ANTHROPOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES ON STUDENT FUTURES

Youth and the Politics of Possibility

Edited by
AMY STAMBACH
and KATHLEEN D. HALL

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Anthropological Perspectives on Student Futures

Youth and the Politics of Possibility

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Student Futures and the Politics of Possibility: An Introduction

Amy Stambach

Introduction

In a sketch titled *The Future*, cartoonist Frank Odoi ridicules the idea that schooling will improve the world. One student's mother anticipates, "My child will become a doctor one day. She will find a cure for malaria." Another mother hopes, "Mine will be a rainmaker. She will eradicate drought and famine." Set in rural Kenya, Odoi's commentary satirizes education by juxtaposing western medicine with the image of an African rainmaker. Odoi's 2006 reservation about schooling compares with a cartoon by Dr. Jack, published on June 17, 2015, but contrasts in its more expectant view of education. In Dr. Jack's, one of two running students carries a football labeled "aspirations." A grimacing, grabbing, red monstrous creature, sporting "unemployment" on its T-shirt, chases the students. Dr. Jack's message lampoons the idea that education will bring students jobs. It turns youths' aspirations into a political football and unemployment into a grim reality.

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It would be silly to exemplify the main point of this volume through two cartoons published in different sources, but when read together they offer a starting point for introducing one of this book's main arguments: that education is a social field on which the future is imagined, and temporalities concerning youth are emblematic of wider concerns about opportunities and obstacles. The first mother in the first cartoon is hopeful; the second mother appears foolish; the students in the second cartoon are running scared, while the unemployment monster is overwhelming them. Both cartoons orient the time of education toward the future and pair discourses of hope and possibility with discourses of fear and anxiety. The main questions they raise that this book addresses are as follows: How do people see education as framing their fields of social possibilities? How do they imagine and project their hopes and aspirations through education onto a future that, quite obviously, does not yet exist? What political pitfalls and possibilities do people posit and experience through education, and what do their projections indicate about transnational connections and local particularities?

Studies in this book demonstrate that the field of education is full of both hope and uncertainty. They theorize that education is itself a social field or "concatenation of events" (Fortes, 1938, p. 6) through which people express and come to realize their hopes and aspirations, including sometimes to change or to abandon them. Contributors build on Appadurai's notion that the "capacity to aspire" is an unequally distributed "navigational capacity" (2013, p. 289); that human potential exists equally everywhere, but that the poor have fewer resources for activating or realizing it. Accordingly, contributors examine when and how aspirations for a better future through schooling are stopped up or realized. Chapters explore how and when people refashion their aspirations in regard to different coinciding plans, or in relation to what Guyer has called different "emergent horizons of imagination" (Guyer, 2007, p. 413). In examining student futures and the politics of possibility, the authors take seriously the idea that if, indeed, education is about innovation or creativity, about critical thinking or learning beyond simply reproducing the past, then anthropologists must look for the places where that spark flickers, at the places where the imagination of the future is not dismissed as socially unreal because it is not yet materially realized.

In school contexts, the time of education orients continuously forward, toward the immediate and near-term future, sometimes relentlessly. Schooling coordinates schedules. The annual calendar is marked by formative and summative exams, by preliminary and final papers. In contexts where annual testing takes on the quality of rite of passage,

time is punctuated. Activity accrues, merits are earned, and accumulated knolwedge translates into jobs and products—or not. Annual exams and matriculation coordinate with other social calendars, including religious and national holidays, work and agricultural seasons and cycles, and conventions of life cycle development. This future orientation requires an analytic approach that not only accounts for the role of the past in processes of social reproduction (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977) but also theorizes the conjuncture of differently valued and realizable possibilities that transform people into fuller social beings. Johnson-Hanks refers to these moments of realization as "vital conjunctures," moments that are of "particularly critical durations when more than usual is in play, when the futures at stake are significant" (2002, p. 871). Chapters in this book focus on different simultaneous courses of action, contingent on the coincidence or temporal coinciding of social horizons.

By providing ethnographic accounts from various locations where mass schooling is nearly universal though not of equal quality, and by interpreting these settings in the light of diverse histories and logics that inform them, this volume contributes to an anthropology of youth which has been drawn largely to studies of popular culture, consumerism, and resistance. Several recent works, such as Peter Demerath's (2003) on Papua New Guinean high school students and Theresa McGinnis' (2009) work on Khmer youths' visions of the American dream, capture well students' ambivalence about the instrumental value of schooling. Reva Jaffe-Walter and Stacey Lee (2011) discuss programs designed to offer students positive visions of the future. Anthropological research on the lives and experiences of young people advances understanding of how young people plan for the future and experience economic uncertainty (e.g., Batallán & Neufeld, 2011; Cammarota & Fine, 2008; Christiansen, Utas, & Vigh, 2006; Herrera, 2014; Honwana, 2013; Milstein, 2006). Writing about how ambitious young men in Ethiopia grapple with an unemployment rate of about 50 %, Daniel Mains (2012) uncovers that young people there look primarily to not only North America but also Europe and South Africa for future economic opportunities. Adeline Masquelier's (2013) research on un(der)employed Niger youth reveals that many pass time planning for a cosmopolitan future that they also expect may never come to pass. These and related studies (e.g., Coe, 2005; Cole & Durham, 2007; Sommers, 2012; Weiss, 2009) indicate that across many settings, young people feel that formal schooling has not prepared them well for a productive life. This failure is sometimes referred to as a "crisis of modernity"—the failure of state systems of education to deliver equally

on the promises of development: jobs, income, health, wealth, and social security. Cohorts of educated but underemployed youth are sometimes seen as a "sacrificed" generation (Sharp, 2002; Trawick, 2007), captured or captivated by conflict or war. Other times they are seen as static or waiting, as among lower-middle-class young men in India who describe social movement through waiting as "timepass," as a matter of generating social potential by holding back, a bit like revving an engine on high power before pulling the choke to drive forward (Jeffrey, 2010).

The above-cited and other works pave the way for posing the related, positively inflected question here, what are students' and others' own hopeful visions and aspirations regarding education? Studies in this volume address how people engage in educational opportunities and produce their lives through education, including how education "occurs as a by-product of the cultural routine" of daily life (Fortes, 1938, p. 5) and involves "highly asymmetrical forms of co-participation" (Hanks, 1991, p. 18) or what Bourdieu has called a "field of play" in which power relations among social agents structure human behavior. Within this field, students' and others' hopeful visions are expressed through plans, wishes, dreams–even through discourses and feelings of boredom (Nicolescu, 2014). Cultural reasoning about time and resources regarding the production of new groups of contemporaries—generationality—is "emblematic of a wider discourse" (Lukose, 2008, p. 134) having to do with social change and transformation (Cooper & Pratten, 2015). What emerges from such conceptualizations is emphasis on how people "position themselves–cognitively, morally, spiritually, and practically--to be open to possibilities" (Cooper & Pratten, 2015, p. 12). In looking at youth in relation to the cultural production of time and possibility, studies herein emphasize how people situate themselves and are situated relationally with regard to calculations about the past and future. Not unlike the cartoons introduced above, youth figure in these chapters as a subject through which to explore conceptualizations of student futures. As Honwana elaborates, youth are a "critical indicator of a state of a nation" (Honwana, 2013, p. 3). They "figure in how change is imagined" (Cole & Durham, 2007, p. 18) and are not necessarily an adolescent, pre-adult stage of life (Bucholtz, 2002).

Aspirations Within a Field of Play

In investigating people's hopeful visions and, and in conceptualizing youth as a signifier of relationships between people (Durham, 2000), this work moves away from a policy-oriented focus on classrooms and students,

and away from thinking about youth as consumers and counter-cultural, toward a framework that theorizes education as an arena through which people express their hopes and aspirations. Authors conceptualize education as a way of doing or perceiving life, a way of being in the world, and of coming to know it. They take the navigational capacity to aspire as an open question, not a starting point, and examine "situations that are consequential to the participants and beyond" (McDermott & Raley, 2011, p. 373).

This turn toward temporality is a critical aspect of this book's intervention. Anthropological studies of education and youth have largely employed the concept of cultural production. Efforts to explain how and why inequality persists despite the liberating language of education have emphasized the hidden or unintended forms of social advantage that are reproduced through cultural resignification, through a slippage in meaning between what schools intend and what they do. They have focused on how the past influences the present and on the unwitting ways in which people produce and reproduce their own circumstances. Willis' (1977) classic study of how 1970s-era working-class youth got working-class jobs in de-industrializing England (by positively embracing working-class signs that schools, supposedly, are to have altered) has served as a major narrative template in this project. That template stresses that people occupy social positions that determine future positions they may take; that positions and "tacit presuppositions" ("doxa" in Bourdieu's lexicon, 1977, p. 168) both enable and limit people's positions and actions; and that positions are determined by habitus or structuring structures that organize practices and perceptions of practices. Social class and past choices partly determine opportunities within a social field. Contributors here build on cultural production and practice theory to analyze people's education-related aspirations, including how the future is riven with risk and high potential for miscalculation. However, studies foreground temporality over production to emphasize that education involves a "temporal concatenation of events in which the significant factor is time, and the significant phenomenon is social change" (Fortes, 1938, p. 6). The marking, making, and re-making of time is a fundamental and characteristic quality of education, whether in domestic spaces, in national systems, or in religious or routinized spheres.

Thus, in conducting research among lower- and middle-class families and students living in Hyderabad, India, Gilbertson observes a certain "compulsion" among students to aspire to life-ways that differ from and improve on their parents'. Students' narratives of their successes differ between lower- and middle-class students. Lower-working-class students embrace

the idea that working hard and obtaining good marks will lead them on a path of upward social mobility, which students from more privileged backgrounds see as dependent on who one knows, not on marks themselves. When middle-class students fail to secure jobs or perform poorly on exams, they are "sheltered" by the social capital and networks that their middle-class friends and families provide. The "cruelty" as Gilbertson points out, drawing on Berlant (2011), is that the meritocratic system into which students are to be socialized places the responsibility on students themselves to work hard and aspire to something better, but the middle-class students who do, in fact, eventually succeed are those who put a value on networks and markets, not on hard work and high marks or grades. These well-off students recognize, themselves, that the field of play is highly variable and that they, as the more privileged, are strategically working it. Education may be a meritocratic system in principle, but the rules of the game implicitly ensure that the socially privileged are safeguarded.

The production and reproduction of hierarchy is also central to Roder's analysis of students' changing aspirations. Learning from students in modern-secular Bhutan, Roder discerns that not all options are desirable. Sometimes investing in education entails narrowing one's range of possibilities to what becomes "the best and only option." Such honing-in and delay of movement may constitute an investment or a gamble; the difference lies, as Roder shows, as much in the redefinition of success in the near term (e.g., redefining a goal one thought to be second best) as in the changing field of options made available. In the case of highly desirable government jobs in Bhutan, the field is notably shrinking—the government is downsizing—and the number of people seeking to enter government jobs is increasing. More and more students are sitting for government employment entrance examinations. These twofold changes—one in opportunity, another in the number of qualified applicants—constitute two coordinates of a multi-dimensional social field in which students' qualifications are increasingly becoming credentials of an uncertain or indefinite kind. To keep their options open and remain reactive to a changing economic and employment environment, students aspire to nothing in particular, and yet they are ready to take on most anything. The one exception, Roder notes, is in their orientation to the teaching profession. Parents and friends discourage students from becoming teachers, arguing the pay and workload are too inversely related: too much work, too little pay. In limiting aspirations and narrowing possibilities, students "wait for something better." Roder's point is

not that students are lazy and uninterested in working. It is not that they have a "poor attitude" as students are sometimes portrayed in this context. Rather, it is that they are exercising the rationality of schooling, weighing benefits and calculating odds. The untapped resource—or at least that which appears to be untapped in these Bhutanese contexts—is an expression of the broader and wider ontologies, the fuller cultural expressions of students' aspirations. "I want to be a sunflower" one student conveys; and yet such is beyond the scope of modern-secular schooling.

Broader ontologies beyond the state system of schooling are also a part of students' experiences in Gülen-inspired school studied by Kristina Dohrn. Here, in these international schools, such aspirations are encouraged within the limits of a particular institutional conceptualization. Students' aspirations are informed by several conjunctural and different visions; these include transnational ideals of connectedness to wider educated and Gülen-inspired communities (whose members might also provide Gülen-schooled graduates with jobs); moral ideals of an ethical person shaped within a Gülen-inspired Islamic religious framework; and self-motivated ideals of accomplishment and responsibility that students are to embrace and express as "their own." Differences between and among students' and teachers' framing of the future brings "the relational nature of youth" (Cole & Durham, 2007, p. 18) into perspective. This relational nature is evident in the ways students are sometimes seen as children and at other times as adult. Regardless, the future of the "golden generation," as Gülen leaders call Gülen students worldwide, is not entirely shared by all members of the Gülen movement. The politics of possibility lie here for students in the conjuncture of their aspirations and the Gülen movement's business-oriented and Turkish-based political priorities, coupled with students' families' visions of the object of schooling. Such student futures are contingent on the coinciding of different horizons, each of which move into play at different times and at different rates. Middle-class families who send their children to Gülen schools are concerned with converting education into economic opportunities. Parents want their children to get jobs. Yet not only is the capacity to aspire, and to navigate a job market, disproportionally more available to these middle-class and professional families and their children than to the average family of, in this case, other students living in Dar es Salaam (Tanzania), the framing of the future extends to a global network institutionally linked to a "distant prophecy." Fetullah Gülen is a Turkish-born, US-based religious leader hoping to educate students with modern knowledge as well as a

capital-market-compatible set of Islamic practices and morals. Economic and moral horizons are conjoined in these Gülen-supported institutions.

Hefner's research shows that for those who are "less keen on or capable of running on the socioeconomic treadmill," the ends of education are not as important as the pursuit of it. In the context of an Indonesian Islamic or *pesantren* boarding school where a new middle class is able to realize a once-future desire to access secondary education, the good life as it is imagined is not the same as that experienced. The school in this case, which is more explicitly religious than are Gülen-inspired schools, advances and signals families' desires to balance religious piety and educational achievement. Girls aspire to become doctors and engineers and when that is not possible, recalibrate what they want. They begin to see education as, like piety, ongoing and life lasting. Thus what might be seen as educational failure for lack of girls' attaining high-status jobs is redefined in relation to young women's pietistic visions of the now and hereafter. This finding broadens an anthropological literature that contrasts hopeful with uncertain futures. As Cooper and Pratten elaborate, the future is always rife with possibility: "Uncertainty is productive," it "produces new social landscapes and horizons" (2015, p. 2). Indonesian *pesantren* students' life-narrative projects build the future—new as it seems—creatively from the past. *Pesantren* students aspire to more than what their parents have; they wish to attend college and to move beyond their families' achievements. But they create the future in relation to an earlier generation of believers whom they have never met and to a sense of the "future here on earth." Thus there is a concatenation of temporalities, of generationality and futurity, of past and future in the present. But instead of blaming themselves or *pesantren* schools for any changes in their life courses, students reframe the value of their schooling as enabling them to refashion their lives as needed and to do so within an overarching religious frame.

Student futures are full of possibility for many people discussed in these cases, but this does not mean that schooling provides the capital or capabilities needed—or even desirable—for the future. Educated graduates in Hyderabad coming from wealthier families know they have been enabled through social networks; students in Bhutan who are waiting for the right moment to take—and succeed on—government exams know that their education alone does not provide all they need to realize their aspirations; Gülen-associated students in Tanzania know that their parents and the Gülen-inspired schools' horizons of expectation for them sometimes

differ; and *pesantren* students draw on wider discourses of piety to assess the value of their education. Schools are a part of a changing and changeable social field that students approach with pragmatism and creativity. Hopes for the possibility of a better future are what bring people to schools; realization that the future is uncertain and contingent is what connects these disparate cases. Studies demonstrate that schools may be good investments for governments and other entities but not necessarily good personal choices yielding returns for individuals (Cappelli, 2015).

Taken together, then, ethnographic accounts in Part 1 affirm that the capacity to aspire is "nurtured by the possibility of real world conjectures" (Appadurai, 2013, p. 189) and that even though schools provide a map and a plan, a terrain or a field of social action, neither they nor students specifically nor even together produce that future. People follow education's narrative and social course to a point; they live the present in terms of anticipated or desired futures. Like the mother who wishes that her child should become a rainmaker, and like the cartoonist who portrays her, people project a range of hopes and aspirations simultaneously onto the field of education. They "shape and enact their social environments in constant dialogue with the way the social environment moves and the way it is predicted to 'act'" (Vigh, 2009, p. 433), and they "figure the future" (Cole & Durham, 2008) in a manner that connects schools' transnational circuits and global connections with the moralities of the everyday: with the pragmatic forces of rainmaking, in Odoi's cartoon, and in the logic competitive sports and employment markets, in Dr. Jack's. The question addressed in the second part of this book is, accordingly: through what temporal strategies and in relation to what shifting moral compasses do people come to see and realize the scope and limits of education?

Realizations Related to Emergent Horizons

Education unfolds temporally on different scales and planes. Institutional time, daily time, curricular time, historical time—student futures emerge on multiple horizons, as chapters in Part 1 illustrate. But through what logics, pace, or rates of change do these horizons unfold? How do student futures intersect at various points, in relation to one another? And how do people who are sometimes left carrying the political football in the form of being "responsible for themselves" navigate the multiple unfolding horizons of opportunity as well as the obstacles that arise regardless of education? Henrik Vigh has taken a "second look" at the

concept of social navigation, arguing that "the way people move within moving environments is in the form of 'social navigation'" (Vigh, 2009, p. 420). "Rather than designating movement across a hardened, solidified surface," navigation designates "motion within fluid and changeable matter" (Vigh, 2009, p. 420). As such, the concept fine-tunes the concept of *negotiation*, which is often used in anthropological studies of education to designate the agency and willpower of students as individuals. Where negotiation suggests dialogue between entities, and a winner or loser at any given moment, navigation emphasizes the logic by which change that occurs within changing landscapes. It highlights the "interactivity of practice and the intermorphology of motion," allowing anthropological analysis to focus on that which is emerging.

By focusing on navigation or change within change, education can be conceptualized as a social realm or sphere composed of multiple possibilities, containing or promising an unspecified range of futures yet constrained by the limits of resources, information, and opportunities for participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 43). Taking this view, cases in this book's second part examine the social realization of schooling in two ways: one, as awareness that not all is possible, and two, as a material manifestation of education. People convert and conserve knowledge and calculate when and where to act on and with their credentials. They approach education as a vital institution, one in which "more than usual" (Johnson-Hanks, 2002, p. 871) is at stake in its operations. Future jobs, life's failure or success—even the possibility of "curing malaria" as the one cartoon above suggests. To understand how these conditions of change are navigated by students and parents who have high hopes for their children, chapters in this volume look at how social and economic capital accrue or are lost, are circulated and blocked, as students' futures unfold across multiple social horizons of the everyday, the curricular, and the developmental. In other words, they examine education-related realizations—material manifestations and shifting ideations associated with education.

Olivier Pattenden's study of schooling in post-Apartheid South Africa reveals a manifold vision of students' education experiences seen first as a time of hope and aspiration, when students are given and believe in a better future; and later as a time of realization when hope is lost or possibility transformed into new promises and opportunities. In the context of high rates of unemployment coupled with a school system that produces new graduates annually, graduates' realization of schools' cruel optimism is expressed powerfully in what Pattenden terms the "alternative possibilities" of success and fulfillment. These possibilities include drinking, hard

work with low pay, and a sense of misfortune expressed through witchcraft beliefs and practices. Whereas while in school students were ensured they will and can build their own lives upon graduation, graduates look back and recognize a reality that indeed they are alone in building a better future. The biting teeth of unemployment as in the Dr. Jack's cartoon render a mockery of the aspiration students were to have developed and managed while in school. The cruelty Pattenden's study shows is that the playing field was never solid or well delineated for all students.

Betrayal and struggle are likewise central to Mathew's analysis of schools in Kerala, India that are deemed "uneconomic" because state funding does not return an investment, and these schools therefore are in essence politically and financially abandoned. These are Malayalam-medium schools serving marginalized and poor Dalit communities. An ethnographic parallax here—a vision of the social sphere involving education, as seen from different vantages—is enabled through Mathew's account of Dalit mothers' own views of their children's futures. This generational view provides a relational perspective of not only how the future unfolds but also how people come to experience it often as all the more cruel for the great promise having once been attributed to education. "The idea of a utopia full of freedoms and opportunity" that is created through education "is beginning to erode," writes Honwana of youth in Africa (2013, p. 3). Mathew's study indicates where once a modernist discourse of development and human betterment accompanied state-supported public schools, here we see even the state terming Malayalam-medium schools "uneconomic" and therefore unworthy of state support. In the face of this abandonment, mothers experience time as standing still. The temporalities they strategize and navigate are not ones of waiting until times get better and they can activate their knowledge. Rather, they involve simply not moving; experiencing the past as ever present in the moment and watching others pass them by. Appadurai's argument that the poor have less navigational capacity to aspire rings all too loud and clear.

At the same time, neither students nor their parents are dupes. People navigate and are conditioned through schooling to deliberate and calculate their next move. Schooling positions students within a field of positions in which they are to determine their own course of action. To "practice for the future," Krystal Strong indicates, is to "set the terms of political participation that [students] plan to enact after graduation." Strong's analysis juxtaposes students' simultaneous scanning of social horizons with their own immediate assessment of the next best step. Politics in Nigeria necessitates a double play or simultaneous maneuver between

living in the present as it immediately appears and laying the groundwork for future positions. Schooling in Nigeria, not unlike the situation Jeffrey (2010) has described in India, or Mains (2012) of Ethiopia, involves several simultaneous courses of action, each with different temporalities and rhythms. Thus, students in Strong's study can serve as a "party chief," locally connected but tied to the nation, even if doing so requires a certain "doublespeak," a self-claimed title taken by one of Strong's interlocutors. Education here is more about experience than skills, about creating a narrative that itself can take several tacks, not obtaining a "First" or a high Grade Point Average and university degree.

It is also the case that university students at Duke University in the USA are to work out their own scripts, but more to change the world through their actions than to be responsible for what they do. As Cramblit emphasizes, service-learning projects such as DukeEngage provide a model of "hopeful engagement" and social action but fall short of cultivating students' "capacities to relate," a concept Cramblit develops as an extension of Appadurai's work. For these US students, education is realized through a combination of personal risk and self-imposed obligation, itself coinciding with a university's public narrative of atonement for students' sins. The tragedy Cramblit describes is that while these socially privileged students can navigate the coordinates of time and space that are at the core of global capital markets, and can live out their fantasies of saving the world though service learning that they cast in the form of self-enterprise, they do not apprehend the interplay of their own educational trajectories with the production and reproduction of their own privilege and power. Like Gülen-inspired and *pesantren* cohorts, students here embody and enact hope. Yet they experience little of the social "thickening" that arises from thoughtful and reflective engagement.

Together, studies in this section advance an ethnographic understanding of motion within motion viz. Vigh, of movement in the context of different horizons of possibility that people themselves partly and differently advance and control. The social realization of youth—both as a generational cohort and in the sense of a moral community that signifies for older generations a younger cohort's potentiality though not necessarily vice versa—involves the interplay of hope and uncertainty. Hope is a motivator; uncertainty animates the voluminous social field; and social realizations come and go both in the sense that people come to know and understand the scope and limits of schooling and that they convert its value into something else, whether it is for short- or longer-term gain or loss.

The Politics of Possibility

Case studies collected in this volume shift the temporal focus of ethnographic analysis toward the future but they do not predict or anticipate it. As Malkki observes, both history and the future are "imaginative constructions built out of people's perceived realities" (2001, p. 328). Anthropological accounts of student futures present people's uses of the institution of education to animate their sense of knowing and being. Recent innovative work on youth and generationality has affirmed that the future is not merely a matter of fantasy or daydreaming (Cole & Durham, 2008; Weiss, 2009). Studies in this volume apply such insight to the specific realm of education, recognizing that, as Levinson notes (1999), education is more than a site for the transmission or reproduction of knowledge, and schools, as the socially privileged site of institutionalized power, over-run into the world at large.

Indeed, ethnographic accounts of how people experience schooling as a part of the social project of future making demonstrates clearly that education does not exist as a "microcosm" of society or as an autonomous institution that can change people and their worlds, as remains a premise and ideal in education policies. Rather, education is entwined with social relations and projects that shape and are shaped by people's visions of the past and future. In this sense, education is a social resource that is inherently political: it structures possibilities for imagining a future within a set of possibilities full of hope and opportunity, and it discursively empowers people with authoritative responsibility but it cannot place them into motion within any stable or predictable horizon. Thus, the dominant discourse of using education to create a more equitable and less degraded world drives many educational projects forward, but social realities emerge and are created that differentially enable and preclude the achievement of these ends. It is these politics of possibility that inspire case studies in this volume.

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PART I

Aspirations

CHAPTER 2

Aspiration as Capacity and Compulsion: The Futures of Urban Middle-Class Youth in India

Amanda Gilbertson

India is often portrayed as a country on the rise—an economic giant and potential global superpower that is soon to have the world's largest and youngest population. *India Rising* has been the title of a BBC radio series exploring "the stereotype of the burgeoning India" (Arney, 2007), a book describing the country's socio-economic transformation by journalist Oliver Balch (2012), and a *Time* article on the meeting of US President Barack Obama and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi (N. Kumar, 2015). At the heart of these narratives of India's bright future are the "new" middle classes, depicted as both the beneficiaries and the drivers of the country's growth. In the words of the public intellectual, Gurcharan Das (2002), "The most striking feature of contemporary India is the rise of a confident new middle class… Whether India can deliver the goods depends a great deal on it" (p. 280). Just as India is frequently portrayed in terms of its hoped-for future state, so too are the middle classes understood in many contexts to be in a state of "becoming." This is particularly clear in the widely used class (income) categories of India's National Council for Applied Economic Research, with the two middle-class income brackets labeled "seekers" and "strivers," with "aspirers" wedged between the middle class and the "deprived" (Beinhocker, Farrell, & Zainulbhai, 2007). How then, is the

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future imagined and cultivated by these aspiring–seeking–striving middle classes in this rising nation?

Several recent studies have suggested that middle classness in India today is in many ways defined by future orientation and aspiration for mobility, rather than present-day alignment with the idealized images of consumer lifestyles that have proliferated since the liberalization of the Indian economy in the 1990s. Leela Fernandes suggests that while the "new rich" have benefited from liberalization, India's lower middle class and upwardly mobile working class endure decreasing job security as a result of retrenchment and restructuring as well as rising living costs. She argues that a form of "intertemporal interpretation" (2006, p. xx) is at play in India, wherein people aspire to and anticipate future consumption-based benefits by investing in individualized strategies of upward mobility, rather than critique the present-day adverse effects of economic liberalization. For Craig Jeffrey, India's middle classes "maintain their power in part through a strategy of deliberate 'waiting': they invest in specific futures based on their knowledge of likely 'returns'" (2010, p. 33). However, given India's high levels of educated unemployment, the ability to wait is a compulsion as a well as a capacity, as young people find themselves passing time, hoping they will eventually secure a job (Jeffrey, 2010). Both Fernandes and Jeffrey observe that the key waiting strategy of India's middle classes, and their primary form of investment in the future, is education. Through a process of "strategic credentialing" (Fernandes, 2000, p. 94)—the acquisition of MBAs and other degrees along with computer and soft skills training—people attempt to gain the cultural capital necessary to conform to the new liberalizing middle-class ideal and thereby make themselves the best possible candidates for upward social mobility. In this climate of educated unemployment, scholars are increasingly highlighting the contradictory (Jeffrey, Jeffery, & Jeffery, 2008) rather than emancipatory (Sen, 2000) nature of education as a resource. This raises important questions as to whether the aspirations of middle-class youth in India should be understood as a form of "cruel optimism" (Berlant, 2011, p. 1) "when something you desire is actually an obstacle to your flourishing."

For Arjun Appadurai, aspiration is a capacity that should be strengthened as part of development initiatives. He writes, "In strengthening the capacity to aspire, conceived as a cultural capacity, especially among the poor, the future-oriented logic of development could find a natural ally, and the poor could find the resources required to contest and alter the conditions of their own poverty" (2013, p. 179). Appadurai suggests

that the poor have less capacity to aspire than the privileged do (2013, pp. 188–189), as they have fewer opportunities for, or experiences of, conjecture and refutations in regard to the future. His vision for "a general point of view about humans as future-makers and of futures as cultural facts" (2013, p. 285) involves attending to the interactions between imagination, aspiration, and anticipation (2013, p. 286). I suggest that an alternative approach might be to carefully unpack what exactly aspiration as capacity entails.

Appadurai describes the capacity to aspire as a "navigational capacity" (2013, p. 188) in a manner strongly redolent of Henrik Vigh's (2009) notion of social navigation as a form of "motion within motion" as people seek to make their way through shifting social environments. Vigh notes that such navigation involves "movement through both the socially immediate and the socially imagined" (2009, p. 425) or "feeling our way through the immediate convulsions of a fluid environment whilst simultaneously trying to gain an overview and make our way toward a point in or beyond the horizon" (2009, p. 429). However, whereas Appadurai highlights differences between the privileged and the deprived in their capacity to aspire, Vigh notes differences in the compulsion to navigate, noting that "we all navigate, but the necessity of having to move in relation to the movement of social forces depends on the speed and volatility of change as well as the level of exposure or shelter that our given social positions and 'capital' grants us" (2009, p. 430). Whereas Appadurai presents the privileged as having a better "overview" and therefore a better sense of how to make their way toward the horizon, Vigh encourages us to ask whether the shelter provided by their capital may be more relevant to their success. We might usefully think of aspiration, then, as involving not just relative levels of capacity, but also relative levels of compulsion and consequence.

In this chapter, I explore the capacities, compulsions, and consequences evident in the aspirations and educational strategies of middle-class youth in the South Indian city of Hyderabad. Drawing on a year of ethnographic fieldwork conducted in 2009 and 2010, I begin by describing how different visions of and paths to future success were produced in two private English-medium high schools: upper-middle-class Riversdale and lower-middle-class Miyapur High School (MHS). I then turn to interviews conducted in 2014 with students from these schools who were in their last year of high school in 2009–2010 and had since gone on to pursue undergraduate study. The narratives of the young people presented here suggest that while the privileged present themselves as having a superior

capacity to perceive and navigate toward the future, members of the lower middle class are compelled to pursue a more secure middle-class future through credentialing strategies, as they do not have the capital required to shelter them from the potential consequences of more risky strategies built around individual distinction.

Preparing for the Future at School

In 2009 and 2010, I lived in the outer Hyderabad suburbs of Miyapur and Kukatpally/KPHB. These suburbs were relatively new, established following the nearby development of Hyderabad's information technology (IT) industry at HITEC City in the late 1990s, and were popular with many newly middle-class, or at least newly urban, families. I spent most days as a participant observer at Riversdale and MHS and lived with families of students from these schools. In addition, I conducted over 100 semi-structured interviews (in English and very occasionally with a Telugu translator) with teachers, students, parents, college students, and young professionals recruited through school networks. We discussed topics ranging from school education and Indian culture to love and marriage.

The shifting educational environment my participants were attempting to navigate was characterized by a now well-established preoccupation with engineering degrees, an emerging internationalization, and an increasing dissatisfaction with "textbook culture." In the 1980s and 1990s, sectors of the middle class across India began to intensify their investment in education, partially in response to new uncertainties created by a state that could no longer be relied upon for education and employment (Jeffrey, 2010, pp. 39–40). In Andhra Pradesh, engineering degrees became particularly coveted, resulting in a mushrooming of private engineering colleges established by the state's rural elite (Upadhya, 1997). By donating substantial amounts of money to promoting private colleges and paying the fees necessary to get their children admitted to them, this rural elite was able to acquire the cultural capital necessary to blend in with the cosmopolitan culture of the older urban elite (Upadhya, 1997, pp. 186–188). However, Indian engineering colleges differ significantly in quality and reputation, and access to preferred institutions is based on a mixture of money and marks. Students sit a variety of competitive exams at the end of high school (O-level, or tenth-grade equivalent) and junior college (A-level, or twelfth-grade equivalent). They are then ranked, and this rank determines whether they will get into their first or last choice of

institution and course of study. In many tertiary institutions, fees are lowest for those with the highest marks and highest for those with the lowest marks. Those who do not get good enough marks for the "merit" seats have the option of paying (sometimes through a bidding process) for a small number of "management" seats that are not allocated on the basis of marks. This system of exams and ranking has resulted in intense competition that is exacerbated by high levels of unemployment among the educated. As a result, many schools and junior colleges focus exclusively on exam preparation through rote learning.

However, engineering degrees alone were no guarantee of a secure middle-class future at the time of this research, and this was reflected in a diversification of educational styles. Over the past two decades, large numbers of new elite schools catering to a growing moneyed class have been established in India as commercial ventures (Rizvi, 2014, pp. 290–291). These schools are extraordinarily well resourced and offer international qualifications such as an International Baccalaureate (IB) and the International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE). These new corporate international schools compete with the old elite schools that were established in the nineteenth century, causing the older schools to reassert strategically their supremacy by emphasizing their international connections. In this education market, it is clear that schools are competing on the basis of their ability to equip students for a future imagined to be unavoidably and increasingly globalized through the provision of "cosmopolitan cultural capital" (Igarashi & Saito, 2014).

