New Contradictions
The activism of middle-class youth in Delhi

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Abstract

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This thesis examines forms of activism among middle-class youth in the context of neoliberal urban change in Delhi. The research is set within four interdisciplinary bodies of literature reflecting the experiences of young activists: middle-class identity, everyday politics and new modalities of social action, intersectionality, and active citizenship. What emerges from each of these bodies is a view to the contradictory politics of the young middle-class. Focusing on new forms of social action at the community level, this thesis uses an expansive definition of both activism and middle-class to encompass a range of activities from social enterprise, to technology-enabled mobilization around social issues, to political campaigning among India's expanding middle-class. The research is framed within young peoples' period of waiting: for full adulthood, marriage, and importantly, full-time employment.

Grounded in qualitative fieldwork, this thesis concentrates on young people, aged 18 to 30, in the middle-class with putatively distinct activist practices. Young people in Delhi are engaged in various activities that loosely correspond to different ideals of social justice or social work. I illustrate the innate differences in these ideals, their motivations, and methods. I analyze the limitations of different activist projects and the extent to which the social action is constructive—in the sense of enhancing the capabilities of marginalized sections of society and promoting inclusivity. The young people at the core of this project contend to be anti-politics, yet they are quite political. Additionally, the interlocutors show contempt for the state and the commercial interests of the market but deploy and rely on strategies from both.

My examination gives prominence to the improvised nature of young people's lives and the decisions they make at key life stages. Activation of the self, and actualization for the researched youth, manifests in entrepreneurial activity, community work short of politics, and the negotiation of class, caste, and gender on an everyday basis.

This thesis argues for more scholarly attention to the everyday lives of middle-class youth that can offer insights into this key demographic and connect individual decisions to broader social and political change.

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Abbreviations

AAP Aam Aadmi Party
ABVP Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad
ADB Asian Development Bank
AISA All Indians' Students Association
BJP Bharatiya Janata Party
BJS Bharatiya Jana Sangh
BoP Bottom (or Base) of the Pyramid
BSP Bahujan Samaj Party
CEO Chief Executive Officer
CGD Center for Global Development
CM Chief Minister
CPI(M)/CPM Communist Party of India (Marxist)
CPI(Maoist) Communist Party of India (Maoist)
DDA Delhi Development Authority
DU Delhi University
EPW Economic and Political Weekly
FIR First-information Report
GBV Gender Based Violence
GDP Gross Domestic Product
GPS Global Positioning System
IAC India Against Corruption
IAMAI Internet and Mobile Association of India
ICT Information and Communications Technology
IIM Indian Institute of Management
IIT Indian Institute of Technology
ILO International Labour Organization
IMF International Monetary Fund
IMRB Indian Market Research Bureau
INC Indian National Congress Party
IT Information Technology
JNNURM Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission
JNU Jawaharla Nehru University
JP Jayaprakash Narayan
LGBT lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, and transgender
LGBTQIA lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, queer/questioning, intersex, asexual and allies
MCD Municipal Corporation of Delhi
MIM All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen
MLA Member of the State Legislative Assembly
MNC Multi-national Corporation
MNREGA Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act
NCAER National Council for Applied Economic Research
NCR National Capital Region
NCT National Capital Territory
NDA National Democratic Alliance
NDMC New Delhi Municipal Council
NGO Non-Governmental Organization
NPO Non-profit organization
NREGA National Rural Employment Guarantee Act
NRI Non-Resident Indian
NSSO National Sample Survey (Organisation)
OBC Other Backward Class
OECD Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OpASHA Operation ASHA
PCRF Public Cause Research Foundation
Rs. Rupees, the Indian currency
RSS Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh
RTI Right to Information
RWA Resident Welfare Association
SC Scheduled Caste
ST Scheduled Tribe
TRAI Telecom Regulatory Authority of India
UC Unauthorized colony
UJRA United Residents Joint Action in Delhi
UN United Nations
UNICEF United Nations International Children's Fund
UNDP United Nations Development Programme
UPA United Progressive Alliance
USD United States Dollar
WTO World Trade Organization
YKA Youth Ki Awaaz

1. Introduction

1.1 This thesis

This thesis examines different forms of activism among middle-class young people in Delhi based on qualitative fieldwork among 'activist' communities. Focusing on new forms of social action at the community level, I use an expansive definition of both activism and middle-class to encompass a range of activities from social enterprise to technology-enabled mobilization around social issues to political campaigning among India's expanding middle-class. I examine the improvised nature of young people's lives and the decisions they make at key life stages about how to engage in a dynamic but precarious economic environment in which youth under-employment is a pressing issue (Ganguly-Scrase and Scrase 2008b; Gooptu 2013; Baviskar and Ray 2011; Fernandes 2004). The thesis aims to offer insights into individual lives within this key demographic, and connect individual decisions to broader social and political change.

Scholars have shown ways in which the middle-class seeks to discipline and mobilize subordinate social groups in the name of the public interest (Ghertner 2012; Anjaria 2009; Baviskar 2011; Harriss 2007; Chatterjee 2004). These connections are mediated through embedded power relations between the middle-class and urban poor (Webb 2012). However, recent research has shown that youth activists, often as intermediaries, may be challenging existing power inequalities (Baviskar and Ray 2011; Jeffrey 2010; Krishna 2002). This research explores nascent forms of political action by Delhi's middle-class youth, often with the objective of promoting inclusive growth and liberalism. Moreover, I will empirically examine the active engagement of Delhi's middle-class youth in framing their lives and notions of citizenship.

A focus on the middle-class, and in particular the youth in the stratum, acknowledges that in India they represent two emerging demographics. This thesis

aims for a stronger understanding of the agency, identifications, and performances of middle-class youth within state discourses, citizenship, and social expectations. I endeavor to do this through observational accounts of middle-class youth activists, often within durations of 'vital conjuncture' (Johnson-Hanks 2002) and uncertainty about their own trajectories.

With the growth of the Indian economy, the middle-class is expanding. As the middle stratum, between two very different segments of the population with opposing politics and conflicting demands of the state, this expansion will have a significant effect on political and social life in India. The expanding membership of the middle-class challenges what we know about this hegemonic stratum. This has led some scholars to suggest that the lower middle-class is the new *aam aadmi* (common man) who could play a crucial role in formal politics (Baviskar and Ray 2011). A large component of the new middle-classes are people whom scholars have labeled 'aspirational,' with different activities, consumption practices, projects, and goals than the previous hegemonic regimes (Varma 2007; Fernandes 2006; Sridharan 2004). They aspire to be middle-class, but in doing so, they bring their own ambitions and style. At the same time, the high visibility of the urban middle-class in the media and modern narratives engenders a 'politics of forgetting' with regard to social groups that are marginalized by India's policies of liberalization (Fernandes 2004). However, I found evidence that young social activists, cognizant of prevailing patron-client relations within 'fields' governed by considerations of money, social connections and cultural capital (Bourdieu 1986; Chatterjee 2004), are engaged in micro interventions as well as building political movements that attempt to work towards a more inclusive politics that learns from India's longue durée of social stratification. I also found

young social activists that adamantly reject the notion of 'shared citizenship'[1] (Banting et al. 2007) and the motivations behind the supposedly cross-caste political mobilizations moving beyond identity (q.v. Chapter Seven).

This thesis also examines how young middle-class actors view their citizenship and ways to engage in prefigurative (striving to reflect the change they want to see) political/social action to enhance their contribution to society (Boggs 1977). The manner with which youth are 'activating' their citizenship differs greatly with motivations and methods often divergent. This study necessarily includes a diverse range of political and social action in order to capture the fullest view of this group of young social actors in the middle.

I examine activism by youth that is often contested: activism that purports to work towards shared citizenship, activists defending identity politics, supra-state activism, dissident activism, and actions that stretch the boundaries of activism like social entrepreneurship, political party campaigns, and the use of new tools that are changing the modality of activism. A further layer of controversy is that the activism of the young middle-class is often viewed as embedded in mediated power relations, supporting patron-client networks, and espousing neoliberal ideologies (Webb 2012; White 2010).

The contemporary empirical snapshots of different young social actors in this thesis show that young people across Delhi are not necessarily apathetic to social issues and politically disengaged, as other studies suggest, but are rather involved in new forms of politics, social networks, and entrepreneurship. The activities point to a tension between a strong individualistic approach and activism that reflects communitarian acts to generate social capital. What often emerges from these

[1] See discussion in Chapter Two for definitions and interpretations.

activities, discernible throughout this thesis, is evidence of a contradictory politics of the young middle-class.

Research questions and findings

At its core, this research is concerned with how urban, middle-class, educated youth activate their citizenship, and how they navigate the changing political and socio-economic environment of post-liberalization India. I first became interested in this research through experiences in 2008 volunteering for a public health non-profit in Delhi. Many of the young people I met were navigating change in their lives, coming out of school but unsure about their future. The most common denominators among the young volunteers at the non-profit was that they were middle-class and waiting to make their mark on society, still figuring out how or what they would contribute. Following the work of Jeffrey (2010) I have framed this project within young peoples' period of waiting: for full adulthood, marriage, and importantly, full-time employment. In this period and larger context, youth engage in various forms of everyday politics. High politics, and party politics-as-usual is regarded by most as limiting and plagued with corruption, machinations, and power plays.

However, this thesis is not only about politics and understandings of citizenship. Activation of the self, and actualization for the researched youth, manifests in entrepreneurial activity, community work short of politics, and the negotiation of class, caste, and gender on an everyday basis. This will be reflected in the empirical chapters that discuss four different strategies young animators engage in to activate citizenship and exercise agency: hybrid activism using online social networks (Chap. Four), social enterprise (Chap. Five), young activist transitioning into formal political party work (Chap. Six), and in the penultimate chapter, defiance

activism displayed in the politics, economics, and sociality of young people at the margins (Chap. Seven). These chapters are linked by different modalities of social action, each with its own strengths and limitations. The empirical chapters demonstrate young people are negotiating a new politics developing in Delhi characterized by a need for change, but also opportunism and expediency. I critically examine the youth's improvisation with different modes of activism and social action, endeavored in part to activate their citizenship or the citizenship of others by working towards social justice or mitigating some failure in governance.

After eight months of qualitative fieldwork in Delhi that primarily involved semi-structured interviews and participant observations, three research questions emerged as central to my study:

1). To the extent that urban middle-class youth are involved in activism, what form does this take—and what are the limitations?

I found the young respondents to be more enthused and willing to participate in everyday politics and social activism at the local level. The increasing role of information and communications technologies (ICTs), social media, and mobile phones is having a transformative effect on social activism in Delhi. Young people use them in local efforts as well as broad mobilizations. However, these new methods and promising tools have come under the scrutiny of scholars and activist with developing concerns over the misuse and reliance on technology. Compounding the issue, the use of ICTs in activism is often viewed as confined to the middle-class and channels youth into the language, culture, and aspirations of an influential few. This has opened up an ongoing debate among activists and scholars over whether its usage is hollowing out politics from activism.

Young people are engaged in various activities that loosely correspond to different ideals of social justice or social work. These innate differences, that I will discuss and critically examine in subsequent chapters, uncover powerful truths towards the orientation and bearing of Delhi's youth. New modalities of social action are emerging in Delhi with young people at the helm. These new forms of citizen activism have moved the site of deliberation to a hybrid public/digital space in an effort to connect more people to popular movements and political campaigns (Guru 2014; Singh 2014). They seek to mobilize public opinion, expose corrupt officials, strengthen civic engagement, and ignite more democratic participation. However, the young middle-class people that superintend these connections and connecting may—or may not—realize that there is power involved in these actions/activism. Not all these new forms of social action connect and interact with the political movements of the poor and marginalized. This leads marginalized interlocutors (q.v. Chapter Seven) to ask, if these middle-class activists are engaging with power—how are they anti-politics?

Additionally, whilst youth are engaged in new and exciting social work and activist pursuits, they often produce and perform subjectivities that echo normative middle-class incentives and trajectories. The daily activities of these young actors incrementally acquiesce to the "imperatives of the expansion and accumulation of capital" (Lefebvre 2008: 57). Despite efforts to extend their reach and protract movements, the lifespan and energy of these everyday pursuits is trammeled by social structures and middle-class expectations to make progress towards respectable adulthood. Activists are more connected and social action more diffused than before, but these are 'weak' ties that are often cursory and incomplete as an inclusive project.

2). What are the politics of young middle-class social activists in Delhi?

The politics of the young middle-class is diverse and increasingly divergent, reflecting the changing demographics of this heterogeneous stratum and changes in society. At the same time, I found many young people that held a similar politics, one that would like to maintain the hegemonic hold on facets of society and maintain the status quo of a moral, technocratic, pro-development, and aspirational position. However, new cleavages have arisen in the context of the rapid growth of the lower middle-class. The notion of a small homogenous middle-class situated between elites and the poor is outdated; there are new divides between the lower and upper strata of the class. The politics of the lower middle-class, often displaying dissatisfaction with local governance and service delivery, is largely in sync with the lower classes. This has resulted in a nascent politics in Delhi that is defying the previous circumstances and limitations. I argue recent social movements have unsettled the politics of middle-class youth; youth scramble to understand how to navigate this change.

Many in the middle-class were initially for social and political movements that sprung out of central parks in Delhi, calling for an end to corruption and better security for women. The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) was the beneficiary of this loose assemblage of mobilizations that lacked a political ideology and yet became a political movement. The middle-class is now giving way to a more amorphous politics of the urban, a new avatar that is focused on service delivery and a more direct democracy (Dutta and Das 2014; Roy 2014; Singh 2014). This has opened up space for a different kind of politics—one that is largely beyond middle-class interests.

On a micro level this new political course is displayed in the case studies of this thesis. In Chapter Four, activists were attempting to expand their activist projects

and capitalize on the increase in social mobilizations. In Chapter Six, interlocutors' that initially supported AAP dropped that support when they realized the new directions the party was going. Additionally, there are critiques of this emerging politics by the activists in Chapter Seven. This emerging politics, supported by many of my respondents, insist on a new grammar of politics that is outside the politics of identity and ideology. However, my research finds that more progress has been made on the moving beyond ideology than identity. Identity is still a main precept for young social actors. My respondents' social work was largely within the confines and to the betterment of their communities only. Their views of citizenship and the state are guided by how their identity group is situated in society.

Throughout this thesis the activists often say one thing but ultimately want another outcome or are unsatisfied with outcomes. The nexus of neoliberal-enterprising citizens/changing politics/and activism with ICTs has led to a new kind of social movement in Delhi, characterized by individual social actors engaging with power by populating public spaces or digital spaces but continue to define themselves as 'anti-politics'. The young people at the core of this project are anti-politics yet quite political. Many activists relish their role as brokers of knowledge and access to bureaucrats. Their value, the way they activate their own citizenship and that of the people they help is through being able to navigate access to power. Examples of this work in the empirical chapters include: starting a social enterprise that makes everyday citizens 'human sensors' to weak governance, or providing a media platform to be the mouthpiece of the youth—antithetical to mainstream media, by using Right to Information (RTI) to expose corruption, filing First-information Reports (FIRs) with local police, and managing logistics to deliver people to protest sites.

There is some evidence of this changing politics moving towards inclusive aims, but many of the young activists I spoke with have a similar if not identical politics, one that reflects a continuance of normative middle-class politics; perpetuating mediated power relations that are situated in (and bound to) their vertical position in the social structure. Often, what the young activists observe as inclusive social work and politics—including delivery of services and information—are the perception of middle-class activists rather than objective descriptions. Many young middle-class activists strive for an inclusive politics that encompasses the poor, and a simultaneous guarding of entrenched interests that exclude the poor. Processes of activation of the middle-class self—sociality, economically and politically—can be, and are, contradictory. Issues around shared and active citizenship[2] are particularly contradictory and given to varying interpretations. The greatest potential for continued political and social transformation lies in the changing demographics of the middle-class, if segments of the middle-class—with their political capital and media/messaging skills—continue to share a social politics with the lower classes, the push towards a new politics in Delhi will continue.

3). What is the relationship between young urban middle-class activists and the state at different levels?

For many middle-class social actors, their politics and the needs of their constituencies point to the lack of power/access to the state, which they seek to change through their new politics. From being outside power, they want to be inside it, even an idealised version of power. Activists with different political projects largely held strong opinions of disapproval or distrust towards different levels of the

[2] Although I do not posit a definition of 'active citizenship' and prefer the term to remain undefined, my use of the term follows closely Kearns (1992) use referring to individuals that recognize their responsibility to use their skills for the betterment of their community.

state in Delhi. However, emerging from the case studies in this thesis is activism and social action that leans heavily, if not relies, on the state and state services. In the empirical chapters of this thesis, I identify several modes of social action that challenge, prod, accuse, correct, and even defy the state. Notwithstanding, many of these activities and social movements continue to rely on the state, make demands on it, and ask the state to let them in.

Close engagement with the apparatus of the state is viewed as the reserve of institutions of representative democracy and entrenched elites. The preferred approach for many young activists is the route of collective action forged out of commonality of experience and frustration over a deficit of rights and security. For others it is still approaching the state through tacit channels and identity politics, representing a constituency. All of these strategies still approach the state with claims of rights and requests for social justice. For the interlocutors in Chapter Seven, middle-class but from an identity group on the margin (as Dalit, Muslim, and other minorities) they struggle with simultaneously wanting to disentangle from the problematic notion of citizenship derived from belonging to a state, whilst also acknowledging that the state remains an important centre where their group gains and loses power.

This chapter

In this introduction chapter, I first discuss the incredible opportunities that lie ahead for India in terms of the nation capitalizing on its youthful demographics. However, this sustained working age population could be more problematic than positive if citizens' aspirations for being lifted out of poverty and expectations of secure livelihoods are not met. This leads into a discussion of India's transition to a liberal economy and the debate over policies towards continued growth versus reforms to

mitigate inequality (Bhagwati and Panagariya 2013; Drèze and Sen 2013). Next, I discuss the lack of connection between aspirations and actual outcomes for Delhi's youth. Out of this dissatisfaction and restlessness (Jeffrey 2010), youth are mobilizing outside of existing power structures, similar to their inter-generational counterparts around the globe (Biekhart and Fowler 2013; Glasius and Pleyers 2013).

Back in Delhi, recent social mobilizations point to a youth populace that is restless for social justice and dignity. This setting is the entrée for this thesis. In the last section, I outline the chapters of the thesis and describe how each chapter advances and addresses the underlying themes of the research.

1.2 Demographic dividend

India is a country in a time of incredible movement. The face of this movement is the young person. India (in 2016) has over 700 million people under the age of 30. Over 50 percent of the country is under the age of 25. India's future is unfurling on a grand scale, with a restless population, and the nation is tasked with fostering the potential of a 'demographic dividend' (Bloom 2011). In the year 2020, it is estimated India will have one of the youngest median populations in the world, on top of overtaking China as the world's largest population by 2022 (UN 2013; UN 2015). This population growth coincides with a changing economic situation over the past three decades. For the next several decades both children and the elderly will be comparatively small proportions of the population. Young adults may trigger an increase in earnings since a high proportion of the citizenry are in productive employment (Bloom 2011). The state, in theory, will have more resources to invest in economic development and welfare measures. At the same time, increased personal savings can lead to growth in per capita income.

There has been considerable economic growth since India moved to liberalize its economy in the early 1990s, more people are leaving abject poverty and the middle-class is growing (Kochhar 2015). Traditionally the middle-class in India has been a small in-between stratum or strata (depending on how it is defined) that have been described as uninterested in organized politics and unattached to any political parties (Harriss 2006). The emergence of this middle-class is beginning to change India's class structure, characterized often as "a sharp contrast between a small elite and a large impoverished mass" (Sridharan 2004: 405). Estimates from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)—based on "households with daily expenditures between $10 and $100 per person in purchasing power parity" terms—predict that by 2030 the Indian middle-class will account for around 40 percent of the country's population (Kharas 2010). This projection is more than double the middle-class population in 2016.

Sridharan writes, "[i]n a country with 60 percent of the population under 30 years of age, there is a large 'aspirational' middle-class beyond the economically defined middle-class, particularly among the young of all castes and classes" (2004: 424). It is not surprising that so many activists are young and from this aspirational middle-class. Many are in school or unemployed—with a surplus of time to engage in activism. They surround themselves often with other young people with energy, ideas, and time. This is the fruitful liminality of middle-class youth. This doesn't mean they are free from anxieties and responsibilities, they are trying to make good on the promises they are often assigned. They are in the fulcrum between childhood and adulthood, which today is increasingly being prolonged (Jeffrey 2008). Talk of rights and universal citizenship circulate widely in urban areas and social media has hastened its speed and reach.

The young middle-class finds in activism and civil society the domain for their self-assertion (Harriss 2006). Urbanization, education, and mass media have given rise to increased expectations that produce tension if aspirations cannot be met. Now with the advent of social media new forms of media and communication amplify citizens' voices in politics. A better-educated populace is frustrated by the lack of social opportunity and a lack of adaptable political institutions.

In the 2014 general election, voters decided it was time for a change. The Indian National Congress Party (Congress hereafter) had served as the political stewards of economic liberalism for a decade. But often in politics popular sentiment reverts to the expression, 'what have you done for me lately'—the answer by the people, for Congress and the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) in 2014, was an overwhelmingly, not enough. The new conservative National Democratic Alliance (NDA) regime called for more development, more nationalism, increased military spending, and more Hindu prowess. The young middle-class was largely behind this project of increased economic liberalism, evidenced by the election results and large youth surveys (HT-MaRS 2015).

1.3 A rising tide lifts all boats?

Proponents of economic liberalism say high growth will necessarily lead to increasing inequalities for a period of time. This is premised on a so-called "Kuznets curve" that predicts inequalities will rise with economic growth up to a point and then fall (Piketty 2006). The Kuznets curve, named after the Belarusian-American economist Simon Kuznets, has been the tool of proponents of economic liberalism for over three decades to argue that capitalism has a natural tendency to reduce inequality in advanced economies. However, there is little historical evidence of this. During the

Cold War people wanted to believe in this natural process that would lead eventually to a decline in inequality. It was capitalism versus communism (at least that was the popular but limiting dualist perspective) and capitalism offered greater hope in the inevitabilities of development.

In economist Thomas Piketty's influential (and controversial) *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, his central thesis is that inequality is not a layover or temporary phase in a natural process but rather a feature of capitalism that can only be reversed through state intervention. The Kuznets curve is really not much of a curve as much as a growing disparity. Piketty warns that unless the prevailing forms of capitalism are reformed, inequality will continue to grow and democratic order will be threatened (Piketty 2014). Since the 1980s, there has been a resurgence of 19th-century laissez-faire economic liberalism where control of economic factors continues to shift from the public sector to the private market (the market is viewed as an ethic in itself) (Harvey 2005). Following economic geographer David Harvey, in this thesis, I designate this doctrine as 'neoliberalism' (see Chapter Two for further definitions).

Economic liberalization has aided the growth of Ahmedabad, Bangalore, Delhi, and Mumbai. These cities capture popular imaginations towards the 'India Shining' ideal: the developed and modern country that economic reformists envisioned in the early '90s (Ahluwalia 2012). As scholars debate the doxa of neoliberalism there is an episteme that must be acknowledged. India's GDP has risen steadily since 1991 and this has been accompanied by increases in life expectancy, literacy rates, and food security (Nagaraj 2000; Gupta and Mitra 2004). People living below the poverty line (determined by India's Planning Commission) in India went from 44.5 percent in 1983 to 27.5 percent in 2005, a 17 percent decrease (Bhagwati and Panagariya 2013). The IMF lists India as the third largest economy in the world in

terms of purchasing power parity. Most indicators show this economic growth will continue and the proponents of economic liberalization make the argument that as the economy grows and improves so will the well-being of its citizens. Taken from a distance, the *aam aadmi* (common man) is better off today than he or she was two decades ago.

There is evidence that India's move to a liberalized economy and subsequent economic growth has increased the middle-class and reduced overall poverty rates (Joshi and Little 2011; Sanyal 2014; Kotwal et. al. 2011). A 2015 Pew Research Center Report found the poverty rate for India fell from 35 percent in 2001 to 20 percent by 2011, but the middle-class (by Pew's measurement) only grew from one percent to three percent (Kochhar 2015). Other estimates by the UN and NCAER show a much larger increase to the middle-class in that same period. The size of middle-class in India is a contentious debate and a definition or popular understanding is difficult to pin down (q.v. Chapter Two).

However, there is also quantifiable evidence that the ethic of development in India has meant unequal growth (Drèze and Sen 2013; Kohli 2007; Rodrik and Subramanian 2004; Nagaraj 2000). Despite India having one of the world's fastest-growing major economies, half of Indian households lack indoor toilets, nearly 40 percent of the country's adults are illiterate, and 43 percent of its children are underweight. India has seen a collapse of rural economies and an agrarian crisis that has resulted in a rural-urban economic dichotomy. As of 2015, 600 million Indians still defecate on the streets and farmer suicides (a result often of not being able to compete with larger farms and losing their livelihood) continue at an alarming rate (UN 2015). Economists Jean Drèze and Amartya Sen (2013) note that India is in the

middle of a jobless economic boom and the country is falling behind Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka in social indicators from literacy to child malnutrition.

In the last two decades, South Asian neighbors, with fewer resources and similar colonial experiences, are improving health and education indicators at a greater speed than India. Drèze and Sen stress that India needs improved public services and redistributive social programs. This thinking is outside of the fold—not popular with the locus of modern aims and values, especially after programs like NREGA, the national level employment guarantee program, or Delhi's Bhagidari system that so many people view as counterproductive and a waste of precious public funds. Economists Jagdish Bhagwati and Arvind Panagariya (2013), argue that these social welfare initiatives cost too much and derail economic growth. They argue for a proactive deregulated market towards eradicating poverty by "growing the pie" rather than slicing it. They posit that economic growth must come before spending on education and healthcare for the poor. Growth, and only growth generates the revenues necessary for social spending.

Drèze and Sen (2013) argue public reason and greater political pressure from the poor are the only way to bring about real change. One of the central hypotheses, or 'leap of faith' arguments, of this thesis is that the middle-class (propelled by the youth actors) can apply that political pressure. Or, at the least, do the important work of connecting with, mobilizing, and motivating people and resources to push for more inclusive economic growth. Drèze and Sen assert that despite the poor constituting the majority of Indian voters, they have been shut out of public discourse. A democratic system can only achieve gains on issues that are brought into political engagement. This is where the middle-class, with its influence over the media and public discourse, can work most effectively with the poor.

As India continues to grow and advance into this new century there is evidence that this trade-off, the sweeping of major problems like inequality, poverty, and a bevy of other social ills under the carpet in the name of economic growth will not be tolerated much longer by an exacting population. The aphorism 'a rising tide lifts all boats', referring to benefits of economic development trickling down to all facets of society, is losing analytical traction as India closes in on its fourth decade with liberalization—and growing inequality. The proverbial carpet is moving. This thesis will explain why this might be changing now through the local experience of young social actors (primarily activists) in Delhi. Many within the young middle-class, the ordained generation that conceivably stands to gain the most from continued neoliberal reforms are seeking change. At the same time, they live in a more competitive and demanding world where their time and effort towards mitigating personal risk and poverty is increasingly not amounting returns. The global Recession of 2008 exposed some inherent instability within the system of capitalist production and neoliberal ideology. Despite the global recession, neoliberal policies continue to be politically durable and remain culturally hegemonic. Notwithstanding, this thesis reveals attempts within the middle-class (propelled by the youth actors) to widen the social base of politics.

1.4 Aspirations vs. outcomes

The opening up of the Indian economy and adherence to neoliberal reforms has transferred responsibility away from the state towards the individual. The extent of this economic change is revealed in the rapid transformation of youth into self-reliant workers operating under flexible conditions driven by their aspirations for a middle-class lifestyle (Gooptu 2013). Middle-class sentiment stresses that the avenue to good

jobs and fulfillment of aspirations is through education, with tertiary education representing the apex of added value and security. However, the experiences of career immobility for many young people have problematized the aspirations offered by middle-class discourses.

Baviskar and Ray (2011) argue that, while the upper-middle-class professionals have benefitted from rising salaries and opportunities in the private sector, other segments of the liberalized labour market have been characterized by unstable temporary work and skills mismatch, hindering upward mobility for the lower-middle-class. Ganguly-Scrase and Scrase (2008b) challenge the notion of a homogeneous Indian middle-class as being the undoubted beneficiaries of recent neoliberal economic reforms. Instead, they contend, life has become more challenging as a result of "rising prices, inflation, increasing debt" and more competition for jobs and housing, leading to a distinct decline in overall living standards and increase in "personal and financial stress" (3).

In India, the unemployment rate for poor youth in 2010 was 9.7 percent, compared with 10.5 percent for youth living in families with an income per capita above the $1.25 poverty line (USD), showing that aggregate youth unemployment rates tend to rise if family incomes and level of educational attainment increase (NSSO 2011; ILO 2013). Indian youth entering the workforce with an excess of skills are not finding employment suitable to their hard earned expertise. These are the youth in the emerging middle-class that have acquired many of the requisite qualities and wherewithal to enter into the middle-class but the economic aspect is elusive due to a labour market that has not kept pace with an educated and skilled would-be labour force.

Unemployment among male urban youth who are holders of diplomas (~12 years of schooling) or certificates (~10 years) is 28.3 percent (NSSO 2011). Youth unemployment rates for non-poor highly skilled female workers rose to 12.9 percent versus 3.1 percent for poor young women, evidence of a combination of gender-specific cultural expectations and skills mismatch. The difference is far less for young Indian males (ILO 2013). For young women leaving formal education, there is lingering misogyny waiting for them in the workplace. Educated, aspirational youth are underwhelmed by the job market and outcome of their hard work in school. One million young Indians will enter the labour market every month for the next fifteen years, but secure employment remains unattainable for many (UN *WESP* 2014).

The potential for upward mobility remains largely aspirational for many youth in the middle-class; the ability to successfully harness social, economic, and political change for one's benefit remains with upper-caste and upper-middle-class that possess the habitus and social links conducive to the accumulation of Pierre Bourdieu's 'multiple species' of capital (Bourdieu 1986). Lower-middle-class youth struggle to develop the avenues that will lead them to fulfil their aspirations. Often they follow the well-travelled trajectory of educational attainment—one of the few species of capital they have moderate agency in (relying on meritocracy over ascription). With the prerequisite to a middle-class identity often being education, it is no surprise that many unemployed and underemployed youth are discouraged by the devaluation of the degrees and certificates they worked hard to achieve.

Jeffrey's ethnography of four sets of politically motivated young men at a Meerut university in 2004/05 highlights frustrations over the declining value of their education, and consequently, the possibility of not reaching one's future aspirations. The "blighted hope" of educated youth (Bourdieu's concept cited in Jeffrey 2010 and

Cross 2009) spurred collective action that cut across caste and religious divides in the form of local student protests and lobbying of university officials. Jeffrey describes "an emerging culture of political entrepreneurialism" for youth facing adversities and immobility (2010: 161). A series of events taking place in Delhi starting in 2011 are further evidence of burgeoning change, propelled in large part by middle-class youth. The Anna Hazare anti-corruption campaign, protests for women's security, AAP's fragile victory in 2013, and the landslide victory in the 2015 election serves as an affirmation of the power youth have when they mobilize around issues rather than a strict set of ideologies.

Glasius and Pleyers (2013) assert this young generation has a shared value system forged, at least to a degree, by precarious working conditions brought on by the global recession. This is especially pervasive in developing regions where 90 percent of global youth live (ILO 2013). The commonality at the center of demands and the identity of these movements are: "democracy, social justice and dignity" (549). They hold that this generation's—those young people behind the thread that started with the Arab Spring, and for India may be ongoing—mistrust of institutional politics and corruptible power is far greater than the 1968 generation (2013). Biekhart and Fowler advance that the disaffection towards the economic and political status quo has reached a tipping point wherein the "scale of disaffection and/or disillusionment with the prevailing order…cannot be bought off or 'cost-effectively' coerced into compliance" (2013: 535). Youth are looking to other avenues for social and political work that is outside of existing power structures and the well-traveled trajectories.

In their transition from childhood to young adulthood they have acquired knowledge and were taught of civil liberties and the benefits of obtaining capital.

However, young people's access to capital and secure employment is blocked by nepotism and corrupt job markets. Young people begin to lose the plot—they can no longer give meaning to their lives—they have lost the trajectory they set out for themselves and the market does not have a role for them. This experience leads to what Giddens (1991) described as 'ontological insecurity'. Youth with even a modicum of privilege often do what is necessary to avoid this outcome. As Jeffrey (2015) argues in a recent analysis of young men from rich farming families in western Uttar Pradesh, they work to entrench their middle-class standing in the space of university and local-level political networks. They seek to express, legitimize and secure their power by 'kicking away the ladder.'

The two different outcomes of young middle-class social actors in Jeffrey's research frame a principal contradiction of this thesis. In one instance there is the example of youth mobilizing across lines of caste and class towards a transformative politics. In another instance, there are actions by the young middle-class that serve to entrench and secure their social advantage and hegemony.

1.5 Thesis outline

This thesis consists of eight chapters. In Chapter Two, I introduce different sets of literature that address the fundamental topics and concerns of this thesis. I will return to these foundational subjects throughout the thesis. Each empirical chapter corresponds with a review of relevant literature and theoretical debates. One of the key tasks of this chapter will be to outline a series of overarching debates of which strands are woven through each of the empirical chapters and thus introduce the uniting themes of the thesis. The main themes that are pursued across the four empirical chapters are as follows: middle-class identity, the everyday politics and new

modalities of young social actors, intersectionality, and active citizenship.

In Chapter Three, I will explain the multiple sources of qualitative data and research methods deployed to develop the analysis of this thesis. The semi-structured interviews centered mostly on young people's narratives of their activism and work often expanding to a discussion of their views of citizenship. The fieldwork was undertaken during the lead up to the December 2013 Delhi Legislative Assembly (*Vidhan Sabha*) elections and the national election to constitute the lower house of Parliament (*Lok Sabha*) that took place in April and May of 2014. Not all the activities of informants were political but the backdrop of the elections, and underlying considerations drove many of the conversations with young activists.

Throughout the empirical review, the thesis aims to capture the views of the young middle-class activists. These are vignettes of a particular point in the subjects' lives, within the fulcrum of young adulthood. At times in this thesis, I will write more descriptive observational accounts (snapshots) of young informants. My objective with these brief interludes—a short telling of a particular revealing moment I observed—is to serve as a surrogate to a hundred other similar compelling moments I shared with an informant, moments that reveal a great deal about the young person and their motivations.

By following the flow of online and offline activist activity, I considered the recommendation of Hunt (2015) who called for researchers to refrain from 'de-contextualizing' young activists in global networks, especially those that seem to be 'most visible' online. I pursued a combination of digital and analog methods to not only follow the discursive activity of young activists but in order to fully examine their activism. I will also detail how I negotiated access to young people and outline the research questions I utilized. Lastly, I reflect on my own positionality in the

research process and discuss the ethical challenges involved in carrying out the research.

Chapter Four begins the first of four empirical sections of the thesis. I examine emerging digital strategies applied by the middle-class youth towards activism and political/social mobilization. Scholars have suggested that online activism is ineffective, espouses neoliberal orthodoxy, and draws people away from on the ground protest (Ghobadi and Clegg 2015; Shulman 2009; Morozov 2009). Through the research and short case studies, I aim to show that online activism is effective, represents diverse interests, and is symbiotically related to on-the-ground activism, the two types feed off each other and intermix in practice. I introduce 'hybrid activism' as an example of practices combining digital and analog strategies.

This chapter contributes to the understanding of new practices combining digital and analog strategies that young activists are increasingly utilizing at different scales. The empirical discussion reveals the type of social networks and relationships emerging through young people's actions and the solidarities that sustain these networks. Furthermore, I examine how young activists capitalize on events for mobilization as well as strategies for protracting political/social movements.

In Chapter Five I discuss observations in the field to support the emergent study of social entrepreneurship or 'doing charity *by* doing trade' rather than 'doing charity *whilst* doing trade.' Many young people view the synthesis of enterprise and 'social' objectives as a new way to achieve better results and to sustain good works over time. However, in their adaptation to market realities, scholars have argued, youth are consciously and unconsciously reinforcing neoliberalism as the new economic dogma. I analyze various theoretical and normative issues concerning the startups' juxtaposition of 'social' objectives and the instruments of private enterprise.

The case studies draw out the contradictions involved in the course of everyday life and middle-class work trajectories. These youth are establishing new social enterprises that employ other youth, engaged in work related to public health/safety and critiquing aspects of service delivery. This inquiry continues the trend from Chapter Four—activism and social politics emerging that is more concerned with problem solving than voicing outrage.

Through Chapter Six, I discuss youth that have taken a diverging step toward action than previous chapters with activists moving into political party work. The focus is one strand of activism (political/community activism) and the experiences of young activist balancing attempts to connect individual decisions to broader social and political change. Former community activists navigate the difficult terrain of political party campaigning. I discuss the impetus and contradictions to social activists transitioning to formal politics. The work thrust them into formal politics—a foreign arena cautiously entered—where they found mixed results. For some, this necessitated a major sacrifice in time, resources, and, for a subset, dignity.

In this chapter, issues around active citizenship and legitimacy are paramount; they also prove to be contradictory values that, I argue, young political party supporters had varying degrees of success negotiating in relation to their own principles and respectability. This section discusses the contradictory politics of these young middle-class actors.

In the penultimate chapter, I discuss young people that identify as middle-class but are nonetheless marginalized by other distinguishing social factors. Despite this reality, they work to enhance the capabilities of marginalized sections of society and promote new understandings of citizenship (Jayal 2013). The chapter includes a

discussion of the intersectionality between caste, gender, race, religion, and sexual orientation (Yuval-Davis 2011).

The visibility of the 'typical' urban middle-class reinforces the 'politics of forgetting' on marginalized social groups by India's policies of liberalization (Fernandes 2004). These young people embrace their differences and in doing so, they bring their own ambitions and style to the expanding and reconfiguring middle-class. These marginalized middle-class youth activists seek to disrupt and challenge formalized regimes of governmentality and citizenship with new and more radical forms of inclusion. This section also discusses the dependence, yet desire for independence from the state by these youth actors.

The conclusion chapter will summarize the findings of the thesis and highlight the contributions I make to relevant literature in human geography. Due to the range of topics addressed in the empirical chapters of the thesis a key objective of the conclusion is to emphasize the ways in which the main themes unite and advance the overall argument of the dissertation. I will also reiterate the limitations to my research as well as discuss constructive lines of inquiry for future research.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Introduction

This thesis is set within four interdisciplinary bodies of literature reflecting the experiences of young middle-class activists: middle-class identity, the everyday politics and new modalities of young social actors, intersectionality, and active citizenship. What emerges from each is the contradictory politics of the young middle-class. Within each body of literature, I review key debates intersecting and orienting the empirical chapters.

In this chapter I review key debates in the literature that will establish the theoretical framework surrounding the case studies in the empirical chapters. In the first section I examine how the mentality of neoliberalism informs the understanding of enterprise culture and changes in young people's social politics. In the next section, I review debates on what constitutes India's middle-class and the politics and performance of this class. Advancing from that discussion, I review the literature on the activism of the middle–class including debates around civil society and active citizenship. Lastly, I justify why a focus on young people can reveal a great deal about the social, political, and economic changes that are occurring in contemporary India. Young people are using new technology, new methods, and adopting new modalities to activate their citizenship.

2.2 The neoliberal mindset

India's gradual but intensifying encounter with global capital has reconfigured livelihoods and expectations. The crisis of an economic system built on state sponsored planned economy in the early 1990s helped spread the push for pro-business policies and liberalization in India. The rising influence of corporations and

other non-state actors pushed for a more stable economic order after the economic turmoil. Proponents of classical liberalism or economic liberalism tend to favor laissez-faire economic policies. They believe the state should perform a minimal role, favoring a night-watchman state, which means virtually everything except protection services and other non-excludable goods are to be left to the free dealings of its citizens. These economic policies that started in the West were quickly exported everywhere, including, by design, to virgin markets. This prevailing politico-economic moment, which I identify as neoliberalism[3], has given rise to certain effects, technologies, and aspirations among the middle-class in India.

Harvey notes that neoliberalism is not a rejuvenation of liberalism but is distinctive economic theory:

> Neoliberalism is in the first instance a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices (Harvey 2005: 2).

In India, there is a ubiquitous 'enchantment' with the state and the potential it holds (Kaviraj 2005). The elite industrial capitalist are attached to the state because it ensures its control of society, while the masses of the poor look to the state for the improvement of their situation (Kaviraj 2009). Elites in India have packaged neoliberalism as the national project, as 'Brand India', embedded in that project are conservative mores, militarism, and political illiberalism. A large section of the middle-class has adopted this narrative. The state has developed to represent a source of morality and modernity. South Asian scholar Sudipta Kaviraj notes, "[t]here is a

[3] "Neoliberalism" was most likely coined by scholars associated with the German Freiburg School, notably Alexander Rustow, during the interwar period referring to the social market and a system of competition. Present-day scholars identify the term with Friedrich Hayek who used it to describe a minimalist state vision for capitalism. Despite attempts, the term lacks a common substantive meaning (Boas and Gans-Morse 2009).

strangely complex conception of the state which is seen both as an instrument of oppression, and the only recourse against it" (2009: 31). This paradox perpetuates the persistent legitimacy of the state. This trust and reliance of the state is not always productive for lower classes because it perpetuates governmentality, and elites that are the power brokers, to push the liberalization agenda.

Bourdieu's theory of the state and his concepts of habitus, field and capital, help explain the success and validation of neoliberalism as a worldview and orthodoxy. In particular Bourdieu looks at the adaption of neoliberalism as a 'doxa'—the word derived from Greek to mean "to expect" or "to seem"—often interpreted as a common belief. The positive effects of globalization and liberalization have been established as a doxa that operates as if it were the objective truth to the practices and perceptions of the state and social groups (Bourdieu 1998; see also Chopra 2003). Since neoliberalism claims the status of objective truth, Bourdieu argues that neoliberalism should be viewed as a political program that is 'dehistoricized and desocialized' making itself true and empirically verifiable (1998: 95). Bourdieu's habitus—dispositions of a social group acquired over time through the activities, experiences of everyday life—can be restrained by a group's homogeneity (1977). Scholar Rohit Chopra (2003) argues it is Bourdieu's famous concepts (i.e., habitus, field, and capital) that reinforce the phenomena of globalization and neoliberalism as doxa:

> Neoliberalism operates as the doxa of a national habitus, restructuring fields and relations between fields; neoliberalism also reshapes the 'structures' that structure different habituses within social space…Although dominantly forged by the state, the 'state-thought' that once represented an amalgam of different visions now chooses to see the world only through the lens of neoliberalism (Chopra 2003: 432).

The impacts of neoliberal reforms in India have been significant and often problematic on a changing society. Economic liberalization has diverted money away

from the institutions that were formerly public and left market mechanisms to determine factors of accessibility, availability, and the distribution of goods and services. Privatization reforms have made the cost of health care an insurmountable burden for the poor (Jeffery and Jeffery in Gupta and Sivaramakrishnan 2009). Much of the scholarship on Indian liberalization revolves around ways the Indian government produces citizens (and civil society) that directly and indirectly are best suited to fulfill its own policies (Harriss 2007). Power should not only be thought of in terms of the top-down power of the state but as internalized by individuals that guide their behavior (Burchell et al. 1991).[4] The ideal neoliberal "enterprising self" is goal-oriented, self-directed, committed to acquiring skills for self-advancement (Heelas 1991).

Sociologist Nickolas Rose notes this model of 'government-at-a-distance' doesn't necessarily translate to less governance. There are two features of governmentality: political rationalities and governing technologies. Governmentality works through "discursive fields characterized by a shared vocabulary within which disputes can be organized, by ethical principles that can communicate with one another, by mutually intelligible explanatory logics" (Rose 1999: 42). Peck and Tickell (2007) conclude, "Only rhetorically does neoliberalism mean "less state;" in reality, it entails a thoroughgoing reorganization of governmental systems and state–economy relations" (33). Governmentality and 'advanced liberalism' have an added layer of flexibility and impunity under the pursuits of development and civil society (Ferguson and Gupta 2002). Neoliberalism has opened a space for validating competitive, consumptive, and entrepreneurial self-fashioning (Gooptu 2009).

[4] Philosopher Michel Foucault first developed the concept of 'governmentality' in lectures at the Collège de France in the late 1970s.

Neoliberal ideology is not imposed on society; but rather it is subtly disseminated in all sorts of ways. Harvey (2005) revealed how urban transformation through a regime shift from urban management to urban entrepreneurialism has led to the privatization of utilities and urban planning resulting in patchwork cities with uneven infrastructure and social stratification. Neoliberal policies prevail by developing and authorizing many "autonomous entities of government that are not part of the formal state apparatus and are guided by enterprise logic" (Gupta et al. 2006: 277). This is reflected in culture and media. Gooptu (2013) notes that Bollywood has widely circulated and promoted narratives of enterprise culture marked by neoliberal refashioning of individual success and progress. Young people in particular are "synecdochic of the self-representation of the nation as it embraces a reconfigured enterprise culture: unapologetic, self-confident, brash – and driven by aspirations to do better than their parents" (28). These neoliberal discourses of risk, success, and individual responsibility are not unprecedented in India; rather, they have been reconfigured to accommodate transnational circuits of capital and middle-class status aspirations (35).

Young people in India are taught to appreciate innovative mechanisms, take risks, to seek market-based approaches and income generation activities that can lead to self-optimization. In my fieldwork there was evidence that these philosophies have translated into a developing startup culture among middle-class youth (Razavi 2015). Young people expounded the successes of Indian startups like Flipkart and Zomato. Many of the startups replicate successful American startups—a corollary of globalization.

Scholars have asserted that neoliberal reforms and globalization have benefited the middle-class the most, making them the drivers of structural adjustment

reforms and perpetuating liberalizing economic policy (Deshpande 1998; Fernandes 2006; Sridharan 2004). Others have challenged the notion that the Indian middle-class has been the great beneficiary of neoliberal policies (Ganguly-Scrase and Scrase 2008b). There is, however, agreement among many scholars that the notion of a homogenous middle-class—with one political project—is incorrect and outdated (Sen and Stivens 1998: 15; Fernandes 2000; Sridharan 2004; Ganguly-Scrase and Scrase 2008b; Baviskar and Ray 2011).

2.3 The equivocal middle-class

The scholarship on economic liberalization often elicits confusion and uncertainty about India's middle-class or as some scholars suggest (Sridharan 2004; Ganguly-Scrase and Scrase 2008b), middle-classes. The future of India's democracy is very much interwoven with the future of the middle-class. The two categories are interdependent of one another; one cannot succeed going forward without the other also succeeding. The middle-class serves as a bellwether for the economic and political outlook of the nation. Ghertner asserts this is the case no matter what model is examined, "whether treated as a hegemonic culture, an income category, or performative disposition, the middle-class has (re-) emerged as a central sociological concept in studies of contemporary politics" (2012: 1). As noted earlier, with the growth of the Indian economy the middle-class is expanding. As the middle stratum, between two very different segments of the population with opposing politics and conflicting demands of the state, this expansion will have a significant effect on Indian politics.

Defining the middle-class(es)

Defining the middle-class can be a contentious undertaking. I will not attempt to give an absolute definition but rather define with whom my inquiry is positioned and explain why this group is the apposite principal for examination. According to the National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) and their classification of the middle-class, the middle-class in 1995–96 was just 25 million people, that population grew to 58 million in 2001–02 and further to 153 million by 2010 (Shukla 2010: 101). The Center for Global Development (CGD) estimated in 2012 that the middle-class was closer to 70 million (Meyer and Birdsall 2012). Other estimates have the middle-class still well below five percent of the population (Kochhar 2015). This growth, and the debate over its rapidity has prompted different attempts by businesses, consultants, development agencies, international organizations, and scholars to find a satisfactory quantifiable definition to determine a legible consumer market, predict potential, and determine the power in numbers. *Figure 1* shows different estimates for the Indian middle-class by various organizations, as well as the large discrepancy in their estimates and projections. Birdsall (2010), Kharas (2010) and the World Bank (2012) use $10 per capita per day (PPP) as a minimum threshold for an individual to be considered middle-class—this has emerged as a popular global minimum when determining a country's middle-class. Other scholars and observers have argued for higher and lower thresholds, asserting a need for region specific estimates or even making an argument for Indian exceptionalism (Meyer and Birdsall 2012).

