shared how during his initial months, students would not take him seriously, which he concluded was because of his skin colour:

> *John sir: When I first joined, they.. didn't take me seriously*
>
> *Suvasini: you mean..?*
>
> *John sir: It took a first few weeks*
>
> *Suvasini: Why?*
>
> *John sir: Because of my skin*
>
> *Suvasini: The IBDP students?*
>
> *John sir: No, I was teaching the middle years. After some time, they saw my teaching, it became okay*

(fieldnotes, March 2016)

I describe here another example of colour-based discrimination. In a routine presentation in the literature class, students enacted a play, where dark-skinned Sridhar was asked to enact the role of an entitled and pompous young man from a small town in Kerala who had finished studying law in the US and was now looking for a job. This character could get neither his English nor his mannerisms right. He dropped a banana peel on an American street and then got into a fight with the local cop who confronted him over this behaviour. Later in the play, he went for a job interview in an American law firm, where he presented himself as conceited, entitled and ignorant. In contrast to this job applicant, was an orphaned American young man who presented himself as earnest, humble and willing to learn. This American man was enacted by light complexioned Ashok. Not surprisingly, the man from Kerala was rejected and the American boy secured the position (fieldnotes, August 2015).

The students' dramatization points to multiple ways in which the dark-skinned individual was negatively constructed. In their performance, they tacitly associated *karupa* with failure and a total lack of social skills in an imagined meritocratic and globalised world. What surprised me when I observed this enactment was that none of the students, or even the teacher openly reacted to this conflation of skin colour with merit. This incident is significant and deeply disturbing because in the larger social imaginary, skin colour is also associated, albeit in complex ways, with caste identity (Mishra, 2015). Lower castes, especially Dalits are wrongly perceived to be darker, and upper castes, especially Brahmans, are wrongly perceived to be fairer. Skin colour became associated with upwardly mobile, successful identities, thereby obliquely preserving traditional associations between caste and social positioning, while dressing up the social hierarchy in the language of competition and merit.

Earlier in the chapter, I described how some students ridiculed the good students, resisting the dominant discourse in this education context. In the next section, I present an incident which captures feminine resistance to and disavowal of this dominant discourse. It also represents an alternate claim to distinction through a dramatized performance of subordinated femininity. I have invoked Alia Bhatt in my interpretation of the episode, for reasons elaborated below.

## 6.9 The Alia Bhatt episode: performing resistance and subordinated femininity

Alia Bhatt is a young Bollywood film star. In December 2013, she was invited to a popular TV talk show, Koffee with Karan, where she made a fool of herself by answering that the President of India was Prithvi Raj Chauhan, a medieval king. Her faux pas went viral on social media and subsequently, she became the target of several online jokes where she was constructed as unintelligent. She however, cashed on this opportunity and parodied herself in a satirical YouTube production, Genius of the Year[56], where she contradictorily presented herself as both capable of mastering general knowledge and also as 'an ignoramus'. This video went on to become viral and Alia Bhatt succeeded in resignifying herself as affable and endearing. The short video played around with the stereotype of 'pretty women are dumb', a discourse central to the incident described next:

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[56] See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pfHxl46KyZM (Accessed: 20 June 2019).

*I was sitting in a free class with some students – some were working, some were watching films. There was no teacher in the room and many parallel activities were going on. Raghu and a few other boys started to tease Vidya. They kept asking her maths questions, some she could not answer, and others she took a long time to respond. Questions were simple:*

*Two plus two, zero minus four, four minus zero (she said four, not minus four). When asked 98-9, she started counting backwards, one number at a time. The one question which caused much amusement was "If it takes twelve steps from here to there (i.e. from point A to point B), then how many steps will it take from there to here". Vidya took more time than she should have to answer this.*

*In no time, more boys joined in the teasing, other students in the room started talking about this, a larger audience of students stood watching this performance of 'playing a fool'.*

*The boys also teased her directly. They taunted her, "How did you pass 10th?" They commented that she should be in Kinder Garten. One boy joked, "You are like Humpty dumpty – with an egg in your head". Other jibes were, "You have no brains", "You are dumber than a dog", "You are dumber than a new-born baby".*

*From maths questions, they shifted to General Knowledge questions – Who is the prime minister of India? What is the capital of Tamil Nadu? Vidya could not answer some of these questions – in her defence she had only recently moved to India. When they started probing her knowledge of Tamil words, Amrita stepped in to defend her friend, posing questions for the boys, asking them the Tamil equivalent of English words.*

*Vidya appeared to be enjoying the attention. [I wondered whether she was putting on a show, or really didn't know some of the answers.] I was not alone – even Vani and Anitha were puzzled about this.*

<div align="right">(fieldnotes, September 2015)</div>

While this was a one-time incident, it soon became something of a lore, it was much talked about for some weeks after it occurred. At a later point, when I asked Vidya about it, she expressed that she felt fine with this incident, because she reasoned she was being teased only by friends. This was a singular event which involved gaining distinction by embodying dumbness. Over the months, I saw Vidya confidently and intelligently participate in classroom discussions, even winning the praise of teachers many times. Later in the year, I saw her celebrate scoring high marks in a Mathematics test; she went around the class announcing her marks and checking others' marks; she wanted to know if she had topped (she had!). It is noteworthy that she scored the highest in Mathematics, the same subject where she had shown herself to be inept.

It is significant that in a milieu where geekiness was masculine, a girl's claim to distinction, even if momentarily, was possible through an enactment of stupidity. This

was undoubtedly, also an act of resistance, a disavowal of the dominant constructs of the good student and the geek, even if simultaneously this reinscribed a gendered hierarchy that equated the female with 'being dumb'. It suggests that only subordinate subject positions were available for articulation of feminine performativities. In the next chapter, I extend this discussion of feminine subordination into an examination of how subject choices and future aspirations were markedly gendered, mirroring the patriarchal practices of the larger society.

There were also masculine subjectivities which positioned students as peripheral in the everyday life of KI. In the following section, I discuss these performativities which can be alternatively viewed as subordinated or resistant.

## 6.10 The less privileged, or resistant masculinities

The embodied performances of privilege or of marginalisation do not always require energetic dramatization; they can also be enacted through silences and less visible bodily deportments happening in the flow of everyday interactions (Youdell, 2006c). I have already discussed how girls were subordinated in this setting. Not just girls, but a large group of boys were also subordinated in KI. These boys were neither rowdies nor geeks; neither did they aspire to be either. They seldom dominated class discussions and while some of them played online games, they did not become geeks. Their relatively unobtrusive and silent presence disturbed my own notion of legitimate masculinity. Not just me, some of their mothers also shared my views. Both Bharat and Jayaraman's mothers were concerned that their sons did not fit into the ideal norms of masculinity. Bharat, like some of his close friends, enjoyed pencil sketching. He had learned this in primary classes and became quite adept at it. His friends, Gaurav and Niranjan were both artistic. Gaurav made very good copies from pictures and Niranjan learned art professionally and even had some exhibitions to his credit. Even as Bharat's mother took pride in his artistic inclinations, she was worried that he was not like the other boys of his age. She complained that all he did was sit patiently and draw. He was *"soft"*, did not take advantage of the *"free atmosphere in the school"*. He was not independent enough; even on a one day holiday he wanted to rush back home. Jayaraman's mother complained that he was an introvert, that he did not take any initiative; he had not even volunteered to participate in a debating competition at school. She was particularly concerned with the bodily aspects of his masculinity. She wished he would play more, particularly in games that are mostly associated with boys:

> *"I only keep pressing upon him.. go play.. go play.. keep forcing him go play.. He does not go out and play... He loves to watch Indian Premier League (IPL)[57], but does not play cricket!"*

(interview, February 2016)

This desire to see her son active went beyond health reasons (he was overweight). Jayaraman's mother complained that his gait was not brisk enough. She shared that she concurred with a teacher who had described her son to her (i.e., to the mother) in these terms *"He is fine for his age but is not churchuchurup[58]"*, i.e. not vigorous, not energetic enough. She claimed to have become resigned to the fact that this is *"his nature",* but the frustrations she expressed indicated otherwise.

Bharat and Jayaraman did not embody the dominant masculine subjectivities. It is interesting that bodily deportment was a general index of masculinity in their case, as well as in case of the rowdy boys. These boys' identity performances had less purchase, at least their mothers thought so. Simultaneously, these performances also constituted acts of resistance. Even if less privileged in the social life of KI, these boys were not socially isolated. And while these subject positions carried less distinction than that of the geek, they were also easier to perform than a 'rowdy' subject-position which was proscribed in the school. My study points to a variety of masculinities among Indian boys. My observations suggest that the construction of dominant masculinities may vary in different school settings. For example, the geek masculinity privileged in KI is different from the ideal masculinity in Doon school, which is characterised by the physical vigorousness (MacDougall, 2005).

## 6.11 Conclusions

Students, both boys and girls, asserted their class status in a variety of ways which often produced unease both among peers and teachers, for example, when they flaunted their consumptive capacities. The ease with which they conducted themselves in the school, including in their interactions with teachers bordered on insubordination and threatened to break down a delicately balanced teacher-student relationship. The obvious class difference between them was acutely felt by the teachers for the ways this undermined their position of authority. They responded in different ways to this, at the least, expressing a sense of disquiet about it. Many openly voiced displeasures with students'

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[57] Indian Premier League – A professional cricket league in India.
[58] *Churchurupa* – Tamil word for vigorous, active and energetic.

behaviour. Within the classroom, teachers managed the students by infantilising students and invoking traditional customs where respect to those older than oneself was expected, especially from children and young adults.

Even if their assertions of social power were circumscribed by tradition, students made claims to distinction by drawing upon their familial and social background. Local values which disparaged conspicuous consumption notwithstanding, students talked about and valorised expensive accessories and foreign travels, seeking to establish themselves as privileged and rightfully placed in an international school. The school, rather than countering consumptive practices, furthered and legitimised a market logic through its dress regime, which encoded class, gender and occupational hierarchies.

However, the school space was more than just a field for asserting entitlements derived from familial and social backgrounds, and consumptive capacities. It afforded students opportunities to accrue further value. Through the daily routines of school life – lectures, laboratory work, individual assignments, presentations, CAS activities and irrepressible chat with classmates, students cultivated and rehearsed distinct practices. These included speaking English in a western accent, effortlessly handling various gadgetry, learning to talk and argue in specific ways and learning to decode and deconstruct texts. Students practiced a self-authoring process that valorised their prowess in particular fields, and incorporated a recognition of their expertise in particular school subjects, into their burgeoning identities.

Students appropriated these capitals unevenly. This was reflected in the normative discourse of the 'good student'. The good student was one who successfully embodied these capitals, was self-regulated and who appropriated subject expertise into her biographical narrative. The good student identity was open to differently gendered performances. Some boys, who were identified as good students were also identified as geeks, if they exhibited an obsession with a field especially related to technology. The geek was a valued subjectivity in this setting. Even as cyberspace geeks displayed online violence, because this was dressed up as technological savviness, they were valued differently (geekiness was a much more esteemed form of subjectivity) in comparison to the rowdies, discussed in the previous chapter.

The association of fair complexion (skin colour) with ability pointed to the permeation of traditional values in the school ethos. This construct is in complex ways linked to

casteism. It resignifies traditional hierarchies in a language seemingly aligned with a meritocratic discourse.

In the last sections of the chapter, I discussed subjectivities which countered and resisted the dominant discourse of the good student. One such performativity was that of the rowdy already discussed in the previous chapter. Here I analysed one incident where a girl briefly embodied the subject position of 'dumb femininity'. The incident, which gave her momentary recognition was both an expression of subordinated femininity and resistance to the discourse of good student. Later in the year, in contrast to such positioning, she too sought to become a good student, securing the highest scores in a mathematics test. In the next chapter, I return to this question of subordination of girls within the patriarchal regimes of the larger society. The next discussion was about a large group of boys who were relaxed and pursuing more artistic, less masculine activities. I argued that even as these boys may be seen as embodying positions of subordinated masculinity, they were also offering resistance to the dominant discourses of the school, including the notions of the good student and the dominant masculinities of the geek and the rowdy.

The several observations narrated in this chapter point to important implications. First, they draw attention to the micro and intersectional processes via which a privileged, classed subject is formed in an elite school setting. When unpacked, it becomes evident that the valuable self, deemed as competent in the educational field, is neither ascriptively inherited nor is its formation an automatic process. This self is formed over time, through considerable practice and effort. It requires monetary investment. The production of this self is undoubtedly related to family background. This privileged self is gendered and shaped by notions that skin colour indexes ability. The latter in turn is related to casteism.

Second, when these inscriptions become solidified and deeply entrenched within a subject, they assume an atemporal, decontextualized and ahistorical character. It is as if a 'person is' rather than a 'person is made'. This in turn has the consequence of giving rise to misrecognition, where these embodiments are socially perceived as personal characteristics rather than cultural capitals accrued over time. When the larger political economy values such embodiments of the self-regulated, educationally competent subject as economically useful, the larger economy of significations also identifies such selves as morally valuable. Educational institutions play an important role in conferring legitimacy on such processes. What we see in this chapter is a brief slice of a larger pernicious macro

process. The normative differentiation of students along the parameter of good student is a but a mini aspect of the wider picture where moral valuations weigh down forcefully and have real-life, weighty consequences.

Third, for the actors themselves, i.e. the students from local elite families, the school is a space where they accrue cultural capital and gain distinction. Importantly, the school is a pivotal space for these local elites to re-invent themselves. The specific repertoire of cultural capitals which the school introduces are not arbitrary; they in fact constitute regulatory and performative practices which are central and valuable to elite, white-collar jobs in the global work industry. In any case, when embodied, they have much purchase even in this local region. The IB curriculum as it is practiced in this school, is sought to give students a distinct advantage, both symbolically and in real, material terms.

Further, these practices which have the effect of placing students at ease in contemporary spaces (for example, office spaces) draw upon the new middle class discourse which Leela Fernandes (2006) and others (Donner and De Neve, 2011) identify as central to the Indian neo-liberal social imaginary. It is in the last chapter, where I take up this discussion more fully. At this point, I want to flag two points, both of which are only partially developed here.

First, these findings reiterate the conclusions made in the previous chapter about the permeation of the traditional, the local and the larger social practices within the school space. The association of dark skin colour with lack of ability is one such example, of which there are plenty more in the chapter. The school in turn gives legitimacy to these practices which may appear to radically contradict an IB curriculum ethos and approach.

Second, as already noted, while local traditions and practices enter the school space, references to the nation are conspicuously absent. I find this striking because in India, historically it is the elites who have been entrusted with the task of nation building (Joshi, 2001, 2010), and school has been one of the key sites for this socialisation (Srivastava, 1998). The question is, if the nation is not there, what is the discourse of the social which is generated and circulated in the school space? I discuss the larger implications of these observations in the conclusion chapter.

To further develop the above ideas, I need to provide more observations about students' aspirational imaginaries and the social landscape within which these were located. I take this up in the next chapter.

# Chapter 7  Beyond the school: Classed subjectivities in the larger context of family, community and the market

## 7.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I discussed how classed subjectivities were shaped in the school setting. In this chapter, I relate the practices within the school to social discourses circulating in the larger landscape of family and community networks and the market. I begin with description of the IBDP curriculum and discuss its adoption in KI. Next, I examine the relationship between students' subject choices, their occupational aspirations and normative life trajectories which were markedly gendered.

Next in the chapter, I closely look at students' aspirations to study in America. I examine this desire in terms of its consumptive possibilities and in relation to students' efforts at self- propertization. I situate students' aspirations for foreign study within their specific familial-kin contexts and examine students' embeddedness within these relations. Next, I discuss the widely accepted practice of seeking admission to higher education institutions through 'paid seats'. I examine this in the context of the history of privatisation of higher education in Tamil Nadu. I explore its symbolic significations and describe how foreign study has also become assimilated within this understanding of education as a commodity. In the concluding section, I explore the larger implications of these findings.

## 7.2 The International Baccalaureate vision and its interpretation in KI

The International Baccalaureate programme was founded on a liberal humanist modern vision of the world.  The curriculum was designed to enable the development of the whole person, which was believed to be beneficial to humanity at large (Tarc, 2009). The IB curriculum emphasizes independent learning, critical thinking and reflection. It aims to facilitate international awareness, to develop skills, attitudes, knowledge and understanding which would enable students to participate in a global society. KI teachers also articulated the aims of the school in similar language. They used words such as *"international mindedness", "caring for fellow human beings"* and *"multiculturalism"*.

The IBDP curriculum is comprehensive, flexible, with a wide range of subjects. Its pedagogical approach includes project work, group activities and service to the larger society (Institute for Studies in Industrial Development, n.d). The curriculum consists of

three core subjects and six subject groups (IBO website). The core subjects are Theory of Knowledge (TOK), Extended Essay (EE) and Creativity, Action and Service (CAS). The six subject groups are:

1. Mathematics
2. Sciences
3. Individual and Societies
4. Studies in Language and Literature
5. Language Acquisition
6. Arts

As per the IBO website, TOK is aimed at orienting students towards the interpretive nature of knowledge, and requires them to reflect on personal, ideological biases. It introduces them to different areas of knowledge, linking knowledge with cultural repositories and academic disciplines. The course is assessed through a written essay and an oral presentation. The CAS course requires students to participate in a wide range of challenging, purposeful activities, and reflect on their experiences. Further, students have to undertake projects on one or a combination of the three strands of CAS (i.e., creativity, action or service). The Extended Essay seeks to prepare students for undergraduate research. It requires them to undertake an independent investigation on a self-chosen topic related to one or more of their subjects. The students are required to produce a written paper and are also assessed through a *viva voce.* For further notes on the curricular objectives of each subject group, see Appendix 18.