Alongside these elite schools, more modest schools like Riversdale have sprung up to cater to the middle and upper middle classes. These schools are often also referred to as international schools, but their distinction from local, or normal, schools lies less in their international curricula and connections than in their superior facilities, their focus on "exposure" and communication skills (Fuller & Narasimhan, 2006), and their efforts to distance themselves from a textbook culture of rote learning. Since the 1990s, various policy documents in India have criticized overreliance on exams set by external school boards, which are associated with rote learning and student stress. Policymakers have called for continuous and comprehensive evaluation (CCE); that is, regular school-based assessment as well as conceptualizations of student achievement that extend beyond the purely scholastic (K. Kumar, 2005; Nawani, 2013). In response, the national Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) gradually introduced a system of CCE, initially for primary classes in 2004 and reaching the Tenth Class by 2010.

In 2014, the Andhra Pradesh Board of Secondary Education introduced new Secondary School Certificate (SSC) Tenth Class textbooks that were intended to incorporate principles of CCE. However, at the time of this research, schools following Andhra Pradesh's SSC syllabus, such as MHS, were widely perceived to be providing a style of education that almost exclusively entailed rote learning, and CBSE schools like Riversdale differentiated themselves from SSC schools on this basis.

Riversdale was originally an ordinary, private English-medium school, albeit one with unusually large grounds. In 2005, the school was sold and acquired both a new director, who had been involved in setting up the premier international school in the city, and a new principal. Under their leadership, the school shifted from the state SSC syllabus to IB in junior classes and the national CBSE syllabus in senior classes. These changes have been accompanied by gradually increasing fees and a shifting student and teacher demographic from mostly middle middle class to more upper middle class. Most Riversdale parents I spoke to had an undergraduate or postgraduate degree, and fathers worked as engineers, managers, successful businessmen, defense officers, and in other similarly paid occupations, generally earning between Rs. 50,000 and Rs. 150,000 per month.

The Riversdale community articulated its vision of the future most clearly in talk about an approach to learning that it presented as being wholly unsuited to this future. Staff and students criticized SSC schools for evaluating students in terms of marks alone and teaching exclusively through textbooks. One Riversdale father argued:

> SSC is focused only on academics, … rugging, mugging, answer[ing] 600 questions. If you study them thoroughly, you'll get 90 percent. Here it's not like that. In CBSE you have to study the whole lesson, and you don't know what questions will be asked… The kind of exposure they get within a subject or a language is far better than [the] state [syllabus]. I have seen the people who are from SSC schools struggling to become part of this global world. It's going to be very tough.

According to the Riversdale community, this traditional system of teaching places undue pressure on students, who acquire no useful knowledge and are unable to think for themselves.

In articulating their preferred education style, staff talked about their reduced reliance on textbooks and the CBSE's recent moves to phase out exams and to assess "non-scholastic" aspects of student achievement. The

school devoted extensive time and effort to extracurricular activities such as an annual opera, guest speakers, and dance and other performances, as well as interschool sports, speech, and theater competitions. Through these variety of experiences, Riversdale sought to build students' exposure and communication skills (i.e., English language fluency and confident ease in interacting with a variety of people in diverse contexts), characteristics that were perceived to be more integral to a comfortable middle-class future than high examination marks. According to one Riversdale teacher:

> It is a preconception that schools are for academics only. I think it's also about the exposure… to the world and … [the] communication skills [you give students]: grooming the whole person and providing good citizens for the future so they can lead a better world than the present [one]… We keep a lot of emphasis on communication and exposure, and I think this does make a big difference when students apply for colleges and jobs. Maybe not for educational institutions, but when it comes to jobs, these [students] are the ones who are going to be selected. Earlier it was based on marks, but now it's changing. Our students might get five per cent less [on an exam] than students in other schools, but they gain much more in values and communication skills.

At Riversdale, the route to future success was portrayed as one of individualized risk-taking. Paths that were perceived as overly conservative and conventional were heavily criticized. The principal and many teachers at Riversdale slated the two most popular chains of junior colleges in Hyderabad: Sri Chaitanya and Narayana. Whereas others chose these schools for their students' high marks in mathematics and science, the principal of Riversdale argued that these institutions were "factories" producing "assembly line products." Furthermore, Riversdale encouraged both parents and students to think beyond the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs), the Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs), medicine, and engineering. Individuality was so central to understandings of future success in the school that a workshop was held on the subject for all senior-level-wing teachers. The workshop facilitator, called a corporate coach, told the audience that, in order to develop the nation, more individuals—people who can build options and choose between them—were needed. He criticized people with a herd mentality, who were mere extensions of their caste, creed, or religion and were engaged in "trend-based thinking," such as the craze for IT jobs. In the weeks that followed, teachers reproduced the same workshop in their

classrooms, and there was much discussion on the importance of unique identities, building options and personal choices, and making one's own decisions in the service of nation building.

On the other hand, MHS was the kind of school from which Riversdale sought to distinguish itself. The official MHS school hours were from 8:45 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday to Saturday, but all students from Sixth Class onward stayed at school until 6:00 p.m. for additional study hours. Most students also attended tutorials before or after school and on Sundays. Classes involved brief explanations of textbook material but consisted mostly of students reading from their textbooks in an effort to learn material by heart. Exams were held monthly. Students were primarily concerned with getting good marks in exams, and parents complained to the school when their children did not get the high marks expected. The central importance of marks and ranks at MHS was most clearly evident in its advertising. Like other schools of its kind, MHS advertised annually following the announcement of national exam results, using large boards to display photographs and marks of the top-ranked Tenth Class students.

Whereas Riversdale parents and teachers presented this style of education as an obsession, with marks borne of ignorance and excessive competitiveness, MHS teachers tended to blame uneducated MHS parents who could not measure their children's success in any other way. The demographics of MHS parents were certainly very different from those at Riversdale. Many MHS parents had not completed secondary school, and very few had a degree; fathers' occupations included auto-rickshaw and bus driver, shopkeeper, plumber, and electrician, and family incomes were generally between Rs. 10,000 and Rs. 20,000 per month. However, the focus on marks and rote learning appeared to be predominantly an effect of the limited English of teachers (and students) rather than parents' uninformed expectations. Although the fees at MHS were less than half those at Riversdale, they were still barely affordable for most MHS parents and not enough to pay teachers with good "communication skills." By Tenth Class, most MHS students did not have the English language skills needed to understand the passages they read as part of their English syllabus and struggled with sentence-style questions and answers in other subjects. Because the questions in SSC exams duplicated those in student workbooks, students learned the thousands of answers provided in their workbooks by heart. There were pervasive rumors that examiners would only accept answers that exactly reproduced the answers provided in workbooks, which added a further incentive for rote learning.

To some extent, MHS parents may have given less importance to exposure because they were less aware of trends in education and employment opportunities. As Bourdieu (1984, pp. 142–143) argues:

> One of the most valuable sorts of information constituting inherited cultural capital is practical or theoretical knowledge of the fluctuations of the market in academic qualifications… Newcomers to secondary education are led, by the mere fact of having access to it, to expect it to give them what it gave others at a time when they themselves were excluded from it.

MHS parents were, however, not entirely misguided in their perception of good examination marks as the surest way to a good future. While there can be no doubt that fluency in English and embodiment of an upper-middle-class habitus are assets when interviewing for jobs (Fuller & Narasimhan, 2006), as discussed above, seats in junior colleges, as well as those offering undergraduate and postgraduate degrees, are largely given on the basis of marks. Unlike Riversdale parents, one of whom had paid Rs. 600,000 for a mechanical engineering seat in a good university for his son, MHS parents were unable to pay for management seats for underperforming students. Hyderabad's lower-middle-class parents who invested in marks were therefore investing in the educational strategy that appeared most likely to provide good returns, whereas upper-middle-class children could rely on other forms of capital, not only to get into higher education institutions, but also for their success in life beyond education. The future was imagined at Riversdale as something of the students' own making, a place where individual's, proactive, risk-taking behavior would be rewarded and where one should stand apart from the crowd or be left behind. What was obscured in this narrative was the extent to which Riversdale students were sheltered from many of the risks of an ever-shifting educational and employment market by their relatively high levels of economic capital. By contrast, in the context of a lack of economic capital, examination success achieved through rote learning was the most viable route to tertiary education for MHS students.

Aspiring at College

In 2014, I interviewed 14 former Riversdale students and 15 former MHS students who were then undergraduates at colleges. We discussed their experiences of educational, social, and family life since 2010 and their

hopes for the future. In this section, I focus on the narratives of just two students in order to illustrate how young people with different amounts of capital navigate toward anticipated futures. Although small numbers of Muslims and Christians, as well as Hindus from a range of castes, participated in my research, the two young men I discuss here are both Hindus belonging to middling castes.

Although I did not remember Sandeep from my original fieldwork, many of his former schoolmates encouraged me to speak to him when I returned to Hyderabad, telling me that he had been transformed as a result of his tertiary studies in a progressive college in another city. When I met him, Sandeep was dressed in a fashionably checked shirt and was the only young man I spoke to whose hair could have been described as a "style." He framed his story as one of two transformations, the first of which had occurred while still at Riversdale. When Riversdale transitioned from a normal to a (somewhat) international school, the SSC syllabus was phased out gradually, with both SSC and CBSE streams available in each "batch" that was already in the senior wing at the time of transition. Sandeep was in the school's final SSC class. When he completed his Tenth Class exams at the end of 2009, Sandeep had assumed he would go on to an SSC junior college like everyone else in his class. But then Riversdale got permission to start teaching Eleventh and Twelfth Class, and Sandeep decided to stay on. He was worried about the change to a CBSE syllabus and noted that he was unable to speak "proper English." Unusually for Riversdale, Sandeep's parents were not highly educated. His mother was illiterate and his father had completed a BA (rather than the more desirable engineering BTech) before going on to earn over Rs. 2 million a year in business. Sandeep looked back on the decision to stay at Riversdale as a positive one, his first move beyond the limits of his very "basic" family. He explained:

> They are not much exposed to the world. They are very limited and conservative. My dad, after my Tenth, asked me to do engineering, and I said no to it… I joined Eleventh and Twelfth [in Riversdale] and that was something good. If I [had] … joined a local college, I would have been very normal, … very, very normal, very basic. So I would have been like my dad… He is not exposed to anything, so he does not know about many things except for engineering, medicine, and all those.

By the end of Twelfth Class, Sandeep's English had improved and he had decided to pursue a "liberal education." He told me, "I just wanted

to be different from the crowd," and "I am very happy that I am doing something else than the crowd." He had heard about the college he was attending through his more established upper-middle-class friends. His father agreed to the fees—approximately Rs. 400,000 per year excluding boarding fees—after seeing the college's amazing grounds and campus. It was at this college that Sandeep's second and most significant transformation occurred. He explained his experience:

> The exposure I got when I went to Pune, the kind of subjects that I am doing, ... [are] very different from [what] all ... [my old classmates are doing]. When I go back to school [Riversdale] to meet my other friends, they tell me about the change they have seen in me... People ... [at the Pune school] are from Delhi and all parts of India and outside India, ... and it is a boarding school. So the exposure is totally different, and there was a drastic change in me.

Sandeep was unsure what he wanted to do in the future. While still at college, he had started a marketing company and a film company with friends. He said he wanted "to do something creative" but did not know what. He did not "want to work under someone, that's for sure," although he might do so for a period in order to build a portfolio. He was thinking of going abroad to do a master's degree. He was not sure what to study but thought the exposure to places beyond India would be good for him. He felt bad that he had never left the country, particularly because some of his classmates vacationed abroad regularly.

The second student I interviewed, Lohit, was the star of MHS during my initial stay in India. He was head boy and the "topper" in his Tenth Class exams. Lohit's father had a BTech degree, but when I spoke to him in 2010, he was only earning around Rs. 20,000 per month, a third of which was spent educating Lohit and his sister. By 2014, Lohit's father had doubled his earnings in a new job outside of Hyderabad, and the family had purchased a two-bedroom apartment. Lohit's mother had attended school up to Seventh Class but had transitioned from housewife to tailor. When I spoke to Lohit's parents in 2010, they were somewhat unhappy with the quality of teaching at MHS and were encouraging Lohit to read all his lessons before rote learning the questions and answers at the end of each lesson. They wanted Lohit to get into a good college like IIT, saying that "if you go to an ordinary college you just get an ordinary degree."

In 2014, Lohit was an engineering student at a local college and was disappointed with his progress. After Tenth Class, he had done extraordinarily

well in examinations for entrance into a polytechnic but had not pursued this path because although it could well have led to entrance into a top engineering college, it would have closed off the possibility of entry to an IIT. He spent his two years of junior college preparing for IIT exams and did well in these exams, but not well enough to secure a seat. He then wrote exams for local colleges in Andhra Pradesh. He had not prepared specifically for these exams and did not do as well as he would have liked. He was so unhappy with the college he got into that he considered taking a year off and trying for a better college the following year. However, his father convinced him that waiting was not a good strategy.

Lohit was hoping to get a software job through a campus placement system in which recruiters visited colleges and interviewed top students. It was well known, however, that selection through these interviews was based less on academic excellence and more on communication skills. Since leaving MHS, Lohit had come to realize that his school had provided him with poorer English language skills and fewer opportunities to overcome his "stage fear" through seminars than other, better schools might have. He was attending "soft skills" training at college and watching English movies but felt his skills still lagged behind those of his peers. If he did not get a job, Lohit was planning to sit another national exam, this time with the hope of gaining entrance to an IIT for his MTech.

These two interviews suggest that while Riversdale students tended to pursue education as an exercise in character building, confident that futures depend more on who you are than what you know, MHS students, confident that who they are will never be enough, invested in a future in which what you know does counts. In college, Riversdale students were highly critical of their less affluent classmates, whose excessive studiousness they presented as indicative of their restricted nature, herd mentality, and lack of openness and flexibility when it came to new people and new opportunities, along with their failure to recognize that bookish knowledge was a thing of the past. MHS students on the other hand, presented a studious approach to both exams and "soft skills" as their only hope of securing a middle-class future. It is indeed a little cruel (Berlant, 2011) that the very means by which the lower middle classes hope to achieve their desired futures—study—is read as a sign of their unsuitability for those futures.

Conclusion

Middle-class people in Hyderabad often used the word "fast" when talking with me about social change. Certain cities, like Bangalore and Mumbai, and certain people, particularly the elite, were depicted as particularly fast. It was clear in this language of "fast-ness" that it was important to be fast enough to keep up with the pace of change, but not so fast as to be ahead of oneself. Working toward desired futures was, therefore, understood very much as a process of navigation, of motion within motion (Vigh, 2009). Educational strategies were integral to this process. Indeed, a friend of Sandeep's, also from Riversdale, described his advice to Sandeep in this way, "Come back to [Riversdale]; don't go into some state college. You would mess up your life… The world is pretty competitive these days. You need to go fast with people, or else you wouldn't be making good in this world."

When Riversdale students talked about the future, they used words like proactive, risk-taker, and individual. For them, future success in a fast world depended on their ability to stand out from the crowd. MHS students could not afford to stand out. They did not critique the social reproduction inherent in a supposedly meritocratic system in which access to quality education depends on wealth, and upper-middle-class cultural capital is seen as legitimate selection criteria for upper-middle-class employment. Instead, they appeared to be in the first stages of the kinds of credentialing strategies described by Fernandes (2006) and Jeffrey (2010), compelled to aspire by the myth of upward mobility achieved through education in a rising India, and compelled to do so in particular ways by the fact that they are relatively unsheltered from the consequences of misjudgment. In focusing on young people's aspirations as indicative of capacity, we risk presenting Riversdale students (as they do themselves) as more competent future-makers, better able to perceive what moving "fast enough" entails and to enact it. As the ethnographic material presented in this chapter shows, attending to compulsion and consequence provides a more nuanced picture of the conditions in which futures are made as well as the cruelness of certain optimisms.

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CHAPTER 3

"Too Good to Teach": Bhutanese Students and a Hierarchy of Aspirations

Dolma Roder

> A guest speaker at morning assembly told an interesting story about changing aspirations. Apparently, during school visits *Lyonchen* [the Prime Minister] Jigme Y Thinley asked primary school kids what they wanted to do when they grew up. All of them said things like "I want to become an engineer," "I want to be a doctor." *Lyonchen* found these answers very sad because a generation ago all of them would have said, "when I grow up, I want to pay back my debt to my parents." (Field notes, March 2010)

This chapter describes the transformation of student aspirations in the Himalayan nation of Bhutan. It argues that modern secular education, barely six decades old in Bhutan, is effectively producing and reproducing a new hierarchy of aspirations, placing certain professions such as doctor, engineer, and government servant at the top of the hierarchy and the teaching profession toward the bottom. However, this chapter also argues that, *contra* the Prime Minister Thinley the excerpt above, these new aspirations do not signal a break with family ties. Rather families often help to reinforce this hierarchy of aspirations.

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In the last ten years, Bhutanese college graduates have begun to struggle in a competitive and unpredictable job market. Highly desirable government jobs (including for academically successful students, the chance to become doctors and engineers) are no longer guaranteed; however, students' aspirations have not yet begun to reflect these new realities. During the 2009–2010 school year, when I conducted fieldwork at a well-regarded tertiary-level institution in eastern Bhutan, I found that most students' aspirations were limited to careers in government service and that they saw few other "appropriate" career options for themselves. This chapter examines how this particular college and the Bhutanese context more generally shape Bhutanese students' career aspirations.

Barely a generation ago, even six years of education almost assured a government job. However, with the rapid growth of the formal secular education system and dramatic shifts in the local job market, government jobs are simultaneously more difficult to secure and more sought after. This chapter will argue that the Bhutanese educational and social context actively shapes student aspirations and expectations. Such shaping creates a hierarchy of aspirations that is gendered as well as linked to assumptions about class and prestige. Certain courses of study are ranked based on their level of prestige or what taking these courses implies about a student's intelligence and ability.

Levinson and Holland have described schools as "contradictory resources," because while they may offer students "freedom and opportunities at the same time [they also]… bind them more tightly to system of class, gender and racial inequality" (1996, p. 1). Schools limit the ways in which success is imagined by "encouraging a sense of failure" (1996, p. 1) in those students who are unable or unwilling to succeed in the ways that schools claim is possible for "everyone." For Levinson and Holland (1996), schools are powerful sites of cultural production. They are not neutral institutions; instead, they are important sites for the production and reproduction of particular kinds of values, discourses, and power relations. By paying attention to the ongoing process of meaning-making that takes place within them, we can highlight the complex relationship between individual beliefs, actions, and experiences and larger social structures such as gender and class norms as well as nation-making projects. This approach is useful because it draws attention to both the constraints and resources that shape students' choices and experiences.

The aspiration hierarchies described in this chapter are similarly produced and reproduced through the social interactions, practices, norms,

and discourses found within and around educational settings in Bhutan. Forces that help in this process include powerful institutions such as the family, the media, and government agencies that work to promote education as the vehicle to particular kinds of success. These interactions, practices, and norm as well as the students are simultaneously producers and products of a dialectical interplay. Students and their families through their interactions with schools and other related intuitions become convinced that investments in education will result in particular kinds of careers. Their beliefs and actions both reflect these convictions and help to consolidate the way in which these convictions have become a form of 'common sense.' These beliefs are especially visible in the use of a "waiting" in the present or near future as a strategy to access a desirable future even though the media and government observers, frustrated by the rising number of young and unemployed graduate, read this strategy as apathy.

Looking at Indian educated but unemployed youth, Jeffery (2010) identified two kinds of waiting: those of young men waiting for opportunities to match their aspirations, and those of parents who had invested in education and are now waiting for their investment to payoff. In developing nations and increasingly in developed ones "people have been incited by powerful institutions to believe in particular versions of the future" (Jeffery, 2010, p. 3). Both kinds of waiting are visible in Bhutan. Families increasingly invest in their children's education, waiting for the payoff, and young college graduates frequently use waiting for something better as a tactic for realizing their aspirations. Mains (2007) similarly points out that educated youth in Ethiopia would rather wait than take low-status jobs (such as porters) because of the shame that doing this kind of work could bring to themselves and their families. Educational experiences appear to encourage young people both to aspire for occupations at the top of the hierarchy and to believe that waiting can be part of the strategy for meeting those aspirations.

An Investment or a Gamble?

Both Bhutan's modern education system and its secular government structure are comparatively new. Prior to the 1900s, both educational opportunities and the apparatus of governance were concentrated at monasteries. Since monasteries have strict rules about the presence of women, this also meant that both literacy and political power were largely male domains. In the 1950s, the government established modern secular schools with the

explicit intention of creating and educating a modern Bhutanese workforce. Kinga points out, "In the early years of modernization, education was understood as the instrument of joining the civil service" (2005, p. 51).

Until fairly recently, most parents were hesitant to send their children to government schools. There are many stories of parents in the 1950s and 1960s begging government officials to let their children stay home, even hiding their children and lying about their whereabouts (Center for Education Research and Development, 2002). The first Bhutanese students usually stayed in boarding facilities for the school year. Parents were reluctant to lose valuable household labor and uncomfortable with the idea of sending young children so far from home. Now families of almost all socio-economic backgrounds are willing to make substantial investments and sacrifices when it comes to their children's schooling. This willingness is especially visible in the growing and very profitable private school industry. Between 2000 and 2014, the number of private schools in Bhutan exploded from 8 to 85, while the number of children enrolled increased eightfold (RGOB, 2008; Policy and Planning, 2014). Considering that according to IMF, Bhutanese per capita inc ome in 2010 (the year I conducted fieldwork) was $1980 a year (roughly Nu. 87,790), a place at a private school is not cheap. In early 2010, many private higher secondary schools charged at least Nu. 30,000 a year (Bhutan Broadcasting Service, 2010).

Today Bhutan has many more government-run primary and middle schools than high schools, so as students move toward high school, they are forced to compete for fewer and fewer slots in free government schools. Private schools take advantage of these bottlenecks within the Bhutanese education system. The first bottleneck occurs after the Class Ten exams, a national-level assessment that the Ministry of Education centrally administrates. Students who are unable to score over a certain threshold (passing the exam is not enough) are no longer eligible for government education. This threshold score shifts based on the number of students taking the exam, how well they all do, and the availability of places at government schools. For example, in 2015 the cut off for admission to Class Eleven in government schools was 61 percent, which means that nearly 6000 students who scored below 61 percent had to compete for 3000 slots available in private schools (Palden, 2015).[1]

There is a similar sorting process after the Class Twelve exams, but there are even fewer places at free government tertiary institutions. Students

must score high enough to gain admission, not only to a particular government institution, but also to particular courses within the institution. At both junctures, families of unsuccessful students often make a huge effort to find ways and funds to keep their children in school. This eagerness to keep students in school is a sign of a very recent shift in the way Bhutanese understand the connection between modern education and a desirable future. This shift recognizes the desirability of jobs in the civil services, jobs that are only possible with the successful completion of a certain level of education.

In the recent past, Bhutanese learned that formal schooling is the most effective way for families and individuals to gain access to civil service employment and get ahead financially and socially. At a time when few actually attended school, even a little education would provide access to a government job and to the prestige associated with civil service work. Civil servants are involved in "clean" office work (i.e., different from the kind of manual labor associated with farming) and they can, as members of the educated class, demand a significant level of respect from the general Bhutanese public. Furthermore, the regularity of a government salary allows Bhutanese to continue to honor economic obligations to family, including extended family. These obligations often include paying for school expenses for younger siblings, cousins, or even nephews and nieces, contributing financially for annual rituals, and assisting the family in acquiring and improving property. Ueda (2004) argues that the key reasons students aspire to join the civil service are related to how these jobs project success and prestige as well as their absolute job security and other perks such as opportunities to travel abroad for study and work, guaranteed promotions, and subsidized housing.

Stils notes that as early as 1997, Bhutanese policymakers recognized that the expectation that all students with a college degree could and would get civil service jobs was "unrealistic" (2009, p. 72). The strategy at the time was to redirect students toward vocational training. Attempts to encourage young people to pursue vocational training, however, have been and continue to be largely unsuccessful. Students and their families are quick to reject any form of manual labor as beneath an educated person. Many are willing to wait in the present (and into the near future) for the kind of opportunities that they believe their investments in education should bring.

However, these expectations do not always play out as anticipated. Every year the pool of graduates eligible to sit the Royal Civil Service

Commission (RCSC) exam increases while the government is able to employ a smaller percentage of them. In 2010, 1216 graduates registered for the RCSC exams, but only 318 were absorbed into the civil service (Saraswait, 2011).[2]

The college where I conducted fieldwork has for many years been an important civil service feeder school; but students from newer Bhutanese institutions as well as students who have continued their studies outside of Bhutan are increasingly challenging the success of this institution's students. Despite these trends, students' aspirations remain fixed on government jobs. Contributing to this is the fact that the private sector has been slower to grow. Private sector jobs, such as working in tourism (e.g., as a guide or hotel worker), are also considered less desirable, because these jobs are perceived to be less prestigious, less stable, remuneration is lower and sometimes irregular, and benefits such as regular promotions and opportunities for travel are rare.

"This College Was Not My First Choice": Learning Aspirations

Discourses of success that circulate within Bhutanese schools explicitly state that the appropriate aspiration for "good" students is to become doctors and engineers (who are, again, in most cases government employees). For example, starting from primary schools, teachers and administrators will warn students that they will only allow "sincere" students into the science stream, the stream that is a prerequisite for studying to be a doctor or engineer. This academic hierarchy with medicine located near the top is not unique to Bhutan, but it is certainly new to Bhutan. In fact, many of the interviews I conducted with senior educators and policymakers[3] indicated that the idea of having particular career aspirations of any kind is new to Bhutan. Many told me that their academic and career trajectories were not a matter of choice. For example, one principal told a lively story of how as a young graduate she was surprised to be assigned to teach in a remote village in eastern Bhutan, located so far from a road that she had to travel on horseback to reach there. It was clear from her telling that both the new job and the distant posting were an adventure in part because they were unanticipated.

Given that students must perform fairly well to secure a place at the college, I was surprised to find many students expressing the overwhelming feeling that they had already failed by not securing a slot to take up

a professional degree like medicine outside the country or at the newly established business or engineering colleges inside Bhutan. While doctors and engineers are civil servants, the RCSC that oversees the recruiting, placement, and management of all civil servants treats them differently. They fall within the "professional" category in recognition of the specialized skills and training they have received. The RCSC considers all other graduates to be "general graduates" who are ranked based on their performance in the RCSC entrance exams and placed in a position and ministry based on the RCSC's judgment.

During a focus group discussion, almost every student participating admitted that in high school he or she had aspired to study medicine. As one student noted sarcastically, "Everyone wanted to be a doctor once, once upon a time." After the hard work that they invested in high school,[4] a place at the college was clearly a consolation prize for many of these students. It was clear that the practices and experiences around the selection and evaluation of particular academic streams had been effective in producing a widely accepted hierarchy of aspirations.

Early in their high school careers many of the most promising students were tracked, sometimes quite forcefully, into the science or commerce streams, preparing them for competitive professional degrees in fields like accounting, engineering, or medicine. For example, one recent graduate, who was teaching social sciences at the college, told me during an interview that because of her consistently good marks, her high school principal had aggressively attempted to push her into the "sciences stream." Principals in Bhutan tend to have complete authority in their assigned schools, and frequently see it as their job to impart moral values and life lessons. It took stubbornness and persistence on her part to resist her principal's well-intentioned pressure.

This privileging of the sciences was imported into the country along with many other aspects of the new modern education system. Most likely, this privileging came with the scores of similarly socialized Indian teacher and they passed this academic value system on to Bhutanese educators and students. Many students at the college predicated their account of how they came to be there by noting, "This college was not my first choice." Students repeatedly told me how they had done well in school but "spoiled" their Class Twelve exams by not scoring high enough to continue their pursuit of medicine, engineering, or accounting. For many students, who had worked hard their entire time at school, not scoring high enough in these exams meant that they had to rethink what academic

and personal success might look like. The college seemed to offer only one alternative: to compete for a general category position within government service.

Narrowing Possibilities: "The Best and Only Option"

As this section will show, the discourse, norms, and practices of campus life constantly reminded students at the college that government service is the expected and appropriate future. This is perhaps where the mechanisms of cultural production are most visible. As Ho (2009), writing about Ivy League students in the USA, also shows, financial institutions and campus life direct students into particular careers. Future investment bankers, Ho illustrates, are "made" through particular kinds of discourses and experiences. Ho describes the way aspects of campus life such as articles in the campus papers and social activities (including lavish dinners thrown by financial institutions) work to narrow the range of what students see as career success so that investment banking seems like one of the only legitimate aspirations. I observed something similar happening at the Bhutanese college, as there too, educational experiences and campus-level discourse worked to narrowly focus on aspiration. Students at the college were dedicated and goal driven in high school, but now that their former goals have moved out of reach, they had lost their sense of purpose and they needed new aspirations to fill the gap. Students were easily convinced that a career in civil service was their "best and only option."

Ironically, in contrast to the prominent Wall Street investment banks making huge and expensive efforts to woe promising Ivy League students in the USA, as described by Ho (2009), the Bhutanese government no longer actively recruits college graduates. In fact, it is clear that the RCSC would prefer not to have such an overwhelming proportion of the nation's youth continue to so hopefully strive for government employment. In a recent public address to college students, the chairman of the RCSC, Karma Tshiteeem, described the civil service as saturated, saying that from now on it would recruit only a small number of the nation's "best and brightest" (Tshedup, 2015).

It is salient that so few students are able to imagine or name other possibilities. However, family members, who play a powerful role in shaping the aspirations of Bhutanese youth, often actively discourage those who do consider alternatives from pursuing them. Mukhopadhyay similarly

reports that for female science students in India, "[e]ducational decisions are treated as family, rather than individual student decisions, involving the investment of collective family resources and guided by collective family concerns and long term goals" (2004, p. 467). Many Bhutanese college students choose or reject particular career paths in consultation with family, including extended family. Kesang Wangmo, for example, who was a final year student at the time of my study, had dreamt of becoming a police officer since Class Eight. Her desire to join the police honored her much-loved late father who had been a police officer. Yet, at various junctures (after Class Eight, Ten, and Twelve) when it would have been possible for her to leave school and train as a police officer, an uncle encouraged her to stay in school in hopes of securing a civil service job. Similarly, Tshering Lhadon, who had her heart set on becoming a journalist, even successfully completing a summer internship at a newspaper, said her parents repeatedly reminded her that she "had to" sit the RCSC exam. Several other students told me (as discussed below) that they decided not to pursue teaching because their families vehemently discouraged them from this career path. In all these cases, families encouraged their children to sit for the RCSC exam and hopefully secure a spot within the civil service. Teachers and police officers are technically government employees, but these fields are considered less prestigious and have fewer associated perks, such as significant opportunities to travel abroad. Potential police officers and teachers are also not required to sit the RCSC exam,[5] which would give successful candidates access to more prestigious opportunities. Both college students and the national media, something that this chapter will discuss later, frequently refer to teaching as a "last resort" or "last option."

Students, particularly those in their final year, were greatly concerned about how to best prepare for the civil service exam. I once bumped into a group of final year students in the single photocopying room on campus, making multiple copies of a list of documents they needed to be familiar with for the exams. Frequently, I would come across groups of spellbound students assembled around younger faculty, who had more recently taken the exam, eager for preparation tips. Student participants in a focus group also told me that final year students spend much of their free time in the library diligently reading all the national newspapers, which are a major source for questions in the exams. Faculty often complained that students were only interested in taking part in extracurricular activities that resulted in a certificate. Students showed these certificates to the panel during the interview portion of the civil service exam as a way to demonstrate that

they were well rounded. I began to pay attention to the binders full of certificates that particularly ambitious students carried around. These practices and interactions are products of the hierarchy of aspirations described in this chapter. However, as younger students watch their seniors prepare for their post-college life, these practices and interactions work to reproduce and reinforce the legitimacy of these hierarchies.

Despite the stubborn certainty with which many students planned their future as civil servants, what struck me was how students worked to not aspire too precisely. Often when I asked about their post-college plans, they told me they would take the civil service exam and then they would see. The RCSC mostly seeks to recruit bright generalists who they can place in any government department. To fit into their anticipated future as civil servants, students could not anticipate which department the RSCS would assign them to or what they would be doing there. As a result, students kept their aspirations unspecific and lacking in detail.

"Too Good to Teach"

Bhutanese students still confer a very high level of respect to their teachers,[6] so it is surprising how actively and often forcefully, college students rejected teaching as a desirable or even a possible aspiration. Part of this is no doubt because of the marks required to get into either of the two teaching colleges in Bhutan are among the lowest of all the educational institutions in the country. Yeshe Dema, a first-year student, said she had always wanted to be a teacher, but when her family saw how well she had performed in her Class Twelve exams, it convinced her that she was "too good to teach." Several other students told me that they had considered becoming teachers but friends, family, and even their teachers talked them out of pursing the profession. Karma Tshomo, an academically gifted first-year student, recounted how her teachers, including her older sister with whom she lived, told her that teaching involved far too much work and far too few rewards. They encouraged her to aspire to something less strenuous and better paid.

These students were not alone in their sense that teaching was not a desirable profession. The Bhutanese media at this time frequently conveyed stories about the declining prestige of teaching and how it was the "profession of last resort" (see Pelden, 2010). Ironically, Indian contract teachers were partially meeting a persistent shortage of teachers. Yet despite this demand, young Bhutanese rejected teaching as a possible

career. Many young Bhutanese graduates who were offered contract teaching jobs choose to "wait for something better" than teaching.