Organization	Definition/ Equation to determine middle class	India's Mid Class Today	Projected Mid Class Size in 2025
THE WORLD BANK	Using the median poverty line in 70 countries as a lower bound and the United States poverty line as an upper bound	250 Million	500 Million
McKinsey&Company	Using real annual household disposable incomes between 200,000 and 1 million rupees	60 Million	580 million
NCAER	Uses 'household income' as the criterion, a family with an annual income between Rs 3.4 lakh to Rs 17 lakh (at 2009-10 price levels)	260 Million	547 Million
ADB	Defined as those with consumption expenditures of $2–$20 per person per day in 2005 PPP $	274 Million	No estimate
CNN IBN	Using a consumption-based criterion. The survey looked at whether a household owned a car or scooter, color television, or a telephone	200 Million	400 Million
Center for Global Development	Uses a minimum threshold of $10 per capita per day (2005 PPP) and a maximum threshold of $50 a day	70 Million	No estimate
EY	People earning between US$10 and US$100 per day	50 Million	200 Million

Figure 1: Various organizations' definition and projections for India's middle-class. Source: Author using additional sources[5]

Analysis of the middle-class, including the fast expanding lower or emerging middle-class,[6] is important because of the incredible movement and uncertainty about the class. For this research, I unravel and designate the 'emerging' middle-class as the bearer of the broader category of middle-class. This is the class, often referred to as the 'new' or 'aspirational' middle-class, that upholds the notion that India's middle-class is prosperous, self-confident, and on the move (Fernandes and Heller 2006; Lama-Rewal 2011). The established or old middle-class generally reflects or emulates the elite class (Deshpande 1998). I will make more specific distinctions when

[5] Sources: ADB: http://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/KI/2010/KI2010-Special-Chapter.pdf
WB: Ravallion, M. (2009), "The Developing World's Bulging (but Vulnerable) 'Middle-class'", Policy Research Working Paper 4816, World Bank, Washington, DC.; Kharas, H. (2010), The Emerging Middle-class In Developing Countries. Working Paper 285, OECD Development Center, Paris; McKinsey Global Institute. (2007), "The Bird of Gold": The Rise of India's Middle-class." May 2007. Saxena, R. (2009) "Emerging Asia's Middle-class." Deutsche Bank Research. August 21, 2009 State of the Nation Poll. IBN Website. (2007), http://ibnlive.in.com/news/indian-middle-class-happy-with-economic-progress/32178-3.html; Ernst & Young Rapid-growth market Report (2013), "2013 Report." http://www.ey.com/Publication/vwLUAssets/Rapid-growth_markets_forecast_-_Winter_2013/$FILE/RGM_Winter_edition_2013.pdf

[6] My use of 'lower', 'emerging', and 'aspirational' middle-class refers to citizens that are positioned in the bottom half or just below the economically defined middle-class. Generally, I'm referring to NCAER's definitions of 'Middle-class' and the 'Aspirers' consumer class just below the middle-class. See Figure 2 for income distribution ranges.

necessary. However, by most studies of the economic means of the middle-class, the 'emerging' or 'aspiring' cohort of the middle-class constitutes the majority of the middle-income category. Using NCAER's methodology for economic classes, *Figure 2* shows, 405 million people reside in the 'Aspirers' consumer class category (with annual household incomes of $2000-$4000 USD) whilst 153 million people are securely in the defined middle-class with annual incomes of $4000-$21000 (Shukla 2010: 95-129). However, the group or groups that would make up different estimates of the middle-class have volatile economic positioning.

Moving the minimum threshold of this group significantly alters estimates because so many people are situated on the cusp of different thresholds and interpretations of the middle-class. For instance, lowering the minimum threshold from $10 to $8 (USD) a day changes the size of the Indian middle-class (based on CGD estimates) from 69.17 million to 91.14 million, adding over 20 million people (Meyer and Birdsall 2012: 8). As a result, I argue that definitions of the middle-class are problematized by attempts to capture income categories that have political and policy ramifications that can skew understanding of reasonable economic security in today's risk-prone globalized world.

There are better ways to think about the middle-class. Longitudinal studies using a consistent methodology do serve to help understand the movement occurring in these groups. Most of the middle-class is 'new,' meaning a generation or two back their kin were not counted among most classifications for the middle-class. Again, in a decade, the defined middle-class population went from 58 million to 153 million (Shukla 2010: 101). This recent collective upward mobility is one of the reasons contemporary scholars need to examine this class closely. The different estimates of the middle-class are attempts to make the group legible but what works as thresholds

in other countries may not work in the Indian or South Asia context. Within the target population, the relations of different sub-groups are equally important for understanding accessibility and status than the location of the different sections of the middle-class.

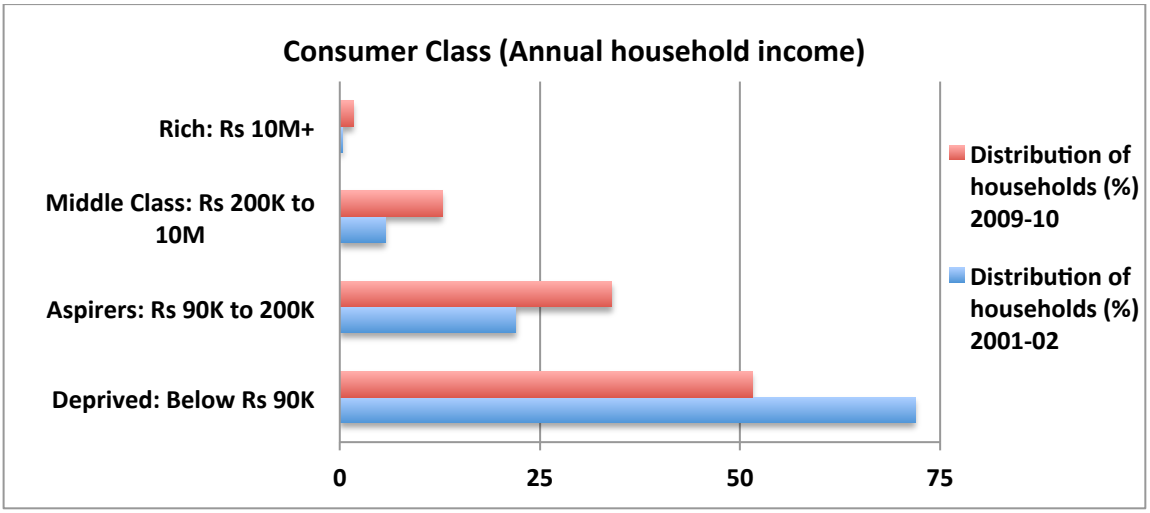


Figure 2: Consumer classes in India. Source: Author calculations using NCAER (NSHIE 2004–05 data, NCAER–CMCR analysis, Shukla 2010: 95-129)

The characteristic of the 'emerging' middle-class as new and working to maintain that class distinction is an important consideration going forward. The size of the class is in flux because of economic and political instability. The designation of middle-class will also be problematized through the research. This research is located in Delhi and so the theory and case studies, unless specifically designated, refer to the *urban* middle-class experience. My definition of the middle-class, or rather commitment to a hypothetical designate, is itself a multivalent classification. In doing so, the aim is to reflect more accurately what is in actuality. There are marked inequalities within the population of middle-class youth as defined for this thesis; for example, the experience of young people from the rural middle-class is markedly different than urban middle-class. That is to say, if you ask a man on the street in Delhi what it means to be middle-class his answer might differ greatly from the man next to him, whose answer will differ from a man on a dusty road 100 kilometers

outside Delhi, differing from the man on the street in Kashmir or Manipur, or the woman on the street, and so forth. Since class formation is a gendered phenomenon (Wright 1997: 115-124), there will be various emerging identities of middle-class women. The method in peoples' answers will also vary greatly. Some will determine middle-class-ness by one's material possessions, others based on income, on education and social connections, and for others, their caste, and lineage will hold the most weight. It is, therefore, important to think of the middle-class along a continuum, and as a process, rather than as a single, fixed category. Finally, it is important to consider the extent to which young people themselves perceive themselves to be middle-class and how that shapes their own identities and worldview.

Class-consciousness

In addition to being an economic and social entity, the middle-class may also be theorized by drawing upon Marx's idea of 'class-consciousness' which creates a stratum of people in active pursuit of their own interests: a "class *for* itself" rather than a "class *in* itself" (Borland 2008: 135). A narrow focus on macro-economic trends (shaping a 'class in itself'), as shown in *Figure 1*, belies what is perhaps the defining feature of this heterogeneous assortment of people that cuts across caste, religion and region: their aspirational drive to distinguish themselves from the working class below and carve out a better future for themselves (Baviskar and Ray 2011; Corbridge et al. 2013). India's middle-class lies within a more symbolic realm than is commonly afforded to it; one can still claim to be part of the India's middle-class despite facing adverse conditions of insecurity not dissimilar from those experienced by the working class (Fernandes 2000). In many ways, most people in the middle-class are the living embodiment of the middle-class—the tangible forms of an

idea, quality, and feeling.

The middle-class should be seen as a fluid category open to interpretation, positioning, and geography. The middle-class I discuss does not have a defined economic position but rather shares the distinction of not being wealthy and not being in abject poverty, in the loose definitions of both those extremes. The middle-class individual should be closer to the $10 (USD) a day (either in income or access to resources) than to the $1.25 poverty line set by the World Bank. In neo-Marxist terms, defining class in relation to ownership of the means of production, the modern Indian middle-class I examine includes the semiautonomous, including professional employees, top-earners among the proletariat and the low echelon of the petty bourgeoisie (Wright 1985; Sridharan 2004).

In capitalist societies, the Marxist view of middle-class initially referred to the bourgeoisie and petite (petty) bourgeoisie, in relation to the proletariat (the working class). The bourgeoisie own the means of production, through which it exploits the working class. The growth of finance capitalism led to the rise of the labour aristocracy, salaried service professionals, and white–collar workers.[7] The modern middle-class has more diverse and varied projects than a bourgeoisie "town-dweller" (Wright 1985). Attempting to apply a Marxist analysis of middle-classes to the modern Indian context reveals two dominant (powerful) sub-groups within the class: The old or established middle-class (bourgeoisie) with industrial capitalists, rich farmers, and independent producers. There is also the new middle-class (petite bourgeoisie) comprised of professionals: public and private salaried professionals and white-collar employees (Sridharan 2004: 407; Wright 1996). Marxist sociologist

[7] My use of labour aristocracy refers to the Marxist theoretical meaning. Briefly, this describes the exploitation of workers in the developing world by companies in the developed world. The low wages paid to developing world workers maximizes profits and allows these companies to pay their developed world employees higher wages, resulting in a high standard of living and reducing the risk of a proletarian (working class) mobilization.

Nicos Poulantzas (1975) claimed the objective of the 'new petty bourgeoisie' (e.g., white-collar employees, technicians, and civil servants) was to consolidate the ruling classes hegemony and undermining the proletariat's ability to self-organize (Wright 1996: 348-349).

A third group or supplement to the new middle-class would also include people that have acquired social or cultural capital but not necessarily economic capital. They have status through education, social connections, possession of scarce skills, or some other linguistic or social skills. The 'emerging' or lower-middle-class belongs almost exclusively to this latter group. This nascent portion of the middle-class has gained some autonomy from the established middle-class because of their possession of scarce skills and socio-political strength. This group's membership is attractive to aspirational Indians because it is viewed as modern; the membership is acquired through merit (as opposed to inherited through familial connections and wealth), and it maintains ideological support for liberalization (Wright 1996; Sridharan 2004). Based on the statistics of CGD and NCAER, this third group is the largest segment of the broadest understanding of the middle-class. Many of the informants in this thesis reside in this fragile tertiary social stratum of the middle and that is an important consideration when assessing the personal risks, forms of resistance, and maneuvering they engage in. Their suspended existence, compounded by their youth, and their pursuits in social politics extend their pendulous position in society.

The Marxist analysis is useful for understanding what makes this emerging middle-class so unique. This is because the emerging middle-class does not fit well into a Marxist classification—serving to denaturalize the class as an intelligible category. As a transitional class, it is not secure in its relation to other classes as the

poor and wealthy elite are. Wright describes the middle-class as a "contradictory location within class relations" (1985: 19). The Marxist classifications have a distinct and coherent set of interests deriving from their position in the relations of production. The middle-class is a collection of heterogeneous social layers who have in common an ambiguous and in-between position in relation to other classes. An Information Technology (IT) worker or telemarketer in Gurgaon can start at the bottom of a multinational corporation (MNC) and through merit, work their way up to managerial positions where they can acquire great wealth, have stock options in international exchanges, and develop transnational linkages. The modern Indian middle-class is fickle and mutable.

Class-in-practice

The most popular theorist for understanding India's middle-class has been Bourdieu, in large part because of the flexibility allowed in his theory. Bourdieu's theory of culture fields states that actors are positioned in a "field" of social relations according to their endowments of "capital" (1984). Bourdieu regards capital as "the set of actually usable resources and powers" and insists there are 'multiple species of capital' (1984: 114). Cultural capital refers to resources the individual can apply to a particular social setting; these are competencies, skills, qualifications that enable the individual to claim a degree of cultural authority (Bourdieu 1986; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1998).

Bourdieu posits a causal link between positions in social space and practices by means of the concept of habitus—the conditions that become internalized in the form of dispositions to act, feel, and think in certain ways (Bourdieu 1990). Loïc Wacquant explains Bourdieu's species of capital: "economic, cultural and social. A

fourth species, symbolic capital, designates the effects of any form of capital when people do not perceive them as such" (2006). Symbolic capital is any species of capital that is perceived through socially inculcated classificatory schemes as a crucial source of power. In contemporary Delhi, this is particularly true of subsets of cultural capital like linguistic capital (command of language) and political capital (command of votes/voters) that affect an individual's position in social space. These multiple species of capital can also be a source of constructive social relations, as well as symbolic violence.

Individuals hold a position in each field of social relations that correspond with their historical, cultural, social, and economic power as well as their habitus. Different fields inspire different kinds of practices and possibilities. Bourdieu's central thesis is that the relationship between habitus and the field shape human action and relations. Habitus and the field can only exist in relation to the other (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1998).

Examining the middle-class in India, Fernandes (2006) favors using Bourdieu's theories and the combination of culturally shaped and structurally limited classificatory practices in determining the boundaries of the middle-class. She argues that structurally the middle-class is not new. What is new is the stratum as the champions of liberalization. Fernandes and Heller (2006) suggest the 'new' middle-class can only be grasped as a 'class-in-practice'—a multitude of bodies, animated by the politics and everyday practices of social, symbolic and spatial jostling within fields of competition. Jeffrey (2010) adds that a uniting axiom for the middle-class is a "shared anxiety about the possibility of downward mobility and a determination to use their economic and social resources to shore up their position vis-à-vis the poor" (5).

The ‘new middle-class’ is defined by its politics and the everyday reproduction of its privileged position. Understanding class distinctions is equally important to understanding how caste, religion, and language contribute towards the politics of hegemony (Fernandes and Heller 2006). The hegemonic project and illiberalism of this fragmented ‘class-in-practice’ is not exceptional to India but a defining characteristic of a contemporary neoliberal middle-class.

Scholars assert that following India’s economic liberalization, the middle-class as a ‘class-in-practice’ has adopted a new introspective (Mazzarella 2003). Scholars claim that the stratum is actively distancing their practices and politics from the poor’s (Baviskar 2011; Chatterjee 2004); and are defining proper citizenship and the public interest to narrowly represent the elite (Ghertner 2011; Anjaria 2009; Harriss 2007; Srivastava 2009). This perceived illiberalism of the middle-class is one of the principal assertions I will explore in this thesis. Inherent in this discussion is the performance of class.

Performativity

The consistent narrative put forward by studies of the middle-class in India is that there are “ways of being middle-class and striving to master its cultural codes [that] require not just material resources, but the imaginative work and self-discipline essential to cultivating new forms of subjectivity” (Ray 2010: 319). That narrative could nearly describe modernity as well. The concepts of modernity and middle-class are intertwined in the Indian context. The ethos of modernity puts a special emphasis on individualization, social relations associated with the rise of capitalism and post-industrial life. The middle-class in India is bottom-heavy with new members that have just arrived and are looking for more. For the newly arrived, the constant pressure to

appear modern whilst facing relentless everyday adversities is arduous but necessary work for membership in the middle-class.

Dickey (2012) argues the construction of middle-class identity in urban India is 'performative'. To Dickey this performance does not reflect Judith Butler's sense of performativity, where identities are naturalized, nor Victor Turner's notion of reflexive self-observation occasioned by social dramas, but is more in line with Goffman's notion of the dramaturgical. "In this perspective, people, all with greater and lesser degrees of self-consciousness at different times, merge 'selves' with the 'masks' of social roles and…see themselves as acting a part" (Dickey 2012: 563). This sense of being an actor—with a sense of 'cynical' and 'sincere' performances constantly in front of an audience—is "key to the precariousness expressed in subjective accounts of class" (Dickey 2012: 563; see also Goffman 1959: 19, 56, 252-253).

The middle-class can be viewed as an ideological construct that is constantly reproduced and reinforced in public and private life (Fernandes 2000). This everyday reproduction manifests in different and often contradictory ways: keeping modern and 'in the loop' whilst living in a rural context, the reliance on domestic servants even when the grandeur and space of a household has been downsized by modern conditions or the preponderance of coaching centers that aim to give kids an edge in school and university admission (Baviskar and Ray 2011). For middle-class Hyderabadi females, respectability necessitates avoidance of opposite sex friendships, yet upper-middle-class youth are encouraged to engage in opposite-sex relationships. At the highest social echelon, pre-marital romance is a form of 'fashion' for elite youth because it is located in high-status spaces of leisure and consumption (Gilbertson 2014). For a group of young middle-class men in the Bangalore

technology sector, engaging in conspicuous consumption—buying the latest motorcycles and expensive watches—was a way to gain cultural capital as well as perform the class they view themselves entering into (Nisbett 2007). These young men displayed 'flagrant and visible' forms of consumption highlighting their particular orientation towards modernity (Nisbett 2009: 943). Consumption practices have been central to images of India's new middle-class, and young people are the "most visible aspirants to a new middle-class consumerist lifestyle" (Nisbett 2007: 936).

The combination of achievement and ascription is the defining middle-class characteristics of IT workers. Many IT workers don't like to acknowledge the latter because it greatly contradicts their ideals of merit-based status, respectable femininity or masculinity, and modernity—all of which are important components in the package of middle-class-ness (Upadhaya and Radhakrishana in Baviskar and Ray 2011). In several case studies in this thesis, there is noticeable tension for informants in their performance of the everyday reproduction of middle-class and development towards the enterprising self (Heelas 1991). Dickey (2012) writes:

> Whilst being 'in the middle' is a source of pride and pleasure, connoting both achievement and enhanced self-control, it is simultaneously a source of great tension, bringing anxiety over the critical and damaging scrutiny of onlookers (559).

The different examples of tensions described above reveal the different commitments endeavored in the name of social mobility—especially for females navigating the contradictory relationship between cultural capital and feminine modesty.

An ideological project comprising the 'moral majority'

The notion of middle-class in India is a "powerful unifying idea that can exert cultural dominance and drive political change" (Roy 2012: 26; also see Baviskar and Ray

2011). The burden of ‘‘being and becoming’’ middle-class is a heuristic and ontological challenge for young people and a valid category of inquiry (Baviskar and Ray 2011). The individual, from a young age, must learn to be the self-reliant and independent political subject, self-disciplined, and prepared to manage new risks and vulnerability whilst upholding traditional morality and values.

The economics and politics of neoliberalism are riddled with paradoxes and contradictions emphasizing concurrently value-free economics and intensive moral regulation, the uneven distribution of risk and security amounting to heightened social inequalities. The state in recent decades has re-orientated as both an enabler of the market and as a vehicle for Hindu cultural nationalism, allowing for the emergence of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) as the party of the expanding middle-class (Corbridge and Harriss 2000; Hansen 1999).

Before the 1999 general election, the BJP advocated for a nationalistic economic agenda that promoted domestic small-scale economic interests (*swadeshi*), internal economic liberalization, and the philosophy of Integral Humanism—a philosophy developed by political philosopher Deendayal Upadhyaya and adopted by the Bharatiya Jana Sangh (BJS), the right-wing precursor to BJP. Integral Humanism stresses the importance of *swadeshi* and Hindu morality in politics (Hansen 1999). The 1999 elections brought Hindu nationalism and an indigenous economic model from the fringes of society to the center of national political discourse. BJP was critical of the ongoing globalization of the Indian economy and influence of foreign agents and a neoliberal agenda that subverted national sovereignty.

Scholar Salim Lakha (2002) contends that during BJP’s five years in government, ending with the 2004 elections, the party’s rhetoric against globalization softened. The BJP shifted from resisting globalization to embracing external

economic liberalization. "[T]he key concept of *swadeshi* has been reinterpreted to make it more compatible with the policy of external liberalization and globalization" (Lakha 2002: 102).

By the 2014 elections, the BJP had furthered this reinterpretation, embracing hi-tech development and promoting India's global competitiveness. The politics of the new right is comfortable with mixing neoliberalism with socially authoritarian politics (Corbridge and Harriss 2000). The new BJP platform counterbalanced modern ambitions with middle-class morality. The campaign emphasized development over identity without the former entirely displacing the latter. In office, the BJP coalition government promoted technocratic solutions to problems. The distinguishing characteristics of globalization and the technocratic discourse behind the growth of hi-tech industries was a departure from the party's previous aversion to an influx of foreign capital into India's economy (Lakha 2002: 85).

In a country where the new national heroes are the titans of industry, technology gurus, and CEOs of multinational corporations and business schools, a technocratic model of development appeals to many in the middle-class. The branding of Narendra Modi utilized social media, rallies with technical marvels like big screens, digital graphics, and even a holographic Modi. This was complimented by simple technology. Strategies included traditional local level canvassing, parading the candidate through streets, and enabling people to call a phone number to listen to a live Modi speech. The different strategies for using technology reached the broadest segment from the young smartphone carrying middle-class person to the hardworking aspirational first-time flip-phone owner. This creative and technical approach to campaigning fit in with the larger BJP brand that sought to present itself as forward thinking and modern. For a middle-class that is struggling to find the right balance

between embracing middle-class morality and consumerism, Modi and the BJP showed that the two are not mutually exclusive (Guru 2014). The values of BJP, steeped in Hindu nationalism and conservative mores, allowed people to embrace the innovative and reformist message. This experience is indicative of Casanova's (2011) model of 'multiple modernities' presented as an alternative analytical framework on the emerging global order that combines a position that rejects both, the notion of a modern radical break with traditions as well as the notion of an essential modern continuity with tradition.

Many in the emerging middle-class claim to eschew ideologies of the class and caste they were born into for the confident and exciting pro-growth agenda. They do not express solidarity with the poor and state-led social programming. Instead, they identified with the movements and solutions concentrated on upward mobility for the citizen. Examining Delhi, Singh (2014: 54) asks,

> By embracing the universal idea of 'citizen' and seeking technocratic solution to political problems, are we papering over deep hierarchies? Or does the idea of 'citizen' represent the beginning of a far more radical politics?

There are indications in recent scholarship, election results, and my own case studies in this thesis that give arguments for both the emergence of a nascent inclusive development narrative and the staunch maintenance of protecting what the middle-class perceive as their interests, by excluding the poor.

2.4 Activism and active citizenship

To understand how the middle-class operates and their relations with other classes it is important to understand that the middle-class and civil society are inextricably linked. John Harriss asserts that civil society is distinctly stratified and is "a sphere of middle-class activism, and such activism is one of the defining features of the middle-

class" (2006: 445). The ideas, methods, and motivations behind social mobilization, active citizenship, and inclusivity are at the core of this thesis. Martin Webb's (2012) study of public activism in Delhi is a stimulus to my research regarding 'citizen activists' involved in campaigns around social justice and corruption in the Indian capital. Webb identifies contradictions that support prominent theorist Partha Chatterjee's (2004) claims about the distinctive nature of cross-class political mobilization. In India, the political strategies pursued by urban middle-classes are often markedly different from those of the poor, which has led scholars to closely examine the motives of the middle-class's work to activate citizens.

Activating citizens

Active citizenship in this thesis refers to individuals getting involved in their communities at any level towards the betterment of that community—in the perception of that citizen. Kennedy (2007) rightly notes, "There is not a single definition of 'active citizenship' – different contexts create different understandings of what it means to be an active citizen" (306). Active citizenship can be filling out government forms for people that are illiterate, it can be teaching community members a new skill; it can take the form of being engaged in democratic processes. It entails some sort of acting upon rights as a citizen. Activating one's citizenship—as I will discuss—can be a contentious process. For those on the margins the process is fraught with contradictions.

Civil society is often regarded as the social domain engaged in active citizenship that is separate from the state, the private market, and kinship. However, recent scholarship in South Asia asserts that civil society is often the principal means to reinforcing existing power relations (Chatterjee 2004; Gellner 2010). A more

complex study of civil society accommodates an understanding of the tension of ethnic divisions, local versus global advocacy, clientelism, and kinship relations. Civil society actors are no longer assumed to be acting separately from both the state and the market. Chatterjee (2004) describes how civil society was a concept developed from experiences and practices in the West and that there is a more appropriate way of reflecting on the politics and engagement for "most" of the world; with the concept of political society.

Chatterjee provides an alternative definition of civil society as "the closed association of modern elite groups, sequestered from the wider popular life of communities, walled up within enclaves of civic freedom and rational law" (2004: 4). In contrast, political society lobbies the state mobilized around issues of kinship, caste, religion and other forms of identity politics. Political society represents the site of negotiation and contestation "between governmental agencies responsible for administering welfare and groups of population that count according to calculations of political efficacy" (Chatterjee 1998: 281).

The civil society is usually organized around formally recognized horizontal associations. The 'politics of democratization' takes place in the "much less well-defined, legally ambiguous, contextually and strategically demarcated terrain of political society" (Chatterjee 1998: 282). This understanding is a more appropriate way of reflecting on the politics of post-colonial countries where democracy "should be seen as the politics of the governed" (Chatterjee 2004:4). Advancing Foucault's idea of the "governmentalization of the state", ideas of citizenship—the "ethical connotation of participation in the sovereignty of the state"—have been substituted with the concept of 'population'—nothing more than a 'target' for the government's policy (Chatterjee 2004: 34).

Advancing from Chatterjee, a number of scholars have shown ways in which the middle-class seek to discipline and mobilize subordinate social groups in the name of the public interest, order, and rational law (Baviskar 2011; Ghertner 2011; Anjaria 2009; Bhan 2009; Harriss 2006; Srivastava 2009). The poor and marginalized often have to engage with civil society to access the state (Webb 2012). These connections are mediated through embedded power relations between the upper-middle-class and poor, practices that are indicative of the distinction made by Harriss (2006) between civil society and political society. Baviskar (2011; 2003) describes middle-class environmental activism as a proxy for promoting a modern 'clean' city. These 'bourgeois environmentalists' are threatening the republic of the streets in Delhi with their goal of spatial and social order, the kind they've seen or heard about in Western global cities. Baviskar suggests that the backwardness of street life and precarious labour in their capital city is embarrassing to the 'bourgeois environmentalist' and their expectations of modernity.

Anjaria's (2009) research in Mumbai describes civic activists that mobilize through civil society to make public spaces more orderly. They use the rhetoric of citizen participation to transform the practice of politics in the city and illegitimate claims by those they see as unruly city residents—many of whom sell and buy goods on the street. Anjaria argues that these civic activists are undermining "heterogeneous forms of democratic political participation" in the city (2009: 391). Similarly, Ghertner (2012) identifies ways the state and civil society allies justify the demolishing of slums with the rhetoric of a need to 'beautify' Delhi in an effort to develop a modern and global city.

Ghertner points to Delhi's *Bhagidari* scheme, an initiative to promote broad-based civil participation in local governance, as an example of the local state

controlling channels of access on the basis of property ownership. Ghertner notes that the scheme has been a mutually beneficial policy for the state and the middle-class—represented by the Resident Welfare Associations (RWAs)—to consolidate accessibility to the local state under the guise of grassroots and participatory programs. RWAs take diverse forms across the city. There are competing RWAs in the same neighborhood and some large RWAs that encompass smaller ones. Many registered RWAs are now defunct or don't follow the rules of holding regular elections. Informal RWAs show up in unauthorized colonies (UC) or as community-based organizations (CBO). RWAs that are officially recognized by the Delhi Government (Chief Minister's office and the *Bhagidari* program), the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD), and Delhi Development Authority (DDA) assert the interests of property owners into the governance process, often shaping normative views of the city—such as who belongs and who does not (Ghertner 2011; Chakrabarti 2007; Lemanski and Lama-Rewal 2013).

Harriss (2010)—pace Chatterjee—argues that contributing to this social chasm is the 'new politics' of participation by the poor (policies of empowerment) that may just be a proxy for the 'old politics' controlled by the wealthy elite. The 'new politics' of upper-middle-class civil society presents itself "as [an agent] of social development while effectively neutralizing political threats from the poor" (Corbridge et al. 2013: 228; Harriss 2010). Participatory strategies are not only 'captured' to promote upper-middle-class agendas, but actively exclude the urban poor. These stratagems by the upper-middle-class undermine the prospect of cross-class mobilization and thus deepen the gap between civil society and political society. Harriss goes as far as commenting, "democratic decentralization in India's big cities is, quite simply, a sham" (2010: 17-18).

In Delhi, former Chief Minister Sheila Dixit managed to build a strong middle-class constituency through the participatory governance initiative. The RWA constituency was generally appreciative of her efforts to rebuild the city on a more macro scale with policies that fit their ideals: traffic control, pollution control, cleanliness, planting of trees, and extra policing in certain neighborhoods (Chakrabarti 2007). The backwardness of street life and precarious labour around their neighborhoods were concerns that RWAs could take to the Chief Minister's office. For more than a decade, Dixit consolidated her power, at the base, with the RWAs. Ghertner (2011) reveals the city's democratic processes gave way to programmatic and administrative recognition for the RWAs' role as stakeholders in the planning and running of the city. Their influence subverts the electoral process dominated by the poor by altering the influence of local politicians. These strategies that promote one group over another are reflected in the scholarship of Jayal (2013) and Yuval-Davis (2011). Jayal asserts that citizenship is contested at various sites; it is not only "a relation between the individual and the state, but also as a relation between citizens" (2013: 2).

Boundaries of belonging

In *Citizenship and its Discontents*, Jayal discusses the "myriad ways in which citizenship in India is perceived and understood, claimed and asserted, surrendered and abrogated, abridged and violated" (2013: 2). Jayal asserts that despite naturalized statuses and guarantees, citizenship is contested at various sites: "as a legal status, as a bundle of rights and entitlements, and as a sense of identity" and belonging (2013: 12). Since the Constitution was signed in 1950, the Indian state has enacted a range of "group-differentiated" rights—most notably various affirmative action schemes—

accorded to citizens based on their relative "backwardness" (203: 227). The designate of backwardness was left ambivalent, and this controversy has led to enduring "zones of contention in Indian society" (18). Economic development is viewed as a remedy against backwardness and obscurantism for citizens on the margins of society. However, development has done little to improve the livelihoods of marginalized groups (e.g., SCs, STs, and poor Muslims). Instead, the push for development has perpetuated the project of building a robust middle-class—perceived as a central tenet of a healthy democracy.

Several scholars have asserted that policies of economic liberalization have been accompanied by discourses on the rise of a 'new Indian middle-class' (Brosius 2010; Fernandes 2006; Varma 2007). Once again Bourdieu's (1984; 1986) research provides useful framework to understanding the determination of one's class is not only dependent on economic capital. Class is also expressed through Bourdieu's multiple species of capital, which are set out in practices, skills, and social connections. Moreover, scholars utilize Bourdieu's concept of habitus: a set of acquired dispositions, expectations, values, styles, and tastes that structure a particular group and forms the conscious or unconscious unity of the class. Correspondingly, the reproduction of the social structure results from the habitus of individuals (Bourdieu 1977).

Drawing on that conceptual framework, Mazzarella (2003) argues that changing consumption practices and lifestyles are used as justification for creating new terms of public/political discourse. The visibility of the urban middle-classes as the essential agents of consumption sets into motion a 'politics of forgetting' with regard to social groups in India that are marginalized by policies of liberalization (Fernandes 2004). This 'politics of forgetting' renders the marginalized "invisible

within the dominant national political culture" resulting in an exclusionary form of cultural citizenship that is contested by marginalized groups (2004: 2416). The hegemonic aspirations of the new middle-class have blended market liberalism with political and social illiberalism (Fernandes and Heller 2006). Largely because of this scholarship on a 'politics of forgetting', in this thesis (q.v. Chapter Seven) I made sure to engage with young people that are within the purview of my research (as middle-class) but also fit into categories of marginalized youth. These are youth that were moving forward despite being labeled backward.

There is emerging scholarship concerning this juxtaposed group. Fernandes (2006) refers to a broad category of aspiring middle-classes as a belied group—not really middle-class yet but on their way. Similarly, Pandley (2009) describes this group as the 'subaltern middle-class'; she highlights how the educated and professional lifestyle of many Dalits does not preclude them from the experience of subalternity and the violence of caste hierarchies. By examining marginalized middle-class youth, I am giving more importance to different subjectivities and acknowledging a group that defies the assumed lifestyles, politics, and social practices of the neoliberal reform era. This recognition deepens our understanding of intersectionality in India's changing social structure since liberalization.

Intersectionality can be described as the ways in which oppressive conventions and practices (e.g., racism, sexism, homophobia, ableism, ageism, classism, etc.) are interconnected and cannot be examined separately from one another (Yuval-Davis 2006; 2011). Intersectional analysis combats "the god-trick" of ignoring social positioning and "seeing everything from nowhere" (Haraway 1991: 189).

Intersectional feminism has given theoretical depth to the notion that oppression comes in many different forms. An individual or even a group may have

multiple forms of oppression directed against them at the same time. For example, a woman who identifies as Dalit and Muslim could be oppressed because of their caste, sex, and their religion. Another part of their identity—their social position—could be positively situated and privileged. Continuing with this example, the individual could be differently located within the same boundaries of belonging because their class status is solidly upper-middle-class. The acknowledgement of intersectionality and the neologism 'Kyriarchy'[8] have worked to problematize the analytical category of patriarchy in terms of acknowledging multiplicative intersecting forms of oppression. Yuval-Davis warns against homogenizing the ways political projects affect people who are differentially located within the same boundaries of belonging:

> Much depends on people's ability to move up those grids of power and the extent to which locations ascribed at birth can be transcended, whether by moving from one category of location to another, such as becoming 'middle-class' while being originally 'working class,' or –even more dramatically— being trans-gendered or becoming assimilated into a different national, ethnic or even racial collectivity (2011: 13).

Lister et al. (2007) posit the concept of 'lived citizenship' which focuses on the relationship between citizenship and everyday life, and addresses the different ways social actors give meaning to and practice key elements of citizenship: rights, belonging and participation (168; *see also* Cherubini 2011: 115). Using this perspective, I was interested in marginalized activists (q.v. Chapter Seven) understandings of the meanings of citizenship. What they were negotiating, and recognized the difficulties inherent in this process, was what I will conceptually

[8] 'Kyriarchy' is a neologism developed by theologian Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (2001 [1992]) that is "derived from the Greek words for "lord" or "master" (*kyrios*) and "to rule or dominate" (*archein*) (Glossary). Kyriarchy is used to describe a social system that acknowledges all intersecting oppressions. An example of this: one person is a high-caste, heterosexual, able-bodied woman; another is a disabled, gay, Dalit man. According to the theory of patriarchy, the woman would be oppressed and the man would be privileged. The woman may still experience oppression as a woman, and the man might experience forms of male privilege, but there is more nuance and minutia to consider—the subtle oppressions and sources of power. Kyriarchy acknowledges multiple dimensions of disadvantage and simultaneous processes.

identify as the 'politics of belonging'.

Yuval-Davis distinguishes between 'belonging' and the 'politics of belonging'—both complex multi-layered concepts. Belonging is "an emotional (or even ontological) attachment, about feeling at home" (2011: 10). There is a wealth of classic social theory around the concept of belonging: Tönnies' distinction between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* (1940), Durkheim's division of mechanical and organic solidarity (1973: 69) and Marx's notion of alienation (1975 [1844]). The 'politics of belonging' is more concerned with the conditions of diversity (e.g., location, identity, ethical and political values) and is best approached through the perspective of intersectionality. Additionally, Bourdieu's multiple species of capital, including cultural capital are largely impacted and influenced by the effects of intersectionality. For those with multiple and intersecting inequalities to bear, the accumulation of cultural capital is arduous work.

The politics of belonging is about more than the construction of boundaries; it also includes the "inclusion or exclusion of particular people, social categories and groupings within these boundaries by those who have the power to do this" (Yuval-Davis 2011: 18)—what Crowley (1999) refers to as 'the dirty work of boundary maintenance'. These boundaries of belonging are the boundaries outlined in Anderson's (1991 [1983]) 'imagined communities'. Boundaries that sometimes physically separate people, but "always symbolically" divide populations into a 'them' and 'us' dichotomy (Yuval-Davis 2011: 20).

Broadening citizenship

Several informants (q.v. Chapter Seven) took exception with normative notions of citizenship; even convictions that I thought were universally conclusive. Therefore in

this thesis, I have left the notion of 'shared citizenship' unsettled and ambivalent, it takes on different meaning at different times with the informants. In general, with my informants, it has taken on a meaning that is antithetical to multiculturalism and groups' preoccupations with ancestral identity—to such an extent that it undermines the sense of a broad community. The sharing of citizenship is in the formal legal sense. In other areas of scholarship it has a positive connotation, as an ideal to strive for, for example in Banting et al. (2007) work on social integration in Canada. I let shared citizenship take on different meanings because in the field I did not apply a strong definition to it; instead I let the informants make their own interpretations. I was surprised to find the term, after I introduced it without defining it, used often in a pejorative sense.

Yuval-Davis argues that citizenship should not be understood just in terms of formal state citizenship. She defines citizenship as "the participatory dimension of membership in all political community" (2011: 201). This broader conception enables us to see one's memberships in a diverse set of communities, including citizenships of sub, cross, and supra-state political communities (Yuval-Davis 2011: 61). This broader conception is indicative of the way Arnot and Swartz (2012) believe that youth understand citizenship. They argue, for youth "citizenship is understood in the broadest possible way—not just as a status, but also as having cultural and emotional aspects" (6). Young people are increasingly resistant to the limitations to their livelihoods and self-respect; they are working to reconfigure socio-political cultures, modes of communication, and social relations (Arnot et al. 2009; Jeffrey and Dyson 2008; Hart 2009).

In the prevailing context of neoliberalism and globalization, people are affected and positioned differently through various projects of belonging. Ghertner

(2012) points out that the concert of government officials and representatives of the middle-class determines belonging at the municipal level. Yuval-Davis writes that the politics of belonging involves the, "inclusion or exclusion of particular people, social categories and groupings within these boundaries by those who have the power to do this" (2011: 18).

Chatterjee's (2004) conceptual framework stresses the importance of civil society organizations as a tool for the middle-class, the increasingly professionalized nature of these institutions and the machinations by which the urban elite excludes and marginalizes the poor. Chatterjee's work pulled the curtain back on established notions of democracy and civil society. However, Chatterjee ignores the anti-democratic directions of political society. Corbridge et al. (2013) offer a useful critique of Chatterjee's view of elites as legal and the poor as open to 'illegal' practices. They point to a multitude of scholarship in India showing elites and upper-middle-class attempts to circumvent the law: through property seizures (Roy 2009b), engaging in corruption (Jeffrey 2008; Harriss-White 2003), colluding in the false registration of land (Coelho and Venkat 2009) illegal urban planning schemes in Bangalore (Benjamin 2000), and investing in illegal water pumps in Delhi (Truelove and Mawdsley 2011). This distinction, crucially, brings in the state as an accomplice to elite interests and hegemonic machinations. Corbridge et al. (2013) highlight a number of important limitations to Chatterjee's framework, including that "the upper middle-classes have not removed themselves from lobbying political figures; and the rich are often involved in illegal activity" (230). Mannathukkaren (2010) also asserts that the series of binaries set up by Chatterjee, "modernity/democracy, civil society/political society and the privileging of the latter half of the binary" as ultimately "counterproductive to the goal of democratization" (295).

Moreover, recent scholarship has shown youth activists—often as intermediaries—may be challenging existing power inequalities (Jeffrey 2010; Krishna 2013; Da Costa 2007). Many in the middle-class have displayed their commitment to democratic values turning to activism in civil society to bypass the machinations in representative politics. Through campaigns and lobbying, the middle-class brought important innovations to the government (notably through the Right to Information Act of 2005 (RTI)). With the tool of the RTI, which was designed as a legal mechanism to foster transparency in the government, Webb (2012) points out that local middle-class activists are helping the poor gain access to the state and its services. Through activism and "public interest litigation" the middle-class has helped usher in important "social provisioning" and legal entitlements with the National Food Security Act, 2013 (Right to Food Act) and the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act 2005 (NREGA) (Corbridge et al. 2013: 167). With these service-provision and brokerage campaigns, the middle-class activists feel they are working to help the urban poor become visible to the state and establish connections to power. But do these practices separate them from politicians or political campaigners that help the poor with everyday local provisions? Do they do more than Berenschot's (2010) case study of the municipal councilor in Ahmedabad that operated as a mediator between state institutions and citizens? There are strong similarities between patronage politics and community activism at various scales (Harriss 2006; Witsoe 2013).

The middle-class activists have initiated political reforms in an effort to mitigate the negative implications of 'patronage democracy' (Chandra 2004). However, Corbridge et al. (2013) argue that these campaigns are an effort to create additional "technocratic measures" that favor middle-class interests "rather than

democratic solutions being sought for public problems" (167). RTI and brokerage activism are mediated through power relations; however, activists would argue that over time familiarity with the process would cause the public and officials to self-discipline. Webb acknowledges that in order to assert their rights the urban poor still requires an intermediary with inside knowledge on how to access and communicate with bureaucrats. As a result, "transparency mechanisms and activists, like the local state they seek to reform, are embedded in the social context of the city" (Webb 2012: 218).

Webb concludes his ethnography of middle-class transparency activists in Delhi by acknowledging that they are situated in (and bound to) their vertical position in the social structure. Their project's objective does not include transforming the poor into active citizens—able to navigate varied fields and overcome the position of their habitus in the social structure. To an extent this 'ethical scene' is shaped by exclusionary middle-class discourses about corruption, dirty politics, and brokerage that promotes the urban poor to negotiate their existence in the city through informal mediated connections to political and bureaucratic power. The result is social activists relying on familiar relational connections in the established social structure rather than a "new politics of volunteerism" (Webb 2012: 218). This conclusion is indicative of Lefebvre's (2008) point that constructive action emerging out of everyday social activity may enhance the prospects of marginalized sections of society whilst also reproducing aspects of local dominance.

Everyday politics

Bourdieu's (1984) work theorizing the politics of everyday life, distinguished from large mobilizations and popular protests, is an essential concept in this thesis. Most

the activism or social work I observed in this research project took place within various everyday social fields, such as the fields of education, healthcare, infrastructure and other local politics that were ordinary plays of power. Jeffrey writes, "negotiating access to goods within clientelistic networks on the part of social politicians usually entails repeated rounds of deeply political work within social fields" (unpublished mss 2013: 11).

Krishna's (2012; 2002) research on low caste youth in rural western India is indicative of this reconfiguration of social politics within Bourdieu's 'fields'. Krishna positions youth often as intermediaries within families and village communities, helping the poor access the local state and its services. Krishna's (2013) research builds on the idea that if youth have educated role models working in social politics, ideally inter-generational (nearest or close in age), this is a critical factor in determining whether youth succeed in education and employment markets.

Makau's (2011) work in urban Kenya describes marginalized youth as "agents of change" that are mentoring younger generations with their school work, keeping them engaged with music, sport, and theatre activities, and assisting community members in accessing healthcare. These youth started a social enterprise called '*kuboostiana*' – slang for giving someone a boost (*see also* Thieme 2010). In 2008, the children who had been mentored in 2003 and 2004 started taking up the movement to boost the capabilities of others. These youth understand how to navigate various fields of social competition better than older generations..

Citizens learn the value of engaging with the state through formal procedures and asserting their rights. They observe agents in the 'field'—social arena in which people maneuver to strengthen their hold over desirable resources (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1998). Agents know the rules of varied fields (games), but their success

across fields becomes embodied in their system of dispositions (habitus) (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1998). Class reflects "the product of people's agency: their attempts—successful or otherwise—to navigate varied arenas" (Jeffrey 2010: 183). De Certeau's (1984) work serves as a theoretical framework for understanding that young activists—in negotiating varied arenas—are engaging in everyday tactics. These tactics work to exploit and then subvert strategies brought through policy, deepening privatization, and inequitable job market.

Ordinary social actors produce culture—often in a way that is local and personal and not conscious that the activity is culture producing. Ordinary culture producers do not have the power to impose culture or strategy on the system nor do they have the power to choose the best time for starting something new. They must improvise with what is available and rational to the system; only it cannot be used in an expected way. This improvising is what de Certeau calls 'bricolage'—the artisan-like inventiveness (1984: xviii). Jeffrey and Young (2014) have highlighted this improvising with 'what's at hand' as *jugād*—an Indian term that, crudely, means "make do and mend" or "find a way around" (182). They posit "shrewd improvisation" as a simplified definition for *jugād,* observing that the concept has gained traction among low castes (Dalits) in Uttar Pradesh that engage in local-level brokerage (185). This process of improvising something new and different yet also fitting (even exploiting) the moment is what de Certeau refers to as performing a 'ruse'. The ruse is necessary because the system is too slow to produce invention, the ruse transgresses the system or "law of place" at the "right point in time (kairos)", to produce a founding rupture or break. This "coup" modifies the local order and "is thus an operation that transforms the visible organization" (1984: 85).

Scholars have identified youth in India involved in everyday politics (Jeffrey 2010; Krishna 2002) that is performed necessarily at the local level and committed to democratization and rejecting modes of cultural/social domination (Bourdieu 1984). They engage in informal politics by working to improve service delivery, exposing corruption, and engaging in social entrepreneurship. Young activists' ideas about citizenship often align with those put forward by feminist and other critical perspectives (Jayal 2013; Yuval-Davis 2011; Arnot and Swartz 2012), which calls for deconstructing simplistic notions of nationalism, ethnic collectivities and their boundaries (q.v. Chapter Seven). Research on the emergence of youth assertion highlights the contradictions associated with the rise of the 'new' middle-class—as I've described in this chapter, representing a significant social, political and economic change that has been ongoing since the 1990s.

2.5 Dynamic youth

Given their demographic prominence and sensitivity to changing practices, a focus on youth uncovers important social, political and economic changes that are occurring in contemporary India. Young people are a particularly useful lens for exploring the gendered politics of Indian society, highlighting their real and symbolic suppression within society. Located at the entrée of numerous contradictions, a focus on youth reveals the disjuncture between aspirations and reality. The youth's 'fresh contact' with society (Manheim 1970) interlocked with conjunctures in their lives filled with anxieties and uncertainty (Johnson-Hanks 2002) compels young people to develop new tactics to combat strategies of economic and political rationality (de Certeau 1984).

Youth often take on the work of what Marx called 'social reproduction'—mitigating "structures and activities that transmit social inequality from one generation to the next" (Doob 2015: 375). Yet youth are often unable to access good-quality housing, obtain credit, and move into salaried positions that match the skills they have developed in school (Gooptu 2007). Sommers (2012) points out this situation affects both males and females because if males get 'stuck' often so do females that may want to obtain legal marriages and have enough security and stability to have kids (2012: xvi). 'Marriage-markets' add an extra layer of stress to young people just starting off (Grover 2009). The result of this waiting and inability to move forward with their lives is that youth become 'chronically bored' (Jeffrey 2010). The period of liminality or 'waiting' is now being extended; transitions into adulthood, the re-aggregation is delayed (Jeffrey 2010).

Jeffrey's ethnography of four sets of politically motivated young men at university in 2004-05, who were the major players in generating collective student protest against the declining value of their degrees is an example of youth taking on new strategies in a period of liminality and conjuncture. It is also an example of youth politics outside the scope of formal politics. Each set of young men in Jeffrey's research had a role and an activity towards protests and student action. They worked well together, "like different parts of a well-oiled machine, one set frequently sprung into action when another set had performed their function" (2010: 110).