To obtain an IBDP diploma, students are required to study all the three core subjects, and six additional subjects, at least one from each of the subject groups 1-5 listed above. There are two levels, Higher Level (HL) and Standard Level (SL) at which courses from the subject groups can be studied. Further, a student is required to study at least three subjects at the HL level. The details of the various compulsory and optional courses included in the IBDP curricula are presented in the table below. The table is based on information collected during fieldwork and information provided on the IBO website.

**Table 7.1: Subjects in the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme curriculum and their provision at Kovai International**

| **Core Subject Group** | | |
|---|---|---|
| Theory of Knowledge | | |
| Extended Essay | | |
| Creativity, Action and Service | | |
| **Subject Areas** | **IBDP courses offered in KI** | **Further courses available in IBDP not offered at KI** |
| Mathematics | Mathematics (at HL and SL) and Mathematics Studies (SL level only) | Further mathematics (Higher Level) Computer Science |
| Sciences | Physics, Chemistry, Biology (all subjects at HL and SL) | Computer Science, Design Technology, Sports, Exercise and Health Science |
| Individual and societies | Economics, Business &Management, Information Technology in Global Society (at HL and SL) | Geography, Global Politics, History, Philosophy, Psychology, Social and Cultural Anthropology, World Religions |
| Studies in Language and Literature | Language and Literature A – English (at HL and SL) | Language and Literature A – (available in 17 languages) Language A – Literature (available in over 50 languages) Literature and Performance (available in English, French and Spanish) |
| Language Acquisition | Language ab initio courses: *French* Language B courses: *Hindi (at HL and SL)* *Tamil (at SL and HL)* | Other language ab initio courses Other Language B courses Classical Languages - Latin and Classical Greek |
| Arts | Not offered in the school | Dance, Music, Film, Theatre and Visual Arts |

Studying a subject from the Arts subject group is not compulsory to get an IBDP diploma. This subject group was not offered at all at KI. Further, as evident from the table, within each subject group the choices offered were limited. Under Sciences, only Biology, Physics and Chemistry were offered. In Mathematics, only Mathematics HL, Mathematics SL and Mathematics Studies were offered. Mathematics HL is a rigorous and demanding subject, requiring in depth study of a broad range of mathematical topics. The Mathematics SL course is less in depth than the HL course and covers a narrower range of topics than the latter. The Mathematical Studies SL course emphasizes student understanding of fundamental concepts, developing mathematical reasoning rather than routine operations, using mathematics in different contexts and efficient usage of the calculator (IBO website).

In the Individual and Societies subject group, only Economics, Business and Management (B&M) and Information Technology in a Global Society (ITGS) were offered from among a wider range of subjects available in IBDP. Some girls studied Psychology as an extra subject, privately enrolling online; such a facility is available in the IBDP (with extra payment). Under Studies in Language and Literature, KI offered only Language and Literature A, English (at HL and SL). Under Language Acquisition, the languages offered were French, Hindi, Tamil and Spanish. French was offered at Language *ab initio* level (for beginners); Hindi and Tamil at HL and SL. Among the IBDP students who participated in my research, there were no takers for Tamil.

It is evident that subjects not offered in KI were largely from the Humanities and Social Science stream. This practice must be seen within the larger Indian schooling context. As already mentioned in Chapter 2, Section 2.5, the higher secondary (classes 11th and 12th) curriculum in India is divided into three streams - Sciences, Commerce and Humanities. These streams are ranked in terms of status and competitiveness. In general Science is most sought after, followed by Commerce and then Humanities. Typically, students securing the highest marks in 10th examinations opt for Sciences and those unable to secure admission in either Sciences or Commerce study Humanities. Further, within Sciences there is a separation between the Engineering stream and the Medical stream. The former consists of the subject combination of Physics, Chemistry and Mathematics (PCM), while the latter consists of the subject combination of Physics, Chemistry and Biology (PCB). Commerce stream consists of the subject combination of Mathematics, Economics, Business Studies and Accountancy (Institute for Studies in Industrial

Development, n.d., p. 69). These subject combinations are in turn directly linked to university studies. For example, to study an Engineering degree course in India, a student is required to have studied Physics, Chemistry and Mathematics at the higher secondary level.

The practice of not offering subjects from the Social Sciences and Humanities stream mirrors the general trend in private schools in Tamil Nadu. In my visit to many private schools in the state during the reconnaissance period (July-August 2015), I observed that private schools in the state typically did not offer the Humanities /Social Sciences stream. Many teachers also confirmed my suspicion that in this region there was a marked Science preference over Social Sciences and Commerce. One teacher attributed these practices to the larger social values in the state, where Sciences were valued, and where people were *"adamant about taking up Medicine and Engineering as their career choices"* and viewed humanities as *"step-sisters and brothers"* (interview, February 2016). The point is, when an elite private school adopts such practices, it further legitimises the dominant discourse of Sciences being superior to Social Sciences and Commerce. Also, in accommodating to the demands of the local context, the liberal humanist intent of IB curriculum gets weakened.

In the previous chapter, I discussed how girls were subordinated in the KI setting. This subordination is further reflected in the gendered pattern of students' subject choices.

## 7.3 Educational practices as gendered and bound within familial contexts

### 7.3.1 The gendered subject choices

As discussed above, KI offered only a limited set of subjects from a larger set of subjects available in the IBDP curriculum. I also noted that students' subject choices were markedly gendered. This, however, went beyond mere differences between boys and girls on the matter of subject preferences. In general, boys' subject choices were aligned towards specific higher education programmes. Such direction was largely missing in case of girls.

In order to appreciate the significance of these choices, it is necessary to note that while students could not randomly study any six subjects (which is required to obtain an IBDP diploma), they could exercise some degree of choice. They could exercise their choice on the matter of which subjects to study from within each of the subject areas, their

sixth subject from either Sciences or Individual and Society and which three or more subjects to study at the Higher Level (HL).

Both boys and girls showed a marked preference for Science subjects over subjects from the Individual and Society stream. This is evident in the following table which summarises students' subject choices. The data presented in this table is based on students' response to questionnaire 1 (Appendix 10).

**Table 7.2: Number and Percentage of Girls' and Boys' studying each subject in Subject areas - Science and Individual and Society**

| Gender | Total | Science stream | | | | | | Individual and Society | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Physics | | Chemistry | | Biology | | Commerce | | | | Information Technology in a Global Society (ITGS) | |
| | | | | | | | | Business &Management (B&M) | | Economics | | | |
| | | No. | %age | No. | %age | No. | %age | No. | %age | No. | %age | No. | %age |
| Boys | 29 | 27 | 93 | 27 | 93 | 4 | 14 | 7 | 24 | 13 | 45 | 10 | 34 |
| Girls | 15 | 13 | 87 | 9 | 70 | 5 | 33 | 13 | 87 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 40 |
| **Total** | **44** | **40** | **91** | **36** | **82** | **9** | **20** | **20** | **46** | **13** | **30** | **16** | **36** |

As the table indicates, both boys and girls showed a clear preference for Sciences over Individual and Society. I relate this to the greater prestige and status accorded to Sciences in the larger society. Further, even as a large percentage of both boys (93%) and girls (87%) chose to study Physics, fewer girls studied Chemistry (69%) in comparison to boys (93%). On the other hand, girls chose to study Biology in greater numbers (33%) than did boys (14%). However, Biology was far less favoured than the other Science subjects among both the genders. In the Individual and Society course, there were no takers among girls for Economics, whereas 45 % boys chose to study this subject. While a similar proportion of boys and girls studied Information and Technology in a Global Society (40% and 34% respectively), the percentage of girls who opted for Business & Management (87%) was significantly higher than that of the boys (24%). In case of girls, B&M was as popular as Physics.

Further, when students' subject choice combinations at Higher Levels (HL) are examined, gender differences emerge in sharp relief. In the following table, I present students'

choice of subject combinations at the Higher Levels. The data presented in this table is sourced from students' response to questionnaire 1 (Appendix 10). In this table, I have defined Engineering, Medicine and Commerce streams in keeping with the customary practices in Indian schooling (Institute for Studies in Industrial Development, n.d, p.69).

**Table 7.3: Boys' and girls' subject choices at the Higher Levels**

| Streams of study as per established schooling traditions in India | Subject combinations at Higher Levels | Boys | | Girls | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | No. | %age | No. | %age |
| Science Stream (Engineering) | Physics, Chemistry, Mathematics (PCM) | 13 | 45 | 0 | 0 |
| Science Stream (Medical) | Physics, Chemistry, Biology (PCB) | 2 | 7 | 3 | 20 |
| Commerce Stream | Business & Management, Mathematics and Economics | 2 | 7 | 0 | 0 |
| Other subject combinations | | 12 | 41 | 12 | 80 |
| **Total** | | **29** | **100** | **15** | **100** |

From this table, clear patterns in subject choices can be identified in case of boys, something which is largely absent in case of girls. Out of 29 boys, 45% chose to study Physics-Chemistry-Mathematics at the Higher Level, i.e. they chose the Engineering stream. Two boys (7%) chose the Physics-Chemistry-Biology combination of subjects, i.e. the Medical stream. Undoubtedly, Science, specifically Engineering stream was the popular choice among boys, a matter I discuss below. Further, 7% boys made a clear choice for the Commerce stream. For the majority of boys, i.e. 59%, the choice of subjects was completely aligned with the subject streams in mainstream Indian schooling traditions. It is significant that despite studying in the IB programme, boys largely chose their subjects in keeping with dominant schooling practices in India.

In sharp contrast, only 20% of girls made such a directed choice in their combination of subjects. While no girl chose Engineering or Commerce, three girls chose the Medical stream. For a comprehensive picture of all students' subject choices at the Higher Level

see Appendix 19. As I discuss in the next section, these choices and the differences between boys and girls were not arbitrary.

*7.3.2 Clear educational pathways for boys and ambiguity in case of girls*

Further investigating the gendered nature of students' subject choices, I sought to understand whether students chose subjects in keeping with their aims for university studies. I noted striking gender differences.

The following table presents data on boys' choice of subject combinations (at Higher Levels) and their stated aspirations for Undergraduate (UG) studies, drawing on student questionnaire data (see Appendix 10 for the student questionnaire, and for a detailed tabulation of students' subject choices and university aspirations, see Appendix 19).

**Table 7.4: Boys' subject choices and aspirations for undergraduate studies**

| Undergraduate (UG) aspirations | Subject combinations at Higher Level (HL) | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Physics- Chemistry - Mathematics (PCM) at HL (Engineering stream) | | Physics- Chemistry- Biology (PCB) at HL (Medicine stream) | | Business &Management, Mathematics and Economics at HL (Commerce Stream) | |
| | Number | Percentage | Number | Percentage | Number | Percentage |
| Engineering | 11 | 85 | - | | - | |
| Physics | 3* | 23 | - | | - | |
| Medicine | | | 2 | 100 | - | |
| Architecture | 1 | 8 | | | - | |
| BBA | - | | - | | - | |
| Business/CA | - | | - | | 2 | 100 |
| Total number of boys | 13 | | 2 | | 2 | |

* Two students who stated they want to study Engineering also stated that they want to study Physics. Therefore, the total number of responses is 15, though the total number of boys who studied PCM at HL is only 13.

The table above summarises responses to the question, *"What course do you plan to pursue after 12th?"* (student questionnaire 1, Appendix 10) given by 17 boys who chose the subject combinations identified in the previous table as Engineering, Medicine and

Commerce. From among the 13 boys who opted for the PCM stream of subjects, two boys gave two responses each. Out of the 13 boys who studied PCM at HL, the majority, i.e. 11 boys (85 %) wanted to pursue Engineering at the UG level. The boy who sought to study Physics also chose appropriate subjects at HL. The boy who chose architecture could have opted to study Design Technology; a subject not offered in KI (see Table 7.1)

The most significant observation from Table 7.4 is regarding the alignment of subject choices in the case of boys. As was the case with Engineering, boys who studied the Medicine stream wanted to pursue Medicine, and all those who opted for the Commerce stream sought to pursue a related course in their higher education.

In case of the majority of boys, 16 out of 29, i.e. 55% (excluding the boy who sought to study architecture) their subject choices were unequivocally geared towards well-established and high status university courses (see Appendix 19 for a list of subject choices and university courses that the other 12 boys wished to pursue). In case of girls, their subject choices were diverse, less orderly and not in any obvious way directed towards future educational aspirations. The IBDP girls wanted to pursue a wide range of subjects at the university level including fashion designing, media studies, law, singing, web designing, business related courses, sociology and architecture (see Appendix 19). Their choice of subjects at Higher Level could not be readily connected with these higher educational aspirations and recognised pathways to realise these. In many cases, there was little in the list of offered subjects at KI which could directly prepare girls for their desired university pursuits. For example, because Social Sciences courses were not offered at KI, those who wished to study Law and Sociology were placed at a disadvantage. Beyond this, girls also did not choose subjects well matched to their requirements. For instance, girls who wanted to pursue Business related courses did not opt to study Economics, at Higher or Standard levels. The exceptions to this misaligned way of choosing subjects were the three girls (comprising 20%) who chose the Biology stream at HL, all of them aimed to study Biochemistry or related subjects in this field. The point is that the majority of boys chose and studied subjects which would directly equip them for their desired university level courses.  This correspondence was largely missing in case of girls.

Another significant observation is that among the entire set of 29 boys in the class, 20 boys (69%) wished to study Engineering at the UG level. This pronounced interest in Engineering is a characteristically Indian feature. A 2015 online survey observed that

Indian youth (16 to 17-year olds) reported high levels of interest in Engineering, with 80% respondents expressing some degree of interest in the subject (Queen Elizabeth Prize for Engineering Report, 2015, p. 29). In the dominant social imaginary, an Engineering degree is valued as prestigious and equated with IT jobs and foreign migration (Upadhya, 2016). Researchers have documented that IT companies, even when the actual jobs are unrelated to engineering, recruit from engineering colleges. Their rationale is that the 'brightest minds' enrol in engineering colleges; the training for the specific job can always be done while in service (Fuller and Narasimhan, 2006). In aspiring to study Engineering, the KI boys were only subscribing to this dominant discourse.

As I discuss next, boys' and girls' respective higher educational pursuits were linked to their occupational aspirations, which were decidedly uncertain in case of girls. These, inturn, were reflective of gendered regimes within the larger society which sought to shape women's and men's lives differently.

### 7.3.3 Students' occupational imaginaries and the power of the family

In some student interviews, the direction of the conversation led into a discussion of students' plans after they had completed their university studies. KI students generally aspired for an occupation similar to their father's occupation or family business. Some students like Gopalan were clear that they wanted to join their father's business. Others like Shreyas and Rishi shared that they wanted to become independent businessmen like their own fathers. Arun spoke of becoming an entrepreneur mentioning his uncle whom he (Arun) credited with introducing technological innovations in Coimbatore's textile industry. Boys from professional family backgrounds were interested in becoming professionals themselves. Alok whose father and uncle have pursued off the beaten professional paths wanted to become a vlogger and join the gaming industry.

Such influences were also evident in case of girls, even as a professional career option was not available for all girls. Rajeshwari wanted to design and sell artificial jewellery online, an imagined venture which was in keeping with her own family business of artificial jewellery. Both Aishwarya and Priya wanted to join their respective family businesses, even as Aishwarya's mother shared with me that this may not be easy for a girl. Suchitra wanted to set up a medical research centre, a high-end technology enterprise. Her interest is related to her own family context. Her parents are both entrepreneurs, they run an established transnational IT firm, among other enterprises. I have presented this information in the following table. This shows fathers' occupations

and not that of mothers' because in general, the former was considered more important by the students than the latter. In the case of family businesses, women were perceived to be playing a secondary role. Contrary to this, in my interviews with mothers, I noted that they were well acquainted with the nitty-gritties of the family businesses and some were directly involved as well. It is likely that their contributions were invisibilized within the dominant, patriarchal social order.