This growing sense that teaching was not an appropriate aspiration was not helped by increasing evidence that those already within the profession were demoralized both by this disdain and by other aspects of the job. Dorji (2009) notes teachers are often blamed for the perceived decline in the quality of education. He argues that teachers are frequently held responsible for the very limitations that they must work under, including "the lack of adequate textbooks, learning materials, limited professional and after training support, … [and] large classes and problematic children" (2009, p. 12). During the 2009–2010 school year, teachers had begun to leave the profession in record numbers (Lamsang, 2011).[7] A 2011 Royal Audit Authority investigation into why teachers were leaving the profession found that nearly 68 percent left because the workload was too heavy (Lamsang, 2011). A further 60 percent felt they were unrecognized for their efforts and blamed for the perceived decline in the quality of education. The audit also found that 38.25 percent of teachers were unhappy enough about their salary to consider leaving the profession.

The seemingly low regard for teaching as a career has clearly shaped both the perceptions of those already in the profession and those who might be on the verge of becoming teachers. These views contrast significantly with how students think about other possible careers, such as those in science fields or within the civil service. Clearly in the hierarchy of aspirations, being a teacher ranks lower than most other options.

Who Can Wait for Something Better?

Waiting, which media and government observers often read as apathy and disinterest, has become a noticeable strategy among young Bhutanese graduates. The civil service intake happens only once a year. This means that many recent graduates spend anywhere from six months to over a year studying for and waiting to sit the RCSC exams. Graduates are also able to retake the exams if they are unsuccessful for the first time, so some young graduates are off the job market for up to two years. Additionally, gathered outside the gate of the Labor Ministry building were usually groups of formally dressed young people, waiting for jobs or news of jobs. I also frequently met young people in the capital, whose upper-middle-class parents could not only afford to provide them with excellent education (often outside the country), but could also afford to support them while they

waited until the right job came along. Jeffery (2010) has similarly argued that middle-class families in India are able to reproduce their privileges because they can afford to wait until a social connection or some other form of social capital makes the "right" kind of job possible.

At the time of my fieldwork, the unemployment rate in Bhutan stood at just over 3 percent, while the youth[8] unemployment rate was 9 percent (Chhetri, 2011). These rates were even higher (18.6 percent) in urban areas, where somewhat educated and uneducated young people from all over the country assembled in hope of finding jobs. During the time of my fieldwork, groups of these youth congregating in public spaces were starting to make many urban residents suspicious and uncomfortable.[9]

The Labor Ministry has repeatedly argued that plenty of jobs are available in Bhutan. A 2011 survey conducted by the Ministry showed that job vacancies slightly outnumbered job seekers at that time (Chhetri, 2011). The government cites an "attitude problem" among young people who consistently prefer office work to any other kind of labor. They also frequently argue that this is a "mismatch" between the labor demands of the market and the expectations and abilities of young job seekers, as the reasons for high youth unemployment. This notion of a "mismatch" between supply and demand, skills and needs, and expectations and available jobs is referred to again and again in the media (e.g., Rai, 2014) and in the work of academics and policymakers (e.g., Kinga, 2005) to explain the extent of youth unemployment. What is often missing from these kinds of analyses is an understanding of how educational experiences have actively shaped aspirations and expectations making it difficult for young people and their families to believe that they are not entitled to jobs further up the hierarchy of aspirations.

Such disconnects are hardly new or unique to Bhutan. Foley's 1977 review of studies of schools in developing countries found that many already saw them as creating similar contradictions. Schools raised "the expectations … for a modern life, but educational production outstrips economic and occupational developments. Schooling expansion leaves in its wake, therefore, masses of educated, unemployable youth" (1977, p. 316). What do young, educated job seekers do in the face of these contradictions? Waiting for something better is one strategy.

This strategy is, however, unevenly deployed. Not every young person can afford to wait. Young women and poorer, less educated youth are much more likely to take up jobs in the service sector rather than wait. Furlong and Cartmel (2007) point out that despite the huge labor market

shift in late modernity, class and gender still work to shape work-related experiences and opportunities for young people. It was repeatedly pointed out to me that girls who had to drop out after Class Ten tended to quickly find jobs as babysitters, maids, or waitresses, but a boy with the same qualifications and no job is likely to wait to see if something better opens up. Similarly, in their account of underemployed but educated young men in India, Jeffery, Jeffery, and Jeffery (2008) found that women were not held to the same career expectations as their brothers. In fact, the paid labor of sisters often helped to support their unemployed brother.

In the Bhutanese context as well, aspirations increasingly reflect gender expectations and economic constraints. For example, in his survey of live-in babysitters in the capital, Thimphu, Dorji (2005) found that they were overwhelmingly young females (most were between 16 and 20 years, while 30 percent were between the ages of 11 and 15) who had little or no education and were from poor rural households. At least half were sending money home and, in some cases, the employer sent the babysitter's entire monthly earnings directly to her family.[10]

According to Harris (2004), in late modernity, young women's life choices are increasingly scrutinized in ways that blame the women themselves for the choices they make often overlooking the constraints that shape these decisions. On the one hand, the increased number of choices for young women is a reason for celebration. However, Harris points out this celebration tends to hide the way that enduring structural restrictions like class and race mean that the full range of choices is only available to young women who are "structurally located" to take advantages of them (2004, p. 10).

As in many other settings, the cultural production that takes place within Bhutanese schools and related institutions are helping to produce and reproduce gender and class privileges. While many may believe that investments in education might guarantee a better future, clearly not everyone was positioned to wait for these futures to arrive.

I Want to Be a Sunflower

This chapter began with the story of one school visit. I would like to close with the story of another. In late 2006, as I was just beginning to imagine this research project, my mother was part of a team appointed to the Education Sector Review Commission that was asked to produce a broad review of education in Bhutan.[11] The process involved innumerable

school visits. During one of these school visits somewhere in rural eastern Bhutan, the team met with a group of young primary school students. The students were asked to close their eyes and imagine what they wanted to be when they grew up, remembering that they could be anything they wanted to be. When the team asked the students to share their aspirations, the first child to speak told the group excitedly, “I want to be a sunflower!”

This story usually draws a laugh when it is told. However, it is only funny because unlike that child, we are certain that no one can become a sunflower, no matter how strongly they may aspire to become one. Despite the team telling him that he could be anything at all, we know his answer is the “wrong” answer. The kinds of values and discourses produced in Bhutanese society and schools will encourage this child to come to believe in a rigid hierarchy of success, one that cannot accommodate his whimsical aspiration. This story suggests that it is not students who lack imagination when it comes to aspirations but educational and social contexts that work to limit the range of what is possible and desirable so successfully that an aspiration like this becomes laughable.

Notes

1. The rest will have to enter the job market, although some may also attempt to continue their education at private institutions in India.
2. In 2014, more than 2800 graduates registered to compete for 436 available civil services jobs (Zangmo, 2014).
3. In the summer of 2008, I conducted 15 semi-structured interviews with long-term educators and policymakers as part of my pre-dissertation research.
4. Students told incredible stories about how hard they studied for exams in high school—including waking up at the crack of dawn to study, taking cold showers to stay awake, and eating less so that they were not sleepy after a big meal.
5. As of 2010, teachers are expected to sit a qualifying exam after their BEd is complete. However, this is not the same exam as other civil servants sit. It is instead specifically designed for BEd graduates and is intended to deal with concerns about the quality of teachers (Pelden, 2010).
6. Examples include students rising from their seats when teachers enter a room; students giving teacher right of way when they walked through crowded hallways; always serving teachers first during events like class picnics, tea sessions, and meals where students were present;

student insisting on carrying anything teachers might have in their hands.

7. This trend continues, with some 179 teachers leaving the profession between 2013 and 2014 (Dorji, 2015b).
8. Defined in this context as a job seeker between 15 and 29.
9. For example, it is frequently assumed in the media that all these young people are drug addicts or members of urban gangs (Dorji, 2010). This suspicion is still very much present; for example, in early 2015, to much controversy, the police announced they would begin frisking "suspicious" youth who were still out after 10 p.m. (Dorji, 2015a).
10. Interestingly, Dorji reports that many of the girls are expected (both by themselves and their employers) to move out of babysitting after their adolescence because caring for children is considered a low-skill job that is no longer appropriate once these girls are over a certain age. At the same time, what opportunities were available for these young women apart from "settling down" in a marriage was less clear.
11. The final product of this study was the document "Education without Compromise" which is referenced in this chapter.

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CHAPTER 4

A "Golden Generation"? Framing the Future Among Senior Students at Gülen-Inspired Schools in Urban Tanzania

Kristina Dohrn

"Yeni bir dünya kuruyorlardı …, they were building a new world." The sound of this year's official song of the International Festival of Languages and Cultures (IFLC) could be heard frequently in the corridors of Feza Girls' Secondary and High School (FGSHS) in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, during the first weeks of March 2015. The students were rehearsing for their big performance in the city's largest event hall, just like other students around the world from schools equally inspired by Fethullah Gülen, a Muslim preacher who is the source of inspiration for the Gülen Movement (GM). During the IFLC, the GM global educational network ties become visible. With the aim to further Turkish language and culture, the IFLC, which previously was called "International Turkish Olympiads," was at first organized in 2003 in Turkey with students from Gülen-inspired schools (GIS) of 17 different countries. Today, in geographically and culturally

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distinct settings such as the Philippines, Kirgizstan, the USA, and Germany (among others), students from GISs from around 160 countries come together and perform dances, poems, and songs from Turkey as well as from their respective country. During the finale of each show, the students sing the same song and dance with the same choreography. The song's lyrics tell of a new world, a bright future, which will be characterized by love, friendship, tolerance, happiness, and joy and which will be created by students from these "Turkish Schools" (referring to schools inspired by Fethullah Gülen).

The GM is among the most active and dynamic transnational Muslim movements today. With roots in late 1960s Turkey, the GM today consists of people worldwide, mostly of Turkish origin, who aim to put into practice the teachings of Fethullah Gülen. Their engagement has led to the development of vast networks in areas of the media, business, charity, and education. Today, GISs like Feza schools in Dar es Salaam have become an integral part of the educational landscapes for about 160 countries around the world.

The IFLC is a central event within the global GM community. Its underlying motto, the idea to create a new and better world, ties in with the GM's larger educational ideals, which aim to shape a "golden generation" that will be able to combine scientific knowledge and moral values in an effort to lead society toward a brighter future (Gülen, 1997, 2004, pp. 193–201; Yavuz, 2013, pp. 97–99). In his writings Fethullah Gülen states that humanity has deviated from the righteous path of religion and portraits our time as characterized by ignorance (Turkish: *cehalet*) and darkness. By using the Qur'anic concept *jahaliyyah,* Gülen refers not only to a lack of scientific and technological knowledge but also to the pre-Islamic times and the ignorance of the religious creation. He laments that today's society is suffering from materialism, unbelief, and a lack of moral values and orientation in life. To lead societies out of these dark conditions, Gülen prophesies the rising of a new, a golden generation (Gülen, 1995, 2015; Hendrick, 2013, p. 79). According to Fethullah Gülen and his followers, such a generation will arise through an ideal education, which he describes as the most difficult and sacred task (Gülen, 1997). Thus, he connects his prophesied future to the educational work of numerous volunteers who work as teachers at GISs around the world.

For Gülen-inspired teachers at FGSHS this religiously framed vision of a better future is central to their work. They dedicate their lives to the realization of the GM educational mission, which they consider to be a fulfillment of Islamic deeds (Dohrn, 2013). Following the work of Appadurai

(2013), this GM-specific idea about a prophesied golden generation can be considered part of a particular configuration of diverse “conceptions of aspiration, anticipation, and imagination which produce the future as a specific cultural form or horizon” (Appadurai, 2013, p. 286).

This particular framing of the future in relation to education at Feza schools is, however, not prevalent among students and their parents. For them, investing in education is mostly framed in terms of securing future pathways, a desire arising from experiences of economic and moral uncertainty associated with processes of neoliberal restructuring. Policies of structural adjustment, the retreat of the state from social services, and the decline of the security formerly provided through patronage and social networks (Weiss, 2004, p. 10) have set the stage on which diverse schools in Tanzania compete for bright and wealthy students and their families by promising to open secure pathways to a good future through education. In this regard, Feza schools particularly promote the idea that today’s Feza students will be among the country’s economic and political elite of tomorrow.

In this chapter I argue, that at Feza schools diverse visions of the future with different temporal horizons coincide. For the inner core of the Gülen community, the prophecy of a better future formulated by Fethullah Gülen is central to their motivation to educate students. Framing their engagement in Islamic terms, their work relates to a greater and distant objective and they formulate their aspirations in relation to the hereafter. Simultaneously, Feza schools fill a certain niche for middle- and upper-class families aiming to secure their children’s future, mostly framed in economic terms. Their aspirations, then, are configured in relation to an imagined community established through connections within the global Feza network and the related educational and economic opportunities that circulates throughout it. Thus, the future horizons that are imagined by many parents and students are less related to a distant prophecy but rather to a calculable economic and moral security in an uncertain present.

At FGSHS, I argue, there are multiple futures at play with diverse framings and temporal horizons. They coexist, merge, and contest each other. Answering Guyer’s (2007) call to pay more attention to the near future, I explore how students in their last year of school at FGSHS orient and calculate their actions, choices, and aspirations with regard to their future and the different visions of future at play at FGSHS. Through ethnographic material, I show how the “lived future” (Guyer, 2007) of senior students at FGSHS is framed in relation to very diverse factors: It can be influenced by moral formation or its contestation at school, by religious visions of a distant future, and by expectations from families, as well as by experiences

of moral and economic danger. Thus, this chapter sheds light on the diverse futures that are being formulated and lived at GISs using the pathways students see for themselves after graduation which they await.

Context and Methodology

The first GIS in Tanzania opened in 1998 during a period in which the country's educational landscape was undergoing dramatic changes. The weakening of the national educational system due to privatization and World Bank policies opened the space for new groups and actors, among them religiously motivated schools such as Feza schools, which compete on the recently emerged and highly competitive urban educational market of Dar es Salaam (Dilger, 2013, p. 451). At the time of my research, 12 schools of different types belonged to the GM educational network in the country, with most of them located in Dar es Salaam and Zanzibar. The schools were mainly financed through school fees. But they also received considerable monetary and material donations from Gülen-inspired businessmen in Turkey and Tanzania.

At the time of my fieldwork, Feza schools in Dar es Salaam were considered among the best schools in Tanzania. Within the national educational market, they primarily compete with successful Christian schools, which often top the list of the annual school rankings. This is also the case for FGSHS, which is the focus of my research and is located in Kawe, a district in the northern part of the city. In 2014, FGSHS enrolled around 350 female students, with about 90 percent of the girls staying in the school's dormitory. The families of the students generally belonged to the urban middle and upper classes and were thus able to pay for the high school fees (around $4000 per year). However, several scholarships were available for especially high-performing students. As at the other GISs in Dar es Salaam, classes offered at the FGSHS corresponded with the official curriculum of the Tanzanian Ministry of Education. The official medium of instruction was English; however, all students learned Turkish as a foreign language.

The majority of the students at FGSHS, 60–70 percent, were Muslim, while the rest had a Christian background. Although Feza schools were generally not considered Islamic schools by the inhabitants of Dar es Salaam, FGSHS was seen as having an inclination toward a Muslim lifestyle, which most of the parents traced back to the fact that the administration and all classroom teachers were Turkish, and thus Muslim. However, as Feza schools differ from other Muslim schools in the way Islamic contents are addressed in school, namely in a less explicit way, they are still acceptable

to parents who might otherwise be reluctant to send their children to a Muslim school. For some parents, the question of the religious affiliation of the school is secondary when compared to the importance of securing a good education for their children that could provide for their future. When I asked a Muslim father of a Form Six student about whether FGSHS was considered a religious school, he answered, "We don't really understand them, whether they are Islamic or not … but we don't really care. What we are looking for is education!" (field notes, December 12, 2014).

This chapter is drawn from a larger project exploring the interrelation among religion, education, and ethics at FGSHS in Dar es Salaam. I conducted ethnographic fieldwork at FGSHS for a period of 14 month between 2013 and 2015, including diverse groups in and around Feza Schools, such as teachers, students, graduates, parents, and administrative staff as well as businessmen and their wives who supported these schools through donations or by getting involved with the school's afternoon activities. The core of my data was derived from intensive fieldwork within three Forms: Form Two, Form Four, and Form Six. I conducted semi-structured and partly biographical interviews, focus group interviews as well as participant observation, and had numerous conversations in formal and informal settings. Complementing this fieldwork was a contextualization of the school within the transnational activities of the GM network between Turkey and Tanzania and its interrelation with the foreign policy of the Turkish state in Tanzania. Furthermore, I conducted interviews with staff of other religiously motivated and competing schools in Dar es Salaam in order to contextualize Feza schools within the local educational landscape. For the purpose of this chapter, I focus on the experiences of Form Six students who were in their last year of school. Altogether 67 students were enrolled in Form Six during my research, of which 15 participated actively in my study. In this chapter, I particularly rely on a sample of five of the Form Six students with whom I conducted biographical interviews, as well as on interviews with their teachers and parents and observations of their classroom and outside of class activities. The experiences and positions of these students contrasted with regard to their social, economic, and religious background as well as with regard to the way they responded to the ideological framework of the school and the future pathways the GM network provided to them. Thus, this sample reflects the diversity of futures articulated and lived by students at FGSHS.

In my research, I considered how experiences, discourses, and practices at FGSHS influenced the way these senior students framed their near future in relation to the opportunities they recognized, the choices they

made, and the aspirations they formulated. In so doing, I aimed to analyze the diverse kinds of "lived futures" (Guyer, 2007) being articulated and lived at GISs.

Moral Formation and Visions of the Future

"Be better educated," the official slogan of Feza schools, decorates many of the school brochures and is often referred to at school events. The slogan refers not only to the students' performance in diverse subjects, but also to the GM vision of an ideal education that combines academic excellence and moral values; this education will bring up a "golden generation" consisting of pioneers for a better future.

Fethullah Gülen describes the future he prophesies as a hallway to paradise, characterized by peace, friendship, faith in God, economic and social security, honesty, and happiness, as well as by the reconciliation of mind and soul, physics, and metaphysics (Gülen, 2010). In fact, the reconciliation of religion and science is a core element of his vision. In his sermons and writings, Gülen follows up on the ideas of Said Nursi (1878–1960) who was a Muslim thinker, writer, and religious leader in central Anatolia and had a major impact on his ideas. Gülen takes up Nursi's idea that the Qur'an determines the ultimate goal of scientific and technological developments, and directs their ultimate aims. In many of his writings and sermons, however, he goes beyond this Islamic contextualization and calls for a reconciliation of religion and science in more general terms (e.g., Gülen, 1995, 2012b). According to Gülen, through an education which incorporates this ideal, a golden generation will rise and lead societies out of the current state of disbelief, materialism, and conflict (Gülen 1993, 1995, 1997, 2000).

Through their not explicitly Islamic framings, I argue, Gülen's vision of a distant future and his idea of an ideal education leading to it can be adapted to religiously mixed educational settings of GISs around the world. Because Gülen relates to Islamic sources, the religiously inspired core of the GM, such as the Gülen-inspired staff and teachers at FGSHS, frame their educational engagement as a fulfillment of Islamic deeds. Originating from Turkey, they had left their home country in order to dedicate their lives to *hizmet,* meaning service to Islam; within the GM discourse, this is framed as a service to humanity. Looking at the operating level of the school, Gülen's distant prophecy gets translated into successful marketed education which offers promising prospects to students and parents in their near future after the students' graduation. Yet,

the everyday educational practices in particular local settings, such as at FGSHS in Tanzania, show that at GISs different visions of the future which are connected to different temporal horizons and framings are at play and intermingle.

When talking about their educational engagement in relation to creating a better future, Gülen-inspired teachers at FGSHS often used the metaphor of seeds that GM followers plant through their work in education and which might grow, thus changing the future of diverse countries. This metaphor, which is also referred to by Gülen himself (e.g., Gülen, 2007, 2010, 2012b), is connected to the GM approach of educating people who in the future will influence their respective societies and thus further the moral values they have internalized though education at GISs. This is also the case for students at FGSHS, who are often expected by their teachers to change Tanzania for the better in the future. Tuğba, a classroom teacher of Form Five, underlined this aspect:

> The ones who will change Tanzania in the future will be our students. This is how we see it, if God wishes, in many fields…in education, health… If Tanzania will be a very beautiful and developed place in the future, then our students will be the ones who will bring the change. Because we try to give them the values here…This is what we hope. (Tuğba, interview, March 27, 2015)

Classroom teachers, who at FGSHS were all part of the GM, played a significant role in supervising the students; they were held responsible for the students' moral formation and thus for the realization of the broader vision of the GM educational mission. They were imagined to ideally embody the GM moral values and thus influence the students through their exemplary conduct (*temsil*) (see Balcı, 2003, pp. 221–224; Dohrn, 2013, pp. 250–251; Yavuz, 2013, pp. 109–111).

In addition to teachers influencing students' moral development through example, the moral formation of students was also carried out in more institutionalized ways. Every Friday Gülen-inspired classroom teachers taught units on “Social Ethics” in which moral values were framed in rather universal terms. *Hizmet* teachers also arranged tea programs during afternoons. Students were divided into groups of around six persons: two groups consisted of Muslim students only, but in another group, Christian and Muslim students were mixed. Usually, the program for each group took place at least once a week in the dormitory or in the homes of Gülen-inspired businessmen where their wives hosted the students. The

program's shape and content differed according to the respective group. In the Muslim groups, the programs entailed a recitation of a *sura* from the Qur'an, shorter prayers (*dua*), and a lecture and discussion of a text, which often dealt with stories about the life of the Prophet and his followers and the Islamic deeds one could deduce from these stories. Gülen-inspired teachers often took these texts from the *Fountain* magazine, a monthly magazine that is part of the GM media network and reflective of the GM value discourse. Many articles in this magazine accentuate values which are central to the moral education within the GM, such as love, altruism, mercy, and piety. Furthermore, the diverse contributions often promote the reconcilability of religion (in most of the cases specifically Islam) and science and each issue comprises an article written by Fethullah Gülen himself. Much of what the Muslim groups practiced functioned as a way to discipline students and instill a certain Islamic habitus. The shape of the mixed group was different. Religious practices, such as prayers or recitations, were not integrated into the program. Although the values, which were discussed with the help of short articles or video clips often resembled those of the Muslim groups, they were not related to a specific religious background. However, also within the mixed groups the teacher's aim of influencing the moral conduct of students was crucial.

Students at FGSHS described the moral education experienced in social ethics class and during tea programs in individual ways. Especially in regard to their futures, students met their teachers' advice with different ideas concerning their dreams, expectations, ambitions, and anxieties. Thus, while teachers aimed at influencing their student's character formation and their future pathways, students negotiated these pathways and the moral education at Feza in relation to their own social, economic, and religious backgrounds and their own individual visions of future.

Maneuvering Between Social Contexts and Future Pathways

The moral formation at FGSHS was reflected, adapted, negotiated, and/or contested by Form Six students in very diverse ways, depending on their social, religious, and family backgrounds as well as on their individual personality. For many students who were in Muslim groups during tea programs, the moral formation which they had experienced at FGSHS had an impact on their Islamic practice and led them to integrate the fulfillment of Islamic duties into their everyday life. Furthermore, there was also a small

group of Muslim students for whom the GM discourse became central to their subject formation and to the way they imagined and created their future. Through Gülen-inspired teachers, these students were gradually exposed to Fethullah Gülens books, his video sermons, and to GM-specific practices, such as *sohbet* (conversation) meetings. *Sohbet* meetings are central religious and social practices within the GM. Separated by gender and organized according to age and profession, GM followers come together in *sohbet* groups in order to read Gülen's books and discuss their implications on everyday life. An *abla* (literally "older sister," the male equivalent is *ağabey* "older brother") functions as authority for a particular group and leads the discussion (see also Dohrn, 2013, pp. 249–253). Those students, who were part of a specific *sohbet* group for Tanzanian students at FGSHS and consequently familiar with GM discourses, often embraced Gülen's idea of an ideal education and the vision of a better future that will be created through it. They formulated their aspirations and oriented their choices accordingly. For many students this meant to choose the profession of a teacher and further the educational ideals of the GM at GISs in the future. This was the case for Maryam: Maryam was born in Dar es Salaam and grew up in a Muslim social environment. Her mother worked in the administration of an Islamic Seminary school, and her father was employed with the national government. They had first enrolled her in an Islamic primary school. When she graduated from the primary school, Feza School seemed a good option to the family. In contrast to other high-performing schools, which often had a Christian background, Feza school allowed Maryam to continue practicing an Islamic lifestyle.

Maryam explained that since Form Three, she had sought Islamic knowledge and read books that were given to her by the Turkish teachers. She stressed that with time, she began to understand the background of Feza schools and the motivation of the Turkish teachers. Her deeper knowledge affected her behavior and changed her aspirations for her future pathway: Originally Maryam wanted to become a doctor, but after being inspired by the *hizmet* teachers, she now wanted to become a teacher. However, many people in her social environment reacted critically to her new professional aim. She explained:

> When I tell my friends that now I want to become a teacher… you know … in Tanzania, being a teacher is something low. You can hardly find the atmosphere like here. This is the only place. For someone who doesn't know, when you explain that you want to become a teacher and that kind of

> teacher who is there for his students, who wants to sacrifice herself … people don't even understand this. Also, my parents … were very disappointed, but now they are ok with it. (Maryam, interview, March 28, 2015)

The high value she placed on working as a teacher within the GM contrasted with the way the teaching profession was generally regarded among the Tanzanian population. Teachers are paid low salaries, face hardworking conditions, and often receive poor training. This lack of training can be traced back to the rapidly increased need for teachers since 2002. This was the year in which fees for public primary schools were eliminated, leading to a massive growth in the number of pupils, which made teaching an unattractive job for many graduates. In this regard, the idealization of the teaching profession at FGSHS conflicted with the views more commonly held by parents and students. As the value of going to Feza school was often described an economic investment for the future, parents usually expected that their children would choose a prestigious career and future job—a goal made all the more significant due to the expectation of many families to be financially supported by their offspring at a later point.

Embracing the GM educational vision, Maryam aspired to study education in Turkey. However, because her father wanted her to take her first degree in Tanzania, she planned to apply to the University of Dar es Salaam, where she expected a full scholarship from Feza schools due to her closeness to the GM and her wish to study education. Providing scholarships in education to students who embraced GM values and practices was indeed also a way of attracting young women who could extend the scope of the movement. These efforts align with the GM's view that in the future, *hizmet* should be furthered by the citizens of a respective country and not only by those originating from Turkey. Through studying in Turkey and staying in *hizmet* houses, houses in which students live together and which are shaped by GM-specific discourses and practices, such as the above mentioned *sohbet* meetings, Tuğba explained that Feza graduates could stay "close to us and to our ideas" (Tuğba, interview, March 27, 2015). Back in Tanzania, the graduates would then work as teachers in GISs and pass on their moral ideals to the next generations of Feza students.

The process of moral formation differed greatly for Christian students and those Muslims who were in religiously mixed groups during tea programs. The content of these tea programs mostly revolved around moral values, such as respecting one's parents, the importance of helping and

cooperating with each other, or the necessity of working hard and not giving up. Outside the Muslim groups, the values addressed were not related to a certain religion. However, the importance of being religious and believing in God could be addressed in the discussions.

Although students also enjoyed going to the tea programs and talking about moral and social issues, they sometimes expressed the criticism that the content did not prepare them well enough for their future. Students often perceived Gülen-inspired teachers as too far from their own social and cultural environment and from what was expected of them outside of Feza. Anita, a Form Six student from a Catholic family explained her concerns:

> They cannot make us better humans because they are not open. We are girls of 18, 19, 20, 21; we have passed the border of girls. [Teachers often tell us] "If you want to make it in life, you have to walk with God, you have to pray."… Yes, we need that wake-up call, but we are going to university, [and] you are not hitting the target. Tell us what we are going to face! For example, [say to us], "Girls, you are going to meet people offering you drugs." [Girls] … might want to work, and people might propose very bad work, maybe as a stripper, or being a waitress. How should we cope with such situations? Because that is what is also surrounding our lives, especially also when [we]… are going abroad. [Tell us], "Girls, you are becoming grown-ups, you can become mothers." We have to understand [that] when you want to be a mother, you have to be at this age… This is what is social with us right now. (Anita, interview, March 09, 2015)

Anita joined FGSHS after graduating from Form Four at a Catholic missionary school. Based on her comments, it appears that the moral guidance provided by *hizmet* teachers did not have much influence on her future plans. After graduating, Anita wanted to study law in South Africa. She described herself as a person who always liked to speak her mind and to stand up for others, something that led her to aspire to become a lawyer. However, she felt that these attributes were not encouraged at FGSHS and that *hizmet* teachers were limited when it came to knowing what is "out there" (Anita, interview, March 09, 2015). She criticized the teachers for not being "open" enough and stated that accordingly she could not talk with them about issues concerning relationships with boys, sexuality, or other topics which are predominant among girls at her age. When directing the topic into that direction, teachers would often end these conversations, designating these topics as shameful (Turkish: *ayıp*).

Thus, while for students like Maryam, the moral guidance experienced at Feza became central to their everyday life as well as their aspirations, other students perceived the values and lifestyle of *hizmet* teachers as too far removed from their own ideals and personal concerns. Here it becomes clear that the aspirations of students at FGSHS were based on a variety of visions of the good life, which contain diverse configurations of ethics, values, and religion (Appadurai, 2013, pp. 290–292).

While some students said that Turkish teachers at Feza schools would not prepare them well enough for interacting "out there" in the future, in environments perceived as risky and morally deviant, other students and their parents praised the opportunity to provide moral supervision through Feza schools even beyond graduation. In the next section, I will explore how Feza schools were perceived by students and parents as providing security for their future in a double sense, jobwise and concerning a moral lifestyle. Thus, Feza schools respond to particular anxieties and aspirations concerning the future with particular educational offers and future prospects.

Securing Futures: Transnational Social Capital and Supervised Morality

During the final weeks before their graduation, Form Six students and their parents were introduced to the opportunities provided through the GM transnational network in a more concrete way. An educational consultant from *Afrika Danışmanlık*, an organization coordinating the exchange between Turkey and sub-Saharan Africa in Gülen-inspired education and business, came to Dar es Salaam to inform parents and students about existing opportunities for their studies in Turkey. In seminars and individual meetings, the consultant introduced certain Turkish universities: Most of these were private and part of the GM network. For these universities, recruiting students from abroad had become an attractive business opportunity. Being part of the same global GM educational network, Feza schools offered to take care of students' enrollment and to assist the young women in finding appropriate accommodations in Turkey. Furthermore, Feza graduates were granted a considerable discount when studying at Gülen-inspired universities. Thus, the lower university fees compared to those in other countries and the security and supervision offered through the Feza network made Turkey an attractive option for many parents.

This was also the case for Sofia and her family. Sofia was born in Dar es Salaam into a wealthy Lutheran family and had attended FGSHS since

Form One. Ever since her childhood, Sofia had wanted to become an engineer and follow in her father’s footsteps. Her dream was to study at one of the prestigious universities in the USA and earn her doctoral degree, then to return to help her own country. Because she did not have any relatives in the USA, the option of going to Turkey while still being supervised by Feza seemed appealing, particularly to her father. Thus, Feza can accompany the educational pathways of young women beyond their school days. As Sofia explained, “When I go to Turkey, then I will still be under Feza. They know our parents and they will keep watching us. So if something happens to us, they can contact our parents easily. So I think these are better connections” (Sofia, interview, November 22, 2014). Sofia planned to stay in a dormitory that was connected to the GM network. She imagined the dormitory to be similar to the Feza dormitory where she was staying in Dar es Salaam. As she wanted to concentrate on her studies, she felt comfortable with the idea of being closely supervised and restricted. The trust parents have in Feza and the security which a close supervision provides made attending a private university belonging to the Feza network an attractive choice, especially because students and parents alike perceived university life as connected to more freedom and to risks for moral deviance.

Besides the moral and personal security that the Feza network is expected to provide, social capital gained through global connections with GM businessmen is another factor students consider when calculating their opportunities. Although Sofia comes from a well-to-do family, she too thought about job security, as did the Turkish staff at the school. Turkish teachers suggested to students that knowing the Turkish language might make them more eligible for jobs within the growing market of Turkish companies in Tanzania. At the seminar for students and parents described above, the Feza consultant introduced the Gülen-inspired Alliance of Businessmen and Industrialists in Tanzania and Turkey (ABITAT) and its global network, arguing that it might open doors in the future. Sofia, too, considered such transnational business connections when thinking about her future employment:

> Maybe if you study engineering and later you fail to get work, if there is a Feza company, they might take you because you were a Feza student, so I think this is beneficial! … They started this business organization, TUSCON [the global GM business umbrella organization]. It connects different countries and they do business… So I might get employed [at] … TUSCON facilities in Germany. (Sofia, interview, November 22, 2014)

The guidance provided to the students and their parents during the final weeks of their schooldays through seminars and individual meetings had a significant impact on parents and students, on their way of imagining and calculating future opportunities, and on their decision-making processes. Senior students at FGSHS experienced the future opportunities provided through the GM transnational network as an increase of their social capital (Bourdieu, 1986). Job opportunities, lower tuition fees, and secure living circumstances were often reasons for the wish to stay connected to Feza schools and their network in the future, especially in an environment where employment was viewed as highly insecure.