The political animators shared characteristics—like weak links to political parties, and detachment from the machinations of local politicians—but differed in how they fit themselves to student politics and leadership. Jeffrey highlights the ambivalent nature of youth politics and a need to acknowledge "the potential of young people as political agents and especially the contradictory politics of lower-middle-

class young men" (2010: 117). In the course of 'waiting' young men engaged in collective political action to forward public critiques of the cost of private education, harassment of students, university corruption, and the deteriorating value of their degrees (2010). This state of oblivion, or 'limbo' made young men studying in Meerut (a city in Uttar Pradesh) begin to imagine themselves as a lower-middle-class collective, as opposed to the self-maximizing rational beings in Bourdieu's schema. In spaces of 'waiting', the young men "[r]eflecting the links between temporal anxiety and cross-class political action" began to mobilize (Jeffrey 2010: 187).

Generations and liminality

Jeffrey's ethnography is indicative of Turner's work on liminality. Turner (1969) argues long periods of liminality lead to the development of a transcendent feeling of togetherness, which he termed 'communitas'. Liminality can be a time of questioning traditional authority and experimenting with new strategies while in a state of oblivion. Along these lines, Mannheim (1970) states that each generation, due to their 'fresh contact' with the world has a unique place in the historical-social process. This new contact gives the youth an idiomatic potential for new ideas and dissent that can trigger social change. This leads to innovative social behavior and the rejection of the status quo. At particular moments, such as the period after leaving formal education or migrating to a city, these "generations in themselves" can become "generations for themselves", for example through developing new critiques of societal conventions (Jeffrey and Dyson 2014: 971).

For Mannheim, society advances, in part, because of the constant emergence of new generations, who have a 'fresh contact' with society. This period of rejecting rationality or questioning authority is what Turner terms 'anti-structure'. Turner

argues that such installation rituals as rites of passage involve three phases: separation, liminality, and re-aggregation (1969).[9] Generations come and go, they occupy the anti-structure for a short period, but 'fresh contact' is consistent and infinite. As one generation reintegrates with structure (or Bourdieu's schema) a new generation arrives to replace the former in the anti-structure.

Ethnographer Jennifer Johnson-Hanks (2002) developed, pace Bourdieu, the idea of 'vital conjuncture' to conceptualize the extended period in lives when structures deliver particularly challenging and confusing consequences whilst also delivering new opportunities for transformative change. Vital conjunctures are often presented as disruptive life moments: a death of a family member, marriage, leaving school, facing unemployment, migration, or another volatile transition. The duration of these vital conjunctures can vary greatly, they can take place over a few months or several years. Often these key transformative life changes are "concentrated in the period between people' s mid-teens and late twenties," dynamic years of one's youth (Jeffrey and Dyson 2014: 971). Johnson-Hanks' determination is that the life cycle model is rarely coherent or fixed, even when expectations direct the youth to follow a trajectory that checks off milestones as they are fulfilled. This systematic aligning is characteristic of Indian middle-class culture and fits with the precept of middle-class morality.

Johnson-Hanks argues instead for a new anthropology of the life course, one that recognizes the "indeterminacy and innovation" of individuals (2002: 865). The presumed transition to adulthood is nonsynchronous, the notion that people progress in stages of childhood and youth, en route to adulthood, "has lost analytical traction" (Jeffrey unpublished mss 2013: 3). This suggests the best way to think about youth

[9] Turner's 'liminality' is derived from Arnold van Gennep's *Rites de Passage* (2011 [1908]).

now is as along a continuum or in transitions. In the face of these life course expectations the youth profiled in this thesis display novel efforts at improvisation and mobilizing around issues affecting youth.

Youth mobilizing

Youth in India have a long history of collective action and political mobilizations. Since Independence, many youth movements have gained political traction and longevity whilst others amount to ephemeral protests. In the 1990s, young people led the push for the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) to establish a power centre in Uttar Pradesh (Duncan 1999). Leftist protest movements in Kolkata, during the late 1980s, led to the election of a CPI(M)-led Left Front in West Bengal. They wielded considerable power over society without interruption from 1977 until 2007, when a new wave of protest agitations by the opposition (including the resistance at Nandigram comprised largely of young activists) brought Mamata Banerjee an electoral victory in 2011 (Ramaswamy 2011).

In the 1970s, students in Bihar led by the Gandhian socialist Jayaprakash Narayan, popularly known as JP, rallied against corruption in the state government. Under JP's guidance, the Janata Party (an amalgam of parties opposed to Indira Gandhi's State of Emergency) was voted into power and became the first non-Congress party to form a government at the Centre. The party lost their majority in 1980 and later dissolved in 2013 (Witsoe 2013; Samaddar 2008).

In recent years, Delhi has been at the centre of new political and social mobilization in India with the Anna Hazare anti-corruption movement and protests concerning women's security in the Capital after the December 2012 gang rape murder of a 23-year-old physiotherapy student. In July 2015, Patidar youth that

identified with the surname Patel started public demonstrations across Gujarat seeking OBC status. These movements were propelled in part by the young middle-class, often aided through the use of ICTs. Similarly, young middle-class activists played a vital role in bringing the Aam Aadmi Party into prominence in 2013.

There has been considerable movement across the globe by young activists guided by a struggle for a more pluralistic, tolerant and democratic political system. The Arab Spring uprisings, the Occupy and Indignants movements, as well as recent protests in Delhi, Moscow, Kiev, and Latin America all saw significant participation by the young urban middle-class utilizing social media as a tool for advocacy, up-to-the-minute information, and organization (Bennett and Segerberg 2013; Glasius and Pleyers 2013; Khosrokhavar 2012; Diuk 2013; Biekhart and Fowler 2013).

The uprisings are using the tools developed by the information age and often knowledge acquired from private or for-profit education. Scholar Joel Rocamora (2012) calls this groundswell movement "people power" and writes that it is, "sustained by the prodigious capacity of capitalism to produce victims; by the continuous production of educated, unemployed, bored youth; by the insults of autocracy; by the avalanche of information generated by the Internet" (201).

Republic of the Internet

In May of 2015, less than one-in-five Indians used the Internet on a regular basis. However, there are over 106 million active social media users in India (eight percent of the total population); 92 million are active via mobile devices (IAMAI 2014). The share of web traffic on mobile phones and tablets was 70 percent. These numbers suggest the rise of the "Mobile-First" generation of Internet users (IAMAI 2014). India's digital landscape is accelerating fast; there were 30 million new Internet users

in the first six months of 2014, a 14 percent increase. Social media use is keeping pace. Facebook added 16 million new users for 2014 by July—roughly equating to a new user every second (IAMAI 2014). As mobile phones that can access the Internet (smartphones or feature phones) and data plans become more affordable, this will have a significant impact on the number of Internet users in India.

The mobile market in India is growing rapidly. India's telecom giants like Airtel, Reliance, and BSNL are making large investments in fiber optics for increased data and service, meanwhile Indian mobile companies like Karbonn, Micromax, and Spice are working with Chinese hardware companies to develop affordable smartphones. The merging of Internet and mobile phones is an exciting frontier in terms of accessibility to ICTs. For 49 rupees, Indians can get a data package from a *dukaan wala* (corner shop that sells mobile phone data plans) that may not download movies but it can access social media. Doron and Jeffrey's (2013) research describes how the mobile phone has become indispensable to life in India, but they caution that there is no evidence that mobiles have weakened deep-rooted notions of caste, class, or gender. However, small changes like increased social connectivity, innovative social applications, new forms of e-governance, and the use of mobiles to check abuses of authority are promising developments.

Doron and Jeffrey (2013) assert that mobile phones deliver a "networked individualism" that is disruptive to social structures, in good ways with active citizenship activities and in potentially bad ways, for example by amplifying communal violence (215). Mobile and Internet literacy is a cultural capital young people deem crucial. Audio and visual advancements, including iconic and pictorial apps along with larger screens on new phones are working to overcome the

multiplicity of difficult scripts for illiterate Indians.[10] Castells et al. (2006) assert that the "multi-modality" of mobile phones have made them the "living eyes and ears…to observe events in real time and share them" in a convergence culture that is "always on" (211).

Web 2.0 social networking sites (e.g. Facebook); micro-blogging services (e.g. Twitter), and content-sharing sites (e.g. Vimeo, YouTube, and Pinterest) have introduced the opportunity for increased online social participation. Facebook is currently the preferred social media network for most people in India and certainly the choice of most young middle-class activists in Delhi, most accessed Facebook via mobile phones. Twitter, Google+, and Orkut[11] were also popular social media platforms for young activists.[12] I arrived in Delhi in the fall of 2013 at a time of increased activist activity; I quickly discovered the use of the Internet as an important source of information, mobilization, and dissent.

As the use of the Internet and social media in activism increases, there are new and challenging questions scholars must examine. Shulman (2005) warns that online activism does activate citizens, but in a useless manner, "since the activities do not have any impact on political outcomes in the real world" (quoted in Christensen

[10] Mark Zuckerberg of Facebook has said he will invest greatly in India to increase access for BoP markets, acknowledging Facebook will not initially make a profit but rather to create "on-ramps" or the "gateway drug" to lure in people who don't know they need a digital life (Times of India 2014; Morozov 2014). In March of 2015, Ozone, India's largest public Wi-Fi provider announced they would allow mobile users to connect to any of their free Wi-Fi hotspots in Delhi automatically in an effort to increase Wi-Fi users in India and the data they consume.

[11] Orkut was a site decommissioned by Google in September 2014 despite its popularity in Brazil and India.

[12] Each media form has different advantages for young activists. Twitter is excellent for up-to-the-minute information and reaching a wide audience in an instant. But the market penetration in India is low and the 140-character limit is restrictive and abstruse for many young people in India who enjoy the vivacity of a harangue. Facebook has the most users, but the drawback for many of the activists is the amount of other content to compete with. The social utility tracks activities, games, news, and various applications that can obscure a post about a rally in all the competing 'noise' of Facebook. Blogs are conducive to long-form writing, but it is not something people will be alerted to unless they have a Rich Site Summary (RSS) feed or another form of syndication with direct alerts to their mobile devices. A 'text bomb' (a text or WhatsApp message that goes out to a large group of preset contacts) is useful for rapid mobilizing.

2011). Shulman believes this will have negative consequences for citizen engagement going forward (2009; 2005). Similarly, bestselling author Malcolm Gladwell in an article for *The New Yorker* argued that social media makes it more difficult for an "expression to have any impact…social media are well suited to making the existing social order more efficient. They are not a natural enemy of the status quo" (Gladwell 2010: 6). Two months after Gladwell dismissed digital media for activism—and wrote that "the revolution will not be tweeted"—the Arab Spring uprisings that toppled governments began, in which social media has been lauded as a means for collective activism to circumvent state-operated media channels.

The increase use of social media and ICTs has led to new modalities in activism, but it has also accelerated the emergence of social entrepreneurship. Social entrepreneurship was viewed by many of my informants as taking action not just advocating for action. Young activists eager to incorporate new modalities with ICTs, display their individualism, and engage with enterprise and startup cultures (indicative of a neoliberal mindset) have found equipoise in social entrepreneurship.

Social entrepreneurship

For many young people I met in Delhi, social entrepreneurship was the outlet not only for their kinetic energy towards social change but a creative process they could manage. This emerging hybrid sector appeals to the young people that are no longer attracted to hierarchal civil society work and are discouraged with the private sector's lack of social responsibility. Social enterprise is susceptible to pronounced critiques like bottom-line objectives that can conflict with a social mission and a vulnerability to the influence of corporations. This work is a corollary of India's neoliberal project as well as a response to the new realities that the liberalized market has created for

India's middle-class youth. Social entrepreneurship is not to the detriment of the social sector work but rather an emerging trend of sociality that is "properly aligned with the demands of the economy (and not the other way around)" (Dey 2014: 8). Young people, who believe they have a vocation to be entrepreneurs, are developing new tactics to do work within the social sector whilst paying their bills and fulfilling immediate social responsibilities.

Social entrepreneurship[13] roughly translates to an organization that applies commercial tactics to bring sustained improvements in human or environmental well being, rather than maximizing profits for external shareholders (Dees 1998; Zeyen et al. 2013). Social entrepreneurs draw upon innovative thinking in both the business and nonprofit worlds. At least one measure of their performance is their positive returns to society.[14]

India is home to over two million registered non-profits and NGOs (Singh and Kumar 2014). The country's population and poverty contribute to this prevalence, but there is a feeling among my informants that the market is saturated with civil society groups and many organizations are redundant, not actively working towards their approved mission statement, or entirely fraudulent and siphoning money from the state. It is difficult to separate authentic and spurious claims with so many NGOs and creative ways deceptive practices operate. Many of my informants spoke of a large problem of fraud and abuse in the non-profit sector.

Meanwhile, starting a business—or the preferred nomenclature among my informants, an entrepreneurial venture or startup—is gaining popularity with middle-

[13] My use of social entrepreneurship is interchangeable with many definitions of social enterprise (Ridley-Duff and Bull 2011)

[14] In India, the terms 'social entrepreneurship and enterprise' are not widely used; terms like NGOs and NPOs are preferred for the work that is seeking the legal authority to raise funds for non-business activities. My use of social entrepreneurship and enterprise are interchangeable and follow the above definitions.

class youth. The Internet provides much of the tools needed to start a company at a markedly low-cost compared to building a brick-and-mortar presence and other physical startup assets. Many educated middle-class youth find this path much less restrictive than working for a hierarchical and bureaucratic NGO or NPO with little room to move up and little creativity with substantive work.

Cho (2006) distinguishes social entrepreneurs from other social sector workers in their approach to a problem, the social entrepreneur asks: "How can I mobilize resources to solve this issue,' rather than 'why does this issue exist; why is it that the state welfare system can't or won't meet this need?'" (47). Today's youth that grew up in neoliberal India understand that relying on, lobbying for, or waiting on the state to act is unproductive.

Nevertheless, an overriding challenge for governments is to foster an entrepreneurial culture that encourages and supports people, particularly young women, in the context of creating new opportunities for many. The informants I talked with acknowledged that the state can play a significant role in creating an atmosphere where social entrepreneurs can thrive. In recent years, there has been increased traction with the state at different levels encouraging and shaping social entrepreneurship. The Modi government in May of 2015 announced it was committed to creating an "ecosystem for supporting young entrepreneurs through a formal network of incubators, accelerators, and mentors" (Dhoot 2015). The emphasis is on social enterprises and commercial adaptation of grass-root level innovations. The network will include institutions like the IIMs, IITs, Indian Institute of Science, research parks and industry bodies, and is being steered by the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship as a 'high-impact scheme' to spur job creation and plug a skills gap (Dhoot 2015).

With a million people entering the job force each month and only 5.5 million organized sector jobs created a year, there is a serious demand for jobs that are non-existent. This is the first integrated national policy for developing skills and promoting entrepreneurship at a large scale. The government's policy announcement went as far as stating that one of the focuses of the new policy is skill development opportunities for women and socially/geographically marginalized groups (Dhoot 2015). Policymakers can create a legal environment conducive to launching social enterprises by ensuring access to credit without collateral, mobilizing resources to encourage access for women, and protecting entrepreneurs from family and political manipulations (Datta and Gailey 2012).

Social entrepreneurship is one effect of the desire by young people to utilize technology and alternative tactics adopted from the market and startup culture. This action, importantly, is outside (at least initially) the domain of institutions. Glasius and Pleyers posit that the recent movements of young people around the globe (post-2010 or Activism 2010+) are distinctly different than erstwhile forms of activism in the shared "mistrust of institutional politics and a determination not to become corrupted by power" (2013: 547).

In the context of India, this youth assertion, as well as the perception of agency, can take negative and positive forms. Often the focus in India is on the negative forms: predatory forms of enterprise (Jeffrey and Young 2014) the large population of 'alienated' youth as a 'ticking timebomb' (Chakrabarty 2014), violent student factionalism and recruitment by the Indian Mujahideen (Fair 2010), and as a top contributor to political turmoil around the world (World Bank 2011). But recent research has also shown that youth are serving important roles such as entrepreneurs and community workers (Jeffrey and Dyson 2014), involved in civic engagement

(Ilavarasan 2013), and as role models for younger youth (Krishna 2013). Some scholars have shown youth in a contradictory position describing them as both 'deviant' and politically progressive (Atluri 2013) and as scheming student political 'animators' as well as the moral authority as social reformers (Price and Ruud 2012). Today's youth mobilizations, social enterprises, informal (everyday), and formal politics will be presented in the empirical chapters. The chapters will reflect the disparate ways middle-class youth mobilize and engage in social action.

2.6 Conclusion

The literature reviewed and scholarly debates presented in this chapter will inform the remainder of this thesis. The case studies of Delhi's young middle-class activists will examine: new methods young activists are employing with online social networks (Chapter Four), the ways youth are improvising their work trajectories to inhabit a new social politics with entrepreneurship (Chapter Five), community activists' experiences moving into political party work (Chapter Six), and the expanding politics of the class with diverse, radical, and feminist critiques of citizenship and belonging (Chapter Seven). In the next chapter, I will discuss the methodology informing my research questions, fieldwork, writing, and analyses.

This research integrates broader implications with local realities through an examination of young people's activity towards active citizenship. Middle-class youth are often the harbingers of change in society and their connections with other youth cohorts among the urban poor and elites can reveal where they are leading India. This thesis investigates whether the sociopolitical actions by the middle-class youth are positive, inclusive, and sustainable. The motivation for India's middle-class youth to

engage in social action should be viewed critically as both increased efforts to channel power and as the wellspring of a constructive politics.

3. Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter explains the research methodology I used, including the strategies for fieldwork I conducted in Delhi between September 2013 and May 2014. I will describe and justify the methods deployed to develop the analysis of the thesis. I conducted semi-structured interviews in an effort to construct a narrative of young people's social actions and shed light on the processes that shaped their trajectories as well as their own perceptions of their experience.

First, I outline the research design and questions that underlie this study. Next, I discuss the criteria for my research community. I will describe my recruitment strategy and fieldwork methods. In the penultimate section, I expound on my process of analysis and writing including a discussion of my positionality and the limitations of my research. To conclude, I reflect on strategies taken and discuss the rationale for a qualitative research design.

3.2 Research design

In developing a design for qualitative research there is an understanding that the researcher's course—including in the course of fieldwork—may on occasion deviate. A research design should, therefore, be a reflexive process taking "the line of least resistance" to adjust to events (Hammersley and Atkinson 2005: 21). I set out to investigate young middle-class activists acting as intermediaries (brokers) between the urban poor and the local state—with the intention to focus on their effort towards improving service delivery. Not far into my fieldwork I broadened my focus to include various forms of activism and active citizenship. I found civic actions and developments in political activism that I felt made for interesting study and justified

expanding my research community. However, the research design largely stayed the same.

A good design provides a road map to return to when the researcher finds they have gone down the wrong—or too many—paths. I set out to interview as many young middle-class activists—representative of disparate activist projects—as possible. From this larger sampling, I planned to rely on a smaller number of key informants for more in-depth empirical discussions. I interviewed 78 young activists (that does not include my interactions and informal interviews with a much larger sampling) and settled on 15 key informants distinguished by their activism, challenges, and experiences—as well as my access to them. These key informants' experiences constitute a majority of the case studies in the empirical chapters.

Initial research questions

The impetus of my research was to challenge scholarly sentiment and popular opinion concerning the young middle-class in India. The young middle-class is often portrayed in the media and by scholars to be narrowly self-optimizing actors and politically apathetic. Several scholars assert that those in the middle-class that are active in civic work often seek to discipline subordinate social groups in the name of the public interest (Baviskar 2011; Ghertner 2012; Anjaria 2009; Harriss 2007; Chatterjee 2004). I wanted to conduct research that would investigate and unsettle the axioms that supply their findings. One of my aims was to provide alternative understandings to abrade the negative scholarship on middle-class social action by focusing on the youth.

In my review of existing literature, there was a paucity of empirical material that showed young middle-class activists engaged in constructive social action in

Delhi, despite media attention to notable social mobilizations starting in 2011—principally the Anna Hazare anti-corruption and women's safety campaigns. I hypothesized that in-depth research on the political and social action of middle-class youth might challenge the notion that middle-class political actions serve to entrench inequalities and impede inclusive development. In the context of Delhi, this research explores the prefigurative strategies developed by the middle-class youth to remake critical thinking towards broader transformative ends. During the fieldwork, I had the following five questions in mind as I interviewed the young informants. These research questions framed the discussion but ultimately the conversations and writing evolved towards new analyses and understandings. Nevertheless, the following questions were the starting point—used to frame the interviews and begin addressing the main themes of the thesis:

1). To the extent that youth are involved in activism, what form does this take—and what are the limitations? Is this activism invited or invented? How much of this activity is part of their work, for example through establishing social enterprises that employ other youth, activity related to public health/safety and critiquing aspects of service delivery? Is their activism independent, institutionalized or via political organizations and parties?

2). Does evidence of the positive political action of middle-class youth challenge the notion that middle-classes seek to exclude and exploit the poor? Is this politics inclusive socially, progressive in its goals, and non-violent? To what extent is this social action constructive—in the sense of enhancing the capabilities of marginalized sections of society and promoting inclusive development?

3). How sustainable is the positive politics of this youth? Is this activism proactive—focused on long-term issues and changes, or reactive—a response to immediate crises and events? How do youth conceptualize their role in society with reference to ideas of service, citizenship, community and whether they see their role changing in the future?

4). What type of social networks and relationships are emerging through young people's actions? How do social networks operate at different scales, for example their geography, morphology, and the degree to which they are hierarchical or more egalitarian in nature? How has economic liberalization and globalization restructured the way young middle-class activists operate—especially in terms of modality, strategy, technology use and measurable results?

5). Can social activists successfully gain entry into formal party politics and be effective towards their objectives? What is the impetus behind those transitions, as well as the limitations of that changeover?

Research community

The criteria for establishing my research community were meant to be simple and objective. I was going to speak with interlocutors that satisfied all three groups: young, middle-class, and an activist. In the literature review, I discovered that all three of those categories and the standards of each are contentious. First, an age-based definition of youth (18-30) is largely subjective to this study. Respondents below 18 years old require additional ethical considerations that I wanted to avoid in my first-time in the field. The range (18-30) was not as restrictive as I thought it might be, I encountered only a couple of instances where I met a potential informant that was outside the age range, disqualifying them from my research community.

Educated middle-class youth confront a set of comparable pressures in trying to capitalize on their schooling: the devaluation of their diplomas, in developing social connections, and gaining access into a secure middle-class career trajectory (Jeffrey 2008). Leaving school they face a new set of putatively distinct challenges: rising prices, inflation, increasing debt, rising aspirations associated with urbanization and Western consumerism, and competition for affordable housing and the few jobs that utilize their skill-sets (Ganguly-Scrase and Scrase 2008b; ILO 2013). Because of these realities, scholars have shown that mid-teens to late-twenties can be period of tension and liminality. In this period, youth often improvise, mobilize and experiment with new forms of activism and political work (Jeffrey 2010). Equally vexed are the categories of middle-class and activism. In Chapter Two I discussed those debates and my interpretations.

I set out to understand how young people are working to mitigate social and political problems despite the pressures and expectations bearing down on them by examining their activism, active citizenship, and local politics. In determining the participants for this thesis, the equation was: my research community = young (within the range of 18 to 30) + middle-class (see Chapter Two for discussion of definitions) + engaged in activism (loosely defined to include social entrepreneurs and political party workers with activist backgrounds) in Delhi to mitigate social and political problems.

Beyond deciding whom I would investigate and the methods for choosing individuals to interview, I deliberated on how I would access these young informants and how many I needed to speak with. I'll describe later in this chapter the reflexive process I undertook in determining how to gain access to young informants. The 'how many' was something I struggled with. At first, I had a frivolous goal of completing a certain number of interviews that would justify my time in India. However, when my fieldwork began I quickly shed any plans of a set number of interviews. The sampling method became a very simple: speak with as many different young activists that were willing to speak with me more than once about their projects, politics, and personal experiences. This most closely reflects the extended case method[15] strategy, a reflexive model that gives validity to studies of intervention, process, and the analysis of both structure and agents without giving primacy to either (Gluckman 1961; Burawoy 1998: 4). This process allowed me to recognize forces of socialization and find the middle ground in reflexivity between letting society and my environment completely dictate the direction of my sampling and shaping my own experiences to carefully collect a sampling that would fit nicely into a narrative constructed from my own norms, tastes, politics, and desires.

[15] The phrase, "extended case method" was first coined by The Manchester School of social anthropology (Burawoy 1998: 5; Gluckman 1961; van Velsen 1967).

The extended case method was a more attainable sampling model for me in such a foreign environment because it allowed me to be reflexive and facilitated a bottom-up approach where I could experience and learn from the local social worlds I was observing and apply it to the macro later. The interviewees would make recommendations on other young people I should be talking with. Additionally, at rallies and events I was introduced or stumbled upon other young activists with diverse projects. The extended case method places less emphasis on structural analyses and more on detailed observations of local social processes wherein individual strategies and choices reveal the context of everyday life (Gluckman 1961).

Sociologist Michael Burawoy describes the reflexive science as "the Siamese twin of positive science that proscribes reactivity, but upholds reliability, replicability, and representativeness" (1998: 4). I followed social mobilizations and activist methods that seemed to be gaining steam or breaking new ground. When I found myself speaking with young people with similar goals and projects from familiar backgrounds I began to seek out new actors and directions. I widened the scope of my investigation based on what struck me as interesting (vis-à-vis my own criteria of 'interestingness', which is a limitation to my study). Admittedly, many of these activists were supportive of AAP and that development may be a reflection of my own politics or presumptions, but their projects were seemingly new and varied. For Jaap van Velsen, a sociologist that recommends the extended case study method, it is the method's ability to illuminate the complex relationship between a social world of "norms in conflict" and the strategies and choices of individuals (1967: 146).

I gave up on striving for a particular number of interviews and strove for profundity, access, and focusing on individual activist strategies, especially those strategies that were different in scope or employed new methods from what I had

already seen. I tried to maximize my time in India and develop a good understanding of the young middle-class activist experience in Delhi. There is always more I could have learned and experienced, however, given my limitations, I felt I had a solid foundation to which I could start writing on and critiquing what I had observed. At that time I had spoken with 78 young activists with a much smaller number of activists (~15) that I had recurring access and observations with.

Before my fieldwork, I planned on an informed approach to the field as a deductive social scientist. I would set out with a theoretical problem that would power my investigation. But when I entered the field I found the strategies of an inductive researcher were more to my liking, driven more by the operations within the culture and moments of activism and mobilizations. In the field I looked for relationships, for challenges, resistance, and the different places power can come from in everyday lives. I worked to find anomalies; I sought moments in the micro social worlds I had entered that could explain the macro experience. Burawoy (1998) writes that the extended case method is a reflexive science that can "extract the general from the unique, to move from the "micro" to the "macro," and to connect the present to the past in anticipation of the future, all by building on preexisting theory" (5). In my post-fieldwork, I attempted a return to operate as the deductive scholar, using my qualitative data to refine the theory whilst the inductive case studies would attempt to advance new understandings to existing theory.

Recruitment

For connections instigated offline, I recruited informants through the snowball method (chain referral), using initial contacts from OpASHA (a non-profit I volunteered for) and friends working in the social sector to obtain advice on other possible interviewees

(Biernacki and Waldorf 1981). A disadvantage of this method of recruitment is that it can limit researchers to a specific 'circle' of youth involved in social action. I was sensitive to this possibility because early in my fieldwork I was surprised to discover just how many young activists or political party workers regularly knew of other young social actors. I made sure to expand out of the initial social/political networks that my first informants were a part of. I visited other university campuses, I walked the city to find new activism, and I attempted to visit all the major political party offices with the intention to fan out into their networks finding activists and civil society groups from different ideological planes. Some political party offices sent me away, but I was able to connect with young party workers and access their social networks.

I ensured that my sampling contained people engaged in different forms of social action, representatives of different caste, gradations within the middle-class, racial, ethnic, and religious groups. Another challenge was to represent a range of ages within my study's purview. Within the category of youth, I engaged with early youth (18-24) and late youth (25-30), with near equal frequency. I found notable differences between these two groups in terms of responsibilities, aspirations, and their politics. I recognized a major developing lacuna halfway through my fieldwork. At that point, nearly 80 percent of my respondents were men. For the second half of my fieldwork, I made a concerted effort to increase my sampling of women whilst maintaining the principle of purposive sampling. At the end of the fieldwork, I had interviewed 30 women (~38 percent of my sampling). Striving to recruit more women inadvertently helped open up my sampling further to obscure and diverse networks.

My informants were differentiated in terms of caste, ethnicity, gender, and religion. During interviews, I tried to elicit information about the informant, including their age, caste, religion, ethnicity, linguistic background, schooling, place of origin,

occupational history, and household information (e.g. parents' occupation) in addition to whether they identified as lower (or emerging), established, or upper-middle-class. However, if they did not share relevant identity information and nothing was revealed in conversations, I did not push for those details. Some informants took on new identities for themselves, including removing indicators as to their ethnic identities. This is evidenced in that the most common (the mode in statistics) surname of my informants was Kumar. Kumar is a surname that can be found in nearly all-major castes; therefore changing a surname to Kumar can obscure an individual's origins and identity. A majority of the Kumars I interviewed had themselves changed their surname from their parents' or given surname.

Digital and analog connections

When I first arrived in Delhi, I attempted to setup connections to activists offline and online at the same rate. By following the flow of hybrid activism—activism that utilizes digital and analog efforts (q.v. Chapter Four), rather than just initiating connections online, I considered the recommendation of Hunt (2015) who calls for researchers to refrain from "de-contextualizing young activists" in global networks, especially those that "seem to be most visible online" (12). She argues that the work of scholars like Juris and Pleyers (2009), Nilan and Feixa (2006) and popular writers like Thomas Friedman have lauded the ways in which young people around the globe after 2010 share similar activist practices. Nilan and Feixa (2006) assert, "in youth culture the global eclipses the local" (xi). Hunt underscores "the danger of not considering the young activist behind his or her online presence; understanding the depth of experiences and richness of contexts young activists bring to a global movement" (2015: 12-13).

Hunt is concerned with the idea of local knowledge being converted into global knowledge and how the experiences of some youth are open to manipulation and gatekeeping. This includes the way youths' "online presence can mask their distance from power" that become important factors in "constructing inclusive and representative samples" (13). With the conversion of local to global, often gendered messages are reconstructed and "made invisible by the consumer media system" (Newsom and Lengel 2012: 31). Young activists' efforts in the global south in recent years have been "most noticeable and globally recognized" when they fit within global and Western narratives (Newsom and Lengel 2012: 37). Hunt recommends researchers develop projects that can reach beyond a sample of what scholars have termed the "transnational activist class" (Desai 2008: 33) and develop a combination of digital and analog methods (2015: 12).

There are parallels between my own recruitment, data-collecting methodology, and the hybrid activism I observed. I pursued a combination of digital and analog methods to not only find more diverse young activists but in order to fully examine their activism. DePew's (2007) work asserts that researchers benefit from triangulating data that is gathered through online means to overcome the intrinsic biases and problems arising from single-observer and single-theory studies, what DePew refers to as "single-voicedness" emerging from digital observations (54). Research of online spaces must be "cognizant of the rhetors' and audiences' contexts outside of the digital space" (55). To get a fuller picture of an event or experience, I would triangulate the data—crosscheck with other sources online and offline.

I found most the young people I was initially meeting were in the upper-middle-class, higher caste, and Hindu. Most the young people I met initially had unrestricted access to the Internet. Yet less than a quarter of Indians have consistent

Internet access. Mobile phones, with over 73 percent market penetration, keep social groups connected, but they are limiting for making new connections (TRAI 2013). However, with the emergence of affordable smartphones in India these limitations may soon be lifted. The upper-middle-class informants I was initially meeting primarily used their mobile phones and smartphones to stay connected online. Most my meetings (face-to-face) were initiated through social media, which is indicative of the transnational character of social media and 'alter-activism' (Juris and Pleyers 2009). In order to get a more diverse sampling within the broad category of middle-class, it was important for me to go to actual events and meet with people. From there I would work on traditional snowball recruitment but also attempt to find people I was not being introduced to by my online connections.

Offline, I found some young activists in the lower-middle-class with no online activities. I met several young people in the lower-middle-class that were either not as versed in social media or did not have liberal access to the Internet outside of a shared mobile among friends or at school. But I found, with greater regularity, lower-middle-class activists whose activity was discursive—moving from online to offline and back. When I followed their activity back online I found 'affinity spaces' and networks in situ to lower-middle-class young activists' concerns (Gee 2005). These were online spaces I would have had trouble finding on my own either because it was removed from the network of the upper-middle-class informants or because many of the posts are in Devanagari or Hindi with English/Roman script. This revealed to me that the hierarchies and graduations of social class are reinforced within online spaces. Had I not followed the flow of hybrid activism (gone to offline events and followed new casual and quotidian affinity spaces) and connected with informants only through

social media, I might not have met many of the lower-middle-class informants, including most of my key informants.

I moved between physical meetings and online networking. I would give my researcher card to young people at an offline event, then follow-up with them online. The online work kept me engaged with them, it also served to legitimate some of my claims as a researcher and as being in contact with other people (usually young activists) they knew and trusted. For the online recruitment of informants, I would introduce myself via social media or email but to build legitimacy I would often arrange informally to meet them at an activist event. As a complete outsider, I had much more success making connections online, but I understood the danger of only relying on this method.

I encountered many young people who had recently created an account either on Facebook or Twitter via mobile; estimates show India is behind developed nations in proportional usage but rapidly catching up. In India, a report released by IAMAI and IMRB[16] estimates 243 million people use the Internet, 19 percent of the population. Nevertheless, if I had only recruited through offline methods I would have missed a large segment of my eventual sampling that was initiated online. It was also important to understand how young activists were connected and in what ways they engaged with one another. Many of my informants in conversation mentioned another activist I should meet with, young people that inspired them to action. However, when I inquired about how they met, often the answer was that they hadn't actually met in-person, but they were connected through social media.

Make, marker and markings

[16] Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) and Indian Market Research Bureau (IMRB)

One of the first considerations with the recruitment of my informants was: who is an activist? What makes an activist and what are the markings of an activist? Many of my respondents were comfortable with me considering what they *do* as activism but *being* an activist was a much more difficult concept to accept. Bobel (2007) examines why social actors resist the identity of 'activist'. Activism elicits images of 'on the street' and 'in your face' relentless efforts and requires activists to 'live the issue'. "This conception of activist effectively places the label 'out of reach' for many" involved with social movements; it is a perfect standard that few are worthy of (147). Bobel frames the limitations of this perfect standard by asking the questions:

> Who, exactly, does satisfy the criteria for activist? Who can afford to devote nearly every waking hour to their chosen cause? And while this mythic activist is off doing the good work, who, after all, is caring for the children, preparing meals, washing laundry, paying the bills? (2007: 156).

Similarly, many actions taken by my informants can fall somewhere outside of traditional understandings of activism. Bobel asserts, "social movement participants can do activism without self-identifying as activists – a revelation that calls for a more complicated account of identity in our analyses of social movements" (2007: 157). This often resulted in interlocutors commenting that they were unsure or uncomfortable with their status or a perceived status (by me) as an activist. I could allay some concerns that I would be misrepresenting them by explaining I was also looking at 'active citizenship' and local social work. For this reason, I did not immediately disengage with young social actors if they said they were not 'activists', did not know about their status, or were uncomfortable with the label.

With my research community, I moved beyond *being* an activist as constituting the only action or standard I was interested in. I was more interested in the people that were *doing* what they saw as a constructive social good. For example, I was interested in the work of grassroots organizing and everyday negotiations over

access to services—activity I observed my informants participating in—work indicative of 'everyday politics' (Jeffrey 2013). However, when I used certain nomenclature, for example by labeling their activity as 'politics' in conversations, it gave my informants additional unease. In particular, I found young women informants were more uncomfortable or unsure about labeling their activity as 'politics' than men were. This finding is indicative of Ferree and Mueller's (2004) assertion that, "women activists themselves, however, may be slow to define grass-roots community organizing…as being really "politics" which they may define as male-dominated formal institutions" (589). The identity of activists is avoided because it ranks "too high" with young social actors, whilst the identity of 'doing politics' is avoided because the term is loaded with extra—and often pejorative—connotations (Bobel 2007: 156). I was able to overcome this issue with my informants by applying the prefixes 'local', 'everyday', and 'grassroots' before politics. This eased most of the remaining concerns.

It is important to recognize these micro interventions as everyday politics and to identify, sometimes decipher, diverse and constructive contributions to social change. Grassroots political and social work have a tendency to get lost behind the scholarly attention paid to large-scale youth mobilizations (Biekart and Fowler 2013; Juris and Pleyers 2009; Nilan and Feixa 2006). Often the harbinger or genesis of these larger mobilizations is an array of small-scale youth mobilizations and 'social non-movements' (Bayat 2013). One important reason for nuanced coverage of diverse and small-scale contributions to social change is that there is frequently a conventional division of labour in activism. I found that women often work behind the scenes and men are the ones with the megaphone and leading a chant. This division of activity or performances obscures women's activist contributions (Ferree and Mueller 2004). For

this reason, when I recruited activists offline, I would make sure to understand the process and performances of the activism to identify people that were integral to a social movement—not the designated mouthpiece, best speaker, or individual with the greatest online presence. Sometimes that outspoken and visible person was also a crucial member of the activist group, but not always. However, and vitally, a few times I found a soft-spoken or taciturn woman at the back of an encampment or classroom that was the chief organizer, mobilizer, and authority on the activism (see the case studies of Deeksha, Miti, (Chapter Four) and Rathi (Chapter Seven)).

3.3 Fieldwork methods

The fieldwork took place in the autumn of 2013 extending to the spring of 2014 (eight months) in the Delhi metropolis. I maintained an affiliation with the Institute of Economic Growth (IEG) within the campus of the University of Delhi that served as my base for research activities because of its close proximity to a large sampling of my target population. I choose to examine young people's experiences, practices, and perspectives through semi-structured interviews and participant observation.

Semi-structured interviews

The semi-structured interviews centered mostly on young people's narratives of their activism and work often expanding to a discussion of their views of citizenship. The fieldwork was undertaken during the lead up to the December 2013 Delhi Legislative Assembly (*Vidhan Sabha*) elections and the national election to constitute the lower house of Parliament (*Lok Sabha*) that took place in April and May of 2014. Not all the activities of informants were political but the backdrop of the elections, and underlining considerations, drove many of the conversations with young activists.

I conducted semi-structured interviews with 78 young people in and around Delhi. The primary research sites were Jantar Mantar, Delhi University, and JNU; secondary sites were other universities and central locations in Delhi like cafés and near landmarks in Connaught Place and Green Park that were easily accessible by metro or a main road for the interviewees. I engaged in 'purposive sampling', a research technique that mitigates non-probability sampling by studying the cultural domain and being extra selective when recruiting respondents (Tongco 2007).

With the aid of social media, I was able to do an informal background investigation on many of my informants. If I met the informant offline and they had an online presence I could verify some facts concerning their credentials as a good candidate for my research community before moving on to more interviews and meet-ups. Even if I was confident that the interviewee was a representative of a group or cause, I would verify what they said by triangulating some or the facts I was told. That is, I would ask other key informants if they knew of them and their work. If they did not, I would search their online connections to arrange offline meetings (most times in the double effort to interview them for their activist work) where I could ask fairly informal questions to them about their relationship with the informant. For instance, asking another activist, "have you ever worked with [Activists A] on this issue?" Their answers would reveal or substantiate something about the other informant without me prodding too much. This was just one confirmation in a multiple-step process that included a second interview or follow-up communication where I could confirm some of the information I received in the first interview.

Tongco (2007) writes regarding purposive sampling that, "expertise can only be achieved by constant practice and integrating many experiences" (155). I found that as the fieldwork progressed I became more effective at choosing informants by

applying nascent local knowledge: where to find informants, when they would be accessible, and how to correctly assess reliability and credibility of an informant. In the beginning of the fieldwork it was much harder to determine which informants would be informative, I had not yet developed ways to avoid inherent bias and implicit assumptions. After a couple of months, through the practice of purposive sampling, I could accurately gauge respondents' involvement in my research topics.

Once I targeted whom I wanted to interview I needed to make sure to ask the right questions. Wengraf (2001) writes regarding semi-structured interviews that the "questions are only partially prepared in advance…and will be largely improvised by you as interviewer. But only largely: the interview as a whole is a joint production…by you and your interviewee" (3). My interview questions were geared towards issues of meaning, experience, and reflection. My intention was to have the interviewee guide the discussion with me intervening only when we had moved far off from the directions I wanted to go. This worked well for the most part. Some interviewees' expectation was that the interview format would be more of a question and answer session than conversation. In some interviews conducted early on in my fieldwork, I was unable to draw out a good conversation and so the interview—by default—became more structured. Semi-structured interviews require a great deal of preparation despite their informal character. Wengraf asserts that not doing advance work and preparing for these interviews is a "terrible mistake" insisting, "improvisation requires more training and more mental preparation before each interview" (2001: 5).

Some of my early fieldwork mistakes dealt with logistics and settings. Often I would underestimate how much time I had to travel through the National Capital Region (NCR) to meet informants. Delhi's traffic was unpredictable; the only

consistent assumption I could make was that I would be delayed at some point in my journey. The Delhi Metro (Delhi's subway system) was mostly reliable but long queues during rush hours were a cause of delay. I always asked for the interviewees' preference for the location of the interview but most of the time they responded (out of politeness most likely) that I could choose. Many interviewees explained that they informally pre-screened my credentials through an Internet search to make sure I was legit or to ease their parents' concern. Luckily, I had one prominent (in a search-engine optimization sense) webpage that linked me as a student researcher at Oxford (the page for a workgroup at the Martin School in Oxford no longer exists). On a number of occasions the informants said that webpage made them feel they could trust I was who I said I was.

Another early mistake I made was asking women interviewees to meet me in neighborhoods or at a time of night that made them uncomfortable. For example, early in my fieldwork I asked a participant to meet me at a café in Paharganj (a subdivision in Central Delhi by the New Delhi Railway station) at nine in the evening. The suggested location was in a neighborhood and at time of night conducive to crime. She declined and we met another day. The error in my judgment is now obvious to me. In most cases, it was the informants that worried about how I was going to get home from interview locales or participant observation sites far from the guests houses, hostels, and family homes I stayed in during my fieldwork. They would escort me to the Metro station or an auto rickshaw. Delhi is a sprawling metropolis and despite my best efforts to stay near my informants, their places of work, activist activity, and residences were littered all over the region.

As the fieldwork progressed and my dexterity for traveling in the city improved, I was able to insist on young people's suggestions or make intelligent

decisions on interview settings that worked best for everyone. I became more proficient at interviewing—eliciting conversation. After a recorded interview, I would listen to the audio and critique my performance. By listening to the audio I learned to formulate questions for greater clarity and to adjust the style and sequencing of questions. This critical review of interviews helped me avoid wasting time on superfluous or faulty questions.

One prominent issue in my early interviewing technique was not letting the silence sit, meaning that I would abruptly move to the next question to avoid what I perceived as awkward silence. In many cases, that silence was necessary because the interviewee was thinking about what else they wanted to say and I was effectively cutting them off by moving to the next question. In interviews later in my fieldwork, I let us sit in silence and often some of the most informative conversations arose from letting informants break the silence with a new thought or interesting aside. The structure of the interviews changed based on my familiarity with the interviewee and whether it was my first or a follow-up interview. The first interviews with new informants were usually more researcher-led; I would gently direct the conversation towards my research questions. I was concerned often that I may not get another chance to sit down with informants as young people at university often traveled back to home districts. Bernard (1988) asserts that semi-structured interviewing is best when the researcher is not sure that they will have another opportunity to interview someone.

During a second interview, the questioning was loosely structured around broad aspects of the young informant's activist activities, social experience, and relationships. This reflected more of what my intention was for interviews. Second interviews also gave me a chance to clarify or verify relevant background information on the interviewee. I would ask for their views on local politics, the middle-class experience,

and other personal histories that they might want to share with me. The informal nature of semi-structured interviews allows open responses in the participants' own words "rather than 'yes or no' type answer"(Longhurst 2010: 105). This gives the conversation room to grow. I found, happily, many informants to be very talkative and on most occasions I was the one that suggested we wrap-up the interview.

Towards the latter half of my fieldwork, I was able to share some of the experiences and opinions of previous interlocutors with other participants. Shared themes and experiences emerged with a variety of participants; I often shared these comparisons with new informants to generate conversation. For example, my informants Inshah and Shri had similar experiences dealing with power dynamics and detractors of their activism but they had very different solutions and theories as how to mitigate the problems. Nevertheless, they were interested to hear how the other activist worked. These comparisons provided my research community with a basis for developing a 'sociological imagination' (Mills 2000). This term, crudely, means how people understand their own social position (including privileges and disadvantages) in relation to others' dispositions. My interlocutors appreciated this method and many were often surprised to discover more similarities in their experiences and viewpoints than differences, including young BJP and AAP supporters. I found this informal comparison method a useful heuristic for highlighting similarities and differences that surface across a multitude of individual projects.

Focus groups

Semi-structured group conversations (or focus groups) are another way I collected qualitative information—gaining access to multiple ties of activist work and friendship. Participants perform differently in an interview with the researcher than

they would around familiar people (Longhurst 2010). I engaged small groups (three to six) of activists and political party workers in informal group discussion, focused around their politics and their roles as activists and/or volunteers. In these groups, activists shared their experiences as well as compared and contrasted their styles and strategies. At the onset of the fieldwork I envisaged using this method to a greater extent than I did. One issue (perhaps justification for not insisting on the structure of a focus group) was when I was in a group of young activists I found my role as the informal moderator, with gentle directing, awkward. Instead, catching up with a group of young people as they came together in the shade of a tree, outside a Metro stop, or around the *chaiwala* and *dhabas* on a university campus I received informal but seemingly genuine interactions. I made sure to note informal group meetings or times of the day when a group of informants (or at least a group comprised of multiple people in my research community) usually gathered. After all, Morgan (1988) writes that the interaction between the participants is the 'hallmark' of this method (12).

The interlocutors readily talked about the topics I was interested in and so I did not force the issue—I merely reminded them that I was listening and taking notes—and occasionally requested that someone translate quickly on the side to me what a non-English speaker had just said. I listened to their conversations and applied my analysis to their interactions, making sure to ground my interpretation in the particularities of the situation and participants' perspectives—"rather than" the analyst's perspective (Wilkinson 2011: 170). This analysis is a detailed contextual account of social practices including extracting illustrative quotations from these discussions. The absence of a specific line of questions and recorders allowed for arguing, criticisms, derogatory language, and the telling of jokes (Shegloff 1997).

This ‘deep hanging out’ revealed additional insights that would have been impossible with the visual queues and formalities of a focus group (Geertz 1998).

Participant and everyday observation

Shadowing and participant observation are important informal methods for reducing critical distance in understanding the processes and work that young people engage in (Hammersley and Atkinson 2005). I shadowed (observed) subjects during everyday activities and moments of activism. For example, I sat with young members of the AIDS Control Employee Association on strike over wages for an entire day at Jantar Mantar, absorbing interactions and emotions. Participant observation is a “mode of knowledge transmission and technique for social inquiry, the scope of carnal sociology, and the textual work needed to convey” the full experience (Wacquant 2005: 446). I knew that full immersion was not possible with the many limitations of this fieldwork, nor was it my goal. In my summation, I was, however, able to reach an understanding of this group of young social actors that I could write without distracting lacunae or misrepresentations.

It was important for me to reduce the critical distance whilst conducting fieldwork and living as an expatriate in Delhi. My positioning privileged neither “the notion of the academic as source of technocratic knowledge” or “the more Gramscian invocations of the organic intellectual” (Keith 2008: 323). The performance, my observations and fieldwork journal, are in my own style. I did not attempt to perform local styles. The way I experienced Delhi, and “walked the city,” is a sort of language that speaks about the city and creates new meaning (de Certeau 1984). My goal was to write what I observed taking full epistemic advantage of the visceral nature of social

life but also benefits from the researcher's positioning that acknowledges the production of habitus (Wacquant 2005).

Fieldnotes

Fieldnotes were another essential tool for capturing moments of observation that can lead to substantial research findings. Fieldnotes or "jottings" are mnemonics "to 'fix' observation" (Clifford 1990: 51). I wrote 'scratch notes' to capture small but notable events before other observations could begin to overlap and meaning was lost or forgotten. If the act of pulling out a notebook to record something quickly was going to be distracting then I would make a mental note (headnote) to write down (or speak into my mobile) in a free moment later (Sanjek 1990). The act of writing fieldnotes, or quick voice memos, usually happened immediately after a meeting in an effort to note something that I was holding in the back of my mind as important or could lead somewhere with the way I was planning to structure the thesis. I scribbled diagrams, and resorted to drawing—approximated maps and sketched scenes—when a picture would suffice for a thousand words, or just a few sentences (Taussig 2011). "The very practice of observational note-taking draws one's attention to the tangential and unexpected" (Mills and Morton 2013).