**Table 7.5: Students' occupational imaginaries**

| S. No | Name | Father's occupation/family business | Imagined future occupation (or professional qualification sought) |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Boys** | | | |
| 1 | Gopalan | The extended family own a chain of hotels. | Wants to work for a year; then take up father's business. |
| 2 | Bala | Father is a private financer; runs a real estate business; owns private buses. | Will work in father's business; wants to bring new ideas in the business. |
| 3 | Anand | Father is an eye surgeon; mother is a psychiatrist and psychologist. | Wants to study quantum physics and pursue a professional career (perhaps in finances). |
| 4 | Sameer | Father is a professional; holds a high managerial position in a multinational company. | Wants to become a Chief Executive Officer. |
| 5 | Shreyas | Extended family has jewellery businesses. | Wants to do business. |
| 6 | Gaurav | Father owns a jewellery shop. | Wants to get a government job (he is trying for Indian Police Service). Else he will work in the family owned shop. |
| 7 | Rishi | Father is a private financer; this is a family business. | Wants to start his own business; else will work in father's business. |
| 8 | Bharat | Father has a textile business. | Wants to start his own business. |
| 9 | Santosh | Extended family has a manufacturing industry and owns retail shops. | Wants to start his own business. |
| 10 | Arun | His parents are both IT professionals. Extended family runs business. He mentioned his uncle who had introduced new technology in the local textile industry. | Wants to become an entrepreneur. |

| 11 | Alok | Family has agro-businesses; his father is a renowned wildlife hunter; uncle is a wildlife photographer. His mother runs a school for underprivileged children. | Wants to join the Indian Air force, or work in the gaming industry, wants to become a vlogger. |
|----|------|------|------|
| 12 | Raghu | Father is an IT professional; mother is university teacher. | Wants to study Medicine. |
| **Girls** | | | |
| 1 | Geetha | Extended family owns hardware shops. | Wants to work for some time before marriage; wants to study designing. |
| 2 | Rajeshwari | Family owns artificial jewellery shop. | Wants to make a website to design and sell artificial jewellery online; wants to become a vlogger. |
| 3 | Aishwarya | Family owns a manufacturing business. | Wants to take over father's business but wants to work her way upwards. She is also aware that women do not work in these factories. Her mother clarified that Aishwarya would become involved in the business but will not take over. |
| 4 | Suchitra | Both parents are IT professionals and have an IT business; extended family owns businesses. | Wants to study Medicine, wants to set up a medical research centre. |
| 5 | Surabhi | Extended family owns a manufacturing business. | Wants to become an entrepreneur. |
| 6 | Priya | Family has a manufacturing business. | Wants to join the business. |

The familial contexts clearly played a key role in shaping students' occupational aspirations. In fact, many students including both boys and girls were already being initiated into the family business whilst still in school. Rishi's father ran a private financial enterprise giving loans for purchase of automobiles and large commercial

vehicles. This was a family business established by Rishi's grandfather. He told me that he often spent Saturdays in the office, writing receipts and managing cash payments. Geetha's family own hardware shops. On holidays, she regularly helped by covering for father and uncle when they took breaks for lunch. Shreyas came from a *Vaishya* family; their traditional, caste based occupation was in the gold business. He had already made a gold chain – apprenticing with a goldsmith employed with the family business. Bala's father ran a financial service. On weekends, he moved around the city with his father's employees, visiting debtors.

For many boys, their families provided a ready-made occupational role to enter into. More importantly, the familial context set limits to their imagination. Students' aspirations seemed to be largely circumscribed by these discursive frames. Shreyas for example, imagined paid employment to be more challenging compared to managing a (jewellery) business:

> *"We don't want to work under someone and [managing one's own business] you can earn more than you do in a job I guess and job is very stressful I guess".*

> (interview, March 2016)

The influence of the family context was very marked in Santosh's case. Even though he declared himself passionate about Physics, he could not visualise himself as a scientist; the idea of doing business was closer to his imagined possibilities:

> *Suvasini: Okay what do you intend...what do you want to do...what do you aspire to do after your 12th?*
>
> *Santosh: That's a difficult question...I do not know entirely but I would get into the field of Physics and especially to do with quantum physics... also the abstract sciences you know like general relativity, quantum physics...and these very specific areas in physics...not mechanics, not the worldly physics that we think about.*
>
> *Suvasini: Why?*
>
> *Santosh: I don't know, it just fascinates me and because I think it's the closest thing to answer the events of the universe...the closest thing I think to answering the question of why, how, what, for all the mysteries of the universe can be answered using these areas in physics... Relativity, you know ..when I read about physics, quantum physics or about the outcomes of relativity or the theory behind what is being talked about mathematically, it excites me to know that you know this is, there is a possibility of such events occurring like you know...when we talk about black holes, singularities...it just excites me to know that there is something much more beyond... that there's so many mysteries uncovered and I*

*think this is one of those fields where you know not much has been uncovered yet. And I think I have a great scope in, in uncovering.*

*Suvasini: Okay so after you do your grad...so what will you do after your undergrad?*

*Santosh: I have to decide that.*

*Suvasini: No, but you are choosing a research career...*

*Santosh: Yeah, I guess, I will be choosing a research career, I would want to, I am planning to do an MBA so that if I really, if I really want to start business, if I want to you know get into that field of Commerce or something like that then it will be way easier for me to do so because I will have the knowledge that I need to survive in this world. I would... my main purpose would be to probably go into research in Physics that I am very very interested in. But at the same time I don't think I am a kind of person who can just sit and do research 24\*7. It's not like I want to get into the top- most part of my field and become the greatest ever person or something like that...that's not gonna make a difference in the field.*

(interview, March 2016)

Bourdieu (1988) has discussed how consumptive choices are often framed by accustomed ways of life and constitute 'choice of the necessary'. In case of Santosh, even as he privileged studying Physics as a form of distinction and articulated his aspirations in a narrative of self-propertization, his habitus foreclosed 'the universe of possibles' that he could imagine for himself (Bourdieu, 1988, p. 381). Santosh was evidently resigned to what seemed natural to him in this field, at least at the moment of the interview.

Just as boys' occupational aspirations were framed by their familial contexts, girls too were bound by their social norms. However, in sharp contrast to the boys, marriage was considered as central in a woman's life and their professional career was clearly secondary. As I discuss next, at the time of my research KI girls were uncertain whether they would pursue an independent career, join the family business or become a full-time householder. It is also interesting that in girls' interviews marriage came up as a topic for discussion whereas in case of boys, this topic did not come up.

### 7.3.4 After marriage what? Girls' uncertain horizons

Osella and Osella (2006) note that in the Indian context, 'the production of the normative household through the institution of marriage is the ultimate outcome of processes of gendering' (Osella and Osella, 2006, p. 2). The normative household requires the woman to take charge of child rearing and other domestic responsibilities and men to pursue an occupation and provide for the household. The custom among these trading and business communities was that girls got married between the ages of 23 to 26 years. In general,

they did not take up waged labour positions available in the job market (De Neve, 2011). They were, however, active in the family business. The mothers I interviewed who were from business families had considerable knowledge about the family business, even if they did not have a formally acknowledged role in the business.

In their responses to student questionnaire 1 (see Appendix 10), 19 students out of 41 identified their mothers as housewives, i.e. approximately 46 percent were housewives. 10 out of 41 mothers (around 24 percent) were in professional occupations - doctors, software engineers, architects and teachers. Six mothers (approximately 14 percent) occupied high managerial or administrative positions in family run institutions or businesses. Examples include an administrative head of hospital run by family and a chairwoman in school established by family. Another six (approximately 14 percent) mentioned that their mothers were businesswomen or entrepreneurs. This information is presented in tabular form below:

**Table 7.6: Mothers' occupations**

| S. No | Occupation | Total | % |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Housewife | 19 | 46 |
| 2 | Professionals | 10 | 24 |
| 3 | High post in family business | 06 | 15 |
| 4 | Businesswomen/ entrepreneurs | 06 | 15 |
| **Total** | | **41** | **100** |

However, the above statistics should be taken only as rough indicators. Students' one worded answers were subjective, not comparable across respondents and incapable of capturing the complexities of the situations. For example, I knew that some women categorised above under 'professional occupations' were in fact working in the family enterprise. And at least some women mentioned as housewives may also have been actively involved in the family business. Women's participation in their family business may have been misrecognised and discounted in students' responses reported above. On one occasion, students were talking about marriage when Surya emphatically stated that his wife would not work after marriage. I countered this arguing that in fact his mother was working; she was active in the paramedical business run by the family; I had even

interviewed her in her office where I saw her efficiently supervising her employees. It was evident that she handled the office staff regularly. Surya, however insisted that his mother did not work; that she was primarily a householder; that her participation in the family business was limited and that this did not count since it was within the family. Women's participation in waged labour outside the family was regarded as bringing dishonour to the family, a hegemonic patriarchal value deeply entrenched in these communities.

What can be gleaned from the questionnaire data is that women did not generally work outside their family enterprises. At the same time, the presence of a significant minority of professionals among students' mothers must be noted and may point to a changing trend among these communities. Such a conclusion corroborates De Neve's (2011) research on the Gounder business community. He noted that for the Gounders, women's work participation was a matter of family honour and respectability. While female education was increasingly valued, whether a woman would work after marriage depended on her husband and the needs of the family (De Neve, 2011).

Given this context, it is not surprising that that girls at KI were unsure if they would have an occupational career after marriage. Some like Geetha were certain that their working life would be limited to the brief period between studies and marriage, *"After PG [Post Graduate studies] I will work...after that only marriage...Even my dad supports that so."* (interview, March 2016)*.* In one case, the primacy of marriage dictated that the girl could not study Medicine. Rajeshwari explained this,

> *"They [referring to her parents] think like it's, I have to study a lot of years for MBBS [Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery] so they think that like in 28 or 29 only you will finish then I couldn't like... be in my society...like in 28-29 years I would be married then so they think it's like I have to study a lot and it takes a lot of years, so they think like why don't you do anything less serious like B &M [Business and Management] that profession like that...".*

<div align="right">(interview, March 2016)</div>

It was clear that in her case, an occupational career was not a priority. Other girls nurtured occupational aspirations even as marriage was a doxic expectation. Aishwarya wanted to become independent, *"standing on my own money, self-making, yeah. Independent....financially, mentally..."* (interview, March 2016)*.* She was however expecting to get married around 26 years of age. Trying to negotiate between her desires

and her family's expectations, she was hopeful of accomplishing her goal in the ten years' time she had until then.

For most girls, marriage signified a potential discontinuity in aspired for occupational pursuits. Unlike boys, who derived some certainties in their futures from their family business, for girls how they might be involved was uncertain. Even when they were inheritors to a family business, it was not a given that they would take over the business in future, or even be an active partner. Both Geetha and Suchitra were certain that it would be their brothers (in Geetha's case cousin brothers) who would take over the family business. Priya, a single child who assumed that she would take over the business in future was atypical. Social custom in this region dictated that life trajectories would be different for the young men and women. Just as boys imagined their futures within the norms of their familial-social context, so did girls. In case of girls, they believed that marriage would bring their occupational pursuits to a 'natural' end.

It is in these practices that I can see the workings of caste. Students' educational and occupational aspirations were bound by the doxic expectations of the family and the larger society. Girls were expected to fulfil reproductive duties within an endogamic sexual-moral regime, hence they remained uncertain about career paths. For both boys and girls, their operative logic was restrained by the choice of the necessary. The centrality of marriage for girls and occupational reproduction in case of boys point to a strengthening of the caste-community ties. It is also significant that among these well-resourced communities, an intergenerational continuity in occupations and a corresponding transfer of various capitals is effectuated.

When seen in the light of the above, KI girls' subject choices in higher secondary schooling and aspirations for university studies make sense. Girls' higher educational aspirations were diverse and did not have straightforward routes from school to university studies. Girls' stated aspirations were more ingenious when compared boys' cliched choices. This was because from the point of view of their families, their career choices were largely irrelevant, because occupational identity mattered less in case of girls. Boys, on the other hand, were more constrained by social expectations in this matter. Both Bala and Ravi's mothers confirmed this when they stated that girls were generally given 'freedom' to study until they got married, whereas boys' studies had to lead to earning a living.

Regardless of their occupational aspirations, KI students, both boys and girls wanted to go to western countries for their university studies. Further, they animated this desire by locating it within a narrative seemingly aligned with the discourse of meritocracy. Beyond this, it was the specific familial-social context which influenced whether this aspiration could be pursued or not. In the next section, I discuss the narratives in which such desires were couched and the decision-making processes within the family which were critical to pursuing these aspirations or conversely, in shelving them.

## 7.4 The 'American' dream and mobilization of familial-social networks

### 7.4.1 Foreign study as an aspirational ideal

One of the questions I asked students in the questionnaire administered in October 2015 (see Appendix 10) was whether they had identified universities for UG education. At this point, 26 out of 49 (59%) were yet to narrow down on the choice of a university. However, of the 18 students who had identified their choice, all pointed to premier universities located in USA, UK and Singapore. Very few students named Indian institutes, and when they did, it was always in addition to a foreign university. Interestingly, premier Indian institutes were not sought after (except by one student); the Indian universities named by students were largely regional rather than spread across the country, a matter which I address later in the chapter.

Students' aspirations also changed through the course of the year. When I interviewed students in March and April 2016, a larger proportion of students wanted to go abroad. Of the 14 boys interviewed, ten wanted to go abroad to study; similarly, only three girls out of 13 interviewed did not mention foreign studies. It was clear that going abroad to study was an aspirational ideal. Even students who planned to study UG in local institutions paid allegiance to this ideal by promising (themselves and me) that they would surely go abroad to do their masters. This postponement was reasoned in varied ways such as attaining greater maturity with age "A*fter UG I'll get some maturity and thing, so I'll learn how to manage with everything, so only during PG I'll go abroad" (*interview, Ajay, March 2016).

The school milieu greatly facilitated the imaginary of foreign education becoming a dominant ideal. First, students perceived that the IBDP curriculum equipped them for admission to foreign universities. Next, having foreign returned and foreign national students in the peer group brought closer the reality of foreign lands. For instance, Badri, in his interview (March 2016) reasoned that having three close friends who were Non-

Resident Indians (NRIs) would make it easier for him to adjust to a western culture. Third, an imagined America was often invoked by students and teachers as part of routine classroom activities (for example, see Chapter 6, Section 6.8).

For the KI students, studying in premier, western universities had multiple significations. These included increased consumptive possibilities and a powerful intensification of the ongoing propertizing of the self through embodying valuable cultural capitals.

### 7.4.2 Consumptive possibilities and independent living

Researchers have observed that Indian youth often construct a binary of western countries versus India. Further, this binary is deployed to index matters such as consumptive practices, loyalties to the nation and sexual-moral codes (Deka, 2014, Sancho, 2012, 2015).

KI students, some of whom had travelled to and lived in western countries aspired for lifestyle choices not readily available in the small towns of Coimbatore district. Western countries were construed as being cleaner, less populated, having better infrastructure and better public transport. These places appealed to a youthful imaginary of consumptive practices:

> *"And one of the reasons for me to go to USA also is food because I love the burgers, the roadside, the trucks, hotdogs, the burgers, the sandwiches, the subs".*

> (interview, Aishwarya, March 2016)

In fact, even as these boys and girls desired such pleasures in western countries, similar leisure and entertainment centres like restaurants, ice cream parlours, malls, play centres were sprouting up in upmarket locales in the region (Revathy, 2015). There was evidently a growing demand for such consumptive goods.

Going abroad also held the promise of freedom from adult scrutiny and social regulation, a matter especially important for girls. Padma imagined western countries as offering opportunities for a 'truer' self-expression:

> *"There, people like you can, you can literally be who you want to be, like yeah you can just like you know wear whatever you want to and what would make you happy, like if I like, so for me I like getting dressed up, like you know make-up and stuff like that. But here like for a casual meeting if you go with a lot of make-up people would be like where are you going but there if you like make-up, wear make-up, walk nobody is going to question you. It's more like free."*

> (interview, March 2016)

While some students toyed with the idea of other adventures, for example Priya contemplated drinking (but only after PG studies), others like Aishwarya assured me they would remain within the moral boundaries set out by their parents, i.e. not enter into romantic relationships. For these girls, even at the level of mere imagination transgressing social-moral norms was not easy, all of which points to the severity of the regulatory practices over girls' conduct.

Students also talked about financial independence, i.e. taking up jobs while studying abroad (this was not a concern if studying in India). Some expressed admiration for life in west, where:

> *"Once someone reaches 18 years, they are on their own, they have to pay for their own college, and they have to sort of make up their own life"*
>
> (Nitya, interview, March 2016)

Given their context, to me this sounded dissociated from their realities for nearly all students planned to fund their university studies (in India and abroad) with support from parents.

### 7.4.3 Propertizing the body through western education

KI students saw western universities as providing opportunities such as greater subject choices, a freedom to choose subjects unburdened by social and peer pressures. Students also valued the progressive teaching practices and the conducive peer cultures of western universities, which they saw as being similar to those in KI (which were perceived to be non-existent in Indian universities). Further, students narrated their imagined trajectories within these international cultures in ways that accrued cultural capital to their identities, and which worked as a form of 'self-propertization' (Skeggs, 2004a). It was striking how some students constructed the wider cultures of these university spaces as more naturally suiting their inherent abilities. They discussed this in ways that overtly valorised these foreign cultures as well as their own subjectivities which they described in terms of their innate individual 'abilities'. The following excerpt from Santosh's interview illustrates this point:

> *"The love of education and the way they conduct their life is a lot more, is I guess a lot more suitable to me, my needs and to my goals than it is in India. I wouldn't mind going to the UK or Europe if it gives me what I need, right. And so far, US has lived up to that standard according to all my sources and all, suggestions and the internet. Somehow it just fits my calibre".*
>
> (interview, March 2016)

Students who were determinately pursuing admission in foreign universities were recognized as different and enjoyed greater status in the school setting. These preparatory activities were themselves claims to distinction, i.e. they served a symbolic function at a time when actual outcomes were yet unknown.

Even as students nurtured aspirations to study abroad, when it came to pursue these dreams actively, what mattered was whether these aspirations made sense within the family context.

### 7.4.4 Situating students' aspirations within the family context

Parental and familial strategies are central to understanding the educational activities of the middle classes (Nambissan, 2010). These strategies constitute a key link in the larger relationship between privatisation of schooling sector and reproduction of social hierarchies. In India, studies have pointed to the centrality of and value placed upon children's education within middle class families. The general understanding garnered from this body of work is that families stretch their financial and other resources to realize the educational aspirations of their children (Drury, 1993; Donner, 2005). While this is also true of the trading and business families which formed the core constituency of KI, my interviews and observations also suggested that in many cases, in order that the families extend their support, it was necessary that the student's desire to study abroad made sense within the doxic logics of the family contexts. Parents' extension of support for their child's foreign study was generally contingent upon the overall utility of this venture within the context of the larger family, including the family business operations. Shreyas is a case in point. As already mentioned, his family business was of gold jewellery designing and its wholesale trade. At one point, Shreyas wanted to study jewellery designing in Birmingham, UK. His parents however overruled this. They felt that such a credential had little market value because jewellery designing is learnt by apprenticeship, not by formal training. It is also something Shreyas had already been initiated into. The family business would not particularly benefit from Shreyas acquiring such qualifications. Subsequently, when he showed interest in studying architecture in Singapore, they were approving and supportive of his desire. This choice was not random either; Shreyas' uncle was a professional architect, and he had spent time with his uncle and got a sense of what the work involved. His parents reasoned that while jewellery designing, a family business required no formal training, on the other hand, an architectural degree could prove useful in an uncertain future.