However, the support of Feza could also imply a certain dependency: Students with scholarships especially were expected to return not only their appreciation but also their support through work for Feza schools. In many cases, they were offered scholarships in order to study education and they were then expected to work as teachers at Feza schools after their graduation from university. In contrast to children from wealthier families, the lower economic background of many students studying at FGSH with scholarships limited their choices after graduating from school. Although it may not correspond with their individual preferences, a fully funded university degree and the prospect of secured employment which, however, also implied a dependency toward Feza schools in the future was often the best among the available options. Thus, social and class differences were significant influences as students formulated their aspirations. As poin ted out by Appadurai (2013), the capacity to aspire is unequally distributed and depends on cultural, social, and economic experiences and conditions (Appadurai, 2013, pp. 289–299). Thus, the way students of lower socio-economic backgrounds could profit from the GM network of opportunities and formulate their individual aspirations in relation to it was influenced by the limited resources of their families for investing in these future opportunities.

This case study shows that an investment in education at Feza schools goes hand in hand with an investment in the transnational social, educational, and economic network of the GM, providing young women access to social and economic resources and security. Feza schools, in return, profit not only from the success of their educational institutions but also from their social ties to wealthy families of students. These can provide transnational economic opportunities for Gülen-inspired businessmen. This interplay of economic pragmatism and religious vision, of entrepreneurial spirit, and a dedication to a GM-specific moral formation imagined to bring up a "golden generation" is pivotal for the "lived futures" (Guyer, 2007) at GISs.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have shown how diverse "lived futures" (Guyer, 2007) with different framings and temporal horizons coexist and intermingle at FGSHS. Gülen's distant prophecy of a brighter future and human salvation through the rising of a golden generation represents the underlying ideological framework for the educational engagement of Gülen-inspired teachers and staff in Tanzania. Simultaneously, education at Feza schools is connected to localized aspirations, anxieties, and expectations of students and parents for the near future. Within the highly stratified educational market in Tanzania, Feza schools fill in a niche: They are especially attractive to middle- and upper-class families, which aim to secure the future of their children through connections to the global Feza network of educational and economic opportunities while at the same time relying on the moral supervision of their offspring after graduation.

Looking at the "lived futures" (Guyer, 2007) of senior students at FGSHS, it becomes clear that the aspirations, anticipations, and imaginations that configure the future as a "specific cultural form or horizon" (Appadurai, 2013, p. 286) within GISs are diverse and point to different images of the good life (Appadurai, 2013, pp. 286–290). While for Gülen-inspired teachers, the moral formation of students at GISs was part of their everyday ethics and related to their image of the good life "as a map of the journey from here to there and from now to then" (Appadurai, 2013, p. 292), the way female students at FGSHS incorporated the experienced moral formation into their own images of the future and their aspirations for their life after graduation varied according to their religious, economic, and social background. While some students embraced the GM-specific ideological framing of education and oriented their future pathways accordingly, other students were not aware of these GM-specific underlying educational ideals and visions of the future; they framed the future pathways that Feza provided to them in terms of economic and moral security. Thus, the GM attempts to grow the movement and its members does not exclusively refer to the core of Islamic motivated actors, who aspire to become part of the global network of Gülen-inspired teachers in the future. Rather, FGSHS equally targets a broader group of young women. Through giving them an ideal education, which combines moral values and scientific and technological knowledge, they imagine these young well-performing women to become future citizens who will be among the Tanzanian elite and thus through their influence turn the

country's future to the better. Thus, the futures articulated and lived at FGSHS with their different framings and temporal horizons intermingled, and are integrated into the broad framework of Gülen-inspired education.

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CHAPTER 5

Aspiration, Piety, and Traditionalism Among Indonesian Islamic Boarding School Girls

Claire-Marie Hefner

Islamic boarding schools or *madrasa*, as they are known in much of the Muslim world, exist in the public imaginary as places of rote memorization, draconian rules, and limited human flourishing—particularly for young women. Until recently, many scholars of contemporary Muslim societies overlooked these institutions, assumed to be bastions of conservativism, unyielding to pressures to accommodate contemporary cultural and social climates.[1] However, recent anthropological investigations of students' lived realities at Islamic boarding schools reveal that these negative stereotypes overlook the diversity of roles that religion plays in society and more specifically, the critical social and historical role Islamic schools play in molding modern, educated, and pious youth.

This chapter analyzes the life-project narratives of young Muslim women at a traditionalist Islamic boarding high school in Indonesia as they envision and prepare for their futures. Indonesia is the world's largest Muslim-majority nation and claims one of the largest Islamic educational sectors globally (Noor, Sikand, & Van Bruinessen, 2008). The school at the heart of this study is Pesantren Krapyak Ali Maksum, a traditionalist *pesantren* located in the bustling university city of Yogyakarta. A *pesantren* is an Islamic boarding school dedicated to the study of the classical Islamic

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sciences of the Qur'an, the Sunna of the Prophet Muhammad, and *fiqh* jurisprudential commentaries.[2] Far from an institution set on curtailing the aspirations of its young female students, Krapyak Ali Maksum has adapted its curriculum to cater to the education and career goals of students and their families. Established in 1910 as a school dedicated to the crafting of scholars of the classical Islamic sciences, by the 1980s, Pesantren Krapyak began to respond to the desires of parents and students that the curriculum include general studies courses in the form of a *madrasah tsanawiyah* and *madrasah aliyah* (Islamic middle and high school), which allowed Krapyak diplomas to be recognized by Indonesian universities. Today, the broader school offers both general studies in accordance with the national curriculum as well as rigorous religious training.

While the families of many Krapyak students struggle to maintain what is typically a lower-middle-class lifestyle, my research suggests that girls' imagined futures show the influence of aspirational optimism and upwardly mobile values of the new Muslim middle class that has taken shape in Indonesia since the sustained economic boom of the 1980s (Hefner, 1993; Heryanto, 1999). Although educational outcomes are ultimately contingent on the girls' economic circumstances, most young women at Krapyak make it unambiguously clear that they aim to go on to attain higher education. They view a Muslim middle-class future as including (but not limited to) a college degree, a respectable (i.e., white-collar) career, and a dual-income family (Parker & Nilan, 2013).

This chapter details the plurality of ways in which girls' visions of their projected futures are refracted and reinterpreted through the lens of not only these markers of middle-class modernity, but also a traditionalist Islamic ethos that blends piety and social propriety with pride of nation and a relative tolerance for Indonesia's religious and ethnic diversity. On the one hand, my research supports Arjun Appadurai's assertion that the "capacity to aspire"—defined as "a navigational capacity that is nurtured by the possibility of real-world conjectures and refutations" (Appadurai, 2013, p. 189)—may not be evenly distributed across social groups. Many students at Krapyak had precarious economic means that do not always guarantee their ability to achieve their middle-class aspirations. On the other hand, I argue that in considering the "capacity to aspire," it is critical to note that student aspirations and imagined futures are also shaped and reinterpreted vis-à-vis the diverse social imaginaries and concerns students bring to their educational pilgrimage, and in which they and their aspirational futures are remade (cf. Barth, 1993; Taylor, 2004). The young women at Pesantren Krapyak are not only driven by the otherworldly

aspirations of piety but also inhabit a fragmented moral world where they are students, citizens, sisters, consumers, potential spouses, and professionals.[3] For the young women in this chapter, students' aspirations show the influence of a middle-class vision of the "good life," but these dreams—their achievement or failure thereof—are also refracted and reinterpreted through the lens of traditionalist Islam.

Research Methods

This chapter is part of a larger project on Islamic education and ethical subject formation in two Islamic boarding schools in Yogyakarta. Research at Krapyak Ali Maksum was carried out over an 11-month period during the 2012–2013 academic year. The school runs gender-segregated Islamic middle and high school programs for boys and girls. At the time of my research, the girls' middle and high school dorms housed around 450 students, while the equivalent boys' programs enrolled around 350. I focused my research on the programs for young women and regularly attended classes, lessons on religious texts, after school activities, fieldtrips, and off-campus outings. I also hung out in dormitories, took girls to the mall, went out for afternoon snacks, and visited with girls' families. I conducted over 70 interviews with students, teachers, administrators, parents, and alumni at Krapyak. To supplement these methods, I conducted a multivariate student survey addressing socioeconomic backgrounds, parental education levels and occupations, career and education goals, and consumption practices of 175 female students.

In what follows, I begin by briefly detailing the critical aspects of traditionalist Islam in Indonesia and profile Pesantren Krapyak Ali Maksum. I then consider how the largely aspirational middle-class backgrounds of girls' families influence their imagined futures and the role they see their religious training playing in this educational pilgrimage. Finally, I take up the issue of how traditionalism allows young women of precarious socioeconomic standing to re-evaluate and reinterpret what might be read as failures or shortcomings through the lens of traditionalist Islam.

Traditionalist Islam in Indonesia

A distinctive feature of Indonesian Islam is the pattern of social and normative divisions within the Muslim community, divisions referred to as *aliran* ("streams"; see Geertz, 1960; Peacock, 1978). Perhaps the most studied and well-documented streams of Islam in Indonesia are the two

major subsets of what Geertz identified as the *santri* (Javanese for "student of an Islamic school"): the traditionalists or classicalists and the modernists.[4] In the first decades of the twentieth century, traditionalists came largely from rural backgrounds, and although their religious elites were well versed in the Islamic sciences, their rank and file had notably lesser levels of educational achievement than did their urban modernist rivals. Traditionalist education focused on the in-depth study of classical texts in the Islamic sciences, known locally as *kitab kuning* (literally "yellow books," Van Bruinessan, 1989) in rural *pesantren* schools. In today's Indonesia, the majority of traditionalists are still formally or informally affiliated with *pesantren* and the mass Muslim social welfare organization, the *Nahdlatul Ulama* (NU, Arabic: Renaissance of the Islamic Scholars) that claims some 35 million members (Bush, 2009). Despite NU's self-identification as custodian of Islamic-science traditions, the organization has been shaped as well by a deep engagement with and forward-looking embrace of modernity and its aspirational horizons.

Pesantren Krapyak Ali Maksum is an influential and historic Islamic boarding school in the special district of Yogyakarta, Java. Loosely affiliated with the largest Muslim social welfare organization in the world, the NU (Van Bruinessen, 1994), the school once focused on training male scholars of Islamic sciences, but today teaches both men and women. It is through the school's legacy of having trained some of Indonesia's leading scholars of Islamic sciences that Krapyak is recognized as an institution with the moral and religious authority necessary to shape young men and women into pious and learned Muslims.

Middle-Class Aspirations and Traditionalism

A key social and ethical characteristic of the traditionalist wing of the new Muslim middle class is the desire to balance educational achievement and social mobility with a traditionalist Islam that is proud of its place in the history of Indonesian nationalism and confident that its commitment to national culture and diversity is fully compatible with a proper profession of Islam. Pesantren Krapyak Ali Maksum is a *pesantren modern*—a term used to refer to an Islamic boarding school that offers the national curriculum alongside a rigorous Islamic studies program. As such, the school includes an Islamic middle school (*madrasah tsanwiyah*) and Islamic high school (*madrasah aliyah*) on its school grounds alongside a *kitab kuning*[5] and Qur'anic study program in the dormitories. As Ninik, a recent alumni,

described it to me, "There are two *kiblat* [orientations] here, rather than just one. It means that we can have formal and informal learning; it's nicer than if we only have non-formal [i.e., religious training]. If we only did *ngaji* [religious study] without knowing anything of the outside world, that would be really challenging [when we graduate]." Krapyak Ali Maksum gives students the tools that prepare them religiously without overlooking the general and practical knowledge necessary to be successful in this life.

Today, the traditionalist Muslim community is still primarily rooted in Indonesia's rural population and is of notably modest socioeconomic means. However, the families who send their children to Krapyak Ali Maksum are among the new or aspiring Indonesian Muslim middle class that first emerged in the 1980s and 1990s (Hefner, 1993; Heryanto, 1999; Jones, 2012; Smith-Hefner, 2005). Krapyak parents are less likely to be involved in high-status urban professions than their modernist counterparts. However, a significant percentage do hold modest positions in the civil service (according to my student survey data, 17 percent of mothers and 26 percent of fathers), and more strikingly, some 30 percent of fathers are active in some form of economic entrepreneurism. In light of national trends suggesting that approximately 8 percent of women and 10 percent of men between the ages of 35 and 44 have attended post-secondary programs,[6] Krapyak parents I surveyed are also remarkably well educated: The overwhelming majority of them have graduated from high school, and 20 percent of mothers and 28 percent of fathers have attended college. In interviews, students told me consistently that they aspired to go beyond their parents' achievements and in many cases, to be the first in their families to attend university. The desire to pursue a tertiary education was pervasive among students; all Krapyak survey respondents reported that they hoped to attend college, although the actual numbers who achieve this goal are much more modest.

The *Pesantren* as a Critical Step in an Educational Pilgrimage

In the eyes of many young women and their parents, attending Islamic middle school and high school at Krapyak Ali Maksum would help to make this dream of tertiary education become a reality. Annisa, a bright and serious second-year high school student from rural West Java, was an example of a young woman for whom Krapyak clearly offered an escape from the limited opportunities available to her back in her family's village. Annisa's father

was a low-level member of the military with a technical degree, and her mother was a housewife who had not attended college. During my visit to their home in July 2012, Annisa's parents insisted she was better off socially, academically, and morally at the *pesantren*, where they believed the constant activity and ethical surveillance would provide a better religious foundation for Annisa than they felt they could give her. On the level of this-worldly achievement, Annisa's parents believed that through the social and political connections of the well-known *kyai* (the male leader of a *pesantren*) and the school's good name, she would have a good chance of securing a merit scholarship for college. The vibrant educational milieu of Krapyak, with a *pesantren* program for university students within the same complex, offered high school students advisory support and important social networking, both integral to helping them make the transition to college.

Based on these observations, it seems the decision to attend a school like Krapyak is itself a reflection of both parental and student aspiration. My interviews with parents highlighted that for many of them, their aim in sending their children to a *pesantren* was not only that they develop life skills for social mobility, but that they also acquire a solid foundation in Islamic knowledge and practice. The school's national reputation was viewed as an important springboard into future Islamic studies at similarly prestigious Islamic boarding schools in the country. On a more basic level, parents often spoke of Krapyak as a protective institution where Islam is taught "correctly," a bounded space that they hoped would provide constant insulation from the questionable moral landscape of modern life. Parents, as well as the young people themselves, consistently cited *pergaulan bebas* (free socializing between boys and girls), drugs, and *free sex* (premarital or extramarital sex) as the most threatening challenges facing Indonesian youth today (Bennett, 2005; Smith-Hefner, 2009).

Krapyak is also an institution with ties to local universities that parents hope will become natural avenues into tertiary education. The university students *santri* boarding in the Ali Maksum complex acts as an important social resource through which younger students with no background in college culture can gain insights into the requirements and application process from young mentors. Finally, Krapyak's national reputation and its national networks of alumni and affiliates provide graduates with social connections that are often crucial to future employment. As such, the decision to send students to Krapyak already reflects an aspiration to go beyond a middle and/or high school degree into a future that is at once pious and confidently cosmopolitan. However, because Krapyak students

vary greatly in socioeconomic backgrounds, with a large portion drawn from the lower and lower middle classes, many of these imagined futures remain in the realm of dreams. Educational pursuits beyond high school are often contingent on financial aid, scholarship, support from extended family, or students working part time.

Imagined Futures, Pious Selves

Until the mid-1900s, most Krapyak graduates—particularly women—aspired to careers in the religious professions, as Muslim preachers or teachers, or as conveners of study circles and seminars (*majlis taklim*). Over the past generation, however, the aspirational horizons of most girls have shifted. Today, many girls hope to use their education as a springboard into a variety of better-paying and largely non-religious professions, and through them, a secured middle-class existence. Most notably—and in striking contrast to the situation for Muslim young women in some parts of South Asia and the Middle East (see Adely, 2012)—most see no contradiction between the demands for piety and a women's aspiration to social mobility and professional employment.

At Krapyak, most young women view the ability to pursue a higher education as a major religious and ethical achievement in itself: The pursuit of knowledge, religious and otherwise, is considered a religious duty and a form of worship in Islam. However, across the board, young women also aspire to more prestigious careers than their parents have. In spite of the fact that 43 percent of mothers did not work outside of the home, the great majority of young women—a full 91 percent—reported a desire to work after marriage. My survey data showed that when asked what future careers they aspired to, 28 percent of student responded doctor, considered one of the more prestigious and lucrative careers in Indonesia today (Parker & Nilan, 2013); followed by teacher (11 percent); and entrepreneur (9 percent). In interviews, girls' reflections on these aspirations showed the influence of traditionalist Islam's emphasis on community and social responsibility; they often added that they aspired to careers that would be beneficial to others (*bermanfaat bagi orang lain*).

Although almost none of these young women will actually pursue a degree in medicine—their fate already sealed by the fact, they attended a school with a heavily religious curriculum—these findings do illustrate three broader trends in traditionalist Muslim circles in Indonesia. First, women are investing in and pursuing long-term career goals to a greater degree;

second, this ambition itself reflects an aspiration to a middle-class lifestyle; and third, they recognize that in today's economy such a lifestyle is generally dependent on a two-income family (Parker & Nilan, 2013). Girls' efforts to perfect their piety and more deeply internalize their faith are not contrary to these dreams, but are closely associated with the practical desires to go to university, get training in a profession, graduate, marry, and continue working even while becoming a mother and running a household. As one second-year Islamic high school student replied when I asked her if she felt satisfied with her studies at Krapyak, "I have learned from my studies here that one shouldn't ever be satisfied (*puas*) [in the pursuit of knowledge of any kind]. I follow that principle; you are never finished." Much as the practice of piety is characterized "by fragile day-by-day self-suggestion, which, by its nature, is a troubled and usually incomplete process" (Schielke, 2009, p. 181), so too, for these Muslim girls education, both religious and professional, is seen as part a life project that by its nature is never finished: The final achievements are less critical than the pursuit of them.

Aspiration Through a Traditionalist Lens

These narratives and broader educational trends illustrate that the social horizons and ethical discourses of traditionalist Islam, including those that apply to young women, are not at all incongruent with the rhetoric and social reality of social mobility and educational achievement. In striking contrast to the young Jordanian Muslim women described in Fida Adely's *Gendered Paradoxes*, for whom "higher education is imagined as necessary for success but not necessarily tied up with dreams of … careers" (2012, p. 15), most female students at Krapyak see no contradiction between the demands for piety and a women's aspiration to social mobility and professional employment. In fact, rather than merely running parallel to each other, the two concerns were often woven into a single ethical fabric. However, if a positive synergy between religious education and modern aspirations appears to be a prominent feature of traditionalist society, the relationship is not by any means simple. Indeed, one can suggest that the ethical subjectivities nurtured through traditionalist ethical discourse and practice offers a twofold perspective on social futures.

First, traditionalist education in contemporary Indonesia is self-consciously envisioned as aiming to keep in check the individualistic excesses and "this-worldliness" of more secular-minded careerism and motivational training. Somewhat more subtly, traditionalist ethical education also offers an alternative way of viewing and recasting what might

be seen as failure in mainstream schooling, offering a more multifaceted and moralized model of social achievement and success. For example, at graduation in June 2013, soon-to-be high school alumnae were reminded in speeches by their teachers that rejection from university did not have to mean an abrupt end to their schooling trajectory—there was always the possibility of continuing their religious training either in Krapyak or at another *pesantren* school. These reminders suggest that a traditionalist lens on social reality offers these young female students a way to recast what might be seen as a failure (in this-worldly, achievement-oriented terms) as an opportunity to pursue more piety-minded projects.

Both these points are demonstrated in the story of Mira, a senior when I knew her in 2012–2013. Mira is the second youngest of 12 children. She is petite but she compensates for her diminutive stature with a loud and affable personality. Although she did not do very well in her courses and often tested the boundaries of school regulations during her time at Krapyak, Mira was still well liked by her peers and teachers at the school.

At the time of my research, I suspected that there were some major obstacles to Mira's ability to pursue a college education. Her family's financial conditions were not entirely stable, especially given the number of her siblings. Her academic performance was relatively poor. Although some of her older siblings who were already working might have been called upon to support their young sister's education, the fact that Mira was not a star student was likely a major factor in some of the decisions she and her family made.

As it turned out, the *pesantren*'s twin emphasis on social achievement and ethical learning provided something of a cultural-psychological cushion for Mira as she made her future plans. Mira was one of the few girls I met at Krapyak who said she was uninterested in attending college. Rather than going to university, she averred that she planned to continue her education in a *pesantren salaf*—a "real" *pesantren*, as she described it, one which focused solely on training in the Islamic sciences. There, she explained, she hoped to study *kitab* and develop her Qur'anic memorization skills. When I asked what she wanted to gain from this future education, she explained:

> My heart wants me to study there. Maybe my decision to do this was influenced by thoughts of the material world [*duniawi*] and the hereafter [*akhirat* or afterlife]. Anyway, I don't want to go to college, because the majority of people in college are just after, well, they are just interested in a future on this earth.

Highlighted in Mira's statements are two major themes. The first is her identification with a traditionalist, classicalist ethos in its purest sense, as expressed in her desire to study in a "real" *pesantren* where she can focus on Islamic studies. In stating her plans, she offers a gentle critique of the college aspirations of young women who, in her assessment, "only" think about the material world and success therein. By contrast, she identifies her goals as focused on the hereafter, a more pious path. At the same time, however, it is striking that Mira's self-narrative uses the same idioms as those used by other girls: describing her life not as a matter of learning and performing a settled role, but as putting together a personal life project. But by using a traditionalist lens to see her life project, she is able to recast what might be seen as a disappointment or a failure to continue onto college as a successful, prestigious, and pious life choice.

The influence of middle-class life-project narratives and future-oriented horizons was also apparent in young women's assertion of their own agency—often one suspects, the result of a retrospectively revisionist reinterpretation—in making decisions on matters of importance in their lives. Many of the young women in high school and middle school at Krapyak Ali Maksum began boarding at a *pesantren* as early as the age of ten, sometimes even younger. However, students regularly asserted in interviews that it was their own decision, not that of their parents, that they attend an Islamic boarding school. My survey results confirmed similar trends. Over 54 percent of survey respondents stated that they themselves had chosen to attend Krapyak, 27 percent said it was a decision they made together with their parents, and only 19 percent said that their parents made the choice for them. Girls also cited their own agency in their imagined future university careers. When asked who would make the decision about where they attended university, 80 percent asserted that it was a decision they would make for themselves. Thus, while most girls depend on the economic and social support of parents and family to pursue a tertiary education, this does not mean that others dictate the course of their future. Even where parental opinion weighs heavily, the girls speak of their lives in ways that highlight their own initiative and their understanding of their own lives as life projects defined in relation to the hereafter as well as the opportunities and rewards of a contemporary middle-class Indonesian life.

Conclusion

As Arjun Appadurai rightly notes, "Aspirations are never simply individual (as the language of wants and choices inclines us to think). They are always formed in interaction and in the thick of social life" (2013, p. 187). The young women from traditionalist Indonesian families featured in this study remind us that the truth of that generalization can be even more socially and ethically complex than sometimes recognized. These traditionalist girls aspire to an education that is both achievement oriented and religiously observant. No less important, the "social life" the young women engage in is not exclusively that of a community of this-worldly fellows. It includes a community of believers seen to be in dialogue with earlier generations of Muslims, and especially Muslim scholars, who in turn are all in relationship with Allah. The aspiration to traditionalist piety introduces a way of being proudly Indonesian, educated, and Muslim all at once. It allows one to be future oriented and upwardly mobile while also identifying with a community of sociability—one that provides a significant measure of religious meaning and comfort to those less keen on or capable of running on the socioeconomic treadmill. For more than a century, traditionalist education in Indonesia has been a site of innovation and reform as well as a custodian of religious tradition. It remains so today, providing an ethical haven in an energetically competitive world.

Notes

1. See Zaman (2002).
2. Elsewhere in the Muslim world, these schools are called *madrasa*. In Indonesia, however, *madrasa* refers to an Islamic day school which combines general education with Islamic studies, as discussed in the chapter.
3. See Zigon (2009).
4. Geertz, 1960; Peacock, 1978; Dhofier, 1999; Lukens-Bull, 2005; Nakamura, 2012.
5. Literally "yellow books," referring to the color of the pages; commentaries on the Qur'an and Islamic law used as teaching texts in *pesantren*.
6. Statistics based on the USAID Education Profile published in 2012: http://www.epdc.org/sites/default/files/documents/Indonesia_coreusaid.pdf (accessed July 7, 2015).

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PART II

Realizations

CHAPTER 6

Schooling in Post-Apartheid South Africa: Hopes, Struggles, and Contested Responsibilities

Oliver Pattenden

The learners at Ngomso School (pseudonym meaning 'tomorrow'), situated in a small city in South Africa's Eastern Cape province, were not yet born when Nelson Mandela addressed the nation and the world upon his release from prison.[1] Only a minority could have witnessed the unprecedented queues during the general election of 1994. The oldest would have been four years old when education became an integral component of constitutionalized promises that the injustices of apartheid would be overturned. However, the young men and women who became my interlocutors during fieldwork in and around Ngomso in 2011 and 2013 were fashioning their lives amid the legacy of these very public displays, pronouncements, and experiences of hope.[2] Given this context, this chapter considers schooling in relation to processes of self-fashioning and conceptualizations of hope.

Jarrett Zigon (2007, 2009, 2014) builds on the philosophy of Foucault and Heidegger to encourage us to consider self-fashioning as an ethical becoming: Individuals make continuous and open-ended efforts to adjust

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their way of being-in-the-world so that they might dwell in the world more comfortably. Zigon (2006, p. 72) thinks of this as "an ethics of hope" with their "little projects" individuals make a constant effort to better themselves and become "the kind of person they want to be." He argues that such effort is geared toward historically constituted possibilities for living a moral life, which are numerous and changeable, and that the kind of person an individual wants to become is a personalized reworking of such possibilities. In this chapter, I draw from this theorization to analyze moral possibilities my interlocutors encountered as they fashioned their lives.

It is worth noting that Ngomso was a public special school, offering primary-level education to the "severely socially marginalized," to quote Mary, the principal and founder. Charitable support, coming most prominently from a partner charity in the UK with a Christian ethos (according to its website), provided additional financial and material resources, such as clothes and books. Many learners had missed mandatory years of schooling and could enroll up to the age of 19. The majority lived in the "township" (i.e., the area designated Black during apartheid), while a dozen or so lived in a residential shelter. Almost all spoke isiXhosa as their first language and identified with Xhosa heritage.[3]

Hoping to Find Hope

On numerous occasions, I asked learners, "Why did you come to Ngomso?" Almost without fail, their answer had little to do with an enthusiasm for a school education. Many interlocutors spoke about their early days at Ngomso in terms of efforts to fulfill immediate needs and limit undesired experiences, such as hunger and violence.

Buzwe had recently started high school, having completed his final year at Ngomso. As we shared a curry, he told me that prior to attending Ngomso, he left a "mainstream" school to earn a living by begging and washing cars "in town" (i.e., the area designated White during apartheid). Our conversation follows:

Buzwe: I was walking in town and [Mary] saw me. She said that I must go to Ngomso for food and clothes.
Oliver: How old were you?
Buzwe: I was 12.
Oliver: And how long was it since your last time in school?
Buzwe: Maybe one year.

Oliver: Why didn't you stay there [in town]?
Buzwe: At that time, I was talking about hope. It was my dream that day to move on with my life: to see different things and different situations. "I deserve more"--that's what I was thinking.

The events he depicts are similar to those that occurred in the area during the mid-nineteenth century, when young Xhosa attended mission stations and schools in greater numbers once wars with the British and the Great Xhosa Cattle Killing of 1856–1857 had combined to create unprecedented destitution (Ashley, 1974; Peires, 1989).[4] Mary descends from an English missionary, who established a school among the Xhosa at this time. Then, as during my fieldwork, individuals with pressing needs turned to schools operated by individuals with Christianized ambitions to assist and save them.

Being Taught How to Hope

Once in attendance at Ngomso, learners engaged in educative experiences with staff members who encouraged them to embrace a particular way of being-in-the-world. During a Grade Six life orientation lesson, for example, an enthusiastic educator named Mrs. Mambi was speaking about sex and relationships. She promoted prevention, protection, abstinence, and patience before turning her attention to education (i.e., schooling). She told learners that boyfriends and girlfriends did not replace the need to make time to study. "Education," she continued, "is more important than sex." She then asked them to repeat the phrase, "The most important thing in my life is education." They obliged in unison.

Some weeks later, I joined these learners and their peers from Grade Seven at a Careers Day organized by the Department of Education. We sat in a sports hall with several hundred teenagers from the "mainstream" township schools, who were sporting striped ties and coordinated V-neck jumpers. Once a school choir had sung several hymns, the master of ceremonies delivered two Christian prayers. The first informed the audience that "worshipping God makes you wise" and that "you will remain foolish [if you do not]."[5] The second told us that "this side of heaven is not perfect," but that "God helps us to have an abundant life here regardless." These events did not surprise me. Christianity was a central tenet of activities at Ngomso and was explicitly acknowledged during school-/education-related events elsewhere. Historically, Christianity and

government-funded education have long been conjoined in various ways in South Africa.[6] Government policies of the post-apartheid period leave "room for religion."[7]

The next speaker, a senior representative of the Department of Education named Mrs. Price, asked the audience to stop chattering, telling the group, "You were not quiet when he was speaking to God, this is very worrying indeed." Once their voices subsided, she addressed them:

> Close your eyes [and] look into your soul. Visualise yourself once you have finished school, with your matric certificate in hand. I want you to think about who you are going to be five or ten years from now. If you haven't thought about this already, then you are in trouble. … The youth must build their own futures: No one will build it for you. Not parents and not teachers; you cannot have their matric certificates. … What you become in life will be your own doing, nobody else's. Today is the day to build your future.

I noted the wording of a display board behind her, which supported her instruction:

> Choosing a career:
> Know yourself
> Identify your interests, values, and abilities
> Research
> Work hard
> Be focused

Michael Lambek argues that ethical dimensions of life become "explicit" when "the right thing to do is unknown or hotly contested" and when "priestly classes [are] attempting to rationalize and educate (2010a, p. 2)." The (well-meaning) educative efforts of individuals like Mrs. Mambi and Mrs. Price can be understood in this light. Although fashioning oneself by spending time in school is *a possibility* for how one might live a moral life, this possibility was promoted as though it were truthful or right (Zigon, 2010). Put another way, individuals like Mrs. Price and Mrs. Mambi employed pedagogic technologies (visualization and repetition, respectively) to convince learners that school education was, and would be, good for them. That they were compelled to do so suggests that they believed learners might be unaware of such a judgment or might have their own, different or even antithetical, judgments.

Two aspects of this moral possibility that I wish to consider are conceptualizations of both (1) betterment and (2) responsibility. In relation

to betterment, schooling was most frequently promoted in terms of its purported ability to better—that is, to improve *and* make "more moral"—individual lives, nations, or humanity as a whole; its utility judged as an end external to its practice, namely fulfillment through gainful employment. Relatedly, the predominant political frame of schooling during the post-apartheid period has been "human capital development" (Sayed & Ahmed, 2011). Such conceptualizations can be contrasted with Aristotle's notion of "actuality," understood as "life as lived for itself" (Lambek, 2010a, p. 3), but align with what Stambach has termed "Christian-modern faith in schools" (2010, p. 183). They have foundations in the eschatological imperatives of the religion: work/effort and piety/restraint as a mode of fashioning oneself *now* with concern for betterment in this life and the Promised Land.

Turning to the second point, I follow Zigon (2006) in using the concept of *responsibility* when considering individuals' responses to, and attempts to deal with, the successes and failures of their efforts to bring about an alternative state of affairs. That is, individuals can take responsibility for who they become and what becomes them, or they can (attempt to) locate such responsibility elsewhere (also see Laidlaw, 2010). This issue brings us to Lambek's assertion that intersubjectivity, or "how much each of us is part of others and how much my self is determined by the self-making projects or the acts of others" (2010a, p. 16), is variably recognized and occluded in different localities and, I would add, by the logic of different conceptualizations of being-in-the-world.

Signaling a particular conceptualization of responsibility, learners were told that, as self-disciplined individuals, they could design and build their own futures, somewhat independently of their personal histories, relationships with others, and the political, socio-economic situations in which they were enmeshed. The related notion that misfortune is merited was frequently articulated in terms of Christianized sin; logic that concerns God's benevolence and His ability to deliver a good and fair world (Laidlaw, 2010), which the master of ceremonies spoke of during his prayers. Learners were encouraged to believe that they would lead better lives if they recognized that God created the conditions for such transformations and that they, as individuals, were responsible for bringing them to fruition. Indeed, although educators recognized all manner of causal influences, they rarely shared understandings of responsibility that involved third parties (God excluded) with learners. For example, while educators made a causal link between the "poverty" of learners' homes and academic underachievement, and made efforts to address it

themselves, they did not encourage learners to acknowledge or critically examine this link. Instead, they encouraged them to acknowledge total responsibility for their academic progression or lack thereof, in the hope that their learning to do so would ultimately enable them to disentangle themselves from, or overpower, causal influences and conditions.