I limited my writing of notes during the interview to points of clarification or if the interlocutor insisted on me writing something down. Wolfinger (2002) asserts that researchers, irrespective of any formal strategies for note taking, imbue tacit knowledge and expectations that "play a major role in determining which observations are worthy of annotation" (85). I tried to avoid making assumptions about the importance of something or put weight to certain experiences over others. Wolfinger writes, "fieldnotes, given their importance…deserve the same self-scrutiny

that other prose is routinely subjected to" (93). I found this to be apt advice as a surfeit of fieldnotes resulted in important observations over time.

Fieldnotes were particularly important during periods of 'deep hanging out' (Geertz 1998). After observing something interesting, I would try and excuse myself and speak or write a quick aside about the scene I had just observed while it was still fresh in my mind. I would make sure to note the particularities that surrounded the activity. This made for more colorful and textured descriptive vignettes. A majority of fieldnotes never amounted to anything in this research paper but this practice added an important layer of understanding and reporting. I was immensely appreciative of the practice at the end of the fieldwork when I began to write. The fieldnotes on their own were rarely more than minutia and oblique commentary but as an aggregate they contributed to a multifaceted account. Fieldnotes are a safety net of sort. If other data recordings were lost I would be able to piece together many experiences through the praxis of writing consistent fieldnotes. By combining empirical detail and personal asides, the interpretive with the subjective, I collected a detailed account of each interview and observation session.

3.4 Analyses and writing

In writing this thesis, I am reporting on selected aspects of culture. Through immersive and situated research, I am building an understanding of young people's lives. This practice among social scientist "carries quite serious intellectual and moral responsibilities, for the images of others inscribed in writing are most assuredly not neutral" (Van Maanen 2011: 1). Critiques of qualitative methods assert that they are limited to making questionable (second hand) inferences from what is said and does not give the genuine voice of informants (Hammersley 2006; also see Atkinson et al.

2002). With this thesis, I believe the ends (the qualitative data) justify the means (the fieldwork and design), towards an understanding of young middle-class activists' experience in Delhi. The result is a complex and truthful account of their social world by a "professional stranger" (Agar 1980) and "self-denying emissary" (Boon 1982). I practiced good habits of a researcher and referred back often to the training I received in coursework on conducting fieldwork and producing ethnographic portraits.

I don't think I achieved a notable or special status with most my informants. My status rarely amounted to more than as a pleasant but trivial visitor. I was, however, successful in avoiding the status of disruptive or disrespectful. I was as much a fly-on-the-wall as I could be, absorbing everything as fodder for the thesis and in the pursuit of informative details. In some instances, there was the novelty of having a researcher around that I surmise some interlocutors enjoyed. One participant in particular often introduced me by my perceived role before name saying, "He is following me around. He's writing about me and my work." Not completely untrue, I would not disabuse him of his understanding of my role. Other informants were less enthralled about my presence. They looked at our relationship as if they were doing me a favor (also not completely untrue) and downplayed my association with them. This scenario was also fine with me. I tried to build interpersonal relationships, but I also tried not to let my personality or presence imbue relationships and situations too much.

My time in Delhi was limited and I wanted to make sure not to miss anything important, as well as not interfere with processes (any more than my presence already had). In participant observations, for instance spending a day at Jantar Mantar with collective actions or with AAP party workers canvassing the streets, I was able to connect with young people. My relationships with the 15 key informants also allowed

for more time to have them get to know me on a more personal level. Gaining some sort of amity with young people was important for me—to prove I was capable of building confidence and rapport with people from a different geography despite the pretext of researcher-researched. I benefited greatly from being a similar age—in most cases just a few years older than my informants. Often, the interlocutors would talk about *our* generation (sometimes using the term Millennials), which attached me to their collective project or generational unit. I feel with the accumulation of experiences in the field and the attention I gave to role relations that emerged, the fieldwork was instructive despite any inability to achieve statuses of affinity and assimilation with all the informants.

I was able to interpret and portray in writing the culture I observed. "A culture is expressed (or constituted) only by the actions and words of its members and must be interpreted by, not given to, a fieldworker" (Van Maanen 2011: 3). There are limits as to what I was able to learn in a given setting and time period. My personal expressions and conventions shape my writing and analysis. Hammersley writes that there is a "tension between trying to understand people's perspectives from the inside but also viewing them and their behaviour more distantly, in ways that may be alien (and perhaps even objectionable) to them" (2006: 12).

Hammersley asserts there is a danger in researchers ignoring or trying to supersede that inherent tension; it is an important part of the process (2006: 12). This thesis, therefore, is reporting on a social world as I came to know it. I acknowledge the tension inherent in the process of converting what I was told and what I observed into my writing. I am only able to offer localized observations bounded to a particular time and space. The writing reflects the fieldwork and the fieldwork reflects my best intentions to manage a program of interviewing and observing a diverse range of

young activists in Delhi. Often, things did not go as planned: several times interviewees never showed up to interviews, gave me incorrect information on times and location of events, I missed opportunities to attend protests because of traffic delays, and so on. However, I learned as much from my happenstance, difficulties, and misadventures as I did from successfully navigating life in Delhi. I hold that this is the norm in fieldwork conducted in unfamiliar geographies, whether or not the fieldworker reports it that way.

Observing the local

In the literature review, I enjoyed research and analysis that was nuanced, avoiding dualistic approaches by observing the local, exposing realities that are often counter-intuitive and missing from existing theory (Lemanski and Lama-Rewal 2013; Jeffrey 2010; Webb 2012). This approach resembles anthropologist Lila Abu-Lughod's 'ethnography of the particular', a powerful tool for unsettling the 'culture concept' and avoiding generalizations as neutral description (Abu-Lughod 1991). This theoretical and methodological approach, acknowledging the nuances of everyday life, deserves greater recognition in academic and policy debates. I employed this method, when apposite, in my writing.

The case studies in the empirical chapters are modeled after the portraits of young people in Jeffrey and Dyson's (2008) book *Telling Young Lives*. My intention is not to record a complete life history but rather describe my observations and develop a narrative with the understanding that I have encountered these young people for a brief period at a particular time. These vignettes are timestamps of their everyday political life and the activism that took place in the lead-up to the Delhi and general elections. I feel this is sufficient because I am investigating not only their

activism and politics but also the liminal nature of their youth. “Individual vignettes can illustrate how processes cohere to produce human outcomes, convey the textured experience of youth, and instill in readers empathy, respect, and understanding” (Jeffrey and Dyson 2008: 2). The aim is to reveal insights into the attitudes and experiences of young activists during a short duration of their youth.

Digital tools

In addition to observation strategies, I put visual and virtual tools in my methods toolbox. I took pictures, recorded video, and audio of informants and activist events. Mills and Morton note this enthusiasm and expectations for new tools, “new communication technologies have…opened up a range of seemingly disembodied ‘virtual’ spaces, experiences and relationships” (2013: 104). It is fitting to mix qualitative methods to cover the various entry points when observing today’s young social actors. A diverse set of methods hedges against missing a crucial perspective of this generation that has grown up in an increasingly digital landscape.

In India, the popularity of mobile phones starting in the 1990s has led to changes in the lives of Indians rich and poor; people communicate across wide distances and staying in touch means expanded networks (Donner 2008). Research on and in digital environments is a second supplementary method that served to understand the process of activism. Informal use of social media sites is a critical study associated with what I’m investigating. The use of Facebook and Twitter for mobilizing and organization is on the rise and I examined these phenomena within my research context. The December 2012 gang-rape murder protest showed the power of social media flash mobs, similar to the mode of mobilization during the Arab Spring, today’s youth have access to thousands of other youths with the click of a key. For the

government this type of mass protest, once the purview of political parties to show their strength, is disruptive power in the hands of many young political animators. I frequently documented and followed activist mobilizations over social media. I recorded (captured through screen-shots) Twitter feeds and Facebook walls during the lead-up to action days, 'affinity spaces' (Gee 2005), protests, and mobilizations.

In contrast to social psychologist Sherry Turkle's *Alone Together* my account avoids deploying online/offline dichotomies and instead explores the complex connections and modes of sociality between the online and face-to-face contexts (2012). As lives move with fluidity through virtual and offline social worlds the boundaries are increasingly blurred. This ambiguity of boundaries compounds when virtual actions have real reactions that affect peoples' politics and everyday lives (Mills and Morton 2013). Forming online connections established a contradictory ontology. On one hand, I had the freedom to 'dip in and out' of this geography, in some instances with young people that were facing precarious job markets and periods of their lives that were very much in flux. At the same time my online presence in my informants' lives, the ongoing relationship harbored through social media, brought new complexities to the researcher/informant relationship.

The Internet and social media keep people in close communication. Before there was an understanding, even in a longitudinal study, that maintenance of a relationship would be difficult and time-consuming if attempted—or at least one-sided, often dependent on when the researcher would return to the field. The informants could reasonably expect that the researcher would not be a part of their ongoing social world once they went home or ended their fieldwork in places far from where they work and live. I found the traditional dynamics of the researcher/informant relationship to be more complex than what I read before my

fieldwork. In some cases, I spent the equivalent of several days in total hours with informants and we have become friends. Due to advances in social media and telephonic/messaging technology (especially inexpensive messaging tools like WhatsApp) it is very easy to maintain contact with people with whom you have shared contact information. The expectation is that we will remain in contact. Furthermore, the expectation is that several of my informants (that expressed an interest to me) will eventually read my thesis. This fairly new interconnected reality is changing the dynamics of researcher-researched relationships.

Positioning and reflexivity

Throughout the research process, from conceptualization to dissemination, I have been mindful of my representation of the people I interviewed. Conducting fieldwork in the global south requires the researcher to be "attentive to histories of colonialism, development, globalization and local realities, to avoid exploitative research or perpetuation of relations of domination and control" (Sultana 2007: 375). A principal concern for me in pursuing fieldwork in Delhi is the same concern that has become of particular anxiety for critical and feminist scholars working in the global south—the issue of positionality and reflexivity. The criticism or fear understandably is that the research will perpetuate neocolonial representations, having Western biases, and purporting to speak 'for' respondents from very different geographies.

Before I started my fieldwork, I was mindful of these concerns but I was also aware that if I approached every fieldwork event with extreme caution I would progress very slowly. I embarked on my fieldwork keeping in mind feminist critiques and engaged in research that was more 'politically engaged,' materially 'grounded,' and institutionally sensitive (Nagar 2002). This turned out not to be as much of a

challenge as I thought it would be because the method of semi-structured interviewing and observing quotidian experiences allowed for a great deal of localized and reflexive examination. “Reflexivity in research involves reflection on self, process, and representation, and critically examining power relations and politics” (Sultana 2007: 376). This allowed me to gain a nuanced understanding of issues from the ground level; often I was experiencing something at the same time as the interlocutor. However, we would discuss and acknowledge how processes would differently affect the informant and myself.

One benefit from being an outsider was that I understood from the onset that any presumptions or perceived familiarity by me would be conjecture. My movements and my interactions were particularly circumspect at the beginning of my fieldwork, but as I gained some familiarity with social norms and processes—as well as personal referrals—I could approach potential informants and discuss controversial topics with more confidence. My interaction with new interlocutors always started with me acknowledging my ignorance to processes and acute awareness of my outsider status. I let interlocutors guide me through experiences, as they understood them and even educate me on local activity and expectations. I also started interviews by explaining exactly what I was researching and why I was interested in interviewing them.

Despite my best efforts to tread carefully and the acknowledgment of positionality, reflexivity, identity, and representation, I don’t believe that I was able to transcend existing power relations between the interlocutors and myself. However, had I not acknowledged the power axis inherent in every research project the resulting effect might have been more problematic. I made an effort to inhabit multiple and shifting subjectivities contingent on moments, contexts, and spaces but I never purported to be something or someone I was not. If I was uncomfortable with

something said or done, my respondent most likely read that emotion on me. The same is true of a manifold of other emotions and subjectivities. At times, my own perceived class, nationality, and minimal local language skills were glaringly visible and led to both privileged access and disadvantages. When I was with a close-knit social group, the social chasm between the group and me was at times insurmountable. At other times, privileges and positionality were subdued, most notably when I was speaking with upper-middle-class respondents who had previous exposure to foreigners or even research scholars from the West interested in their work. Whenever I was with informants I held a strong awareness of intersectionality and positionality so that I could better acknowledge and ground the differences and similarities between us.

Post-fieldwork organization

The process of analysis was ongoing throughout my fieldwork. After every interview, I would identify and make note of key themes developing as well as any important similarities or departures with other informants' accounts. Returning home from the fieldwork, my first task was to organize all the unstructured information and mixed methods into one workspace. I did not have a structured sequence but rather utilized methods simultaneously to have broad and varied coverage. I learned how to use NVivo 10 software to store and analyze qualitative data from the mixed methods, including information collected from social media, interview transcriptions, and literature review (Babbie 2012: 404-406). However, my use of the software was limited to helping me organize some of the interview transcripts and recordings. I had four key themes in my mind from the fieldwork and began to develop a thesis plan around those themes. I wrote the thesis in Chicago and Oxford as well as various

locales in between. I benefited from keeping in contact with many of my informants through social media and WhatsApp to clarify points they made during interviews. I did not, however, consult with them concerning the direction or focus of how I represented them and their activity.

Limitations

I have already described some of the limitations inherent in empirical research and as an outsider. The qualitative method has its own logic and criteria of validity. There is an abundance of scholarship concerning the limitations of qualitative research (Hammersley 2006; Glaser and Strauss 2009) and the debate over the quantitative-qualitative divide (Mahoney and Goertz 2006). I will not advance these discussions here but rather acknowledge qualitative research of this nature is not a perfect science. The limitations for this type of fieldwork and reporting are considerable. Still, I want to acknowledge several salient issues concerning limitations for me (as the individual conducting the research) and regarding context.

The heightened political and occasionally seditious atmosphere in Delhi during my fieldwork may result in certain issues being interpreted inside the moment. For instance, in the lead-up to the general election in 2014 many of my respondents were disappointed with the direction AAP was going. I feel that I captured the true feeling of my informants. Very quickly thereafter AAP reemerged, reinvigorated, and with even more public support in Delhi. My responsibility is to report on the feelings and opinions of the interlocutors expressed to me during my fieldwork. I have followed-up with many informants. Most of them share similar political views and goals as they did during the fieldwork as I reported on, but a few have reversed course and once again support the party.

Much of the research was bounded to current events and anticipation of the after effects and externalities of policies and political outcomes. The political and temporal instability of issues in different contexts may result in certain issues being interpreted or told in certain ways. For my fieldwork, this temporal reporting—"research situatedness"—and engagement helped blur boundaries between process and content (Ward and Jones 1999). At other times, experiences of the young informants reflected past events and conjunctures. I would try to step back in time, their timeline, to get as deep an understanding from the individual as possible.

There are obstacles to gaining access to information whilst processes are still developing that go beyond limits imposed by positionality and power in the research process. For instance, interviewing young AAP and BJP informants in the middle of a political campaign has particular limitations. The informants might have been restrained or guarded about what they said to me about political beliefs and positions they had in relation to the party. Understandably, their outlooks were overly optimistic and they spoke in affirmations about the party whilst campaigning for an upcoming election. However, if I were to interview the same person after an election or after they have moved on from political party participation (in a few instances I was able to) their account might be more truthful and void of necessary biases. To conduct research on a topic that is sensitive and in development at a particular time presents divergent problems in terms of access to certain types of information and a range of informants.

I heeded Ward and Jones' (1999) advice to keep my approach sensitive to 'research situatedness' with respect to the politics of time as a 'research moment'. This was essential to avoid over-generalizing from my limited and temporal experiences. Ward and Jones assert accessibility and positionality are shaped by the

'mode of entry', "indicative of a 'political-temporal contingency' of research: namely the politically time-specific entry made by the researcher into the research field" (1999: 309). I am reporting on what I observed from the mostly bottom-up view of the young political party worker or social activist. The experience of the young individual could be during a period of anxiety, successes, or disparagement that often did not align with the general disposition of the group he/she represented at the time. The case studies follow individuals' development as activists and their experiences within broader fields of competition and the pursuit of specific social goals.

I acknowledge this limitation of 'political-temporal contingency', but I also contend it can be an opportunity. The timing presented me with great opportunities too. Being in Delhi at the time of the elections, the development of AAP and various social movements put me in the mix of important social changes. This gave me insights into the manner young people were developing as social actors, thinking about their future and improvising how to mitigate social/political issues. I observed change in young people lives and opinions as they were taking place.

Another limitation on the research was my decision to make my research community narrowly bound to young urban middle-class activists and young political party workers. I choose not to interview older members of political parties, government officials, educators, and older civil society organization members. I did not engage with people from the urban poor, from the upper echelon of elites, nor did I conduct full interviews with the family members of my informants. I wanted the focus to be on the young middle-class and the thesis set inside their activist experiences. To include these additional lenses would have made for a varied account and more balanced representation but it would have, in my opinion, served to dilute the viewpoint of the young middle-class interlocutors.

Ethical considerations

I have described ways in which I carefully negotiated my representation of informants. There were ethical considerations working with people who had different political persuasions and who were competing against each other for influence. It was important for me to keep my own persuasions muted and inform informants of my impartiality. I assumed a careful agnostic frame of reference with regard to contested issues and politics. In addition to what has already been written, for this research full consideration was given to issues of power and confidentiality. Appropriate ethical guidelines set forth by the Central University Research Ethics Committee at the University of Oxford were followed. All names of subjects interviewed were altered unless expressed written consent was given. For some participants, I have obscured specific identifying factors while keeping true to the nature of their identity and experience.

3.5 Conclusion

The case studies in this thesis benefited from having a qualitative method that was flexible to lives that were in flux and could move around a constellation of potential informants. The case studies that follow in the next four chapters emerge from my interactions with young people and their experiences that I observed over the course of eight months of fieldwork.

The strength in these methods lies in offering localized insight and perspectives that can be applied to critical events, structural factors, and social processes relevant to broader contexts. Despite being grounded in Delhi, this research

concerning youth politics, social change, and understanding of citizenship can be applied to various anthropologies and geographies.

4. Hybrid Activism

4.1 Introduction

When I first arrived in Delhi in September of 2013 I made it a point to explore the city starting from the centre. I exited the Barakhamba Road Metro Station and walked down Janpath until I reached the clearing at Rajpath, looking east through a thick haze I could make out India Gate. As I approached Lutyen's ceremonial axis of New Delhi, I was stopped on Rajpath as a rally for LGBT rights was passing. One of the activists handed me a leaflet with a link to a Facebook page for more information about their cause. I went to the page and connected to LGBT activists, a cause I was sympathetic of but had little previous involvement in. My online introductions allowed me to meet young activists for in-person interviews. The Facebook page kept me updated with developments in the LGBT community and aware of upcoming events, a few that I attended. The members produced creative digital content and had interesting discussion forums that I checked in with frequently. On December 11, 2013, India's Supreme Court reversed a lower court order that decriminalized gay sex (Section 377). Within minutes of the decision I received text messages from my informants, Facebook invites, and Tweets urging me to attend a protest and was instructed to wear all black. A couple hours later I was on the street in Jantar Mantar, surrounded by impassioned protestors. Someone gave me leaflets to hand out, I did, it was the same flyer I'd received several months before.

This chapter looks at emerging digital tactics applied by the middle-class youth in Delhi towards activism and political/social mobilization. This is the first of four approaches towards active citizenship by young social actors that I will examine in the empirical chapters. In India, as with much of the world, the Internet is having a substantial effect on practice towards social mobilization. I will set out four key

arguments in the chapter to illustrate the changing landscape of activism among middle-class youth in Delhi. The first key argument I posit is that online activism is often effective, represents diverse interests, and is symbiotically related to on the ground activism, the two types feed off each other and intermingle in practice. Put together; the online/offline activism practices are more than the sum of their parts. This practice has been made possible because the Internet and mobile phones play a dual role in mobilizing formal and informal political participation, as well as encourage existing offline participation. I discuss Juris and Pleyers' (2009) concept of 'alter-activism' that argues for a symbiotic relationship between online and offline activism.

Alter-activism is distinguished from past youth movements through an emphasis on horizontal collaboration, highly globalized networks, and how it is shaped by the use of ICTs. However, studies of online activism often neglect localized activity, the practice of keeping activists engaged with a cause, and the need to look simultaneously at on the ground physical events and digital flows (Hunt 2015). I introduce the concept of 'hybrid activism' as a novel way to describe the nexus and synergy of offline and online strategies in activism. This account of symbiosis in activism differs from alter-activism by its flexibility to embrace local strategies as well as transnational movements, its focus on marketing and advocacy for continued engagement, and the maintenance of social networking and learning spaces. I aim to show that researchers interested in understanding the relationship between online and offline political engagement will benefit from using both digital and localized approaches.

I present five case studies of young middle-class activists with varying projects and their complimentary use of online and offline activism. Young activists

are finding the symbiosis of online and offline strategies (hybrid activism) to be the best combination for their objectives, flexible to activists' needs. Activists' goals are rarely singular, they develop from and are affected by new events and prevailing conditions. Moreover, as a second key point, I show that some activists use hybrid activism for local campaigns with the objective of mobilization and participation staying local and concentrated to their community, as opposed to transnational activist strategies. As a third key point, I discuss how hybrid activism facilitates learning in social networks (that exist online and offline), which helps the sustainability of activist movements. Online activism is increasingly the loci for knowledge development and maintenance of causes aided by the formation of "affinity spaces" (Gee 2005). I found the goal of many activists was constant engagement from social actors around their causes and activism that is proactive rather than reactive.

In the penultimate section, as a final argument, I assert that hybridity is increasingly being mainstreamed, evidenced by media and political parties adopting strategies of young social activists. In the conclusion, I examine how the Internet and new media can provide a crucial platform to promote and mobilize social change.

4.2 Flexible activism

In recent years, scholars have begun investigating the nexus between India's youth, activism, and ICTs and their findings vary (Ilavarasan 2013; Rao 2012; DeSouza et. al. 2009; Hamilton et. al. 2011). Rao's (2012) research shows that activism and advocacy with ICTs work well to support and organize offline actions and bolster continued activities via the Internet. However, Rao concludes that ICTs do not change activism but rather amplify existing abilities and activities of civil society groups (12). Chadha and Harlow's (2015) research concludes that activists in India believe social

movements needs to utilize both offline and online activism to reach their full potential. Ilavarasan's (2013: 297) research conducted in 2010 and 2011 showed the "use of ICTs for political uprising or online activism is not evident among the youth" in New Delhi and across India. Ilavarasan did not rule out future activism with ICTs, noting the opportunity and capabilities were there but not the motivation. Today's youth, Ilavarasan wrote, are "apolitical" and "the community service dimension" of civic engagement is greater than the "political activism dimension." He found youth using ICTs in "their everyday lives" but that they did not exploit ICTs fully for activism purposes (297).

With hindsight, Ilavarasan's timing for conducting interviews may have been a few months too early. One of the first prominent examples of digital activism use in India came during the Anna Hazare anti-graft protests in late 2011. Social media coverage was a "new feature during the movement" that helped people to mobilize in support of Team Anna, making Hazare one of the first "major beneficiaries of this technology" in India (Kumar and Thapa 2014). The next major social movement to gain traction online was the 2012 protest and discussion after the December 16th gang rape-murder of a para-medical student in Delhi. Digital activism by middle-class youth surrounding the gang rape was significant. The hashtag *#Nirbhaya* (fearless in Hindi) was given to the victim; the subsequent social media activism propelled a major campaign by the mainstream media against rape and sexual abuse of women in India (Guha 2014). To sum, both these movements were largely influenced by young people and were propelled by activism using ICTs.

Limitations to online activism

As discussed in Chapter Two, there are challenges to the value of ICTs in activism, specifically as to what it produces or returns to society. Scholars have suggested that the effect is negative, arguing that online activism is ineffective, espouses neoliberal ideology through the drive for click rates and quasi-actions on social media, and, therefore, draws people away from on the ground protest (Ghobadi and Clegg 2015; White 2010; Shulman 2009; Morozov 2009). Morozov refers to this form of online activism as "slacktivism…the ideal type of activism for a lazy generation" (2009). The concern among observers is that "slacktivism" and lazy digital engagements will have lasting effects on the public sphere by crowding out more substantive offline participatory efforts.

In an article for the *Guardian Online* Micah White, former Editor of *Adbusters* magazine, suggests that the new model of activism "uncritically embraces the ideology of marketing," which cheapens the political engagement, removing ideology and passion. "As the novelty of online activism wears off, millions of formerly socially engaged individuals who trusted digital organizations are coming away believing in the impotence of all forms of activism" (White 2010). Ghobadi and Clegg (2015) argue that online activism has led to the decline of activism over time and the increase of Internet filtering and surveillance by elites. These arguments posit that online activism is not only drawing people's energies away from on-the-ground participation but also draws them into a neoliberal, consumerist ideology. White asserts there is a danger in accepting the tactics of advertising and market research to build social movements. This makes organizers obsessed with the power in numbers and tracking clicks that turn activism into "clicktivism." Clicktivists equate political power with growing "click-rate" percentages, the emphasis on metrics results in a "race to the bottom of political engagement…[g]one is faith in the power of ideas, or

the poetry of deeds, to enact social change" (White 2010). New media has produced citizens that are no longer willing to be among other citizens and engage in political movements.

White argues that "clicktivism" is ostensibly portraying activism. The line between tangible and intangible is increasingly blurred as different stakeholders put more weight to online actions like posting links, viewing a video, joining online groups, or starting to 'follow' someone. In my observations of activists and their online activity I found that these 'clicktivist' actions are only a subsidiary of online activism; just as signing a petition is just one action in offline activism. However, it is worth noting, these quasi-actions, some seemingly insignificant, can have real cultural and economic consequences (Fenton 2008; Kahn and Kellner 2004).[17]

For every tangible activist action instigated on social media, there are many more quasi-actions. These online engagements are not replacing the substantive offline actions; they promote—some scholars have suggested amplify (Rao 2012)—offline activism. In his research, political scientist Henrik Christensen found there to be no evidence of the 'substitution thesis'. He asserts that an activist who was going to go out on the streets to protest is not going to send a Tweet instead. If anything, Christensen (2011) argues, "the Internet has a positive impact on off-line mobilization." He says there is little to support the accusation that 'slacktivism'—used in the pejorative sense—defines Internet campaigns. "It is at worst harmless fun and can at best help invigorate citizens" (Christensen 2011: 1). More small advocacies

[17] For an example of this: In May of 2014, two Dalit girls, cousins aged 14 and 15 from Uttar Pradesh went into a field to relieve themselves in the brush. They were ambushed, gang-raped, killed and hung from a mango tree. When photos of the girls hanging from the tree circulated around media outlets and the Internet, many Indians took to the streets of cities calling for justice and better security for women. The photo was posted and reposted across social media reaching millions of people. Juxtapose that with the impact of an activist at a street protest in Delhi holding up the same photo for people to see, people already on the street protesting the issue.

via quasi-actions adding volume to the aggregate can lead to increased awareness, which can lead to palpable activist action, including desired outcomes.

Another critique of online activism is the problem of a digital divide. The digital divide refers to the gap between demographics (in terms of affordability and accessibility to digital tools) and—particularly in the case of India—in rural areas where the control of ICTs can reinforce existing social divides (Pick and Sakar 2015; Sreekumar 2007). In India, the digital divide represents a sociocultural divide: social media users are more likely to live in urban areas, to hold a passport, and to share values with global social media users. Some scholars view social media for activism as a distinct feature of the urban middle-class and not representative of the issues faced by the greater population (Pick and Sakar 2015).

For my research, which examined the young urban middle-class, accessibility to ICTs was less of an issue compared to previous and broader studies. Still, online activism excludes the lower middle-class and working-class activists that do not have liberal access to ICTs (Hunt 2015). Notwithstanding, the digital divide in India is closing, as evidenced by increasing mobile phone penetration, lowering costs for hardware and data, and various programs in India to increase accessibility (Doron and Jeffrey 2013). Warschauer (2003) contends that the digital divide is not equivalent to the socio-economic divide. The young and poor are finding ways to have fuller participation and inclusion, even though they lack an equal amount of resources. Youth from lower classes and the emerging middle-class are finding ways to engage in activism using ICTs and stay flexible to ongoing changes in technology. Young activists in Chadha and Harlow's (2015) study understood social media's potential for activism, despite the digital divide. Only a third of young Indian activists surveyed in their study said the lack of Internet access was an obstacle to social networking use in

activism. The authors of the study suggest, "the technological determinists may be overly pessimistic to assume that the digital divide automatically inhibits the use of technology for social change" (Chadha and Harlow 2015: 685). Their research showed young people are overwhelmingly optimistic about social media's role in the future of activism and want to learn the best strategies for utilizing ICTs.

A first key consideration about activism among middle-class youth in Delhi is that the Internet and mobile phones play a dual role in mobilizing formal and informal political participation, as well as encourage existing offline participation. This is indicative of the many youth that admitted to me that they had bought mobile phones that were well above their means. These purchases—for some, uncharacteristic conspicuous consumption—were justified because mobiles are viewed as an important investment in learning new skills, staying abreast to technology, and capacity to network. Activism was just one of the many proactive uses of these phones. For youth, performing the status they aspire to and the consumption of culture were also important considerations (Nisbett 2007).

Prasad, a 19-year-old Dalit rights activist originally from Indore stresses the importance of mobile. "I can't imagine living without my mobile"; he said without looking up from his phone, "I don't have any other way to connect." I asked him if he would save money to buy a computer or television. "There's no need for that, mobile is the future. I can do everything from this little box." He added, "I don't want to go home every time something happens or we need to get everyone [together] for protest." This thinking is typical of other interactions I had with young people, the mobile is viewed as their apt tool for mobility (in more than one sense), the desktop computer is static and increasingly not conducive to what Prasad calls his "on the go" lifestyle. Informants spoke of having the right "tools" for their activism, which was

increasingly dynamic and operationally lean. Tools like mobile phones, USB sticks, and 3G data cards were flexible utilities.

In recent years, mobilizations around anti-corruption and women's security were propelled by online activity. Juris and Pleyers (2009) concept of 'alter-activism' is useful in understanding these developments in Delhi. Alter-activism is a more flexible form of activism that is characterized as apolitical, democratic, egalitarian, dynamic, and horizontally structured. Unlike traditional offline activism that requires a central hierarchy to organize with trickle-down communication, "new online engagements allow activists to maintain such interactions via horizontal and peer-to-peer contacts" (65). Juris and Pleyers assert that young alter-activists (using global informants) continually expressed a view of social transformation as an ongoing collaboration rather than an established project. Alter-activists often articulate a model of social change through everyday practices.

Scholars hypothesize that young people today are part of the "activism 2010+" movement shaped by an accelerating rejection of traditional politics, hierarchical institutions (including NGOs), and the proliferation of status quo (Glasius and Pleyers 2013). Alter-activism represents an "alternative form of democratic participation, which is at once cultural and political, a new mode of global citizenship, and an emerging form of transnational (sub)cultural practice" (Juris and Pleyers 2009: 61). Alter-activism has developed symbiotically with the trend of extended periods of youth, collecting degrees, and precarious job markets (ILO 2013; UN 2014). These realities have postponed the transition to adulthood and resulted in youth waiting, in a period of "limbo" or "timepass" where they experiment with activism and political work (Jeffrey 2010). Alter-activism, perhaps because it is conducive to experimentation, has fully embraced the rise of new ICTs and other resources for

putting activists' vision into practice on a transnational scale.

Contemporary Delhi is a hotbed for these activism projects. Young urban middle-class activists are increasingly engaging with ICTs whilst facing down a precarious job market that is prolonging the transition to adulthood. As a result, middle-class youth are experimenting with new flexible forms of activism. Again, and as the first key point, young social actors are finding online activism is often effective, represents diverse interests, and is symbiotically related to on the ground activism, the two types feed off each other and intermingle in practice. One development is the combination of different forms of activism (online and offline activism as well as marketing, knowledge-building, and advocacy efforts) in what I will refer to as 'hybrid activism'.

Hybrid activism is not suggesting the evolution of activism but is rather a way to explain the trend I observed with young middle-class activists in Delhi that builds off of the concept of alter-activism. Frequently, the young activists I interviewed were using online activism to build advocacy and support—utilizing marketing strategies in the form of short videos on YouTube, photos, narratives, micro-blogging, and open forums or discussion groups (affinity spaces) on social media to build support and then organize and promote a symbiotic offline event (e.g., rally, protest, sit-in, boycott, petition campaign, etc.). Hybrid activism moves from offline to online and back, but its maxim is constant engagement and proactivity—fitting with many young middle-class activists' 'on the move' mobile lifestyles.

The process—when meant to be sustainable—is a well-greased alignment of corresponding gears, together a driving force for continued engagement (*Figure 3*). Any handouts or hard-copy marketing at an event would start moving the gears towards directing people to a website or a social media page (like my experience with

LGBT activists handing out pamphlets). Hybrid activism differs from alter-activism by its emphasis on online organization and the development of 'affinity spaces', as well as its application in localized activism projects and by political parties. Sociolinguist James Paul Gee describes 'affinity space' as a place—virtual or physical—where informal learning takes place between people with a shared interest (2004). The range of spaces is unlimited, from gaming forums, transnational book clubs, to activists' spaces and everything in-between. In an affinity space, the sharing of knowledge and debating best uses/strategies is encouraged.



Figure 3: Hybrid activism.

Hybrid activism, unlike alter-activism, does not emphasize transnational connectedness; it works on all scales and I'll describe later how it is being adapted for political campaigns. Hybrid activism is discursive and flexible, moving from large-scale projects to local interventions depending on activist objectives. Rao's (2012) research on the role of RTI-centric online affinity spaces, known as "sister-groups", and their offline networks shows their utility in generating collaborations towards collective action. In her research of an RTI Yahoo and Google group called the *Hum Janenge* ('We Will Know'), she concluded that networked online communities

amplify the abilities of activists towards coordinated collective action, "rather than create any new repertoires of collective action" (Rao 2012: 1). Her findings resonate with other scholars (Postmes and Brunsting 2002) that the role of ICTs in activism is principally as an amplifier. Rao's "sister-groups" were also linked to Non-resident Indians (NRIs) abroad, but I found similar affinity spaces among my informants in Delhi that dealt with local issues. Similar to the way Postmes and Brunsting (2002) note that most traditional offline activist strategies have an online equivalent; these affinity spaces are the online equivalent of a group of people sitting around talking about an issue and sharing knowledge.

4.3 The activist's repertoire

In my fieldwork I witnessed young activists engaging in hybrid activism in Delhi and I will describe in five case studies different examples of this intermingling of strategies operating as more than an amplifier. Most the young urban activists I interviewed were volunteers that preferred the labels of "community" or "grassroots" activists and identified as "middle-class" not giving any more specifics, some said they were "lower-middle-class" with only a few saying they were "established" or "upper-middle-class." My starting point for finding many activists offline was on university campuses.



Figure 4: Library Canteen at JNU with student organizations' murals (2013). Photo by G.R. Ortiz

Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) has a reputation for being the home to many young political and social activists. Often I would meet with politically active students (either after reaching out on Facebook or just finding students that were mobilizing on campus) at one of the *dhabas* (small eateries), the food court or various other eateries at JNU that are not only popular with students but also local residents. The price for the food is excellent value, four rupees for tea and 30 rupees for many plates like *masala dosa* and veg *thali*. Several times I found Deeksha engaged in a heated discussion with fellow students at the *dhabas* or Library Canteen (*Figure 4*).

Deeksha, 20, is a lower-middle-class woman who identifies her caste as Teli, which is classified as an OBC. She also identifies as a feminist and women's rights activist. Deeksha is an International Studies student at JNU who does not know what she would like to do after university but does know her life's work will revolve around bettering the position of women in India. She argues the connection with women's right activists across the globe is what is giving momentum to the current women's rights/security movement in Delhi. "It is no coincidence that more rapes are being reported and more pressure is being put on men in Delhi today and more women here are online." She wants to accelerate the level of engagement and activism. She contends her activism is highly globalized, networked, collaborative, and getting more effective all the time.

Deeksha sounds more like a corporate executive than a social activist when she talks of having "low attrition rates" for young feminists on her online spaces as well as looking daily at the analytics provided by Google for her sites. This gives a modicum of support to White's (2010) claim that online activism draws activists into a neoliberal and consumerist ideology. Deeksha explains, "we want to keep the traffic moving from our [on-campus women's rights] workshops to our online forums. We

share online resources where they can talk exclusively about women's issues." She has been learning to code and use programming language because she says they are modern tools for formative change. "If I can build a startup or app that helps women then I don't have to rely on others to understand my vision. I'll just do it myself." Recent literature supports her strategy; young women are using ICTs in the service of political and social aims in exciting and novel ways (Guha 2014; Newsom and Lengel 2012; Hamilton et. al. 2011). "Sometimes I feel like here in Delhi, we are reporting from the past to allies in the future in places like Australia, New York, and Copenhagen."

In the autumn of 2014, Deeksha was busy following a campaign by Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP)—a right-wing student organization, both online and offline, against "Love Jihad" (in this context referring to consensual live-in relationships). In October 2014, ABVP Delhi secretary Saket Bahuguna announced:

> Live-in relationships go against the grain of Indian culture and the institution of family. It is also true that hardly any such relationship succeeds. We will form student groups in various colleges and undertake case studies to apprise girls of the detrimental effects of being in such a relationship (Garg 2014).

Deeksha and other feminist students launched a counter-campaign that she said would be more than "a couple of Sangh men telling women how to live, how to love." Her counter-campaign included a diverse spectrum of voices: young, old, local, and global. She also organized opposition to the ABVP rallies and human chains. She collated and organized her campaign online because it was across several universities in Delhi. She contacted the media, wrote letters, and implored women to have (offline and online) discussions around love to find their own opinions. Deeksha said it was a "subversion of women's freedoms and is really only used to further an ideology, not to protect women. Women can protect themselves." The counter-campaign was effective and ABVP (which controlled the students' union at DU) backed-off of their

campaign and stopped using the phrase "Love Jihad." Deeksha wrote to me after the campaign, "I think the online activism only works if you have real [offline] action. But, it's getting to the point where the reverse is also true."

Out of my observations of Deeksha and several other activists I came to think that the objective of transnational or cross-national linkages was a common goal, which I could easily understand. But, in some other cases (at least six of my 78 informants), I found that an emphasis on local mobilization and participation was favored. I maintain, as a second key point, these activists use hybrid activism for local campaigns with the objective of participation staying local and concentrated, as opposed to transnational activist strategies.

In Rajesh's (a 29-year-old Dalit rights activist) view, the threat of reconstruction and mediation towards a global or even national narrative was very real and unwelcomed. What Rajesh was pointing to more broadly was a form of revanchism in Delhi against the political advances of Dalits. Rajesh explains the need to keep activism local:

> Middle-class youth participate in movements as a fashion, because of media pressure. This is reactive. I'm not blaming youth or middle-class, they have other things on their mind, but their experience is framed by market concepts. If you ask them how do they think about SCs they will say, "oh they're getting their appropriations so their reservations should be closed" even though only three to five percent are in higher education, and tribals are less. They will say, "Mayawati has so much money." I say to them, how many joint secretaries are at the union level? Not many.

He says many upper-caste and middle-class youth want to come and help the situation of Dalits in Delhi but that it is temporary work and not sustainable. "If I start talking capacity-building, they don't want anything to do with it. The fashion is enough. So we kindly say no thanks, our activism is for ourselves." Rajesh invited me to an activist event at Jantar Mantar.

'Jantar Mantar' is well known as a place for protest, social mobilizations, and organized activism in the capital. The name is slightly misleading. Jantar Mantar is the archaeoastronomical site of the 18th century architectural instruments given by the Mughal emperor Muhammad Shah. Jantar Mantar Road just south of the landmark, starting at the intersection with Tolstoy Road or the meeting of Ashoka Road and Janpath Lane, is the site designated by the police as a place for organized protest. Jantar Mantar, the stretch of road measuring a little over 1000 feet, is one of three prime staging areas for protest in Delhi. Protesters are allowed to camp in the corridor. Groups often schedule their protests and encampments long in advance to coordinate with other groups—this accommodates Rajesh's style of activism. I met with Rajesh under the canopy of an encampment on one of his breaks from megaphone duties (their microphone wasn't working). The crowd was full of people in colorful garb, sitting cross-legged and generally attentive, responding to speakers on the megaphone with chants, slogans, and affirmations (*Figure 5*).



Figure 5: Dalit activist event at Jantar Mantar (2014). Photo by G.R. Ortiz

Short of breath, Rajesh explains, "This crowd…we bring together through word of mouth mostly but also Facebook. We use all devices and strategies for mobilizing." He admits his constituency is not as technically savvy as others, but he says many people access Facebook via functional phones. "I have seniors connecting with me on Facebook." Rajesh and a collection of young Dalits work to mobilize SCs to come sit at Jantar Mantar. "They [young mobilizers] are on Facebook so we can

organize events over messenger, it's easier than a conference call." Rajesh often relies on the generation just below him in age (by only a few years) that has embraced social media and ICTs more than his own. Instead of fighting these intergenerational differences he understands the value of utilizing different modalities and tools for mobilizing. Rajesh's marketing cuts across different mediums to include everyone. At the encampment, leaflets are handed out, sometimes hats, and fans. The leaflets and banners hanging will have the different Dalit organizations' websites, phone numbers, email addresses, and Facebook pages listed. Rajesh says, "hopefully they will go online and stay connected. We have to stay a [tight] group, keep the base together."

Rajesh is skeptical of external interventions and partnerships on Dalit civic and social activism because of the discrimination against Dalits and Adivasis. "We've worked with other groups before, but we find they try and thin our message or use our strong numbers. They use us." Rajesh worked hard to keep the activism and advocacy localized. I asked Rajesh specifically about the possibility of a larger, national reach?

> No, that is not our aim. Other Dalit societies work that way. They get formalized support. But we are a campaign of individuals with organizational support. We work at the grassroots in our communities, which is where we find the most impact. We want to serve our people well. If everyone, all the Dalits in India are serving their [constituency] well then it will have the best overall result. Our work, activism if you will, would not be as effective if we're always trying to bring in people from the outside into our causes. The national organizations work on special component program: Dalit budget in planning commission is 16.2 percent of their share, Adivasis 8.4 percent, they make sure resources are reaching the people, mandated as per policy 1975 for tribals, 1979 for SCs this is from national to block level. This here, we are the block levels.

Rajesh uses online activism to stay current and reach more of his community. "Some people prefer Facebook so we're on Facebook, that's all there is to it." The speed of activist mobilization often depends on the organizers. A Dalit coalition protest for Lok Sabha representation quotas organized by Rajesh would be advertised on Facebook weeks in advance of the event. This advocacy strategy differs from most

calls for activism I received. For most online calls for offline mobilizations, I would be alerted online only hours or at most a day before the actual event—often a reaction to something newsworthy. For Rajesh's events, I could join the event and Facebook would conveniently export it to my Apple iCal or Google calendar. I would receive emails from the organizers with pre-protest literature and the latest news concerning the issue at hand. For the people going to the activist event, this scheduling and advance-work online was considerate of their time. Rajesh explains his activist style:

> Again, we're not [reactive]. We leave that to others. Our activism is about capacity building. It never ends; we constantly create more assets at local levels. The best social work is to dedicate your time to community but also have quality time with family. If we plan our activism in advance we can do this for a long time, we can live our lives and do activism just as we plan other aspects of our daily lives. We won't burn out. Because of this, we will always be impactful and listened to. The politicians know they will have to deal with us. We have a base that will always sit in Jantar Mantar and so we will always have [political] suitors.

Rajesh and at least five other young activists I interviewed kept their efforts tailored to local participation. Deeksha and others pursued wide-scale and diverse interventions—welcoming global voices of support. For many of my informants, the symbiosis of online and offline is often the best combination for activists' purposes. Activists' goals are rarely solitary, they change and adapt to new conditions and events. The activists I met often moved from activism that was concerned with local issues to later concentrating their efforts on larger mobilizations—or vice versa.

Shashank's experience is indicative of this; hybrid activism is flexible to his activist needs. Shashank, 22, a middle-class RTI activist from Gandhi Nagar has used a combination of online and offline tactics to get results. Shashank believes activism can be effective in large mobilizations as well as the local grassroots level, including online activism for continuous engagement. During the last elections, Shashank collected photos from people of the rubbish lying around the district and posted them

on his Facebook page and blog to pressure the parliamentarian who campaigned on a "Clean Delhi" slogan. Shashank filed applications for rubbish pick-up, asked for attendance reports of waste management workers and financial reports, handed out flyers, organized sit-in protests, and collected/posted pictures of piled up rubbish on social media.

I found Shashank's activism to be indicative of research by scholars that suggests the backwardness and disorder of street life is embarrassing to civic activists and their expectations of modernity (Baviskar 2011; Anjaria 2009). They use the rhetoric of citizen participation and the quick advocacy tool of online social networks to transform the practice of politics in the city. Shashank also used Facebook to illegitimate claims by those they see as unruly city residents by posting photos of the litter they produced. Shashank reports to his connected constituency, which in return puts middle-class political pressure on local politicians who are trying to appease claims from different constituencies: those on the side of order/cleanliness and a large informal workforce that sell and buy goods on the street.

Shashank says the combined efforts by him and others pressured officials to act and deliver services. "RTI is good for putting pressure on them [politicians] and it is part of the package of efforts to get the basic needs of people met." I asked Shashank if it actually challenges the status quo, does it remove the corruption that the RTI law intended to mitigate? "Not really. It is more about service delivery and addressing people's needs." Shahsnak explained further:

> We need to continue to ask the important questions like why are footpaths constantly in disrepair, what can be done about street dogs biting residents, how do we stop our children from getting sick from air pollution, who is responsible for these rubbish failures…how can we prevent encroachments in our colonies? We do this by holding events…but the rest of the time we blog, we draft circulars that can be posted on Facebook, we post photos as proof. This is the new advocacy work, for the community, for everyone.

I ask Shashank how this 'inclusive' work compares with the work of *People's Action* and its affiliate UJRA. Shashank is a member of these RWA advocacy groups that represent middle-class interest in the policymaking of the MCD and other local governments—often in opposition to the poor's politics. In this other capacity, Shashank has protested against the increase in electricity tariff hikes, auto-rickshaw overcharging, privatization of the water utility agency, and city planning issues (primarily in support of "voluntary" demolition of slums). Shashank explains, "there is no conflict. I work on specific issues. Issues in my neighborhood…please, do not politicize the neighborhood."

Shashank is most proud of his part in a recent RTI action that resulted in a water connection for a secondary school in Northeast Delhi. "We were shocked to learn children at the school had no facility for safe drinking water. The Principal had been trying since 2012. Even the MLA tried, but no action was taken by Jal Board." Shashank and others filed an application under RTI, "we started an online campaign and setup an e-petition. This was followed by real protests. The application is still pending, but the connection has been installed." The combination of different offline and online efforts helped make the connection happen:

> Had we not done all of these strategies, I'm not sure enough pressure would have been built for immediate action. I don't know what action pushed the Jal Board to act. But I know together they worked.

Shashank believes concentrated local efforts that deal with specific issues have the most impact. He argues localized action like this has little controversy because you know the people involved and you know "what is at stake." For Shashank localized activism does not have to be sophisticated and collated but it doesn't hurt. "It works because people care about what is said about them online. They don't want to be shamed in front of their peers. They will contest their name and reputation online." He

would like more people to go online and be constantly engaged. This would increase the speed of action. “Many residents are elderly or disabled. If more of them had [Facebook] pages then their voices would be [amplified]. RTI’s real value is the empowerment of people.” However, these people must be connected—online—and agree with the civic action Shashank was campaigning for. Shashank noted often that he was anti-politics, but many of the people he was “shaming” for the public interest, from local politicians to street vendors, were not on social media, and therefore unable to defend themselves in the coterie and medium of Shashank’s choosing.

4.4 Digital discovery

Shashank’s assertion that a participatory population would be ideal is representative of a large set of activists I met that noted their goal was not only constant engagement but also active learning among participants—a community of learners or space for learning. A third key point about activism among middle-class youth in Delhi is that hybrid activism facilitates learning in networks and affinity spaces, which aid in the maintenance and sustainability of an activist movement. Young activists I talked with spoke of engaging in activism that was inclusive and participatory. The activism encouraged building and sharing knowledge via affinity spaces (e.g., Google and Yahoo groups, Facebook discussion groups, Twitter feeds, and other micro-blogging sites).