In the case of Bharat, he wanted to go to Australia to pursue a course in computer graphics and animation. His parents saw differently; they wanted him to study a Business or Commerce related course somewhere in India, in part because financing a foreign degree was not easy for them. Their expectation was that he would soon eventually take charge of the family textile business. Over the course of my fieldwork, Bharat was persuaded to give up this desire, which seemed impractical and not beneficial within his familial context.

Students' aspirations to go abroad made more sense when there were extended family members, cousins, aunts and uncles in the foreign land. Munshi (2014) has discussed the importance of community networks in facilitating foreign migration. He observes that individual members bootstrap their way into a new occupation in foreign lands. In this case, it was educational mobility, and not occupational advancement for which the KI students relied on relatives in foreign lands. For KI students and their parents, extended family members constituted a reliable social network. They mediated the life and culture of the foreign land, making it more proximal. Parents' willingness to send their child to a foreign country depended partly on their close relatives living there. Students' talk about foreign study was often accompanied by mention of their aunts, uncles, cousins or siblings living in that country. Badri's brother being in Canada, this became a natural choice of foreign country for him. Shreyas' aunt lived in Singapore; this made it easier for his parents to think of sending him there. In the following excerpt, Santosh describes his cousins' experiences which evidently shaped his own aspirations:

> *"So, there is like 50% influence from my cousins who have studied in Stanford, both of them. They have done their undergraduate in Stanford and one of them is doing post graduate and when they describe their life in Stanford, and then they describe what they do, how they conduct life there, it's just amazing to know that you can do so much and still do well in life".*

<div align="right">(interview, March 2016)</div>

Santosh was also attesting to the importance of known social networks for accessing information about higher education. Such sources assume special significance in the Indian context where career counselling and other institutional channels of information are notoriously weak. Students typically rely on parents, friends and relatives for information on career pathways (Krishna, 2014).

Students' aspirations had to be aligned with the family's context in order that they be supported. Next, I discuss the case of Suchitra, an unusual example, where the parents

were committed to supporting their daughter's foreign education so that she could pursue a professional business career. This was possible because her parents were themselves professional entrepreneurs with an established business in USA where Suchitra wanted to go for higher studies.

Suchitra, as listed in Table 7.3 was one of the three girls whose choice of subjects was directed towards pursuing Medicine at university. She was from a Naidu business family; her parents who were IT professionals had business interests both in Coimbatore and USA. Her parents had moved to Australia soon after marriage and subsequently to USA where they had two children. Suchitra and her brother had dual citizenship of two countries, Australia and USA. In 2006, Suchitra's mother returned to Coimbatore, Suchitra's father's native town where she started a sports equipment business along with extended family members. Suchitra's parents also jointly ran a software company with US clientele, her mother managed the offshore office in Coimbatore while her father lived in USA attending to clients. With Suchitra wanting to study Medicine in USA, her parents were making the arrangements. Her mother's calculation was that the eight years' course would cost 40,000 United States Dollars (USD) per year. Her mother was aware that such a study would be demanding on her daughter. Therefore, she and her husband planned on staying with Suchitra throughout her UG studies. Her father planned to relocate within USA depending on where she secured admission. Her mother was planning to stay with her on occasions when her father was required to travel:

> *"After 12th, you need some more time, support. So, he is going to support her and whenever he has to travel, I will go there and support her… my husband will see whether he can shift there and be with her".*

<div align="right">(interview, February 2016)</div>

In Suchitra's case, her desire to study Medicine in USA was seen as legitimate, and the family was gearing to make the necessary provisions, including finances. Similarly, Arun's desire to study in MIT was directly related to his and his parents' US citizenship. Even though his entire schooling was in Coimbatore, it was considered inevitable that he would return to USA for university studies. When I started my fieldwork, his parents had already taken him to tour university campuses in USA, so that he could familiarise himself with their programmes and prepare accordingly. Even as he was planning to study in USA, his parents, IT professionals who ran an IT company were readying to relocate there along with him.

In contrast to Suchitra and Arun, Anand who was among the highest scorers in the class did not aspire to go abroad for undergraduate studies. His parents were also keen that he study undergraduate in India, a perspective which stemmed from their own professional biographies. His parents were originally from Bengaluru; his father was a neurosurgeon, his mother a psychiatrist and psychologist. After their education, they wanted to shift to a smaller town. After a brief stint in Erode, they moved to Coimbatore and have now settled down here. Having themselves studied in government institutions, they felt that their objective of becoming doctors was to serve the nation and the community:

> *"I mean, we paid peanuts to become doctors…. I used to pay 1000 rupees per semester. That was my fees. So, we have paid peanuts. That means, If the government is invested in us and you just take a USMLE [United States Medical Licensing Exam] exam and just go and mint money, I mean, money was not our … our objective of becoming doctors. It was to serve.. and I think we are… I mean, that was our personal values".*

(interview, February 2016)

They wanted Anand to study in India for UG studies, not just because foreign study was not financially feasible but also because they believed that this experience would inspire him to come back and serve the community:

> *"I find that him staying here till the age of 23 or 22, we would still see some more of him. Would instil in some more of him [referring to values], you know so that he would come back and serve the community later on".*

(interview, February 2016)

Anand's mother's narrative was sharply different from that of other participants. Unlike others, Anand's occupational aspirations were not required to suit the requirements of the family's business, since both his parents were employed professionals. The discursive frames which shaped his aspirational ideals were starkly different from those of his classmates who were largely from business families.

These case studies illustrate that even as studying abroad was an aspirational ideal, its pursuit was possible only when this made sense for the student's family. Even as the question of whether foreign study would give fillip to the capital accumulative process of their son/daughter was an important concern for parents, considerations went beyond this. Other interests, chiefly the family's business activities were factored in. Further, known social networks, typically extended family members were sought to help make the transition to foreign countries easier. The point is, that the individual student aspiring to study abroad, remained embedded within and tied to the communal fabric of his familial

life. As was the case with questions related to occupational choices, whether to study abroad or not, where and which subject to study were ultimately matters around which the individual student was regulated by the larger family. These findings are commensurate with Munshi's (2014) observations that business communities seek to advance group, not individual mobility. My findings also corroborate the observations made by De Neve (2011) about Gounder industrial families in Tiruppur. He notes that as the community transformed from rural peasants to urban industrialists, educating the next generation became a concern for these families now trying to advance their social status. He also observed that the educational trajectories of their sons and daughters were governed by the family's business interests.

Besides their embeddedness in familial context, it was the dominant logic of 'paid' education which shaped students' decisions regarding where to study within India.

## 7.5 The normalcy of 'paid seats'

KI students, when they were not preparing to go abroad for foreign studies showed little interest in seeking admissions to premier universities in the country. Barring very few students, their educational horizons were limited to local, private institutions. For instance, even as an overwhelming majority of boys, 20 out of 29 (69%) wanted to study Engineering at the undergraduate level, only Anand was aspiring for the Indian Institutes of Technology (IIT) and Vellore Institute of Technology (VIT), top-ranking government engineering institutes in the country. It was as if KI students' purview of higher educational institutions within India was confined to the region. This relates to my general observation that the country was largely missing in the symbolic landscapes of KI students. Furthermore, within their locally selected institutes, KI students were mostly targeting admissions only within the quota of 'paid seats'. It seemed that they had altogether bypassed the competitive process of securing admissions. To understand these practices, some background about higher education provisioning in Tamil Nadu is needed, which is discussed next.

The expansion of private, or self-financing institutions in Tamil Nadu started in the 1980s. In the Sixth Five Year Plan (1980-85) when the central and state governments were finding it difficult to expand technical education, Tamil Nadu, along with Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Maharashtra, decided to permit private registered societies and trusts to establish technical institutions. Several private engineering institutions were founded in this period, and unlike the charitable institutions of earlier eras, these new

organisations sought to run higher education as a profitable business like any other (Rani, 2010). Following the neo-liberal restructuring of the economy, specifically, the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act of 2003, the government's participation in higher education further declined.

In present-day Tamil Nadu, Engineering courses are overwhelmingly run by private, profit-making institutions. While government institutes are perceived to be of high quality, their numbers are meagre in comparison to the private sector. In 2018, as per the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) website[59], of the total 533 undergraduate engineering colleges in Tamil Nadu, 476, i.e. 89% are private unaided institutes (AICTE website). Private institutions have a dual admission system which combines government seats and management quota seats. 85% seats in private institutes are offered on competitive bases (and in accordance to the reservation policies of the state government) and on subsidized fees (additionally, the state government reimburses fees of students from reserved categories). The other 15%, called management quotas are autonomously managed by the private institutes and generally, offered against payment of substantial amounts of money (Manuel, 2016). While there are government mandated guidelines for fees under management quota (Rani, 2010), in practice however, private engineering institutions violate these norms and stupendous amounts of money are exchanged through dubious, illegal routes (Narayan, 2014). Despite their compulsory affiliation to the state government's Anna University, private engineering colleges in Tamil Nadu continue to remain under regulated (Manuel, 2016).

The growth of private engineering colleges in Tamil Nadu reflects their market orientation; they have come up in regions where government institutions already existed, where a demand was already established, and where infrastructural provisions were already in place. Interestingly, Coimbatore is the second largest cluster for engineering colleges in Tamil Nadu, next to Chennai and its vicinity. Upadhya (2016) has documented how the expansion of private engineering colleges in coastal Andhra Pradesh has created a stratified higher education system where dominant communities monopolise the more expensive, better institutions and students from marginalised communities join devalued institutions. The former groups use higher education as a

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[59] http://www.aicte-india.org/misappengineering.php (Accessed: 20 June 2019).

route to foreign migration, whereas the latter are forced to take up less skilled local jobs at lower wages.

Among the communities' the IBDP students came from, the general practice was to seek admission in local private institutions through management quotas, a practice observed in other regions as well (Gilbertson, 2014). I was initially shocked that neither students nor parents shied away from openly sharing this. An often repeated argument by students and parents was that given the stringent assessment in IB curriculum, one could not compete with students from state board schools who scored impossibly high marks. They were, therefore, compelled to seek admission through management quotas. This was in fact the case, in Tamil Nadu, the cut-off marks for Engineering and Medicine admissions are impossibly high, such as 95% plus. Students were able to score such high marks in Tamil Nadu State Board Exams, but not so easily in the IBDP curriculum. However, it was not just for Engineering that KI students sought to enter via the management quota. Even those seeking to study other courses, for example, Commerce considered getting admission through paid seats. I was told by Ajay (interview, March 2016) that for admission into engineering seats in prestigious institutions, the rate was anywhere between 7 to 20 lakhs. For Bachelor of Commerce, the rate was 10 to 15 lakhs. Further, the amount varied; in general, if the applicant scored less, she would have to pay more. Also knowing someone from the university management could also help in reducing the admission costs. The price was negotiable, and the entire process was not quite above board. I also heard of the practice of reserving a seat by making an advance payment, i.e. even before the examination results were declared, because, in reputed, private institutions, even the paid seats were in high demand. The point is, students and parents spoke about this as if it was common sense. This was the normative practice amongst these people (Bourdieu, 1984). This doxic logic rendered corrupt practices as acceptable and altogether marginalised the place of meritocracy in admission to higher education institutions.

When students talked about studying abroad, the language deployed was one of individual ability and self-propertization. In contrast, students spoke about local institutions as if they were entitled to these institutes, as if admission here was assured. That admission through management quotas was the standard practice amongst these people was clear during an orientation programme for prospective parents, where the discussion led to opportunities after completing the IBDP. Revathi madam, who was presiding stated,

*"Only if they are very particular that they don't want to go into the management quota then going to the state board school is important"* (fieldnotes, February 2016). Her narrative made it seem that paying large amounts of money to take admission to private institutions was the normal thing to do; seeking admission through a competitive process a lesser option.

Not just the regional private institutions, in recent years even foreign universities are entering this field. They are usually represented by brokers who mediate access to the international global education market (Kenway and Fahey, 2014). During my fieldwork, I attended two presentations by agents, who were marketing undergraduate degree programmes in western countries. In both cases, the representatives presented the course as a package offer. They informed the students that the courses would be conducted in multiple institutions across different nations, there would be an Indian institutional partner; there was also a promise of stay in a western country. The agents pitched these programmes to suit the requirements of the local communities. They offered a clearly charted path culminating in employment possibilities in USA and Australia, and plainly laid out the cost calculations and eligibility requirements. One of the agents even addressed potential parental concerns such as safety in the foreign country and stay arrangements. He also made comparative cost calculations, demonstrating that a Medicine degree offered by his program would cost less than entry to local universities through management quota. The agents were promising not just foreign study, but mobility to western countries. They were deploying a parlance of the market, rendering higher education as instrumental, a means for foreign mobility. Given how entrenched the doxic logic of private education was among these communities, it is not surprising that such marketing strategies appealed to these people for whom private, paid education was the norm.

I conclude this chapter by drawing attention to the emerging issues.

## 7.6 Conclusions

In this chapter, I sought to locate KI students' classed practices within the larger social fabrics. I began with an examination of KI's adoption of the IBDP curriculum. I argued that KI's adoption of the IBDP has considerably reduced the scope of the humanist IBDP curriculum. The influence of local discourses in the schooling practices is reflected in the limited subjects from the Social Sciences and Humanities streams on offer in the school.

Further examining students' subject choices, I demonstrated that while boys' subject choices were streamlined as per Indian schooling customs, girls' subject choices were generally disorderly when matched against traditional subject streams. Further, when I examined these subject choices in relation to students' university aspirations, it became clear that while boys largely studied subjects which were directed towards specific university level courses, for the majority of girls, no such link could be established. Further, a large majority of boys sought to study Engineering at the university level. This points to their alignment with the dominant discourse of the region and the country at large.

When it came to what they would do after studies, both boys' and girls' imaginings were regulated by the gendered social norms of these communities. Boys' occupational aspirations were circumscribed by their familial contexts; most boys being from business families aspired to start their own business ventures or join the family enterprise. Girls were acutely aware that whatever professional career they might pursue was likely to come to a halt with marriage. Unlike boys, a clear occupational pathway seemed uncertain for girls. Given this, it is not surprising that the KI girls aspired for a wide range of occupations, and that their subject choices had little relation with their undergraduate pursuits. In their case, these matters were less regulated by society, given that marriage rather than occupational identity was considered as pivotal in their lives.

Going to western countries for undergraduate education was a dominant aspiration among the KI students. Students conjured up a life in western countries where consumptive desires would be amply fulfilled and where they would escape parental and social regulation. Such independence was more important for girls, whose lives were far more restrictive under the normative regulations of the society. However, even in these fantasies, students' imaginaries were still constrained by the moral codes of both family and their wider social worlds. Going to western countries for study was also understood as a capital accumulative process. Students who were actively preparing to go abroad appropriated the culture of these western universities into a narrative of a valuable, propertized self (Skeggs, 2004a). This process was in continuation with the embodiment of various capitals discussed in the previous chapter.

Students' aspirations for foreign study could materialize only when these desires appealed to the doxic logic of their family contexts. Decisions about whether one's child should go abroad or not for UG studies went beyond the considerations of how

this would enhance a student's individual capital accumulation. Business interests of the family, and presence of relatives in these foreign lands were important considerations. When students' foreign study made sense, parents were seen to make enormous efforts and adjustments to facilitate the successful realization of these aspirations.

These observations suggest that KI students were thoroughly embedded in their familial contexts. This family went beyond parents. It included the larger network of kin members who were bound together by shared business interests. Students' educational and occupational aspirations were circumscribed by the discursive frames and normative practices of this community. On matters such as educational pursuits, occupational aspirations and marriage, the KI student's positioning was not as an isolated individual, but as a member of this larger community. It is this embeddedness which is the pointer to the continued presence of strong caste ties among these trading communities (Damodaran, 2008; Markovits, 2008; De Neve, 2011; Munshi, 2014, 2016)

Apart from the familial situation, it was the doxic culture of private education as a commodified entitlement which shaped students' choices of higher educational institutions in India. KI students wanted to pursue undergraduate studies in local institutes and were aiming for admissions through paid, management quotas. This was evidently the standard practice among these communities. KI students spoke about joining these institutions as if this were an entitlement. This language of entitlement stood in contrast with the self-propertizing language deployed when speaking about foreign study. Further, when it came to the choice of Indian higher education institutions, students' ambit was very limited, confined to the local region, seldom moving beyond the boundaries of Coimbatore. This concurs with the overall absence of the nation in the students' imaginaries. There is a recent practice of marketing foreign degrees as a utilitarian product, available for purchase. This practice extends the parlance of the market, now in the context of global mobility. I discuss the larger import of these findings in the next chapter.

# Chapter 8 Conclusions

## 8.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I draw attention to the larger implications of the study. I begin by reiterating the key arguments of the preceding chapters. Following this, I discuss the knowledge contributions of the research.