This analysis aligns with Swartz, Harding, and De Lannoy's argument that the myth of meritocracy is "a major tenet of the post-Apartheid South African narrative" (2012, p. 35). It also relates to discourses of empowerment and human rights, which have been integral to much recent activity concerning schooling and charity/development in South Africa and elsewhere. All these discourses, which members of the staff at Ngomso and its supportive UK-based non-governmental organization (NGO) invoked, rest upon historically constituted, individualized conceptualizations of agency (Durham, 2008; Laidlaw, 2010; Zigon, 2011, pp. 231–232; Zigon, 2013).

I began to think about how such moralized discourses could be learned, that is, embodied as dispositions following interactions with those who "had faith," when I noticed disjunctures between the recollected accounts that learners in Grades Six and Seven gave of their first days at Ngomso and how they evaluated school education when speaking with me, having attended the school for some time. Regardless of their initial circumstances and reasons for joining Ngomso, like the "School Xhosa" described by Phillip Mayer (1961), schooling had become integral to who they wanted to be and to how they envisaged themselves fulfilling their hopes. For example, in Grade Seven, a 16-year-old named Cebisa told me, "School is the only way of living nice." A male peer chimed in, "By going to school, maybe I will get a better job." He nodded as he thought about his statement, concluding, "I can do anything." The way they linked their investment of themselves and their resources in schooling to expectations of a payoff in the future reflects the discourses promoted by educators at Ngomso.

After recounting how Mary had approached him in the first instance, Buzwe encapsulated the themes of this section when describing his own transformation:

> It is five years now that I have been with Mary [at Ngomso]. Now I have seen my life, I must finish school. Maybe I can go to University. Maybe I can get a job. … She took me [when I was] on the ground and now (he raises his hand from the table to a position above his head), I can see something. That's why I say *uThixo unceda abazincedayo* [God helps those who help themselves].

Following his experiences at Ngomso, Buzwe was hopeful of a better possible life: one with school/university and employment. He also knew how to fashion such a life (i.e., by "helping himself" while recognizing God's agency). In other words, he had come to embody the hopeful moral discourses that educators like Mrs. Mambi and Mrs. Price articulated. Due to his transformative experiences of schooling, he was now committed to a specific way of being-in-the-world and could acknowledge the person he had become. Confirming Lambek's (2010b, p. 47) insistence that "temporality is critical" to such *ethical* commitment, Buzwe's transformation had taken several years. He now knew the kind of person he wanted to be.

Much of the work that schools and their supporters do can be understood as attempts to encourage such commitment. Schools are powerful in this regard; however, learners engage with them ethically (i.e., judgmentally [Lambek, 2010b, pp. 42–43]), and they thus have transformative potential. Young people can learn of the multitude of possible lives that await them, and the modes by which they might struggle to create them, during educative experiences with all manner of individuals in numerous locations. To this point, some learners at Ngomso did not come to embody a position similar to Buzwe's. This was especially true of individuals who engaged with the school only fleetingly, before continuing to live life without it.[8]

The (Im)materialization of Hope

I will now consider some past Ngomso pupils, and Cebo, one of my closest interlocutors, in particular, to discuss the relationship between experiences of schooling, hopes of betterment, and judgments of responsibility from a different perspective. Recognizing that the individual lives depicted in each section of this chapter are not identical, I present a cookery programesque "here's one I made earlier" effect. I will describe how conceptualizations of hope articulated by educators were recalled and evaluated by those who had experienced the post-school reality that the learners discussed earlier were being prepared for, and how these older, past pupils dealt with disjuncture between the lives they had hoped for while at school and those that materialized. In doing so, I will argue that my interlocutors evaluated various moral possibilities when fashioning their lives.

Several learners graduated from Ngomso to high school each year, but the majority did not complete their Grade Twelve matriculation exams. Cebo was one of the rare individuals who did. Having lived at the shelter

during his teenage years because his parents were unemployed and drank heavily, he passed matric in 2010 at the age of 22. We met in Mary's office in 2011. She told him she had secured him a job with a local business. The warmth of the hug he gave her and the quiver in his voice as he said, "Thank you," told me how important this was. He had been struggling to find employment for more than a year, and the atmosphere was one of celebration. Hope had been realized.

However, the job did not materialize as expected. Weeks later, under a bare light bulb that hung in his "cozy shack," his friends and I ate cold hot dogs smothered in watery ketchup. Cebo was adamant he would not work "hard labour" (i.e., construction) like those without matric certificates. He recalled the words of one of his educators, "Cebo, if you can read books, you are very clever; you can go anywhere," and suggested that he had once engaged with the kind of moral education detailed in the previous section. Having done so, at least to the extent of passing matric, he was unenthusiastic about employment he could have secured without years of commitment to schooling. Yet, being unemployed, he was frustrated when he could not repay friends, who did not have matric certificates and were working "hard labour," when they bought him drinks.

Cebo's position had much in common with the "educated idlers" of the 1860s, who concerned the colonial government because frustrations can morph into "political disruption" (Ashley, 1974, p. 207). Yet, unlike other young South Africans (see Dawson, 2014), to my knowledge, Cebo was not engaged in protest politics or revolutionary activity at this time. Instead, like male graduates in India, who similarly compete for oversubscribed government jobs with favorable salaries (Jeffrey, 2010), he pursued more education and training—a business management City & Guilds certificate and a driver's license—as he waited, hopeful and despairing, for a return on his investment in schooling.

He had applied for positions as an office clerk and security guard, but individuals who were without qualifications were appointed. He complained to me about this apparent unfairness:

> If you finish Grade Twelve, what are they telling you? "Write a CV; go out there and find a job." But when you go out there, [there is] nothing. … You just drop a CV and go home. Then you go to a rubbish bin and find your CV there. They put it there because it's [about] networks, family networks. … [A prospective employer] will say "I know him," then you got the job.

Cebo's friend Zenzile, who had also attended Ngomso, extended his argument, "But our families are working hard labour, so that is the choice that you have, 'My brother, can I be your friend and work in hard labour too?'" "And other people," continued Cebo, "they think 'he's from Ngomso [so I won't employ him]'; there's no one that can talk for you and say 'he's good now.'"

Their words raise three points of interest. First, the dearth of employment opportunities: The municipal youth (15–35 years old) unemployment rate was 42 percent (SSA, 2011). Second, securing employment depended on social connections and social capital (Bourdieu, 1986). Third, Ngomso learners were stigmatized. This was a gruesome double bind, as the school's unique qualities gave hope to many in the first place.[9] Cebo had tried to transform himself into a particular kind of moral person, to become "good," but he felt that his efforts had been nullified by the actions and judgments of others, which were clearly beyond his control. In short, his effort and investment in schooling had guaranteed neither employment nor fulfillment.

Fixing the Future

Months later, I filmed a music video for Cebo's hip-hop group. He fantasized about record deals and a world tour (also see Weiss, 2002) while relying on the support of Ngomso and several members of the congregation at the city's cathedral, which he had attended while living at the shelter. Together with a trickle of computer repair jobs, these networks were providing just enough income for him to sustain himself but left him feeling that he was not adequately providing for his six-month-old son.

After filming, Cebo explained how he had tried to hide his son from supporters at Ngomso and the cathedral, even though they would have offered financial assistance, "Because I felt that 'this is my problem, *I have to fix it myself*.'"

Zenzile agreed with his logic, saying, "Without your [own] money, you fail to show your child how much you love him or her."

Cebo then spoke of his failure in this regard, "It was killing me, that thing of having a child. *Joh* [I was so surprised]. That's what makes me drink, just to [help me] sleep as well."

Cebo told me that the mother of his child had informed his supporters at the cathedral about his son. This revelation caused more discomfort, as the following exchange shows:

Cebo: Now they are always asking "How is he doing?" If he is not doing very well, I will tell them "He is not doing very well," and then they will have to pay. That's what I don't want. I am the problem.
Oliver: You don't want them to pay?
Cebo: *Ewe* [yes], that's not good, that's not fair.
Zenzile: Just because he is already the problem.
Cebo: I am already the problem.

These last five words, which I understood as an indication of Cebo's desire to take full responsibility for his life and that of his child, have stayed with me ever since. Recall the instruction of Mrs. Price, "The youth must build their own futures: No one will build it for you." As though to reflect this moral discourse and highlight his embodiment of it, Cebo was struggling to "fix" the problem: to fashion a future for himself and his child with an alternative trajectory while blaming himself for the difficulties he encountered while doing so. Moreover, he experienced ethical discomfort regarding the fairness of passing his responsibilities on to others. This internalization of blame only added to his struggle; it was the cause of his inability to sleep and, consequently, his drinking.

Fixing the Future (Again)

When I returned to South Africa in 2013, Cebo and I sat on the curb outside a small convenience store, eating samosas. He said there had been "ups and downs" since we last spoke but that he was now "in the middle." The computer repair work had dried up and the hip-hop group had disbanded. In their absence, his life had become "too dark." In contrast to Buzwe's words about how he was able to "see something" (i.e., hope of an elevated self-built future with school, further education and employment), Cebo's life had lacked light, making it difficult to see forward. In response, he had turned to an opening he had previously shunned by asking a friend who was a local councilor to secure him a short-term contract: working "hard labour" building houses for the government's Reconstruction and Development Program. Cebo's new employer had not requested his matric certificate, City & Guilds qualification, or driver's license. "It's not what you know, it's who you know," he said, with a smile that suggested he remembered our conversation from 2011. He had been on strike for two weeks in a hopeful, ultimately fruitful, attempt to secure a 10 percent pay increase. We spoke about

Marikana, where 34 striking miners were killed one afternoon by members of the South African Police Service. Cebo was adding to the weight of political protest in the country, although he found the picket line as unstimulating as his wait for employment. He spoke about his parents, who remained unemployed and continued to drink heavily, saying, "My family all think I am doing well and look [up] to me. 'No,' I say, 'look at me, I am struggling.'"

Having previously spoken with other interlocutors who made a link between misfortune and "witchcraft," I raised the subject with Cebo, although we had never spoken about it before. He gauged my opinion on the topic before telling me that his whole family was affected by witchcraft due to his father's (jealous) ex-lover, and that it had caused his father to lose his job and become an alcoholic. Before its influence, his father had been a "good man," he said. He then spoke about learners at his high school who had, in his opinion, been unfairly rewarded, explaining, "I was stronger than them [in class/exams], but now they are working for the police or for the army." Cebo stopped eating his samosa while he collected his thoughts; ethically stepping away from himself and the world he shared with others momentarily, in order to contemplate what to think or say about his situation (Zigon, 2009, p. 261; also see Jackson, 2012). He then concluded with "my family will always fail; we won't go anywhere."

According to the individualistic, meritocratic logic of schooling outlined earlier, those who perform well at school will fashion better lives for themselves. Why had this logic not held true for Cebo? I can understand how witchcraft provided him with an *explanation* for his misfortune (see Gluckman, 1970, pp. 84–85). Gluckman (1970, p. 86) argues that "witchcraft as a theory of causation embraces a theory of morals, for it says that witches are wicked people." I would argue that it is also moralistic in the sense that it maintains that (im)moral transformations can be brought about by witchcraft. Cebo held witchcraft to be responsible for his father's immoral transformation and the "failure" of his family to better itself.

Witchcraft was not the only explanatory discourse Cebo could have drawn upon. Other interlocutors spoke of how numerous other events/agents were responsible for such misfortune, including "the legacy of apartheid," "failures of the ANC government," or "recession." As noted previously, Cebo and his friends were well aware of unemployment levels and discourses concerning corruption in recruitment processes. However, while these discourses all provide compelling explanations, which other individuals, such as politicians, economists, and academics attempt to

address, *in isolation* none explain why Cebo deserved his misfortune or why he should not have been more fortunate, given that these shared historical, economic, and political causal circumstances benefited others (see Laidlaw, 2010). Moreover, how might he have attempted to hold such perpetrators to account? With difficulty, no doubt. In contrast, Cebo believed that witchcraft can be countered with direct action: He wanted his father to visit a *sangoma* (diviner).[10]

As I understand it, if witchcraft was responsible for the failure and stagnation that had been "killing" him, the healing (i.e., fixing) offered by a *sangoma* was a mode by which he *hoped* to eradicate such predetermination. Thus, Cebo's newfound belief in witchcraft not only offered an explanation for his misfortune, it also enabled him to hope that he might fashion a better life for himself, and that his family might be able to do likewise, as a result of his father's action, that is, a visit to a *sangoma*. This transformative potential contrasts with other antidotes to (overwhelming) misfortune that similarly provide a fix but have degenerative, unhealthy, and even deadly effects, including alcoholism, which Cebo had already turned to, and suicide, which has increased among young South African men. Other members of Cebo's family had attributed their misfortunes to witchcraft before he did. I asked him when he had begun to agree with their judgment, and he replied, "I started to believe when I could see that life is too difficult."[11]

We can understand the moment he described as his experience of what Zigon (2007, p. 138) calls "moral breakdown." When he could no longer encounter and fashion his life armed with the moral disposition he had had up until that point—one acquired during, and that had seen him through, his schooling—he had worked on himself to find hope again; thus coming to terms with his situation and the world he shared with others by transforming his "way of being-in-the-world" (Zigon, 2009, p. 261; also see Jackson, 2012). A lack of hope had necessitated a change of tack. This transformation can be compared to that of other Ngomso learners and past pupils who were similarly drawn to new moral discourses and experiences at the school when they too were hoping to find hope. Recall that Buzwe said he was "on the ground," without sight of possible ethical directions, before his transformative experiences at Ngomso. However, Cebo achieved his latest transformation by embracing an alternative moral discourse that was promoted by his family (among others): the belief that their lives were shackled by witchcraft.[12] When realizing that his own agency was limited, that it was "too difficult" to build the life he hoped for, this belief in witchcraft created agency of a different kind (see Laidlaw, 2010, p. 157).[13]

Turning to punitive magic in an attempt to find the person/agent *responsible* for his struggles (Laidlaw, 2010, p. 156), he now believed his misfortune was caused by the actions of others and dismissed the possibility that he alone was responsible.

Cebo's "alternative" disposition can be understood in relation to moral discourses concerning "Afro-communitarianism" (Metz & Gaie, 2010, p. 273), captured, in the South African context, by "*ubuntu*," short for "*Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*; a person is a person through their relationship to others" (Swanson, 2009, p. 11). Ashforth (2005, p. 86) discusses witchcraft and "occult violence" in terms of "negative ubuntu." While *ubuntu* is most often considered in terms of harmonious social relations, belief in witchcraft similarly maintains that the thoughts and actions of others can influence your thoughts and actions, and that you alone are not responsible for your being or for what befalls you. In other words, it strongly recognizes intersubjectivity. For example, Cebo said that on the rare occasion his father had "some money, he [thought] … about [going to see the sangoma]." However, he said his father would "forget" about the *sangoma* and spend the money on alcohol instead, concluding, "That thing [the witchcraft] is working." This assertion is important because it suggests belief in the idea that free will and one's control of his or her own cognitive functioning can be compromised by witchcraft (also see Ashforth, 2005), which contrasts with my understanding of Cebo's position in 2011.

Alternative Possibilities and the Struggle for Fulfillment

Cebo's position in 2013 struck me as being incommensurable with the moral education he had received at Ngomso. Indeed, while learners enrolled at Ngomso spoke to me in private about their belief in witchcraft, which convinced me they were also evaluating alternative moral discourses, belief in witchcraft was neither taught nor encouraged at the school.[14] Relatedly, Christian missionaries based in the area during the nineteenth century "attacked" witchcraft (Ashley, 1974, p. 201). Social contestation relating to these alternative moral possibilities can thus be understood as a long-standing, historically constituted dynamic of life in the locality (also see Mayer, 1961).[15] However, given the creativity and consciousness with which these alternative discourses continue to be encountered, it should be recognized that such contestation is inventive (i.e., productive), rather than repetitive (i.e., reproductive).

What explains this conflict? To my mind, the discourses offer competing explanations for what befalls individuals and their responsibility for it. In providing such explanations, they encourage individuals to understand that they can have a hand in shaping their being-in-the-world, but by also recognizing the agency of witchcraft or God, they can account for the limits of such will (Jackson, 2005, p. 127). To follow Jackson (2012, p. 133, emphasis in original), it is "the ambiguity of human *existence*, in which we are acted upon *by* the world to the same extent that we act *on* the world, wherein we are both determined and free," that makes such explanation necessary. Without it, individuals struggle to dwell comfortably in the world because they cannot comprehend, and thus find it challenging to encounter, the inherent uncertainty of their dwelling: the knowledge that they only have *some* control over their being and becoming.

Due to the unevenness and unpredictability of South Africa's post-apartheid transition, Cebo and his friends appeared to be struggling for such control. Despite the pervasive hope for equality and unprecedented prosperity that accompanied apartheid's welcome demise and the hope that young men like Cebo would have the freedom to fashion better lives for themselves than apartheid's oppressive politics allowed, the inequalities that remain post-apartheid mean that such hope has not materialized for many (also see Swartz et al., 2012). In Cebo's shack one afternoon, Zenzile captured this scenario when speaking of his intention to write a rap about "politics" with the lyrics, "They say that we won the struggle [against apartheid]. I can say that I am still struggling."[16] In other words, these young men experienced their relationships with the world and others as an unenviable balance of "fulfilment and frustration" (Jackson, 2005, p. 129). Younger interlocutors, who were still at school, hoped they would fare better and struggle less. Their variable and varying engagements with, and beliefs in, schooling and witchcraft can be understood as their investing of themselves in different ways of being-in-the-world, in the hope of finding fulfillment rather than frustration.

Notes

1. "Learner," rather than "pupil" or "student," and "educator," rather than "teacher," are most frequently used in South Africa, following efforts to move away from the injustices of apartheid's system of schooling. However, "past pupil" was most frequently used by my interlocutors when speaking of learners who were no longer at Ngomso,

and I have employed this terminology. (Thanks to Dr. Dalene Swanson, whose correspondence helped with this footnote).

2. For practical and analytical reasons, this chapter focuses on male learners and past pupils. The school had a male/female ratio of about 70/30. Much fieldwork was conducted at the male-only residential "shelter" where some learners lived. Additionally, the majority of my closest interlocutors, in terms of past pupils at least, were men. Quite simply, I spent more time with them during weekends and evenings and can speak about their lives here with greater understanding. A discussion regarding the gendered distinctions of the issues raised in this paper is beyond its scope.
3. My interlocutors most frequently referred to themselves as "Xhosa" without reference to explicit classifications of descent (see Peires, 1982, p. ix).
4. The Great Xhosa Cattle Killing was a millennial movement, which saw the Xhosa slaughter their cattle in the hope of ridding themselves of British settlers (see Peires, 1989).
5. Although the speaker did not acknowledge his source, his words have much in common with those of Matthew (7:24–26, New International Version): "everyone who hears these words of mine [i.e., God] and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand."
6. Mission schools were partly funded by the colonial British government and remained the most prominent schools for the Xhosa until the apartheid government sought control. Apartheid's 'Bantu Education' had roots in Christian National Education.
7. For example, the National Policy on Education and Religion states: "Separate spheres for religion and the state are established by the Constitution, but there is scope for interaction between the two" (South Africa, 2003, p. 4).
8. I intend to discuss such individuals in more detail elsewhere.
9. I am exploring this issue in my PhD thesis.
10. Jackson (2012, pp. 131–133) offers an insightful consideration of how different explanations for (mis)fortune correlate with related modes of addressive action, which has informed my analysis here.
11. Isak Niehaus (2001, p. 192; 2012) similarly found that his interlocutors, living in a former Bantustan area of post-apartheid South Africa, invoked their belief in witchcraft when encountering "perplexing events" or "unspeakable misfortune" (also see Ashforth, 2005).

12. I knew that he was visiting the cathedral less frequently but did not ask whether his belief in witchcraft was linked with a shift in his Christian faith.
13. Niehaus (2012, p. 5) makes a similar point when treating “the sorts of frustrated expectations, social relations, and misfortunes encountered in contemporary South Africa as one possible context for witchcraft beliefs.”
14. Individuals can, of course, have both Christian and witchcraft beliefs. Relatedly, some churches and strains of Christianity recognize witchcraft (Niehaus, 2001). While some members of staff attended such churches, others spoke disparagingly about this. Exploring these dynamics in relation to the fact that witchcraft played no part in the moral education at the school could be the purpose of a different paper.
15. By speaking of two “alternative” moral possibilities, I am not suggesting that they were the only ones I encountered during my research or that life in the Eastern Cape is somehow limited to the navigation and invocation of them. Nor am I suggesting that my interlocutors lived in accordance with one or the other, or that they were embraced by all in uniform ways. Instead, I have offered a simplified, theorized, understanding of how my interlocutors were fashioning their lives. Such a depiction does not capture all that is worth knowing about them.
16. Perhaps it is telling that Zenzile shifted from “we” to “I” when explaining such events; was he suggesting that the anti-apartheid movement was a collective endeavor, whereas the post-apartheid period has seen individualized endeavor rise to prominence?

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CHAPTER 7

Betrayed Futures: Uneconomic Schooling in Liberalizing Kerala (India)

Leya Mathew

This chapter describes the social practices of mothers whose children study at Malayalam-medium schools, arguing that these mothers' struggles highlight the extent to which Malayalam-medium schooling has become a sign of marginalization and abjection. Further, ethnographic inquiry reveals how, despite experiencing abjection, mothers yet hoped for more just and desirable futures. However, mothers were simultaneously aware of the inadequacies of hope in effecting radical material and social change, and the costs entailed in hoping were exacting. For former slave-caste mothers whose children disproportionately remain at Malayalam-medium schools, schooling was thus entangled in obsessive hope and overwhelming despair.

Aware of the pain and shame evoked through caste naming, I hesitate to name former slave-castes in the local language Malayalam. Though slavery was legally abolished in mid-1800s and former slave-castes were constitutionally listed as Scheduled Castes (SCs) post-independence, "SC" has also accumulated shame in the 60-odd years since independence (Satyanarayana & Tharu, 2011). Meanwhile, the political identity "Dalit" has gained purchase, since the term affords a self-naming that foregrounds the radical potential of oppressed castes as well as social systems

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that produce abjection (Guru, 2009; Karunakaran et al., 2015). The term Dalit, however, is more commonly used by those who have participated in organized anti-caste movements. Former slave-caste mothers with whom I worked had not participated in anti-caste movements and did not assert a political self-naming. However, since mothers' lives were spent in anti-caste struggles, I privilege the term Dalit throughout this chapter. Further, I contend that Malayalam-medium schooling is emerging as a key intermediary destination for *becoming* Dalit in contemporary Kerala.

The chapter is organized in the following manner. After introducing my context and theoretical frameworks, I describe the sites and histories that situated my ethnographic engagement. Following, I recount mothers' everyday experiences and articulations of material and social abjection. Next, I explain the exclusive nature of contemporary Dalit abjection, and mothers' heightened awareness of, and responses to, their exceptional status. Radical changes affected by economic liberalization have afforded most other villagers access to favorable future orientations, for instance, (low-cost) English-medium schooling. Dalit mothers at the Malayalam-medium school were thus recently segregated from normative future-making practices. However, mothers responded to new segregations by hoping obsessively. I next witness the pain inscribed on children's bodies when mothers intermittently faltered in their hopefulness and then, the agony inscribed on mothers' souls as they considered, momentarily, the inadequacy of hope. I conclude by arguing that experiences of Malayalam-medium schooling in contemporary Kerala give an account of caste-structured poverty and propel among Dalit mothers a rising critical consciousness about caste inequality.

English-Medium and Vernacular Schooling in Post-colonial, Liberalizing Kerala

Following independence from colonial Britain in 1947, India inherited English as the language of administration, law, technology, science, and higher education, and national policies reproduced inequalities that cohered around the English-vernacular divide. The centrality of English in elites' social planning prompted Kumar (1996) to write, "competence in the use of English is the single most important marker of a young person's eligibility for negotiating the opportunity structure that the modern economy has made available" (p. 59). In Kerala, however, privileges accorded to English were concealed by the region's unusually robust

vernacular schooling histories. In the southern part of Kerala—in what was then the princely state of Travancore—princely government interest in education and its overriding concern for vernacular education surged in the 1860s when anxieties concerning British annexation prompted a massive administrative reform and educational certification became linked to newly created government jobs in the reformed state administration (Tharakan, 1984). Since the official language of the princely state of Travancore was the vernacular Malayalam, and not English, schooling in Malayalam received princely government's support and funds. Though vernacular education dominated, landowning elites had access to the few English schools, and those who passed the English School Leaving Certificate became eligible for university education or high-ranking government jobs. After independence and the linguistic re-organization of states, the Communist Party was democratically elected to power in the newly formed state of Kerala in 1957. Though the post-colonial socialism of the Communist Party seemed to further strengthen vernacular-medium education in Kerala, the language of "national development" in India was English, with English-educated techno-managerial elite governing and administering the newly independent nation (Faust & Nagar, 2001). All post-secondary education and desirable employment came to be mediated in English in Kerala (Franke, 1993, pp. 239–240; UN, 1975, p. 132),[1] and linguistic pride in Malayalam became a vehicle to conceal and consolidate the privileges of English literacies.

Policies of economic liberalization post-1990s brought in contradictory changes in the educational sector, most notably increased privatization along with increased government spending. Federal and state governments embarked on extensive and expensive public educational projects even as private schools proliferated at a scale and magnitude that was unprecedented (Nambissan, 2012). In Kerala, the state government invested in mother-tongue medium schooling while parental patronage of low-cost English schooling surged (GoK, 2013; Retnakumar & Arokiasamy, 2006). However, neither socialism nor privatization radically altered the educational abjections of Dalits, who are increasingly remnant at state-funded Malayalam-medium schools (Ajaykumar et al., 2011; Padmanabhan, 2010). Further, increasing non-elite patronage of English schooling along with demographic decline in Kerala has engendered "uneconomic" state-funded schools—schools with classes of fewer than 15 students are recommended for closure due to the financial liabilities the state incurs in keeping them open. The largest percentage of uneconomic

state-funded schools is in the lower-primary sector where Malayalam is the mandated medium of instruction (GoK, 2013). To clarify, the system of school catchments is nonexistent in Kerala and uneconomic schools are presently closed only after zero enrollment. Nevertheless, I argue that to attend an uneconomic school is to experience segregated precarity, which is a grueling undertaking.

Theoretical Frameworks: Consumption, Caste, and Hope

In order to understand the social changes affected by increased privatization, I draw on literature on consumption, wherein consumption is conceptualized not just as an individual activity but also as a social practice that ascribes value on individuals in relation to others. Next, I examine scholarship on caste to clarify intersections of consumption and caste. Scholars argue that the method of caste oppression in independent India took the form of denied consumption, produced through structural and institutional deprivations and manifest as endemic, inter-generational poverty. Lastly, I return to the ascendance of consumption rites in liberalizing India and its interruption of caste logic to locate the emergence of hope amidst abjection.

In liberalizing India, national development agendas are aligned with a consumerist good life rather than with communal production, rationing, or radical re-distribution, and social membership is increasingly negotiated through consumption rites, practices, and moralities (Deshpande, 2003; Dickey, 2012; Mazzarella, 2005). Lukose (2009) clarifies that straightforward notions of inclusion and exclusion in consumption practices are far too simplistic and those on the margins of capitalist articulations are yet “fully formed by its structures of aspiration and opportunity” (p. 3). Rather than merely a possession (or lack) of goods and services, consuming is a social practice and cultural performance through which notions of the self and one’s place in society are negotiated. Likewise, Nakassis and Searle (2013) theorize consumption as “social value projects,” wherein practices associated with consumption entail reflexive attempts to construe value both for the self and on things. This ongoing production of self-worth is concomitantly “shot through with affect and with sensation” (Appadurai, 2013, p. 287) and entails the sensory consumption of objects and spaces as well as the negotiation of moral values ascribed to these (Pink, 2007).

Not surprisingly, caste operates around the devaluation of particular bodies deemed "lower" through the denial of consumption. Following independence, religiously sanctioned untouchability and "lower" caste pollutions were constitutionally abolished and reservations were institutionalized in higher educational institutions and public sector employment. However, these measures did not significantly alter Dalit access to or control over resources (Deshpande, 2003; Satyanarayana & Tharu, 2011). Rather, dominant castes "gifted themselves" the claim of being above caste and consolidated control over resource and commodity consumption (Kumar, 2013, para. 33). Socialist national development agendas in India therefore produced casteless citizens of privileged castes and transferred the burden of caste and the violence of poverty on to "lower" castes (Deshpande, 2003; Kumar, 2013). Devaluation of marginalized caste communities through re-articulations of economic, social, and spatial abjection and the managing and denying of caste-sanctioned devaluation became the double face of caste in independent India (Rao, 2015). For Dalits, the world continued to belong to others and the self in all its temporalities was "reduced, cramped, shrunk, cracked, stigmatized" (Kaviraj, 2013, p. 386) as social institutions and practices embodied disrespect for and systematically violated Dalits' self-respect with impunity (Parekh, 2009).

The ascendance of consumption regimes in post-socialist India interrupts the logic of caste and newfangled practices of consumption are becoming crucial sites of desire, hope, and politics (Lukose, 2009). For instance, Kapur et al. (2010) argue that shifting Dalit consumption in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh is radically altering social performances of (in)equality. Likewise, consumption of English schooling is becoming intricately linked to non-elite hopes for more just futures in many parts of India (NCERT, 2006). Pine (2014) describes hope as marked by the "desire to believe in a better future or in the possibility that something can change" (p. S96). However, he adds that hope is "also always mirrored or shadowed by its opposite, despair" (p. S96). Mothering on the margins is always already characterized by this duality of hope and despair. Collins (1990) describes black mothering as a "fundamentally contradictory institution" (p. 195), where "even though her children are her hope, the conditions under which she must mother are intolerable" (p. 197). How then do Dalit mothers at an uneconomic Malayalam-medium school—denied the consumption of newly democratized future-making practices like English-medium schooling—imagine and work toward desirable futures for their

children? And what are the costs entailed in hoping when practices in the present that perform future orientations are foreclosed?

Sites, Histories, Methods

Pathanamthitta district has the unfortunate distinction of being the district with the highest percentage of uneconomic state-funded primary schools in Kerala. As I visited uneconomic schools in Pathanamthitta, upper-caste villagers often guided me to what they referred to as "slave-caste" schools [*para/pela pallikudam*]. Established by the colonial British Church Missionary Society or the native MarThoma Church, these Malayalam-medium primary schools were established in late 1800s and early 1900s for slave-castes who had been denied entry to Travancore state-funded but upper-caste patronized schools. Even though the state of Kerala has replaced the Travancore government and over a century has passed since their establishment, these schools have yet to lose their slave-caste-ness. About ten kilometers from Thiruvalla town, I was allowed to conduct research at one such slave-caste school [*para-pallikudam*] established in 1894 by the native church for slave-castes. This school is presently state-funded, Malayalam-medium, and uneconomic with 12 Dalit students enrolled in grades 1–4. I will call the school St. Thomas and the village Edanadu.

School admission registers, available intermittently from 1914, reveal that new students enrolling into Class 1 at St. Thomas averaged around 28 from 1914 till the late 1980s, with only a few exceptional years where the enrollment fell to 11 (1929) or spiked to 51 (1916). Parental caste and family names from admission registers also reveal that Dalits and low-status upper castes—who had minimal land holdings and lived relatively proximate to Dalits—had historically patronized St. Thomas. Most landowning upper castes in the school neighborhood had studied at an upper-caste Malayalam-medium primary school till the first private English-medium primary school in Edanadu opened in 1979, and all low-status upper castes and a few Dalits had more recently moved to low-fee private English-medium schools. Since the larger project from which this chapter is drawn attends to the aspirational terrains of non-elite English schooling, I was associated with a neighboring low-fee English-medium school to which many families from St. Thomas had migrated in the present generation. If in state-funded schools English is taught as a subject from first grade, in English-medium schools all subjects are officially taught in English and unofficially taught in translation (also see Vaish, 2008).

For this paper, I draw on ethnographic fieldwork conducted at St. Thomas from June 2013 to December 2014. At St. Thomas, I was enlisted to teach English in 2nd grade and I taught the Kerala state English curriculum to two 2nd-grade cohorts, to three students during 2013–2014, and to four students in 2014–2015. Conforming to the architectural traditions of the region, older primary schools like St. Thomas are essentially one long Mangalore-tile-roofed hall with screen-partitioned classrooms, each classroom opening out to the outside world through its own doorway. Only high-fee schools in Edanadu are gated communities, in concordance with the recent rise in gated housing societies among upper middle classes (see Tripathy, 2015). On the other hand at St. Thomas, mothers routinely rest and socialize inside the school building after their long walk to and from school to pick up and drop off children. The lunch corner—at the far end of the hall—with its single bench and desk is their hub as they chat with each other and teachers, including me, about children's antics, lessons, trajectories of old students, academic performances of enrolled students, as well as the mundane details of everyday life that produce caste and gender differences.