Ghobadi and Clegg (2015) argue activists can further their causes by working to develop deeper knowledge among activists. Activists using online methods should know the difference between movements “going viral” and “building a virtues-based community that coalesces around an alternative vision and value proposition for social organization” (68). They argue that online approaches only manage “the

creation of 'knowers' and should be revised in order to foster the empowerment of 'learners' that are capable of generating new knowledge" (68). The affinity spaces my informants frequented were utilized for more than advocacy; users contributed toward a deeper understanding of the issues and experimented by 'trying on' different ideas.

Affinity spaces are important for scholarship on activism by youth because they are active pedagogies that agentic youth are frequenting with greater regularity. Gee writes regarding affinity spaces, "Young people today are confronted with and enter more and more affinity spaces. They see a different and arguably powerful vision of learning, affiliation and identity" (2005: 231). Through this practice, young learners are allowed to network with each other "with various tools and technologies and be rewarded for doing so", rather than to be rewarded for individual knowledge "stored in the head" as they would in school (230).

Affinity spaces encourage the sharing of interests, experimenting, and 'intensive' knowledge to add as a potential resource for others—what Gee calls "distributed knowledge" (230). Traditional classrooms "tend to narrowly constrain where students can gain knowledge, rather than utilize widely dispersed knowledge" by letting students (or learners) learn from one another (230). Affinity spaces are largely unregulated—appealing for many youths—and an important feature to hybrid activism because the spaces remain open and democratic. I discovered the objective of activists was not always to build a critical mass but to have curious participants engage with affinity spaces, with the aim of developing new activists (learners) armed with deeper knowledge.

Boyd's (2007) work on youth online cultures problematizes the online/offline distinction. The popularity of affinity spaces among young people and the restrictions in Indian society on cross class/caste/region travel/mixing, gives this heightened

importance. A crucial component of hybrid activism is affinity spaces that are the 'rawest' manifestations of public discourse and democracy. Boyd argues that these networked 'publics' play a crucial role in the development of young people, writing: "Without publics, there is no coherent society. Publics are where norms are set and reinforced…[l]earning through impression management is key to developing a social identity" (137). Through social networks and affinity spaces, youth learn how to manage their social lives. This is an important development in today's society where private/public life is increasingly blurred.

Pierre Lévy (1997) notes these 'knowledge spaces' are compelling to people that might prefer a voluntary affiliation as opposed to groups that demand exclusive loyalty (*also* Jenkins 2002: 157). In Indian society the differences between social groups is a critical distinction: organic (kin, tribe, caste), organized (nations, institutions, religions) and self-organized (friends and online spaces). A space—as with affinity space—differs from a community, a word that conjures up ideas of belongingness. A community or "community of practice" puts a label on a group of people and begins to dictate who is in and who is out. Communities have membership. The lack of community is freeing for many youth in Delhi where so much of their lives are based on where they are placed in a hierarchy and whether they are in or out of some group. Prasad, 19, mentioned earlier, describes this freedom, "on the web, I'm who I want to be. I'm not what I am to other people. No one necessarily knows what biases you're bringing, they can't tell you off or disregard you based on your skin or name." I heard this type of statement often from young people, including activists I engaged with.

Miti, a 24-year-old upper-middle-class Brahmin woman from Delhi, is one such activist. Miti, an LGBT activist, describes the benefits of online liberties, "the

anonymity social media provides is necessary. You can be someone else online but learn from and share actual experiences." Miti described how a few years ago, from the comfort of her computer, she learned from the experiences of others involved in LGBT activism, "I learned where to go, when to go, and how to connect [offline] with people, I expanded my resources, found allies, friends…best friends online."

Prasad and Miti's experiences are representative of a larger set of young people that talked to me about the freedom they experienced through the relative anonymity and safe distances online activities provide. Participants in an affinity space have little identity, what Gee calls "background", they choose how much to divulge or indulge in (with reference to made-up or false identities). An affinity space is a democracy, "people relate to each other primarily in terms of common interests, endeavors, goals or practices, not primarily in terms of race, gender, age disability or social class" (Gee 2005:225). Prasad talked about how new approaches in activism reflected a new politics in Delhi, "young people don't care about identity politics, we act on issues that are important to us and we find people that share in these causes." Affinity spaces are a good destination for these young people, they have no telos and they are characterized by continuous discussion and ever-expanding viewpoints.

The response I observed against the ruling on Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code (that overturned a 2009 High Court of Delhi ruling that the section was unconstitutional) is indicative of this. Once the initial protest subsided, what Miti called "the time for venting, for collective frustration, really a chance for us all to hug it out"—then the real work, the development of learners began online. Affinity spaces on different social media began talking about what the ruling actually meant and what the long-term response would be, including the legal road map to get this issue in

front of the court again. The activism became subdued but proactive; the impetus became about learning and righting the wrong.



Figure 6: Local and transnational events in protest of 377 ruling (2013). Source: G.R Ortiz, Facebook

On Facebook, a 'Community Meeting and Discussion' was organized at Max Mueller Bhavan in central Delhi by no particular organization but rather four young LGBT activists (*Figure 6*). They specifically asked for no media, and if anyone were caught with recorders they would be removed. That night, young lawyers with experience arguing in front of the Supreme Court carefully explained the ruling and took questions from a packed house, mostly comprised of young middle-class people, both gays and allies. People who wanted more information and to follow proceedings were encouraged to go to destinations online, on social media, where the conversation was ongoing. When I returned to my computer the next event was scheduled and the discussion was continuing.

At the offline events (*Figure 7)* concerning the 377 ruling, online spaces were promoted as spaces for discussions and learning where more people could engage, including people from outside India. Letter campaigns, and various local and global events taking place online and offline followed. More than a year after the court's decision, activists have been able to use the court's decision as a platform for continuous engagement.



Figure 7: Protest against 377 ruling (2013). Photo by G.R. Ortiz

The activism has led to broader concerns like the need for judicial reform and continued dialogue in the capital territory over LGBT rights. I followed online spaces and found the discussion at times cordial at other times the decorum broke down along ingrained prejudices. At times, the chorus of malign anti-gay sentiments drowned out the more constructive debates and knowledge sharing.

This experience reveals the contradictory nature of virtual communities and the limitations of affinity spaces and networks. They are democratic and free to move in any direction. They can be powerful unifying sources of information, but they can also be platforms polluted with misinformation, propaganda, and derogatory debates. Knox et al. (2006) research on networks argues that people involved in network-like activity tend to adapt and use the language of networks. They argue that networks do not connect, transfer, and emancipate in the ways that they promise to do as an explanatory tool, "networks are not neutral tools for describing social life, but rather entail a particular politics in their description of social life as fluid and contingent" (2006: 135). Lévy (1997) writes that online communities leverage a sort of democracy in numbers, "[n]o one knows everything, everyone knows something, all knowledge resides in humanity" (20).

Adopting and adapting subculture

Despite the breadth of information online, people consume information that is easily accessible, disseminated widely, and bundled by the media. Politicians and mainstream media are beginning to understand the value and impact that social media and other subcultural media have—media that many youth have been engaged with for years. Kahn and Kellner (2004) argue that the Internet is a contested terrain, employed "by the Left, Right, and Center of both dominant cultures and subcultures to promote their agendas" (94). It is no longer a tool only for subculture or new oppositional cultures. The Internet and social media are moving toward the mainstream. Older forms of media have given way or given-in to new media. The evidence is in the nightly Indian newscasts' use of social media and citizen reports. In much the same way, the old political strategies have evolved to find new ways to mediate their politics across to wider audiences; the subcultures will continue to be appropriated into the mainstream. A final key argument I advance is that the hybridity in hybrid activism is increasingly being mainstreamed, evidenced by the media and political parties adopting strategies of young social activists. Hybrid simply means something that is mixed and hybridity—a mixture. The constituent parts of this mixture are various online and offline practices.

Chadwick's (2007) work on hybridity in organizations and the media system anticipates some of the arguments being presented here. Chadwick asserts that increasingly, new organizations are emerging that exists only in hybrid form. These organizations could not function without the Internet and the new spaces of "fluid spatial and temporal" interactions it facilitates (289). Political parties, interest groups, and social movements have benefited from "hybrid mobilization" that blend repertoires. Quick "repertoire switches" between offline and online spaces and during campaigns "are emerging characteristics of contemporary political mobilization"

(283). Chadwick highlights the work of *MoveOn.org*, a public policy advocacy group and political action committee that has thrived in hybrid form. Jenkins (2006) highlights the way culture is shifting based on the intersection of new and old media. New media and technology have made it possible for average citizens to reach a wide audience. This is counterbalanced with corporations and political organizations finding new ways to capture audiences, produce irresistible content, and create controlled spaces where they can usher users. This convergence is both a top-down corporate/elite-driven process and a bottom-up consumer/subculture-producer-driven process.

The 2013 and 2014 elections were the first to have substantial organized social media campaigning by political parties in India. One of the strategies taken by political strategists was to promote the undeterred and unofficial use by their supporters, which allows for the spread of useful propaganda and attacks that the party is largely insulated from. For the general elections in 2014, BJP skillfully tapped into a legion of young tech savvy people that worked diligently to spread the message of Modi and company with smart branding and targeted media campaigns—similar to a US presidential campaign with so much emphasis on the leader.[18] BJP understood that social media is an extension of the campaign trail and used a two-pronged approach to social media: increase its online presence and promote offline activities. BJP went as far as crowd-sourcing its election manifesto, with thousands of people using Twitter and blogs to comment. Many of the suggestions were incorporated into BJP's manifesto (Ali 2014). In addition, BJP arranged a hotline that supporters could call into and listen to a live Modi speech—an important pragmatic initiative

[18] AAP and BJP spread their messages to the Indian diaspora in countries like the U.S., Canada, Singapore, and U.K., taking the time to answer big donors' questions, coveting their support, and raising funds. Before the December 2013 Delhi election, AAP secured 30 percent of its total funds from Indian passport holders living abroad (Nagarajan and Thaku 2014).

considering the ubiquity of mobile phones compared to Internet users. The strategy and commitment to maintaining Facebook and Twitter pages that have thousands of followers is substantial work.

I met a collective of young AAP volunteers at IIT Delhi, all of them young men, each contributing to just one Twitter profile. They were first and second-year students working on the Twitter account of a final-year student—himself too busy with exams and finding a job—that had amassed a large following in recent years. With the team of four behind one profile, they told me they averaged over 100 new followers a week, in some weeks during the campaign they brought on over 300 followers a week. They were directly competing with a BJP collective, also university students. The nominal leader of the group was Anuj, a portly 19-year-old from Jaipur. He identifies as part of the "emerging middle-class" and learned about AAP through friends on social media. "In Jaipur there is no AAP, at least at the time. So I was learning from schoolmates about the movement." He liked that AAP was led by "technically skilled professionals from civil society…outside of typical political circles."

The strategy of multiple people working on one account is a way to consolidate activity and exposure to one following. The tactic is proficient at snowballing followers and gaining new supporters. If four Twitter users were putting out content to 100 followers (many of which would overlap) that would net much fewer views than one prominent user sending out continuous well-crafted content to 400 unique followers. With Twitter, there are additional strategies like including hashtags in your tweet that are commonly trending and popular (e.g. #LokSabha, #BJP, #DelhiGangRape). Another tactic is to mention someone with many followers in a tweet (e.g. @arvindkejriwal, @timesofindia @narendramodi). The more output

of content the greater opportunity to gain followers. I found that this practice takes a significant commitment, these students scoured the Internet for the latest article, cartoon, or op-ed to be as current as possible and if there were no good fodder for their cause that day, they would produce original content. They would post something hourly, as the news was breaking, sometimes they were breaking the news, sometimes setting or moving the agenda. Anuj explains, "we've had times where we post something in the morning and then we see Goswami [popular news anchor] talking about it at nine o'clock [on broadcast news]."

However, there is less scrutiny on what Anuj and his friends produce than the mainstream media. Often, I found the 'news' Anuj and friends were spreading was not news at all, they were fabrications, made up by the young men or they were greatly exaggerating and stretching truths about topics like Modi's marriage or violence by BJP supporters. I asked Anuj if he really believed some of these stories they were putting out to their followers, Anuj admitted they had taken "some creative liberties", but he explained, the content was based on true events. He did admit that some of the news items he put out were later found to be not true, however his Twitter account did not provide a correction or update. Anuj justified these actions largely by noting that his counterparts working for BJP were "spreading lies and propaganda" at a much faster rate than his team. He also hinted that the sensational stories that stretched the truth were more widely shared and led to more followers.

A key component, beyond the flow of content and "crafting" the message, was announcing events and ushering users to offline events. Anuj contends, "if someone is on the fence about AAP, if they go to a rally, listen to party leaders speak, they will be supporters very quickly." Just as the student campaigners know the offline experience at an AAP rally will be profound and appealing, AAP leadership understands that the

online activities are going to keep supporters engaged and informed. At rallies, people are reminded to follow Kejriwal and the party and they in return prop up young supporters' profiles by acknowledging the work of these online volunteers. "Our username has been mentioned by party leaders and every time we have an uptick in followers. We put out content and direct people to campaign [events] and this is how you build it all up, this is the cycle", Anuj explained.

These findings are indicative of Doron and Jeffrey's (2013) research on the 2007 Uttar Pradesh political campaign. The Bahujan Samaj Party's (BSP) campaign in 2007 was largely affected by a conscious systematic mobile phone campaign. Instead of traveling to distant villages to speak with Dalits, the booth captains called thousands of people from their flats in Lucknow and Ghaziabad, talking with distant sympathizers that could spread the message to their neighbors. Additionally, Dalit BSP activists used mobile connectivity to document interference in voting. Activists documented vote-rigging and other abuses of power through the camera and video utilities on their mobiles (Doron and Jeffrey 2013). BSP won a majority in 2007. By the 2012 elections, the political parties understood this strategy in UP and all the major parties engaged in collated mobile phone strategies. The 2012 election had the highest turnout in state history. The experience in Uttar Pradesh and similar nascent strategies in other regions was the harbinger to the 2013 and 2014 election experiences.

4.5 Conclusion

The Internet as "networked, additive, interactive and polycentric" accommodates "radically different types of political praxis from different places at different times, offering a new type of political engagement" (Fenton 2008: 37). This is the latest

development in new media, just as the newspaper, radio, and television altered the landscape of information and mobilization (Anderson 1997). However, the Internet is different than previous iterations because in particular locations, the Internet can be more democratic; many people have added their voice and can broadcast their views to the world. Today's social media users report the news faster than mainstream outlets, moderate political debates, help find shipwrecks from their mobiles, secure loans to artisans in developing nations, and online activists can build impactful campaigns (Jones and Wayland 2013: 1). The challenge for activists will be to increase access to the Internet and to keep the net neutral, outside of the control of traditional power brokers. Social media has amplified the voice of people living under restrictive expression laws (Jones and Wayland 2013; Mukherjee 2010). It has also amplified the voices of people that can be persuasive in spreading their agenda whilst not being held accountable for the accuracy of their reporting.

Feature phones and smartphones are transformative technologies that allow young people the autonomy to engage with flexible forms of media. However, Doron and Jeffrey (2013) argue that despite the increased autonomy mobile phones socialize people into global consumer modernity and state legibility. Online interventions are also compliant to data contracts, provider regulations, surveillance, and depersonalized interactions. That is not to suggest a technologically deterministic view, but to remind researchers to recognize the limitations of Internet access and continue to observe simultaneous developments in offline activism and personal networks. As Internet accessibility grows it will be most crucial to recognize the last bastions of social exclusion as a result of privileged access to ICTs (Hunt 2015; Rao 2012; Sreekumar 2007).

There is a formidable counter argument to the perceived positive returns from

the development of this low-risk and low-cost technology-mediated activism and the direction this new participation is taking activism in general. Does online activism actually foster social change or does it function as a quasi-action within a 'radical ghetto' (Fenton 2008: 238)? Sensitivity to everyday politics and the improvisation around issues of conflict, education, hierarchy, and power by youth actors can still be a powerful guide for understanding agency and cultures of resistance in the new information age. The next chapter will test the boundaries of activism with young people working with hybrid strategies and ICT tools to create social enterprises.

The combination of analog and digital activism was flexible to the objectives of young middle-class activist. I observed these strategies being implemented at the local level (Rajesh and Shashank), with transnational solidarity movements (Deeksha and Miti), as well as municipal, regional, and the national level with political campaigning (Anuj). If minimally these new online repertoires are purely a "difference-of-degree" (Karpf 2010), this is still a significant development. As a stand-alone subset of activism, online activism serves as an amplifier (Rao 2012; Postmes and Brunsting 2002), but in combination and coordination with offline action I argue that this practice (hybrid activism) furthers the utility and effectiveness of that activism or collective action.

5. Enterprising Youth

5.1 Introduction

In February of 2014, a young informant named Sanjay and I walked over to a group of auto-rickshaws off of the pedestrian overpass near the main bazaar in Paharganj. We were drawn to a colorful electric rickshaw, we were traveling a short distance and e-rickshaws tend to be a cheaper option than the green and yellow CNG-fueled auto-rickshaws. Sanjay began negotiating a price for us. "Too high, no, no…too high." The negotiations continued. Curious, I asked Sanjay how much the driver was asking. The driver, no older than 17 turned up the music in the rickshaw and looked at me. He started to pull items out of compartments in the rickshaw. The rickshaw was adorned with pinwheels, Bollywood stickers, assorted designs, and painted in vibrant colors. "He says this is more than a rickshaw, his friend (sitting in one of the seats) will give you a massage, you can listen to music, there are breath mints and candies, hair product, lotions and combs."

I was curious, and in the spirit of exploration we paid the premium price (which amounted to nearly double the usual price according to a bemused Sanjay). The experience was unique. The massage was haphazard, we didn't use any of the grooming products but we did get a demonstration. Sanjay spoke with the driver who knew limited Hindi. Something he said amused Sanjay. "He says *yah mera startup hai*" [This is my startup]. This was a business model that the driver and a few other young men had started. He said they were in the process of procuring a second e-rickshaw. We arrived at our destination, there was some confusion over the agreed price but we parted on good terms. As we walked away, I saw a group of young men—familiar with the startup's concept—take their seats in the rickshaw and immediately began to fix their hair and asked the driver for the portable mirror as he

drove on, smiling and turning up the music.

In the previous chapter, I described the ways young people are engaged in activism and advocacy with ICTs. Online social networks support and organize offline actions, as well as serve to bolster continued activities via the Internet. Despite the success of movements and excitement that this hybrid activism has brought, several scholars (Rao 2012; Postmes and Brunsting 2002) conclude that ICTs do not change activism but rather amplify existing abilities and activities of civil society groups. That critique is in some small way shared by those among the young middle-class working to redefine social work with social enterprise. This movement towards "something else, something more" as an informant named Varun describes it; "something that matches our enterprising style" was a shared motivation I discovered in my fieldwork. Several enterprising young middle-class people were engaged in their own hybrid projects, one that combines the drive of activism with the alluring startup culture that is popular with young people in Delhi.

As my electric rickshaw experience shows, startup culture is not only the reserve of the upper classes. Ravinder Kaur (2016) describes how Delhi's poor, in the spirit of *jugād,* are viewed as the ideal neoliberal subjects, a mass of autonomous individuals engaged in frugal enterprise that generate additional value in society. In his 2011 'drive to succeed' speech, Prime Minister David Cameron spoke about how Britain could benefit from some of the 'Delhi drive' (Kaur 2016: 320). He was urging Britain to find its inner energy and to jump start innovation, with all the fire of those in the young and hungry developing world. Poor individuals, like poor nations, are no longer symbols of dejection, but symbols of hope and even the future of neoliberal capital.

For the middle-class, social enterprise represents a new direction with the third

sector. The new direction is more in-tune with innovative mechanisms, market-based approaches and income generation activities that have emerged as an alternative to the so-called "developmental dilemma" that the current financial and social order created (Kummitha 2016: 14; Zeyen at al. 2012). Delhi has emerged as a leader of co-working spaces and startup funding, well surpassing cities like Bengaluru and Mumbai that were 'supposed' to be the startup capitals of India. Instead, the NCR is competing with Bangalore as the leader in startup funding (Razavi 2015).[19] A young social entrepreneur named Varun explains, "there is a growing ecosystem around startups in Delhi and there has always been a strong activist spirit in this city…those cultures have collided and some youth don't see any reason to separate them."

Scholars are far from reaching a consensus as to what social entrepreneurship actually means and determining the distance between activist, social entrepreneur, and regular entrepreneur (Cho 2006; Nicholls 2010; Dey 2014). Martin and Osberg (2007) argue the difference starts with the nature of the actor's action orientation. Governments, NGOs, activists, etc., attempt to create change through indirect action, by influencing others. Alternatively, "the social entrepreneur makes change through direct action" (37). Social entrepreneurs create ventures to advance the changes they seek. Martin and Osberg (2007) argue, to call a social activist a social entrepreneur "wouldn't be a tragedy" (38). Cho (2006) is more cautious arguing that social entrepreneurship is "a very promising avenue for effecting social change. But the very efficiency that is its hallmark is also a critical cause for concern" (54). The issue for Cho is who is attempting to create social change and why?

In this chapter, I will present four case studies of young social entrepreneurs with a focus on the actual practices of self-formation through these enterprises (Dey

[19] *See also*: https://blog.tracxn.com/2016/06/24/delhi-ncr-bangalore-mumbai-pune-and-hyderabad-are-indias-top-5-startup-cities-for-2016/

2014) and highlight the kind of politics that emerges from such enterprises. These case studies are representative of a small but growing community of social entrepreneurs from Delhi's young middle-class; covering the wide spectrum of enterprises youth consider a social good. I focus on the formation process rather than the results.

I highlight organizations run by middle-class youth that are engaged in social entrepreneurship as a way to avoid starting careers at the bottom of staunchly hierarchal systems in the private sector and civil society—as well as bypassing the "archaic" [Varun's label] work of social activism. They understand what opportunities await them after university and they are choosing to set out on their own or with a group of friends. I discuss how young social entrepreneurs are acting as a bridge between civil society, social activism, and private business practices. These social enterprises, started and managed by the young middle-class, emerge as agencies of neoliberal expediency, assuming responsibilities—and authority—once assumed by other formal institutions, the state, and social actors. In their adaptation to market realities, scholars have argued, youth are (consciously and unconsciously) reinforcing neoliberal ideologies (Hogg and Baines 2011; Eikenberry 2009; Edwards 2008; Carmel and Harlock 2008).

In the penultimate section, I demonstrate young people's navigation of social issues through creative manipulation of resources and improvisation. This resourcefulness reveals that young people amidst globalization and neoliberal change are not just passive consumers, but frequently act as enterprising tacticians (Gooptu 2013; Jeffrey 2010; Klenk 2010; Dyson 2014). These projects give the young entrepreneurs a sense of agency in their own work trajectories and desired livelihoods. However, I will also discuss limitations to these startups, the action they are creating,

and examine the progress made towards fulfilling their goals and mission statements. To conclude, I'll summarize the key points made and discuss constructive lines of inquiry that lead into the next chapter.

5.2 New tacticians

In Chapter Two I discussed how the art of making-do, again what de Certeau calls 'bricolage', is a process that often implies cooperation as much as competition (1984: xvi). The strategy and culture that has been advanced by elites for the last few decades are those that support neoliberalism. Therefore, increasingly the tactics of the young middle-class take a neoliberal form—espousing profit-making in the free-market, eschewing public sector strategies, working to scale-up operations, the heavy use of technology, and appropriating the methods of startup businesses, in an effort to reflect the future society/change being sought and alter their own work trajectories. Producing culture and utilizing tactics that reflect and appropriate strategies used in enterprise, toward active citizenship, is noteworthy and what distinguishes the group of respondents profiled in this chapter from other social actors that blatantly resist or merely reproduce/recreate longstanding tactics of activists.

A new trajectory

In a small flat in Sant Nagar, East of Kailash, a short way from the corporate offices clustered around Nehru Place, I sit across from Aditya. The former consultant mulls a question of mine. I've asked Aditya how he would explain to fellow IIT alumni his recent transformation from high-priced management consultant to social sector work. "I know I could tell them that I didn't do this because I felt the need to help others. I did this to help myself, to understand myself better." Aditya is unhesitatingly direct.

"I can't tell them that this is not a crisis that will eventually fade. That would betray the whole concept of exploration, and a journey. If I didn't believe in either of those notions, I wouldn't be here." Aditya explains that throughout his life people have been telling him what he should be and how he should progress. However, at every stage, he learned that the aspirations he strived for did not belong to him. So, he made a dramatic change. "For the first time in a long time…I don't know where this path will take me, what my trajectory is."

For educated youth in India, the expectation is often that if you have been lucky enough to receive a quality education that you will adhere to a career trajectory that is gainful and respectable (usually in the eyes of middle-class parents). These filial expectations and dominant constructions of the transition to adulthood are installed and instilled at an early age (Kapur 2013; Baviskar and Ray 2011; Varma 2007). Aditya learned that his early intellectual promise would be quickly harnessed in a competitive middle-class culture. Aditya was born in Punjab in a town called Naba where he spent the first ten years of his life. "I was unfortunately extremely talented academically. In the Indian context academic talent is aligning, very quickly recognized, channelized, and very quickly converted into money value." Singh and Doherty (2008) observe the anxieties of today's middle-class parents to "prudentially" engineer "through strategies of choice" the reproduction of "class advantages in the face of risky global markets that make such status less secure" (119).

Aditya intended to be a cricketer, but he was better at mathematics. The trajectory developed for him, once his intelligence was registered, brought him to IIT Delhi. Engineering was not his favorite subject, but it was determined to be "best" for his trajectory. He pushed through and started a career in management consulting. Fresh out of IIT he was making good money at a Mumbai office. "I was suffocating, I

could not look in the mirror, it was easy to get lost in the money, Bombay, etc. There are so many instincts to fight, expectations, security…success." Aditya was fulfilling someone else's goals and subsequently began to feel he was living someone else's life. "I was trying to quit for 18 months of the 24 months on the job." Finally, a couple days after he received a promotion he quit.

Aditya packed some clothes and books into a backpack and went off to travel. He was abroad when the December 16th gang rape murder took place, "it was the sort of thing that made me feel the distance." The news of the gang rape and learning about these issues "connected a lot of threads" for Aditya, including things he saw wrong with Indian society and in himself. For Aditya, it was a triggering event. "I was surprised how much of an effect it had on me." He abruptly quit a job he had taken in Africa and returned to Delhi to start a new venture. Aditya notes that this was a turbulent time in his life but "incredibly necessary."



Figure 8: Aditya presenting the Pukar App to local police (2013). Photo by P*f*P Facebook

Aditya, in his mid-twenties, started an organization called Parity for People (P*f*P). P*f*P strives to promote equality for all genders through intensive stakeholder engagement. It is primarily a volunteer-driven organization that works to challenge the problem of gender-based violence (GBV) first in their own lives and then take their understanding to solve the problem in their communities. Aditya aimed to make P*f*P different and relevant. One of the first initiatives was to do something that would have an immediate impact. "I wanted to do something more. A lot of the social

work…goes in circles. It never progresses, it does not produce something, something that can be of use." His first idea was to develop a new pepper spray that women could use to fend off attackers. But little gender-based violence occurs in the manner where pepper spray is effective. Instead, Aditya used his engineering skills to develop Pukar, marketed as India's first safety mobile app that works directly with local police (*Figure 8*). The app can be used for emergency situations because it sends out the location to local police and a coded SMS is sent to five pre-selected contacts. The app is especially useful for women in situations of eve teasing, stalking, molestation, and domestic violence because of its furtive features: the phone goes into silent mode once the SOS button is pressed, the display brightness is reduced, and coordinated GPS tracking begins.

On arrival to Delhi, Aditya asserts that one of the most significant achievements he had was to confront and convince his family to let him live in his own flat, separately from his parents. It was important for Aditya to have that freedom that was foreign from convention. He strived to apply that to his new organization. Aditya stresses P*f*P would have been a failure if it became a space for people already sensitive to the issues: "activism is often an echo chamber, we needed to be different." One of Aditya's aims was to constantly be talking with people that are opposite of him, the people that make him "feel uncomfortable, betrayed, and judged." Aditya wanted to develop an understanding of gender beyond women and men, and violence beyond rape and harassment:

> I try and constantly empathize and connect with people, with who I was, figure out what would've brought me to a place like this. I've positioned this as a social change organization just to say were not supporting the less privileged, disabled, or old—ours is different because I work with people that are facing the same issues as me. There are no power positions here.

Aditya is unsure where this new trajectory leads: “Is this a quarter-life crisis? Do people question my authenticity? Yes, I face that fairly often.” Aditya says he understands that cynicism and doesn’t blame people for questioning his motives. “To be honest I’m not sure that this will be forever. I don’t have that sense of clarity about myself. “

Aditya says he always wanted to do work that created a social value but the strategies of activists and non-profits never appealed to him. In his consultancy work he found that people that work for banks and consulting firms are often hardworking and smart. Aditya insists finding a way to incentivize even monetize these social pursuits, making them as financially rewarding as finance or business consulting, is one way to attract better people, something Aditya would like to do with P*f*P. “There is no bridge that brings them here [to the social sector] in a sustainable fashion, it brings them here for a day, it doesn’t bring them here on a do-or-die attitude.” Aditya stresses that the culture of the social sector doesn’t bring the “I will do this at any cost” attitude out of young people that got them to IIT, to the firm, and to the third promotion. “I would like a lot of that to come here, to harness that energy and skill level. I would like those people to come to this sector and feel real joy, the joy of impacting people’s lives.”

I visited several social enterprises in Delhi to learn from their experiences. With the exception of Aditya’s foundation (that operates largely from his own savings) the enterprises have commercial interests, were started a few years ago, are operated by people in their twenties, and have mission statements with a distinctly social bent. These social enterprises, which rely heavily on ICTs, have made an impact in a short period. This work in many ways resembles the bridge Aditya spoke of, bringing enterprising young people into the social sector. This is the emergent

study of 'doing charity *by* doing trade' rather than 'doing charity *whilst* doing trade'—often described in management studies as social entrepreneurship (Zeyen et al. 2013).

A new medium

Anshul grew up in an upper-middle-class setting in Noida, a city with the highest per capita income in the NCR; he attended the prestigious preparatory school Maharaja Agrasen College and continued his studies at the University of Delhi. Anshul is fluent in English and has a proven aptitude for quickly learning new concepts. Many with his trajectory find well paying jobs in the private sector or with the government. Instead, Anshul worked full-time on his blog venture in college. Anshul felt there was a serious lacuna for young people and their views in mainstream media. "We don't have enough stake in issues, we cannot speak up, and cannot relate to the decision makers, this led me to start youthkiawaaz.blogspot.com" —the forerunner of Youth Ki Awaaz (YKA hereafter). He says he had little time to enjoy university because he was building YKA. He had to learn ways to make it fresh, independent, impactful, and profitable. There were a lot of critics and skepticism among his friends. "I ignored the pessimists who would push me towards the convention." Anshul grew his circle of contacts, young people, who understood the depth of issues and wanted to contribute their ideas to his idea of a social media platform for youth:

> I was in love with an idea. I wanted to live a life creating new, better and more social tools to make it easier for people to speak up against violations, against problems, for solutions and togetherness. I realized that my life's passion lay in this and not in the convention. My short stints at Indian Express and Wall Street Journal India reinforced this belief. I knew that it was nothing but only entrepreneurship, and Youth Ki Awaaz in specific that I could do. It was more than work. It was a way of life.[20]

[20] "Youth Ki Awaaz's 5 Years: Why I Never Took Up A Job, And Why It Made All The Difference – A Note From Our Founder" <http://www.youthkiawaaz.com/2013/03/note-from-anshul/>

YKA's headquarters are in the South Delhi neighborhood of Gautam Nagar, there are no espresso machines or interns with headsets running around (YKA's interns work from their homes), absent is the kind of scene one might find in a media startup space in California. I'd come to expect (and appreciate) the unimpressive spaces young people manage to do significant work out of. The flat was bare with two prop-up tables and three young men behind laptops. The young men were Akhil, Anshul, and Dhruv (they also have women on the core team but they were out of the office on my visits). Before we could talk they needed to finish a few things. After a few minutes of feverish typing, Anshul turned to me: "Like I said in my message, I'm not sure what you want me to say, I'm not sure I'm the activist type you're looking for." I tell him it is no problem and continue to ask questions. I would be remiss to leave Delhi without speaking to him. Throughout my stay, and in conversations with young activists, YKA was frequently mentioned as a source of alternative media. Some youth I met had written for the website, others followed it closely or told me to read an article on the site to get a better perspective.

In Delhi YKA was on the tip of many young activists' tongues. Young people were developing mistrust for the Indian media. For good reason too: *Reporters without Borders* (2014) ranked India media 140th of 180 countries in press freedom. Putting India in the "difficult situation" category behind Chad and Libya (2014: 29-31). The core team at YKA believes social media is necessarily disruptive. Social media and mainstream media are not parallel entities; rather they have a tangential relationship. Anshul feels his team is providing youth with the type of platform that not only fits their needs and strengths the best, but also puts the youth in the lead, pushing the mainstream media agenda and activist coverage of recent years:

> I'm optimistic about my generation. People came out organically [in recent protests] and it's going to happen more. The movements of previous

> generations were not community driven. Now they are resolving issues their selves, it's still a minority of the youth, but it is notable. In 2009 there was no talk of youth and social media. In 2014, social media and youth are huge. That shift says a lot about what is to come. Nobody can own the Internet. Any nine pm news show has a twitter feed and they're getting their info from social media and users. The reporters are interacting with young people online.

I ask Anshul, with neat-coifed hair and preference for thick-framed specs and smart causal wear, about his media company. YKA, he says, is "the mouthpiece of the youth" —those mouths are apparently speaking English, occasionally there is content in Hindi. YKA is a media platform for India's youth to express themselves on issues that are important to them. YKA articles range from serious issues like reporting on a gang rape and the response, to Bollywood news. There are a handful of editors with most the content driven by users (young people) and editorial interns. YKA's growth and impact is impressive. In six years, what started out as Anshul's personal blog has grown to give a voice to over 25,000 young people. A blog that was once read by close friends and family now gets 1.5 million unique readers a month. Anshul has even bigger plans for YKA with mobile platforms and app technology on the horizon.

YKA has excellent usability and a smart design. In my time in Delhi, I came across many blogs run by young activists, often very simple and uninspiring with major glitches and broken links. YKA, which at the surface is a glorified blog, benefits from a simple interface with easy linking to social media. YKA works hard to make sure there are no redundancies in their content. Nothing someone watches on the evening news or can find on the *Times of India* homepage should be on YKA's site. The same event can be covered, but covered from a different point of view, ideally the youth's view. YKA is a commercial platform. At the time of my fieldwork it made money by being a hub for their partners (clients), usually NGOs and NPOs—enabling them to gain access to large youth audience with active community and social antennas. YKA also consults on content driven campaigns and lends their

expertise on how to make digital media go viral. YKA is very careful whom they partner with: “we only work with organizations we believe in. We don't deal with anything remotely political. We stay away from politics. Only non-profits.”

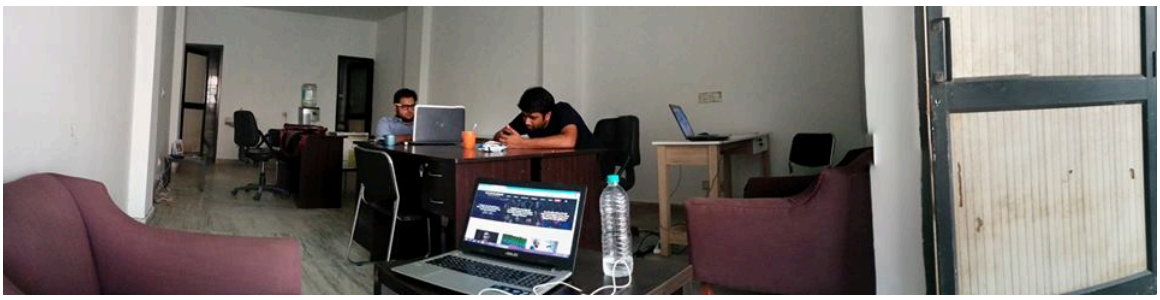


Figure 9: Youth Ki-Awaaz 'Media Hub' (2013). Photo by Anshul Tewari

Anshul claims that issues once brought to the public’s attention via newspapers and television is now coming to young people on new media platforms like YKA that don’t have an agenda. Anshul stresses the access, the inclusiveness of YKA; no one is controlling or producing the direction of the discourse. “Things have changed for a population that was ignored, stereotyped, termed as apathetic and kept on the fringes of decision-making; youth are now at the centre of every dialogue.”[21] I ask Anshul how can he stay relevant with young people in several years when he is no longer a young person. How can he and his core team be the ‘mouthpiece of the youth’ when they have aged out of youth? What happens to YKA then?

> We take a back seat. After a certain age, we won’t be the ones leading Youth Ki Awaaz. That will be the new people that are the right age for the audience that can relate with users. Its extremely important, the generation gaps are getting shorter and shorter, people that are two years younger have completely different views. Five years from now we might think we know everything about young people in India, but, in truth, we won’t.

This thinking is indicative of Gregory Dees’s “idealized” definition of social entrepreneurship. He envisioned social entrepreneurs as change agents adopting a mission to pursue new opportunities that will best serve the mission and, “[e]ngaging

[21] *Ibid.*

in a process of continuous innovation, adaptation, and learning" to best serve their constituencies (Dees 1998: 4). Anshul wants to build a platform that will be waiting for each new youth generation. An organization that Anshul says is "focused more on the growth of young people than the growth of organization." YKA hopes to be a platform that will always be in situ with the youth of India and as a result always a legitimate voice of the youth. Ten years from now Anshul believes the vision of YKA will be the same, the tools and mechanisms will be different but the mission must not waver, "we will keep building tools and technologies that empower the everyday youth and make them a stakeholder in the country's issues."[22]

The status of problems

Similar to Anshul, Prukalpa was months away from graduating when she made the decision to start her own social startup that would allow people to track social parameters important to them. She was staring down offers from big corporations and investment banks. A part of her did not want to let go of university and the time for experimenting. She was lamenting the loss of creativity she associated with a streamlined corporate life as well as the prospect of starting from the bottom at an NGO. She found or rather constructed a third door using the remaining time she had at university as a cost-effective incubator to test her ideas. The result was SocialCops.

Prukalpa and two other co-founders of SocialCops—Harjoben and Varun (both young Indian men)—took the plunge in their final year at Nanking Technological University in Singapore. The founders were interested in the emerging crowd sourced data industry. On a Friday night, almost as an amusing whim, they launched a crowd-funding campaign on Indiegogo along with a Facebook campaign.

[22] *Ibid.*

They benefited from their student status, with room and board paid for they could concentrate on the startup. They were overwhelmed by the initial support. It was enough to decide to go forward with the idea. The next task was to pinpoint the social problems and work on a pilot program for social audits in Singapore. Prukalpa explained, "the question initially was how do we raise money? What is our model? So we entered business competitions."

From the competitions they raised a little capital but the exposure to people with business acumen was priceless for their development. "In business competitions you have 10 minutes where they have to listen to us and that's a really valuable thing…judges are awesome people." They worked on the SocialCops model for eight months; health and education were determined to be the focus of their data. This low-cost improvising and experimental innovation is indicative of what Dees describes as the essential performance social entrepreneurs offer society. Social entrepreneurs engage in, "highly flexible, decentralized innovation, experimentation, and problem-solving" that contributes additional options and tools for society to mitigate current and future social problems (Dees in Zeyen et al. 2013: 4).

One of the problems with the "status of problems" was that there were so few problems in Singapore. Prukapla explained, "everything is kind of already taken care of, there isn't much in the way of community issues, and the government of Singapore is pretty responsive." So they expanded their reach with a particular eye on their homeland of India. "We kept getting reports, mainly out of Delhi, of this movement of young people and community protests around so many different issues. We missed home, we knew we could help." The SocialCops team didn't have a particular affinity to Delhi. But when their first significant client (a department in Delhi's municipality) hired them they had a decision to make. Done with school in Singapore and short on

funds they took another plunge and moved to Delhi. They struggled with poor Wi-Fi infrastructure and less than desirable office space, but they adapted to the quirks of living in Delhi. They discovered Delhi was where the action was, not in a young startup sense, but in a city full of socially conscious, dissatisfied youth, and no shortage of problems.



Figure 10: Social Cops office in Delhi (2014). Photos by Vikas Plakkot

In April 2014, I visited SocialCops' global headquarters in the basement of a residential flat in the Malviya Nagar locality of South Delhi. There are three continuous rooms with little more than computers and foam bullets that litter the floor, I'm told they have "intense NERF blaster battles…for inspiration." I made sure to avoid the walls, still wet with paint, and attempt to sit on a beanbag, hold a recorder, and write notes. Prukalpa managed her beanbag fine. Immediately, the caveat I had come to expect from young people at social enterprises arrived. Prukalpa asserts, "first, I want to have full disclosure. I'm not an activist." I ask her why she is so quick to distance her work from that of an activist, even those that receive salaries or stipends:

> We like to call ourselves social entrepreneurs. Maybe it's because I'm a woman but…I want to add to the growing number of female entrepreneurs. There are plenty of female activists for young girls to emulate in India. There are less female entrepreneurs and social entrepreneurs. It still seems like a male dominated title, even though anyone can do it. The hardest part for girls is deciding to take that leap.

The leap

That leap is something Prukalpa talks and writes a great deal about. She notes often that as a young female from a middle-class family there is an extra layer of scruple to push through. Entrepreneurship is gendered because it is influenced by spatial-institutional contexts that are gendered and may direct women into specific industries or disciplines, as well as restrict their access to credit and resources (Welter et al. 2014). Additionally, social contexts such as institutions, networks, family and household embeddedness are markedly different for women entrepreneurs (Aldrich and Cliff 2003).

Responding to these realities, Belliappa's (2013) work appraises Giddens' 'reflexive modernity'; a concept describing processes of individualization through reevaluation and flexibility (Beck et al. 1994). Belliappa believes Giddens does not accurately describe how individuals manage or appropriate those processes in reality. Belliappa's research describes how working women in India often preserve the fragile equilibrium of conventional household order and career autonomy outside the home. Belliappa defines this careful negotiation and maintenance of the self in relation to others (e.g., mothers-in-law, male colleagues, etc.) as 'relational reflexivity' (2013: 88). The feminist perspective provides a powerful critique of reflexivity theory's assumption that tradition involves collective obligations and individualism is the axiom of modernity.

The IT sector is celebrated as providing women with more career opportunities, but there is still a dichotomy in the functions and roles men and women play within the sector, women are typically in less essential roles. This vulnerable at-will position puts additional stress on women that already struggle with how to balance work with family/domestic obligations. Vijayakumar (2013) asserts that women in the formal Indian workforce must draw on both individualistic and

domestically embedded articulations of the future in a process he terms 'flexible aspirations':

> In articulating flexible aspirations, they draw both on the gendered language of neoliberal self-improvement for the global economy and on the nationalist ideal of rural middle-class feminine domesticity. While insisting that the future is uncertain, young women use flexible aspirations as a symbolic resource to distinguish themselves from both old-fashioned village housewives and promiscuous urban call center girls (777).

Entrepreneurship is similarly complicated and contradictory for women. There is a wealth of scholarship on home-based entrepreneurship emerging as a means of female empowerment in India (Ghani et al. 2013; Williams and Gurtoo 2011; Datta and Gailey 2012; Kantor 2003; Mitra 2002). Ghani et al.'s research identifies the persistence of the unorganized sector in India is supported by a rapid increase in the share of "women own[ed] household-based businesses" (957). These enterprises represent a stepping-stone for women who would otherwise have not engaged in free market work (Ghani et al. 2013). The convenience and flexibility to work from the relative safety of home has been cited as an impetus for women to engage in this work (Williams and Gurtoo 2011). However, this empowerment is achieved within—and does little to challenge or resist—the constraints of the existing institutional context.

For Prukalpa, working out of her home would not allow her the freedom to take the ideas for SocialCops to the next level. The co-founders wanted an office space and to build a visible brand that would be a bold new entry onto the startup scene. She wanted to travel to new clients and be the face of SocialCops—building an online presence by engaging with media, social media, writing articles, and giving talks about startups and her journey with entrepreneurship. She negotiated her 'relational reflexivity' carefully by explaining to her parents her 'flexible aspirations'—what she wanted to do, how she would make money, how it would fit in with future plans, her family's plans, and why it would make her happy. On top of the

scrutiny because of her gender, there is the scrutiny within middle-class families around an uncertain and variable trajectory of entrepreneurship. Prukalpa asserts, "there is also little patience" for entrepreneurship—let alone social entrepreneurship. The mixed bag of supporters and detractors from friends and family provided enough impetus for her to go forward with the plan. For women, "flexible articulations of the future are never separate from gendered social dynamics, they may still create some space for maneuver" (Vijayakumar 2013: 794). Prukalpa is continually unfurling space not only for her but perhaps the next generation of women with her work to promote efforts for women to 'take the leap' into social entrepreneurship.

The leap is a key point in Dees's definition of social entrepreneurship: "acting boldly without being limited by resources currently in hand" (1998: 4). Drayton (2002) also refers to the leap, not only for the social entrepreneur but also for convincing society to go along with their plan:

> The job of the pattern-change social entrepreneur is to recognize whenever a part of society is stuck in an inefficient or harmful pattern, to conceive a better and safe alternative, to make that vision realistic and then a refined reality, and then to persuade his or her entire society to make the leap to this new way (121).

For Varun, 26 years old from South Delhi, taking the leap was difficult enough, but he also needed to convince friends to come with him. He pulled friends out of good salaried careers to chase his goal. I first met Varun in October of 2013. He sought to alleviate a problem in healthcare delivery in Delhi, a gap in healthcare that he and four friends saw as an opportunity to fill a need and maybe even make some money. A few years ago Varun finished a Masters in public health administration and landed a good job. He had friends in nursing and physiotherapy jobs. He insists he and his friends were not satisfied with the outlook of their careers. They would make money, but the work did nothing to change the status quo. "Either you go private and you're a

part of something that overcharges and abuses the system or you go to government run, which means low pay and little resources." Varun was already unhappy with this system and then Varun's grandfather broke his hip, which Varun singles out as his triggering point:

> He was taken care of at the hospital, they operated on him, they fixed his hip, but then they released him with vague instructions on rehab. His condition did not improve and he became immobile, which led to other complications and shortly thereafter he died. He died from easily preventable reasons. He did not know what his options were.

Varun says many people in Delhi can't afford post-operation or appointment treatment. "The government hospitals just let patients loose, and people don't want to pay for extra days that are very expensive." At private chains Varun says it is the reverse situation, "they'll keep you there and drain you of money." This is complicated by the fact that often these patients are elderly and not aware of the costs until younger family members are given the bill. Varun and his friends decided to give up their jobs at government clinics and private consultancies to start a physiotherapy home healthcare business. The goal is to franchise the business and have many clinics that will provide the same quality affordable care across the region; something Varun says just doesn't exist today. "It will be the McDonald's of home healthcare."

Varun's plan was to make money not on high rates but on volume. By opening many clinics and operating with a small margin of profit, he could keep prices low. "There is nothing like owning your own company but to put in our collective expertise and make a difference, bring affordable care to our community is rewarding work. But it hasn't been easy." Varun says in the last four years of building the business they have had to deal with many adversities that ultimately strengthened their resolve. "It's a cliché, what doesn't kill you makes you stronger! But it's true.

Our future is brighter now because of mistakes we've made." Varun says he and his friends have exhausted their social networks trying to build their home health-care network. "My family was not supportive of this idea at first. But after they saw how hard I was working towards this they were on board. Without friends and family's backing, we would not have made it this far."

As in Varun's case, I found that many social entrepreneurs relied on friends and family—their social networks, to get a start. I met over a dozen social entrepreneurs, all in their twenties or late teens. I met them through one another—there is a small network of social entrepreneurs in Delhi. I found that social entrepreneurs are often the nodal bridge between civil society and private enterprise, but they are also the social bridge between the two sectors. I would meet a young person that worked at a MNC that mentioned a social entrepreneur I should speak with that was doing interesting work. The entrepreneur would connect me with a civil society organization that they work closely with. The process would work just as well vice versa.