## 8.2 Summary of the thesis

The *Introduction* chapter established the significance of the present study. It highlighted the absence of any in-depth ethnographic research into elite private schooling in provincial India. It emphasized the need to directly examine the relationship between schooling and social class. It also outlined the research questions which I recapitulate here:

> 1. What are the regulatory discourses and disciplinary practices in this school setting?

> 2. How is social class produced in this school setting and how does it intersect with caste and gender?

> 3. How do these identity productions relate to wider societal discourses?

Chapter 2, *An international school in an industrial region* introduced the site of my research, Coimbatore district, a provincial region in the southern state of Tamil Nadu. I described how the region had become an industrial centre and how the dominant communities of the region, chiefly the Gounders and Naidus had transformed from peasants to businessmen with global interests. The burgeoning of international schools in this region was related to the larger context of privatisation of education in India. The establishment of an IB school in this region also reflects the changing educational practices of the dominant industrial communities of Coimbatore.

The next Chapter, *Exploring class and schooling in the Indian context* introduced the theoretical constructs and research themes which are central to the thesis. Tracing the history of the Indian middle classes from the colonial times to the present, I discussed how the middle-class identity remains entangled with caste identity and shapes the normative discourse of gender. I highlighted the centrality of education in the project of becoming middle class in India. Traditionally, the middle classes have positioned themselves as leaders of the masses. With economic liberalisation, however, the

character and composition of the middle classes has changed considerably. The new middle classes are oriented towards success in a globalising world and have abandoned their historical responsibility towards the nation.

Class and middle class have been studied in India from Marxist and postcolonial perspectives. The dominant narratives have privileged the educated middle classes and marginalised the merchant communities. Sociologists studying contemporary middle classes are increasingly influenced by the post-structural and cultural turn in social sciences. Research on contemporary middle classes examines cultural practices in different realms of life, including education. The present study strives to address some of the lacunae in existing research. It adopts a post-structural theoretical lens to investigate the research questions.

The next Chapter, *Research Methodology* reflected on methodological issues and the research processes. It is here that I presented a full account of my fieldwork (from August 2015 to April 2016) and described in detail the process of analysis. I identified my methodological stance as post-structural and elaborated on my ontological and epistemological positioning. I elaborated on ethical issues I grappled with during the course of the research. I discussed how a post-structural approach supported an intersectional analysis of class, caste and gender.

In the first analysis Chapter, *Disciplinary regimes in the school,* I mainly addressed research question 1. The disciplinary regimes of the school sought to produce a 'self-regulated' subject. The use of technology made possible a penetrative gaze into the students' conduct in the school and normalised a culture of surveillance. Further, the disciplinary practices in the school were shaped by the caste based moral regimes of the larger society. Students' continuous resistance, often drawn from their family's social status, interrupted the exercise of such power. I noted that while local discourses permeated the symbolic world of the school, there was an absence of the nation as a reference point in the disciplinary practices of the school.

In Chapter 6, *Performing social class in school*, I mainly addressed research question 2. KI students claimed distinction on account of their family backgrounds and consumptive abilities. This produced class based tensions between the students and teachers. The dress regime of the school, instead of countering conspicuous consumptive practices, legitimised a market logic within the everyday life of school.

The school also afforded students several opportunities for cultivating cultural capitals which accrued value and allowed them to claim distinction as 'good students'. The good student was a subject position available to both boys and girls; however, the geek, a privileged masculine performativity was accessible only to boys. I observed less privileged masculinities and femininities in the school and noted these to be both positions of subordination and acts of resistance. A dominant and tacitly casteist discourse circulated in the school which conflated fair complexion with ability. I concluded the chapter by pointing to how the production of a self of distinction in the school engendered misrecognition and re-signified social hierarchies in the psychological language of inner characteristics.

In Chapter 7, *Beyond the school: Classed subjectivities in the larger context,* I mainly addressed research question 3. I argued that the school had adopted the IBDP curriculum in keeping with the local dominant discourses which privileged Sciences over Humanities and Commerce. Students' subject choices were markedly gendered and closely linked to different life expectations from boys and girls. Students' aspirational imaginaries for undergraduate studies were dominated by a desire to study in western countries. However, the pursuit of these aspirations was dependent on the specific familial context of the student. I concluded the chapter by pointing to the incursion of market logic and the significance of caste-community networks in shaping the aspirational imaginaries of KI students.

Having summarised my thesis, I now elaborate on the knowledge contributions of the study.

## 8.3 Contributions to knowledge

My research documented educational practices in a private, international school catering to business communities in provincial India. It is the first in-depth ethnographic study of the ways in which elite international schooling in provincial India contributes to the production of classed identities. It is the first school ethnography in the state of Tamil Nadu and also the first study of an IB school in India. It is also unique in drawing on a post-structural lens to analyse the ethnographic data on schooling practices. This allows a detailed illumination of the practices through which identities are produced in schooling, as well as how class intersects with gender and caste in this particular context.  I now expand on the substantive, theoretical and methodological aspects of these contributions.

*8.3.1 Class and caste advantage inscribed as 'individual abilities'*

My thesis directly investigates the production of classed subjectivities within schooling. It draws attention to the production of distinction through immersion in the everyday life of the school. It powerfully demonstrates how the making of classed identities is conjoined with caste and gender identities. It compellingly demonstrates how these practices accomplished a resignification of unequal social relations in the language of individualism and inner abilities (Bourdieu, 1998). The discourse of the good student (see Chapter 6) served to obscure the fact that the cultural capitals acquired in the school were, in fact, dependent upon prior material and cultural advantages. Further, such constructions of distinction and the economy of significations they are woven into potentially disadvantage the marginalised castes as well as girls. The clientele of the school comprised largely of dominant and affluent caste groups in the region - Gounders, Naidus, Mudailiars, Marwaris and Brahmans. On account of its high fee structure, the school remained inaccessible to the Mathari Dalit community who were otherwise present in large numbers in the school (as service staff) and the region. Such exclusions potentially engender a tacit symbolic association between the production of 'individual' distinction and specific caste identities. Such associations between caste and ability are not uncommon in India. Further, even job recruitment practices have been found to be tacitly favourable to the privileged castes (Upadhya, 2007; Fuller and Narasimhan, 2007; Fuller and Narasimhan, 2014).

My study also documents how the everyday practices in the school disadvantaged girls. While becoming a good student was possible for both girls and boys, the geek subjectivity excluded girls who were mostly positioned as subordinate in the school. My study draws attention to how the recasting of social hierarchies in the language of psychological ability facilitates the recoding of class, caste and gender hierarchies in a mystified language in ways that legitimize social inequalities. Further, my study demonstrates how resistance to even talking about caste prevents its recognition as an enduring structure of disadvantage.

Students who enrolled in the school were largely from the dominant communities of the region and enjoyed power within the traditional social order. The school, on the other hand, worked towards cultivating a different kind of, and apparently more individualised capital. The individualised capitals which the students cultivated in the school have considerable currency in prestigious job markets in a globalised world

(Arabandi, 2011). In highlighting the acquisition of these individualised cultural capitals, my research points to the changing social practices of the business communities in provincial India. My study documents that even as these communities continue to rely on traditional entitlements, they are also acquiring capitals which carry greater purchase in a global world.

### 8.3.2 The embeddedness in communitarian relations

Commodification of the self has been portrayed as central to classed practices in the neo-liberal world where class is individualised, hierarchised and implicit (Bottero, 2004; Pakulski, 2004; Skeggs, 2004a). The self-propertizing bourgeois individual is imagined to be a globe-trotting cosmopolitan, disembedded from his local social ties. It is this dislocatedness of the bourgeois individual which marks him as distinct from the working classes who are unable to break free from their geographical and social roots (Giddens, 1991; Beck, 1992).

The particular combination of business communities in a provincial region makes my sample unique in the context of existing research on the Indian middle classes (Baviskar and Ray, 2011; Béteille, 2001; Fernandes, 2006). Existing studies have focussed on the urban, metropolitan middle classes. These groups are largely from the historically privileged castes and the salariat classes. Studies on these middle classes have noted them to aspire for credentials, skills and resources to navigate the globalising world. I made similar observations in my thesis on how self-propertization was related to the construction of a globally mobile self, which was privileged in this setting. However, my ethnographic data has shown that the production of individual distinction remained securely bound up with familial relations. Families in turn were tied to larger kin networks. My study also counters the writings of Beck (1992) and Giddens (1991). My analysis of identity productions in these provincial, business communities' points to the furtherance of strong familial, community and regional ties, not to any disembedding of the individual from their social surroundings. My argument is that among these business communities, social mobility is not pursued by an individual in isolation but is a matter for the larger family-kin relations. Efforts at becoming global citizens did not result in an uprooting of the individual from his community; these efforts were collective and strengthened family, caste and community ties (Reiniche, 1996). Bourdieu's (1998) observations are relevant in this context. He notes that older forms of social capital, reinstated and performed in collectivities, and institutionalised over time, can offer

resistance to aggressive neo-liberal currents. Strong kinship bonding buttressed further by shared business interests resisted the ability of neo-liberal forces to individualise and atomise members of these social groups. These communities firmly located their children's future within the larger familial-social context, even as they sought to ensure that through education their children came to embody the individualised capitals that were particularly valued within the global marketplace. Unlike the Dalit labourers in the region (Carswell and De Neve, 2014), these economically well-endowed communities were favourably positioned and better equipped to use their social and cultural capitals effectively to negotiate with neo-liberal developments.

### 8.3.3 The absence of the nation in the doxic imaginary

As discussed in Chapter 2, nation and nationalism are central themes in in the history of Indian middle classes (Joshi, 2001; Fernandes, 2006; Joshi, S., 2017). Simultaneously, studies of schooling have shown that its disciplinary practices produce useful citizens, docile subjects in the case of lower classes, and elite leaders in the case of upper classes (Srivastava, 1998; Benei, 2005; Thapan, 2014). These studies have identified schools as important institutional sites where students are inducted as subject-citizens into the imagined nation. It is, therefore, striking that in the symbolic world of KI, the nation is conspicuously absent. This was partly because, being an international school, its stated aim was to produce individuals capable of navigating a globalised society. Even so, it is remarkable that the nation never figured in the everyday of the school life. The loss of the nation in the symbolic world of the school was paralleled by the absence of ideas of secularism, equality and other democratic values generally considered integral to a modern imaginary of the nation. As discussed earlier in the thesis, these notions have been central to shaping middle-class subjectivities in India. My study, therefore, points to a different moral landscape which is shaping the middle classes of contemporary India. Concurring with Fernandes's (2006) commentary, my findings also suggest a growing chasm between the middle classes and an imaginary of the nation.

Even as the nation was absent in my participants' imaginaries, the local and the regional were ever-present. The permeation of local discourses in the practices of the international school is one of the recurring observations of the study. This observation is consistent with findings that neo-liberal rationalities engender a weakening of the symbolic significance of the nation even as local affinities become stronger (Assayag and Fuller, 2005).

### 8.3.4 Private education as a doxa

As discussed through the thesis, the school ethos was deeply permeated by the logic of the market. The school ethos in general was well aligned with the dominant practices of the school's clientele who were completely accepting of the logic of educational privatisation.

There are several ramifications of these findings. When society's elites abandon state-sponsored education, the educational landscape becomes fragmented and hierarchised. A moral landscape which grounds and legitimizes private education as the norm endangers and can potentially erase the idea that education is an equalising force, that it should be the responsibility of a welfare state; that it should remain beyond the capture of market forces. When the doxic logics openly render education in the parlance of the market, it is no longer sought as a leveller of inequalities. This perhaps is the greatest threat that neo-liberal forces pose in a society which continues to be steeped in severe inequalities of caste, class and gender.

### 8.3.5 Theorising the intersections of class, caste and gender

In addition to substantive contributions to existing knowledge about schooling and social class in India, my study also makes important theoretical and methodological contributions to knowledge. The deployment of a post-structural theoretical lens makes this thesis unique among Indian research studies on schooling. This lens offered distinct advantages in developing a complex analysis. I could illuminate the particularities of schooling practices while tracing the continuities between the dominant discourses of the school and those of the wider society. This enabled a recognition that the institution of school is neither determined by larger social forces, nor autonomous of their effects. (Youdell, 2006b, 2006c). Schooling practices are entangled with larger, social discourses in indeterminate ways. I disagree with Chibber's (2006, 2013) critique that a post-structural approach produces a dismissal of political economic considerations. In my analysis, while focussing in depth on the cultural practices of schooling, I was also concerned with relating these to the larger political-economic landscape.

Without such a theoretical lens, social class would have been rendered as a static, a priori identity marker. Instead, I perceived social class as always in the making, as a performative requiring continuous recitation and one which is also continuously resisted. Further, thinking with Bourdieu (1984) helped me recognise classed practices as particular forms of embodied cultural capital. Skeggs' (2004a) writings drew my

attention to class as commodification of the body, and to the rendition of social class in the language, grammar and syntax of neo-liberal rationality. The latter had evidently penetrated the ethos of the international school where I conducted my study and the doxic logics of the business communities that the school caters to. Therefore, in adopting a post-structural lens, my study offered a unique understanding of the relationship of schooling and the production of social class.

A post-structural lens also enabled theorising the intersections of class, caste and gender. Caste, class and gender can be treated as distinct axes of analysis. However, when class is conceptualised as a performative, it is not possible to disentangle caste and gender from such performatives. These, in turn, are no longer merely stable, static identities. They become discourses which at times converge with, at times unsettle discourses of class. In deploying such an interpretive lens, I could see how class (which indexed various capitals and was linked to the larger forces of the market and the state), caste (which indexed traditional hierarchies, Brahmanical-scriptural discourses, material inequalities and dominant patriarchies) and gender (which indexed the dominant heteronormative discourses of sexuality and gender) interacted together within the dominant discourses in the school. Such an intersectional analysis is significant because segregating class from a complex social dynamic where class, caste and gender are tightly interwoven makes for a flattened and factitious analysis. In the Indian context, there are multiple claims to status and power involving a complex interplay of caste, class and gender. Further, it is not the case that caste has been replaced by class, rather caste practices endure and animate classed performatives in significant ways. My thesis, therefore, makes a significant contribution to the field of educational studies in India where an intersectional analysis has not yet been undertaken (Velaskar, 2013, 2016).

### 8.3.6 *Interrogating the concept of the Indian middle class*

I began my study by locating the concept of the middle class as central to understanding classed subjectivities in an international school in provincial India. I noted that the concept of the Indian middle class has been equated with the English educated, salaried classes. I also pointed out that merchant communities have been marginalised in the dominant narrative of the Indian middle class. I highlighted that the Indian middle class is located within a complex stratificatory order and is enjoined with caste identities (Palshikar, 2001; Fuller and Narasimhan, 2014). All these specificities imply that the concept of Indian middle class has only limited explanatory power, that it further needs

to be located within specific contexts and particular social histories. The problem is that middle class and new middle class have been used as hegemonic concepts in academic writings and deployed for making grand theoretical pronouncements about contemporary social dynamics (Baviskar and Ray, 2011). However, without making explicit the caste, gender and regional contexts, these concepts do not offer much explanatory power. My thesis unpacks the theoretical underpinnings of the concept of middle class and undertakes a complex intersectional analysis. It, therefore, offers a counter narrative in an academic context where the middle class identities are often assumed rather than interrogated by social scientists.

## 8.4 Reflections

My thesis makes significant contributions to knowledge. However, there are also some limitations of the study. A deeper engagement with the students' families and interactions with students outside the space of the school would have enabled a denser understanding of the relationship of schooling practices with the wider context. Interviewing fathers might have brought new issues into the research focus. It would also have been useful to explore through a longitudinal study, the trajectories of the participants of my study and examine how these were gendered and classed. However, this was not possible within the timescale of a doctoral research.

I hope to extend my analysis further by exploring the writings of postcolonial theorists to analyse the ethnographic observations generated in this study. One possible theme for future work is a study of what aspects of social life have changed, and what have remained deeply entrenched in the field site of my research. Another potential area for exploration is the knowledge content of the pedagogic transactions which I observed in the school.

My thesis also points to further areas of study. More studies are needed on schooling practices and other cultural practices of non-traditional middle classes in non-metropolitan regions. More research on international schools and elite private schools is needed to understand how student identities are being shaped in these institutions. The relationship of schooling with the larger society is complex and dynamic, and further theoretical exploration is required to conceptualise this relationship. Finally, there is an urgent need for a meta-analysis of the ways in which the concepts of class, middle class and new middle class have been deployed in the Indian academic context.

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# Appendix 1 - Glossary of Tamil words

*Aeyy* - An expression of exasperation

*Akka* - Elder sister

*Amma* - Amma means mother and is a respectful way of addressing an older woman.

*Anna* - Elder brother

*Ayya -akkas* - A*akka* means elder sister. Younger women workers who did cooking cleaning and nanny-work in the school were addressed as ayya-akka.

*Ayya amma* - Ayya refers to women workers who are sweepers and cleaners. *Amma* means mother and is a respectful way of addressing an older woman. In the school *ayya-ammas* were women workers who did cleaning, cooking and nanny-work for younger children. If younger, they were called *Ayya-akkas*.

*Cholam* - Locally grown cereal; a millet consumed by animals and humans. It is the largest crop grown in this area. In earlier days, this was widely eaten as daily staple in these areas. These days, it is grown mainly as cattle feed.

*Churchurupa* - Vigorous, active and energetic

*Dayyy* - Same as *De* (see below) only more excited expression

*De* - An expression for one's felt attitude/emotion. Different intonations of *de-* signify different emotions. It is generally a suffix. *De* is generally used only in close relationships.