Additionally, I also relate information I gathered from interviews with Dalit elders who had attended St. Thomas in earlier years. It was to conduct these interviews that I first visited Dalit "colonies" in Edanadu. Spatially segregated from the village proper, accessible typically by a footpath, Dalit colonies are hidden not only from public view but also from the public imagination. Eighty-five-year-old Mary[2] *ammachi,*[3] who grew up in one of the Dalit colonies, explained her memories of colony formation thus: "those who did not have land or houses settled here, then the government gave that land to us [Dalit settlers]." In colonial-era Kerala, landownership was the privilege of "upper" castes and Dalit bodies were typically aggregated in abject spaces. The much-celebrated "land reforms" instituted by the Communist Party when it came into power in 1957 legalized for Dalit families fragments of uncultivable land they had settled on. Simultaneously, dominant-caste tenants—who oversaw the work of Dalit agricultural laborers—were accorded property rights over tenant land (Radhakrishnan, 1981; Yesudasan, 2011). However, re-organization of land rights also rearranged water rights (Krishnan, 2009) and to this day, most Dalit colonies in Edanadu have no running water. The continued ecological, economic, social, and educational abjection of Dalits is duly noted in official and research literature, but in the public imagination of Kerala, caste is presumed absent due to the "radical" politics of the

Communist Party (Devika, 2010; Kapikad, 2013; Yesudasan & Mohan, 2014). To clarify, state-subsidized public housing in India is a benefit accorded to casteless citizens engaged in national development agendas. In addition to interviewing Dalit elders at neighboring colonies, I also conducted more formal interviews with all mothers of children enrolled at St. Thomas during 2013–2015. However, my more intimate relationships were with students I taught and their mothers, and it is their narratives that form the basis for this chapter.

Death, Love, and Betrayal

"I've thought about ending my life many times [*ithellam avasanipichalo ennu palapravashyam vicharichittunde*]. I'm fatigued, teacher [*maduthu, teachere*]. What a hellish life I live [*entho narakicha jivithama*]. Why should I suffer like this? But when I think of my two children, who will they have if I'm not there? Will anybody else take care of them? You tell me," Jessy confided, watching her pot of water slowly filling up at the roadside water tap. I had taught Jessy's daughter Jaisy during the 2013–2014 academic year and Jessy continued to give me updates about Jaisy's progress every time she saw me, both at school and outside. Like most other mothers at St. Thomas, Jessy loved talking about her children Jaisy and Jaisy's younger brother Jesson. Our conversations outside school typically took place at the entrance to Jessy's colony, which I passed on my way to church. But that day, Jessy stopped me at a different place, across from her colony, and next to a nondescript water tap. I had never noticed taps by the roadside in Edanadu before. I didn't need to. I had running water at home. But for Jessy, this tap was her lifeline, from where she collected water in pots and buckets for all the needs of her family of four. Her colony, like most other colonies in Edanadu, did not yet have running water and to live in a colony is to consume the sufferings of structural precarity that Jessy calls "life in hell" [*narakicha jivitham*].

The student community at St. Thomas was exclusively Dalit and lived, like Jessy's family, in segregated spaces. Furthermore, of the seven students I taught over two years, three were from landless families, the single most intelligible criterion for destitution [*daridryam*] in contemporary Kerala and also officially acknowledged as such [*bhu rahithar*]. They too lived near a Dalit colony, renting out half-finished or abandoned single-room houses for minimal rent. Visiting seven-year-old Jisna's house the first time, I was surprised to see her favorite play spot—a staircase that led into the open sky. The construction of this single-room house had

been abandoned half way and the part of the roof where the staircase was supposed to lead to the small roof terrace was nonexistent, a gaping hole. I wondered what happened during the monsoon months but dared not ask. Nearby, little Ajina lived with her family of five in an even smaller room, the single bed in the house stacked close to the wooden fire over which her mother cooked all their meals. The door to their room opened out to a pit that had once been a red-rock [*vettu kallu*] quarry. I had to suspend my middle-class notions of safety and risk when I visited my students; material impoverishment did not interrupt their fun, laughter, friendship, and play. But the very real struggles of poverty were also simultaneously articulated, especially by mothers. Jessy lived in another colony about a kilometer from St. Thomas; her colony was a strip of land wedged between wetlands and a pool that had over the years become a dumping ground. Land close to wetlands flood easily during the monsoons but the conversion of a major chunk of the wetlands near Jessy's colony into dry land by a local liquor and real estate baron had exacerbated the periodical flooding into an everyday life in slush and mud. After every downpour, which in monsoon drenched Kerala is half the year round, Jessy's colony turned into a mud pool. Visiting Jessy's house through the slushy, smelly, capricious mud that slid and slithered underfoot, I was surprised when Jessy asked me if I had any cream. She pointed to the eczema on her children's feet and cursed the muck that was devouring their bodies and the floodwaters that seemed bent on consuming their already dilapidated and bare house. Flooding had become severe with the reclamation of the wetlands and muddy, smelly, floodwaters entered her house regularly. Fatigued by the material and affective labors life in a colony demanded, tired of living beyond the margins, Jessy wanted to end her life. But Jessy felt that her bodily death, the only legitimate form of protest in certain contexts (Girija, 2011; Morrison, 1997), would betray her children to a loveless world. She asks, "Who will they have if I'm not there? Will anybody else take care of them?" Love and nurture prevailed as a form of defiant resistance to corporeal death.

Segregated Poverty, Shrinking Temporality

A radically rearranged cash economy post-2000 has re-structured material and social life and engendered unprecedented aspirational horizons in Edanadu (Mathew, forthcoming). However, as other non-elite villagers migrated temporally into profoundly different materials worlds and

social practices, Dalit mothers like Jessy found themselves caught in an older time. This exclusiveness and the caste segregation it manifested, for instance, becoming remnant at an uneconomic school that had only recently become 100 % Dalit, produced an experience of standing still when everybody had moved on. Others were already in the future Jessy yet hoped intently for. And, what had once been a "difficult" and "impoverished" past for most other Edanadu residents was Jessy's continuing present. In Dalit colonies and uneconomic schools, this feeling of being stuck in the normative past of the village heightened stasis—changelessness suggestive of inaction despite fervent and arduous action—collapsing the past, present, and future into one long saga of labor and precarity.

To elaborate, a decade and a half ago most non-Dalit low-status families in Edanadu—those with minimal land holdings who lived relatively adjacent to Dalit colonies—also had no indoor plumbing and walked their children to Malayalam-medium schools like St. Thomas. But now, indoor plumbing and low-fee English schooling was ubiquitous even among non-elites. Further, moving from a colony house to St. Thomas was but a meandering back into the familiarity of deprivation. Like colony houses, St. Thomas School, too, had no running water. Teachers, the cook, and I drew water from the church well located across the road for all the needs of the 12 students. Conversely, English-medium schools had indoor plumping. Jessy often voiced the punishing nature of her everyday life saying, "I don't even get to sit down for a minute [*oru minite kuththi irrikkan neramilla*]." However, *kuththi irrikkan neramilla* [no time to sit down] is the same term non-elite mothers at low-fee English schools in Edanadu used to describe life a decade earlier, a time when they also toiled the whole day just to get routine chores done.

Mothers at St. Thomas were acutely aware of their exclusive presence in a normative past. Jessy described her walking to school routine as exclusive [*njan mathram*] and fatiguing [*maduthu*]. Other Dalit mothers at St. Thomas and elsewhere articulated their unease with walking to school in terms of safety. Walking children through the torrential downpour of the monsoons was neither easy nor safe. Younger children often had to be carried. Lightning strikes had become harsher with changing monsoon patterns. Further, when mothers fell sick and could not walk their children to school, students missed school, sometimes for weeks. Beyond the actual safety of the walking, the practice was marked temporally (of the past) and demographically (by Dalits). It was common earlier but (almost) nobody did it any more. Children at English-medium schools rode to

school on buses and autos or on their parents' motorbikes. Thus, walking to a Malayalam-medium school with children in tow as well as spaces like uneconomic schools, colonies, and roadside water taps produced a stasis in everyday life that was easily but painfully recognized. As the present and the past flowed into each other and time shrunk, however, mothers became obsessively hopeful.

Obsessive Hope, Punishing Love

Though a terrible discontent and fatigue with living in the past-present was commonly spoken, desires for good futures, whether it be new residential spaces or English-medium schooling, were rarely articulated in my presence.[4] On the contrary, mothers obsessed over academic performance—a socially sanctioned and more "appropriate" orientation to good futures. One morning when I reached St. Thomas, I saw Jaisy at the door, hugging her mother, weeping. First graders and preschoolers routinely sobbed and wailed as mothers left but Jaisy was in third grade then and I had never seen her cry to see her mother leave. I tried to comfort her, but she refused my offers and clung on to Jessy. I had witnessed enough bickering to know kids can be exceedingly mean to each other and I went in to find out what had happened. The other mothers were sitting in their usual spot chatting and they told that Jessy's daughter had come to school without doing her homework, and Jessy had slapped her full across the face. When her daughter burst out crying, Jessy immediately hugged her, consoled her, and dried her tears and blew her nose. But when a teacher went to Jessy soon after, Jessy burst out crying. She was broken hearted to have hit her child, but the only way any desirable future could even be imagined as possible was if Jaisy did well in school, which she usually did.[5] When social norms purport schooling and the academic success of youth as the only way out of material destitution, hoping became obsessive, punishing, and heartbreaking.

Annu was the soft-spoken mother of three, of whom the oldest Aneena was in my 2nd-grade cohort in 2014–2015. Annu's husband was a daily wage laborer who also took up plumbing and other jobs, and they lived in a rented shack about a kilometer from school. Annu walked Aneena to and from school every day, carrying her youngest and walking the others. The one time Annu fell sick during my fieldwork period, there was nobody to walk Aneesha to school and she missed a week of classes. But unlike Jessy, Annu rarely complained about her hardships. During one of the parent-teacher meetings when I commented on how diligent and

hardworking her daughter was, Annu responded, "She is good at studies, but these days she isn't paying attention (to her studies). You should hit her, teacher, if she doesn't pay attention." Orienting to good futures in a temporality of stasis was characterized by labor and pain for the children. If little Aneesha had to have a good future, she had to work harder and harder—like Boxer in Orwell's *Animal Farm*. Like Jessy, Annu too pushed her child hard. Both mothers solicited the help of more literate cousins or neighbors to monitor their children's reading of the picture books I sent home for reading practice. Any slip up was met with harsh and definitive punishment, the students confided. Mothers were fiercely optimistic about the academic success and possible futures of their children. They had to become hopeful to survive.

Stepping into the Future

If considering the possibility of endless abjection, even momentarily, was agonizing for Jessy, stepping into yearned for futures—feeling, smelling, and touching the future—made Jessy confront the inadequacy of hope in producing radical material and social change. In August 2014, Jessy's cousin moved into a new house near St. Thomas, and in the week that followed Jessy's two children had a sleepover at their aunt's new house. Though Jessy did not accompany them, she gushed about the new house after the sleepover. "It's a wonderful house. You should see the tiles, they sparkle." Entering her cousin's new house seemed to be a momentarily stepping into the future, not just in the imagination but also in the corporeal body with all its sensorial consumptions. When I was invited to see the new house, the smooth sparkling tiles, the fresh gleaming white paint, and the fan whirling silently overhead seemed vastly different from Jessy's rough patchy cement floor, unpainted walls, and the whirring table fan that sat clumsily on a roughly hewn wooden table. If the past was rough edged, cement colored, and mud smelling, the future was smooth, white, and without slush. As she took her children back home after the sleepover, Jessy said, "I wish we had a house like that. But she has brothers in the (Persian) Gulf who help her out. I don't have any brothers, let alone brothers in the Gulf." When she saw others leave, like her cousin who had earlier lived next door, her resilient optimism revealed itself as insufficient. Hope was not enough. Emergent English literacies in primary school were hardly adequate to climb out of abjection, buy land, and build a new house. But Jessy persisted. One morning a few weeks before I left, when we were among the earliest to arrive at school, Jessy came to me and said softly,

glancing around to make sure nobody heard us, "Didn't you ask me once what I hoped for Jaisy? I want her to become a doctor." Only elite upper castes in Edanadu have become doctors in the past or the present, and to become a doctor in Edanadu is to embody unquestionable social worth. While children of upper caste elites in Edanadu are naturally accorded this respect and worth on the strength of their inherited material and social capital, Dalits at uneconomic schools find themselves segregated out to perform abjection. And yet, yearnings for a different world are whispered about and carried secretly in the depths of a mother's loving and despairing heart. Hope emerges agonizingly in response to hopelessness.

Conclusion

Uneconomic schooling in Edanadu is not just an issue of medium of instruction but a composite entanglement of sensory consumptions and affective labors produced in certain kinds of material and social spaces by mothers who live on the margins of society. With no running water, poor sanitation facilities, leaky roofs, and scarce furniture, St. Thomas was a material extension of the colony and only allowed for the production of colony-specific practices and affects. Walking children to school thus became a practice that entailed much reflection, articulation, and dejection. What accentuated this experience of caste-inflected deprivation was its temporal exclusivity; stuck with performing the past, mothers at the uneconomic school were acutely conscious of the changing terms of social membership and their inability to perform them. Uneconomic schooling was therefore an exposition of caste-structured poverty and a newfangled way of "becoming Dalit," and to recognize the enormity of social rejection anew that too in the very system purported to disrupt inequality was heartbreaking. Jessy called it "life in hell"; Ambedkar[6] called it social death. Jessy considered corporeal death a fitting form of protest to "reject the rejections of caste society" (Guru, 2009); but the betrayals it entailed drove her to love and hope. The obsessive hope and the pain it inscribed on her child's body as well as her own, however, reveals the price of desiring and imagining dignity in a future already betrayed.

Notes

1. All education post-10th grade was in English-medium. Franke (1993) and UN (1975) detail the caste compositions and occupational privileges of post-10th-grade educated Keralites.

2. All names are pseudonyms.
3. *Ammachi* meaning grandmother or elder (female). Upper castes typically address Dalit elders by their first names even though addressing elders by their first names is considered exceedingly disrespectful. In such a context, I am unable to address an elderly Dalit lady by her first name. Relational terms like *ammachi* are commonly used to address elders.
4. See Mathew (forthcoming) for varying articulations across caste borders.
5. The best academic performances at St. Thomas were still significantly below expected grade level competencies and I describe curricular violence in detail in my dissertation.
6. B.R. Ambedkar was one of the most prominent anti-caste activists, the first Law Minister of independent India, and the principal architect of the Indian constitution.

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CHAPTER 8

Practice for the Future: The Aspirational Politics of Nigerian Students

Krystal Strong

"I Need Job"

In April 2013, an image gained traction within Nigerian social media. In an undisclosed city, likely Lagos or Ibadan, a young man stands by the roadside, raising a cloth banner aloft in an eye-catching shade of neon green. In this part of the world, a young person soliciting passing vehicles with advertisements or goods for purchase is an expected component of the urban scenery. The presence of this young man, however, is curious. Overdressed for petty street hawking, he wears a crisp pair of khaki slacks. A dark cardigan with a white-collared shirt peeks out above his neckline, and a book bag straddles his shoulders. Stamped in red and blue block letters on the canvas sign are the words "I NEED JOB." Below this, a terse delineation of the graduate's qualifications: a Bachelors of Science in Public Administration with honors; a diploma in Human Relations; and, membership in two professional bodies, followed by his phone number. The image of the young man peddling his credentials was recirculated as an emblem of the unpromising reality awaiting young Nigerians.

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A year later, the Nigerian daily, *The Punch*, reported a far more disturbing story involving another graduate, trained in mechanical engineering and jobless for ten years. Dressed in a suit and tie, the young man reportedly stormed the grounds of a state prison in southeastern Nigeria begging the guards on duty to "shoot him dead or put him in prison where he could rot and die." Interviewed later, the graduate confessed, "There is no state that I have not gone to in search of a job in the past ten years. […] I came with the hope that [getting] a job would be easy so that I can begin to be a man. But since I came, I discovered that so many people are also crying because of poverty and joblessness" (Ekpimah, 2014). There are countless stories of this kind, which suggest both the urgency and futility of formal education for Nigeria's youth, who deploy audacious means to access education, which too often fails to confer the anticipated outcome. Annually, millions of youth sit for admissions examinations that can only matriculate 10 % of the tertiary age population. Those who go on to earn credentials are met with a staggering 54 % youth unemployment rate, even among graduates.

What hope for the future can youth, stalled at the threshold of adulthood, carry in the face of this kind of denial and self-abasement? This question is in the background of this chapter, which takes up the volume's concerns with education, youth, and the future in the context of higher education in Nigeria. In the field of African studies, much attention has been afforded the social and, especially, economic challenges youth face. Here, I discuss my work among students attending three higher educational institutions in Ibadan, Nigeria's third largest city, based on a total of three years of ethnographic research conducted intermittently from 2006 to 2012. As with the desperate young man by the roadside and the despairing graduate at the prison yard, many Ibadan students anguish over the uncertainties of their futures. In part, however, many use their time at university to develop strategies and approaches toward becoming a part of the newly democratic state. They do so through what I am calling "aspirational politics." For students, the post-1999, post-military era is a time for advancing and developing new political identities and aspirations. Aware that formal education is no longer, itself, adequate preparation for post-graduate livelihoods (if it ever was, see Abernethy, 1969), students use their university years to create and set the terms of political participation that they, in turn, plan to enact after graduation. Such participation and planning is all the more important and possible in today's context of post-military Nigeria. After three decades of almost uninterrupted military

rule, Nigeria turned from a military state to a constitutional democracy in 1999. Despite the promises of democracy, however, political instability has continued, including with the 2015 democratic election of a former military dictator, General Muhammadu Buhari. Against this backdrop and knowing this history, many Nigerian university students, I argue, imagine campus political activities to be a rehearsal for the future, in the sense that students' *present* political practices are thought to offer the possibility of *future* membership in a tenuous but technical democracy.

Young Africa

Over the past two decades, Africanist scholars have written extensively about the economic and generational contradictions that emerged in the wake of post-colonial civil war, military regimes, and the devastating adoption of neoliberal economic reforms, which disproportionately and adversely affected young people. To be sure, changing conceptions of age, maturity, and full social membership are not entirely new considerations among post-independence-born university students living in many countries across Africa, nor among Africanist scholars studying youth in Africa (see Aguilar, 1998; Burgess & Burton, 2010). However, what may be distinct is young adults' uncertainty—and scholars' focus on them as living in a prolonged state of youth. Since the mid-1990s, a sub-section of this literature has focused on the so-called lost (Cruse O'Brien, 1996) or "sacrificed" (Sharp, 2002) generations of African youth, who claimed social space from the power-hoarding gerontocracy, at times violently (e.g., Honwana & De Boeck, 2005). However, some scholars have pointed out that contemporary youth are not so much a generation "lost" to the failures of nation-building projects in the decolonizing world, as a generation that, despite better access to education and participatory democracy, finds its economic options circumscribed (Hansen, 2014, p. 1). For these reasons, more recent works have emphasized inertia as a key characteristic of the present, both in temporal and in spatial terms, coining expressions such as "forever youth" (Hansen, 2014), "waithood" (Honwana, 2012) and, more bluntly, "stuck" (Sommers, 2012) to characterize this generation.

In this chapter, I argue there is more than 'waithood' or 'stuckness' happening in Nigeria. Yes, in Nigeria, as in a number of other African countries, the population skews toward the young. Demographically, about 70 % of the African continent's population is under the age of 30 (Lin, 2012). A reasonable scholarship has analyzed the political implications of

this population curve, namely that it creates limited opportunities for youth to exercise political power, particularly when one considers that old men historically in much of Nigeria are considered to be the most politically powerful (Aguilar, 1998; see Adeboye, 2007 on "elderhood" in Ibadan). Consequently, political frustration and pressure emerges from the younger, more educated population. Such frustration and pressure has been the focus of perhaps too much scholarly attention on youth protest and violence (see Bay & Donham, 2007, pp. 16–33). Not enough literature has examined other ways the young and educated are politically engaged, or the central role of the university campus in social movements and democratization in Africa (Federici, Caffentzis, & Alidou, 2000; Ivaska, 2005; Ngwane, 2001)—a theoretical gap in which this chapter critically intervenes.

Education and Politics in Post-Military Nigeria

Two developments in Nigeria, Africa's most populous nation of 175 million people, are important to keep in mind throughout the rest of my discussion. They are the nation's crowded educational sector with tenuous socioeconomic returns for graduates, and a political system equally under duress. Unlike many other African countries where there are a dozen or so post-secondary institutions, today, Nigeria has an educational landscape of over 500 post-secondary institutions, including dozens of federal and state universities, an increasing number of private universities, among other types of institutions. The massive educational infrastructure is, in part, because the establishment of schools went hand in hand with the expansion of Nigeria's oil economy during the 1970s and 1980s. However, the prioritization of education within the state agenda changed dramatically in the 1980s when Nigeria, like other developing nations, was compelled to adopt neoliberal economic reforms called structural adjustment programs, which drastically defunded education while the country was in the midst of three decades of military dictatorships.

The recent transition to democracy in 1999 signaled the end of military rule and a reprioritization of higher education in state policies. However, many institutions are still rebounding from decades of defunding the education sector and, despite the promises of democracy, national politics continues to be plagued by instability in the form of factional violence, electoral misconduct, and a culture of impunity in which blatant malfeasance goes unchecked. What this means for students today is that credentials are keenly sought, but they do not necessarily lead to mobility,

as the opening stories signal. Nevertheless, in the midst of protracted economic and political upheaval, the democratic transition has created unexpected openings for students. After acting as agitators *against* the military state, students in the post-military era anticipate the possibility of being *incorporated into* the state as professional politicians. Now, I turn to the stories of how three students at different institutions in the city of Ibadan express political aspirations in the context of schooling, and of how they understand the very purpose of education and its horizons.

Roadmap[1]

Muyiwa was the President of the Faculty of Arts student association at the University of Ibadan (UI) and he was better known by his chosen political persona, Roadmap. I ran into Roadmap on the walkway in front of the Student Union Building in June 2012 and, after exchanging pleasantries, he complained, "The semester is choked." There were just six weeks left before the end of the academic year. The campus had recently re-opened after university administrators imposed a recess of nearly two months on students as punishment for the "Occupy University of Ibadan" protest that April. With a shortened academic calendar after the closure, avoiding flunking out of school would require focused attention to academics. For politicians like Roadmap, there was an additional burden: he had even less time to fulfill his campaign promises. To continue to exist politically, he needed tangible results to show for his tenure as President. I asked Roadmap how he would manage classes and the fulfillment of his ambitious "5-point" manifesto. Completely nonchalant about the fate of his grade point average, Roadmap explained that it was not a degree, alone, that he was seeking from the UI. Rather, leadership experience would be the most rewarding outcome of his education. He said,

> Leaders in twenty years will be the ones leading campus now. I'm working out the script that I will act out later and playing politics in the real sense. I'm learning all the strategies that I will use later.

Roadmap, itself, is a rich name, the selection of which signals the promise that student politicians desire to devote their terms in office, and their very identities, to establishing a pathway for improved conditions for their fellow students. Roadmap is also a fitting metaphor for the ways youth navigate schooling with the hopes of arriving at a desired future destination.

Of all the Ibadan campuses where I conducted my research, students at the UI were the most invested in a professional political identity. They referred to themselves as "politicians" and participated in activities such as debates, the development of public personae (i.e., the selection of nick-names like Roadmap), and the production of sophisticated media such as jingles, social media support pages, and campaign posters. Established in 1948 under British colonialism as the first university in Nigeria, the UI is now a federal university with a population of approximately 34,000 students, which is among the most ethnically, regionally, and economically diverse. Noted for its role in the reproduction of the nation's socio-economic, political, and cultural elites, its ethos as the "first and best" university in Nigeria pervades sociality and the likely reality that UI graduates will go on to positions of national prominence. Certainly, this also inflected the belief among leaders like Roadmap that there was a realistic trajectory between student politics and national politics in the present and future.

Returning to the dilemma of Roadmap—of not having enough time to fulfill his campaign promises—our roadside encounter calls to mind when I first met him formally, after weeks of seeing his smiling face emblazoned on glossy campaign posters around campus, bearing the slogan "Roadmap 2011." It was the Faculty of Arts Debate Night, where candidates for the student government presented their platforms and fielded questions from the campus press. Dressed in a crisp slate gray-colored suit, it was then that Roadmap unveiled his "5-point" manifesto, which included the execution of two, unprecedented development projects he promised to roll out in the Faculty of Arts complex. These were the establishment of a student IT center, and the construction of two new toilets to supplement the existing two, which were always flooded and particularly inhospitable for female students. The projects were ambitious goals, and many in his audience doubted he could execute them, since they depended on funding and infrastructural support from the campus administration, or external patrons.

His plans, nevertheless, were in line with a growing trend among campus leaders, to base their political profiles on the execution of "development projects" and on the ability to raise funds—or at least appear to do so. Such efforts were previously associated exclusively with national leaders. However, in early 2011, UI campus politics was reinvigorated by the re-instatement of the student union after being banned for ten years, as well as national elections in April 2011. The co-occurrence of revitalized

campus and national politics opened up new possibilities for leveraging student political influence within the national political arena. Such opportunities were the basis for aspirations for future political participation and leadership.

"Deji"

Deji went by the nickname "Double Speaker." A Higher National Diploma student in Computer Science at The Polytechnic Ibadan (Poly), Deji was the Speaker of the department legislature. He was also a student at the UI, a *double* enrollment that was technically forbidden and punishable with expulsion. Deji had already started his program at the Poly before gaining admissions to study engineering at UI, so he decided to complete the short diploma and five-year degree simultaneously, unbeknownst to both institutions, on top of seeking elected offices on both campuses.

Soon after I met him, Deji invited me to go on an excursion with the "Seeds of Africa" press club at The Polytechnic, an organization that he was also an officer for, and which was in the process of fundraising for their major event for the year, some six weeks away. A group of about a dozen Poly students and I took a rickety bus held shut with a rope that the students had chartered to the town of Ife about 90 minutes away. The group intended to meet with a retired Professor of Yoruba culture, who they hoped would support the event with a donation. The group had already printed an expensive glossy poster with the Professor's name advertising the event, which was designed to be a celebration of African cultures, as evidenced by the theme, "You and Your Culture." The students had never met the Professor, but they managed to get his number and arrange a meeting with him in Ife, hedging their bets on the presumption that seeing his name emblazoned on the poster in person would convince—or more likely cajole—him into agreeing to be their keynote speaker, which would of course imply a financial contribution to the club.

Such tactics were common among student leaders at public institutions. I accompanied student politicians at UI on many such trips to solicit local politicians and other prospective patrons in influential positions, often successfully. The Poly students' trip, however, was a resounding failure. When we reached Ife, the Professor summoned us to meet him in a local watering hole where he was drinking beer and, despite the students' best efforts, he only offered them pocket change in support of the event. The unfavorable response was likely influenced by the messengers themselves: students of a

state-owned polytechnic, who were often not taken seriously by virtue of their association with a public technical institution.

The Poly was established in 1960 as the first technical institution in this region to train "mid-level manpower" in technical education to complement UI's "high-level manpower" in university education. Though initially established as a "separate but equal" institution within a broader educational mandate, over time, the National Diplomas in technical training that Poly grants in lieu of a degree have become stigmatizing credentials marking the lower cultural capital of an education there. As a state institution, the student population, of roughly 15,000, is homogenous as most Poly students are ethnically Yoruba and indigenes of Oyo State. Located in the capital city of Ibadan, the political culture of Poly is inflected by the nuances of local state politics. Poly students insisted that politics at the neighboring campuses, UI and Lead City, were vastly different and that Poly politics was exactly like national politics, as opposed to some idealized, intellectualized form of politics that was out of touch with the way Nigerian politics "really works." There, students interested in politics take "the game" very seriously: with access to limited institutional and personal resources, campus politics is not merely a pathway to future aspirations, but also an immediate survival strategy.

The resemblance of Poly politics to national politics is linked to the recurrence of violence within the political process. This is because Poly has a reputation for harboring "campus cults," which were initially founded in the 1960s as fraternities, but which began to function more like urban criminal gangs in the late 1980s, when national politics as a whole had turned violent (Edigin, 2010). Members of cult groups at Poly, and elsewhere, are often employed as thugs by national politicians during elections to intimidate opponents. Due to the overlap between campus politics and cult activity, violence is common in campus elections. In July 2012, for example, the Department of Computer Science election for student representatives was canceled because a ballot box was stolen, after a fight with machetes erupted between supporters of opposing candidates. These occurrences are among the reasons that Poly authorities banned the Student Union Government for three years between 2010 and 2012.

The lack of institutional support for activities and infrastructural development compels students to seek outside patronage, which can end in disappointment, as was the case with the trip to fundraise from the Ife professor. The lack of leverage within the prestige economy of student politics also compels Poly students to become entrenched within local

politics that is notoriously "bloody" and "dirty." When students are successful at gaining political patronage, ironically, they are able to introduce infrastructural changes that would not be possible by students elsewhere. In contrast to the other institutions, capital projects for infrastructure, including relaxation areas, notice boards, and signage, were executed by student associations themselves—development projects that would have likely been institutionally discouraged or abandoned at the planning stage in public and private universities where such projects are contracted by university authorities. Roadmap's plans for UI, for example, were hastily abandoned. Such development projects immortalize the political "regimes" of Poly political bodies, whose leaders embrace the title of "comrade" as opposed to politician as a marker of political identity, in line with the long history of militant student activism in Nigeria, premised on "agitation" *against* the state. This practice also may anticipate the likelihood that Poly graduates will remain marginalized within positions of formal leadership, given the relatively low value of their credentials.

"Obi"

"This school is a dumping ground, they'll accept anything. Honestly. They don't give two fucks. Just don't abuse the lecturers! I'm telling you, this school is fucked." These were the words of Obi, who was prone to such expletive-laced rants concerning the management of Lead City University (LCU), where he was a transfer student. After flunking out of the UI, where his Dad was faculty, he gained admissions in InterRel (International Relations) at Lead City, where his family managed to foot the hefty tuition fees. Somewhat a socialite at the UI, Obi transformed into a serious student at Lead City. Whether this was voluntary or circumstantial was unclear. Perhaps the embarrassment, to himself and his parents, of flunking out of UI was a wake-up call. More likely, Obi was forced in this direction because his middle-class background that garnered distinction at the federal university could not keep pace with the habits of the children of wealthy elites, who make up the majority of Lead City students.

One of the recent additions to Ibadan post-secondary institutions, LCU was established privately in 2005 and offers its 3500 students degrees in management studies, information technology, law, and applied sciences, which are designated "knowledge for self-reliance." With tuition fees over ten times the cost of a UI education, LCU offers a window into the experiences of wealthy Nigerians who have prospered in spite of, or perhaps

because of, the economic turmoil besetting the nation—and the African continent—since the 1990s. Organized politics at LCU are extremely limited, due to the decision by authorities to ban student unionism other than academic representative bodies, and to limit any form of protest to written complaints. Unlike UI and Poly, where students adopt many of the strategies of national politicians, LCU students interested in being leaders of student associations must submit an application to administrators, who select candidates for students in lieu of elections.

Instead, campus life is organized around rave clubs led by "party chiefs," who organize all-night parties in urban clubs, where students make a showcase of foreign cars, imported champagne, and designer clothes in competitive, conspicuous displays of distinction. Where student "politicians" elsewhere purport to serve the interests of their constituents, party chiefs are socialites, representing wealth, influence, and affability. On several occasions, Obi facilitated introductions to some of major players of the club scene at the central bar in Zanga da Hood, the campus social zone where most of these groups gathered during the school week. With the exception of one party chief, "Opsy," a young woman who led the rave club, Meltdown, men led all campus social clubs. At the group level, rave clubs accumulated influence based on which club hosted the best parties, and whose members were the most talked about.

Though involved in activities that are imagined to be forms of entertainment, students connect this form of socializing to "running" the city and extending their influence beyond the campus within its urban setting. This also includes future aspirations for leadership, as a May 2012 party organized by the LCU rave club, Finesse, suggests. On the paper invitation circulated to invited guests, the headless image of a well-dressed man with a white tuxedo jacket, contrastive black pocket square and polka dot bowtie is emblazoned with the name of the event, "CEOs and Office H*eS [Hoes]." The branding of the party is both telling and troubling. On the one hand, the image presents a sophisticated, gendered impression of the event and its desired guests with a sartorial aesthetic that was especially common at the time among fashion-forward young men. That current students are here posited as CEOs also indicates the purported feasibility of entrepreneurship and business savvy in the imagined futures of students. However, that the figure of the CEO is paired with the Office "hoe," or whore, suggests that women students are not imagined as members of this envisioned cohort of present and future business owners, but rather in positions of sexual exploitation. Indeed, campus politics is masculinized

and, even in institutions where formal politics is not practiced, the participation of women in leadership is circumscribed to ancillary roles.

Lead City student interests, on the whole, revolve around class aspirations and material consumption. Students cultivate experiences in entrepreneurship and financial self-reliance that their access to money and institutional resources permits. Moreover, while seemingly apolitical given the banning of most forms of organized politics, students experience a more class-exclusive form of political professionalization, which hinges on the leveraging of economic resources for desired aims. While incompatible with more conventional forms of politicization in a context of representative forms of governance, in the Nigerian setting, such acumen is perhaps most relevant to the current political system of money-driven party politics. Moreover, despite a lack of an explicit "political" identity, students still imagine themselves as the future leaders of businesses and "big men" (gendering intentional) in the political process, essentially bypassing the campus politicization process that has produced most of Nigeria's political activists and respected leaders through public institutions like UI and Poly.