5.3 Neoliberal expediency

In my conversations with social entrepreneurs and young activists the rhetoric of social change and maximizing social value was repeated many times. In principle, social entrepreneurs, instead of pursuing "self-interest and profit-maximization," start organizations that work to solve societal problems (Santos 2012). This notion contradicts the traditional behavior of self-maximizing economic agents. I found, risk taking and self-interest was not antithetical from social entrepreneurship. In fact, risk taking, self-optimization, and self-interest was largely the impetus behind these social enterprises for the informants. They wanted to see what they could achieve in both the

business/startup world and in the social sector. The issues they work to mitigate were found or discovered rather than an acute experience or pressing down on them—although activist events taking place in Delhi were said to be a stimulus. The feeling among respondents in and around social entrepreneurs was that in order to be successful an individual has to have a special set of skills and abilities. Varun explains, "anyone can be an entrepreneur, many people have this quality, but that does not mean they have what it takes." Varun says in order to be successful an entrepreneur must be a leader, they must be the type that is "never satisfied." Davis (2002) also believes a social entrepreneur must be someone with special traits:

> [S]omeone who, in the core of her/his personality, absolutely must change an important pattern across his/her whole society. Exceedingly few people have this driving motivation…it's only the entrepreneur who literally cannot stop until he or she has changed the whole society…social entrepreneurship extends the definition of entrepreneurship by its emphasis on ethical integrity and maximizing social value rather than private value or profit (7).

However, many scholars are not convinced of these special traits or distinctions. They are skeptical of this interpretation. In their adaptation to market realities, scholars have argued, youth are consciously and unconsciously reinforcing neoliberalization as the prevailing economic doctrine. This has the danger of diluting activism and actions that have the goal of attracting profit rather than putting people and problems first. If self-optimization is determined by making the most money and succeeding through the lens of middle-class society, the informants in the chapter had varying degrees of success with their endeavors, but all gave up easier routes to making money and upgrading their social status. A key objective for several of the social enterprises was to be self-sustaining; it was not toward a commitment to the service of others but rather developed around the nexus of the needs of society and economic opportunity.

Sociologist Eurig Scandrett views social entrepreneurship as a "euphemism for incorporating activists into the realm of market relations" (2010: 1). Some

scholars view the rise of social entrepreneurship primarily as the work of deterministic pro-growth forces that superintend liberal youth into enterprising and governable subjects (Hogg and Baines 2011; Eikenberry 2009; Edwards 2008; Carmel and Harlock 2008). I talked with founders of social enterprises who relied heavily on the advice and connections of friends at NGOs, state entities, and technology companies. On the surface these appear to be contradictory bedfellows and evidence of the business sector's efforts to mainstream social entrepreneurship, potentially compromising a social startup's mandate (Dart 2004). Scholars assert that these formative connections and early stage consulting influence social entrepreneurs to emulate the values and behaviors of those who support them, even if it is only in the beginning (Nicholls and Young 2008). This view of social entrepreneurship is supported by the fact that these enterprises are engaging in "deeply contingent and controversial" endeavors that "turn the social into a space of competition, individual risk and self-organization" by people, often young and inexperienced, "who until recently were not entrepreneurs" (Dey 2014: 1).

However, this view in part assumes that social entrepreneurship is in lieu of social activism or civic work. Another way to examine this development or to 'denaturalize' social entrepreneurship is to consider the opportunity cost of people that endeavor to work in the social sector but cannot afford to do voluntary work or are compelled by expectations and responsibilities to concentrate on their income potential. For the middle-class youth, consider again, the expectations of parents after financing high-priced private educations. This group is finding ways to accommodate both making money and doing 'good' with social entrepreneurship. Social entrepreneurship, therefore, has the potential to be paradigm shifting and disruptive to both traditional trajectories young people follow in civil society and the private sector.

For some youth, social entrepreneurship is a third door. With 'doing charity *by* doing trade' this blurs the lines further in the debate of civil society and civil organizations effectiveness and ethics. In social entrepreneurship, with the façade of non-profit lifted and the increased entry-points for fiscal abuse that identity allows, there is effectively more transparency with 'doing charity *by* doing trade.' A non-profit organization that relies on philanthropic income to establish their budget and output is based on the largesse of donors, whereas clients and customers maintain a social enterprise. A for-profit social enterprise is accountable to their labour and output, what they produce in goods or services rendered. The young social entrepreneurs I met neither parroted nor rejected neoliberal ideas, they were merely improvising with what skills and resources were available.

Another criticism of social entrepreneurs is that often the work does not push society forward with the compulsion to innovate and make money. Entrepreneurs want to thrive and make as much money whereas social entrepreneurs want to survive and make enough money. Management scholar Jay Barney (1991) argues that social entrepreneurs do not seek to build resources that are "rare, imperfectly imitable, and non-substitutable" but that are valuable, yet common, "transferrable and substitutable."

Prosaic realities

In April of 2014, I followed-up with Varun and the progress he was making with his physiotherapy/home health social enterprise. What I observed was indicative of different scholars' criticism. I arrived at his newly established clinic just after visiting an activist encampment in Jantar Mantar where I was speaking with Ashutosh, a 23-year-old nurse who was on strike along with fellow members of the AIDS Control

Employee Association over wages at government hospitals. He explained a young AIDS control colleague of his had just committed suicide, the man was fed up with the low pay and lack of respect despite the overwhelming need for better resources. I was told that the protest was as much about dignity as about pay. I arrived at the bucolic garden in a RWA where Varun was running therapy sessions across from his new clinic. I asked Varun what a new employee at New Age Physiotherapy makes. It was more than double what Ashutosh and his fellow strikers were asking for. Varun stressed that when they expand to more home care options like diabetes and stroke survivors the new employees with expertise in those areas would be paid more. Varun could not give me a timetable for when those services would start.

Varun had good and bad news to share with me. He and his partners had failed to secure a partnership with any hospital. They were going to try to work outside of the healthcare referral networks. Varun said that the administrators at the hospitals were missing the potential in a partnership and did not want to work with such young people. “Most of all, they were worried somehow that we would be taking future income from them” and in other cases, Varun admitted, hospitals were waiting for more established home care networks to come calling. Varun believed it to be a blessing in disguise because (the good news was) they were making a good profit and were finally registered with the physiotherapy council.

I watched as an elderly couple got out of a Jaguar and Varun rushed to greet them and help them along. The elderly man with a knee brace started with some stretching exercises and the woman went for a walk around the park across the street with one of Varun’s partners. The driver of the Jaguar waited in his car using his mobile. Two elderly men that had just come from a flat across the street joined Varun’s group later inside his clinic. I observed mostly assisted stretching and

conversation. A woman was dropped off by what looked to be her adult son driving and ushered into the clinic by Varun. Most of the physiotherapy equipment—including large colorful balls, pads, mats, etc. went unused. Several times one of Varun's assistants left to go get some tea from a nearby *chaiwala*. The patients were massaged and prodded up and down, a few stretch bands were used, and the man in the knee brace was helped up and down a small staircase. Somehow this scene did not fit the image of Varun bringing affordable home healthcare to those left out by the system. I couldn't help but juxtapose this scene with Ashutosh and his group's struggle.

The evolution of Varun's social enterprise is indicative of Lefebvre's argument that creative moments and unconventional actions eventually "devolve back into the ground or humus of everyday life" (2008: 234). Varun was in his fourth year of trying to make his affordable home health-care enterprise work. He garnered funds from donors, he had tapped into his personal network (garnering seed donations from friends and family in Delhi and America) and brought in good friends that forwent steady employment to support his dream. There was a great deal of pressure, he was getting older and remained unmarried. These pressures undeniably were building up. So in the spring of 2014, when he was finally starting to turn a profit servicing upper-middle-class clients (some from his personal network) it was a small victory. But it was far from his original vision.

This scenario reflects Jeffrey's (2013) findings that social pressures placed upon young people frequently intensify as they age. As a result of this building financial and familial pressure, it is common for youth to move from relatively 'constructive' action towards more narrowly self-interested activity. The high-minded ambitions and aspirations of their early youth often give way to the realities of their

late youth. Kumar's (2012) study of educated low caste young men in north India describes the shift from community-minded 'social reformers' to predatory 'brokers'. Similarly, in Jeffrey and Young's (2014) research in Uttar Pradesh, young men used their relatively privileged social networks and experience as student activists to become entrepreneurs of poor quality and exploitative private higher educational institutions. In their qualitative research from Uttarakhand, Jeffrey and Dyson (2014) describe youth that develop reputations as self-styled 'civic men' only to later exploit their positive reputations to embezzle money from state development projects. The scholarship identifies enterprising young people that justify new forms of cultural production with changing circumstances and the lack of progress towards desired outcomes.

After four years of trying to build something large-scale, socially progressive, and noteworthy, Varun had reached a point where he wanted to celebrate some successes. I asked Varun whether he had accomplished his goal. He answered, "we're definitely on track now, yes, this is the start." His answer was either bravado or gumption; perhaps it's too early to judge. But the tactics employed by Varun show a shift from a noble pursuit to a narrowly self-maximizing venture. Lefebvre writes, "our daily activities are colonized progressively by the imperatives of the expansion and accumulation of capital" (2008: 57). The result (or perhaps more fair—the work in progress) I observed lacked a higher ethic or social value than any other physiotherapy business.

In September 2015, after seven years of a "bootstrapping and crowdsourcing" financing model, YKA announced it had received angel round funding of Rs four crore ($600,000) from Raghav Bahl-led Quintillion Media—a digital content company in India. The same company that funded angel round investment in

Sheroes.in—another social enterprise marketed as an ecosystem for women and their careers and aspirations. In both instances executives at Quntillion have been installed on the social enterprises' boards. In April of 2016, Bloomberg Media announced the formation of BloombergQuint, a new partnership in India with Quintillion to create a multiplatform Indian business and financial news company.

With success and more users, YKA became appealing to mainstream media. How much of the autonomy and freedom is Anshul giving up to scale up his blog venture? Will Anshul still step away from YKA when he is no longer part of the youth, or will his new board ask him to stay? YKA has generated revenues since 2012. The model is not driven by advertisements, instead, YKA connects with high "impact organizations" such as UNICEF India and Save The Children that run sponsored content series about issues important to the NGOs. This model lends credence to scholars' critiques (Hogg and Baines 2011; Dart 2004), how much will the NGOs and now financial backers of YKA drive or influence the "community of contributors" stories and determine what is newsworthy. As Nicholls and Young (2008) argue it will be hard for the young entrepreneurs, no longer completely independent, to avoid emulating the values and behaviors of their new backers.

5.4 Creating value

Apologists of social entrepreneurship argue that the direct action of social entrepreneurship is antithetical to the indirect action or mere influence of activism and civil society (Santos 2012; Dees 2001). This criticism of activism and civil society by scholars and some of the young entrepreneurs I encountered is reductive. Similar to the collaborative relationship between online and offline activism in the last chapter, social entrepreneurship works to address specific problems, but it must be seen as a

complement to, rather than a substitute for, processes of activism and good governance. Cho (2006) argues that social entrepreneurs "should approach the public sector as a potential partner rather than a competitor in the delivery of key services" (54). In this regard, the report from Delhi is mostly positive. The state and public are integral in the capabilities of these social enterprises I observed. The public plays critical roles as the "human sensors" of Social Cops and "contributors" to YKA. Without the role that the state and civil society plays—as client or facilitator—the social enterprises' profiled in this chapter simply would not function; they would not exist. Cho writes, "[i]f social entrepreneurs are truly committed to the advancement of broader social objectives, they cannot afford to isolate themselves from other key actors" (2006: 54).

To date, SocialCops has been involved with citizen crowd-sourced initiatives that have reported on a variety of concerns: garbage collection irregularities, teacher attendance in government schools, the maintenance of community toilets, tracking patient misconceptions regarding cervical cancer, and implementation of the mid-day meal schemes. The revenue stream is from the data output consulting for clients that need "actionable" crowd-sourced data (what they call "pulses"—evidence that they are developing their own unique startup nomenclature) that is presented well. The clients are state entities at different levels and civil society organizations. In many ways SocialCops has found a niche to charge for information that the state and NGOs don't have to employ people to do. The manpower of these young social enterprises has replaced the need for excess bureaucrats and technocrats. Additionally, Aditya and Varun's enterprises required the cooperation of the state to move forward with their goals. Aditya's mobile app alerts local police to act, without the intervention and partnership of the state the app would be useless. Varun was never able to secure

contracts with government hospitals, in part because he was not willing to cooperate with norms and regulations. This prevented his social enterprise's ability to scale-up and attract funders. SocialCops says it leverages technology and citizen engagement to create a positive impact on the communities it serves, while building a business around it. When I pressed Prukalpa on what ways SocialCops brings social value or change from what governments provide, her response was tepid: "You're not changing mindsets, you're changing how to allocate and alter resources with that data." The value might be to the state that can outsource its own erstwhile tasks. There is value in what SocialCops does when we view their action as a complement to community activism and governance; they are filling the space left by an inattentive state. In situations where governance is weak or failing, social enterprises like SocialCops mobilize to improve and rehabilitate the capacity of the public sector.

Improvising solutions

The young entrepreneurs in this chapter observed problems and sought solutions applying the tactics and skills they know best, cognitive of how their maneuvering will fit in practice. There is an important distinction between practices and what happens 'in practice'. For instance, as Aditya listened and learned more about gender-based violence he found a better way to serve the community, a safety app—a tool—that was apt for actual situations women confront. These social entrepreneurs maneuver with little resources, like card players that play the same "hand" differently according to their skill and the feel for the game; these actors are artful interpreters of practices (Bourdieu 1990: 148). On the surface, what SocialCops does: gathers, analyzes, and creates executive summaries of data for clients, is nothing remarkable. But the manner in which they do it by maintaining a culture of "making a better world

through data," has set them apart. The optics or branding of being "social" has most likely helped business. This maneuvering and improvisation does not always work. In Varun's case, he may have overplayed his hand and will need to apply his skills in an entirely different way going forward.

For SocialCops, their feel for the game is strong; they have found a way to leverage both clients and consumers. SocialCops works with municipal and state agencies as clients but also commits to keeping agencies accountable with 'human sensors' continually reporting on service delivery and maintenance failures—contributing to SocialCops' valuable depository of data. They act as unconstrained and reflexive creative agents, consumers producing culture, with the dexterity to resist the mindless reproduction of the initial conditions (Giddens 1991). In their stratagems, "there is a certain art of placing one's blows, a pleasure in getting around the rules of a constraining space. We see the tactical and joyful dexterity…of a technique" (de Certeau 1984: 18). YKA is taking on mainstream media by ensuring their content is fixed to the perennial constituency of youth, whilst becoming part of a media empire. De Certeau describes how ordinary people have "innumerable ways of playing and foiling the other's game…there is a skill that has its connoisseurs and its esthetics exercised in any labyrinth of powers" (1984: 18).

The case studies represent young people's ability to navigate social issues and structural barriers with creative improvisation of the resources available to them. This resourcefulness shows that young people amidst neoliberal change are not passive consumers, but strategic negotiators and tacticians (Jeffrey 2010; Klenk 2010; Dyson 2014). The young middle-class can take these risks because of the safety nets they assumed and built using Bourdieu's multiple species of capital. But they are nonetheless substantial personal risks made towards mitigating social issues. Schuyler

(1998) defines social entrepreneurs as individuals that have a vision for social change and—importantly—also have the financial resources to support their ideas. The work of the interlocutors in the chapter is markedly distinct from Kaur's (2016) *jugād* social entrepreneurs engaged in frugal enterprise for bootstrapping and sustenance. These are enterprises that work to meet multiple aspirational goals, the dual status of innovative entrepreneur and social innovator.

Gooptu (2013) has identified, new narratives of enterprise "marking an epochal shift…which lies in the creation of the new Indians" that are: "the do-ers, who are endowed with what might be called aspirational capital and imbued with 'passion', 'self-belief', and the 'conviction' that 'no dream is distant'" (3). Gooptu writes that these do-ers, "do not place blame on political systems or infrastructure; instead, they take the responsibility themselves, roll up their sleeves, and plunge into action" (3). The young entrepreneurs demonstrate different forms of agency, less in the form of resistance as the activists in other chapters take, but more of a proactive form of agency, as improvisation and resourcefulness. Many of the young social entrepreneurs I met resemble the 'new Indians' and 'doers' who do not resist prevailing structures and unequal systems but find enterprising ways to maneuver around and through them.

Resourcefulness with new technologies is a key practice in these case studies. They use and adapt the dominant cultural economy towards their own interests (de Certeau 1997 [1974]). The mission of SocialCops and YKA, as well as Aditya's safety app, would not be possible without the application of new tactics that utilize the tools of new media and technology. Social networking has afforded youth the ability to transcend physical and hierarchical space to connect individuals on the Internet in

ways that are "conducive to the formation of both passive actors and active networks" (Zayani 2015: 17).

SocialCops continues to evolve their business model forging new active networks; something Prukalpa says is necessary, to serve the growing needs and concerns of everyday citizens—to avoid getting complacent or stuck. "We don't want to be comfortable, we always want to tinker and find new ways to solve problems." In the early days of SocialCops, the team took a train journey covering 12 cities to understand the problems facing urban India. A recurring theme they found was that people wanted to improve their communities, but their efforts were fragmented and lacked actionable data. "We could see that the most sustainable solution would be one that allowed communities to solve their own problems."

Despite big plans to be a global company, for now, they are very much situated in Delhi, with this generation. Prukalpa acknowledges that she and her co-founders are a product of their times. They relinquished staying in Singapore to chase many unknowns in Delhi. Instead of being convinced to stay away, the youth mobilizations on social issues in Delhi propelled them to take the plunge:

> Things have changed majorly in the last five years. I've never seen so many youth campaigns at once like this. A lot of it is noise, people talking but nothing happens. So our job here at SocialCops is to transfer the talk to actions. In this generation, there are a lot more people quitting their jobs and doing things in social enterprise. It's possible to do what you love, make a real difference here and get paid at the same time. This is not e-commerce there is a lot to be done!

Prukalpa says she sees other young people setting up startups and becoming social entrepreneurs and that gives her great optimism. A community, an incubator of social entrepreneurs could go a long way in bringing much-needed change. One of her passions is to talk with young people to try and convince them to take the leap, to alter their trajectories, and start innovative enterprises that will mitigate social problems in

Delhi. “I really believe that this generation has what it takes, we have the passion to change India for the better.”

5.5 Conclusion

Throughout this thesis, I examine how young people respond to neoliberal discourses, how they resist or reproduce governable notions of individual enterprise and self-responsibility. In this chapter, additionally, I identified young middle-class interlocutors that extend the parameters of social and entrepreneurial work by drawing on tactics of improvisation and holding ‘flexible aspirations’ (Vijayakumar 2013).

The narratives of how and why enterprises were started serves as evidence that these entrepreneurial activities can often transgress the “governable terrain” of neoliberalism through objectives that are laudable (Carmel and Harlock 2008). There are still modes of self-optimization in the young entrepreneurs’ projects, but this drive is not necessarily antithetical to what is good for society, in the same way as some activists seek self-optimization through their activism. Dey (2014) argues, “studies of neoliberal governmentality need to go alongside qualitative inquiries of actual practices of self-formation” (1).

In their pure forms, social entrepreneurship and activism are very different. But in-practice there is a continuum with extremes that range from street activism to business venture. With the emergence and influence of ICTs these lines are becoming blurred. There is plenty of scholarship attempting to distinguish and define these social ventures. But in practice there are more hybrid models than pure forms. Martin and Osberg (2007) use the example of Muhammad Yunus to show the effectiveness of this hybrid model: “By using a sequential hybrid – social entrepreneurship followed by social activism – Yunus turned microcredit into a global force for

change." Social entrepreneurship has the potential to be a source of job creation and social innovation. It also has the potential to exclude marginalized populations and channel social efforts toward profit-making and market influences. The socioeconomic diversity of social enterprises' founders and employees remains entrenched in the socially privileged middle-class. Cho (201X) writes,

> [W]hile [social entrepreneurship] addresses local symptoms of deeper political and institutional malaise – poverty, exclusion, marginalization, environmental degradation – it may also avoid discursively mediated processes that could produce more inclusive and integrative systemic solutions (53).

Social entrepreneurship is another tool, aided greatly with the advancement and utility of ICTs and social networking. Similar to online activism in Chapter Four, on its own social enterprises are capable of solving local issues and amplifying campaigns. However, the best strategy for young entrepreneurs going forward is to view their work as a complement to, rather than a substitute for, processes of improving governance, promoting social justice, and mitigating social problems. This would reflect the way SocialCops works with government departments and non-profit clients, the Pukar mobile app works in conjunction with local police, and YKA operates with non-profit clients.

The young interlocutors in this chapter assumed risks associated with uncertainty on behalf of stakeholders in society, they were innovative, they put financial, social and intellectual capital into an idea in response to a societal problem, and they managed the direction their enterprise would go. Social enterprises are isomorphic with social change; as the context in society changes, what these enterprises produce/provide will transform. This is not a necessity in activism, but in order for these enterprises to remain self-sufficient there has to be creative destruction based on societal needs. There is a space for this new field; young people that are

most adaptive to changes and trends are the ideal founders and stewards of these enterprises.

Similar to activism, there is a politics to social entrepreneurship and the practices of young entrepreneurs. In determining their activities, the people they want to help/improve, the service delivery they're choosing to improve, the clients they accept, and the processes and failures they choose to uncover are all political decisions; decisions that can define the nascent sector. There is a danger of—if not an inevitability—that the line between social enterprises and political advocacy will blur. Moreover, are the clients or collaborators of these enterprises, like the clients of SocialCops and YKA, creating strong political linkages—with or without intention? There is fluidity in political party-social linkages. In many ways, the nature of formal/party politics is changing as much as the world of activism, as a result of similar social and political trends (expanding middle-class, media penetration, ICT, urbanization, etc.). The changing world of activism described in this chapter and Chapter Four is already changing party-society linkages.

In the next chapter, I will discuss young people once involved in activism and civil society work that were compelled to move with mobilizations that entered formal politics. Young educated, urban middle-class people could find ballast in a political party that was comprised of civil society leaders and technocrats. Nevertheless, as the next chapter will convey, conflicts between values and approaches created revealing impasses.

6. Young Aam Aadmi

6.1 Introduction

Under the shadow of *Palika Kendra*, the half-concaved concrete headquarters of the New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC), a nondescript residence stood unconvincingly as the Delhi office of the upstart political party I had heard so much about. I approached 41 Hanuman Road hesitantly, having already been denied entrance to the other political party offices in town. To my surprise, I was greeted warmly, more warmly when I confirmed I was not from the media. I was led to the courtyard in the back and offered tea. I sat down with three young men who were eager to tell me I was right to be researching their party. "Come December, Delhi and all of India will stand up and take notice. The humble *jhaad* [broom – AAP's symbol] is going to sweep out corruption," the most gregarious of the three began with. Their rhetoric was similar to that of other young political party members I had talked with. They used strong endorsements littered with hyperbole followed by a discussion of why the other parties are so bad.

Eventually, two of the men excused themselves for "official business." I was left with Pradeep, the quietest up to then. He leaned towards me with arms folded and eyes locked. He talked with little more than a whisper, as if he had a secret for me: "Gregory, this movement isn't about politics; it's about truth." He exactingly explained this point, then abruptly got up from his seat leaving me alone in the courtyard. He returned with a copy of the book *Swaraj*, written by the party's leader Arvind Kejriwal. It was mine to keep. I asked him why he joined party politics; it did not seem to fit with everything he had just explained. His eyes, under a crimped brow, began searching my own, indicating that I had not understood him fully: "We are activists, fathers, sons, and daughters, we are teachers and doctors…we are not

politicians. We will *never* [his emphasis] be politicians, even, when Kejriwal is Chief Minister." This seemed preposterous to me—not the idea of Kejriwal as the anti-politician, but that he could be leading Delhi in four months time. Could Pradeep, whom I found to be a well-spoken and candid young man, really believe that? Pradeep continued: "This is anti-politics, unlike anything India has ever seen. We're not organized behind a certain group [of people], we are not in front of the people…we are the people."

Several scholars have echoed Pradeep's message conveyed to me that day in the courtyard, asserting that AAP was attempting to build an "anti-establishment" party by deploying the politics of "extraordinariness" and exceptionalism (Roy 2014). Scholars maintain that AAP set out to "reconfigure" the claims of direct democracy (Dutta and Das 2014), moving politics towards a "positive truth" (Guru 2014: 112-113) that would place a moral premium on political agency by "changing politics" instead of "doing politics." AAP, because of its activist roots, became the vanguard of popular social movements emerging in Delhi leading up to the elections. This allowed AAP to recruit and retain supporters from many social groups and to develop without the usual soliciting of identity groups, social glue, or ideological constraints of established political parties. However, as I argue, AAP's catchall constituency made finding a unified way forward difficult. In the process, AAP revealed the "inherent democratic ambiguities" and sustainability pitfalls of anti-establishment party politics (Roy 2014: 46). In order to keep growing, the party's aspirations moved beyond the anti-politics held by the young middle-class informants I spoke with.



Figure 11: 41 Hanuman Road, AAP's Delhi headquarters (2013). Photos by G.R. Ortiz

In this chapter, issues around active citizenship and legitimacy are paramount. They also prove to be contradictory values that, I argue, young AAP supporters had varying degrees of success negotiating in relation to their own principles and respectability. The focus of this chapter will be one strand of activism (political/community activism) and the experiences of young activist balancing attempts to connect individual decisions to broader social and political change. Distinctive from the informants in the previous two chapters, these young activists gave up individual projects to be a part of something bigger. Young AAP volunteers viewed the new political entrant as trying to take active citizenship and grassroots causes out from the margins of civil society and into the power center. [23] The informants in this chapter had mixed views on whether AAP succeeded in that endeavor. As I'll discuss, to give allegiance to a political party is no small undertaking for young people with no experience in formal politics. With that decision, they felt responsible for the party's actions—and inactions.

I will draw on Paul Lucardie's work on new political party typology. In Lucardie's (2000) study, new political party challengers decide whether they will compete with established parties by cleaning up the ideology of an established party

[23] Reflecting the different ways these young people self-identified, the terms activist, campaigner, party worker, supporter, and volunteer will be used interchangeably.

or if they will bring an entirely new ideology to voters. Allan Sikk (2012), who has expanded on Lucardie's typologies, offers a fourth category based on the "project of newness" that may best describe the AAP experience (Roy 2014). AAP shares many characteristics of the "project of newness" typology, but as the scholarship on nascent political parties illustrates, the advantages of "newness" are short-lived. Each young informant saw AAP and the goals of the party in a different light—aligning with different typology.

The crux of this chapter is shaped by interspersed vignettes of five young middle-class AAP supporters, including Pradeep, working in different constituencies with whom I conducted multiple interviews as well as observed and frequently spent time with over the course of eight months, a period encompassing the December 2013 Legislative Assembly elections in Delhi and the Indian general election (to constitute the 16th Lok Sabha) in April-May 2014. In my fieldwork I talked with 78 young middle-class activists, nine identified as actively campaigning for AAP (a much larger number ~39 said they favored or supported AAP). Of these, five cases were selected because each of their experiences offers rich and varying examples that serve to contextualize young people's navigation of political participation and constraints towards active citizenship and respectability. These informants are representative of wider analytical sets among the AAP activists I worked with.

In this chapter, I first discuss the party's activist roots. Next, I examine the development of AAP to illustrate why young activists decided to support the movement. After a review of young AAP supporters' experiences, I describe the decline in support for AAP by my informants prior to the 2014 general election. Lastly, I will conclude with final observations from young informants on the transition to political-party work

6.2 Activist roots

From 2011, a succession of political protests and social movements, populated largely by Delhi's middle-class, were supported by the civil society organization India Against Corruption (IAC), led by RTI activist Arvind Kejriwal. IAC and allied social organizations helped draw people to Delhi's Ramlila Maidan to sit alongside the septuagenarian social activist Kisan Babu Rao "Anna" Hazare. Hazare was holding a hunger fast (*dharna*) demanding the participation of civil society in drafting the Jan Lokpal Bill, legislation that called for the creation of a national ombudsman authority to monitor and punish corrupt government officials (Duta and Das 2014; Guru 2014; Roy 2014). Kejriwal along with other leading activists—most notably former journalist Manish Sisodia, the Supreme Court lawyer Prashant Bhushan, and the political scientist Yogendra Yadav—broke with the movement's champion when they decided to transfer the energy of the movement into the realm of formal politics. Kejriwal stressed his reluctance to break with Hazare, but he described the decision to form a political party as an act of necessary compulsion (*majboori*). At the time, Yadav wrote, "if politics is about shifting the balance of power in a society, then not resorting to politics is not an option" (Choudhury 2015).

Over a period of roughly a year, AAP incrementally amassed large crowds and passionate campaigners to cover the capital. AAP successfully bottled the momentum of Hazare's anti-corruption movement along with other popular movements. The actions got the attention of many people in Delhi who felt disenfranchised by corrupt politicians and an obstinate political system that ignored the rights of the common man (*aam aadmi*). 26-year-old Sneha,[24] a Delhi resident all her life, was a part of the

[24] Some of the names of informants have been altered to protect their identity.

anti-corruption movement from its inception. In 2009, she graduated with a degree in Journalism from Kamala Nehru College, part of Delhi University. The first job she took was with a civil society organization to expose corruption. She was fortunate to sit with Hazare in his first fasts and this inspired her to organize events around civil disobedience. On several occasions she thought she would end up in jail for her protests, including a 2011 protest outside the Parliament Street Police Station to pay tribute to Bhagat Singh, who was jailed there. She describes herself as a strong communicator and from the start she excelled in advocacy work. She was nostalgic speaking with me about the forerunners of AAP:

> In those early days, it was very simple but exciting to me. I was working for an organization called Kabir.[25] I was part of Manish's organization. We made RTI advocacy films, including Kejriwal's YouTube film. We promoted Hazare. Eventually, Kabir got dissolved into PCRF.[26] RTI applications got lost in the bureaucracy, right, so they realized they needed an anti-corruption agency to ensure that the applications did not get thrown out. But how could they get a law made in this country, only politicians had the power to make laws, if you lobby them and they themselves are corrupt, how can you get such a law passed? So they saw the need for a social movement. We didn't know what would come of it, but it was something we saw as our duty to promote if we really wanted change.

Sneha suggests that Hazare, as one of the pioneers of the RTI who played a role in getting the original RTI law passed, was the natural choice for IAC and RTI allies to promote. Hazare was a senior activist, which Sneha asserts, gave him the necessary authority to lead the movement:

> It's not a job for a young person; no one would get behind a young person. There is a cultural bias against us [the youth]; our legitimacy would be in question. Most young people feel that's fair, I don't know how [sic.], it's just the way it is. We can respect one another, but we don't expect respect from seniors. Anna-ji had put in the time; he'd devoted his life to these causes. There was no question of his legitimacy as an activist or as [a galvanizing] figure. Kejriwal gained much by being associated, even if only in the beginning, with Team Anna.

[25] Kabir was a communications non-governmental organization with the mission of increasing the awareness and use of the Right to Information Act across all segments of Indian society.
[26] Public Cause Research Foundation (PCRF)

Hazare became the grandfather figure of the Jan Lokpal crusade. At Jantar Mantar the first movement took off in large part because of guerilla media advocacy. Sneha explained that the first reporting on the agitation in Jantar Mantar was by the Asmita Theatre group. The group's street plays addressed the issues of corruption. Their performances were a form of social activism, developing plays that dealt with relevant contemporary social issues. After their performances, pamphlets were distributed explaining Hazare's fast. A YouTube video, produced by her organization, followed, and people were asked to spread the word about Hazare and Jan Lokpal. Sisodia was a journalist, as were Santosh Kholi and Rakhi Birla, and others like Sneha, young men and women with journalistic capabilities and credentials. The makeup of these early activists contributed greatly to the promotion of Hazare and IAC's cause. Sisodia's contacts as a former journalist helped build advocacy and Sneha asserts that Sisodia called in favors from peers still working in Delhi's media to cover the events.

Initially, the Jan Lokpal crusade was the focus. Sneha says, "Arvind used to say I just have a couple of laws I want for this country and then I will retire, I have no other ambition." There were many different civil society and RTI groups unified behind Hazare in 2011. But by 2012 some camps were tired of the lack of action. After many demonstrations, hunger strikes, rallies, and social media campaigns, they had not achieved many of their stated goals. In late 2011, the Lok Sabha (lower house of parliament) passed a weak version of the Jan Lokpal Bill but the upper house's (Rajya Sabha) session ended without this bill being passed.

New protests began in Jantar Mantar in 2012. By the end of 2012, Kejriwal and Sisodia were beginning to change their tone. They sought a new strategy. Kejriwal authored the book 'Swaraj.' The short work was a guidebook to what the activist saw as the best future for India. In the book's namesake, the concept of *swaraj*

(Gandhian self-rule), the activists had a vision beyond Jan Lokpal. Sisodia, Sneha explains, thought, “Jan Lokpal is just a painkiller medicine, it only relieves the symptoms, the real cure is *swaraj*.” Kejriwal and others wanted more from the movement they helped build. They solicited Hazare’s blessing to form a political party but could not procure any favor from his camp. Hazare wanted the movement to stay politically neutral saying, "elections require huge funds, which will be tough for activists to organize without compromising on their values" (Bhatt 2012). Despite this, Kejriwal and company acted on the ‘compulsion’ to bring the movement into politics. The party was formally launched in Delhi on November 26, 2012.

Youth appeal

I arrived in Delhi in September 2013 and began asking young middle-class activists what their political persuasions were. I quickly found that AAP was hitting the right cords with their anti-corruption message. The majority of my respondents were not interested in Delhi politics but spoke with admiration for the new political entrant. The middle-class is often skeptical of politics; it is a dirty word, the “dirty river” (Harriss 2005). However, the young people I met seemed largely willing to make an exception for AAP on account of the party’s activist roots and anti-corruption mantra. There was also a feeling among my informants to not let the increase in non-hierarchical and spontaneous activism, opposed to entrenched power, that was building over the two preceding years to go to waste, Pradeep talked about the need to “capture the moment.”

Many young AAP campaigners were coming straight from experiences as social activists, principally RTI and gender rights activists that were more familiar

and comfortable with everyday politics [q.v Chapter Two.],[27] community activism, or social work—not in the western sense—but in the characteristically Indian way.[28] These youth were used to engaging in local activism, addressing things like broken sewer lines, ration forms, helping people fill out applications and first-information reports (FIRs). Their activism was as intermediaries or brokers (between the state and urban poor)—similar to the RTI activists in Webb's (2012) account. Webb argues that although this work is commendable, there are limitations to this type of grassroots action because they are shaped by exclusionary middle-class discourses around corruption, dirty politics, and brokerage that promote the urban poor to negotiate their existence in the city through informal mediated connections to political and bureaucratic power. The poor are learning, with the help of these young middle-class activists, how to enter in and engage with the enduring structures of space and class. Their work was situated in and organized around the unequal contest over resources within patron-client systems (Webb 2012; Chatterjee 2004).

Pradeep talked about filling out many FIRs against the encroachment of land by the public authorities and the demolition of slums in affluent Vasant Kunj against powerful RWAs and their middle-class activists. Pradeep explained, "This work was the best kind I could offer." Even in the face of threats on his life and RTI friends that had been injured or even killed, Pradeep saw the work of RTI activists as critical.

As a student, 19-year-old Zahir was involved in the forerunner anti-corruption/bribery groups to AAP. As a "community activist", he helped residents in East Delhi fill out ration forms and pressured local authorities to improve a sewage treatment plant by organizing student rallies. Many informants came from

[27] Everyday youth politics can be provisionally defined as actions occurring outside formal party politics and large visible socially inclined movements (Jeffrey unpublished mss 2013).
[28] Social work in India can take the classic institutional form, similar to the West. But I often heard 'social work' referred in a sense that conjures a type of local grassroots work within a community for the benefit of a community. This work is often outside of formal institutions.

backgrounds of grassroots politics and civic work. The transition from activist to AAP party worker was not entirely seamless. Informants talked about having to re-focus their energies from local political work to campaigning work.



Figure 12: Young AAP party workers and an auto-rickshaw campaigning (2013). Photos by G.R. Ortiz

Some respondents were emboldened by AAP's activist roots and the prospect of a party disrupting the political hegemony in Delhi. For others, AAP was a potential replacement of the Congress party, filling the centre-left vacuum. For Zahir, AAP was a regional political party that would return Delhi to the values of social liberalism and secularism:

> For me there is little option. I'm Muslim, and that shapes my worldview. I need to vote for the party that will be best for my family and me. BJP is not this, and Congress has not delivered, they were good to us for a while, but now my friends are intrigued by the MIM [the All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen] but they're not here [in Delhi] and I see them as no better than BJP. An all-Muslim party sets us apart and we don't need that. We need a party that is inclusive, that rebukes sectarian urges in this country. AAP is the party for Muslims in India; I believe that to be true.

Many young AAP supporters also had reservations over the cleavage between Hazare and AAP, but they choose to continue campaigning for AAP because they wanted to take these causes further. For others it was a more nuanced decision that beyond conceptualizing the political entry as good for the movement they had to contextualize their own personal foray into formal politics, which brought new scrutiny. Akhil, a

19-year-old AAP activists said, "I had no expectations [going in]. So in a way, for me, I didn't see it as entering politics until I realized we might actually win. And it was like, I'm a party member?" Several supporters told me they felt a little "exposed" by campaigning for AAP and often feared the next bad or embarrassing headline. Despite these reservations the informants felt there was room in politics for activists and civil society reformers.

For young activists, AAP garnered legitimacy and respect as a new political force in a number of ways. I came to think that the focus on anti-corruption was the common denominator and framing point that largely brought young people to AAP. But, in many other cases, I found that the idea of implementing *swaraj* was the drive, indicating that some youth were looking beyond just the issues in front of them. Specifically, some youth were encouraged by Kejriwal's promise of instituting *gram sabhas (*village assembly), *janata darbar (*public hearing*),* and *mohalla samitis (*community committees*)* (Roy 2014).

Pradeep—the 26-year-old AAP worker I met at the Delhi headquarters—had certain principles he was not willing to compromise on. Pradeep resigned from his teaching job with a primary school to campaign for AAP. The work took him away many nights from his young family in Malviya Nagar. His support was centered on AAP's anti-corruption message, which in his view was the kernel of the movement and the impetus for his involvement. Pradeep explained, "why are the potholes fixed in some blocks but not others, why is electricity so expensive, why is there no water, no access for water tankers, because [of] corruption." Corruption to Pradeep was at the "root of all the problems" in Delhi; not only with service delivery but also with politicians that believe justice and the rule of law are "amenable." The "epidemic" of corruption in Delhi merited his uncharacteristic involvement in political party work.

For others in the middle-class, AAP's legitimacy stemmed from the professional make-up of party leaders: consultants, professors, non-profit executives, former bureaucrats; people the middle-class could relate to outside of caste and religion. Coming from these careers strengthened the case for the candidate's integrity by showing that they were already successful and would not use political office for personal gain (Roy 2014). AAP's leadership came from professions the young middle-class saw their parents in or identified as their own career trajectory. AAP's leadership largely came from civil society, something that is within the sphere of the middle-class, something they could understand and partake in (Harris 2005; Chatterjee 2004).

These accounts contrast my discussions with young BJP supporters, in particular a young man named Jai. Jai, 25, lives in Karol Bagh and is a member of BJP's national youth wing; Jai had two main activist projects, crime reduction and anti-corruption. Like AAP supporters, he was inspired by the mobilizations of young people over the last few years. "I'm sick of the graft. The middle-class is finally coming together, but Kejriwal has shamefully politicized these movements that were for everyone." Jai was not supportive of AAP because he feels the party is a replacement for Congress. Jai contends politicians on the left were the most corrupt. Jai argued that AAP would not be strong enough on crime and pointed to AAP's troubled relationship with the police. "A lot of the crime is from young men in groups, they're on the street all day and they tease and scare women. We need to protect our women from these vagrants and outsiders." Jai argued that BJP was the party of young people. He took me to a campaign rally where local candidates were paraded down narrow Delhi streets. For the most part, I observed mostly young men in these crowds, similar to AAP rallies. Jai argues, "the difference between my friends

who are for AAP and me, I'm practical."



Figure 13: BJP campaign rally (2013) with Jai (far left). Photo by G.R. Ortiz

Among my interviewees many told me stories of activist epiphanies—when they were converted from an apathetic bystander to an impassioned activist. For some it was the December 16, 2012, gang rape, for others Hazare's fasting, and for others, specific events in their neighborhoods that propelled them to participate in the political and social mobilization. For Ritu, a 26-year-old supporter from Ghaziabad, the timing of increased activist mobilizations in central Delhi was opportune; the camaraderie of youth activists became an emotional crutch during a difficult period in her life. In 2012, Ritu's father committed suicide because; as Ritu explains a Delhi politician was blackmailing him. Her life was put on hold; she took solace in the social movements taking place in central Delhi.

> I was never political until December 16th. For me protesting became freedom. Friends of mine expressing themselves in ways they had never done before. All of us realized we had deep, unresolved anger. My place, my outlet, where I felt comfortable all of sudden was in a group of people, on the carpet at Jantar Mantar surrounded by all sorts [of people], people that were angry, demanding more. When I was alone I would be left with my thoughts. I needed to be occupied.

Another young informant, Sunil, describes his turn to activism:

> I was oblivious to that stuff but a friend took me to where Anna-ji was and I talked to people. They were telling me how we the *aam aadmi* could bring down corruption. I thought that's impossible. You can't stop it, corruption is power and once you have power no one can take it from you. I left thinking, no, that will not work. But that night I could not sleep. All I could think about was going back, I wanted to hear more craziness!

Sunil explains to me that it was not necessarily Hazare himself that converted him but the young activists he met at the sit-ins, "their passion was infectious." I first met Sunil at the Indian Coffee House at Mohan Singh Palace near Connaught Place. The co-operative coffee house is a much-loved institution of Delhi, popular with old and young people alike that enjoy good conversation and a coffee for as little as Rs.10. I recognized Sunil from his Facebook page; he was hunched over his friend in deep explanation. He wore the uniform of many males his age, stonewashed jeans and a cotton shirt with a design on the upper torso and sharp dress shoes. He carries his white AAP hat in his back pocket preferring to let his heavily stylized thick hair sit unencumbered. He had various plastic bracelets and strings around both wrists, from clubs and festivals. He constantly slid his phone open to check his Facebook messages.

Sunil, 24, from Delhi and self-proclaimed "lower-middle-class," was a year out of university with a degree in History and working at a mobile phone store in Connaught Place, a placeholder position [his contention] whilst he campaigns for AAP. "Everyday after classes I'd end up in Jantar Mantar. I couldn't stay away." Sunil says he's enjoyed being an RTI advocate and activist for a couple of years but now enjoyed the buzz and camaraderie of campaigning. "Our RTI efforts are stalled, they are not honoring applications, and we need to be political to be taken serious. We need to change the system." Sunil spoke often about changing politics in Delhi and the need to move beyond patronage and identity politics:

> We are the new way in Delhi; we are breaking up establishment politics based on identity. Look at Ilmi's candidature [a Muslim AAP candidate in 2013]…we are blind to differences, we are past these concerns and focused on issues…and we are moving into [constituencies] to give people a real choice.

Sunil is charismatic and a close-talker, attributes that will help him in his political

pursuits. Sunil speaks excellent English and is inquisitive about the language; when I spoke a word he was unfamiliar with he asked me to repeat and explain it.

I walked out of the coffeehouse with Sunil who seemed to know everyone we encountered on the stairs down several floors. He moved like a politician working a room, this part of Delhi was his room. He led me to an Auto-rickshaw on Connaught Circus and negotiated a much better fare than I would have got. With his arm around the driver, Sunil said, "this is my friend Sanjay, he will take care of you. He is *aam aadmi*." The auto-rickshaw was full of AAP stickers and in short simple exchanges Sanjay told me why he supported AAP, "no more corruption, India has sickness, Kejriwal is cure."

In my many conversations with young AAP supporters, I found a familiar logic in support for AAP. AAP's appeal was the organic growth, the bottom-up possibilities that aimed to fix the sickness of corruption and broken system that favors elites. People were mobilizing around grassroots social work based on issues not ideologies, religion, and caste.

6.3 The catchall party

On December 8, 2013, the results for the Delhi election were announced, BJP had won the most seats with 31, closely followed by AAP with 28, in its first election; this resulted in a hung assembly as no party won a majority of the 70 seat assembly. BJP had underestimated AAP and its broadening appeal in Delhi. In the aftermath, AAP was able to form a minority government with support from the Congress party. The domestic and global headlines focused not on the plurality of seats BJP won but the surprise emergence of AAP and their victorious CM candidate Kejriwal. Many voters in Delhi were convinced that in order to move forward there needed to be progress

made on immediate issues: the price of gas, the discoms (electric power distribution companies), access to healthcare, and rising prices on vegetables. AAP addressed these issues directly in its manifesto[29] as well as galvanized people behind the movement to end unbridled corruption. *Figure 14* gives evidence that in its first election AAP did best in areas of high urban concentration, including those with significant slum populations. The leadership and campaigners may have been middle-class, but it was the political mobilization of the urban poor, including the marginalized Dalit communities, which made AAP a political force (Ramani 2013). Leading up to the Delhi election, I observed young AAP supporters campaigning in informal settlements and areas with high urban density. The advocacy work of these AAP workers penetrated deep into slums.

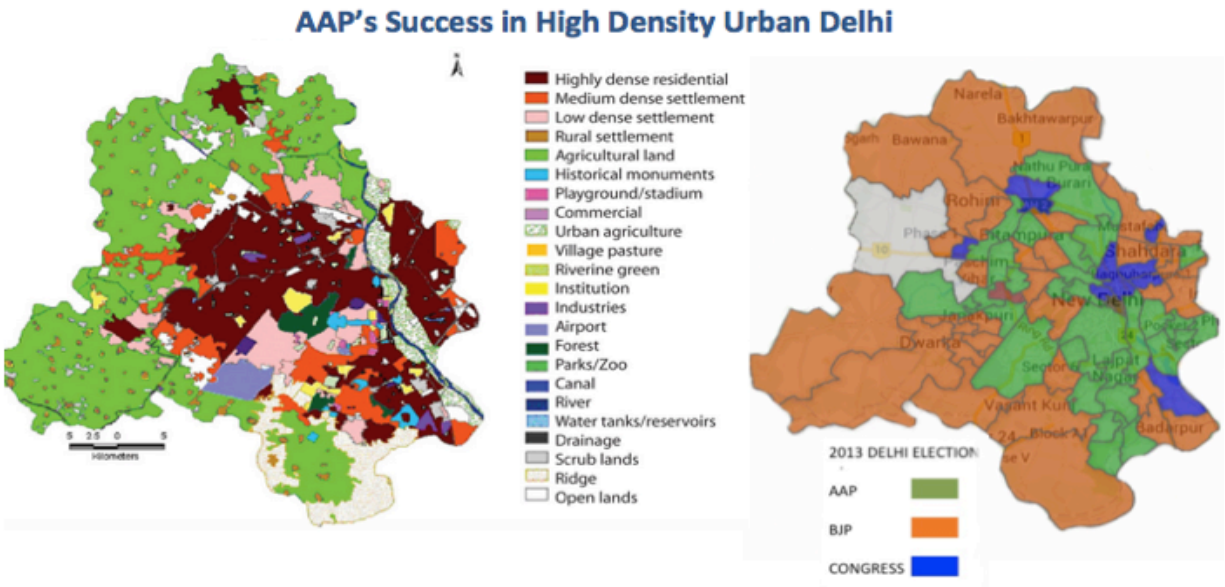


Figure 14: Comparison of Delhi's urban density map and 2013 election results by district. Source: EPW, Netzband Malik, Atiqur

Shortly before the 2013 Delhi election, I met Zahir at Shastri Park Metro station. It was an unseasonably cold December evening in East Delhi. Zahir was in a hurry to get campaigning with only a couple hours of sunlight left; there were few streetlights where we were going. We walked into an informal settlement that looked

[29] AAP's 2013 Manifesto for Delhi <http://www.aamaadmiparty.org/Manifesto-for-Delhi>

like it was still under construction with corrugated roofing sheets and brick surrounding huts. Some homes were no more than an assemblage of tarps and tents; this was less *jugād* than make-do. Zahir began approaching people with AAP literature. Some people ignored him and he quickly moved on, unaffected. He encountered many people who were Congress supporters, but those who let Zahir talk seemed willing to try out AAP. He implored them to not take election gifts from Congress and the importance of getting AAP into power. "Out here it is more about getting them out of a certain mentality, it's like rebooting a computer. They're for Congress but don't know why. It's programmed into them."

He encountered several Muslim households and he spoke to them with the greatest ease. Many residents were worried about DDA demolishing their homes. Zahir reassured them that these issues would be avoided with Kejriwal as CM. Night fell and thankfully there was a nearly full moon, I noticed for the first time that the light on the moon traveled from left to right, opposite what I was accustomed to, adding another level of foreign to my surroundings. The moonlight silhouetted the breath of people beginning to huddle near the huts and out of tents. The mood was somber as we turned back towards the Metro, "tonight it is very cold. They're not concerned about politics," I sensed Zahir would have rather been there in his erstwhile community activist capacity. On the Metro home, as Zahir studied for his exams, the contrast of the warm-lit modern cars was striking.