*Idli* - Traditional breakfast in south India. It is made by steaming fermented rice-lentil batter.

*Karupa* - Black

*Kevallam* - Useless. It can be used in derogatory or teasing manner.

*Kollu patti* - Mother's grandmother, and grandfather's mother-in-law

*Kuttis* - 'Little ones', an affectionate reference to children

*Maryadai* - Respect; Kongu Nadu Tamils take pride over their language. They consider that *Maryadai* or respect is inbuilt into the local language. This they believe is mirrored in the local culture where adults are respected.

*Oet Vitu* - Local name for traditional houses, made of red tile roofs and mud walls. These days the walls are cemented. Vitu means house.

*Rowdy* - In Tamil movies the rowdy is the archetypical anti-hero character.

*Saree* - Traditional Indian women's dress. It consists of a six-yard piece of cloth which is draped around the body. In this area this is what women, especially married women wear.

# Appendix 2 - Glossary of Hindi words

*Asanas* - Yoga postures

*Amma* - Amma means mother and is a respectful way of addressing an older woman.

*Banias* - Hindu traders belonging to the merchant caste.

*Beta* - Child in Hindi used for both boys and girls.

Crore - A unit in the Indian numeric system. 1 crore equals a hundred lakhs, or ten million.

*Dhoti* - It is garment worn by men, consisting of one garment draped around the waist.

*Gajab* - It is an exclamation meaning great.

*Guru* - A teacher in Indian traditional education.

*Kathi Roll* - Similar to tortilla wraps with vegetable or meat inside.

*Marwaris* - Traders of Hindu and Jain castes originating from Rajasthan.

Lakh - Lakh is a unit in the Indian numeric system. I lakh equals a hundred thousand.

*Navaratri* - A ten day Hindu festival, celebrated at the end of autumn every year. Schools are closed at least for the last few days of the festival.

*Pooja* - Festivities and prayers

*Salwar kameez* - Traditional Indian dress for women. It consists of loose pants, a long tunic and a long scarf. It was originally from Punjab and parts of north India. Over the years it has become popular across India, including in Tamil Nadu. As with other traditional attire, today designs available are chic and contemporary.

*Saree* - Traditional Indian women's dress. It consists of a six-yard piece of cloth which is draped around the body. In this area this is what women, especially married women wear.

*Vaishya* - Upper caste Hindus, generally associated with trading and business activities.

# Appendix 3 - Glossary of colloquial usage of English words

Crore - A unit in the Indian numeric system. 1 crore equals a hundred lakhs, or ten million.

Head-weight - Local term to describe snobbish behaviour.

Jolly - It signifies being light-hearted and without a care.

Lakh - Lakh is a unit in the Indian numeric system. I lakh equals a hundred thousand.

Non-vegetarian (non-veg) - In colloquial English, it refers to meat, egg and fish products. In the school, generally chicken and eggs were served. A non-veg meal would have most or all of the vegetarian meal, plus one meat/egg dish. The cuisine, both veg and non-veg was very local.

Pass out - In colloquial English, it refers to Graduates or the process of graduating.

# Appendix 4 - References to people, places, institutions and artefacts from wider culture

Alia Bhatt - A young Bollywood film star. In a popular TV talk show, 'Koffee with Karan' (December 2013) she made a fool of herself by answering that the President of India was Prithvi Raj Chauhan – a medieval king. Her faux pas went viral on social media where she became the butt of several jokes. She took this in good stride and in short YouTube video parodying herself as 'an ignorant fool' (Genius of the Year, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pfHxl46KyZM). Subsequently, this online film also became a social media hit.

Animal Farm - A famous book by George Orwell, famous British writer.

Baskin Robbins - Brand of ice cream, sold in ice cream parlour.

Bono - Irish songwriter, singer and musician.

Children's Day - 14th November, the birthday of Jawahar Lal Nehru is celebrated as Children's Day in India. He was known to be fond of, and very popular with children.

Domino's - A pizza joint, chain of restaurants.

Dropbox - A virtual mailbox.

Dylan - Bob Dylan - American pop music icon (popular in 1960s).

Fair and lovely - A fairness cream very popular in India, manufactured by Hindustan Unilever Limited. People refer to fair and lovely as if it were a generic product name, not a brand name.

Fitbit smart watches - They are wireless, wearable devices which track heart rate and other physiological activities. Fitbit is a brand name of an American company. Students in Kovai International wore Fitbit smart watches and other similar devices.

Fruit salad - A children's rhyme (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2eHakgM8qjs)

Indian Premier League (IPL) - A professional cricket league in India.

iPhone - Smart phones manufactured by Apple company more expensive than other smart phones.

Kalam - President Kalam was former president of India. He was from Tamil Nadu and was much loved and revered there. He suffered a fatal heart attack while addressing university students in North East Hill University on 14th August 2016.

Kendriya Vidyalaya - This is the Hindi term for Central Schools. These are government schools which are meant to service Central Government employees who typically have transferrable jobs. They are considered to be one of the best among government schools in the country.

Kollywood - Tamil cinema industry

Local Area Network (LAN) - A computer network that spans a relatively small area. Most often, a LAN is confined to a single room, building or group of buildings.

Maruthur Gopalan Ramachandran (MGR) - A film star in Tamil cinema from 1930s to 1970s. Later he went on to become the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu. he died in 1987.

Manga Comics - Japanese comics very popular among these students, has a particular style of sketches and drawings.

Minecraft - A multiplayer online game involving "exploration, resource gathering, crafting and combat" Available at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minecraft (Accessed: 6 April 2017).

The New York Times - Established American daily newspaper

Papa Jones - A pizza and fast food joint

Physics- Chemistry- Biology (PCB) - In the Indian higher secondary schooling system, this is subject combination taken by students who want to study Medicine in the Undergraduate (UG) level.

Physics- Chemistry- Mathematics (PCM) - In the Indian higher secondary schooling system, this is subject combination taken by students who want to study Engineering in the Undergraduate (UG) level.

Pictionary - A game in which words are written in folded bits of paper and given to one team. One team member then must pictorially represent the word, while other team members have to guess the word correctly from the sketch drawn.

Smite - It is a "third person, multi-player, online battle arena video game". Available at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Smite_(video_game) (Accessed: 6 April 2017).

Soccer - American version of football. In India, football, not soccer, is generally played

Statement of Purpose (SOP) - In university admissions in many countries' students are asked to give an SOP - which requires them to write about themselves, showcase their best qualities and describe how the course applied for is core to their burgeoning and future identities.

The Guardian - British daily newspaper

Truth and Dare - A game in which one player asks another, "truth or dare?" If the player chooses truth, she has to truthfully answer the question asked by other players. If the player chooses to dare, she is asked to perform an action.

Vlogger - A person who makes online video blogs, for example on YouTube.

# Appendix 5 - Letter seeking permission to conduct research in the school

Dear Ms./ Mr. XXX,

My name is Suvasini. I work as Senior Assistant Professor in the Department of Elementary Education, Miranda House, University of Delhi. With a background in psychology, I primarily teach papers on Child Development, Cognitive Development and other psychology courses. I have been involved in teacher education for over a decade now; I have also conducted in- service training and workshops for school-teachers and have been involved in text- book writing for NCERT. At present, I am pursuing PhD at the Centre for International Education, University of Sussex, U.K.

In my PhD, I seek to understand experiences of young people (from professional classes) in a school setting and to a limited extent in settings outside school. My focus is on students of $11^{th}$ grade. I am interested in aspects such as schooling experiences, informal interaction among peers and the role of the family with respect to young people's education.  I want to understand how these experiences shape young people during this phase when they are just entering adulthood. I would like to conduct my study from mid-August 2015 to mid-May 2016.

I have enclosed a detailed information sheet along with this letter with further details about the study.

I request you to consider my request and sanction me permission to conduct the study. I can visit the school in person to discuss further details.

Thank you
Sincerely
Suvasini
PhD student
University of Sussex

US

University of Sussex

**Information about the research**

**Title:** To understand experiences of young people from professional/upper middle classes in a school setting and in spaces outside school

**About the study**

Since the 1990s, there is emerging in India a new middle class, distinct from the earlier middle classes in terms of lifestyle, consumption pattern, future aspirations and organization of domestic life. Research over the past two decades has documented the distinct cultural identity of this new middle class and has traced the relationship of this middle class to the changing economy. This middle class is not, however, culturally homogeneous. There are regional differences and differences arising due to diverse historical trajectories of different communities. For example, Ashraf Muslims of Lucknow as a middle class group have certain distinct features different from that of Gounders, a formerly peasant community which has recently acquired education, wealth and status and has just entered the middle class. Also, because in the Indian context the middle class includes a wide income range, there are several fractions within the middle classes. This further adds to the diverse nature of the middle classes. For example, the lower middle classes of Calcutta are noted to have significant cultural differences from the upper middle classes of Mumbai.

Despite these differences, there is one common thread that runs across all the middle classes –Schooling for children, and increasingly schooling for children in private, English medium school. While this aspiration has been widely documented, and the relationship between education and social mobility is also well known, there has not been much research on social and pedagogic processes within school and how these shape middle class identity formation. It is this gap that my research will attempt to address.

My study begins with the hypothesis that school is an important site which influences young peoples' habits, attitudes and perceptions. I consider that it is in school life that certain beliefs are acquired, habits are formed, and skills are learned. It is in school that students acquire the personal, social and cognitive characteristics to participate in the

global labour market that is now opening up to middle class Indians. To explore this question, I seek to locate myself in a school and observe everyday life in the school.

**Data Collection Plan**

I would like to observe three grade 11 classes in your school, one from each of the subject stream Sciences, Arts and Humanities and Commerce. My primary method will be one of sitting quietly in one corner of the classroom and taking paper-pencil notes of ongoing activity. I would like to conduct observations thrice a week, one full day in each class and continue this from mid - August 2015 until mid-May 2016. I would like to observe ongoing teaching-learning activities, other activities that grade 11 students participate in such as daily assembly and extracurricular activities such as sports and music. While observing, I will remain a silent spectator, and not interfere. In addition to this, I would also like to interact with school-teachers, observe Parents Teachers Meetings, and any public event in the school, such as Annual Day celebrations and farewell parties.

After 2 months of such observations, I will invite some (around 10 young people) to volunteer for a more intense study on them outside the school including interactions with their families. I will seek permission separately for this (from the students and their families). Alongside this, I will continue to observe classrooms through the year.

I would also like to study public, non-confidential documents of the school such as web pages, prospectus, brochures and any publicity materials, and documents internally circulated to parents and students.

However, I am also open to the possibility of a shorter period of observation, or a more flexible approach so as to suit the school situation. For example, I can visit a school once a week instead of thrice a week (and conduct my study in two/three rather than in one school).

Needless to say, all data gathered will be kept confidential and used only for purpose of my PhD research. Further, while writing my PhD, I will change all contextual information so that the school itself cannot be identified by anyone. However, if the school so wishes, I can retain the name of the school also (for example, studies on The Doon School and Rishi Valley School have retained the name of the school).

**What can I give back to the school?**

In return for permitting me to conduct this research, I can offer my services for free to the school. I have a Master's in Psychology and have many years of teacher training experience. I can contribute to the school life in a positive and supportive way. For example, I can work with students who need help in their studies. My exact contribution to the school life can be worked out with the school.

**About myself**

I have done my Masters in Psychology and M.Phil in Education from University of Delhi. I am at present working as Senior Assistant Professor in Department of Elementary Education, Miranda House. I have been associated with pre-service teacher training for over ten years and have conducted workshops with school-teachers on topics related to Child Development and Learning. At present, I am pursuing PhD from University of Sussex, under the supervision of Dr. Barbara Crossouard.

**Contact Details**

C. Suvasini

Doctoral Scholar

Centre for International Education

University of Sussex

Email: xxxxxx

Ph: xxxxxxxx

# Appendix 6 - Sample of notes taken during classroom observation

Why P[M]?
wearing of Saree

Date / Page

we

we will start with something
called contribute.

A pair of shoes —
        Jean pair — Rs. 2500.
pair of jean
    p

which 2 roses similar.
    Print (Variable —
For manufacturing this, an
pair of jean — direct —
Variable car Rs 500/—

MRP — Rs 5000
Di — Rs 500.
Contribute is please undulang
Contribution for P-Av. variable
                    cost

Date / Page

2500 - 500 = 2000 -

contribution towards everything up -

for manufacturing

direct var direct
close to fab ----
want to go to dispensary -

Wen I minus DC from
push - towards everything
fixed var - remaining
money is called profit

FC = Rs 19,000/

students coming in
By selling 1 pair of jeans
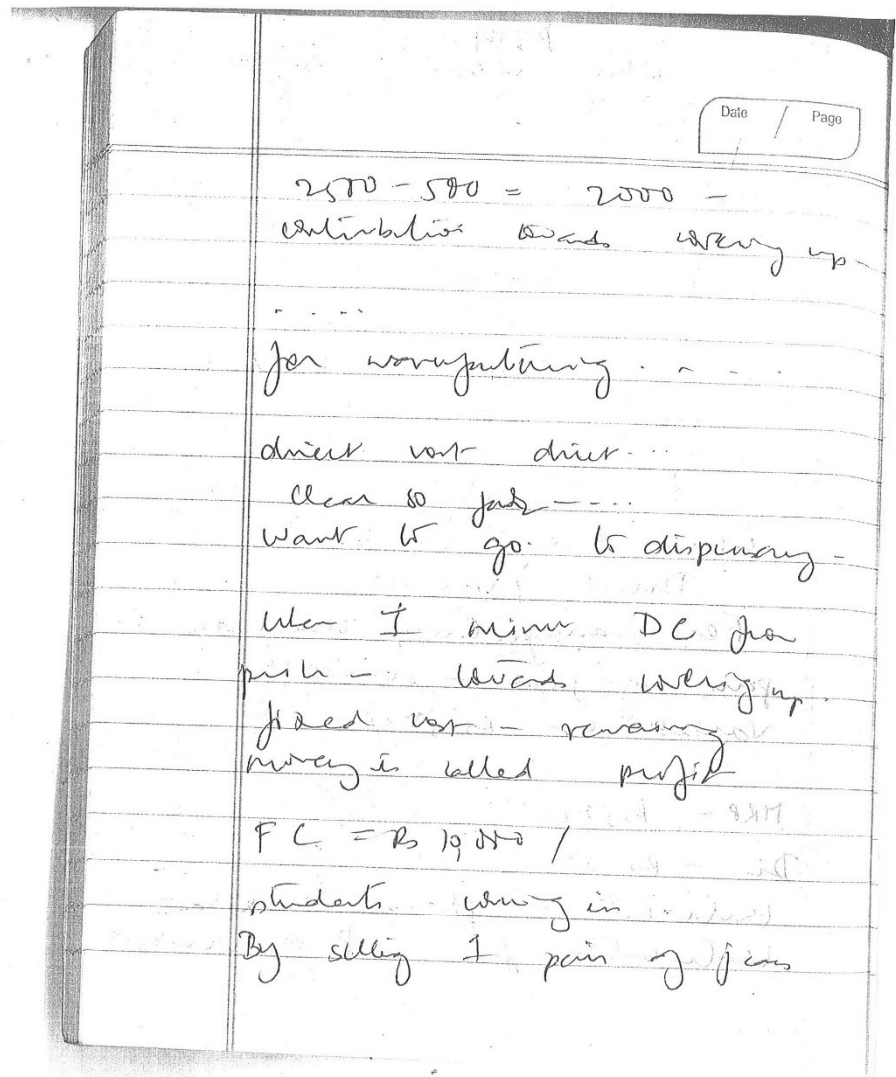
2000/- towards FC.
F·C cannot be covered
by one pair of jeans —
2000 towards F

how many jeans to cover entire
FC
means — 5 jean —

over & above how much I sell —
5 — is called profit

Break even quantity —
over & above 5 jeans how much
ever you sell — profit..

clean all of you —.

# Appendix 7 - Sample excerpts of transcribed fieldnotes[60]

**Excerpt 1 - 15th October**

(this excerpt is the elaboration of the sample of classroom notes provided in Appendix 6)

After this I go to the B&M class at 9:40. The teacher is wearing aaa… a blue colour sari. So, ok. Then after that B&M class starts. So, ma'am is wearing a blue sari. Two girls are talking to her and they ask her "Is blue the colour of today?" Ok.

Then, the teacher asks, "All notes upto date?"

Aishwarya says, "Didn't get PPT. I completed all, aaa….. only ALF."

"I completed", Somebody says, "I completed only alf." Then the teacher laughs at alf and she says, "Say Half".

Then the teacher says that, you know, "If you marry a girl called Harshita, will you keep calling her Arshita? And if you have a child and name her Hansini, will you keep calling her Ansini?" The teacher tries to make Krishna keep saying, this happens with, I think Krishna. She tries to keep making Krishna say Harshita and Hansini. He is not able to.

Then one student says, "Wife, you know….something like he will look for a wife with some specific name or something." Then the….. says, "Wife kandapidianta" Like he has already found his wife or something, somebody says or he will do it himself.

Then the teacher says, "The only qualification that she should have is that her name should not start from H. Ok" Now the teacher is making fun here of the Tamil accent in which it is not possible to say Ha. They all say aa. They say alf, arshita. They are not able to use the ha sound. Hmm.

Then students are asking teacher, "Why are you wearing a sari?" and the teacher says, "Because today is photo session with 12th standard students." Hmm.