Aspirational Politics

The three stories—of Roadmap, Deji, and Obi—and their respective higher educational institutions—University of Ibadan, Polytechnic Ibadan, and Lead City University—in different ways indicate how Nigerian students use and imagine that education will inform their futures. Rather than a period of time in which students merely acquire educational credentials, the time of schooling is also one in which students acquire experience in and exposure to different kinds of leadership in the context of educational institutions with varying levels of prestige, resources, and opportunities for political activities. For students like the Roadmap, Deji, and Obi, campus leadership is practice for the future.

Though these forms of political practices may be somewhat particular to this regional context, Nigerian students are imagining education and political participation in new ways, which have broader relevance to educational research and how we understand the experiences of global youth. The experimentation of Nigerian students with forms of leadership can be productively viewed as a desire to create openings within a seemingly closed social structure that limits opportunities for young people. The narrowing of opportunity for youth is, of course, not unique to Nigeria

and is, rather, a global phenomenon, which has been described as a condition of late capitalism for so-called precarious youth. The conditions of precarity are described as the flexibilization of labor and the neoliberal restructuring of education (Allison, 2013; Neilson & Rossiter, 2008), which have resulted in unprecedented levels of student indebtedness as well as the more insidious sense that Millennials are socioeconomically "going nowhere." In this, the activities of Nigerian students are instructive. In envisioning the schooling experience as a time, not just for the pursuit of credentials, but also a time for developing leadership experience for the future, Nigerian students reject the discourse of failure that is ascribed to African schools as well as the unfulfilled promises of education to engender socioeconomic mobility. Instead, they insist on the idea of schools as sites of transformative potential premised on the future-oriented practices of campus politics—a form of learning that is not tethered to formal instruction or the conferral of credentials.

Participation in campus politics is an expression of aspirations for the future that are catalyzed by the recent transition to constitutional democracy. Despite limited avenues for social mobility and participation in Nigeria's turbulent political system, for students, the present is ripe with possibilities. In contrast to the focus of much of the existing literature on African universities as sites for reproducing privilege, or failed institutions that no longer guarantee social mobility, their stories demonstrate that higher educational institutions in Nigeria are more than institutional enclaves: they are important sites within urban landscapes and the national political arena, in which students develop ideas about, and modes of practicing, future political engagements.

Note

1. Due to the public nature of campus political activities and the intention of student politicians to develop public personae, I use Roadmap's real identity for my discussion. Pseudonyms are used to refer to the other two students.

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CHAPTER 9

Hopeful Engagement: The Sentimental Education of University-Sponsored Service Learning

M. Mackenzie Cramblit

Introduction

The arrival and widespread adoption of service learning, an educational philosophy with roots in progressivism and pragmatism,[1] is easily among the most significant developments in American higher education over the last 20 years. In a foundational definition, service learning joins practical service work with traditional pedagogical models to create "a form of experiential education [requiring reflection and reciprocity] in which students engage in activities that address human and community needs together with structured opportunities intentionally designed to promote student learning and development" (Jacoby, 1996, 5). The expansion of the service-learning model reflects the growing influence of what has been termed, following Ernest Boyer, a "scholarship of engagement" (Boyer, 1990; cf. Butin, 2006). As service-learning programs and centers have proliferated across the landscape of higher education—from liberal arts colleges and universities to professional accreditation programs and trade schools—research on

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the implementation, institutionalization, and impact of service learning has become an important area of investment for scholars in education, psychology, and public policy. Perhaps not surprisingly, this research tends to be both quantitative in nature and conducted at a high degree of abstraction. Many scholars are (justifiably) invested in measuring outcomes of service learning in order to prove the pedagogical worth of service learning and to design more effective programs (Butin, 2005, 2010; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Jacoby, 1996). Research designed with these goals in mind tends to rely on survey data to document general trends, a methodological choice that necessarily constrains both the researchers' ability to perceive nuance and the survey respondents' capacity to express it in the first place.

While not discounting the value of this type of research, it is remarkable that there have been so few examples of alternative approaches to the study of student experiences and outcomes in higher education, particularly in the context of service learning. One notable exception to this rule is a recent study by Russell L. Carson and Elizabeth Domangue (2013), in which the authors adopt Robert Coles' (1993) terminology of emotional "satisfactions" and "hazards" in service learning in order to analyze the role of "emotion" in student experiences of participation in a hurricane relief program. Significantly, Carson and Domangue rely exclusively on qualitative data collected through various means, including written reflections, informal conversations, and open-ended interviews. The authors depart from dominant trends in research on service learning by prioritizing student experiences (as they were subjectively lived and felt) over abstract and measurable "outcomes." Moreover, in adapting Coles' language of "hazards" or negative affects activated during service, the authors demonstrate their commitment to honoring students' varied and often ambivalent experiences in service.

As a cultural anthropologist, I am admittedly partial to accounts that dwell in such ambiguity, valuing the irreducible expressive power of words and speech. Building on Carson and Domangue, I want to suggest that we need even more qualitative research on the subjective experience of being a student in service. The widespread adoption of service-learning programs across the landscape of higher education institutions, and service learning's growing acceptance as a pillar of American pedagogy, suggest that this model is a legitimate cultural artifact of our times, quite deserving of critical reflection. In particular, anthropologists ought to take service learning seriously not only as a site that condenses particular institutional and social values, but also as a system designed to produce a certain kind of subject: the engaged scholar, the student *qua* global citizen (cf. Foucault, 1980; cf. Mahmood, 2005).

My objective here is not to assess the feasibility or impact of service learning, nor to critique its normative assumptions about the types of students suited to this task, or indeed to reveal and comment upon its underlying universalizing motives. This is work that others, particularly scholars of education, have ably done (Astin, Vogelgesang, Ikeda, & Yee, 2000; Bringle & Hatcher, 1996, 2000; Butin, 2006). Rather, I propose to examine how a particular university-sponsored service-learning program has taken root within a wider institutional culture, and how it in turn shapes students as the hopeful and engaged subjects of service. I do this through an analysis of Duke University's flagship non-credit-bearing global service-learning program DukeEngage, which in the eight years since its inception has surpassed sports to become one of the leading reasons cited by prospective students when asked to explain why they applied to Duke.

While DukeEngage is just one among a proliferating number of university-sponsored global outreach programs, it is perhaps unusual in its twin ambitions to resignify the meaning of a Duke education and to reform undergraduate student culture through immersive service and civic engagement. By focusing on the aspirations and experiences of undergraduate students involved in a DukeEngage program based in West Africa, a program in which I participated in the role of site coordinator and program assistant,[2] I hope to make a case for paying attention to the physical, affective, and intersubjective experiences of service—dynamics which, however real and gripping, are routinely glossed over in program brochures, endorsements, and student evaluations. I argue that while DukeEngage forms students as service learners by providing a structured setting in which to deploy their "capacity to aspire" (Appadurai, 2013), it does not prioritize giving students a nuanced language through which to conceptualize and describe their experiences. In this way, the program implicitly values students' capacity to aspire at the expense of what might be called their *capacity to relate*.

Higher education institutions often demonstrate their commitment to values such as critical thinking and lifelong learning through their curricular programming. But as purveyors of service learning, universities have a unique responsibility to form students whose intellectual curiosity is enhanced by empathy and self-awareness. In failing to provide the guidance and support that allow students to reflect on their experiences critically—which at least in part means fostering a culture that celebrates (and publicizes) the valleys as much as the peaks—universities do a disservice to their charges, hindering their emotional and intellectual development. This essay aims not only

to show what service learning does (and sometimes fails to do), but also to suggest how anthropology might take a more active role in advocating new forms of "engagement" that prioritize relationality over insulated investments in the entrepreneurial self. While anthropology is already well positioned to illuminate how service learning functions as an institutionalized culture and mode of engagement, anthropologists should also take heed of the institutional cultures and programs in which we ourselves participate, as advisors, program directors, liaisons, or coordinators. Thinking critically about our own roles as leaders and educators in these areas, we might more ably support students as they learn to engage—and aspire—relationally.

DukeEngage and the Ascendance of "Global" Education

DukeEngage was born in the midst of difficult institutional circumstances. Conceived in 2006 at a Big Ideas conference hosted by then-Provost Peter Lange, the program came into being as the University was dealing publicly with a scandal of legendary proportions. In March 2006, a young black woman—who was a Durham area resident but not a Duke University student—accused members of the Duke men's Lacrosse team of raping her at a team party for which she was hired as a stripper. The resulting Duke Lacrosse case, which ended in the Lacrosse players' acquittal and the high profile disbarment of North Carolina district attorney Mike Nifong, brought infamy to Duke and further amplified racial tension and distrust between the University and the surrounding community of Durham.

DukeEngage arrived on the heels of this public scandal. Given the public relations crisis in which the University found itself embroiled, the successful launch of DukeEngage fulfilled an institutional need for redemption. Launched in the summer of 2007, DukeEngage was backed by $30 million in contributions from the Duke Endowment and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. It quickly garnered public attention, becoming the defining feature of Duke's undergraduate education less than ten years into its operation. Since its inception, DukeEngage has funded more than 3200 undergraduates volunteering both domestically and internationally, on trips to 69 countries located in every continent but Antarctica.[3] Current University President Richard Broadhead proudly invoked this legacy during a DukeEngage pre-departure orientation hosted at the Durham Convention Center in 2013. Speaking to a group of several hundred undergraduate students and faculty advisers picking at

the remains of their continental breakfast, he commented proudly that this was the first year more college applicants cited DukeEngage over Duke Basketball as a reason for applying to the school. The audience, clearly a sympathetic cross-section of the campus, erupted in applause.

While it is significant that DukeEngage took off in the immediate wake of the Duke Lacrosse case, the creative energies that gave birth to the program were already in motion as early as 2001. At that time, Duke had embarked on an intensive planning process with the ambition of repositioning the University as a leader in American higher education with emphases on interdisciplinarity, ethical inquiry, and cutting-edge research. The resultant plans, *Building Excellence* (2001) and its successor *Making a Difference* (2006), advertise the administration's interest in continuing to invest in areas of perceived strength that distinguish the University from other leading institutions. In particular, *Making a Difference*, which appeared in September 2006, expresses desires to "improve campus culture" and foster a "commitment to making a difference in the world" among undergraduates, goals that must have seemed all the more pressing and relevant given the events of that spring (Duke University, 2006). With its emphasis on inquiry motivated by "humility, respect, and curiosity" and a desire to understand "how global inequalities shape our world," DukeEngage set itself the task of remaking Duke's undergraduate culture from the inside out.

This ambition to hone Duke's image and its institutional culture through strategic programming investments is echoed in the 2017 DukeEngage Strategic Plan entitled, *A Blueprint for Deeper and Broader Engagement*. In snappy language that suggests the influence of an ad consultant, the *Blueprint* hails Duke's emergence as a signature purveyor of global outreach programs:

> DukeEngage is, in many ways, a reflection of the most important qualities of Duke, which only a generation ago was a highly regarded regional University and now is a major presence in global higher education. Bold, experimental and nimble, Duke has embraced initiatives that might be eschewed by more tradition bound institutions. It is just this mind-set of ambition with purpose—this culture of bold thinking—that enabled Duke to create DukeEngage, a civic engagement program that stands out for its magnitude and global reach. And to the extent that DukeEngage embodies three of the most important core strategic values of the University—globalization, interdisciplinarity and knowledge in the service of society—DukeEngage could probably only exist here at Duke. (Duke University, 2012)

DukeEngage is thus celebrated as the cornerstone of a new university culture, one characterized by a "mind-set of ambition with purpose" that sets Duke apart from its peers. Of course, DukeEngage is only one piece in the university's larger plan to globalize itself. In August 2014, the joint venture Duke-Kunshan University welcomed its first students after protracted negotiations with the Chinese Ministry of Education. Duke's success in this niche market of global education and service learning, taken with its massive investments in a new global campus, might be seen as an atonement for—even a disavowal of—the University's recent trials. Wittingly or not, this revamped global face defined by service (via DukeEngage) and enterprising partnerships (via Duke-Kunshan University), has effectively redeemed Duke's undergraduate program from the negative press of the Lacrosse scandal.

While DukeEngage has grown tremendously over the past ten years, it appears to have done little in the way of self-auditing (cf. Redfield, 2013), and has raised few questions in its voluminous self-promotion materials about the value and meaning of undergraduate service, and the precise nature of students' experiences in the program. Instead, the positive value of service is assumed, while the program website highlights students' uniformly upbeat reviews. Students can be heard speaking about DukeEngage in enthusiastic yet banal terms as being "amazing"—"a special opportunity" that can "change you and you entire Duke experience." While it would be naïve to expect the program *not* to advertise itself in the most flattering light, it is equally misguided to take a few students' solicited sound bites as the final word on the meaning and value of service. Anthropologically speaking, what seem more interesting are the embodied hopes, frustrations, and anxieties that are inevitably produced in the context of service learning, a paradigmatic encounter of self and other in an increasingly globalized, neoliberal world. Attending to students' experiences in service-learning programs is not the same as assessing the means and ends of service, although these deserve critical reflection as well. Rather, the former requires asking, what does it mean when we do service, how do we learn to conceptualize and speak about our experiences, and with what effects? I will return to these questions in a later section, but move now to a closer consideration of the ways service learning has become institutionalized in the context of neoliberal higher education, focusing in particular on its emergence as a specifically managed form of sentimentality and engagement with the other.

The Neoliberal Sentimentality of Service

Education researcher Dan Butin has argued that the institutionalization of service learning is hobbled by practitioners' attempts to make this pedagogical model appear principled yet politically neutral, and accessible yet distinguishing. The meteoric rise of service learning, Butin notes, is conditional on a double disavowal: proponents of service learning consistently downplay the model's underlying liberal ideology and the implicit normative assumptions it makes about the identity of "ideal type" service learners (white, middle-class, liberal arts students) (Butin, 2006, 481; cf. Butin, 2003). Following scholarship on neoliberalism, the retreat of the welfare state, and the age of affective labor (Harvey, 2007; Muehlebach, 2012; Ong, 2006), anthropologists studying the global university have instead emphasized the production of space within a neoliberal geography, the forms of relationality presupposed by global education, and the fashioning of students as global citizens.

In a recent article on the reconfiguration of area studies in the age of the global university, anthropologist Tom Looser describes the neoliberal global geography as aspiring to "create a world in which the outside doesn't matter…[through] differentiation without real difference" (Looser, 2012, pp. 112–113). Significantly, DukeEngage appears to embrace a similar philosophy positioning standardization as a measure of quality. In a welcome speech at a DukeEngage pre-departure orientation, one of the founding DukeEngage program administrators—an esteemed dean and education researcher—explained the success of the program's service model by comparing it to a McDonald's franchise. The goal, the dean explained, was to make DukeEngage a recognizable and dependable name for service throughout the world. There would certainly be local variations—indeed, not all Big Macs taste quite the same—but this was precisely the point. As a global franchise of immersive service learning, DukeEngage could promise undergraduate students an equivalent experience whether they traveled to Detroit or South Korea. An article in the local newspaper advertised the latest additions to the DukeEngage offerings this way:

> Next summer, Duke undergraduates can travel to the demilitarized zone between North Korea and South Korea. They can explore the entrepreneurship of Motor City [*sic*] or the multi-ethnic community of Miami Beach, or

immerse themselves in the political climate of post-conflict Serbia. (Dudash, 2013)

The unordered sequence of destinations in this announcement effectively establishes South Korea and Detroit, Miami and Serbia as undifferentiated locations of equal interest and value. To paraphrase Looser, this underspecified enthusiasm exemplifies differentiation without real difference within the sentimental geography of global service learning. If the experience of service in these places is truly interchangeable, then what does this say about the kinds of relationships students are expected to form with the people whom they are meant to serve?

Looser also examines this question of relationality from the standpoint of neoliberalism. For Looser, "neoliberalism implies freedom from responsibility; especially, it implies freedom from responsibility to any kind of alterity, in favor of responsibility only to one's self. Logically, carried out as a principle, the result would be a kind of pure self-identity, free of relation to others" (Looser, 2012, p. 99). If the self's freedom from obligation to the other is a hallmark of neoliberalism, this particular withdrawal appears to be intensifying precisely as the university expands its reach beyond the American campus. Looser is deeply skeptical about the anti-relationality produced within neoliberalism. Freedom from relationality "might already sound like a possible vision of both freedom and autonomy," he writes, "but as a model for either community, or for individual identity, it is at the very least strange; what would it mean to have a self that finds identity without relation to any other?" (Looser, 2012, p. 99). But something stranger still appears to be going on when one considers the confluence of larger trends. How could an inward-looking ethos of personal accountability and individual autonomy become predominate in the age of global service? Have theorists of neoliberalism got it all wrong?

Although it may seem paradoxical, the age of global service is in fact wholly compatible with—even enabled by—the economic, political, and affective structures commonly identified as "neoliberalism." The leading characteristics of the neoliberal Zeitgeist—both the withdrawal from social obligation and the elevation of the entrepreneurial self—do not contradict the aims of contemporary global service. In fact, these qualities serve to define the limits of safe and effective connection in a world that privileges autonomy over interdependence. Specifically, neoliberalism authorizes relationality on the condition that connections be

freely chosen by self-authoring subjects; that they remain temporary, contextually bounded, and extinguishable at will; and that they serve as productive investments in the subject's personal development and self-actualization.[4] DukeEngage's slogan exemplifies this model of self-serving relationality (Fig. 9.1).

Grammatically speaking, the slogan "Challenge yourself. Change your world" quite literally positions the ego (you) as the central figure in the program's mission. This formulation leaves little room for doubt about the aims of DukeEngage, and whom precisely the program is intended to serve. Perhaps it should not be surprising that, in spite of the program's uplifting rhetoric about humility and service, it is Duke undergraduates who are ultimately the subjects of DukeEngage's work. After all, they (or their parents) are among the most influential constituents that the University serves. Transforming students, investing in their cultural capital, and enriching their opportunities for employment post-graduation: these are the unscripted ends that DukeEngage is tasked with achieving. To paraphrase Looser's intentionally absurd question: what kind of relationality is possible when the self finds identity without reference to any other? What kinds of connection does DukeEngage facilitate if its ultimate mission—and the message it sends undergraduates—is to employ service as a means of prioritizing investment in the self? Just as relationality in the neoliberal age always folds back onto itself, DukeEngage promotes a model of engagement in which relations with the other are sufficiently transformational to propel the subject along its own trajectory of self-authorship, while at the same time remaining temporary enough to preserve the ego from the substantial risks of real and sustained reciprocity.

Fig. 9.1 DukeEngage logo and slogan

> Anthropologist Richard Handler echoes this idea in a recent article examining the institutionalization of University of Virginia's new global development studies undergraduate major, in particular the ways undergraduate desires shape students' disciplinary object choice.[5] Handler writes that his undergraduate advisees conceive service "in an egocentric and individualistic fashion" (Handler, 2013, p. 190). Students
>
> do not picture themselves in long-term social relationships with particular people to whom they are bound by multiple ties. Rather, the human object of their service is constituted as a function of their whimsical interests and personal biographies: they just happen to have gone on a service trip to such-and-such undeveloped, impoverished place; or they just happen to have conceived of a love for the study of, and travel to, such-and-such country. Global others are there to be chosen, and abandoned, more or less at will. (Handler, 2013, p. 190)

This account is consistent with the self-focused, even solipsistic language through which DukeEngage expresses its program aims (change *your* world), as well as the franchise model of service through which it advertises a seemingly inexhaustible variety of specific, yet substitutable program sites (from Miami to Serbia). Far from performing the relationality of global service incorrectly, then, it is the noncommittal—"whimsical" to use Handler's term—students who best live up to the expectations of a program like DukeEngage.

Indeed, in the marketplace of global service, undergraduates are taught to perform certain kinds of emotional or intellectual capacities, among them the "capacity to aspire" (Appadurai, 2013), the capacity to develop and usefully deploy passions, and the capacity to communicate across cultures. What I term the capacity to aspire (borrowing Appadurai's phrase) refers to students' ability to dream up ambitious service projects and development interventions that are conceived as addressing "real-world problems" while actually failing to be executable in practice (usually due to lack of expertise and financial resources). Service-learning programs like DukeEngage reward students for demonstrating a capacity to aspire rather than a capacity to achieve realistic and meaningful outcomes. Students are further encouraged to cultivate numerous "passions" and to implement these in ways that are strategic and self-promoting, all the while learning to speak about their passions in narratively compelling ways, as being disinterested, inevitable, and selfless. According to Handler, cross-cultural communication is one of the core technologies undergraduate students

feel they need in order to do good development work. Communication is a mutual, "two-way process," but one which is also imagined to be frictionless: "By some magical process," Handler writes, "[students] think they can will good communications into being across most, if not all, social divides. And good development work will follow good communications, in an equally magical process" (Handler, 2013, p. 188). This faith in intuitive, unhindered communication is central to how DukeEngage conceptualizes the challenges that students must confront and overcome during service. As one DukeEngage administrator puts it:

> Students will be expected to find ways to communicate in an environment filled with language barriers and political tensions…and to foster understanding between cultures…We can really connect on a very basic human level, even beyond language, and have the students take that away, the kind of possibilities that could be really amazing and endless, based on these types of human connections that we will be able to make. (Dudash, 2013)

In celebrating a kind of ecstatic yet generic "human connection," DukeEngage implicitly teaches students that they are capable of communicating effectively irrespective of differences in language, culture, and history (as the dismissal of "political tensions" makes clear), as long as they show up with the right attitude. In fact, just as geographical distance becomes meaningless difference through the endless proliferation of like forms under neoliberalism, so distinctions of language, culture, and history cease to matter when one is equipped with the universal passkey of "human connection."

The next section will follow a small group of undergraduate students participating in a DukeEngage service-learning program based in rural West Africa to examine how they attempt to utilize these affective capacities in the service context. I will argue that the realities of doing service in an unfamiliar setting force students to face up to the limits of this idealized mode of engagement. Events on the ground repeatedly revealed students to be unprepared for the real challenges of service. While all students experienced unplanned levels of discomfort and dissatisfaction in the service context, many showed impressive resilience in spite of their unpreparedness for these feelings. In the end, however, students' lasting perceptions and personal narrations of their time spent in the village appeared remarkably unaffected by the ambivalent realities of service, suggesting

that students who had completed the program had never acquired a language for articulating the richness—both positive and negative—of their own experiences.

Producing Hope, Managing Engagement

The preparations for an eight-week DukeEngage trip began long before the annual program-wide pre-departure orientation in May. By November of the previous year, the program director for the West Africa trip[6] had already begun a second round of interviews with interested undergraduates, and an independent study consisting of area readings in history and anthropology was planned for the spring semester. Throughout the interview process, the two of us often chatted casually about the composition of the group and our expectations for how the students would adjust to the service context. The program director had been traveling to the site for more than 25 years, and I was already comfortable with the way of life in rural West Africa, having previously spent a year living in the region on a research grant. Most of the students the program director interviewed had never visited the African continent; many had never traveled outside Western Europe; and several had never left the USA. We speculated good-naturedly about how certain students would fare in such an unusual and unfussy place, where the food and microbes were vastly different from home, and where there would be significant language barriers even for those who demonstrated the requisite level of competency. These were essential considerations for the effectiveness of the program as well as for the students own safety. The program director was looking for students who were not only enthusiastic (everyone was), but who also appeared to possess other essential qualities, like good sense, practicality, and grit. We weren't looking for starry-eyed idealists so much as for down-to-earth, hardworking pragmatists—especially those who had some relevant previous travel experience in the so-called developing world.

In the end, the group's composition was a result of compromise. While all of the selected students were academically impressive, most did not have the desired level of foreign language competency. Deficient students enthusiastically offered to take intensive language courses, pledging to learn as much as they could in the six months leading up to the trip, and the program director interpreted their keenness as a measure of determination. Language competency also played against the gender composition

of the group, as far more female than male applicants happened to be language proficient.[7] It soon became clear to us that it would be impossible to achieve a gender-balanced group while maintaining the program's standard of language competency across the board. In the end, it was decided that gender parity should be prioritized over language skills, in the interest of the students' group dynamics and the host community's desire to socialize with a diverse group of students. This meant accepting several students who had inadequate foreign language skills, but who seemed eager enough to learn. Unbeknownst to the program director and myself, our own adjudications during the interview process retraced some of the key tenets of service learning's sentimental education. Comparing character assessments and skill sets, we ultimately chose the majority of students on the basis of perceived personal qualities rather than demonstrable competencies, in the hope that the students with mettle would rise to the occasion.

Throughout the spring semester, the selected students met with the program director to complete guided general readings on the history and anthropology of the region, while also diving into their individual service interests. Each student had applied to the program with a particular project idea to develop, and during the independent study students were expected to begin background research on their project topics. It was at this stage that students demonstrated most clearly their entrepreneurial capacity to aspire—a skill that was neither tested for in the interview process nor explicitly taught at any point during their coursework at Duke. Each student possessed this uncanny ability to "dream big" without heeding to contingencies—planning projects which, even in the idea phase, far exceeded their own or others' ability to execute. The youngest student in the group had just completed her freshman year of college.[8] Having taken a microeconomics course the previous fall, she planned to initiate a micro-lending project for women and young people modeled after Grameen Bank,[9] and kept herself busy reading critiques of microcredit and writing a 20-page research paper comparing the strategies and outcomes of various micro-lending projects throughout Southeast Asia. Another student wanted to teach computer literacy classes to youth at the village computer center; this comparatively more modest and doable task was complicated by the fact that she spoke only beginning French and would have significant difficulty communicating with her charges. Meanwhile, an engineering student had applied for outside grant funding

and was attempting to complete a massive latrine installation on an empty lot near the market with the earnest yet erratic assistance of a group of village residents. Another student wanted to set up a single-payer village health insurance scheme, which he hoped would encourage families to use the nurse's station in the village more regularly. While these projects should be credited for being ambitious—reflecting the enthusiasm of their student incubators—they all lacked the vision and purpose (not to mention financing and expertise) required to bring them securely into reality. It may be tempting to attribute the students' pie-in-the-sky approach to the inherently quixotic nature of youth, even particularly American youth. But, as the preceding sections have shown, this sensibility is specifically encouraged through the program rhetoric of DukeEngage, as well as through a broader cultural script under neoliberalism that rewards abstract dreams over practical action. Reinforced by messages disseminated within the University, as well as by the prevailing cultural norms without, the capacity to aspire thus becomes an unwritten prerequisite for global service learning.

Following the program-wide pre-departure orientation in May and a round of routine immunizations at the student health center, the group of DukeEngage students headed to the service site, a small West African country, where they would be spending a total of eight weeks carrying out their individual projects. In my role as site coordinator and assistant program director, I was in the business of offering practical advice and emotional support to students as they navigated the challenges of service in an unfamiliar place. As the weeks wore on, I watched as the students' initial naïveté gave way to anxieties about making an impact, ultimately resolving into a more mature perspective that balanced the inevitable discomforts and disappointments of service with the numerous joys and satisfactions. But in order to develop the capacity of realistic aspiration (sadly undervalued these days!), students had to face many limitations, both their own and those of the host community. The next section discusses some of the difficulties students encountered in the service context, focusing on struggles to adjust physically, which posed certain challenges to the implementation of their projects.

Food, Taste, and the Limits of Hope

The state of the physical body, including experiences with food and illness, played a key role in students' ability to navigate the service context and execute their projects. Psychologists writing on the phenomenon of culture shock have emphasized the physical and emotional symptoms of distress that

accompany this experience of feeling deeply and existentially out of place (Adler, 1975; Bochner & Furnham, 1982; Bochner, Furnham, & Ward, 2001). And indeed students' experiences of displacement in the service context evidenced a complex interweaving of both physical and emotional symptoms.

Food and nourishment proved to be one of most difficult areas in which students were challenged, partly because problems with food and changes of diet were unforeseen, having never been addressed in the discussions about adjustment during the program-wide pre-departure orientation. Food was therefore somewhat of a blind spot for the students—and, as it happened, for the program director and myself. The program director had been eating the local food for more than 20 years, and it had become completely normalized to his palate. Still, his previous experience traveling to the area with undergraduates revealed students to be picky about eating certain local dishes, and he was rightly sensitive about food as a potentially difficult adjustment issue. He had therefore spoken with host families in the village and encouraged them to serve local food three times a week and more accessible fare the other nights (typically spaghetti or rice with a spicy tomato sauce, or fried omelets). These admittedly "touristy" accommodations seemed to work reasonably well, allowing students to adjust better to the radical changes in diet, incorporating new local flavors in recognizable and non-threatening forms, while still encouraging students to eat typical meals with their host families as much as possible. The program director had made further efforts to describe the local food to prospective students during the first round of interviews to make certain they were open to trying new things; their enthusiastic responses to his queries and his previous experiences with students who adjusted successfully suggested that food would not be an issue for this group. I also had a certain bias in this regard. While I was unfamiliar with the specific ways of cooking and eating in the service site, I had had positive eating experiences during my previous travel in the region, and eagerly anticipated the opportunity to compare and contrast sauces, greens, and preparation techniques with the cuisine to which I had already become habituated. Perhaps equally significant, I am a self-confessed *gourmande* with an adventurous palate; while food matters a lot to my happiness, I will eat (and appreciate) most anything put before me. For all of these reasons combined, neither the program director nor myself were able to anticipate how challenging matters of food and taste would be for the students in our charge.

Problems with food and eating emerged early on during the eight-week trip, and were symptomatic of students' ongoing struggle with "culture shock." Instead of alternating Westernized food with local meals several nights a week, five students out of seven flatly refused to touch the local porridge (*moto*) and sauce, and were eating exclusively spaghetti and rice (with the occasional omelet) for dinner. During group lunches, two young women in the group complained loudly that the *moto* made them "gag," describing in unnecessary detail how the food reminded them of previous times they had been sick at the beginning of the trip. These complaints had a chilling effect on other students' willingness to sample new foods, and it was clear that several others had begun avoiding *moto* or eating it in cautious, birdlike morsels because they had been influenced by their peers' tastes. It soon became apparent to the program director and myself that most students were not trying the local food with their host families at all. The situation was doubly burdensome for those students' host families, who not only had to spend more of the students' accommodation payments on expensive canned tomatoes and spaghetti noodles, but who also had to cook multiple meals, since their own families would not eat the students' food. But the students' contagious intolerance of the local food was upsetting to the program director and myself on another level, because it suggested that the students were not really connecting with what we—as cultural anthropologists—took to be the purpose of the trip. Eating inauthentic food night after night was not allowing students to really be present in the site, and it was preventing them from connecting with the people whom they purportedly wanted to serve. We wanted students to take gustatory risks in the site because this kind of experimentation in taste (Solomon, 2014) is part of what we both value about being anthropologists. Finally of course, we worried that students were not being properly nourished with this abnormally restrictive diet, as all of the nutrients were to be found in the vegetable sauces and locally milled grains they were assiduously avoiding.

During this extended eating crisis, students would hoard packaged food they had brought with them from home, as well as imported processed food they had purchased in the larger regional market town. Often, as the group idled together or walked between meeting sites, the students' conversations would turn to food: expressions of disgust at the meals they observed their host families eating; ravenous descriptions of their methods

for rationing cookies between weekly trips to town; salivating reminiscences of favorite foods from home; and detailed menus of what they planned to eat upon their return. Midway through the trip, a DukeEngage administrator made a routine site visit, bringing with her Ziploc bags full of Cliff bars and electrolyte packets, as well as extra insect repellent. The students hungrily divided the Cliff bars among themselves, disputing flavor choices, and the number of bars to which each student was entitled. The administrator, who had a motherly air and represented a welcome connection with home, was quickly and unequivocally adored.

It took some experimentation of our own, but the program director and I finally found a strategy for approaching food in a way that encouraged students to be open-minded while not (we hoped) triggering reactions of disgust or cascading complaints. Having eagerly sampled much of the prepared food at the village's Saturday market, I often carried around bags of bean fritters, rice flour doughnuts, and groundnut confectionary, offering these treats to students when we crossed paths, describing how they were made, and teaching students how to ask for them in the local language. I was pleased to see that this strategy worked on the two women with the overactive gag reflex, who also turned out to share a love of sweets. Soon, I was hearing positive reviews from both of them about the fritters to which they had newly become "addicted"—not exactly the intended result, but still an encouraging sign that they were feeling more comfortable branching out. A second successful strategy was a compromise between eating more local food and eating more healthfully. By the middle of the trip, the students who were subsisting on spaghetti and omelets were now (predictably) complaining of the monotony. This food to which they had turned with relief when they were sickened by the local fare was now making them feel nauseous from overexposure. Meanwhile, the one Westernized meal that the program director and I enjoyed with our host family was a *salade composée* made with lettuce, tomatoes, red onions, carrots, and other fresh vegetables from the larger town market where the family matriarch liked to shop every other week. Supplemented with canned mackerel and a mayonnaise-based salad dressing, the meal was delicious, fun to eat, and nourishing. By sheer happenstance one evening, a student had come to our homestead to ask a question and found everyone eating salad from generous metal bowls. Clearly hurt by the injustice, she immediately exclaimed how lucky we were to eat such good food! The next day, everyone had heard about the famous salad and was

requesting that their host families make similar food on market day once a week. The matriarchs rolled their eyes at the extra work, but were secretly happy to have a reason to dress up and travel together by taxi to the larger market in the regional capital. Fritters, salads, a dwindling candy stash—and the ever-approaching reality of tasting familiar foods at home—were enough in the end to satisfy students, quelling the intense viscerality of culture shock until it was finally time for them to leave.