The Metro was Sneha's activist lifeline allowing her to do the work of an anti-corruption campaigner, taking her to locations far from her family home in central Delhi. For a woman in Delhi, the working hours of an activist and later campaigning work for AAP are limiting:

> As a girl, I would be able to devote eight hours, when we're having a protest we are offsite. During the day I was there but at night [she pauses]…middle-class families are very conservative, I would get a call, come back home.

Sneha says when she left for home during night events it garnered resentment, "in the eyes of the volunteers I worked less and got paid, they were more passionate and not getting paid." This alienated youth she worked with; they wanted access to top leadership or a salary for their hard work. Sneha benefited from getting involved in a professional capacity early on, but the resentment of volunteers and unpaid party workers affected her. She understood why the volunteers were upset, but she could not appease them and acquiesce to her parents at the same time, "for middle-class youth, earning money is a big priority, so, I decided to step back."

In the lead up to the Delhi election, much of the campaign took place at night in places like Jantar Mantar, largely populated by men. As the campaign pushed forward Sneha says it would have been difficult to convince her family to let her continue full-time. Going into the December polls, it was difficult to tell if the visible size, passionate crowds, and vigorous campaigning on many narrow streets in Delhi was typical political party window dressing or actual proliferation. Many in the media, pollsters, and political analysts were not completely convinced. The *Times of India* poll, just one week before the December 4th polls, showed AAP garnering only ten out of the 70 MLA seats in Delhi. A veritable entry for a party that most people in Delhi had little knowledge of just a year before.

In the past, Congress's ability to win votes from minorities and the urban poor was unrivaled making accurate predictions difficult considering the party's experience carrying these large populations. In the Delhi election, Congress's vote share declined significantly, they went from holding 43 seats to a meager eight seats. Kejriwal defeated Delhi's longtime CM, Shelia Dixit, the champion of the Metro development

and Bhagidari scheme. Equally telling was that the vote share for BSP, led by Uttar Pradesh's controversial former CM, Mayawati Kumari, declined by over 15 percent, a strong indication that local issues like electricity tariffs resonated more than caste loyalties (Mathur 2014; Ramani 2013).

The 49 days

From his first day in office as CM, Kejriwal wanted to make it clear that he was the antithesis of the Office's predecessor, Shelia Dixit. On the morning of December 28th, Kejriwal took the Metro to his swearing-in ceremony. After taking the oath of office in Ramlila Maidan, Kejriwal drove in his tiny blue Wagon-R Suzuki—a car that would become a symbol of Kejriwal's everyman style—to the Delhi Secretariat to start work that Saturday afternoon. On his first day, he transferred nine top bureaucrats, including the CEO of the Jal Board (water supply), and he and his cabinet decided that the use of a red beacon (*lal batti*) on top of vehicles to alert a right of way for VIPs and government officials would be discontinued. The message was clear, his pre-poll promise to put an end to the VIP culture of government officials would be carried out.

As CM of Delhi, Kejriwal operated largely as promised. In late January, he brought the city to a standstill for two days when he held a *dharna* at the headquarters of the Indian Railways (*Rail Bhavan*) to protest against the Delhi Police who defied the orders of his Law Minister. He went after the discoms high prices, Delhi's Police, and made a blacklist of people that AAP believed were corrupt and should be investigated. He repeatedly said that if Jan Lokpal were not passed he would resign which put his coalition members in an awkward position. These actions led to the media labeling him an anarchist, Activist-in-Chief, and an escapist (insinuating that

he wanted to be removed from office). I asked Sunil about those criticisms in late January 2014, he argued that any censure was not warranted considering Kejriwal was clear about his mission and how he would act in office. Sunil argued, "he is complying with the will of the *aam aadmi*, he is being true to his word." To his credit he did not resemble the typical Delhi politician but for some people that made him an unstable and ineffective CM. On February 14th, 49 days into office AAP's efforts to push the Jan Lokpal bill through the Delhi Assembly were met with a strong opposition, forcing Kejriwal's resignation.

6.4 Growing pains

Kejriwal's resignation as Delhi CM was a watershed moment for AAP supporters. Many grew tired of Kejriwal's populism, or his inability to hold office, while others tired of his control at the top and felt with the national elections AAP was reverting to typical party machinations and unholy alliances in an effort to increase its presence in new regions.[30] These criticisms stemmed from a lack of a unified goal and ideology. In a short time, AAP attracted a diverse range of supporters, many with no previous political party experience. This approach, which Roy (2014) terms "highly flexible mode of political accumulation," posed significant challenges for internal unity and coherence as the election neared (51). In January 2014, Pradeep told me that many of the party's workers were "cherry-picking" off of the success of AAP in Delhi and that they were "Congress converts" that were flooding the party with the wrong message. Similarly, Zahir was disappointed by the arrival of many new candidates AAP was pegging to candidatures all over India. Many of the AAP candidates were successful

[30] In Haryana, AAP maintained an ambiguous stance on *khap panchayats* [feudal administrations]. In Punjab, where the party had the most success in the general election, AAP tied up with the United Sikh Movement, viewed by some as a radical religious organization.

businessmen, people "connected to money" that Zahir found hard to get behind. He felt party workers that helped build the success should be put into candidacies.

One of the areas AAP struggled to establish as a new political party was a unified typology. In Lucardie's (2000) study, new political party challengers have to decide whether they will compete with established parties to provide their voters with an alternative by cleaning their political ideology (*purifiers*) or they can be *prophets* by bringing an entirely new ideology to voters. Another option is as *prolocutors*, not linked to any ideology but focused on a particular issue or interest of society that needs urgent reform. *Purifiers* and *prophets* differ based on if their typology occupies a niche captured by an established party. *Prolocutors* are focused on a single issue and are ideologically weak. Sikk (2012) posits a fourth category based on a "project of newness"—an appealing project for new and rejuvenating parties.

AAP, I argue, at different times and from different views from within the party and its leadership, attempted to occupy all these types. Here, type can be switched out with another meaning, e.g., strategy, doctrine, or mandate. This was a major internal challenge AAP faced once it had achieved electoral success in Delhi. This uncertainty was indicative of the varying opinions my informants held towards the party's goals and objectives once in power. Varying factions within the party cleaved along Lucardie's typologies. Many in AAP wanted the party to be a single-issue party (*prolocutors*) as the vanguards of anti-corruption (what Pradeep and Ritu envisioned the party as). More politically savvy factions wanted AAP to fill the political space left vacant by Congress as *purifiers* (Sunil and Zahir's view). Others, for instance, those that felt *swaraj* should be fully implemented saw the party as *prophets* declaring a new grammar of politics through the common man and referendum-based governance (Sneha's thinking).

Political scientist Srirupa Roy posits the best fit for AAP, as a new party typology, is Sikk's parsimonious two-dimensional typology—the "project of newness" ('newness' hereafter). As a project, 'newness' has the distinct advantage of calling for change but keeping that directive open to many different interpretations in order to appeal to a broad group of "discontented" voters. In addition, "the information costs of transferring the key message to the voters are much lower than with ideological or even issue-based projects" (Sikk 2012: 478). Sikk contends voters largely ignore "programmatic profiles of political parties" and instead "focus on the personal qualities of aspirant leaders" (2012: 479). AAP was in good standing with the populist Kejriwal and his entirely fresh message. In the Delhi election, the 'newness' of AAP and its message of change was a viable project. The difficulty came when it was time for AAP to govern for the first time.

Wyatt (2015) posits that Kejriwal needs to be understood as a completely different leadership style, as a political entrepreneur. Wyatt notes that Kejriwal "advocated a new axis of party competition, giving the issue of corruption a new salience in electoral politics and using that as the basis for political mobilisation" (168). By refusing to accept existing patterns of party competition and the perks of being a 'boss' or 'captain', Kejriwal presented himself as the common man offended by failures of governance (Price and Ruud 2012: 133). He attempted to "embody a new style of politics that rejected elite privileges and favoured responsive government" (177). As a "political entrepreneur", Kejriwal distinguished himself as more than a politician responding to the political marketplace by defining "alternative political identities" and drawing "new boundaries between groups" (174). Kejriwal was ambitious, innovative, but also resolute, which led to fulfilling his promise to resign.

In the immediate post-resignation setting, Jai—the young BJP supporter—seemed to be enjoying AAP's putative implosion:

> You cannot govern; you cannot build a party out of one issue. BJP has a vision that is for everyone, *sab ka saath, sab ka vikas* [together with all, development for all]. Congress has failed the middle-class, those on the left, have jumped ship for AAP. But AAP is delusion.

As a catchall party it was easy for AAP to recruit many supporters but to retain and control party members proved to be an underlying stumbling block. In office, AAP had to relinquish the comforts of having outsider credentials. AAP, with ministerial duties, and as elected officials became vulnerable to the scrutiny of public office and the whims of the *aam aadmi*.

Despite the abandonment of the party by many of my informants in the months following Kejriwal's resignation and the pessimism of previously engaged activists and supporters in Delhi, AAP won the Delhi legislative elections in 2015 by a landslide. With AAP's return to power in Delhi, there remain many intriguing avenues for researchers. Many informants, largely from the analytical set encompassing Sunil (from the lower-middle-class), believe the return to the apex of Delhi politics is a vindication of their thinking and faith in party leadership. Others view the party's decision to re-focus on Delhi as crucial for redeeming and reclaiming legitimacy. Dev, a 27-year-old AAP supporter notes, "What we lost in [middle-class] casual opportunists we've gained in real working class that like what they've seen. Their support is wider and more essential to our growth."

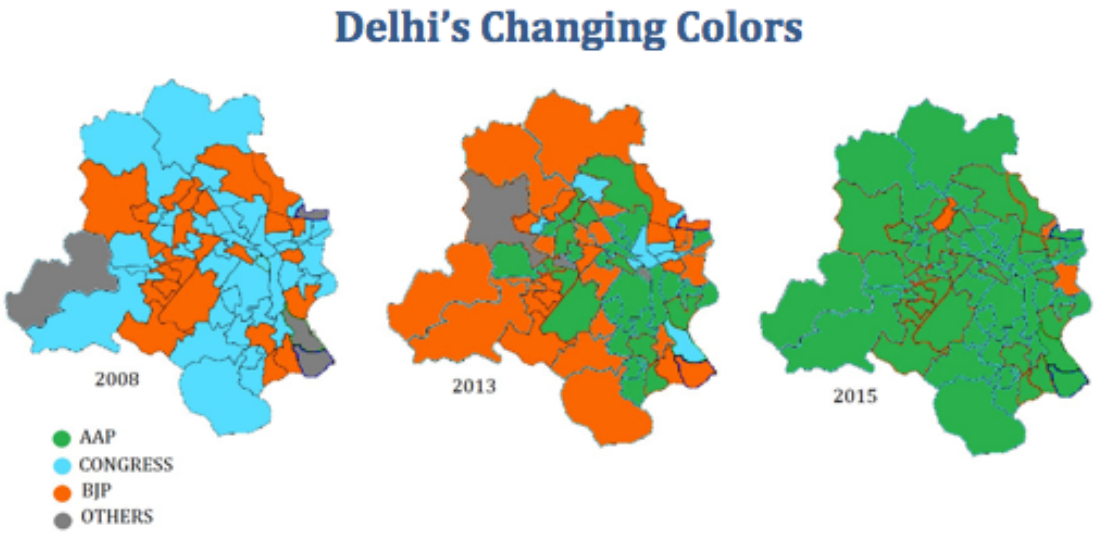


Figure 15: Legislative Assembly Election results.

In my interviews following Kejriwal's resignation, I talked with many young AAP supporters that viewed AAP's national campaign as problematizing its ability to govern in Delhi. But, in many other cases, I talked with supporters that felt AAP's activist roots had become its Achilles' heel as it moved toward becoming a national party, but others contradicted this and saw national politicking as compromising its legitimacy as an activist-based party. The party had become a self-contradiction. Roy asserts established parties, with top-down "hierarchies" with capabilities to arbitrate disputes and set out definite strategy, are unfettered with the internal contradictions and "dilemmas of organizational incoherence" that AAP struggled with (2014: 51). The failures of a unified approach brought on a growing exodus of longtime supporters. Pradeep, fed-up with the plethora of changes and changing goals, left the party in March 2014 citing his agreement with founding member Ashok Agarwal that the party was run like a private company.

There was constant infighting at the executive level of the party and many workers lost faith in the Political Affairs Committee (Dutta and Das 2014). Yogendra Yadav, the mouthpiece of the party, spoke to these issues in early 2014 as a symptom of every new and growing party. He dismissed observers' interpretation that the

internal feuding would break-up the party. However, many of the young people I spoke with thought it was bigger than petty disputes—they saw the conflicts over direction and ideology as fissures that would break off the authentic part of AAP, that core that gave the party its legitimacy as a countermovement. A dispirited Pradeep expressed his disappointment, "It is no longer a social movement or *andolan* [Gandhian method of non-violent resistance] against corruption, it is now a political party like all the rest."

Pradeep was the first AAP member I met when I walked up to AAP's Delhi headquarters, and he was eager to tell me all about their movement when it was still a little-known party. He sacrificed a lot: family responsibilities, his teaching job, completing his master's degree, and now he was an unemployed 27-year-old with a two-year gap on his resume. Pradeep had this to say in late March 2014:

> We used to sit and hear complaints of people who were being mistreated and extorted by the police. We had a highly functional grievance redressal system that dealt with peoples' problems and that was enough to sustain us. We heard and saw the stories of corruption and you could see in Kejriwal and Manish [Sisodia], others at IAC that they were going to do something about it. I wanted to follow, even if it meant going to jail. The old cadre, the people that made this party what it is, they'll all leave the party after the elections. We have no communication with leadership and they don't want to listen. It's sad really. It shows me that Anna-ji was right. These movements have to stay away from politics.

Ritu agreed with Pradeep's sentiment. She reduced her support of AAP starting from Kejriwal's controversial *dharna* in front of Rail Bhavan in January 2014. "I'm uncomfortable with agitationist politics, at some point you need to grow up." She still feels that AAP was the best option, but she says for her it is best if she stays out of politics and is focused on the issues. She does not fault Kejriwal for resigning, but rather questions the move away from Team Anna. "For me, I'm going back to the start. I'm optimistic about what we can do as activists at the grassroots…this is authentic work." Ritu found part-time work with a civil society organization lobbying

for women's security. She says it's not the perfect situation, but it will hopefully lead to more.

Sneha was another supporter, working as an RTI activist long before AAP was formed, who left the party early on, but for very different reasons. Her journey away from AAP was in part due to her discomfort as a paid employee with so many unpaid volunteers and late nights campaigning, but also because she was inspired by the resolve of the leaders of the party. She said she lost motivation for the work but was inspired observing Kejriwal and Sisodia. "Kejriwal practices rigorous meditation, I know that is where he gets his strength." She decided to devote her time and energy to yoga activism. I ask her why she made such a drastic move, she explained that she was "drowning in self-questioning," and that she saw in the leaders a resolve that she wanted to see in herself. "They live by the Gandhian notion that before you point a finger at someone, point it at yourself first, make sure you are content and righteous first. Then you will have unimpeded resolve." She says she is learning this in her yoga activism:

> For a good tree to grow you need a good seed and good soil. Society is the soil, when we are working for society we are improving the soil. But you also need a good seed. The seed is the individual. I'm working on the seed.

Sneha started a yoga studio where she teaches about the physical and philosophical components of yoga. She says in yoga the tip of the iceberg is *asanas* (postures) and *prananyama* (controlled breathing); the rest is what she calls "real yoga." Sneha feels yoga has strengthened her resolve and now she has the confidence to lead the studio and the strength to seek truth (*satiya*).

The truth for Zahir was difficult to accept. Zahir viewed Kejriwal's resignation as "rash" and made AAP look like they had no plan for governance. They lacked

legitimacy as officials. Zahir said he had to answer to family and friends whom he had convinced that AAP was a serious movement, a serious player:

> AAP was not serious. They had no plan. I've learned a lot from this, I thought to be in politics you must have one set of skills, to govern you must have another set. But I find they are not different, they are the same skills in this country. To govern effectively is to scheme, to politick [sic.], and governing is the extension of politicking. I want to believe that Kejriwal did not know this until he got into office but I don't know that. Whatever [the reasoning], my support of AAP has cost me. I gave AAP a year of my life. I have nothing to show for it.

Zahir is applying to graduate school for a degree in either economics or education, looking for work in Delhi, and getting married; all new responsibilities that he contends will move him away from politics. Eventually, Zahir would like to start an NGO that helps young Muslims find avenues to good employment. "My experience today will help me understand what it takes…but I need to make it first," he said with some trepidation.

In contrast, Sunil's view of AAP was still unwaveringly positive. He viewed the resignation as an authentic stand for the party's principles; after all, Jan Lokpal was the reason for taking office. Sunil traveled to Varanasi to campaign with Kejriwal against Modi. He believes those that have left the party have rid the party of "the cancers." Despite this, Sunil could not be immune to AAP's many detractors. In March 2014, I found myself once again in Sanjay's auto-rickshaw, the same one Sunil ushered me into several months earlier. The clawed-at vestiges of AAP paraphernalia could be seen on the interior and exterior of the auto-rickshaw. This time, only an intact Rama sticker emblazoned the back window. Sanjay did not remember me. I asked him whom he would be voting for in the general election "BJP, Modi, he is strong leader. Congress done." He made no mention of AAP, so I asked him what he thought of them. "Kejriwal no good, no leader. No Kejriwal."

6.5 Conclusion

Much of the criticism from the informants had a great deal to do with AAP's expansion into a populist platform and a party for the poor. AAP won 67 of Delhi's 70 seats in 2015 campaigning on promises of cheap electricity and free water. AAP trounced BJP among poorer sections, getting 66 percent against 22 percent of the vote. Among the middle-class AAP received 51 percent against 31 percent that went to the BJP, while among the upper class, AAP victory was slim at 47 percent to 43 percent for the BJP (CSDS-Lokniti 2015). The informants in their critiques displayed some anxiety towards the populist shift of AAP, preferring the party would return to its anti-corruption and middle-class civil society roots. This was the sentiment when Ritu, in the spring of 2014, spoke of the "childish behavior" of the party, "leadership is irresponsible, they have forgotten the core values and they are kowtowing to the poor with short term promises, promises that will be hard to govern." Pradeep echoed Ritu's opinion, "[Kejriwal] prods and pokes too much, to excite people…he is unfairly maligning the police and now the central government."

Kejriwal and AAP's appeal to many of the young informants was their statuses as political neophytes as well as their open contempt for the political system and process. But with initial failures in governance and the increasingly focus on policies that motivate the poor, the initial anti-establishment appeal of the party may have become too much for middle-class partisanship.

The middle-class is often described as apathetic and self-absorbed in pursuing its own projects (Harris 2005; Chatterjee 2004). It favors order and stability but at times when it feels vulnerable the class awakens to bring on change.[31] Popular journalist Jaggi [R. Jagannathan] describes the 2013 awakening as an exhausting

[31] Examples of reactive middle-class movements: the anti-foreigner agitation in Assam and NT Rama Rao's Telugu pride movement, both took place in the early 1980s.

anger over poor governance and politics that allowed the middle-class to shed the "old fears of anarchy" and mobilize "beyond self-absorption to political activism" (Jagannathan 2014). But the movement may have gone too far, becoming too progressive for many in the young middle-class. The old fears of anarchy returned with Kejriwal's abrupt resignation in 2014 and the party's promises for free services and refusal to demolish slums—to the point that a majority of my informants sat-out the excitement of the 2015 mandate from the electorate to form a government.

7. Marginalized Middle

7.1 Introduction

This chapter reveals young activists that identify as middle-class but are nonetheless marginalized by other distinguishing social factors. The lack of social inclusion complicates their activist experiences and increases the daily contradictions they face. The visibility of the 'typical' (i.e., Hindu and upper caste) urban middle-class reinforces a 'politics of forgetting' on marginalized social groups (Fernandes 2004). The activism of marginalized youth aims to disrupt and challenge the status quo by bringing new and more radical forms of inclusion to the expanding and reconfiguring middle-class. The activist projects in this chapter are largely antithetical to the politics of the informants from previous chapters. They take a different approach with politics, the state, society, and notions of citizenship. This is largely because they are situated differently in society and therefore the immediate needs of their community and identity groups take precedent over other public aspirations. The case studies in this chapter display youth that negotiate, resist and personalize their own public representations and discourses of citizenship—some conscientiously oppose certain forms of citizenship (Arnot and Swartz 2012). These activists may want to belong, but not necessarily in the way citizenship is typically understood—as formal state citizenship. This is supportive of Yuval-Davis' (2011) assertion that belonging is multiple, multilayered, and constantly shifting.

This chapter focuses on young people aged between 18 and 30 who identify as middle-class but also come from marginalized backgrounds in the sense that they grew up in households that were relatively low down within hierarchies based upon some combination of caste, ethnicity, gender, location, race, religion, sexual orientation, or another axes of inequality. I focus on this section of the youth

population because they are a growing demographic in urban India. As the middle-class expands, numerous studies have shown that the largest segment of the stratum belongs to this lower middle-class or 'Aspirers'[32] group (Shukla 2010: 100; ADB 2010).

The four young informants in this chapter represent diverse interests and oft-overlooked constituencies. The informants I've chosen exemplify the behavior and attitudes of wider analytical sets of young people whom I met. The 'marginalized middle'—as I will refer to this group of young middle-class activists from marginalized backgrounds—is an important group for inquiry because they have often, through their own merit or the collective work of a family/community, worked to a greater extent than other groups to achieve their social status. Through education and the proliferation of information via the Internet, they are increasingly cognitive of structural violence; these young people can ably surveil contemporary political projects and through their activism are often able to reveal structures of oppression.

In this chapter, I present three key arguments for a greater understanding of the agency, politics, and everyday experiences of the young marginalized middle in framing their lives within discourses of citizenship. First, the marginalized middle explained that in their early youth they struggled with belonging to Indian society and the concept of 'proper Indian-ness'. However, by this current stage in their lives, they have learned to embrace their differences and developed an awareness of the ways they are marginalized. For some this transformation has helped them in their everyday political and social work. The marginalized middle are increasingly avoiding processes of sanskritization and other forms of altering and alternating their

[32] Aspirers are a consumer class classified by NCAER as households with annual incomes of Rs 90,000 to Rs 200,000 [$2000 to $4000 USD](see table 5.2 of Skula 2010: 100).

performativity—what I describe as 'code-switching'[33]—as they did in childhood and adolescence (Auer 2013). Their activist work points to less of a concern with state citizenship—and more a pursuit of the alternative forms of citizenship. Arnot and Swartz (2012) argue that young people, "negotiate, resist and personalize their own national, public representations and discourses of citizenship" (8). The political project for the marginalized youth is frequently transgressive—adept at finding ways to extend ideas of citizenship to marginalized populations and make them equal partners in the democratic process.

Second, the marginalized middle, precisely because of the adversities they have overcome—or continue to negotiate—and perhaps also reflecting their contradictory social position, find it important to encourage constructive action with the generations directly succeeding them. They are concerned about the hardships and challenges experienced by early youth, reflecting their proximity to youth with similar backgrounds and experiences as their own. The late youth activists work to improve the immediate developmental and social conditions for comparatively younger youth. This mentor work ensures the thread and momentum of social activism/movements is strong. As intermediaries, they act as "crucial stimuli", providing necessary perspective and raising the aspirations of younger generational cohorts (Krishna 2013). These young activists work to enhance the capabilities of marginalized sections of society and promote inclusive development.

A final key point concerning the marginalized middle is that they view economic liberalization as a 'double-edged sword' (Ganguly-Scrase and Scrase 2008b). These young activists recognize the new opportunities economic liberalism and globalization afford, but they also view neoliberalism as intertwined and

[33] My use of 'code-switching' follows the various ways individuals not only switch between languages but also change their accent, interactional behavior, identity, and even body language based on different social situations (Auer 2013).

dependent on nationalism—a project that often obstructs their activism and oppresses their communities. In the conclusion, I will summarize the findings of the case studies.

The hardships and actions of the marginalized middle must be understood in relation to the non-marginalized (enjoying wide social access and privileges) and those marginalized but not middle-class in Indian society. The informants from this chapter are starting from at least two positions of privilege. The first is that they identify as middle-class. This can be interpreted as meaning that they are proficient in some or many of Bourdieu's multiple species of capital (1986), proficient enough to pass a self-acknowledged threshold, leading them to identify as middle-class. The second distinct advantage these youth have over other marginalized youth is that they live (at least for the time being) in an urban area. Krishna's (2014) research argues "multiple simultaneous handicaps—being poor *and* rural or scheduled caste *and* rural—reduce" young peoples' chances at getting into good schools and later good jobs (1). Krishna contends that improving education systems, information provision, and career advice would help move the starting line for rural youth closer to that of their urban counterparts. The case studies in this chapter will include additional background of the individuals than the strictly contemporary accounts in other empirical chapters of this thesis. This is done principally to understand how young people came to perceive the ways they are marginalized—yet at the same time middle-class—and in what ways they theorize citizenship. To understand where these young people are going we need to first understand better where they came from.

7.2 Development through adversity

I had several interviews with marginalized youth in which they described having achieved a recent personal transformation. Some of the young informants' responses were indicative of Johnson-Hanks (2002) idea of 'vital conjuncture' discussed earlier. In other cases, they had developed new assertiveness and forms of resistance by incrementally confronting prejudice and discrimination starting from childhood. In both cases, the youth felt they were towards the end of this personal transformation. For some, emerging self-assured, for others, with more questions. With many informants, I got a real sense of young people feeling conflict about how to present themselves in different situations and the need to constantly negotiate their position in a society that is insistent on categorizing young people and sending them down trajectories based on that categorization.

Rathi, 26, was born into a Tamil family in the city of Benaras. She is an OBC—the official collective term used for other disadvantaged castes—she has dark skin and features that denote southern India origin. For most her life, however, she has lived in a middle-class household in North India. By her account, Rathi's connection to Tamil Nadu was severed early in her life, before she was school age. However, in North India, Rathi says it is her roots that continue to define people's view of her. Culturally she belongs to nowhere. "I am part of India but never the whole." She has grown up as a "Madrasi" in North India, a somewhat innocuous disposition, but as Rathi asserts, any "dusky" (*andhērā* or *kālā*)—the derogatory term often used to denote dark-skinned—Tamil people growing up in North India could immediately relate to the adversities she has faced, compounded by her gender. Rathi is representative of other OBCs and young women I met in Delhi who were tired of the daily microaggressions and discrimination they face and are turning to different forms of activism to voice their concerns.

I first met Rathi at the campus of Delhi University in the School of Social Work. In a crowded classroom, Rathi spoke eloquently of cultural assimilation, cultural imperialism, and national integration as "mere euphemisms" for a broader politics of annihilating the identities, histories, and existence of individuals and entire communities in India:

> Racism has been a continued reality for me…I saw my parents having difficulty to ask our house owner to paint our rented house. I believe they have internalized their being an OBC, their not being a north Indian. I was under the impression that none of these intersectionalities applied to me, that I was an Indian—free to move. Till one day I finally realize how blind, how foolish I had been. I realized I will always be an outsider; I will never belong to this part of my own country, which is abusive, emotionally.

Rathi is outspoken and not overly concerned with people overhearing our conversation. Rathi contends that she has dealt with all forms of racism growing up in the north, from the extreme—someone directly saying something offensive—to the banal—a discussion of beauty where the fairer girl is the consensus more beautiful among her friends. To her primary school classmates, Rathi was going to be the Tamilian with dark-skin, whose diet consists of only *idlis* and *dosas*, and who speaks with a heavy Tamil accent. Except, Rathi has no heavy accent and she likes all kinds of foods. The fact that she did not fit into the categories others had set for her "bothered" her classmates more. She contends that it made her illegible to her classmates and from early on she was going to be problematic for many of them:

> You just know that your dark skin will never let you be at peace with yourself. Or rather they will never let you be at peace with it. Gradually, you will develop an aversion—not only at your dark skin, but your parents' dark skin, any 'Madrasi's' dark skin, and at one point in time, at anyone with dark skin. You will hate yourself, the kind of hate that will never be directed at the ones who are mocking you but the kind that is directed inwards. You grow with that hatred, that bitterness. And, unless you call those who mocked you by the term they deserve to be called—*racists* [Rathi's emphasis], you can never find peace.[34]

[34] This is an excerpt from Rathi's Facebook post. Dated January 21, 2014. Quoted with her permission.

Rathi struggled for a long time to understand who she was supposed to be and how she fit in with this society that never embraced her as one of their own. For a long time she had an internal battle, even feelings of shame, she felt she was not entitled to question her situation and not meant to be happy:

> Inspired by Malcolm X I asked myself, "Who taught me to hate myself? Who taught me to hate the color of my skin? Who taught me to hate the race that I belong to so much so that I didn't want to be around my own people?"…The color of my skin, which was always a shade darker against the "fairness of the Indian skin", the humble origins of my parents weren't really something that you can take pride in, can you? By the time, I could reach to discover the answer; I learned that hate was too small an emotion that I carried. I didn't just hate. I was also chronically ashamed, fearful and disgusted. So, now the question is who taught me to be fearful? Who taught me to believe that I can never be the same? Who colonized me?[35]

Rathi asserts that when she was younger she had no tools to identify racism; she didn't realize certain things were not her fault. Grown men would comment on her race in a derogatory and abusive manner. As she grew older she realized physical differences, even the slight variances, mattered to people. Today, despite all her personal development and feminist journey, she still struggles with her public image:

> I still have trouble finding myself beautiful or pretty. And, I need to find out whether this is because I still aspire to the societal standards of being beautiful or is it something innate. I mostly know that it is because people don't call me beautiful. I have not yet accepted myself completely. It more so includes my behaviors, my wrongs, but it also includes the way I look, my face, my hair texture, etc. It includes striving hard to stand out and doing everything to be "different" and yet wanting to be accepted for being me. Precisely, I want to be different and yet accepted. Acceptance, thus, still ranks high on my priority list.

Sanjay, 25, grew up dealing with similar issues around acceptance. As a Dalit Sanjay was familiar with Dr. Bhim Rao Ambedkar's refrain that Hindu society resembles a multistoried tower with no staircase and no entrance. Everybody was destined to die in the story they were born within. This is what Sanjay resists daily. "I'm already an untouchable. But to add insult, I'm also gay." Sanjay struggled with his multiple

[35] *Ibid.* Post dated, November 23, 2013. Quoted with her permission.

marginalities. He was committed to his community and Dalit causes, but internally he was negotiating how to manage his sexual orientation. “I was balancing both. It felt selfish to come out when Dalit issues seemed more immediate. As if this [marginality] was a choice [whereas] others did not have a choice in the matter.” Sanjay says he worked hard in school to overcome his starting position, saying he was “just trying to get by” without any problems. But when he gradually “discovered” his sexual orientation, he loathed the thought of having to go through the process of being on the periphery again. “I had good mates that I wasn’t ready to let go of. So I did not reveal myself until very late in my youth, young adulthood really…because it was just easier.” His sexuality would further problematize and remove him from groups and associations he spent his entire life carefully resolving.

Anthropologists Mary Douglas (2002 [1966]) asserts the “grid” as a concept that clearly defines a social role for an individual within networks of social privileges. Individuals have certain claims and obligations within the ‘group’. In *Purity and Danger,* Douglas notes that when people who go outside the roles society has setup for them, when they deviate from these expectations (go off-the-grid), people are confused, perplexed, even sometimes frightened by them. The layering on of differences, for instance, being Dalit and gay is especially hard for some people to reconcile. Their lack of understanding of the other person, their failure to fully comprehend and formulate empathy and affinity breeds a frustration, that in-turn breeds resentment. The outliers become “dirty” because they are outside the proper and defined lines (Douglas 2002 [1966]).

For Sanjay being a Dalit was a manageable grid to non-Dalits, but also being gay would be too much for many of his friends to accept. Sanjay put off “rocking the boat” as long as he could, building up the courage, before facing another round of

social adversities. Sanjay says if I had met him just five years ago he would be unrecognizable. “I was portraying someone else because I was scared. I was being who I thought people wanted me to be and that Sanjay was so boring.” At university, Sanjay says he had to negotiate “the Western concept of being gay” with his involvement with All Indians’ Students Association (AISA)—a left-wing student association connected to the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) Liberation, which he says did not sit well with some members. “I had to choose an identity that fit a [category]. But I didn’t find one.” As a result, he was constantly code-switching to maintain as many relationships as possible. He would even change his style of speech based on whom he was with. “I would cling to people because I was losing friends fast. So I would pretend to be straight sometimes and other times I would be more myself…I found out even Delhi, such a big city, could be so small”, meaning his various identities were eventually found-out and he felt like a “fraud.”

Conversely, Rathi could have played to her stereotype, as many southern and North-East Indians do to get by punctiliously in the quotidian milieu of North India. But Rathi, unlike Sanjay’s careful negotiation, gradually chose another path, the path of most resistance, and it has yielded abundant opportunities for her to express and defend her feminist principles. By not fitting into the Tamilian role, Rathi did not turn her back on a cultural or regional heritage she espoused in her youth. Rather, she has spent most her life in the North. To adopt or fall-in to the Tamilian role would be inauthentic. The marginalized youth found the notion of being a ‘proper Indian’ is a powerful prejudice. Young people have difficulty dealing with these distinctions that serve to differentiate but discovered that by identifying these forms of discrimination as racism and intolerance they were able to resist and move beyond them easier. They are finding that they don’t need to necessary belong to this idea of ‘proper Indian’

because increasingly it does not represent the diverse nature of being from India today. Nevertheless, they admit to struggling with a deep-seated need for acceptance that can be problematic with the acceptance and discernable embrace of their marginalized status.

Forgetting to belong

Arnot and Swartz (2012) argue that youth have to feel like they are a part of society; otherwise, they won't choose to participate in it. Young marginalized youth like Dalits, OBCs, gays, and Muslims often grow up in this fringe milieu and are indicative of this feeling. The next two informants I will introduce have an extra layer of contested citizenship and feeling of not belonging. They represent a smaller group of young informants that I met that even with the broadest interpretation of citizenship are questioned and reminded often of their status as pseudo-citizens.

Societal boundaries, but also physical borders, have profoundly affected Inshah's experience growing up. Her childhood was taken from her at an early age. "Curfews, security checks, and the butt of guns have that effect", she explains. Her education in dissidence accelerated when Indian Security forces in Srinagar killed Saheed Ashfaq Majeed Wani, a pro-independence activist her family was close with. He was only 23. Inshah marks this as a watershed event in her life, forcing her to begin asking questions:

> I was very young when he was martyred. But I saw my face [for the] first time, while looking at his private album, shining from the plastic sheets that covered his pictures. Tears rolled down from my eyes and I lost control of my life. It affected me long after. In a sense it took me conscious re-engagement to understand that the highest potential for agency to change is rested in those who are oppressed the most.

Inshah, 29, grew up in Srinagar, the summer capital of Kashmir. She says she is middle-class by Kashmir standards, which is markedly different than the rest of India.

Inshah says that Kashmir has been through a freedom struggle of more than 60 years. Often, the struggle is contextualized as a conflict between India and Pakistan over the land that is Kashmir. To Inshah, this perception could not be farther from the truth and more damaging to Kashmiris.

Inshah's father always wanted to be a scholar but could not because of political tensions. He encouraged his daughter to continue her studies. Inshah comes from an agrarian society based on Muslim ethics and found a very different society waiting for her at university in cosmopolitan Mumbai. At first, she enjoyed the freedom of gender roles and was making new friends and shedding some aspects of her orthodox upbringing. But then she had an incident with her roommate and was told by her dean that she was a "Muslim terrorist from Kashmir." That experience was "eye-opening" and she began to try and understand Kashmir through the eyes of people in India. What she found was something she didn't like; "Islamophobia is as bad in India as in the West. The clash of civilizations[36] is also between Hindu and Muslims." Her activism grew out of these experiences and by the time she took up a PhD in Delhi she knew she would be a peripheral figure, "I had no preconceived notions this time, I wasn't naïve."

Inshah's appearance—notably her hijab and fair complexion—arouse interest from people in Delhi. People in Delhi are not afraid to ask straightforward and prodding questions. Inshah described to me an experience she had that encapsulates the attitude that many people in Delhi take towards Kashmiris. A woman walked up to her and asked, "Are you Arab?" Inshah responded no, but the line of questioning continued, "Are you from Iran?" Inshah was perplexed, should she say she is from India? After some thinking, Inshah responded, "I am from Kashmir." The woman was

[36] Inshah, I believe is referring to Huntington's (1996) thesis. It should be noted that Huntington lists India, along with Russia, as a 'swing civilization' – meaning they may favor either side (Western or Islamic) in a civilizational clash.

interested, she had heard Kashmir was a paradise, she asked Inshah if it is easy for Indians to get a visa there. Inshah notes that the woman's questions were in some way satisfying to her own view of Kashmir, a place and people that are culturally, historically, and politically a separate entity to the rest of India, "its occupier." Many Indians fail to absorb the narrative of Kashmir as a part of India. Inshah asserts, "we… are not Arabs, Iranians, Turks, or Indians. We are Kashmiris, and with the acceptance that we have our own identity and narrative, we can have meaningful exchanges with the world."[37]

Inshah says her greatest fear is that what she is fighting for is fading away, that Kashmiris are forgetting their heritage and history:

> I worry that the soul of Kashmir in people is dying, being absorbed by the culture of the occupiers, but I see little resistance, the maintenance of our way in people. I'm fighting for those people that are still determined to hold onto Kashmir.

The Kashmiri experience is difficult to relate to because of its longstanding incertitude and infliction. Notwithstanding, there are similarities between Kashmiris' plight and the struggle of many people in Northeast India for self-determination. Shri, 22, was in his last year of university when I met him. He is from Nagaland, the city of Dimapur. He is lower middle-class, although he insists with his trademark baritone laugh, in Delhi he is "lower-lower-middle-class." He was a student leader of an advocacy group concerning the ethnic conflict in Nagaland as well as for self-determination of Naga people.

At first glance, without any geopolitical context, Shri looks Asian; pressed for further consideration one might guess he is southeast Asian, perhaps Nepalese, Thai, Laotian, or Myanmar (Burmese). "I've been asked if I was Japanese on more than one

[37] Inshah wrote about this encounter in a piece for Peacexpeace.org. She shared the same enlightening anecdote with me in our discussions. < http://www.peacexpeace.org/2012/10/what-does-it-mean-to-be-kashmiri/>

occasion." He is the right complexion but not the right consistency for "proper Indian-ness." And yet Shri is Indian, "sort of." The latter sentiment is what makes Shri so impassioned. Even if he wanted to be Indian, which is no longer self-evident (he refers to the Indian presence in his home region of Nagaland as "Indian occupied"), he feels it is impossible to be fully Indian. He cannot maintain an Indian identity in the eyes of others because he's too "Chinese looking." There is not one Indian look. People from different regions of the sub-continent have many subtle physical differences, but Shri's "Indian-ness" is constantly challenged.

When Shri was younger he felt a strong need to fit in. He moved to Delhi as a teenager and quickly found himself surrounded by diversity. Shri maintains that in Nagaland, "most people looked like me and they were Christian like me. But we respected you if you weren't these things." Back home, he was a popular student and talks of a strong sense of community. In Delhi, he tried hard to fit in and be a "normal" teenager:

> I love going to movies with friends, watching big Bollywood or Hollywood films, and texting with friends and hanging outside the multiplex. But then someone ruins it, I hear comments under peoples' breath or yelled as they walk away, something chinky, go home chinky, do this, do that chinky. And for whatever time I was able to forget how racist this place [Delhi] is, I'm quickly reminded of it.

Shri says this used to bother him much more and he would look inward at what he could do differently when he first arrived in Delhi. But gradually he learned that when he is confronted with these objections he should look outward at society, "they are in the wrong, not me…it took me a long time to realize that." Shri conceptualizes this transformation:

> There was a time when I wanted to be excited, a big fan of India, wear the colors proudly, watch cricket…but then I grew up. I realized the world is full of contradiction and smallest differences, but the smallest differences are really big differences.

Shri has learned to carefully construct his lexicon. He prefers to take a scalpel to carving out language because of the reckless broad carving that many people in India take when describing those people that do not fit their ideal of Indian. Shri believes the discrimination of people from North-East India is on the rise in Delhi:

> It may have something to do with their rivalry with China or distrust of East Asians. Most of the people in Delhi have some prejudices against people coming from North-East; that they are party freaks, alcoholic, loose character, live in jungle and so on. Unfortunately, it cannot be the responsibility of the people from North-East to teach all of them that we do have very successful businessmen and women, excellent scientist, doctors, engineers, bankers, intellectuals, professors, sportsmen and women, pilots, bureaucrats, IPS and Army officers, from a 'good family', live in towns and cities, and so on.

Shri talks about when he first arrived in Delhi he tried to learn the style and swagger of other Delhi teens. But his look and accent were too difficult to overcome. Gradually, he reverted back to his true self, what he calls "default" Shri. "Sometimes when I meet seniors and officials I find myself acting that way [code-switching] again, but I quickly remember to just be me and I adjust." The language and styles that were circumspect in Shri's teenage years gradually gave way to a more authentic sensibility and his rhetoric of dissent gradually became more pronounced.

When Shri traveled back to Nagaland he saw his homeland differently. "I saw totalitarianism and oppressive martial law of the Indian armed forces, things I put out of my mind as a kid." In my time with Shri, he often talked about the upcoming September 2014 referendum on Scotland and his solidarity with Scottish people, but also a reverence for the British government for allowing the vote to take place. He connected the Naga people's struggles with that of minorities in other countries and to the history of racial discrimination around the world:

> I've read the writings of Dr. Martin Luther King and I was inspired. His courage to be non-violent, the legacy of civil disobedience, it's amazing. But when I apply it to my people, my situation, it feels like it won't be enough. But that's probably how he felt reading Gandhi, so I need to reflect more on his example.

The informants in this chapter are representative of tactics taken by a wider analytical set of marginalized youth to deal with discrimination. Rathi, like others I interviewed, from an early age actively sought a position off Douglas's 'grid' that was off-putting and challenging to peoples' perception of her. Inshah, Sanjay, and Shri and a majority of my informants tried to fit in, to make their situatedness work within a greater society, but they could not, and ultimately chose not to overcome their differences in an effort to belong. "Now. I'm like oil in water and that is okay by me," explains Shri. Sanjay says, "I don't need to belong, but I should never be denied my rights."

Arnot and Swartz (2012) describe the search for belonging as often beginning in school. They argue schools are tasked with preparing young people to be constructive members of society, but they also have the secondary project of creating "a sense of belonging and entitlement, a common identity and patriotic project in the name of the nation" (3). What Durkheim (1973) calls the 'conscience collective' used to "reinforce social solidarity, maintain social rules and aid young people in fulfilling social roles" (Arnot and Swartz 2012: 3). Schooling is used to reinforce the idea that those members of society that are "least likely to benefit from society" will remain "transfixed by a common national identity, with a common history" (2012: 3).

The literature concerning the anthropology and sociology of 'citizenship in the postcolony' describes the reproduction of the idea that there is a shared history and a shared project, "importing normative notions with their own culturally located histories" (Robins et al. 2008: 1085). In Mohanty and Tandon's (2006) book, they describe 'participatory citizenship' as requiring "citizenship to be conceptualized by taking into account the experiences of those whose inclusion remains problematic" (10). This can be done by viewing citizenship as in-practice and from the viewpoint of excluded collectives; they write that collective identities compete "for social and

political space" but each group "has its own peculiar character and its own logic, which allow as well as restrict the mobility of the bearer of that identity" (2006: 14).

These conceptions of 'shared' and 'participatory' citizenship are meant to be inclusive and an attempt to alter existing relationships that are overwhelmingly exclusionary. But I found from the interviews that these conceptions of citizenship are problematized by marginalized youth that view this as just another way to remind them that they have not met the prerequisites of inborn or complete citizenship, and so they must compete for resources and work towards acceptance. All citizens may have the right to participate, but are all voices equal in the process? Unlike marginalized groups, citizens with higher (or even normative) statuses are exempt from the constant responsibility to justify their claims to citizenship.

Sharing citizenship

Citizenship in India is being contested by alternative projects of belonging, whilst there is increased state control in the everyday life of activists on the peripheries of society (Yuval Davis 2011). As a consequence, the political project for the marginalized middle is finding ways to extend democratic citizenship to the marginalized populations and make them equal partners in the democratic process. These experiences and their activism points to less of a concern with formal state citizenship—and more a pursuit of the rights and dignity they feel they deserve.

The discussion of citizenship brought noticeable unease to the marginalized youth. Shri explains his reservations; "I can't celebrate my citizenship until everyone has equal rights and freedoms. I don't want to be a part of something that gives different meaning and value to different people." The concept of citizenship is viewed by marginalized youth as an intricate web of boundaries, some they could traverse

others they could not, at least not without shedding something of their identity. They were more interested in the ways through which marginalized groups can overcome structural inequalities and live with consistent mutual respect. This is indicative of Jayal's (2013) assertion that there is "no easy resolution of the contention between principles of universal and group-differentiated citizenship"(3). The marginalized middle and other less privileged marginalized populations are rendered 'peripheral' or 'thin' citizens. They are recognized and counted but not always afforded full access to basic rights.

Jayal (2013) ably describes the political outcome of this scenario: "the classes that have political voice do not have any stake in their improvement, while the classes that are entirely dependent on these services lack the voice to effect such change" (194-195). The reliance on state welfare in a period of neoliberal direction has led to a population that relies on and has come to expect entitlements. Embedded in these entitlements is an implied acceptance that welfare requires formally identifying with an officially defined category of disadvantage or 'backwardness'.

For Sanjay, this describes the paradox many Dalits are locked in, "one of my goals is to convince my community that provisions and welfare schemes do not equate to citizenship. We need to move beyond this." But he admits the progress of this understanding is glacial and many educated Dalit activists disagree with him. The link between perceived rights and citizenship needs, in Sanjay's view, should be severed. "It becomes a winner takes all games [sic.], there is this competition among minority groups. That is not good for anyone." Citizenship is a complex and difficult project for him to reconcile. He explains:

> My citizenship is to India but more the idea of India as a diverse, colorful, wonderful culture…to the ideas of Ambedkar and Gandhi, less so to what we would now label as the Indian state. It's for equality and presently some people are more equal than others.

Sanjay describes how these notions are lost in the popular Cartesian dualism of "are you for or against the nation. It is not as simple as that. I love India, that's why I want real change." For Shri, he also views the zero-sum mentality for provisions as destructive. "We need to stop pitting our agenda against other oppressed groups. We should be working together," Shri explains. Shri says his citizenship is not necessarily located in Nagaland: "The Naga people, my family, friends…my loyalties are with them. But I'm also part of the citizenship of humanity. I respect life and basic rights…I consider myself a comrade of anyone who agrees with that." Despite the adversities he has faced, Shri is optimistic about reconciling with a greater society, what Yuval-Davis labels a 'people's citizenship' (2011: 61).

Rathi believes the holding onto one's origin or birth position is at the core of many problems in India. She wants people to celebrate their uniqueness but in the same breath be able to celebrate the differences of people around them. She says if everyone "lived for a while as the other", as the marginalized, the minority, or "certainly as a woman" they would be less concerned with statuses towards a nation or even a group. As Rathi writes: "You ask my origin. I say, I am here."

In my interviews, I came to think that citizenship for the marginalized middle did not require a rootedness or connection to a home. However, in a distinct break from the other informants, Inshah's view of citizenship appears firmly established and anchored to a specific homeland:

> Citizenship is loaded with so many oppressions…I just think of myself as from the valley…my grandmother said, "When we are free come to my grave and tell us we are free." She knew someday India will not occupy Kashmir, they can't occupy forever. Governments and borders change, as a people we will survive, we will persevere.

Hannerz (2002) asserts that home is a contrastive concept, concerned with the emotions of being away from home. Yuval-Davis (2011) describes the various ways

the concept of home can be interpreted and correlated with citizenship: "It can involve a sense of rootedness in a socio-geographic site or be constructed as an intensely imagined affiliation with a distant local where self-realization can occur" (11). For Inshah, the latter may be her motivator; the notion of home is a sense of freedom:

> The intensity of home lives in me always…self-determination. Kashmir is not a map. It's peaceful, full of hope, and love, its home. Just leave us with the valley. We can be happy with that. My obsession is not with the territory. It is for a freedom we have never known. The freedom our ancestors enjoyed.