Then teacher says, "We will start something called contribution. A pair of shoes, jean pair, rupees two thousand five hundred. Pair of jeans…hmm… which 2 costs similar?

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[60] My field notes have real names of students. In the excerpts provided in all the appendices, I have changed these to pseudonyms.

Direct variable. For manufacturing this, a pair of jeans, direct variable cost, rupees 500. MRP is rupees 5000. Direct rupees 500. Contribution is, please understand, contribution is p-average variable cost. 2500-500=2000. Contribution towards covering up … for manufacturing. Direct cost, direct. Clear so far." Want to go, you know, somebody's probably expressing, feeling unwell.

She says, "Do you want to go to dispensary?"

Now basically contribution is the money that is earned after the initial costs are covered up. Ok. Then the teacher says, "When I minus DC from price, towards covering up fixed cost. Remaining money is called profit. FC=rupees 10000."

Students are coming in, into the class. Teacher says, "By selling one pair of jeans, rupees 2000 towards FC. FC that is fixed cost cannot be covered by one pair of jeans. 2000 towards FC. How many jeans to cover aaa…. Earlier FC?"

Chorus answer "5 jeans".

"Over and above how much I sell 5, how much I sell over and above 5 jeans, that is called profit. Break even quantity. Over and above 5 jeans, how much ever you sell, profit. Clear all of you?"

Now this teacher generally has an accent which says, "Clear all of you (loud pitch)" and she has also got a very Tamil accent. Ok.

Shreyas asks the teacher a question then the teacher is answering in Tamil.

"How much quantity? First, they will decide the quantity." Ok.

Shreyas "Variable cost not accurate."

Teacher: "Why? They can make it."

There is reading from slide…."overhead is dot dot dot…. "

"We know that profit is equal to T-FC. How can we increase profit? Reduce variable cost or increase number of products. Earlier you cover up the fixed cost. Here, you, you will get profit". Goes, ok, the teacher voice goes at a quite a high pitch.

**Excerpt 2 - 29th January - Educational trip to Kerala**

So, the trip began on Friday, the 29th. I arrived in school along with Pankajam. It was around 8:15 that I came with Pankajam. I was told to leave my bags at the front, near one of the gates where the vehicle was parked and at that time, I…after parking, after

keeping my bag there, I went to, I called up Radhika. Radhika had said the previous day that we would have our breakfast together. So, I waited for some time. I went in, you know, at that time, they were going to have a small gathering and they were going to discuss with the students, sort of preparation for them before the trip. Aaa…but before that I went and had my breakfast. I went downstairs and I was hoping Radhika would also come but she got a little late. After that I went for this..soon she came and when she came, she also had breakfast, in fact, she was a little late for everything and she had to do a lot of signing off papers because she is in the, she lives in the residential accommodation and therefore she was, that was taking some of her time. So, in fact I got her luggage from the residential, from the girl's hostel. I brought it to the front. Now, after that, I attended this meeting. In this meeting, Sumangala was there. In this meeting, Radha madam was there. Kesavan Sir was there. Anthnony came in and went out and Radhika came in and then she went out because she needed to bring something from her hostel. Some of the things which struck me during the meeting, the, the, not all the students were there. They were coming in and going out. Aaa…the…the things that were told in the meeting are, Kesavan, he said one thing. He said that you must, you know, aaa…not transgress privacy. You must respect the privacy of other people and you must not allow other people to aaa…he used a word, 'violate' your privacy or something. Ok. Basically, he said if you take photographs, take it only of yourselves. Do not take of other people and certainly do not post photographs on Facebook. Aa..,then he said, be careful that others should also not do the same, same to you and photographs should not go online. Then he said something about sharing emails and phone numbers. He said this is a place where you will encounter many people. Do not go easily and share your phone numbers and emails because aaa…because you never know what can happen to these photographs and emails and I do not remember whether he said, this is a special caution for girls or not but at several points during the trip, aa…there were concerns that both Anthnony and Radhika expressed that girls need to be safeguarded, protected and boys must help them, must at least ensure their safety. Boys must protect them. Aaa…after that, these people were told they would not be allowed, they should not do online gaming, at which point, I know that some students came up and asked Radha ma'am, "Will there be a slot for us when we can do online gaming?" and there was a little bit of laughter and ……hmm…

Then Sumangala had said that there would be one dormitory in which all of us have to stay and Radha said, "No, this is an International school and KI is an international school and in KI we provide dormitories in which there is an accommodation for 4-5 people. So surely in XXX International, the accommodation will be decent as it is, as it is in KI." Aa….I think that's, that's about it. No, I wish I could remember this thing about…I wish I could remember this about aaa…about what he said about privacy. Let me just try and remember the phrase that he used (Privacy infringement, infringing privacy).

This is something that student's kept repeating whenever they were taking photographs, they kept repeating this again and again and for them it was a, it was a phrase causing much amusement. Aaaa….Suchitra, just a couple of other things. Suchitra was wearing a sleeveless. I think some teacher told her that she should put on some more clothes because it will be cold once we move up the higher altitudes. Aa…students had come in non-uniform clothes and they were, girls were wearing, I think, everyone was wearing trousers or something and tops. That's the kind of dress they were wearing.

Aa..Now from the DP batch that I know, the second year DP Batch, these were the students who went: Santosh, Arun, Sriram, Raghu, Nikhilesh, Badri, aaaa….then Surya, Niranjan, , Rishi, Shreyas hmm. Aa..from the girls these were the girls who went, Nityal, Ashwarya, Suchitra, Anitha, Vani. So, 15 from this year and from the junior batch, there were… and Rajat was also there. So, 16 from the second-year group and there were certain students from the junior batch. Now, this is something that I have been asking both the batch aa the students who went and I today after coming back, I asked the other students why they, they didn't go. I asked Geetha. I asked Bharati ma'am. I asked, you know, Ravi, why he didn't go. It was a matter of self-selection. Students who wanted to go could go. They had to make the payment and they could go and aaa….this whole selection, this whole self-selection process whereby certain students felt  they were comfortable enough to go and certain others students did not feel comfortable enough to go. Each student had been, I think asked to pay I think 3000 or 6000 rupees. This is something I need to check. So, even if it was 6000, it was very much within the affordability range of the students.

Aaa…. after this the trip started. There were two buses which, which went. One was the bus which was ca, which had all these students. The teachers accompanying were Anthony, Kritin, Radhika and myself. There was another bus which was actually a

school van. In this school van, all our luggages were kept and the two, there were three drivers totally who were you know, with both the vehicles, probably there were, yeah there were three drivers who accompanied us. Aa… so before we began the journey, everyone settled in. Radhika and I, we sat right in the middle of the bus and before we began, Anthnony said something. He said, you know, he said, "Those of you who believe in God, close your eyes and let us make a small prayer, a silent prayer that the journey should go well" and nearly everyone, even I actually closed my eyes and prayed and prayed that the journey should go well.

# Appendix 8 - Excerpt from log entries of school visits and interviews conducted

**Sample record of log entries of school visits**

| S. No | Date | Details of field work | Details of time spent | Time in hours/days | Whether recorded or not |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | January 13 | Visited school chatted with teachers –attended Pongal festivities (harvest festival) | 10:30-1:00 | 2 and half hours | yes |
| 2 | January 20 | Went to school; told students to inform parents about meeting me in PTM/ took permission from Kesavan and Radha; attended meeting for trip with Sumangala, Anthony and Radhika | 11:00 a.m to 12:00 noon | 1 hour | yes |
| 3 | January 21 | Went shopping with Radhika | 2:30-9:00 p.m | 6 and half hours | yes |
| 4 | January 22 | PTM – contacted parents | 12:30 p.m to 5:00 p.m. | 4 and half hours | Yes |
| 5 | January 26 | Interviewed Dhanush's mom | Interview between 11:00 and 11:45; visit between 10:30-11:45 | 1 hour and 15 minutes | Meeting recorded; my notes about meeting all parents recorded |
| (some entries omitted) | | | | | |
| 13 | Feb 4 | Class observations | | 100 minutes (also in Excel file) | yes |

| 14 | Feb 5 | Interview with Sheena – English teacher | | 45 minutes | Yes |
|----|-------|------------------------------------------|-------------|----------------------|---------------------------|
| 15 | Feb 8 | Interview with Vani's mom | 9:30-10:30 | 1 hour | yes |
| 16 | Feb 9 | Interview Bala's mom | 11:00-11:35 | 35 minutes | Yes, translated in English |
| 17 | Feb 6 | Attended cultural fest | 6:00-10:00 | 4 hours | yes |
| 18 | Feb 10 | Interview Ravi's mom | 12:55-1:15 | | Yes, translated |
| 19 | Feb 11 | Interview Anand's mom | 11:30-12:35 | 1 hour | yes |
| 20 | Feb 13 | Interview Arun's mom | 10:40-12:15 | 1 hour 35 minutes | yes |
| 21 | Feb 15 | Interview with Ashwarya mon | | | yes |
| 22 | Feb 19 | Interview with Suchitra's mom | | | yes |
| 23 | Feb 21 | Interview with Ravi's mom and dad | | | yes |
| 24 | Feb 22 | Interview with Murugan and Aarti – maths teachers | | | yes |

# Appendix 9 - Record of observations conducted in the school

| Subject / date | TOK t.period | dur | ENG t.period | dur | HINDI t.period | dur | MATHS t.period | dur | ECO t.period | dur | B&M t.period | dur | PHYSICS t.period | dur | BIO t.period | dur | CHEMIS t.period | dur | FREE TIME t.period | dur | OTHER t.period | dur | descrption | ASSEMBLY t.period | dur | CAS t.period | dur |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 5th august | 3:00-3:3:50 | 50 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 6th august | | | 12:00-12:50 | 50 | | | | | | | 11:10-12:00 | 50 | | | | | 8:40-10:20 | 100 | | | | | | | | 1:10-2:50 | 100 |
| 7th august | | | 11:00-12:50 | 100 | | | 1:10-2:00 | 50 | | | | | 9:20-11:00 | 100 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 9th septt | | 50 | | | | 50 | | | | | 9:30-10:20 | 50 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 10th septt | | 50 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1:50-4:10 | 110 |
| 11th septt | | 50 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 14th septt | 11:15-1:00 | 110 | | | | 50 | | | | | | | | 100 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 16th septt | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 10:30-4:45 | 360 | yoga, alcohol, food, pictionary | | | | |
| 18th septt | | | 3:50-4:45 | 50 | | | | | 3:10-3:50 | 50 | | | | | | | | | 12:00-12:40 | 40 | | | | | | | |
| 21st septt | | | 12:00-12:50 | 50 | 3:10-4:00 | 50 | 4:00-4:45 | 45 | | | | | | | 1:10-2:50 | 100 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 23rd septt | 3:00-3:50 | 50 | 11:10-12:40 | 90 | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1:10-2:20 | 100 | | | | | | | | | |
| 25th septt | | | | | | | 11:10-12:50 | 100 | 2:00-3:50 | 110 | | | | | | | | | 1:10-1:40 | 30 | | | | | | | |
| 28th sept | 12:00-12:50 | 50 | 11:10-12:00 | 50 | 3:10-4:00 | 50 | 1:10-2:50; 4:00-4:50 | 150 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 30th sept | | | 11:10-12:50 | 100 | | | | | | | | | 1:10-2:50 | 100 | | | | | | | 3:10-4:00 | 50 | | | | | |
| 1st oct | | | | | | | | | | | 10:20-11:10 | 50 | | | | | | | | | 9:05-10:20 | 75 | | | | | |
| 7th oct | | | 11:10-12:50 | 100 | | | | | | | 10:20-11:10 | 50 | 1:10-2:50 | 100 | | | | | 9:30-10:20 | 50 | | | | | | | |
| 8th oct | | | | | 8:40-9:30 | 50 | | | | | 10:20-11:20 | 50 | 12:00-12:50 | 50 | 11:20-12:10 | 50 | | | 9:30-10:20 | 50 | | | | | | 1:10-2:30 | 80 |
| 10th oct | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 10:00-1:30 | 210 | foodstall hanging around | | | | |
| 12th oct | 12:00-12:50 | 50 | 11:10-12:00 | 50 | | | | | | | | | 9:30-11:10 | 100 | | | | | | | 8:50-9:30 | 40 | intt:arun | 8:40-8:50 | 10 | | |
| 15th oct | | | | | | | 10:20-11:10 | 50 | | | 9:30-10:20 | 50 | 12:00-12:50 | 50 | | | | | | | 8:40-9:30:11:10-12:00 | 100 | hind/frnch/talikng | | | | |
| 19th oct | | | 12:00-12:50 | 50 | | | | | | | 8:40-9:30 | 50 | 9:30-11:10 | 100 | | | | | | | 11:15-12:00 | 45 | presentation by xxx college | | | | |
| 20th oct | | | | | | | | | | | 9:40-10:30 | 50 | | | | | | | | | 9:00-1:00 | 240 | PTM | | | | |
| 26th oct | 12:00-12:50 | 50 | 11:10-12:00 | 50 | | | | | | | 10:20-11:10 | 50 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 28th oct | 3:05-3:55 | 50 | 11:25-12:50 | 100 | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1:20-2:50 | 100 | | | | | | | | | |
| 29th oct Thursday | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 12:00-12:50 | 50 | talking to students | | | 1:10-4:45 | 215 |
| 2nd nov | 11:10-12:00; 3:00-3:50 | 100 | | | | | | | | | 12:00-12:50 | 50 | 9:15-10:20 | 65 | | | | | | | 10:20-11:10 | 50 | talking to students | 8:45-9:15 | 30 | 1:10-4:50 | 220 |
| 4th nov | | | 11:10-21:50 | 100 | | | | | | | 10:20-11:10 | 50 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 5th nov | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 12:00-3:00 | 180 | talking to students, questionnaire | | | | |
| 14th nov | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 9:00-9:30 and 1:00-3:00 | 180 | talking to stdents and watching childrens day functions | | | | |
| 16-Nov | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 12:15-3:50 | 200 | talking to students | | | | |
| 19-Nov | | | | | | | | | 1:10-2:50 | 100 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 3:00-4:00 | 60 |
| 23-Nov | | | | | 3:00-3:50 | 50 | | | | | | | 2:00-2:50 | 50 | | | | | | | 12:10-12:40 | 30 | talk to teachers | | | | |
| 26-Nov | | | 10:20-11:3 | 50 | | | 11:10-12:00 | 50 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 30-Nov | | | 10:20-11:10 | 50 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | not known | 60 | | | | | |
| 02-Dec | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | not known | 30 | | | | | |
| 03-Dec | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | not known | 30 | | | | | |
| 09-Dec | unknown | 55 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 10-Dec | unknown | 55 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | int students | 30 | | | | | |
| 25-Feb | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 11:30-2:50 | 200 | boys' play, talk to students, teachers, and some science experiments | | | | |
| 29-Feb | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | duringday | 50 | doing exptt, talking to teacher | | | | |
| 04-Feb | | | | | | | 9:30-10:20 | 50 | 10:20-11:10 | 50 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

## Sample record of observations conducted in the school

| Subject | TOK | | ENG | | HINDI | | MATHS | | ECO | | B&M | | PHYSICS | | BIO | | CHEMIS | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| date | t.period | duration | t.period | duration | t.period | duration | t.period | duration | t.period | duration | t.period | duration | t.period | duration | t.period | duration | t.period | duration |
| 5th august | 3:00-3:3:50 | 50 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 6th august | | | 12:00-12:50 | 50 | | | | | | | 11:10-12:00 | 50 | | | | | 8:40-10:20 | 100 |
| 7th august | | | 11:00-12:50 | 100 | | | 1:10-2:00 | 50 | | | | | 9:20-11:00 | 100 | | | | |
| 9th septt | | | | 50 | | | | 50 | | | 9:30-10:20 | 50 | | | | | | |
| 10th septt | | | | 50 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 11th septt | | | | 50 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 14th septt | 11:15-1:00 | 110 | | | | | | 50 | | | | | | 100 | | | | |
| 16th septt | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 18th septt | | | 3:50-4:45 | 50 | | | | | 3:10-3:50 | 50 | | | | | | | | |
| 21st septt | | | 12:00-12:50 | 50 | 3:10-4:00 | 50 | 4:00-4:45 | 45 | | | | | | | 1:10-2:50 | 100 | | |
| 23rd septt | 3:00-3:50 | 50 | 11:10-12:40 | 90 | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1:10-2:20 | 100 |
| 25th septt | | | | | | | 11:10-12:50 | 100 | 2:00-3:50 | 110 | | | | | | | | |
| 28th sept | 12:00-12:50 | 50 | 11:10-12:00 | 50 | 3:10-4:00 | 50 | 1:10-2:50; 4:00-4:50 | 150 | | | | | | | | | | |
| 30th sept | | | 11:10-12:50 | 100 | | | | | | | | | 1:10-2:50 | 100 | | | | |
| 1st oct | | | | | | | | | | | 10:20-11:10 | 50 | | | | | | |
| 7th oct | | | 11:10-12:50 | 100 | | | | | | | 10:20-11:10 | 50 | 1:10-2:50 | 100 | | | | |

## Appendix 10 - Student Questionnaire 1

**US**

University of Sussex

**Questionnaire for first year DP students**

**Please take 10 minutes to fill this out**

Name:

Date of birth:

Father's Name:

Father's occupation:

Mother's Name:

Mother's occupation:

Address:

Mother Tongue:

Are you a        a.)Day scholar          b.) Weekly boarder     c.)Full Boarder

Subjects taken:

  a.)  At HL
  b.)  At SL
  c.)  In which subject is your Extended Essay

Since which class are you studying in this school?