Significantly, students' struggles with food were not unrelated to their performance and engagement within the service context. It has become clear to me that our students' multiple preoccupations with food—their strong aversions to local tastes (in both senses of the word), their hoarding and rationing of European processed foods, and their compulsive fantasies about dishes they would eat once they returned home—were symptomatic of other, more private anxieties. These food-related symptoms were telling us something about that which remained unspeakable for the students themselves, expressing a wide range of possible emotions: fears of disappointing the host community; worries about not being able to accomplish the goals to which they felt committed; shame surrounding the apparent gulf between students' own and host community members' income and education status; or guilt—perhaps stemming from the nagging sense that, even in an encounter framed by ostensibly selfless virtues, all of us might actually be taking more than we were giving.

Students' chronic preoccupations with food also had a significant impact on their effectiveness as communicators and learners in the service context. Indeed, it mattered very much to the service outcomes how and in what ways students were able to connect with the host community. The student working on microfinance projects could not appreciate what it meant for young beneficiaries to receive credit for a small business—I think—until she had tasted snacks at the market, observed how these foods were prepared in the home, and learned what ingredients, supplies, and other inputs and conditions were required for a young person's hobby to become commercially viable. Likewise, a student studying local farming practices was only able to make strides with his project once he began participating in local drinking sessions following a day's work in the fields. I want to suggest that such a visceral mode of engagement—an engagement that passes through the senses, as well as the mind—while undervalued by DukeEngage's current teaching model, is precisely the kind of relational capacity required for service performed with humility, curiosity, and a good faith commitment to putting oneself (one's self) at risk.

The Education of Hope

As this chapter has shown, hope was a palpable and recurrent theme of this particular service-learning trip, emerging under multiple guises. I have argued that DukeEngage condenses the institutional hopes invested in the rehabbed image of a University with global aspirations. In another sense, overnightly meals together in our village homestead, the program director and I expressed our joint hope that the students would be transformed by their experience in a critical sense, becoming able to examine their own motives for doing service, and learning to denaturalize service's status as an unquestionable good. We watched as the students discovered their own bodily and gustatory limitations, and as they worked to come to terms with their inflated expectations for service outcomes in the face of real events. In yet another iteration, students described to us their personal hopes to make an "impact" in the service context, hopes they would also express as gnawing preoccupations with the kind of "legacy" they would leave behind, and with the ways they would be remembered by villagers once they had gone home. As I see it now, these valleys were missed opportunities for the adults in charge (DukeEngage administrators in Durham, the program director, and myself) to offer more directed support to help students untangle their confused feelings, and to diagnose particular worries and frustrations as normal reactions to the process of doing service in relation with others. Rather than merely reassuring students, as we tried to do, we might instead have opened a space for a more frank conversation about the emotional challenges of service learning and development work, and the unexamined cultural assumptions underlying all of these endeavors.

In this discussion, I have suggested that the neoliberal "capacity to aspire,"[10] which structures service learning as a historically specific mode of sentimental engagement, is at best a kind of hollow hope that leaves students ill-prepared for the concrete and embodied realities of living and working through difference, in relation with others. What would it take to recuperate hope from this flimsy formulation, to give it substance and real-world traction? One possibility emerges through the work of Ernst Bloch, as interpreted by the queer theorist José Muñoz in his book *Cruising Utopia* (2009). Drawing on Bloch's materialist philosophy, Muñoz argues that the state of being queer is always a horizon, like the "not-yet-conscious" in Bloch's version of unfolding futurity. Utopian spaces, which create a rift in what Muñoz cleverly terms "straight time," are often carved out of banal material existence through attentiveness to the ephemeral.

Thus poet Frank O'Hara finds in the scene of two men sharing a Coke, a moment where the potentiality of queer intimacy acquires solid, if fleeting, presence. Following Bloch, Muñoz distinguishes between abstract and concrete utopias. Abstract utopias, which are "akin to banal optimism," contrast with the productive solidity of concrete utopias:

> Concrete utopias can also be daydream like, but they are the hopes of a collective, an emergent group, or even the solitary oddball who is the one who dreams for many. Concrete utopias are the realm of educated hope. (Muñoz, 2009, p. 3)

Concrete utopias bring a vision of the future into alignment with the realities of historical and present-day struggle. To borrow Muñoz's term, what would it take to move from a position of neoliberal sentimentality to one of "educated hope"? How might we as educators and mentor figures support undergraduate students in this developmental transition? How might we teach students how to produce realistic aspirations while coaxing them into an attitude of healthy curiosity and experimentation? These questions have pursued me in the years since I completed the DukeEngage trip, and have been a significant motivation for writing this piece.

In the months following the students' return to Duke, it became clear that many of them were unable (or were simply not encouraged) to articulate the vicissitudes of their own experiences. At a fall semester informational meeting for new students interested in the West Africa program, the previous summer's group was present to show pictures, answer questions, and provide commentary on their experiences. I became somewhat disheartened as I listened to students talk about the trip in generically positive terms as a "great opportunity" or an "awesome learning experience." These banal descriptors could not begin to express the nuanced topography—both low points and highlights—of each student's experience. Each one of the students in our group had lived through legitimately uncomfortable and in some cases profound moments during the trip—not least of which, the experience of one's body struggling to acclimate to an environment of unfamiliar flavors and textures, as I have described above. And while most of these students had become newly sensitive to their tastes and (to some extent) cultural biases through challenges encountered in the service context, all now appeared incapable of describing these experiences in ways that did justice to their complexity. As I sat listening during the students' presentations, I wondered how we as educators involved

with DukeEngage could help students integrate and evaluate their experiences in ways that might be more personally and socially meaningful. This, to me, is both the major problem and the major opportunity facing university-sponsored service-learning programs like DukeEngage.

In general, the preponderance of a flat, noncommittal, unrevealing language—apparent both in DukeEngage promotional materials and in students' own narrations of their experiences in the service context—suggests that something may have been lost in our collective rush to celebrate the capacity to aspire. This missing factor is an undervalued sensibility I have provisionally called the *capacity to relate*. Ultimately (and regardless of mission statement sloganeering) service-learning programs are in the basic business of creating and managing relationships, both in the immediate service context and beyond. Forming students who know how to extend themselves—students who will put their "selves" at risk—is imperative, unless we are willing to settle for the neoliberal order that Tom Looser has so chillingly described: a world built on a vacuous foundation, devoid of reciprocity and meaningful difference (Looser, 2012). A sad promise, indeed.

One way of refusing this empty world within the context of university-sponsored service-learning programs would be for us to commit ourselves to rigorously account for the relational complexities of service learning. We might start by taking seriously students' notions about "opportunities" and "learning experiences" as cultural categories. Words such as these are emic terms that summon specific affects, capacities, and projections of the self into an imagined future. In particular, the term "learning experience" indexes students' ability to decathect from challenges and other unpleasant but formative trials. However penetrating and hurtful one's experience of discomfort, shame, or disappointment, a "learning experience" can be invoked to insulate the ego from negative effects associated with failure, thus allowing injured students to reboot their capacity to aspire. But a colloquialism that allows the ego to gracefully dissociate from the pain of failure only becomes a mark of fluency in an environment that denies students a safe forum in which to celebrate their vulnerabilities alongside their accomplishments. This is the hallmark of an order that cares more about the capacity to aspire than the capacity to relate. In glossing over the imperfections of service as it is actually lived, the term "learning experience" allows students to continue to operate within the superficial realm of hopeful engagement. Rather than applauding the simple optimism of this expression, we as educators ought to consider invocations of

the "learning experience" as crucial moments to engage more deeply: to prod, ask questions, and guide students through the real work—indeed, the real service—of making educated hope.

Notes

1. Progressivism emerges out of John Dewey's individualist experiential philosophy of education, while pragmatism typically refers to the philosophical method of William James, who (by way of C.S. Peirce) upheld an empiricist inquiry based in concreteness over abstraction.
2. This role required my attendance at a pre-departure orientation in Durham, North Carolina, as well as my presence on-site in the rural West African village in which students lived and carried out their service projects.
3. "About DukeEngage." http://dukeengage.duke.edu/about-dukeengage. Accessed September 30, 2015.
4. The biopolitical overtones of this phrasing are intentional. See Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics* (2008).
5. See Wiegman (2012) for a more complete discussion of desire and disciplinary formation.
6. In the interest of confidentiality, some details (including the location of the program and names of participants) have been withheld or modified.
7. There were also gender disparities within the greater applicant pool, as many more young women than young men expressed interest in the West Africa program. On the basis of observations at the program-wide pre-departure orientation and conversations with other program directors, it became clear to me that the gender balance varied significantly across the spectrum of DukeEngage programs. While certain programs appeared to easily attract equal numbers of women and men, others like ours had far more women participants than men. There appeared to be no program with more men than women participating.
8. To protect students' identities, some personal and project-related details have been altered.
9. The progenitor of microfinance, Grameen Bank is a community bank founded by Muhammad Yunus in Bangladesh in 1976. Grameen has been critiqued for its part in fostering a culture of shame around

debt status in rural India and Bangladesh, and for its practice of maintaining high interest rates to discourage participants from holding debt.

10. I borrow and reinterpret this term from Appadurai's (2013) original usage.

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PART III

Afterword

CHAPTER 10

Reflections on *Student Futures and Political Possibilities*: An Afterword

Kathleen D. Hall

It has been 20 years since the publication of another edited volume, *The Cultural Production of the Educated Person*, which approached issues of education, culture, and the economy through a temporal lens—one related to theories of cultural production and social reproduction, or the perpetuation across time of durable forms of inequality. This now classic volume, edited by Bradley A. Levinson, Douglas E. Foley, and Dorothy C. Holland, is a product of its time. The ethnographic studies draw in innovative and highly productive ways on the work of the Birmingham in an effort "to fill out an underdeveloped part of Marx's thought—a focus on consciousness and subjectivity" (1996, p. 12). British cultural studies approached the study of consciousness and subjectivity as well as identity through a concern with everyday practice, rituals, and expressive media, "social forms through which human beings 'live,' become conscious, [and] sustain themselves subjectively" (Johnson, 1986–1987, p. 45) as they make sense of and respond to historically specific social and material circumstances (Levinson et al., 1996, p. 12).

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The case studies in *The Cultural Production of the Educated Person* build upon this body of work, focusing specifically on Paul Willis' concept of cultural production, a concept he brings to life in his study, *Learning to Labour*. Willis vividly depicts how the British "lads" in his study "are not passive bearers of ideology, but active appropriators who reproduce existing structures only through struggle, contestation and a partial penetration of those structures" (1981/1977: 175). His ethnographic account "open[ed] up the 'black box' embedded in the reproductionists' views of schooling" and "forever shattered the image of the passive, malleable student implicit in reproduction theory" (Levinson et al., 1996, p. 9).

The *Cultural Production of the Educated Person*, together with a range of other ethnographic studies of education in this era, made critical contributions to our understanding of the transformative possibilities of agency within a temporality Guyer refers to as the "recurrent-reproductive and historical-disruptive" experience (2007, p. 411). The studies demonstrate how the creative practice of social actors transforms "aspirations, household relations, local knowledges, and structures of power" (Levinson et al., 1996, p. 14). Within studies of cultural production as well as social reproduction, however, issue of temporality remain largely implicit, an obvious and largely unquestioned aspect of the particular object of study, namely the reproduction over time of forms of social inequality. Broader questions about temporality itself, about how temporality is culturally figured, or how actors construct imagined futures were not yet issues of central concern within the anthropology of education at that time, nor in the discipline of anthropology more generally, with some notable exceptions (see Munn, 1992).

The ethnographic accounts collected in this book are clearly grounded in this early work on cultural production in education. Yet in their ethnographic explorations of education, culture, and the economy the authors draw upon and productively extend more recent work focusing on constructions of temporality to explore the making of educational aspirations and future horizons. As Amy Stambach notes in her introduction to the volume, temporality, in various forms, is central to educational visions, missions, as well as everyday practice. Education is, therefore, a very productive ethnographic object for further developing an anthropology of temporality. Understanding the role temporality plays in educational processes, moreover, is critically important to explaining (and improving) education. Education, then, seems an ideal focus for work addressing what Appadurai has identified as a "desperate need" in anthropology, namely building a more "robust anthropology of the future" (2013, p. 5).

So what do we learn from the wonderfully diverse case studies in this volume about the relationships between figures and forms of temporality and education, culture, and the economy? What contributions do these theoretical insights make to an anthropology of the future? And what additional questions do they raise for further ethnographic study?

In the most general sense, perhaps, the chapters together—similar to the pieces in the *Cultural Production of the Educated Person* volume—do remind us of how valuable the study of education is for enriching anthropological theory (Hall, 1999; Lave, Duguid, Fernandez, & Axel, 1992; Levinson, 1999; Spindler, 1955). Educational institutions and processes, policies and practice are critical sites of and for the workings of cultural politics related to a range of economic, political, legal, and social issues. It is, then, curious that education has not, in similar ways to medicine and law (as well as childhood and youth), become a more widespread topic of study among anthropologists in Departments of Anthropology. Yet, the value of studying education is brought clearly into relief in these chapters, specifically in what we learn about the complex processes and multiple dimensions of temporality.

Taken together, the chapters provide varied windows on the distinctive yet related forces producing widespread precarity in our current historical moment. These conditions of precarity, as many of the accounts describe, produce social dislocations and forms of rupture in the midst of which new future imaginings, adjusted aspirations, and new and renewed hopes and desires emerge as people struggle in the present for control of their futures.

Figuring the Future in the Field of Education

As Amy Stambach sets out in the introduction, a main argument in the book is "that education is a social field on which the future is imagined." These temporalities concerning youth, in turn, are "emblematic of wider concerns about opportunities and obstacles" (p. 2). Indeed, children and youth themselves, as Cole and Durham have argued, "contribute to how the future is figured—how it is symbolized, hoped for, and made" (2008, p. 21). Yet in the era of modern schooling, and with the increasing availability of diverse forms of schooling worldwide, the social field of education has become a key site in which the figuring of futures in relation to youth transpires. In this way, as the chapters powerfully demonstrate, understanding how education structures possibilities for imagining futures is critical to analyses of futurity and for the anthropology of the future more broadly. In my concluding reflections on this volume, I want to

highlight several analytical contributions the chapters make to an anthropology of the future.

Appadurai in proposing an anthropology of the future, harkens back, in part, to Nancy Munn's warnings decades ago about the neglected topic of time. "Futurity is poorly tended as a specifically temporal problem," she wrote. "[A]nthropologists have viewed the future in 'shreds and patches,' in contrast to the close attention given to 'the past in the present'" (1992, p. 116). Appadurai's anthropology of the future, however, centers on what he calls the capacity to aspire. The study of aspirations, and relatedly of wants, choices, and calculations, he notes, has been "assigned to the discipline of economics, to the domain of the market, and to the level of the individual actor." But, he reminds us, "aspirations are never simply individual" and are "always formed in interaction with and in the thick of social life" (2013, p. 187). "To repatriate them into the domain of culture," he suggests, "we need to begin by noting that aspirations form parts of wider ethical and metaphysical ideas that derive from larger cultural norms" (2013, p. 187). Aspirations are deeply embedded in broader notions of what is valued as "the good life."

The book gains inspiration too from the work of Jennifer Johnson-Hanks and in particular her notion of "vital conjunctures." Johnson-Hanks challenges conventional Western social science notions of a stable, consistent sequence of life or developmental stages in an effort to argue "for a new anthropology of the life course" (2002, p. 865). Her notion of vital conjunctures adapts Bourdieu's concept of conjuncture (1977), a term he deploys to refer to:

> Practices can be accounted for only by relating the objective structure defining the social conditions of the production of the habitus which engendered them to the conditions in which this habitus is operating, that is, to the conjucture which, short of a radical transformation, represents a particular state of this structure. (1977, p. 78)

She uses this concept in combination with a term from demography, "vital event" (typically denoting changes in status related to birth, death, marriage, or migration/change of residence) (2002, p. 872), to capture the interplay of "recurring systematicness and contexts of unique possibility and future orientation" (2002, p. 872). These vital conjunctures, she argues, are not simply "events" that happen to individuals at one moment in time. Rather vital conjunctures are social, involving a matrix of social relations and ties, and have duration, involving "multiple outcomes over

different time frames" (2002, p. 872). Vital conjunctures, she proposes, "are experiential knots during which potential futures are under debate and up for grabs." She calls these imagined futures "the horizons of the conjuncture" (2002, p. 872).

Schools as social fields are contexts in which vital conjunctures emerge. They emerge, moreover, in relation to a temporal frame that Guyer has referred to as the "near future," a temporality in which

> the reach of thought and imagination, of planning and hoping, of tracing out mutual influences, of engaging in struggles for specific goals, in short, of the process of implicating oneself in the ongoing life of the social and material world that used to be encompassed under an expansively inclusive concept of "reasoning." (2007, p. 409)

Schools, historically, have been sites in which reasoning within this temporal frame has engaged "wider ethical and metaphysical ideas" as well as pragmatic and rational ideals to inform educational purposes and notions of desired ends. Within the temporality of schooling, educators seek to prepare the next generation for a future that socially embodies what is valued as "the good life" in what is imagined to be "the good society." Schools exist, in part, to instill in youth the desire and capacity to aspire, to acquire the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that will enable them to contribute to achieving "the good life" and contribute to "the good society" within an imagined future.

Yet schools are also contested terrains, social contexts in which heterogeneous horizons of futurity often coexist, signifying what can be quite varied imaginings of "the good life" and "the good society" as well as the "ethically," morally or socially "valued person." The conjunctures within schools, then, as we see across the cases in this volume, are conjunctures not simply of institutions and aspirations, but of multiple aspirational horizons as well as varying capacities to aspire. These conjunctures, moreover, like the aspirations involved, are fundamentally social. They are situated and shaped within social contexts and social relations. The chapters bring into relief several dimensions to this complexity, which I will highlight in turn.

Multiple Horizons of Futurity

As Amy Stambach suggests in her introduction, schooling embodies multiple forms of temporality: the structuring of time in the present through the ritual and routines of everyday life in schools; the establishing of

trajectories across time for how long it takes to become educated; and, in the possible futures imagined, in terms of the ends or desired outcomes of becoming educated. These diverse forms of temporality vary, in turn, in relation to the unique ways that the purposes of education are defined, valued ways of learning conceived, and educational ends imagined. There is an interaction, then, between these various valuations at the heart of education and how forms of temporality are imagined and enacted.

Kristina Dohrn's chapter is a rich case study of how temporal heterogeneity can exist within a single school and, as she describes it, "diverse visions of the future with different temporal horizons coincide" (p. 53). Within the Feza Girls' Secondary High School (FGSHS) in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania (a Gülen Movement-inspired school), teachers and parents envision the aims of schooling in relation to divergent educational purposes associated with varying temporal horizons and imagined futures. The teacher's sense of educational purpose is inspired by the ideals of the Gülen Movement, namely to produce a generation of the future through educational practice in the present able to combine scientific knowledge and moral values to create a better future for society. Parents, on the other hand, for the most part, view education as an investment, a near future strategy to pave a pathway to greater economic security for their children. Dohrn's analysis, interestingly, gives no hint of a dominant ideology in the school producing either subjects or resisting agents. Rather she describes the multiple temporal framings and horizons as "coexisting, merging, and contesting each other," it seems within how students "orient and calculate their actions, choices and aspirations with regard to their futures and the different visions of the future at play in FGSHS." For as she concludes,

> while teachers aimed at influencing their student's character formation and their future pathways, students negotiated these pathways and the moral education at Feza in relation to their own social, economic, and religious backgrounds and their own individual visions of the future. (p. 58)

Feza schools, she notes, were at the time considered some of the best schools in Dar es Salaam, and the students were generally from upper middle and upper class, implying that, as Gilbertson suggests in her piece, that a classed sense of futurity and capacity to aspire may have also been at play.

Yet this sense of ease in navigating multiple aspirational horizons is also evident in Claire-Marie Hefner's case study, in this instance among young Muslim women attending a traditionalist Islamic boarding high

school, Pesantren Krapyak Ali Maksum, in the university city of Yogyakarta in Indonesia. Her account describes how what she calls "a positive synergy" emerges between the young women's "modern" aspirations for social mobility—for acquiring more prestigious professional careers than their parents—and their "traditionalist" religious education. "The relationship," she insists, however, "is not by any means simple" (p. 76). For while pursuing mobility through education, their experiences are "refracted and reinterpreted through the lens of traditionalist Islam" (p. 71). As Hefner explains,

> The aspiration to traditionalist piety introduces a way of being proudly Indonesian, educated, and Muslim all at once. It allows one to be future-oriented and upwardly mobile while also identifying with a community of sociability—one that provides a significant measure of religious meaning and comfort to those less keen on or capable of running on the socioeconomic treadmill. (p. 79)

When, for some of the young women, social mobility is not what emerges at education's end, "traditionalist ethical education also offers an alternative way of viewing and recasting what might be seen as a failure in mainstream schooling, offering a more multifaceted and moralized model of social achievement and success" (p. 77). For most young women at Krapyak view the ability to pursue higher education as itself a "major religious and ethical achievement" (p. 75), and pursuing knowledge generally "is a religious duty and a form of worship in Islam" (p. 75).

In a similar way, Oliver Pattenden's analysis also highlights how the coexistence of multiple discourses of futurity provide possibilities for recalibrating future horizons, as well as for reinterpreting what might be read as failures and re-attributing responsibility for these ends. In this instance, in the lives of youth in a small city in South Africa's Eastern Cape province, discourses (schooling and witchcraft) provide competing and often incommensurate explanations for what "befalls individuals and their responsibility for it" (p. 98). But Pattenden's analysis frames this navigation as a process of self-fashioning, an ethical becoming. He draws upon the work of Zigon (2006) to consider how these acts of self-fashioning reflect an "ethics of hope," constant efforts made by individuals "to better themselves and become the kind of person they want to be." Given that the historical possibilities for living a moral life are "numerous and changeable," individuals continually rework such possibilities in their lives. In this way, the figuring of possible futures is deeply implicated in the fashioning of

moral ethical selves. And as he argues, the experiences of schooling, hopes of betterment, and judgments of responsibility become, hence, intricately intertwined, particularly in the openings that emerge when hopes do not materialize.

Explaining the Emergence of Varying Capacities to Aspire

In the lives of all too many who populate these pages, hopes and futures figured never do materialize. For as Appadurai reminds us, the capacity to aspire is not evenly distributed. It is "a navigational capacity" (2013, p. 188); and groups positioned differently develop differential "navigational capacities." Educational institutions provide a concrete empirical grounding for studying how the capacity to aspire becomes a navigational capacity in practice, and for examining how processes of navigation are hindered, stalled, or curtained. For educational institutions are both conceived as vehicles for navigating, providing a capacity to hope and aspire, while also entailing what we refer to as a politics of possibility, limitations, "real world conjectures and refutations" (Appadurai, 2013, p. 189), that when encountered, stall the process of navigation, too often turning aspirations into forms of cruel optimism (Berlant, 2011).

Yet for the students in Amanda Gilbertson's study in particular, the capacity to aspire is not simply unevenly distributed, it is also differentially realized. This recognition leads her to propose an alternative approach to Appadurai's formulation, namely "to carefully unpack what exactly aspiration as capacity entails" (p. 21). In this effort, she draws upon Vigh's (2009) theoretical formulation of social navigation as "motion within motion," which attends to how people move through what are inevitably shifting or "fluid" social environments. In explaining social navigation, Vigh directs attention not only to capacity, but also to what he calls "compulsion." As he explains,

> We all navigate, but the necessity of having to move in relation to the movement of social forces depends on the speed and the volatility of change as well as the level of exposure or shelter that our given social positions and "capital" grants us. (2009, p. 430)

Gilbertson quite productively engages in unpacking the capacity to aspire, through a comparative case study of two private English-medium

high schools in Hyderabad, India, which she refers to as upper-middle-class Riversdale and lower-middle-class Miyapur High School. In her analysis, she explores the capacities, compulsions, and consequences evident in what she finds to be the differential aspirations and educational strategies between the youth attending these two schools. Distinctive visions of and paths to future success within the two schools, she argues, produced varying classed compulsions, leading students to perceive their capacities and figure future paths quite differently:

> The narratives of the young people presented here suggest that while the privileged present themselves as having a superior capacity to perceive and navigate toward the future, members of the lower middle class are compelled to pursue a more secure middle-class future through credentialing strategies, as they do not have the capital required to shelter them from the potential consequences of more risky strategies built around individual distinction. (pp. 21–22)

As Gilbertson concludes, "attending to compulsion and consequence provides a more nuanced picture of the conditions in which futures are made as well as the cruelness of certain optimisms" (p. 31).

The unevenness of the capacity to aspire and consequent cruelty of optimism, however, are perhaps most vividly and painfully depicted in Leya Mathew's account of the aspirations Dalit mothers hold for their children's futures. Living in the past-present, as Mathew describes it, excluded from economic development surrounding them, the poor and profoundly marginalized "become hopeful to survive." The impoverished Dalit mothers in Mathew's study develop a "will to aspire" (Comaroff and Comaroff, 2004, p. 340), or what she refers to elegantly as "obsessive hope." "Yearnings for a different world are whispered about and carried secretly in the depths of a mother's loving and despairing heart. Hope emerges agonizingly in response to hopelessness" (p. 115).

Dalit mother's encounters with the temporality of economic development illustrates further what Vigh (2009) refers to as the temporal density related to social navigation. The economic developments emerging in the present, for these profoundly marginalized and segregated Dalit women and their families, remain located only in future hopes and dreams. And the women are acutely aware, says Mathew, "of their exclusive presence in a normative past"—that they are living in what Mathew calls "the past-present (p. 113)." Their consciousness illustrates, painfully, what Vigh's

(2009) formulation of social navigation captures analytically, namely, how futurity is not simply heterogeneous and multiple, but more complexly layered and dense. As Vigh explains,

> Because navigation designates motion within motion, it forces us, in a social perspective, to consider the relation between the environment people move in and how the environment itself moves them, before, after, and during an act. Social navigation, in this manner, adds an extra dimension to practice as we become able to focus on the way people's movement in the social environments is constantly attuned and adjusted to the unfolding of the environment itself and the effect this has on possible positions and trajectories. (2009, p. 425)

Vigh's formulation of social navigation, in this way, allows for the recognition of a denser temporality, capturing "the complex of actions and interpretations that enable one to act in the here and now, gain an idea of the possible routes and courses that emerge from the present and direct one's movement expediently toward possible futures" (Vigh, 2009, p. 426). Mathew's ethnographic account, however, captures this temporal density far more vividly:

> Walking to a Malayalam-medium school with children in tow as well as spaces like uneconomic schools, colonies and roadside water taps produced a stasis in everyday life that was easily but painfully recognized. As the present and the past flowed into each other and time shrunk, however, mothers became obsessively hopeful. (p. 113)

The Capacity to Aspire as Affective Labor

M. Mackenzie Cramblit's analysis of "hopeful engagement" among undergraduate participants in a global service learning project in West Africa shifts the vantage point to a quite different social and educational context, as well as a distinctive form of aspirating. The perspective gained in considering this novel setting brings into relief additional and quite significant social issues that continue to complicate our understanding of the capacity to aspire. The Duke students certainly possess the "capacity to aspire," in this case, to aspire to "make a difference" in the futures of others, people who are far removed from their lives, largely unknown and only imagined. Cramblit's analysis of the student's "capacity to aspire" recontextualizes

the concept, bringing to the foreground its affective dimensions and historical specificity as indicative of neoliberalism, the "age of affective labor." This model of service, he argues, is "a historically specific mode of sentimental engagement," which "is at best a kind of hollow hope that leaves students ill-prepared for the concrete and embodied realities of living and working through difference, in relation with others" (pp. 151–152). This capacity to aspire is simply a form of affective labor reflecting a "neoliberal sentimentality of service" elevating "the entrepreneurial self."

Cramblit contrasts this more sentimental entrepreneurial capacity to aspire with what he refers to as "the capacity of realistic aspiration." This second form, he proposes, would support new forms of "engagement" that "prioritize relationality over insulated investments in the entrepreneurial self." To embody this capacity, students must first acquire the "capacity to relate," which, as he envisions it, is a more fundamentally affective and sensorial capacity. The "capacity to relate," he explains, is

> a visceral mode of engagement—an engagement that passes through the senses, as well as the mind. … is precisely the kind of relational capacity required for service performed with humility, curiosity, and a good faith commitment to putting oneself (one's self) at risk. (p. 151)

Cramblit's analysis, in sum, raises important issues and brings out additional dimensions in theorizing the capacity to aspire. His account speaks directly to the politics of possibility, particularly the politics of positionality for those who aspire to help better what inevitably are the imagined futures of imagined others. His account also brings attention to the affective and sensorial, relational and ultimately ethical nature of such concerns and resulting actions of "engagement." In shifting the perspective on the capacity to aspire to service learning in the Global North and considering it as a form of affective labor, Cramblit's account resonates with other works in anthropology (specifically, Harvey, 2007; Muehlebach, 2012; Ong, 2006), considering how affective labor masks the erosion of governmental support and may hinder mobilization to achieve more substantive structural change.

Aspiring for Social Change

Across many of the case studies in this volume a fundamental disjuncture is evident, one that lies at the heart of the meritocratic promise of modern education and is deepened, it seems, by widening inequities brought forth

by neoliberal economic policies and relations. Parents and their children, through hope, heed the call to improve oneself and one's condition in the future through achieving in school, while faced in the present with the reality of few jobs and mitigating forces far beyond the control of individuals. The Bhutanese youth in Dolma Roder's analysis, similar to youth in many other studies (Jeffrey, 2010), wait in hope because their professional aspirations "have not yet caught up" with new economic realities. And despair leads the young man, Cebo, in Pattenden's account, to conclude, tragically, that "I am the problem." Reflection on these ethnographic examples prompts a question, one at least as old as Marxist theory: Why do those caught up in this paradox of precarity engage in waiting, hold on to aspirations for a better future, and then take responsibility for their conditions? Why don't they challenge the forces producing their precarity?

Gilbertson reflects on this longstanding dilemma in her chapter, turning to Fernandes' work on an emerging middle class in an India seen to be rising:

> that while the "new rich" have benefited from liberalization, India's lower middle class and upwardly mobile working class endure decreasing job security as a result of retrenchment and restructuring as well as rising living costs. She argues that a form of "intertemporal interpretation" (2006, p. xx) is at play in India, wherein people aspire to and anticipate future consumption-based benefits by investing in individualized strategies of upward mobility, rather than critique the present-day adverse effects of economic liberalization. (p. 20)

It is only in Krystal Strong's account that student futures and political possibilities actually become directly intertwined with activist forms of "the political." Strong's analysis demonstrates how a different type of aspiration, what she calls "aspirational politics," can emerge in the midst of vital conjunctures in educational fields. Experimentation with forms of leadership among Nigerian students on college campuses, she suggests, can be "viewed as a desire to create openings within a seemingly closed social structure that limits opportunities for young people" (p. 129). In response to the narrowing of opportunity and conditions of precarity, these young people are engaging with the future through a vision of change, a change involving transformations that also reflect imagined temporalities. The students imagine schools as "sites of transformative potential premised on the future-oriented practices of campus politics—a form

of learning that is not tethered to formal instruction or the conferral of credentials (p. 130).” Engagement in politics, Strong’s account suggests, is also an aspirational possibility.

“Future” Directions

The ethnographic accounts gathered together in this volume, individually and collectively, implicitly and explicitly, illustrate contributions that the study of education can make to developing an anthropology of the future. It is hoped that this volume will contribute productively to ongoing conversations concerning education, culture, and the economy, conversations influenced significantly by the classic work, *The Cultural Production of the Educated Person*. For attention to aspirations, futurity, and the politics of possibility continues quite productively to “fill out an underdeveloped part of Marx’s thought” (1996, p. 12) relating to the nature of subjectivity and consciousness, specifically providing a more nuanced articulation and understanding of the heterogeneous temporalities that shape and are produced in processes of social reproduction and change.

The focus on temporal density in relation to social navigation, drawing upon Vigh’s work in particular, seems to add additional complexity as well to Johnson-Hank’s path-breaking formulation of vital conjunctures, specifically in terms of the temporality of the “motion within motion” these conjunctures necessarily entail. For as Gilbertson explains, this leads to a focus not only on the aspirational capacities that emerge within conjunctures but also to the production of compulsions to navigate futures further.

The turn to the study of affect in anthropology as well as to ethics, ethical becoming, and moral personhood, as evident in Cramblit’s and Pattenden’s accounts, provides additional theoretical lenses that could continue to be applied quite productively in analyses of education, student futures, and political possibilities. There is much more to understand about the affective and sensorial as well as the social-relational nature of aspirations as well as of processes through which the capacity to aspire (or a capacity for aspirational politics) can be cultivated, in Appadurai’s (2013) sense. And as these case studies so richly demonstrate, the social field of education should continue to be a central focus for this kind of theoretical and ethnographic work, a key site for scholarship that will continue to contribute in innovative ways to further developing an anthropology of the future.

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