Figure 16: Inshah and her grandmother (2012). Photo by Bridgette Auger

In my many conversations with the broader group of young middle-class activists, the idea of 'participatory' or 'shared' citizenship was brought up often as an idealized goal or vision for India. The exact meaning behind shared and participatory citizenship varied. For some, I interpreted it as meaning working together across lines of caste, class, religion, and other differences. For others it meant something that was a collaborative project towards national prosperity but with an inclusive bent. For others, 'shared' citizenship is a style of pro-poor, non-party, voluntary informal grassroots political action (Webb 2013; Kamat 2002: 19).

Holston and Appadurai (1996) write, "citizenship depends less on the idea of the nation as a neutral framework for competing interests than on that of the nation as a community of shared purposes and commensurable citizens" (192). But this is an

equally problematic motivation according to the marginalized middle. When I pushed for opinions of shared citizenship or the universal citizen they felt these were not idioms they would be—or should be—using. This was surprising to me. The issue was that in shared citizenship there is the assumption that the prerequisite of citizenship was met by one party, meaning the person (patron) sharing their citizenship has a greater level or more acute version of citizenship to offer (the client).

The marginalized middle described 'shared' citizenship and the 'universal' citizen as an idiosyncrasy of Delhi's liberal middle-class, a genteelism for clustering vote-banks or subaltern clients. Many marginalized youth could not move beyond the politics of identity—either because of the obstacles it posed or because they supported different forms of group-differentiated citizenship. The construction of group identities for specific purposes, for example receiving entitlements or gaining political capital, was problematizing citizenship. At the same time, marginalized youth from differentiated groups (for example Dalits as distinct from OBCs) recognized the problem with groups competing for resources and provisions but saw no end to this competition for resources as long as their differences garnered state resources and special treatment. Some of my informants because they were members of more than one group (e.g., Sanjay as Dalit and gay or Inshah as a woman and Muslim) were acutely aware of this system of opposing minority factions and social dynamics as problematic, but offered no solution other than continuing to fight for their groups' inclusion. This is indicative of Mohanty and Tandon's assertion on collective identities: "identities are not given and constructed once and for all. They are reconstructed, mobilised and manipulated both for the purpose of excluding others as well as for seeking inclusion (2006: 14).

The marginalized youth's near unanimous rejection of these notions of shared citizenship is indicative of Webb's (2012; 2013) research that describes the limitations of working towards a shared or even active citizenship. He says efforts by young middle-class transparency activists toward a shared citizenship were not immune to the "enduring structures of space, class, and patron-client relations in the city" (Webb 2013: 2). Similar to the restrictions the marginalized youth spoke of in relation to their position outside of popular interpretations of citizenship. Thus, "considering the enduring differences in life trajectories within the city" between middle-class activists and the people they are trying to help, the politics and project of shared citizenship remains something that is incomplete for the marginalized youth to support (Webb 2013: 29). Robins et al. (2008) argue that those in the middle-class and civil society that promote citizen participation "can be understood as 'missionaries of modernity' who seek to 'civilise' the 'unruly masses' by drawing them into procedural democracy and its normalising and virtuous effects" (1084). But often these views of citizenship "fail to address the legacies of colonial projects…that have uncanny echoes in today's donor-promoted 'citizenship and participation talk" (Robins et al. 2008: 1085).

The marginalized middle doesn't have a collective project but rather, the majority of them, want to reconcile with a 'community of communities' and greater multiculturalism. These youth are more interested in reconfiguring or reconciling with some of the contemporary constructions of citizenship (i.e. people's citizenship) rather than formal state citizenship (Yuval-Davis' 2011). Because of this, the marginalized middle found it important to help those from their own constituencies—from their group-differentiated citizenship—find routes to successfully navigate the adversities of living with a peripheral or thin citizenship. This was observable: young

Dalits looked out for younger Dalits, older gays helping younger gays navigate the difficult social terrain, Tamils helped younger Tamils living in North India, middle-class neighbors were for younger neighbors, even women helping girls interact for the first time with feminism. The intermediary connections between generations broke down along lines of affinity and similar experience—empathy. This mentoring work by the marginalized middle is especially important as generational successors move through their youth, a period of flux and uncertainty but also a time when new opportunities for constructive action emerge (Johnson-Hanks 2002; Jeffrey 2012).

7.3 Intermediaries and mentors

The challenges marginalized youth encounter are complex and measured. These challenges require close attention to changes occurring in the fields of education, work, health, and politics (Bourdieu 1984). Apart from their own self-management, no individuals are more acutely aware or apt to guide marginalized early youth through these processes than late youth of the same or similar group. For the marginalized middle—in their late youth—their work as intermediaries between younger youth and the fields and structures of greater society is a crucial undertaking. They are concerned about the hardships and challenges experienced by early youth, reflecting their proximity to youth with similar backgrounds and experiences as their own. This work is viewed by the marginalized middle as important to the long-term viability of their political action. Shri describes this process; “I want to help youngsters find themselves quicker…move through this process to take up a voice for Nagas in Delhi.” Shri’s desire to help young people with their everyday social politics was echoed by the other informants.

I found a strong desire among the marginalized middle to pass the proverbial torch, even in their relative youth, to an even younger generation of activists developing a voice. The marginalized middle, precisely because of the adversities and tribulations they have overcome, find it important to encourage constructive action with the generations just below them. Increasingly this intermediary work takes place online to compliment offline work. These activities support recent research showing the positive outcomes for youth that have educated late youth 'role models' working in social politics (Krishna 2013; Makau 2011—q.v. Chapter Two).

This process manifests itself in various ways among my key informants, the marked difference coming in a hands-on approach—youth learning by working alongside older activists—compared with a more solitary figure approach—youth learn by watching/reading. Rathi, Sanjay, and Shri actively worked with young people, sitting together and meeting with young people regularly, encouraging and even mobilizing them to activism or social work. They are representative of other marginalized middle activists I met that did the same—principally middle-class Dalit activists. For Rathi, some of this was part of her employment with a non-profit that promotes social enterprises led by young people. For Shri, the first-hand leadership meant mobilizing his many followers on social media for offline events, serving as the vocal leader at protests, and coordinating with student organizations (for example mobilizing for university curriculums to include languages other than Hindi). I observed that Shri frequently brought groups of young people with him so they could learn how to talk with government officials, media, in front of large groups, and how to keep protestors engaged. He stressed "learning by doing."

Sanjay says this part of his activism; the mentor work is "probably the most important" thing that he does as an LGBTQIA[38] activist. "In my community, young people struggle with these new feelings and how to act. There is also the process of coming out and confronting the family with this news." In addition, he says there is often the added dimension of private/public lives. Young gays that are not ready to come out publically—or fear that process—start to build community with gays that will acknowledge their identity with discretion. LGBTQIA activism has been aided greatly by the increase in social media (as described in Chapter Four with Miti). One aspect Sanjay wanted to stress was that young and even adult gays usually live with their parents. Therefore, there is little privacy for alternative lifestyles within traditional families:

> Gays in Delhi don't have the freedoms yet as they do in European cities. There is a serious threat of violence, sometimes from within your own family…but things are quickly getting better. We have new ways of connecting with, filtering, and searching through information about our communities…when I was coming up I wish I had access to information, to other lifestyles, to other people that youngsters have now.

Sanjay encourages young people to do their own research online and to establish networks. "Just like in business, youngsters need to network to help them get ahead." Sanjay works for a company in advertising that he learned through networking with other gays was not only a progressive business but also gay-friendly. "This information saved me lots of time, money, and headaches…knowledge that [was] passed on." Sanjay says that now he contributes "whatever knowledge I have for questioning youngsters."

[38] Sanjay insisted I use the acronym LGBTQIA that stands for lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, queer/questioning, intersex, asexual and allies. In other parts of this thesis I use the LGBT acronym because that was the acronym spoken to me.



Figure 17: Gay rights rally in Jantar Mantar (2013). Photo by G.R. Ortiz

Sanjay asserts that his activism and mentorship cuts across caste and class to work on many issues. The campaign to overturn section 377 is a major thread of his activism, but he notes that there is widespread support and significant backing on this cause from allied communities and powerful civil society organizations. "I truly believe with 377 it is not a matter of will it, but when will it [be overturned]." Sanjay says the real danger of 377 is how it can be used for blackmail and to extort gays and closeted gays. For Sanjay, a more pressing concern are the economically marginalized and socially stigmatized sexual minorities that are more vulnerable to institutionalized forms of violence and abuse than class and caste privileged groups.

On a warm early evening in March 2014, I met Sanjay at a café near the diplomatic enclave of Delhi. We had some coffee and walked over to Nehru Park, a green lung in Delhi not behind private walls. On the way, I reminded Sanjay of my request for him to take me some time to a drop-in-centre for gay youths he works with. "If I take you to a drop-in-centre…hardly anyone drops-in, it's just not something youths are going to do for themselves. So I go to them. We're going to another type of drop-in-centre," he explains laughing. In Nehru Park we stroll with colorful Cineraria flowers lining the path and corresponding pillars of palm trees, joggers run past people meditating, boys are finishing up cricket games, and amateur gardeners are admiring a public exhibit. As we walk Sanjay searches for connecting eyes and benign glances. He explains how he can tell if another man is gay: "it's not

all for dating. Sometimes I just want to be social. But you have to be careful not to be mistaken."

It's not long until Sanjay finds a group of young men he knows sitting on a mound near the path. Sanjay talks to them in Hindi, introducing me. Sanjay starts speaking to one in a stern voice, even grabbing his arm to thwart the youth's boyish insouciance. We walk on. "His friends tell me he's been cruising and seeing an older man that is abusive and dangerous," Sanjay explains. "He has no money and can't go live with his family. I'm just telling him to stay away from the man and to stay off pharma drugs." They make loose plans to meet later that week with another counselor/mentor from a foundation. Sanjay assures me, "away from his friends he will be different. He will be more open with us. He knows he needs help." We walk on, waiting for a while as Sanjay texts with a youth that never shows, on our way out of the park Sanjay stops to talk with two young hijras, but two older hijras emerge and the conversation is cut short. We walk on and he explains to me that he knows, at least, one of the hijras his young friend was with is a bad influence. "She is in a bad place, with a bad guru, it's a gang…they'll make her do prostitution, crime. She is so young and beautiful. I need to find her mobile number." Sanjay will text her later to warn her. But he admits, "there is only so much I can do." As the sun sets Sanjay says we had better get in an auto-rickshaw and we head to dinner in Hauz Khas where a very different gay social scene unfolds, one that is out of the shadows and absent of the circumspect and leery backchannels of the park scene.

Sanjay is acutely aware that even with his own marginalization he has risen to a position of relative privilege within his groups. He makes a good salary, is educated and asserts that he is firmly within the middle-class now. He has connected with a strong community of gay activists and progressive thinkers. But this group's lifestyle

is less at threat because they are often middle-class or upper-class professionals. They frequent the same clubs and restaurants in Hauz Khas village, in Gurgaon, and attend the same house parties in Chanakyapuri. Sanjay is thankful for this small community, but he sees some growing fissures within an already fragile community, among gays that don't have the relative insulation of affluence. "My work now is to help the gay community in Delhi understand the dangers of competition between caste, class, and religion. We need to be broad-based and united."

Sanjay says there is a great deal of violence and coercion of gay youth in Delhi, often by older gay men. "Young kothis and hijras are frequently abused and exploited. We need more support and resources for them…something to break the cycles they're in. But I'm limited here, my hands are tied." Despite a busy work schedule, Sanjay volunteers at an actual drop-in-centre in Delhi, run by a foundation geared toward economically challenged sexual minorities and people living with HIV/Aids. Sanjay wants to be an authoritative voice to younger gays, "we need to build stronger networks, with better resources, not just information on where to cruise or go clubbing. Real resources are still in their infancy in Delhi."

Sanjay and Shri represent a wider set of young people whom I met that have ties to minority and oft-discriminated marginalized groups, find it important to work with younger people to make their transitions to adulthood easier. These intermediaries' own transitions were not easy and instead of seeing this period as a rite of passage for younger cohorts, they endeavor to guide youths—in similar situations as they were in—through these conjunctures.

For Shri, the connection online activism gives him back to his home in Northeast India is vital. "Many North-East people like me, living in Delhi, are thankful for online networking. It is a lifeline to our home, culture and the reverse,

back home they can know our efforts here." In the several months I kept in regular contact with Shri his activism revolved around a prominent case—Justice for Nido Tania, a 19-year-old student from Arunachal Pradesh who was killed in Delhi after being teased about his race and hair color. As an on-campus leader of students from the Northeast, Shri's position placed him in a dynamic situation. Shri saw the media attention and response on social media to Nido's case as an opportunity to keep people interested in Northeast issues.

On a cold morning in February 2014, I ran past standstill traffic towards the cause of the delay—disruptive by design—a protest in support of justice for Nido Tania. Protestors were blocking the gates in front of the Lajpat Nagar police headquarters (where Nido was processed the night he died). It was one of those days when Delhi's air pollution is oppressively low to the ground, I was out of breath as the dense particle-rich air gave way to the warm mass of more than a thousand young people—mostly from the North-East community. I worked through the crowd to find Shri speaking with police officers (Shri and others were negotiating terms). The crowd was chanting, "We want justice" in English. The protest was peaceful and impressive.

After Shri finished talking with the police he pushed young people forward to talk to media. He was not merely at the protest, he was orchestrating micro interventions and making sure a diverse group of youth were heard. The blockade lasted for a few hours, time for Shri to collect names of new faces and encourage youth to stay involved online. In the early evening protesters began to disperse as word of a promise of a police inquiry circulated. A large segment of the crowd shifted to the front of a mall where Shri was holding court; imploring young people to come up and speak. "This is important for us to have a voice, if you have something to say,

come up, don't be shy." The meeting was well attended and young people discussed feelings of a fringe existence, incrementally more youth were eager to talk. The topic of racism and the issues of living in Delhi were paramount. Before the meeting ended Shri led the youth in chants for justice.

For the next few weeks, Shri was part of various student delegations to political parties and leaders in Delhi to talk about Nido's case and accept the politicians' condemnation of the violence. The mobilizations after Nido's murder garnered significant media attention that has led to a national debate on discrimination against Indians from the Northeast. Seven people have been arraigned and will face charges of culpable homicide not amounting to murder. Shri and others have built a social media campaign to follow-up on justice for Tania and to continue the conversation on race in Delhi.



Figure 18: Justice for Nido Tania protests (2014). Photos by Justice for Nido Tania Facebook page

Shri says the Nido Tania case was a landmark moment in Delhi for activism of North-East Indians, but it was largely that way because Nido was from a prominent family, as the son of a Congress MLA from Arunachal Pradesh:

> The activism following Nido's death was an important event, but it was hardly the first violent hate crime against people from the Northeast. I recently held a protest for the lack of justice for a girl from Manipur who was raped in Delhi. She does not come from an important family like Nido. So there has been no news coverage and, even worse, there will be no justice for her.

For Inshah, social media is an important link to young Kashmir; "it's magical for a Kashmiri. I was trapped for four months in 2010 with nothing to do during a time of intensified occupation. It was my outlet." Inshah took to social media to facilitate the important work of reporting on who was killed and collecting photographs of the killed. "I created a file of those killed, how they were killed, and put up photographs on different sites as evidence." The time was transformative for Inshah and her development as an activist. "That was the first time when we made Indians realize the idea of national security is flawed. This [social media] was an extremely powerful tool." She built a network and a following; many of her followers are younger Kashmiris.

Since that time, Inshah has been very active on social media, keeping her constituency informed of her activity. From my observations, Inshah's style can be characterized as solitary activism. She is certainly a leader in her community with an impressive social media following (including active detractors) but her offline activism in Delhi is limited, by her own account, due to safety reasons. She describes a time she went to central Delhi to protest the hanging of a young Kashmiri:

> He was hanged to satisfy the collective conscious of India. In Kashmir, we collectively thought the noose is around us. So we went to Jantar Mantar and there were right wing groups waiting for us with knives. The police were protecting them and instead bundled us up in the van and took us to the police station. If you're not what Indians think you should be you're going to jail. They snatched away scarves and say this guy looks Kashmiri. It's difficult to protest because you're targeted. If you are a Kashmiri protesting even around Indian friends they will pick you out. So you won't see me at many rallies.

Nevertheless, for young Kashmiris Inshah is something of a celebrity. I reached out to some of her Facebook followers for a comment and received telling feedback: "she is doing the work of a people, maybe someday a nation", "she is blessed", and "she is a warrior, a bad ass woman." Inshah is based in Delhi but very transient, and usually somewhere other than Kashmir. She is reporting back to her community and offering

her views. Her prolonged absences from Kashmir' makes her following largely online. The action to her activism is in the form of speeches and writings about the plight of Kashmiris. There is also the form of resistance she engages in by simply living in Delhi.

Rathi has made her passion for social work with younger generations into a career. She works for a national level nonprofit organization that promotes small enterprises. Rathi's activism was institutionalized within a formal organization (albeit a small one); many of my informants had full-time or part-time employment with institutions. Rathi's job involves developing entrepreneurship programs for youth that connects with their passions whilst addressing specific need-gaps in society. She specifically works to develop enterprises run by young women. This is a logical step towards her dream of one day "opening a school for girls that will encourage girls to convert their thoughts to action and address the changes they want to see in society."



Figure 19: Rathi (blue scarf) leading a group of young women (2014). Photo by Dhriiti

Early in her journey towards feminism, Rathi defended her "stand through lived experiences, shared histories, and through the guileless reservoir of [her] emotions." Feminism succeeded despite the pressures she felt from grown-ups and authority figures against her new line of questioning and divergent thinking. She wants to ensure other girls will have access to feminist literature and outlets for feminist discovery. Rathi's vision for her school is a place where you can sit and

discuss different theories like feminism and intersectionality. She says, "Existentialism must be the base of feminism." Rathi wants her students to understand how these forms of oppression interrelate and react to one another. Liberalization has enabled some women to assert a sense of personal agency and have greater access to education, but Rathi argues their actions are contained within the confines of patriarchal ideologies of the neoliberal state (Moghadam 2005; Ganguly-Scrase 2003). Rathi finds it increasingly difficult to mobilize around gender issues since gender equality is by many casuistry accounts and specious reasoning, assumed to have arrived. She says the modern "emancipated" woman is supposed to be self-managing, self-responsible, and seeking self-advancement yet economic liberalism has arrived with exclusionary private corporate capital and ethno-nationalism.

7.4 The double-edged sword

The marginalized middle largely view neoliberalism as both a positive and negative development—a "double-edged sword" (Ganguly-Scrase and Scrase 2008b). The young activists recognize liberalization and globalization as ushering in social change but are apprehensive of the connection between neoliberalism and nationalism in India. From their position in society, the project of nationalism has very real and discouraging effects on their lives.

A principal concern for Rathi is that in the gradual adoption of neoliberalism,[39] the proliferation of consumer choice and ideals of market justice has been expedited, whilst social justice issues have made glacial progress. Globalization and neoliberalism continue to have a very different impact on men and women (Ganguly-Scrase 2003; Harvey 2005; Moghadam 2005). Several scholars assert a

[39] My use of neoliberalism in this chapter is driven by the use of the word by my informants.

profound enmity between the outcomes of neoliberal reforms, including the reduction of public sector investment, and the interests of women (Harvey 2005; Moghadam 2005). Rathi argues that neoliberalism is a "double-edged sword",[40] on one side global influences, market capitalism, and liberal ideals present Indian women with greater opportunities and freedoms, whilst on the other side, there are new anxieties from the reduction in state support causing stress upon personal risk, reduced security, and new expectations that contradict traditional family expectations (Ganguly-Scrase 2003).

The genealogy of neoliberalism in developed countries reveals a well-traveled and defined route of reduced spending for social services and increased military spending. Rathi views this roadmap for development as "irrational and oppressive", in line with the broader context of post-colonialism. In neoliberal India, Rathi believes legal resolutions have purported to solve the long-term problems of racism and sexism. Because of this, Rathi views the issues of racism and sexism as deeply suffused and increasingly distorted:

> What has been happening lately in the xenophobic "people's city" of Delhi is racism. This racism is beyond skin color. This racism is dangerous because it is laced with the toxic combinations of sexism and nationalism, macho-nationalism to be precise. The fact that one group of individuals are made to feel small, inefficient, ugly, worthless, and incapable owing to biology and anthropology not being in their favor shows that biology is political as are anthropology and history. Even if "victory" is celebrated, you cannot hide racism with nationalism.

Sanjay agrees. He does not see a distinction between nationalism and neoliberalism: "to me, they are one in the same." Several scholars have echoed this view by arguing neoliberalism is essentially capitalism organized differently. Moreover, all forms of capitalism need, "both the territorial nation-state form and the ideology of

[40] Ganguly-Scrase and Scrase (2008b) also use this idiom when describing the new opportunities and new problems women face as India continues with policies supporting liberalization.

nationalism" (Davidson 2008). Harvey (2005) states, "the neoliberal state needs nationalism of a certain sort to survive" (84). Harmes (2012) advances this thinking by writing; "certain nationalist policies are not only compatible with neoliberal values, but that these values may actually be dependent on certain nationalist policies" (59). For Inshah and Shri the effect is profound on their daily lives. Inshah argues nationalism is what makes the Kashmir conflict perpetual: "the State functions through a colonial narrative, with coercion and militarism being the main tenets." In India there is no significant military industrial complex but militarism is still big business. Inshah explains:

> India is the largest importer of weapons and Kashmir today is the most militarized zone in the world. They're importing Western cultural militarism. There is a constant state of conflict and it is perpetuated by nationalism and the fear of terrorism. But it is part of an even bigger project, the liberalization and pro-development doctrine of Modi. That's why feminism, those tribes in the Northeast, and Kashmiri struggles are intertwined. This is structural and patriarchal abuse. From the patriarch we never asked for and don't want. India has imported not only the weapons of the west but also the political and psychological weapons.

India has a foreign policy of restraint and rapprochement but domestically Inshah argues the strategy of "rearmament and containment" is maintained. India, since the 1940s, has engaged in several protracted contests with its neighbors. Border disputes over Aksai Chin, Arunachal Pradesh, and Kashmir highlight a need to maintain a large standing force ready to confront powerful opposition in China and Pakistan. Inshah believes that this amounts to Kashmir acting as a "stepping stone", a training ground, for a foreign policy breakdown and military escalation. Inshah argues, "Kashmir keeps India's soldiers fresh with ongoing conflicts, ongoing status quo militarization." Shri endorses Inshah's thinking, "India is not involved in any wars right now so who do you think they are they testing these weapons on, how do they justify expenditures? Some lives are expendable. The rationale is lost on me."

In *Imagined Communities* (1983) Anderson argues that nationalism, although modern and correlative of the age of enlightenment, is not based on rationality. Shri is concerned about increasing nationalism; it is used as a tool for a political project, not for progress. He acknowledges that liberalization has helped increase opportunities, but he would like to see more liberal reforms and economic opportunities travel to other parts of India, not just cities like Delhi and Mumbai.

Sanjay believes India, with the rise of BJP, is following lockstep with the roadmap Rathi described. He believes India's plat for development is more defined by traditional mores than Western iterations. Sanjay notes, "my friends warned me that [BJP] was growing and that the country was changing. I thought people were becoming more progressive. But I was wrong."

7.5 Conclusion

In the spring of 2014, as I left Delhi amidst a landslide election victory for Modi and the BJP, the prevailing feeling from the young marginalized middle was one of a protracted brace and tension. They would carry on in the Gramscian way, 'with the pessimism of the intellect and the optimism of the will' (Morgan 1987: 295). Through their experiences the marginalized middle have become less concerned with state citizenship than the pursuit of the rights and dignity they feel they deserve. Despite political changes, little had or would change. They would continue to find ways to extend democratic citizenship to their constituencies and encourage constructive action with the generations just below them. They would continue to approach liberalization cautiously, staying vigilant for processes that belie claims for progressive politics, new freedoms, and shared citizenship—including those by the new political entrant, the Aam Aadmi Party.

Young people strive to belong in many different ways, whilst boundary maintenance is ongoing. Marginality in India is marked by invisibility. The distinction between minority statuses and backwardness—to combat invisibility—is one of the most divisive quests for inclusion in modern India. Who is backward, who is privileged, how does one social group compared to another group? These questions are problematic, especially towards collaborative political work among marginalized groups—an unrealized goal of the marginalized middle. The marginalized middle-class activists recognize the danger in marginalized communities pitting their ambitions against each other to garner recognition from the state. This endeavor does not enhance groups' claims of citizenship but rather maintains the status quo of peripheral citizenship. Ambedkar famously quipped that a, "backward community is a community which is backward *in the opinion of the Government*" (Jayal 2013: 245). This notion that backwardness is entrenched survives today and is as applicable today as it was in the early days of Independence. Despite their claims otherwise and the important social work for their constituencies, I observed little collaboration among marginalized groups. I observed little active citizenship outside of activists' identity groups.

The case studies in this chapter offered a grounded examination of processes, serves to unsettle stereotypes, and make visible the nuance of privilege and marginalization. Belonging and the politics of belonging is multi-layered and multi-scaled (Antonisch 2010). By recognizing the challenges and complexities ushered in by neoliberalism and the intersectionality of caste, gender, religion, and sexual orientation we can move towards an understanding of mobilizations around marginality. Identities and citizenship are not determined by one quality but several complex and shifting components.

8. Conclusion

8.1 Introduction

This thesis explored the nature of young middle-class activism in Delhi, with the middle-class broadly defined. I examined the construction of emergent class categories by focusing on self-ascribed identities and their performance within a prevailing politico-economic moment, which scholars have identified as neoliberalism (Harvey 2005; Gooptu 2013). Economic liberalism has given rise to certain effects, technologies, and aspirations among the middle-class. These effects are manifest in the rise of social mobilizations by a restless youth in Delhi. I argued there is evidence to counter, as well as support, much of the existing pessimistic scholarship on the young middle-class (Ghertner 2012; Baviskar 2011; Anjaria 2009; Harriss 2007; Chatterjee 2004). Much of what has been described as middle-class activism in previous studies is mobilizations by RWAs as part of larger horizontal networks in Delhi. The other focus in scholarship has been on civil society groups that mobilize subordinate social groups in the name of the public interest, order, and rational law. In the empirical chapters I've shown that young people are now engaging in a diverse range of micro-interventions as well as building political movements. Many of these social and political activities attempt to work towards a 'shared' citizenship, thus engendering, a more inclusive politics.

In the review of relevant literature and bringing together of diverse themes, this research speaks to various key issues in global social science, including the politics of youth, the performativity of class, a politics of belonging and the use of networks and ICTs in activism. There were limitations to my research project, chiefly my outsider status and decision to keep my research community narrowly bound to young urban middle-class (q.v. Chapter Three).

There are many more types of activism and social action in the middle-class that I have not covered in this thesis. Young people are active in a plethora of local i.e. block, colony, and neighborhood level activities, such as caring for elderly family members, cleaning litter from the street, as well as larger issue based campaigns, for example campaigns against he use of large dowries in marriages. The research would have benefited from more voices from the political right, as well as religious activists and young people involved in judicial activism. However, I was able to converse with many young people championing disparate causes and observe their innovative social politics. Young people and students' participation in political movements in India is not new or novel, but I argue the impetus towards a 'participatory' or 'shared' citizenship and the notions being perpetuated by some of my respondents—that they are beyond identity—is new and noteworthy.

Through the chapters, I have conveyed a sense of youth assertion and agency through terms like 'agentic' youth, 'active' citizenship, and 'dynamic' youth. This understanding should be juxtaposed with the literature on the shortfall of agency and rights for youth, the theory on civil society/political society and oppressing structures/schema (Hart 2009; Chatterjee 2004; Giddens 1991; Bourdieu 1984). It should also be understood alongside the discussion in this thesis about the self-perception—and projection—of young middle-class activists and objective descriptions. In addition, the extent that structures shape the agency of the youth under this study is a key underlying consideration.

In this conclusion chapter, I bring the various elements of the thesis together and address the research questions from Chapter One. Additionally, in each section I will identify conceptual shifts taking place that have far-reaching implications. Before a final statement, I will outline what remains for future research.

8.2 Activism with limitations

The young middle-class is increasingly engaged in exciting new modalities of social action, principally with the use of ICTs. Activists are more connected and social action is more diffused than before, but these are 'weak' ties (Werbner 1999) built around broad issues that are often cursory and incomplete as an inclusive project. In the context of Delhi, this research showed middle-class youth involved in social action that did effect change at the local level, subtly altering local fields related to education, health, and exposing corruption. At times their activism did connect to the politics of the lower classes and marginalized, but many of these activities were restrained by simultaneous contradictory or limiting actions.

For example, the collective mobilization and activism around women's security was viewed as a moment of cross-class mobilization. However, Dalits I spoke with felt these mobilizations were exclusive to upper-caste women. The actions of the young middle-class often reflected only the gender, caste, and class location of its proponents. In another instance, social entrepreneurial activity to improve public safety, health services, and service delivery in Chapter Five connected technology and the users/consumers of that tech, providing all citizens with better service delivery and options. However, when examining the formation of these enterprises, the young entrepreneurs were guided most by a desire to be seen launching an enterprise that was doing good, succeeding after starting with little—feeding off an emotional narrative of taking great risks to create something extraordinary. The impetus to these actions was not public-spiritedness, but rather challenging one's self to see what one could produce. The cause was malleable to avenues that would expand the enterprise and make money. There is also the example of AAP supporters like Sunil that were

galvanized by the party's inroads with the urban poor and inclusive strategy. Notwithstanding, many other AAP supporters left once the party became a populist platform and its campaigns/manifesto began to focus on a wider spectrum of people and issues. There are several examples of actions by informants in this thesis that contradict or belie true motivations.

The activism of middle-class youth proved to be both invited and invented. For example, the social action was invited with the coalition that formed around advancing Dalit rights, as well as the many examples of activists groups forming a collective to have a stronger impact (e.g., LGBT rights groups against Section 377 ruling). Other interventions like RTI and community activists' working on service delivery and local state transparency labeled their activities as 'social' as a means of distinguishing their actions from political activities. This was the case with Shashank in Chapter Four and other informants in this thesis; this work—despite the assertions by activist otherwise—is often very political.

From my sampling of informants, I found activism that was frequently invented. This was indicative of the young middle-class that increasingly engaged in new and inventive social action, experimenting with new tools and methods. However, the lifespan and energy of these pursuits was constrained by social structures, especially expectations from middle-class families to find a more secure and traditional career. As Prukalpa noted, "there is little patience from our families for anything except what they see as respectable work". Behind many of the respondents were family members (largely offstage in this thesis) unsure of activist projects and social enterprises. When Sneha resigned from her work with AAP, this was partly because of internal questioning and resentment from the unpaid workers, but also because her parents feared for her safety when she was out at night with so many

young men campaigning—and they feared how that course of action would be seen by others in the middle-class.

Young activists like Aditya and Sneha revealed that they were still struggling with activation of the self and actualization, admitting they needed to work on their selves first before they could reach their full potential as changemakers. Several AAP supporters (Ritu, Pradeep, and Zahir) entered into campaign work, something that they would later admit was a mistake. They were unwilling to unpack fully why they were no longer supporting AAP. Other informants were less honest about how they were performing the change they wanted to see. Varun, for example, struggled with expectations and staying committed to his enterprise's mission.

I found youth activists to be generally more optimistic about their own everyday political and social work than larger mobilizations they were a part of. Many of the young people I met were perhaps truly playing the part of a middle-class citizen in line with Goffman's notion of the dramaturgical, merely wearing the 'masks' of social roles to see themselves as acting a part—to embody being middle-class (1959: 19, 56; Dickey 2012). Seemingly, in playing these roles they were unaware of the embedded power dynamics and their stake in attempts to enroll the urban poor as ethical and moral actors in a scene framed by neoliberal governance paradigms of individual participation (Kamat 2002: 9).

As these youth assimilate more with the middle-class, there is the danger or inevitability that their actions will be "adopted and adapted on all sides, banalized [and] recuperated" by dominant political projects and cultural hegemony (Lefebvre 2005 [1981]: 108). Their pursuits and politics may begin to align more with the pessimistic critiques of scholars. Some of this is indicative of Lefebvre's argument that creative moments and unconventional actions eventually "devolve back into the

ground or humus of everyday life" (2008: 234). Holding Lefebvre's assertion, we can understand why some idealistic youth activists are unable to sustain their positive work against the persistent effects of dominant interests.

Economic liberalization and globalization have restructured the way young middle-class activists operate—especially in terms of modality, strategy, technology use, and approaches to the state. Instead of fighting these inevitabilities the middle-class youth are embracing them and molding them to fit their objectives with numerous transformations of and within the dominant cultural economy. The art of making-do, what de Certeau calls 'bricolage', is a process that often implies cooperation as much as competition (1984: xvi). Many of the young social activists I met resemble the 'new Indians' and 'doers' that Gooptu (2013) identified who do not resist prevailing structures and unequal systems, but find new ways to maneuver around and mold them. The young activists demonstrate different forms of agency, some in the form of resistance but others with improvisation and resourcefulness: bricolage. An important focus for researchers going forward is to interrogate the new politics emerging behind the need for improvisation and the assertion of middle-class activism.

8.3 An emerging politics

The young middle-class respondents claimed to be moving beyond identity but young activists on the margins problematized this as glossing over deep societal hierarchies. Many actions that are described as 'anti-politics' and have reconfigured the political space do little to connect with the politics of the marginalized. Despite an increase in social and civic activism over the past several years, there is no evidence of increased solidarity among groups in Delhi.

Many young middle-class activists strive for an inclusive politics that encompasses the poor, and a simultaneous guarding of entrenched interests that exclude the poor. Social action was built around issues that were conducive to the participation of broad collectives, but the new politics that remains is still reminiscent of varied sub-groups pushing for targeted benefits. Social welfare and inclusivity is not a political priority for the middle-class.

The middle-class maintains vast multifarious and antithetical relationships with the other classes, with different levels of the state, dominant capital, and various forms of media. As a result, the hegemonic politics of the traditional middle-class that attempt to coordinate the interests of the dominant classes is increasingly coming into conflict with the highly diverse fragments of the emerging middle-class. In recent years, different fragments of the middle-class mobilized around a multitude of issues e.g., electricity tariffs, transparency in government, threats from informal/illegal commerce, demolition (and preservation) of slums, etc. These mobilizations were absent a restrictive ideology. Another characteristic of this emerging citizen activism is that the actions and stakeholders are diffused, spread over different groups and varying projects. The activism of the middle-class is articulated in varied frames and increasingly with new approaches.

New modalities of social action

New modalities of social action have moved the site of deliberation to a hybrid public/digital space in an effort to connect more people to mobilizations and political campaigns (Guru 2014; Singh 2014). In Chapter Four and Five the hybrid model, whether it be with online activism or social enterprise, proved to be in sync with social change. The new modalities correspond with young people and their "on the

go" modern lifestyle, as Prasad noted in Chapter Four. By using both offline strategies for activism and not ignoring the state's potential role in action, the output of these activities and activism will continue to transform with society.

Hybrid models of social enterprise that work to complement—rather than substitute for—improving governance and mitigating social problems will further their effectiveness. Just as hybrid activism furthers the utility and effectiveness of activist projects when it incorporates both digital and analog strategies. Visible leaders are largely absent from these mobilizations. Anna Hazare was more of an inspiration for anti-corruption mobilizations, he did not help setup online groups, coordinate with the media, and promote gatherings in advance. An army of activists did this work. These new modalities increasingly belong and relate to all the members of the mobilization. There is no central or core group pushing these movements forward. They were shared efforts with people adding to the logistical and advocacy efforts, free from hierarchal structures that exist in (and many of my informants would say—hinder) civil society. The relationships among the organizers, promoters, and mere participants are horizontal. Additionally, the new modalities are isomorphic with the changing landscape of democratic politics and active citizenship in Delhi.

When I first arrived in Delhi, many informants spoke of how the atmosphere had changed after the anti-corruption push and mobilizations around women's security. They spoke of a network of activists, including those from the political right, that was now underlain and ready to mobilize if needed. Werbner (1999) argues that civic networks; even 'weak ties' are powerful in generating widely ramifying interethnic links and an evolving shared consciousness. These weak ties can create a sense of togetherness among disparate groups. Emerging acquaintance networks constituted by 'weak' ties are proficient in creating a diffusion of influence and

information, mobility opportunities, and community organization (Werbner 1999; Granovetter 1973). Primary groups built around 'strong ties', like that of Rajesh's activist community, are applicable to a small, well defined—in both their objectives and membership—closed networks. They are adept at targeting a local or single issue where the returns of that activism are to be narrowly distributed.

Granovetter stresses the "cohesive power of weak ties lends itself to discussion of relations between groups and to analysis of segments of social structure not easily defined in terms of primary groups" (1973: 1360). These movements are diffused and distributed widely; this composition informs how these new forms of activism sustain and extend these movements. However, in my time examining activism in Delhi the 'weak' ties that were forged around broad mobilizations like women's security in 2012 eventually dissipated and despite a bevy of new and innovative activists projects, the strongest appeal for individuals was back with their identity groups and primary groups, making requests of the state.

8.4 Activists and the state

I observed young activists that approach the state in various ways. Youth tended to negotiate with state officials in response to their specific issues or the issues of their primary groups. In my conversations I learned young people have very different opinions about what the role of the state should be. Some believed the state should be a distant manager; others wanted more intervention in the social sector. There are many young middle-class people in Delhi that are apathetic to politics and social justice pursuits. But a growing number of young people articulate a different worldview and seek solutions through civil society and grassroots action. They

strongly disapprove and distrust politicians but nevertheless interact with different levels of the state.

For example, in Chapter Four much of the hybrid activism endeavored to bring people to offline protests and events in central parks to make demands of the local government. RTI activists use the tools of the government, LGBT protestors used the constitution as a guide, SCs and STs use statutory commissions, Sneha, Shri, and AAP supporters all at different times protested in front of police stations. Activists in this thesis demanded justice for various causes; those demands were directed towards the state at different levels.

By organizing sit-ins in front of ministry offices and police stations the young activists were attempting to draw in the state as a villain, whilst at the same time the state becomes the guarantor of their safety and legitimacy of their activism (this was not always the case for minority, supra-state, and insurgent mobilizations). If something happened to the protestors it would be the state's responsibility. In return the conformity of activists to use the spaces of the state and direct their protest at the institutions of the state adds to the state's legitimacy. Moreover, the spaces of protest for activists, in central parks and public universities, follow the logic of the state. At Jantar Mantar police are on stand-by ready to take overzealous or riotous protesters to the nearby police station in Sansad Marg, Police Colony and future home of the Delhi police headquarters.

For many middle-class social actors, their politics and the needs of their constituencies point to the lack of access to the state, which they seek to change through their activism. From being outside power, they want to be inside it, even an idealised version of power. The interlocutors in Chapter Seven, middle-class but from an identity group on the margin, downplayed the role the state played in their lives

and spoke of the need for a radical overhaul of our understanding of citizenship. However, their actions and words reinforced the importance of the state as the centre where their group gains and loses power.

Citizenship lenses

In my conversations with young activists there was a clear divide between the ways young people view citizenship and civic philosophies. The demand for rights and equality was ever-present, the approach or strategy was what differed greatly. For many of the middle-class that tended to be more secure in a socioeconomic sense, I found a desire for the ideals of shared citizenship, a push for equality as a complete project reinforced by working across caste/class/and ethnicity. Shared citizenship for these informants was a constructive tactic, a means for balancing difference and universality. These informants believed in the idea of the universal citizen. This view of citizenship steers clear of ideology and instead focuses on what is morally right. This was the worldview of many of the AAP supporters like Pradeep and Ritu as well as the urbane social entrepreneurs like Prukalpa and Anshul.

However, with the absence of ideology the appeal here is to an individual sense of morality, which can also be problematic. Singh (2014: 2-3) asks,

> What happens then to the rights of the marginalized, stigmatized, vulnerable groups who go against this sense of morality—the homosexual, the sex worker, the single woman who is out past 10 pm the dalit who is an 'out-caste'?

Middle-class activists are attempting to avoid what they see as a return to a reactionary politics, but this new politics largely fails to address these important issues. Many AAP supporters saw themselves as modern professionals and they viewed their achievements as moving beyond caste and religion. My respondents perpetuated these ideas. However, this irons out privilege from the trajectories of

these aspiring journalists, academics, bureaucrats, etc. In addition, recent political developments at Hyderabad University provoked by the suicide of Dalit research scholar Rohit Vemula, as well as Jat and Patidar reservation agitations in Haryana and Gujurat led by youth, shows that social capital asserted under the discursive rhetoric of broad social issues, not caste, is the perception of these middle-class activists rather than neutral descriptions.

Another analytical set from my informants was critical of the push for a participatory or shared/universal citizenship. They viewed this worldview as perpetuating hegemony that blunts marginalized citizenship claims. This analytical set was comprised of many from the marginalized middle as well as informants from minority groups. They see the urban middle-class/upper-caste young person—whether liberal in their social politics or conservative—as treating lower classes and minorities as denizens that needed succor and intervention, reflecting an uninvited and imperious paternalism. Instead, they want an India, or at least the people of India, to value multiculturalism and to acknowledge a need for special affirmative rights. Some of my respondents like Rajesh and Sanjay called for temporary exceptions for social justice needs. They want India to continue to preserve the standard of a 'community of communities' but one in which diversity is acknowledged and valued. This analytical set of young people noted that this is not far off from what is actually done in practice, arguing that group-differentiated citizenship is already the dominant mode of citizenship in Delhi. Shri and Inshah, from this minority analytical set, would go even farther, viewing pluralism (as in multiple self-governing states and territories that coexist) as a welcomed development.

To these points, the middle-class activists that supported the universal citizen/shared citizenship model had critiques for the 'community of communities'

model. First, they would agree that this is what is done in practice and has led to 'vote-bank' and patronage politics. Instead of a representative democracy this group would like to move towards a more direct democracy (except some became uncomfortable with that reality once AAP began the work of governing). This analytical set was opposed to identity politics that is susceptible—in their view—to bankrupt ideologies. They argued that this model maintains social stratification, groups breakdown along factions of identity instead of the individual. It is a zero-sum game for entitlements and rights, where one group gains in an electoral season and another losses ground. This group-differentiated view is anti-India—India as a whole project—and, importantly for middle-class sensibilities, this philosophy they put forth is unconstitutional, it disregards the original interpretation (Jayal 2013). These activists believe in equality over consistent appeals for legal rights. Rajesh suggests this is because the secure middle-class know without interventions by minority groups, 'equality' is a euphemism for the status quo: "they don't want [Dalits] to have advantages now, and they don't want us to fully catch-up."

Intersectionality and lived citizenship

Awareness and understating of intersectionality are important for responding to rights and citizenship inequities by making visible the interconnected structures of power that create them. I support that the complexities of belonging are best approached through intersectional and 'lived citizenship' perspectives (Lister et al. 2007). These perspectives can help identify and understand asymmetric relations in multiple social spheres, because not all aspects of society correspond to one another or have an equivalent. Nor do they have a central logic; some aspects of society and an individual just don't make sense unless it is through intersectional lens. For example,

Rathi's feminist principles came up awkwardly against admission that she desired to be accepted into a society that she believed to be racist and discriminatory. Sanjay's Janus-faced relationship between his identity as a Dalit and as a gay man revealed a young man trying to navigate complex and intersecting social fields.

By exploring the intersection of gender, caste, ethnicity, geography, religion, and class as sources of discrimination against minorities in Indian society I intended to acknowledge overlapping and interdependent systems of disadvantage. The case studies highlight not only the young people's acknowledgement of intersectionality but also their strategies and tactics for carrying these epithets in the everyday. I observed non-normative sexual and ethnic identities that were unabashedly championed and defended by young people with these identities. These acts herald a change in Delhi society that is important considering the structural and physical violence that these identities can provoke. Young people on the margins are increasingly asserting their voice into the public discourse. This gradual assertion has taken place in society as well as the individual; I described this in Chapter Seven with the marginalized middle informants. In their early youth some subversions and negotiations of their identities took place, but in their later youth these same individuals have managed to express their aspirations through activism, finding strength in an emerging social liberalism—as well as their identities' community.

As discussed, the middle-class is expanding and attempts to capture and define the stratum are frequent and varied (q.v. *Figure 1*). However, and importantly, these boundaries are also being tested. Tested by an emerging politics in Delhi, by the heterogeneous make-up, and by cultural shifts—spearheaded by young people. Nevertheless, sociocultural inequalities like caste and language are an integral part of the process of middle-class formation. Politics, modalities of social action, and young

people's relationship with the state are principally affected by their feeling of inclusion and how they interact with society (Arnot and Swatz 2012; Yuval-Davis 2011). Some of the upper-caste activists I met understood these issues, even if they themselves did not have to worry about inclusion. Young people that understand the connection between intersectionality and structural inequalities can persuade others in the middle-class to shed their privilege blinders.

This is important for this study because of what was claimed by many middle-class political and social activists—that they were moving beyond caste and identities in their work. They were focused on the idea—or rather ideal—of the individual, the universal citizen. But as the discussions in this thesis advance, there are limitations to this universal idea of 'citizen' and push for technocratic solutions (Singh 2014). These activists' worldview does not take into account that the marginalized are still wrestling with issues of citizenship and belonging because their claims to rights and premise of citizenship are not equal. The meanings that citizenship actually have in people's lives, and how that connects with the emerging politics in Delhi, will provide future researchers many directions for analysis.

8.5 Implications for future research

As a situated account of young people in Delhi engaged in social and political activism, this thesis is an analytically generative addition to geographic scholarship on the urban middle-class. In the empirical chapters I focused on four approaches to social action that brought out the different strategies young people take towards activating their citizenship. These new experiences and expressions by the young middle-class are indicative of conceptual shifts taking place that have far-reaching implications. There is much that remains to be done in further research, partly because

of the limitations of my research project but also because of the profusion of conceptual paths created from the discursive activities of young people in Delhi.

To start, further inquiry into the ways young people involved in political action put an emphasis on the use of newly available technologies as essential for success. This would necessitate expanding beyond an examination of their use of ICTs to how young people enter in, their quotidian experience with, and what they are learning from expanding digital networks. Researchers should endeavor to learn how youth navigate 'affinity spaces' (Gee 2005), as these networked 'publics' (Boyd 2007) are increasingly critical pedagogies where new norms are reinforced and youth are socialized. Moreover, how will increased access to ICTs, including affordable smartphones effect cultural production and social politics in India? How will the new modalities of social action continue to change activism?

A second area of examination that might enrich this project is additional scholarship on youth 'doing charity *by* doing trade' rather than 'doing charity *whilst* doing trade' that could offer new ways of theorizing young people's agency. Several important question remains from interactions and observations with the young social entrepreneurs. How do these young entrepreneurs define how their enterprises interpret 'social' objectives to enable the rational pursuit of values and objectives? Future research would benefit from examining whether these enterprises provide aegis and charge to marginalized members of society. What are the bottom-up possibilities of social entrepreneurship, does it move the social sector beyond just aid and protection?

The third area of research that can augment this study comes from the experience of activists moving into political party work. My research took place whilst the AAP experience was unfolding and young peoples' relationship with the

party was still in flux. For researchers with prospective hindsight, the impetus for the young middle-class to support this new politics will be a central inquiry. Is the rise of AAP the culmination of various protest movements in Delhi over the past several years? How have recent social mobilizations reconfigured the political space in Delhi? How can the activism of the middle-class connect with the politics of marginalized groups?

A final area of further investigation concerns the interaction of different social identities and the power structures that underpin them at multiple levels. Intersectionality merits greater attention from scholars that examine India. There is a profusion of research that examines forms of social strata in isolation from one another. An intersectional lens covers more angles and extends the analysis of domination beyond class to include the micro dynamics of structural inequalities. A stronger understanding of mobilizations around marginality might help determine how to mitigate the competition for resources and build real cross-group collaboration. How can the various obstacles preventing social groups from cooperating be mitigated? What can young activist do to improve the social and developmental environment for the next-in-line youth, inside and outside their social groups?

The intention of this thesis is to contribute new understandings to scholarly, policy, and activist debates on the Indian middle-class, trends in activism, and experiences of youth that can inform each other and encourage future research. Drawing on qualitative research, this thesis explored the aspirations and practices of young people caught between channelizing middle-class expectations and the social change they want to inhabit with activism, entrepreneurship, and everyday politics. My account underscores a need identified elsewhere (Bayat 2013; Jeffrey 2008) to

move the scholarship of youth agency beyond resistance; it must also begin to critically examine young people's practices within wider political economic processes and cultures of enterprise. The actions of the young middle-class may not point to a new politics of volunteerism, but it may signify a new politics of improvising solutions through activism.

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