Where were you studying before?

Which course do you plan to pursue after 12th standard?

Have you identified any specific university? If yes, give details.

Are you taking any coaching (for example for outside school? If yes, provide details.

Is there any other information about yourself that you would like to provide?

**THANK YOU!**
**Suvasini**
**Doctoral Researcher**
**University of Sussex**
**October 2015**

# Appendix 11 - Student Questionnaire 2

**US**
University of Sussex

**Questionnaire for second year DP students**

**Please take 10-20 minutes to fill this out**

**PLEASE DO NOT MENTION YOUR NAME OR GENDER ANYWHERE**

**IF YOU DO NOT WISH TO ANSWER ANY QUESTION, PLEASE FEEL FREE**

**TO LEAVE IT OUT**

**DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION**

1. Approximate annual family income
   OR
   Approximate monthly family income
   OR
   Don't know

2. Religion/ community
3. Which of these categories do you see yourself as fitting into?
   a. Upper middle class
   b. Upper class
   c. Middle class
   d. Don't know/can't say

If you wish to, you may substantiate your answer to the above question (question no 3.)

**QUESTIONS RELATED TO SCHOOL SUBJECT**

1. What's your favourite subject?
   Why?

2. What's the subject you like the least?
   Why?

**QUESTIONS RELATED TO ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND MOTHER TONGUE**

1. What's your mother tongue?
2. Can you read in your mother tongue?
3. What are the last three different things (for example, book, newspaper, magazine) you read in your mother tongue?
4. Can you write in your mother tongue?
5. What are the last three things you read in English (apart from syllabus books?)

6.  Between English and mother tongue which language are you more comfortable in?

### QUESTIONS RELATED TO FREE PERIODS IN SCHOOL

7.  On an average, how many periods per day are you free?
8.  How do you spend this time?

**THANK YOU!**
**Suvasini**
**Doctoral Researcher**
**University of Sussex, April 2016**

# Appendix 12 - Students diaries/e-journals

**Instructions for student diaries/e-journals**

Dear student,

I invite you to creatively participate in this exercise. I am giving you some minimum instructions you are also free to innovate.

You have to keep a regular diary/e-journal. You could make an entry once a week, or more often if you wish. After some months (in March-April 2016), I would like to conduct an interview with you about your diary entries. I will invite you to talk to me about your entries and share some of the entries. The diary/e-journal itself will remain with you.

**Indicative topics for diary entries/e-journal**

- What was the most interesting and eventful thing that happened last week? Why was this important to you?
- What was your daily routine like last week?
- What did you do over the weekend?

# Appendix 13 - Guiding topics and indicative questions for students' interviews

**Topics and questions for students' interviews**

Related to self-narratives
*Leading questions:*
Describe yourself. If there was something in your situation or in your life or about yourself that you could change, what would it be?

Related to studies after 12th and foreign education
*Leading questions:*
What do you plan to do after 12$^{th}$? In case the student talks about going abroad, questions on how he/she imagines life and studies in that country.

Related to occupational career
*Leading question*
What do you plan to do after studies?

Related to everyday life
*Leading questions:*
What is your weekday like? What is your weekend like?

# Appendix 14 - Excerpt from student interview

**Excerpt from interview with Aishwarya**

S: Have you been...you have volunteered to keep the diaries, right?

Aishwarya: Yeah.

S: Did you keep any?

Aishwarya: Yeah sometimes I entered...not very frequently.

S: Okay, you have it with you?

Aishwarya: Not now.

S: Can you bring it sometime?

Aishwarya: Yeah sure.

S: Now how will you...just can you describe yourself?

Aishwarya: Myself, yeah. I am Aishwarya. I am 17 years old. I am very optimistic, and I like doing the IB because it's, because the subjects that I have chosen are of my interest and because I have interest it's like, it's one of the motivations for myself.

S: Which subjects have you chosen?

Aishwarya: Chosen...business management, psychology, physics, as higher level and French as initial and English and Math as standard level.

S: Okay, okay. Then anything else you want to say about yourself?

Aishwarya: I love racing. My few hobbies are to help...

S: What is racing?

Aishwarya: Racing like bike racing, car racing, Formula 1 car like that...

S: Watching racing...

Aishwarya: Yeah watching but I have also had the chance of being in one but then at the last moment my dad said no. That's very heartbreaking but then...

S: What age do you need to be for racing?

Aishwarya: It doesn't really matter.

S: So which racing did you get a chance to do in Coimbatore?

Aishwarya: Cart...cart racing.

S: Okay, but you know how to drive, ride a bike?

Aishwarya: Yes.

S: And do you?

Aishwarya: Yeah I do. Sometimes.

S: You don't have the license to drive I guess.

Aishwarya: Hmmm. Not yet.

S: Okay and do you like to drive fast?

Aishwarya: Yeah, that's the thrill of it like the adrenaline rush....

S: So do you do it?

Aishwarya: Not really fast but then I like sitting at my dad's bike, at the back and then he'll drive it fast...like that...and then yeah I love doing community services and help people and it's just that the joy when you get that something that you don't need in your life, that they need and then you give it to them and yeah...

S: So do you do quite a lot of that?

Aishwarya: Yeah.

S: Like what?

Aishwarya: I visit differently abled school children and spend time with them. Then sometimes to old age homes and orphanages but we go and give them food and spend time with them where they treat us as their own grandchildren and siblings.

S: So you go with your family or...

Aishwarya: Yeah I go with my dad for the old age home because he's the one who provides...

S: Okay. Now tell me, describe something that you are not.

Aishwarya: Okay. Though being very optimistic, sometimes I get affected by people's opinions, but they are very close to me, and if they are close to me and they think I need different...like who I am actually... that person... and then if I love something and if I lose it then it's hard for me to move on and think...and then I am not very easy going

with the guys, when they take advantage I will stand up for myself and then girls annoy me, I am not very easy going like the other girls.

S: Like in what way guys take advantage?

Aishwarya: Like when they, they'll be just sitting in the class and people will be commenting about girls at the back, may be they just, girls say that they are ignoring them but they are actually giving them the power to keep on talking but to an extent ignoring is fine but if you have already let them take that advantage I think it has to be stopped or else people will just go on about you...and that might affect them and their image in the future, when they get jobs, get proposals for marriage or any other thing...yeah.

S: And what would you do.?

Aishwarya: Yeah just talk back, yeah these days I have become very sensitive, I am not strong these days because... I don't know I have become very sensitive and though I get angry, tears start falling...that's one of the weakness that I don't want to have right now.

S: What do you want to do?

Aishwarya: About it?

Aishwarya: Yeah right, that's the point. I mean it is their business if they are talking and then they...I despise them as a person and not the girl... it defines the personality of the guy and not the girl he's commenting on...expectations he has from a girl and stuff...it describes about him...but still in public it has to be stopped... he shouldn't comment.

S: Yeah, true. Now if there was something that you would like to change about yourself, your situation, your life, your context, what would that one thing be?

Aishwarya: Well, I wish the people in India are very open minded...well, my parents are open minded and I am really thankful and grateful but then about me I would like to change that if I set my mind to something and if I don't want something I will never do it...I mean I am just reluctant to proceed any further on that specific matter. So I would like to myself to you know just consider other's views sometimes and then take decisions.

S: Could you give an example of this?

Aishwarya: Okay. First of all I didn't want to join IB and then I was only influenced, when we came to school to get our, to get my transfer certificate and then they influenced me, they influenced me because I let them to change my view, I actually started listening rather than just hearing...

S: So what were you wanting to do?

Aishwarya: I just wanted to go to state board, just enjoy my life and get done with it, join some local college and enjoy life and go back to my dad's business. But now after getting to know what IB you know gives, the exposure and everything I am really interested and the subject choices that I have chosen are all of my interest so...I want to achieve greater heights with...

S: So did your parents tell you?

Aishwarya: Yeah my mom wanted me to do IB, my dad doesn't really...what to say...he's not much interested in my education but I mean until 12th grade, he's like fine with KI or any other school I want to but when it comes to college he'll take a say in that...but my mom wanted me to do for me to do the IB, but then I think I didn't want to but then when we came to get my transfer certificate

S: Oh you were studying here before that?

Aishwarya: Yeah I am studying in this school from 6th grade.

# Appendix 15 - Guiding topics and indicative questions for interviewing teachers and other staff

**Topics and questions for teachers' interviews**

Educational background and prior experience

*Questions:*
Where have you worked prior to joining Kovai International school? What is your educational background? How did you come to join this school?
Related to IB curriculum

*Questions:*
What is your understanding of the requirements of the IB curriculum? In what ways is this different from other curricula? How does the IB curriculum compare with other curricula, for example that of the Tamil Nadu state board and Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE).

Related to teaching in KI

*Questions:*
Did you undergo any training before you started teaching in KI? Are students in KI different from those you encountered in other places? Is the local culture in Coimbatore and the school different from the culture in other places? Are you satisfied with the recently announced results of the final year IBDP batch? With reference to my research participants, is there any difference between boys and girls in terms of how they respond in the class? What are these students aiming to study after 12th?  Would you categorise the student community of this school as middle class?

**Additional topics for administrative staff**

Related to the history and the organisational structure of the school

*Questions:*
Please tell me about the history of the school. What is the total staff strength? Describe the organisational structure of the school. what is the procedure for IB registration?

Related to teacher recruitment and training practices

*Questions:*
Is there a policy about teacher recruitment? Are there particular types of candidates you are looking for? Describe the details of the recruitment process? Is there a policy about firing a teacher? What kind of instance may result in a teacher being fired? Is there any

training conducted for the teachers after their recruitment? Is there a dress code for teachers and for non-teaching staff?

Related to the school's ideology and vision and policies related to discipline and surveillance

*Questions:*

What is the vision of the school? What kind of student does it want to prepare? What is the purpose of having cameras in corridors and in classrooms? How are these cameras used by the school administration? What is the work done by the IT department? What is the work that the IT department does? What is the language related policy of the school? What is the policy about the school regarding student indiscipline and punishment?

Related to fee structure of the school and its clientele

*Questions:*
What is the fee-structure of the school? What kind of clientele does the school seek to attract? What kind of families/communities send their children to the school? Does the school advertise in local media? Are there any outreach programmes for student recruitment? What is the admissions process?

**Topics and questions related for interview with various non-teaching staff**

Related to background

*Questions:*

Please tell me a little about your family background. Are you from this region, or from another region?

Related to the work in the school

*Questions:*

When did you join the school? How did you come to know about the school? Describe your job profile in the school? What has your experience been of working in this school? Do students and teachers treat you with respect?

*Questions for the in-charge of kitchen:*

What is the school food menu? What is served in terms of non-vegetarian food? Is there a different menu for boarders? Food preparation practices related to vegetarian/non-vegetarian food, nutrition content, and use of fuel and machinery in the kitchen.

# Appendix 16 - Letter distributed to parents requesting for an interview

## US

### University of Sussex

**Dear Sir/Madam,**

My name is Suvasini. I am a Doctoral Researcher at Centre for International Education, University of Sussex, UK. My other identity is that I am faculty member at Miranda House, University of Delhi where I am at present Senior Assistant Professor in the Department of Elementary Education.

The title of my research is *"To understand experiences of young people from professional/upper middle class/elite families in a school setting and in spaces outside school."* As you perhaps already know, I have been closely interacting with IBDP students since September 2015.

I would like to conduct interviews with parents of DP students. The interviews will seek to understand parents'/families' role in shaping young people's educational success and future career trajectories. I would also like to know about parents' own educational biographies.

I request for an interview with you.

Suvasini
Doctoral Researcher
January 2016
Ph: xxxxx; xxxxx
Email: xxxxxxxx

# Appendix 17 - Guiding topics and indicative questions for parents' interviews

**Topics and questions for first round of parents' interviews**

Topic – Background information
*Questions:*
Since when have you been living in Coimbatore/ Tiruppur/Erode?  Where have you lived before? What is your occupational background?

Topic – Time and effort towards son's /daughter's education
*Questions:*
What kind of time and effort do you spend towards your son's /daughter's educational and other activities – for example, do you have to oversee his/her homework to ensure completion of the same? Do you have to drive him/her around to tuition centres or hobby classes?

Topic – Aspirations for their child
*Questions:*
What are your aspirations for their son/daughter? Is this what your son/daughter also aspires for? How are conflicts (if there are any) resolved? What is the kind of preparation being taken by the family towards this goal?

Topic – "Educational mobility" across generations
*Questions:*
What has been your educational career? What is your understanding about the contemporary educational situation in the city/state/country? Does the IB curriculum give an advantage to your child? If so, how?

**Topics and questions for second round of parent's interviews**

The questions in the interviews were based on the conversations in the earlier interview round. Additionally, I asked questions about relevance of caste in present-day life, gender differences in society, marriage related practices in their community and whether they identified themselves as middle class.

# Appendix 18 - Curricular objectives of subjects and courses available in the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme

*Theory of Knowledge (TOK)*

It orients students towards the interpretive nature of knowledge, and requires them to reflect on personal, ideological biases. It introduces them to different areas of knowledge, linking knowledge with cultural repositories and academic disciplines. The course is assessed through a written essay and an oral presentation.

*Creativity Activity and Service (CAS)*

This course requires students to participate in a wide range of challenging, purposeful activities, and reflect on their experiences. Further, students have to undertake projects on one or a combination of multiple strands of CAS.

*Extended Essay (EE)*

It seeks to prepare students for undergraduate research. It requires them to undertake an independent investigation on a self-chosen topic related to one or more of their subjects. The student is required to produce a written paper and is also assessed through a *viva-voce.*

*Mathematics*

Courses in mathematics seek to develop students' mathematical knowledge and refine their powers abstraction and logical thinking. The courses are designed to enable students to pursue university degrees. There are four courses in the mathematics stream, each aligned to a different set of students with specific needs, abilities and interest. Mathematics HL is a rigorous and demanding subjects, requiring in depth study of a broad range of mathematical topics. Students are expected to develop an understanding into the form and structure of mathematical knowledge, and a capacity to solve mathematical problems in a variety of meaningful contexts. The Mathematics SL course is less in depth than the HL course and covers a narrower range of topics than the latter. Its aim is to introduce students to mathematical concepts in a comprehensive and coherent manner. The Mathematical Studies SL course emphasizes student understanding of fundamental concepts, developing mathematical reasoning rather than

routine operations, using mathematics in different contexts and efficient usage of the calculator.

*Studies in Language and Literature*

The courses seek to enhance a students' appreciation of the complexity of language and literature, develop skills in literacy criticism and an understanding of the stylistic and aesthetic qualities of texts. They also aim to develop students written and oral expressions.

*Sciences*

Science subjects aim at initiating students into the scientific method and facilitate a rigorous exploration of concepts, theories and techniques of each subject area. Students are compulsorily required to undertake a project to understand the ethical, social and environmental implications of science

*Individuals and societies*

Courses offered under this subject area seek to develop students understanding of the variety of geographical, social and economic contexts in which humans live. They seek to help students understand the history of social and cultural institutions.

For a comprehensive listing of all the courses available in the IBDP Programme and their individual curricular objectives, see the IBO website.

# Appendix 19 - Students' subject choices at Higher Level and corresponding Undergraduate aspirations

| Subject combinations | Boys | | UG aspirations | Girls | | UG aspirations (many students listed more than one aspiration) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | No. | %age | | No. | %age | |
| Science – Engineering stream – Physics, Chemistry and Mathematics subject combination at HL | 13 | 45 | Engineering – 11<br><br>Computers -1<br><br>Physics -3<br><br>Architecture – 1<br><br>Designing -1 | 0 | 0 | |
| Science – Medicine stream Physics, Chemistry and Biology, subject combination at HL, | 2 | 7 | Medicine -2 | 3 | 20 | Research in Biosciences – 3 |
| Commerce Stream - B&M, Mathematics and Economics | 2 | 7 | Business -1<br><br>Chartered Accountancy -1 | 0 | 0 | |
| ITGS, Physics Mathematics | 2 | 7 | Engineering -2 | 1 | 7 | Web designing-1, Computer Science -1 |
| Economics, Mathematics, Physics | 1 | 3.5 | Economics-1 | 0 | 0 | |
| Physics, Chemistry, B&M | 2 | 7 | Engineering -1<br><br>Business Studies - 2<br><br>Commerce - 1 | 4 | 27 | Designing -1<br><br>Singing-1<br><br>Architecture -1<br><br>Fashion Promotion - 1<br><br>Business Studies -2<br><br>Sociology-1 |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Physics, English, ITGS | 1 | 3.5 | Engineering – 1 | 0 | 0 | |
| Physics, Chemistry, ITGS | 5 | 17.0 | Engineering -3 Nanotechnology- 1 Computers -1 | 0 | 0 | |
| B&M, Economics, Biology | 1 | 3.5 | | 1 | 7 | Law- 1 |
| ITGS, Physics, B&M | 0 | 0 | | 2 | 14 | Commerce – 1 Business Studies – 2 Fashion merchandising – 1 |
| Physics, English, B&M | 0 | 0 | | 1 | 7 | Law -1 |
| ITGS, B&M, English | 0 | 0 | | 1 | 7 | Fashion Designing - 1 Business -1 |
| Biology, ITGS, B&M | 0 | 0 | | 2 | 14 | Media studies/ journalism -1 Entrepreneur - 1 |
| Psychology, Physics, B&M | 0 | 0 | | 1 | | Business Studies -1 Psychology -1 |
| Total | 29 | | | 15 | | |